

Gaslit Nation Transcript
Parliamentarian F*ckadelic
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Sarah Kendzior:

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the bestselling books, *The View from Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*, about Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine.

Sarah Kendzior:

And this is Gaslit Nation, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

And this week's bonus episode running for our Patreon subscribers at the Truth Teller level and higher is going to be delayed until Friday. We are planning to record Friday morning because we want to give the FBI a few more days to hunt down Gabby Petito's boyfriend, Brian Laundrie, a mascot of White male impunity. So this week's bonus will be called "The FBI: Enablers of Abuse". We'll discuss the FBI's protection of Jeffrey Epstein, Larry Nassar, and other sociopaths. And of course, we'll discuss how James Comey, as FBI director, failed our US Olympic gymnastics team, who bravely testified to Congress about surviving Larry Nassar's abuse. And we're going to discuss how White male patriarchy, plaguing law enforcement, failed to protect Gabby Petito and the thousands of girls and women, many non-White and ignored by the media, who go missing every year. We're going to situate this in our ongoing discussion of how the FBI enables an international crime syndicate, child trafficking, and other rampant corruption that the FBI continues to turn a blind eye towards. Enough is enough. It's about damn time somebody cleaned up the FBI before more innocent lives are destroyed. And you can look out for that. We're running it Friday, heading into the weekend. One more thing: We'll be answering questions submitted by our subscribers on Patreon at the Democracy Defender level or higher. We will be getting to those questions in addition to all these rants we have about the FBI.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yup. All right. Well, on with the show. Andrea, I think you, as a graduate of Joe Manchin studies, have a Joe Manchin update to last week's expose.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yes, in our ongoing segment we're calling Quid Pro Joe, we're back with the family of grifters known as the Manchin family. Joe Manchin's wife is corrupt. Joe Manchin's daughter is corrupt, as we went over on last week's episode called [Quid Pro Joe](#), and Joe Manchin's son, not to be outdone, is also a pillar of the Manchin family of corruption. According to Jane Mayer of *The New Yorker* and author of *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, Mayer writes on Twitter: "Could the capture of Congress by money be any clearer? Manchin, who just made nearly \$500,000 from his son's coal trading company and has taken the most fossil fuel money in the Senate, is

poised to gut Biden's clean energy plan.” And again, that's from Jane Mayer of *The New Yorker*. So once again, the Manchin family puts the Trump family to shame.

Andrea Chalupa:

I want to just point out Manchin taking half a million dollars from his son's cold trading company and voting against America's own security interests by blocking desperately needed legislation to combat the exploding climate crisis. This is Ukraine-level corruption. When people look at countries like Ukraine, “Why can't they clean up their act? Why aren't they doing more against corruption?”, it's because of all the damn Ukrainian Joe Manchins who are doing things like this, all the incestuousness of the corruption running in the family being kept inside the family. Why? Because when you keep it inside the family, it ensures a level of trust. It ensures this mafia level of loyalty. It's like that mob loyalty, Sarah, that we've covered with the trumps again and again and again. I would like to see, personally, the Manchins play the Trumps in a game of *Family Feud*, and the questions are all geared towards the dark arts of grifting, racketeering, and bribery. I would watch the hell out of that. We need a Mark Burnett of the Left reality show producer with the guts to approach both families with that offer. One night only, the Manchins versus the Trumps: The art of the grift, *Family Feud* edition.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, with both ending up... Well, I can think of a lot of places I want them to end up, but I'll just say, I would say under federal investigation, but in this country, that means they will roam free, as you will find out in our Patreon bonus.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, spoiler alert, the FBI lets them get away.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. You took one for the team and delved into the Manchin family finances, into the corruption of his daughter's business, into the attempt to buy off his wife, into Manchin himself, missed the son. And I don't put that on you. I put that on the lack of media coverage, where Joe Manchin was treated as this moderate mystery, like, “Ooh, what kind of ideological bent does this man have? Why is he singularly blockading everything in Congress?” And it's not singularly blockading. I mean, if it weren't Joe Manchin, as I've said many times, it would be Sinema, it would be Feinstein. This is the rotating villain that allows the Democrats to remain inert and to not do anything about an urgent threat of autocracy, to not do anything to upset their corporate donors, even though we're literally looking at an existential threat. But still, you would think that this would prompt some curiosity, some deep dive investigation.

Sarah Kendzior:

And I know that the media has gone to hell financially. It's reflective of what happens in society in general. The wealth is conglomerated at the top by people who are friends with these sorts of folks, with people like the Manchins. They, therefore, don't want them investigated. It's very interesting to me that it's Jane Mayer who pointed this out on Twitter because she's among the few really true investigative journalists that looks into kleptocracy, that digs very deep into white-collar crime, and that doesn't seem to fear the repercussions of doing so in the way so many others have. So, I would like to learn more, but my God. The other thing, of course, is that if Jane Mayer knew this, Congress knew this. People in Congress knew this. So, whatever the points of leverage are at getting Manchin to do his job—

Sarah Kendzior:

And again, I will remind all of you that the jobs of these individuals are to serve the American public. It's not to be adulated and cheerleaded and given this bizarre Stan treatment that people seem to have devolved into on social media, less so for Joe Manchin. They would have known. Biden would have known all this, about, "Oh my goodness. What could Biden do?" He's only the most powerful person in the world. He would have known this. He would have known this about Joe Manchin's son, the same way people knew stuff about Joe Biden's son. So, maybe again, maybe that's the problem. I don't know, but the people who bear the brunt of the problem, in the end, are us, are ordinary American people and, of course, future generations worldwide. We're going to have to pay the price of climate catastrophes that could be mitigated if action were taken now.

