

Gaslit Nation Transcript

25 October 2023

“Warnings from the Iraq War”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/warnings-from-91608153>

[opening clip]

Donald Trump (00:00):

A lot of the horrible things... The world is exploding. If you take a look, I mean, the whole world is exploding. I was very honored. There's a man... Viktor Orbán. Did anyone ever hear of him? He's probably, like, one of the strongest leaders anywhere in the world. And he is the leader of... Right? He's the leader of Turkey.

[end opening clip]

Andrea Chalupa (00:27):

Hey everyone, welcome to *Gaslit Nation*. It's Andrea Chalupa, your host. I am the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*. The film the Kremlin and its proxies don't want you to see, so be sure to watch it. So we're going to start off... If you're looking for a ringtone, might I suggest this audio clip of Jenna Ellis crying?

[begin audio clip]

Jenna Ellis (00:52):

If I knew then what I know now, I would have declined to represent Donald Trump in these post-election challenges. I look back on this whole experience with deep remorse for those failures of mine. Your Honor, I have taken responsibility already before the Colorado BAR, who censured me, and I now take responsibility before this court.

[end audio clip]

Andrea Chalupa (01:10):

Very positive development. And I'll have as well that I talk to someone connected to a lawyer in the DOJ who works on national security, who's going to be moving to Jack Smith's team in January to work on the classified intel investigation, you know, where Trump was keeping all of our national secrets, including nuclear secrets, while we're at a time when Russia is threatening us with nuclear war, at Mar-a-Lago, a viper's den of Russian espionage. So that, too, is heating up. The big Jenna Ellis plea deal where she becomes the fourth co-defendant to plead guilty, admitting to aiding and abetting false statements for a reduced sentence, that is very much the news tightening on Giuliani and maybe even eventually Trump. So, again, our constitution allows people who are indicted to continue to run for president. We don't know what would happen if he were to go to prison. Regardless, we're all going to stay vigilant on all of this and fight like hell to secure our democracy in 2024.

Andrea Chalupa (02:13):

We have no choice. The freedom for us here at home depends on that. The protection, the independence of what's left in our court system depends on that. And obviously democracies around the world depend on that, including Ukraine. So, yeah. So I want to start, also, with a very sad announcement. As you know, Sarah and I have both been struggling with people in our close loved ones in our immediate families who are seriously ill. It's been something that has been going on for a very long time now for both of us since writing what's on the wall, definitely for me in January of this year. It's been very, very hard to do that and juggle everything else, including the show. Sarah responded to this difficult personal time by taking a step back from the show. So her step back was indefinite, now it's permanent. She's going to be focusing on her books and her Substack.

Andrea Chalupa (03:06):

She has a free Substack that you can subscribe to. I strongly urge you to do that. And I want to send a thank you to her on behalf of myself and the team. We've gone through hell together. Many of our episodes, including the one where we announced a pre January 6th coup special called "Traitors and Patriots", many of our episodes together, clinging hands, covering some of the darkest chapters in American history, many of those episodes belong in the Smithsonian. I'll forever be grateful to her for what we built together during some of the most difficult times in our lives. The intense harassment my sister faced from the Russians and the Kremlin, the phone calls I'd get at odd hours from my mom over the stress, the extraordinary PTSD that caused several members of my family to the point where my sister had to relocate abroad.

Andrea Chalupa (03:52):

Sarah stuck by me through the immense hell of that, and I'll never, ever, ever, ever have anything but love for her. We grinded it out together, week after week after week. And that's not easy. It takes a toll and it's hard. It's extremely hard, especially trying to write books or having two maternity leaves; two babies came out during that time for me. And so it was five extraordinary years where I think both of us, we had our voice. We knew that our voices should not be taken for granted and that we're morally obligated to use the power of our voice, especially during this dark time. And we did that together. And I am so, so tremendously proud of the work we did together and I look forward to reading her books, letting you know when she has a book coming out on the show coming forward.