Sarah Kendzior:

And that action is being prevented by Joe Manchin, for whom I suppose no amount of money is great enough. And that's one of the things, you know, we've talked about this before, but I still just don't get it. It's like you have millions and millions of dollars. For most people, \$1 million, that's a lot. That would be like a lotto level amount of money. You'd be incredibly satisfied to have \$1 million. These are people who have, like, \$500 million. They have this sick amount of money and no future. They share the futurelessness of the rest of us, and they're contributing to the futurelessness of their children, of their grandchildren. And no matter how much money you have, no matter what you think you're going to do— like build a bunker in New Zealand or what have you—it's not going to work.

Sarah Kendzior:

We've seen over the last few months so many of these little escape plans that sociopathic billionaire elites have come up with over the last few decades, like, "I'm going to build retreats in Whitefish Montana, in the Pacific Northwest, or in Canada," because those areas scientists had thought to some degree would be more immune from the effects of climate change. And then what we saw over the summer is that nowhere is immune. And the way that these climate catastrophes work is with incredible unpredictability. People were not imagining it was going to be over a hundred degrees for weeks on end in Portland, Oregon. They were not imagining that New York would have, I think, the record amount of rainfall in a small amount of time in the entire history of the city. These are catastrophic not just because they're bad, but because they're so unexpected. They push the boundaries of scientific imagination.

Sarah Kendzior:

So these billionaire elites who think they can hide from the climate crisis, they're kidding themselves. You know, I always imagined a kind of *Lord of the Flies* situation where eventually they'd hunt each other out anyway, after the rest of us are gone, kind of like a high-powered version of *The Stand*, because that's human nature for these people. They battle each other. This is not going to be some sort of Kumbaya mafia state post-apocalypse society. But I think they also are increasingly learning that there is nowhere to run, that, as much as they try to distance themselves from ordinary people, they too will be fighting these catastrophes. And yet, they will not take the most basic steps to mitigate them.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. And with fairness to the oligarch overlords who are just growing stronger, more powerful, as we'll talk about in today's show, space is exciting. Good for them for living out their astronaut childhood fantasies. But at the same time, just like the climate catastrophe is going to get you no matter where you

are on planet Earth, space is a hostile place to try to make a go of it. So, maybe the oligarchs should rethink their space invasion escape plans. That's something I often think about. You're not going to leave us behind so easily!

Sarah Kendzior:

These guys have the shittiest escape plans. It's like, space, or, "I'm going to be a transhumanist," like Jeffrey Epstein wanted to do. First, he wanted to literally impregnate his hostages, but then he also wanted to, like, exist... I mean, I just keep thinking of *Futurama* and Nixon's head. I feel like that's the goal of a lot of these dirty oligarchs—they're not just right-wing, a lot of them are just technocrats in general—is to deny the fundamental nature of humanity and continue as some sort of form of AI. And some of them are very serious about this. They're investing a lot of money into research with this, but that is not the human condition. It's so soulless. It's all so bizarre. It's the worst, most dystopian manifestation of sci-fi dreams that I think many of us had when we were younger. They've gone in a very bad direction. They need new advisors. They need new sci-fi writer advisors for all of this.

Andrea Chalupa:

They're twisting themselves into knots just to avoid paying a little bit more in taxes, just to avoid paying a desperately needed wealth tax for all their many, many billions. So, the whole thing is embarrassing. They need to be more publicly shamed. They should all be embarrassed by how they're behaving, and it just speaks to an utter lack of self-awareness and a humanity that they're not. And speaking of all that, before I move off the Manchin family, I do want to say, in my defense, when I put together that first Quid Pro Joe segment that ran last week, his daughter, Heather Bresch, who is the disgraced Big Pharma multi-millionaire who cashed out from her company for over \$30 million after raising, exponentially, the price of a lifesaving medicine. Heather Bresch kept me busy because her corruption was like pulling a string on a sweater. The whole thing just kept unraveling. So, that's how I overlooked the son because his sister was just so beyond dirty to the point where—

Sarah Kendzior:

I don't think you overlooked him, I think there's just... I went and looked. There's not a hell of a lot about him.

Andrea Chalupa:

Right? That's so true. Yeah. So, Heather Bresch has had her moment for years in the spotlight and may she continue to be under great scrutiny. And now the son is going to be joining her, because those are the kids that Joe Manchin—corrupt Joe Manchin—and his corrupt wife raised. All right. So, let's talk about other bad faith actors who need to be marginalized. So, we're going to go into Congress. So, Sarah, do you know Elizabeth MacDonough?

Sarah Kendzior:

No, I do not.

Andrea Chalupa:

You do not. Most Americans do not. And yet, this is a person that wields immense power over us, even though she—

Sarah Kendzior:

Oh, is this the Parliamentarian?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah!

Sarah Kendzior:

Oh, God, fuck the Parliamentarian. That should be the name of today's episode, but go on.

Andrea Chalupa:

Elizabeth MacDonough is the person blocking all of our hopes and dreams. She's, as Sarah just said, the Senate Parliamentarian and the first woman to serve in the role, a reminder that representation and visibility are not enough. Empathy and common sense matter. And Elizabeth MacDonough is either a heartless bureaucrat—the kind that made the trains run on time and Nazi Germany—or she's a straight up Republican plant. To be clear, Elizabeth MacDonough was appointed in 2012 by Democrats when they controlled the Senate. She has a long history of working on the Senate floor and is beloved by leaders on both sides of the aisle. But she's wielding too much power over the American people for someone unelected and at a time we're being hit with several crises. So far, Elizabeth MacDonough has blocked the Democrats from raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour as part of Biden's coronavirus relief package. A \$15 minimum wage isn't perfect, but it certainly would help.

Andrea Chalupa:

The minimum should actually be \$24 an hour to keep up with inflation, according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research. Instead, it's \$7.25 an hour, at a time when income inequality in America continues to skyrocket, surpassing levels of the Gilded Age. Stereotypically cruel and inhumane bureaucrat, Elizabeth MacDonough, could have let the Democrats include a \$15 an hour minimum wage, which should be seen, again, as a compromise to minimum wage, given that it should be higher to keep up with inflation. Instead, she presented some fine print of the Senate rules and as the referee of the Senate, she blocked it. Instead of firing her or ignoring her, which is their right, Democratic leadership—including Biden—accepted her recommendation, which is only a recommendation that once again can be ignored. Republicans, for instance, knowing how to play this game, fired and replaced the Senate Parliamentarian in 2001—2001, when George W. Bush had just come to power—so they could pass his budget and tax cuts through an evenly divided Senate.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, Bush comes to power after losing the popular vote and stealing the electoral college after his Lackey, Kathleen Harris, the Attorney General of Florida, scrubbed a bunch of voters off the rolls and the Supreme court shut down the Florida recount. Bush then has the audacity to have his party immediately fire the Senate Parliamentarian so he can pass his agenda, which the majority of Americans did not want. That is some brazen power moves that the Democrats should learn from, in my opinion, because the majority of the country is on the side of the Democratic party and yet the Democrats continue to refuse to act like it. The Republicans are the party of power and the Democrats insist on being seen as the party of good governance. They pride themselves on being methodical, going by the rules, but how the hell are you going to play by the rules when the other side keeps ripping up the rule book? And it's driving our country deeper into a black hole of corruption, elite impunity, and the highest levels of income inequality we've ever seen in the United States.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, the latest from needling bureaucrat, Elizabeth MacDonough, one of history's most infamous and damaging bureaucrats who deprived millions of a livable wage—especially non-White women and men hit hardest by the economic crisis—she's now refusing to let Democrats include immigration reform as part of their \$3.5 trillion package of social and climate crisis programs. Democrats were trying to establish a path to citizenship for millions of immigrants. This would provide much-needed relief, for instance, for Dreamers, undocumented immigrants who entered the country as minors, immigrants who have been put through hell during the deliberately cruel policies of Trump's terror war driven by proud White supremacist, Stephen Miller. Elizabeth MacDonough, oddly enough, is a former immigration attorney. Yikes. And Rand Paul is a doctor.

Andrea Chalupa:

Again, George W. Bush got his tax cuts for the 1% pushed through and made the classic Reagan Revolution argument that it would help the economy. Democrats could argue the same for immigration reform considering how many immigrants fill jobs that Americans do not want. These are essential worker jobs that keep our economy running. Elizabeth MacDonough, in a long tradition of White women protecting the abusive power structures of patriarchy and White supremacy, once again makes a recommendation that hurts the most vulnerable in America: non-White people. Vice President Kamala Harris who, like every vice president, must forge her own identity and legacy (especially if she wants to win the White House herself one day), can and should overrule the Senate Parliamentarian. Because she can. And, morally, she must. This would certainly cement a legacy for Vice President Harris, one of conviction, fighting for the values that the majority of Americans share. People are hungry right now for strength and leadership, and it is far past time that the Democrats showed that strength and leadership. And especially when they have the opportunity to do so by playing by the rules. They have the right to ignore the Parliamentarian. It's all there. And then

Sarah Kendzior:

And they have precedent. I mean, one of the things that's been just baffling to me seeing the blowback against the Biden administration doing anything ethical, pragmatic, or beneficial to the rule of law in this country has been all these people being like, "Oh, you can't possibly expect Vice President Harris to do this, to overrule the Parliamentarian. This hasn't happened since 1975 when Vice President Nelson Rockefeller overruled the Parliamentarian." I'm like, "Yeah, you know what else hasn't happened since the mid '70s? Any kind of accountability for elite criminal impunity." You know what did happen in the mid '70s? The Watergate hearings, the resignation of Richard Nixon, the Church Committee, the Pike Committee, these endless investigations of internal government corruption that were meant to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past and that we do not have bureaucracy functioning as a coverup for extreme crime.

Sarah Kendzior:

And basically as a way to allow racists and others within the government to try to overthrow civil rights laws, try to overthrow voting laws, to try to protect the most elite and cloistered and powerful at the expense of the majority of the American people. That is why they had people overruling parliamentarians, because we did not elect them. This is supposed to be a representative and transparent democracy, and that very idea is now something that not just Republicans challenge through their overt longing for autocratic rule. This is not something that they're hiding anymore. This is

something we have been warning you about for a very long time and we're seeing more and more basically official proof of this, for example, the memo from the Federalist Society lawyer in which they outlined the plan for the coup that we were lectured endlessly was just a mere grift, was not going to be anything significant.

Sarah Kendzior:

And, of course, it was enormously significant. And, of course, there's been no accountability. The way they get away with this is this sort of veneer of respectability. Like, "Ooh, can't rock the boat." It's like, well, the boat is sinking and we're on the boat, and the entire country is on the boat, and this is not rocking the boat. This is steadying it. This is making it go to shore. And so yes, of course Kamala Harris should overrule the parliamentarian. Who the fuck is going to defend the parliamentarian? As you said, most people don't know this person existed. Most people are kind of appalled to find out this person existed. They're like, "So it's just this rando hanging out in the halls of the Senate, you know, calling balls and strikes while we're out here casting our votes, battling a plague, trying to survive economically, hoping that these big infrastructure and other policies that will affect not only our lives but the lives of all generations to come will pass. And this fucking rando is like, 'Nah.'"