Andrea Chalupa (04:39):

And obviously she's going to be missed. The team and I are going to continue to fight like hell for our democracy. We all are parents. We're trying to create a sustainable, livable future for our children. We understand that securing democracy here at home is not just important for us, for our kids, but also for democracies all over the world because we're dealing in a time, again, of fascism versus democracy. It's the 1930s dynamic all over again. So yes, *Gaslit Nation* will continue. Yes, we're going to continue to pour our hearts out into making the show. And yes, we're going to get these war criminals on the rope and demand accountability for them and their useful idiots wherever they may be in the world. And so as part of that, I hope you'll join me at the Thursday phonebank with Sister District at 6:00 PM Eastern.

Andrea Chalupa (05:25):

I will be there. I look forward to that. There will be a quick training. It is extraordinarily empowering picking up the phone and calling a stranger. Most people are not home. It's a numbers game. You've just got to go through your list. And the people you do get on the phone, either they don't have time, they hang up, no big deal. If you want to build anything in this world, whether it's getting a film off the ground or starting your own business, whatever it may be, you have to risk people hanging up on you. So that will happen obviously when you're phonebanking for democracy. But the people you do get on the

phone, they need help. They genuinely need help. They're busy, they're dealing with a lot. They need to be reminded where their polling place is. So those are the people we're going to be reaching together.

Andrea Chalupa (06:04):

So if you feel any sort of intimidation or reluctance to go, just go dip your toe in the water, get a little warmed up, warm up your voice a bit with me and let's just try it out together. Virginia matters because if we allow Virginia to slide further into the far right, it could be the next Missouri, it could be the next Ohio. So I hope to see you Thursday at 6:00 PM. And then another thing I want to draw your attention to: there is an extraordinary series on what happened to the Oslo Accords. I'm going to link to at the top of the show notes and we're going to be playing a sample of it later in this episode. And as always, yes, we're going to be touching on the crisis in the Middle East; Israel and Palestine. If I get anything wrong, if there needs to be added context or if you just want to vent, because I'm going to be venting here about bringing all of this news analysis.

Andrea Chalupa (06:47):

So if there's anything I fall short on, please join the conversation. Leave comments on Patreon, Instagram Threads, BlueSky, Mastodon, Post. Wherever you are, I'll find you. Or email gaslitnation@gmail.com. I want to hear from you because obviously this is a big time of grief. There's a lot to make sense of. And the videos, the footage, everything that's been coming out is just getting harder to process. It makes it harder to face the day sometimes, but we're going to be doing that together as we continue this discussion. And I will be reading some comments we received on the last very raw episode. And I thank everyone for keeping your comments civil. I know how hard that might be. I'm sure many of us—I know I am—we're dealing with friends, very dear friends, people who we are emotionally dependent on who feel a certain way about Israel and Palestine.

Andrea Chalupa (07:38):

And it may not be the way we feel at all. And they may bring us stories, they may make claims that we could easily fact check because we know; we've been covering the story very closely. And I want to just tell you from my own experience, as long as that friend isn't cheerleading the mass murder of innocent people and civilians, because that's how you know to stay on the right side of history is you always, always ground yourself in, Who are the most vulnerable people here? It's the civilians. It's the civilians of Gaza stuck under a terrorist regime backed by Russia. It's the civilians of Israel, many of them leading the most historic, largest protests against a wannabe autocrat aligned with Russia whose demagoguery made Israel vulnerable to the worst attack on Jewish life since the Holocaust. It is the civilians trapped under corrupt, brutal regimes.

Andrea Chalupa (08:36):

It is the civilians. So if you have a friend who, as long as they're not cheerleading the loss of innocents, but if they're just venting to you, if they're confused, if they hold one side... If they clearly align with one side over the other but they're not celebrating the mass murder of their so-called enemy, because that's where you'd want to draw a line, but if you have a friend that feels a certain way, I would caution to resist fact-checking that person at this time even though the facts are on your side. Because what I'm seeing in my personal life, especially given the assassination of a Jewish leader, there are people who are genuinely scared out of their minds right now and genuinely scared for their children right now. And so it's hard. It's hard because you have friends who are coming to you and they just are venting and venting and venting, and you might know things.