Sarah Kendzior:

You know what I mean? Like, what the hell is that? I think that's the reaction to most people when they find out that this individual exists. So, no, there's not going to be a bunch of people like, you know, clutching their chests like, "Oh my God, not the parliamentarian!" when Harris overrules her. Of course she could. Or, as Trent Lott did, as you mentioned, in 2001, she can be fired. I mean, really, if Trump did one thing—and this is not a good thing—you know, Trump fired everybody for all sorts of reasons. It was like a spinal tap drummer kind of an administration. And a lot of people were fired for unjust reasons, like, say, Alexander Vindman, because he told the truth under oath, which is something the Trump administration did not like. But we now have a precedent of all sorts of folks just getting fired willy nilly without any kind of real repercussions. There's an actual reason to fire the Senate Parliamentarian and that's to protect the American public. So they should do it, and it shouldn't be that hard.

Andrea Chalupa:

Without question. And I think the one thing I'll say is that the Senate Parliamentarian is propping up this whole system of White supremacy that is destroying our country from within. That's why we were such a ripe target, in many ways, for the mass murdering xenophobic terrorist regime of Putin's Russia, where immigrants are harassed in viral YouTube videos. That's the thing there. And a nationalist march founded by Putin turned into a neo-Nazi March. That's why these conservatives and these Democrats-in-name-only are stalling any progress that would Putin-proof and Trump-proof our democracy, because they benefit from the system. They are existentially making their wealth, and they have no escape plan after that because all their escape plans are just fallacies, dumb fantasies that do not stand up to reality. If you look at the moderates, for instance, the ones who are going to be vulnerable in the dark money campaign of the midterms, they love the Parliamentarian. They're hiding behind her.

Andrea Chalupa:

They don't want to have their names associated with any type of immigration reform, especially when Fox News it's exploiting all those images of the Haitians on our border and so forth. And not only that, they hide behind the gloss of good governance and bipartisanship when really the bipartisanship of so

many of these Democrats-in-name-only moderates—so-called moderates—is... The bipartisanship that they do greatly contribute to is taking from the same trough as their Republican colleagues. They're all dependent on the same major corporate donors, corporate donors that are fine to fund politicians that are driving the unconstitutional and dangerous anti-abortion law in Texas, corporations that are funding the violent insurrectionists that drove the mob attack on our democracy in January 6. You have these so-called moderate Democrats—Democrats-in-name-only, DINO— who are taking from the same corporate coffers. And so they're happy hiding behind the Parliamentarian's so-called rulings—which are not rulings, they're recommendations—because then they don't have to disappoint their corporate donors. They don't have to make themselves vulnerable to dark money ads going into the midterms and so forth. So, the Senate Parliamentarian is very much doing favors to the traitors on both sides of the aisle in the US Senate.

Sarah Kendzior:

Exactly, and I just want to sort of emphasize the xenophobic aspect of this because, as you said, images of the thousands of Haitian refugees who've arrived on the border in Del Rio are all over the place being exploited by right-wing bigots. And there's some confusion as to why they're there. So I just want to just... I mean, this situation and the images that are coming out of there and the stories that we're hearing out of there are absolutely horrifying. And if you were horrified, rightly so, by the plight of people in Afghanistan whose lives were ruined in part because of our wars there, you should feel equal empathy and equal upset at what is happening to Haitians at the border. And what has been happening to Haitians, I mean, quite honestly, since the founding of colonialist Haiti, which had one of the few successful overthrows of that rule, but especially since 2010, when they had a catastrophic earthquake that had aftershocks, both environmental and political. A good source, I think, on kind of breaking this down is Jonathan Katz, who studies Haiti, has a free newsletter, and explains that the Haitians who have shown up in Del Rio “were part of a wave of Haitians who've moved to Brazil—”

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm quoting from his newsletter—“in search of jobs and housing in the years after the catastrophic 2010 earthquake. The jobs turned out to be fewer and poorer paying than they had hoped. Some fled the rising xenophobia stoked by Brazil's neo-fascist president, Jair Bolsonaro, to Chile. Then the pandemic came, the dangers grew, and opportunities became more scarce.” And so then he goes on to describe their journey through South America, to Columbia, to Panama, through El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and then finally, to Mexico and finally to the border of the United States. And, you know, anybody who has been a refugee, or worked with refugees, or just has common sense, knows that you do not make this journey lightly.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is a terrifying, atrocious way to live. And the Haitians who are at the border are there with their families, they're there with their children, and the reason that they were being attacked by a border control on horses, holding reins that they were using as whips, was because they were crossing back into Mexico, back and forth, in search of food, in search of medicine, in search of the most basic supplies needed to survive. For the Biden administration to treat them the way they're treating them, but also just to engage in this rhetoric of like, Yeah, we're just going to deport them. That's that.” with no introspection about our own government's role in facilitating this conflict and how we've treated Haiti, but that aside, just the basic laws of asylum, the basic laws of human rights and what this country is supposed to represent. Everyone went crazy when the Trump administration did things like this, when

Kellyanne Conway and Stephen Miller and other racists from that administration engaged in this overt bigotry and this anti-immigration stance.

Sarah Kendzior:

We were at the point where Stephen Miller was castigating the Statue of Liberty and its message. How is Joe Biden any different in this situation, in the way that he is treating Haitians at the border? It's just very hard to watch. There's a great documentary by a Haitian filmmaker and philosopher, Raoul Peck. It's called *Exterminate All the Brutes*. It looks at hundreds of years of White supremacist, colonialist history. I think it's on HBO Max. It's very, very good. It's one of the best things I've seen in years. And one of the things that Peck does that makes this documentary stand out from others is it makes cinematic recreations of horrific moments of White colonialist brutality throughout time. And he films them as if you're watching, like, a Clint Eastwood Western, only it's showing what actually happened.

Sarah Kendzior:

It has Josh Hartnett in this kind of recurring role, you know, dressed Western-style with a hat on a horse and holding a whip and beating indigenous people or enslaved Africans throughout the world. And the images that were shown yesterday, the photos that went viral on the internet, they looked like scenes of the cinematic reproduction of centuries-old crimes that are in Raoul Peck's *Exterminate All the Brutes*. They're indistinguishable from it, and it shows this incredible continuity. And the reason Peck did this was to shock the audience into morality. You know, there are all these images, they're in black and white, they're black and white photographs, or they're etchings or they're reproductions. They're imaginings. And he sought to bring this home, especially, I think, to White people who like to play down these crimes as, "Oh, well, that was just the times. That's just the way things were."

Sarah Kendzior:

This is the way things are now. And they don't have to be this way. The Biden administration could make a different decision. They could actually do something about abuses conducted by border control that have been going on for decades, but increased in their overt brutality under the Trump administration. Alejandro Mayorkas, the head of DHS—an institution which itself, I think, should be abolished—could be making different decisions. And again, you need to stop falling for these Biden administration people who vow to behave so differently, who are counting on you to just coast on their rhetoric, coast on their little teary confirmation speeches that they make about, you know, "I love America. I'm so grateful to it for taking me in." Mayorkas came here when he was a child and grew up in Beverly Hills, but liked to portray himself as a woebegone Cuban exile. Don't fall for this shit. Look at people's actions and ask, "Are they helping the most vulnerable?"

Sarah Kendzior:

"Are they acting according to United States law, to international law, to human rights law? Are they, on a baseline level, just doing the right thing in a very obvious crisis?" And if the answer is No, then just take that in. Don't feel afraid to push back, especially when you're viewing an atrocity like this one. So, on that note, I have more atrocities... Or not atrocities exactly, but more bad things going on in Biden land. But I don't know if you have anything you want to add to that.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's not Biden land. These are all conditions that have been set because of institutional failure for decades now. And it's up to Biden land to finally wake up and see all the people, the majority of the

country, that has their back, that fought like hell to bring them to power, and not be scared of their own shadow during this time when we need strong leadership. But yes, I do want to hear how the latest and what they are failing us on.

Sarah Kendzior:

I want to hear from you because you're the one who actually has some expertise on France here, and we're going to be discussing the big international shocker last week, which is France, I believe, withdrawing its ambassador after Biden decided to form a new Anglo alliance with Australia and with the UK. It's abbreviated as AUKUS, which is, you know, Australia, UK, US, it made the government—

Andrea Chalupa:

More like ruckus!

Sarah Kendzior:

More like ruckus. Good one, Andrea. [laughs] And so it made the government of France extraordinarily angry. It is posing a challenge to the very existence of NATO, which was already in distress. That was a purposeful action on Trump. You may recall that Trump spent his entire four years in office trying to destroy NATO. This was a long-term goal of his. You could see op-eds and advertisements Trump wrote about this following his trip to Russia in 1987, that are in the '80s. He went in there with that ambition which, of course, is a deeply held ambition of Vladimir Putin, Trump's patron who has, of course, wanted NATO to be annihilated and wanted the EU to be weakened and managed to succeed with the latter, of course, with Brexit. So, we already have a very vulnerable situation where our traditional European allies have been alienated from the United States due to Trump, have been increasingly frustrated with us and are also having internal fractures within Europe where you're seeing a lot of Eastern European countries becoming more overtly autocratic, in particular Hungary and Poland.

Sarah Kendzior:

You're seeing increasing Russian influence over those countries, especially in the UK with the Londongrad oligarchy money laundering that's been happening for decades. We'll get a little more into that. And basically, these alliances, which seemed strong 20 years ago, 30 years ago, are already fraying, And Biden is fraying them further by partnering with the hard-right governments of Australia and the UK. And it's important to note, this is who he's aligning with is Boris Johnson, a Brexiteer basically UK version of Donald Trump.

Andrea Chalupa:

A traitor to his country who lied to the public about Brexit, even though it was going to be detrimental to the British economy and just how the country simply functions.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, exactly. And this is also somebody who's handling of the pandemic at many times resembled what the Trump administration does, allowing people to die for profit. This is a serial liar. This is just somebody who you can not expect to act in good faith. This is not a person you want to favor openly over other allies who you're in a partnership with. And Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister of Australia, is a similar sort of fellow. And so what Biden was doing goes well beyond kind of trying to reestablish the "special relationship" that the US and UK have always had. We all know Ted Lasso is the person who has actually

established the special relationship to the US and the UK. So, thank you, Ted Lasso. This move seemed to be designed to stir up rancor between the US and the EU, and that's exactly what it's done.

Sarah Kendzior

And so I'm going to read a little bit from *The Guardian*, where it says: "France's historic decision to recall its ambassadors to the US and Australia is far more than a diplomatic spat,' analysts have warned. The move and protest at Canberra's surprise decision to cancel an order for French-built submarines and its security pact with Washington and London will affect France and Europe's role in NATO and already strained relations with the UK. French officials have accused Australia, the UK, and the US of behaving in an underhanded, duplicitous manner that has betrayed and humiliated France. A visibly angry Jean-Yves Le Drian, the French Foreign Minister, accused the Americans and Austrians of 'lies and duplicity' over the AUKUS deal. He warned, 'It's not finished.' Le Drian said Australia had told France it's breaking the submarine contract and making a new deal with the US and the UK just one hour before Scott Morrison, the Australian PM, announced it at a press conference."