Andrea Chalupa (09:24):

It's not the time to fact check them. I'm just telling you from my own experience. Don't make the mistake I did where I tried to fact check a friend who just needed me to be a friend and shut the hell up and let

them grieve. So it's okay. You're not betraying the truth. The truth is the truth. I made a whole film about how the truth cannot be killed. The truth is the truth. The truth is powerful beyond all measure, the truth is the truth. So just let people right now who feel a certain way about this come to you because you are historically their emotional rock, their emotional support, and they've been that to you historically. So just let people grieve. And I know it's hard. Save the fact checking for another day. Just be a safe place for the friends in your lives who now suddenly feel in this post-October 7th world, whatever side they fall on, that they are now walking around with a target on their head.

Andrea Chalupa (10:13):

So just be a safe place for those who need it right now and don't lose friendships over this if you can avoid it. It's very clear online who among us online is watching videos coming out of one atrocity versus the other, whereas I think our moral obligation—if we're up for it, if we're mentally/emotionally in a place where we can handle it—I feel sort of, personally speaking, a sense of moral obligation to watch videos from not only the disgusting ISIS level attack and the gleeful pride those Hamas terrorists felt killing children in front of their parents, killing parents in front of their... [crying] You know... We all saw it. We all saw it. And at the same time, I'm looking into the eyes of little girls in Gaza who are suddenly orphaned, who are suddenly orphaned and it's not even over yet. It's not even over yet for them.

Andrea Chalupa (11:10):

And I'm staring into the eyes of these videos of these Gazans that are trapped. And I understand Hamas is a terror regime. I understand Hamas has no credibility and they're giving up these hostages—four so far—because there's some return for them. There's some guarantees they need for them. And they have babies, they have elderly, they have people that need real medical care. Okay? So Hamas is the worst. I understand that. But I also understand that Israel is an immense danger, even before October 7th, and that's something we need to pay attention to. This is so critical. So I'm going to read the words of a special guest we're going to have on the show today, the Pulitzer Prize winning historian, Anne Applebaum, the author of essential books; *The Gulag* as well as *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*, a book that cites my grandfather's testimony to a researcher in the US Congress's investigation into the Holodomor, Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa (12:10):

I had no idea my grandfather even gave testimony to the US Congress in their investigation until Anne Applebaum's book. She cites it in Chapter 11. It's extraordinary. And thanks to her book, I got to get the original footage. So Anne Applebaum and I worked with the same researcher and historians. The same researchers that helped me on *Mr. Jones* assisted Anna Applebaum in her book, and they gave me the audio of my grandfather's congressional testimony and I got to hear his voice all these decades later... My safe place in the world. So I'll forever be grateful to Anne and I'm thrilled that she's going to be on the show. She and I sat down for an interview the Friday before the historic Polish election, which saw a coalition finally unite together and defeat the Trumpian far-right threat in Poland, which had packed the courts, taken over the state media created an atmosphere of hate and violence towards LGBTQ+ people, towards refugees, and they finally were defeated through the power of coalition.

Andrea Chalupa (13:18):

So this conversation, this next conversation you're going to hear was recorded then. I did not run the show earlier due to the war that broke out between Israel and Hamas. So this interview was supposed to run two weeks ago. We're going to have an excerpt of it now. But I want to share from a recent piece that Anne wrote in *The Atlantic* on her recent reporting trip to Israel. I'm going to read this now: "When I asked people why they had sacrificed their time to join a protest movement, they told me it was because they feared Israel could become not just undemocratic, but unrecognizable, unwelcoming to them and

their families. But they also talked about a deeper fear that Israel could cease to exist at all. The deep angry divides in Israeli politics, divides that are religious and cultural, but that were also deliberately created by Netanyahu and his extremist allies for their political and personal benefit, weren't just a problem for some liberal or secular Israelis."