Sarah Kendzior:

And then Le Drian says, "That's why I say there has been duplicity, contempt and lies. And when you have an ally of the stature of France, you don't treat them like that.' Asked if there had been a failure of French intelligence in uncovering the secret deal, he replied, 'The agreement project initiated by the US and Australia was decided by a small group and I'm not sure the US and Australian ministers knew about it. When we see the US president with the Australian Prime Minister announce a new agreement with Boris Johnson, the breach of trust is profound. In a real alliance, you talk to each other. You don't hide things. You respect the other party. And that is why this is a real crisis.'" So yeah, I'm taking France's side on this one. Those all seem like logical arguments to me.

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm also wondering though, what else is going on behind the scenes? I mean, this article makes it pretty clear it's not just about a dispute regarding the sale of military equipment. It's about this deception and about the positioning of this Anglo alliance above the traditional allyship that the US has had with France. And there's this kind of Biden bot farm going around that are all suddenly experts on Charles de Gaulle. They're just like, "Ph, you know, France, impetuous France. You can never count on them. Don't you know about Charles de Gaulle?" It's like... Really, go look at this. It's just identical posts. There's some sort of talking point being circulated. But regardless of what France's diplomatic temperament is, the US should know how to handle it. It has experience handling it. I mean, we certainly have been through worse during the US' illegal war in Iraq, where we were parading freedom fries and really being incredibly insulting to France.

Sarah Kendzior:

And then that brings us back to who is in charge of these diplomatic relationships, which is Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who we did an entire episode about because of his incredible corruption and suspicious family ties. So I was wondering what you thought about Blinken's role, especially given that this is a guy raised in France. This is a guy whose relationships with the French government, with French society and so forth, go back very far. So you would think, of all people, this would be someone who would know how to handle this situation, but clearly does not seem to.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, without question. I mean, this is what we keep going back to again and again, which is, we have a lobbyist for a secretary of state. How is this different from having the CEO of Exxon as Secretary of State? It's not. What happened here is that Blinken cut out the French from a lucrative submarine deal. The French had a deal to sell submarines to the Australians. The Australians were like, "No, thanks. We're going to buy these nuclear submarines from the Americans." And so not only was this a disrespectful, utter lack of consideration—a simply undiplomatic move—by the United States towards our close ally, France, it also cut them out of a major deal. It destroyed a deal for them. And this is happening to Macron when he's heading into an election year in 2022 and there is a strong, far-right presence in France. It certainly didn't do that great in recent elections, but there is a far-right disinformation news outlet in France that would certainly try to milk this to try to hurt Macron.

Andrea Chalupa:

Any opponents might try to hurt Macron with this in 2022 and plus, just on the face of it, it is simply disrespectful. It's not just about money. Money clearly does play a big part of it. It's also that the French were cut out completely. And Blinken did this with a quickness. It was a very sloppy, swift job by Blinken because it had an entrepreneurial swiftness to it. Blinken is the guy that set up his own company during the Trump years and made a lot of money serving clients that are destabilizing the planet, including Facebook. Facebook, that continues to lie, to harass researchers that are trying to understand and promote greater transparency of all of Facebook's abusive practices and how it impacts not just democracies around the world, but also the mental health and wellbeing of teenage girls. Facebook knows that Instagram, for instance, negatively impacts teenage girls.

Andrea Chalupa:

And they're not going to do anything about it because money, money, money. This is a company that Blinken served, made a lot of money off of. So, Blinken is a lobbyist. The guy makes money. The guy makes money, and what he did was something that a lobbyist would do by just shoving out the French and grabbing that business for the United States. And it's wrong. It's just simply wrong. Again, if Rex Tillerson did this as Secretary of State, we would all be shocked and we would all be talking about that. I just don't know why Blinken is sticking around, especially after the intelligence failure of the Afghanistan withdrawal, where he was given the intelligence by his own team at the State Department saying, "Hey, if you rush this withdrawal out of Afghanistan, there's going to be a bloodbath. We're warning you. We're sending these cables up to the highest levels of power. We're warning you."

Andrea Chalupa:

And Blinken was like, "Go ahead." The intelligence was all saying that the Afghan government that the US was propping up was deeply corrupt, that it was smoke and mirrors. And yet they trusted the Afghan government that the US propped up when they said, "No, please don't take out all your contractors and all the men and women of Afghanistan that helped you as interpreters and contractors and so forth to help keep your soldiers safe. Keep them there as a show of confidence in us." And Blinken's team listened to that, trusted this corrupt US-backed Afghan government instead of just listening to the intelligence itself. So there's just mistake after mistake under Antony Blinken, lobbyist Secretary of State. And it's not surprising given that this guy set up a company and swiftly made all this money serving all of these nefarious interests. He's showing that same hand as Secretary of State, and it's creating global destabilization and hurting some of our most important allies that we depend on for national security, for intel sharing, for standing united against the rise of autocracy and the corruption that that breeds worldwide.

Andrea Chalupa:

And so I think guys like Blinken are part of the problem. Guys like Blinken are the reason why you have capitals like New York and London that become money laundering capitals for all of these blood money bandits and countries like Russia and elsewhere. Because they're all about making money over human rights. They're all about making money over standing up for democracy. Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State pretty much put out a doctrine saying, "The United States no longer stands for human rights." He went out and said it. That's the refreshing thing about the Trump regime was that they just came out and said it. It was no longer, you know... Yes, they had dog whistles, but it was no longer that Lee Atwater strategy of, "You can't say the N word anymore, but you can say voter ID laws that are super strict. You can say, you know, limiting rights to vote and so forth. You can say voter suppression, but you can't say the N word anymore."