Andrea Chalupa (14:18):

"The people I met believed the polarization of Israel was an existential risk for everybody." And I'll link to that in the show notes. And I want to say they were right. They were right. Netanyahu... So I want people to understand: There's the government of Israel and then there's the Israeli people. Okay? So the issue now here is that the polling in Israel overwhelmingly shows that Israelis blame Netanyahu and his government for the horrific Hamas atrocities. Netanyahu built up whole mythology around himself just like Trump had that Mark Burnett glossed over "you're fired" *The Apprentice* Ivanka in a business suit mini glamor about him where he pretended to be an actual businessman instead of some Ponzi scheme, Netanyahu had that same mythology around him, where he was Mr. Security. He was going to keep Israelis alive. Remember, if you watch *The US and the Holocaust*, that extraordinary series on PBS—it's available for free on PBS—

Andrea Chalupa (15:24):

You'll see that during the 1930s, Jewish refugees were turned away. People blamed the Jews for what was being done to them in Germany. The average American polled wanted nothing to do with rescuing the millions of Jews that were being sent to concentration camps that were being built out in the open, right? And so Israel exists as self-defense. And Netanyahu gave a promise that he's this strongman. He's tough. He's surrounding himself with people that aren't afraid to get their hands dirty and fight and do what needs to be done, whether it's politically correct or not. He built up this whole mythology and Israelis voted for that again and again. So he became Israel's longest serving prime minister. Israelis voted for that. But then what he did over time with his Trumpian tactics, he would scream against any opposition as "traitors", as "the deep state", as "fake news".

Andrea Chalupa (16:19):

He used the whole Trumpian playbook and he aligned himself with Putin, campaigning with giant billboards of himself and Putin. That won votes for him in Israel, okay? And he openly was attacking the court. He openly was attacking the court and he was at war with the security forces with the reservists. So the whole crisis was if Netanyahu turns this into a dictatorship, then what's going to happen? People are going to be demoralized, they're going to be at war with each other, and Israel's enemies are going to take advantage of that. And that is what happened. But the danger now, with the majority of the Israelis polled, they want Netanyahu gone after the war is over. Do you understand the danger in that, that the Israeli people wait until this war is over to get rid of Netanyahu? Do you think Netanyahu, who's been trying everything to stay in power, including attacking the very independence of Israel's judiciary, do you think Netanyahu, who's under investigation for corruption... Do you understand he's not going to have an incentive?

Andrea Chalupa (17:20):

A man who has a long track record of being driven by his own greed, his own ego, his own personal interests, you're taking away his incentive of ever ending this war, and he's already telling us to expect a long war. 10 years. And there's reporting that Biden's team sees zero plan for what Netanyahu wants to do with Gaza. By their own admission, Netanyahu/the Israeli army has lobbed over 6,000 bombs into Gaza, an area just twice the size Washington, DC, in less than a week. And I want to tell you something: I just spoke with a military expert, someone who had done several tours of duty in Iraq and started off as a young man in Vietnam and had worked at the Pentagon and I talked to him about, What is Israel's

strategy other than war crimes? And there's so many human rights organizations, from Doctors Without Borders to Human Rights Watch, to Amnesty International, all saying the same thing.

Andrea Chalupa (18:14):

There's indiscriminate bombing of civilians trapped in Gaza. The number of civilians killed in Gaza far exceeds those that were brutally tortured and murdered on October 7th. There's no proportionality here, it's just a scorched earth campaign of destruction. This military expert I spoke with was really struggling to come up with what the military strategy was. He could say, "Well, it could be to prepare for a ground invasion," which is going to be extremely costly to IDF soldiers. It's extremely costly to go into Gaza where Hamas has probably one of the most sophisticated tunnel systems in the world, unlike anything the US has ever had to go up against, including in Vietcong. It's like... That's going to cost even more in Israeli lives. Do you really want that? No. No, absolutely not. And more people are going to die. More people are going to suffer. So what about the hostages?

Andrea Chalupa (19:09):

How do we free them? How do we free them? Obviously, Hamas has zero good faith. And even though more and more people are raising their voices for a ceasefire, even some paying the price of being disinvited to speaking engagements or being demoted, as happened to one power agent at CAA, the big Hollywood talent agency, even though people are speaking out, demanding a ceasefire, calling what Israel's doing a genocide—because Israel, as has been reported, has used genocidal language and [I'll link to a Guardian piece outlining that](#). The most important thing here is just to end the cycle of violence. End the cycle of violence. And if you want to talk about how we got here, we're going to play a clip now from that three-part series from that Oslo podcast. And you're going to hear now from Jan Egeland, who was Deputy Foreign Minister of Norway in the early 1990s, who had a driving role in the secret negotiations that led to the Oslo accords.

Andrea Chalupa (20:08):

He outlines here how we went from the Oslo accords, which were an interim agreement where the Palestinians and the Israelis agreed to finally talk to each other. That was what Oslo represents; both sides finally agreed to talk to each other, where for a very long time it was illegal for Israelis—for anyone in Israel—to go talk to the PLO. And so they agreed to talk to each other. They created a framework for that conversation, and they set a deadline of May, 1999, where they were going to establish a plan towards implementing greater freedoms, greater peace for both sides where they can live together in tolerance. They don't have to like each other, but they can live together with shared dignity. So now you're going to hear from one of the chief negotiators in that plan on where things went wrong.

[\[begin audio clip\]](#)

Interviewer (20:55):

Coming onto that perpetual conflict, obviously the diplomatic process is stalled to say the very least at the moment. Do you think now, with all your experience, do you think this conflict can be solved?

Chief Negotiator (21:05):

It can. Historically, all wars end. The 30 war ended after 30 years. The 100 year war after a hundred years. So this will end somehow and it will end with political agreements. But what's heartbreaking is that it's not easier now than it was 30 years ago in 1993. It's more difficult than when we did not succeed, when we failed in the 1990s. Many more illegal settlements, hundreds of thousands or more settlers on Palestinian-occupied soil, even more Palestinian refugees far away, third, fourth, fifth

generation of refugees. So a more complex issue, more bitterness between the two sides. The leaderships are not at all of the same quality in terms of being able and willing to make peace talks. The Palestinian leadership is split, weak, old, and the Israeli government is full of extremists. There's no other way of explaining these types who are encouraging violent settlers to beat up Palestinian women and children. This is the leadership now. So one of the lessons I think is we could not have a secret channel arm between the two sides because they would be unable and unwilling to talk. The only chance now is a forceful muscular mediation led by the United States.

[end audio clip]

Andrea Chalupa (22:35):

And now you have Biden, who has not called for a ceasefire yet. And I want to be clear that the ceasefire has to happen because far too many civilians are being killed. It's collective punishment now. It's illegal by international law standards. There's international law of warfare, and you have to ask yourselves, be honest with yourself. Yes, Israel has a right to defend itself, but it does not have a legal right to commit war crimes. And on top of that, if Ukraine did what Israel was doing, do you think Ukraine would continue to get support from the international community? So if you care about the future of Israel, if you have any special connection to Israel, it is absolutely in your best interest that Israel protects its standing with the global community, because already the horrific videos and images coming out of Gaza are dividing the global alliance to protect countries like Ukraine and to secure global support for Israel.

Andrea Chalupa (23:32):

It's undermining Israel's own cause for freedom and protection and fighting Hamas. The war crimes need to stop on the Israeli side. There needs to be a ceasefire, not because it plays into whatever the hell Hamas wants, but because it protects Israel, it protects Israeli democracy, it protects Israel's future. Trust me as an American that watched as my country became a pariah on the world stage with Iraq and Afghanistan and the Pandora's box of terrorism that unleashed on the world, this war is being used by Netanyahu, a callous man, to try to stay in power, who was already hurting Israel before this crisis started, whose own corruption drove towards this crisis, whose own propping up of Hamas to sideline moderate Palestinians led to October 7th. Okay? That's all documented by Israeli analysts in the show notes for this episode. I'm going to now pause for a minute and read responses from listeners to last week's episode.