Andrea Chalupa:

And they created this whole gaslighting apparatus to suppress the vote. No, Trump just came out and was saying, like "shithole countries", "Mexican judge", you know, and all the things that he kept saying and so on. And all the people that he brought into power with them were on that same page, just came out and said it. Former CEO of Exxon as Secretary of State said, "The United States does not stand for human rights." Antony Blinken, with his actions, is saying the same thing, loud and clear. But the problem is he's hiding behind the gaslighting and acting like this is an America that stands for anything anymore. I don't think we do. I think the Biden doctrine and whatever that is in the world, whatever face Biden is trying to show our allies, is one of deception and abuse and taking the most important allies that we need in order to keep America safe at home and abroad for granted.

Andrea Chalupa:

And I think it's a very dangerous slope they've been headed down and I'm shocked it has gone this way. I did not see this coming. I had a lot of frustrations with Obama's foreign policy. We've talked about that a lot on this show. You can go back to an earlier episode we did this year where I was cheerleading the Biden foreign policy. I was always under the impression that all the support, all the strength that Obama should have shown for Ukraine and refused to during his time in office, that Biden was fighting for that, and that Biden knew Putin, for instance, and Biden knew what to say to Ukraine about how their own corruption could be weaponized against them. I'm just shocked that they, totally, are just missing the mark again and again, and making all of these mistakes that aren't even mistakes. It's just, they're ramming through America's interests and steamrolling others, and it's just abusive. And it's going to backfire on us spectacularly if this continues.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, and it's not good for Americans. It's not good for American interests because it severs our diplomatic ties. It's only good for these oligarchs and plutocrats who are the same people that the Trump administration had been supported by and were protecting through their willingness to rewrite the law to make a crime a "not crime" simply by deeming it as such by these abuses of power. And in many ways, the actions of the Biden administration feel like a continuum of the international geopolitical design that the Trump administration had. Like you said, it's all rhetorically framed differently. The way they deliver the message is different. They're not being, in most cases, openly xenophobic or openly treasonous or anti-American or so forth. It's slicker, it's smoother, but it's still dangerous. And when we talked for the last, you know, five years, when Trump was running and certainly when he was in office, about how that

was a transnational crime syndicate masquerading as a government, we were referring to decades of infiltration of institutions by mafia actors, by people involved in white-collar crime and organized crime and state corruption, and how that had blurred over time and with the loosening of laws to the point that it's a big gray area.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's somewhat difficult to prosecute, although you should obviously have the will to do so if you're interested in protecting America's national security and sovereignty, but it's also insidious. And we warned that whoever was going to become the president in 2020 would have to just shovel this massive amount of shit that had piled up not just during the Trump administration, but for decades on end. And that whoever needed to come in needed to be an anti-corruption, anti-kleptocracy warrior. That's why we wanted Elizabeth Warren. We ended up with Biden. We did not expect him to be as good, but we expected him to fulfill baseline objectives of protecting America, being on the side of democracy, being on the side of human rights to the extent that the US ever is—which has never completely, you know, we've always been hypocrites in this regard, but we were hoping for some improvement over Trump.

Sarah Kendzior:

A lot of what's happened under Trump, of course, was specifically Russian mafia crime and affiliated actors—people like Paul Manafort who were working for Kremlin oligarchs, were working for the Russian mob—and, of course, Trump's full inner circle working for the Russian mob; Felix Sater, Michael Cohen, Tillerson getting an award from Putin himself in 2013. It was a very Russia-oriented administration, although obviously was also working in tandem with the worst actors from Israel, from Saudi Arabia, from the UAE. It was not purely Russia, but Russia was the dominant force. One thing I had concerns about with Antony Blinken, and we raised these concerns, the episode I believe is called, [Stop Trying to Make the Russian Reset Happen](#). This was in June. We did a Blinken-centered episode where Andrea went into his own corrupt ties, his work as a lobbyist for all of these horrible groups; Facebook, Blackstone, Boeing, et cetera.

Sarah Kendzior:

I talked about his family history and I was very clear you don't judge an individual by what the actions of their family members did unless you participated in them. And there was no indication, and still there's no indication, that Blinken was involved in the activity of his stepfather, Samuel Pizar, who raised him and who was the lawyer for Robert Maxwell. And if you've read my book or listened to this show, you know who Robert Maxwell is. He was the Mossad agent/UK publishing tycoon/partner of the Russian mafia—in particular Semion Mogilevich for whom he procured a passport in the late 1980s—who died mysteriously in 1991 after falling off (or being pushed off) a yacht. The last person to see Robert Maxwell alive was Anthony Blinken's stepfather, Samuel Pizar, who himself was a diplomat, a political figure.

Sarah Kendzior:

He worked in the Kennedy administration but mostly was hanging in with Robert Maxwell. He was, in fact, the person who gave the Kaddish at Maxwell's Israeli state funeral. This is a very close friend. He undoubtedly knew what Robert Maxwell was actually doing. Maxwell liked to pose as this big publishing magnet, a kind of, you know, rival to Rupert Murdoch. He was a Mossad agent working for the mafia and Blinken's stepfather knew this, and continued to both befriend him and represent him anyway. And it did not end there. And this is what I'm wondering about, which is that after Robert's death, his daughter, Ghislaine Maxwell of course, went on to work with Jeffrey Epstein in their massive global child rape

trafficking operation where they would basically kidnap girls and force them to sexually service people like Prince Andrew, Ejjoud Brach, allegedly Alan Dershowitz.

Sarah Kendzior:

I mean, you know the Epstein story. We've covered it many times. This is Robert Maxwell's daughter, who was the partner in this. And who was representing Epstein as a lawyer when he was dealing with, oh, say, the French government? Oh, hey! It's Samuel Pizar! Antony Blinken's stepfather was the liaison between Jeffrey Epstein and the French government. And we'll post that article, which is in French, in the show notes so that you know I'm not making this up. What I worried about with Blinken's appointment, because as I said, there's no indication he was involved in the Maxwell-Epstein activity himself, but when your stepfather, when a person very close to you, was involved in that activity, it makes you vulnerable. It makes you vulnerable to blackmail. It makes you vulnerable just by the ties that you have forged. And it just seems like this is not an ideal person to be put in the Secretary of State role unless he's willing to just be transparent about everything and talk about it.

Sarah Kendzior:

Of course, no one asked him about this during the confirmation hearings. You know, I think it would have been worth bringing up just as a conflict of interest, but this is a subject that Congress 100% refuses to touch. And I think that they should be looking into Maxwell and Epstein in its own right, but I think it is worth asking. This is quite a coincidence here that we have Blinken as the Secretary of State and we are basically fulfilling a Kremlin wishlist through the actions of the Biden administration and its foreign policy.

Andrea Chalupa:

And the way they're doing that is by weakening American alliances. Look at this latest example of pissing off the French, the rushed withdrawal of Afghanistan that threw our allies on the ground—like the Brits— into a panic that had a scramble to keep up with what the Americans were doing and the dangers that they were putting British nationals and their allies on the ground in. So please understand that an unreliable America under Biden, a destabilizing America under Biden, that weakens the Western Alliance, which we desperately need to counter and contain Putin's aggression, which is worldwide, which is in our own backyard with what the Kremlin is doing to prop up Cuba—there's no accident that Havana syndrome started there—prop up Maduro in Venezuela who is so corrupt and cruel that he's created a refugee crisis in Venezuela that rivals Syria and so forth. So a destabilized Western Alliance is what Putin wants because it weakens accountability for Putin. And that is what is going on so far in Biden's first year of foreign policy under his lobbyist, Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, and directly related to that is a new item, a new news item that just came out today, which is that the European Court of Human Rights has finally taken action on the assassination of Russian dissident, Alexander Litvinenko, by Kremlin agents in 2006. And this assassination happened in the UK. They ruled that "Russia was responsible for the assassination of Litvinenko in the UK." This supports a 2016 inquiry showing that Russian agents poisoned Litvinenko at a London hotel bar. This is the infamous spiking of tea with polonium. And so for those who don't know Litvinenko, he was a very, very outspoken critic of the Kremlin, in particular of Putin himself, and that is why he went into exile. And during that time, in November, 2006, on his deathbed, he said, "You may succeed in silencing one man, but the howl of

protest from around the world where we reverberate, Mr. Putin, Putin in your ears for the rest of your life.”

Sarah Kendzior:

Litvinenko went on and made a number of statements before he passed that were quite revealing. He was speaking about Semion Mogilevich. Again, this is the Russian mafioso who Robert Maxwell was assisting and who was once on the FBI's Top 10 Most Wanted list before James Comey removed him. This is somebody who is linked to the whole Trump mafia network. He was saying that Mogilevich had been working with Al-Qaeda and had been helping supply them with weapons. This was before 9/11. He also said that Putin showed pedophilic tendencies, and in 2017, a UK court ruled that the pedophile allegation was what prompted Putin to personally target Litvinenko for assassination. There had been a photo, the publication of which went somewhat viral on the internet, of Putin kissing a young boy's stomach.

Sarah Kendzior:

And then this is from *The Daily Beast*. It says, “Litvinenko claimed this display of affection was the first public sign of a secret that had long been known by some within the KGB. He said Putin had been denied a place in foreign intelligence as a young recruit ‘because shortly before his graduation, his bosses learned that was a pedophile. Many years later, when Putin became the FSB director and was preparing for the presidency, he began to seek and destroy any compromising materials,’ Litvinenko wrote. Among other things, Putin found videotapes in the FSB internal security directorate which showed him ‘making sex—this is a quote from Litvinenko—’with some underage boys.’ After saying this, Litvinenko was killed.” And so again, you see this continuity with child rape and trafficking being used by espionage agents, being used in international affairs. It's grotesque, it's horrifying, and it's not fully investigated.

Sarah Kendzior:

And, you know, just to add one last point. 2006 was a critical year in the ramping up of Russian aggression toward the EU, toward the UK, and toward the US. It was the year they killed journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who had been critically covering the war in Chechnya. It was the same year that Kremlin agent Paul Manafort moved into Trump tower even though he had known Trump for several decades beforehand. It was the same year that mafia adjacent actor—as the lawyer for my publishing company had me call him—Felix Sater brought Ivanka Trump and Don Jr. to the Kremlin where they sat in Putin's chair and engaged in some, you know, interesting activity over there. It was a year that seemed like a big operation was ramping up. And, you know, it was ramping up in the UK and the UK refused to take it seriously.

Sarah Kendzior:

They refuse to see it as a threat, and now it seems like they're continuing to do so while the EU—while the European Court of Human Rights—is taking this very seriously as a threat. And I think it's interesting that this ruling was released right after the pact—the UK, US, Australian pact that has alienated not just France, but other EU countries, including countries that are vulnerable to Russian aggression, because they're closer to the border—that it happened at the same time. I mean, it could be a complete and total coincidence, but it really brings home who is fighting off Kremlin aggression, mafia aggression, and so forth, and who is deciding to have that Kumbaya moment with the mafia, look the other way, cross off items on Putin's wishlist and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa:

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Sarah Kendzior:

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Andrea Chalupa:

We also encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Afghanistan. Donate at rescue.org. And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to The Orangutan Project at theorangutanproject.org. Gaslit Nation is produced by Sarah Kendzior and Andrea Chalupa. If you like what we do, leave us a review on iTunes. It helps us reach more listeners. And check out our Patreon. It keeps us going. You can also subscribe to us on YouTube.

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Andrea Chalupa:

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