Andrea Chalupa (24:30):

Thank you to everyone for keeping your comments civil, given how much so many people are hurting inside, especially if they have any connection to what's going on over there, to the war. So the first listener wrote in, "Andrea, Hamas literally has the genocide of the Jewish people written into their first charter. Israel tries to avoid civilian deaths, but Hamas is using civilians as human shields. What is happening to the Palestinians is not a genocide but a war crime that Hamas is deeply complicit in. Don't use the term genocide so flippantly." So I'm going to answer that in this next segment. Another listener wrote in, "And the answer is a ceasefire before Israel can even get the hostages back, much less exterminate Hamas, I mean the freedom fighters." Yeah, so you're referencing... I don't agree, obviously, to some idiots on the far left who have no moral consistency, who try to romanticize Hamas' disgusting terrorism.

Andrea Chalupa (25:24):

Those same useful idiots on the left also call Ukraine... Whatever the hell they say about Ukraine, but they're the fake anti-imperialist left. They have no moral consistency. So, no, that's not what we're saying

here. Then another comment that we received says, “I too struggle with how to talk about this topic. It seems that power players of the world have crafted the global discussion to where it is impossible to just look at people killing others and want to focus on stopping it. If we take a side, we risk the other side thinking we want them dead. If we don't take a side, then both sides can accuse us of wanting them dead. And that approach leaves no room in the discussion for any conversation other than a divisive one. Global power players, 1, those who want people to stop killing each other, zero.” Yeah, and I think on the genocide question, obviously there's a whole legal process to figure that out, but it is reported—

Andrea Chalupa (26:20):

and again, look at the show notes to this—that there's genocidal language being used on the Israeli side. And again, look at the show notes. It's not just the fact checking that went into this episode, but also resources/ideas on how to move forward, from experts who have covered this conflict for years and voices to amplify that are on the ground there. Thank you everyone who submits your comments, and I will continue reading everything that people are writing on this crisis as it continues. So I will repeat what I said in the last two episodes: The extremists on both sides, the extremists of both sides, the extremists are the ones that are genocidal towards each other. It's the extremists and the civilians are the ones who are caught in the middle. It's the civilians that are paying the price. And that's why we expect Israel to be the one to abide by international law because Hamas has absolutely zero credibility, where Israel still has credibility despite Netanyahu, because Israel has strong institutions.

Andrea Chalupa (27:23):

Israel is a democracy. Israel has freedom of the press, even though there are journalists there that feel a sort of censorship there and harassment by extremists for speaking out for peace. So because Israel has greater credibility in this situation, in this crisis, we expect more from Israel. Hamas has no credibility. So there has to be a ceasefire. It needs to stop. Because remember, just sending in those aid trucks is like putting a bandaid on a genocide. And that's not playing into Hamas. There are other ways to negotiate. I'm going to link to an article at the top of the show notes from an expert, an Israeli who worked on previous negotiations with Hamas, who outlines solutions on the way forward on how to pressure Hamas. And of course the US has to play a key role in that and the US has to pressure Qatar to kick out Hamas leadership from that country and further isolate Hamas leadership and so on.

Andrea Chalupa (28:16):

So there's all sorts of ways to pressure Hamas to get those hostages released, including the children who are traumatized, including children that were not only kidnapped—Israeli children that were not only kidnapped—but they're being held by terrorists in a tunnel system that one of the hostages who was let free described as spidery. How dark and disgusting and dangerous must those tunnel systems be? So these children watched their own parents be killed, probably in front of them. The last sights they had of home was sheer terror, and now they're being held hostage by terrorists. They need to be returned home. But the way you do that is not by indiscriminately slaughtering civilians because that hurts Israel and it is exactly what Netanyahu wants. He wants a long war. And the ground operation of Gaza is going to be a disaster. It is going to just lead to more Israeli lives lost.

Andrea Chalupa (29:08):

So send in special op teams. Support that. Israel, you've made your point. And I know I'm going on and on, but it's just... My heart is breaking. So that's what's oozing out of me right now. In this discussion, you're going to now hear from Anne Applebaum. She describes why we need to fund Ukraine, what the stakes are for the world. And as I mentioned at the start of the show, this discussion was recorded over two weeks ago, so it does not include the current war, but I will finish off by reading an excerpt from her must-read piece in The Atlantic where she writes, “We are too far from a solution right now to even

imagine what that might look like. I can only offer this imprecise thought: Someday, Israelis and Palestinians have to find some way to live next to each other, both relatively prosperous and relatively free in states that they feel at home in.”

Andrea Chalupa (30:01):

“A unified Israel will find it very difficult to ever reach that solution. A divided Israel never will.” I'm going to add to that by saying Netanyahu needs to go. He needs to go now, not until this war is over, because if he does not go now, he will deliberately protract the war just to keep himself in power. We know that. When somebody tells you who they are, believe them. We know who Netanyahu is. He's going to kill more innocent civilians in Gaza. He's going to get Israeli soldiers needlessly killed with his chaos. He's openly at war now with the security forces in Israel. The reports are coming out that he's just being belligerent. Imagine Trump in charge of a delicate hostage situation. That's what we have here in Israel. Netanyahu needs to go now to save countless lives. Too many have been lost now. And Israelis, we need to support their internal struggle for democracy and security and we need to help them come together, Israeli parents and Palestinian parents healing their shared trauma and moving forward, creating a new generation of leaders, coming together with their shared hopes of a livable future.

Andrea Chalupa (31:15):

I live in Brooklyn, New York, in one of the most diverse precincts in all of New York City. I encounter all sorts of parents from all backgrounds on the playground. We are exactly the same when it comes to talking about our kids. As we've seen just with the Oslo Accords, with the Israeli and the Palestinian who famously were at the center of negotiating the Oslo chords, which inspired the play *Oslo*, at the center of that was two men who bonded together in those negotiations as parents, as dads. That's what we need for our future, not just for their kids' sake, but for all of our kids' sake. And now here's Anne Applebaum.

[transition music]

Andrea Chalupa:

First things first: What I'm desperate to talk to you about is Ukraine fatigue. Do you think it exists in the US and Europe and why do you think it's happening if so?

Anne Applebaum (32:08):

I didn't really like the expression Ukraine fatigue, as you can imagine, because it's not as if Ukraine is doing something to us that should make us fatigued. I do think there are several different things going on. One of them is that there were high expectations that Ukraine would achieve more in its counteroffensive this summer. And so there are people who are asking, “How much longer will this go on?” That seems to me legitimate, by the way, actually. It's not unfair to ask that. There is also Russian propaganda, which is designed to increase those anxieties and to make people feel that the war is a waste of time or that it will definitely be lost. You can see online, some of it is directly from Russia and some of it's coming from people who for whatever reason support Russia or the Russian point of view. Thirdly, in the United States in particular there's a very weird thing that's happened, which is the funding for Ukraine has been caught up in a different argument about the budget and about how Congress is run.

Anne Applebaum (33:10):

And I think it's unfortunate. I don't think it's anything to do with Ukraine really, but it's become a political football in a way. I mean, I saw some polling on Ukraine that was done just before that happened. It was done a few weeks ago. It came out, it was paid for by Razom, which is a Ukrainian charity, but it was run

by independent pollsters. And it showed as of a month ago or so the majority of Americans still support Ukraine, still want to help Ukraine, still want Ukraine to win, and the numbers are 60-70%. So there's no evidence that Americans are anti Ukrainian or they want Ukraine to lose or they don't want to continue supporting the country, but there is a whirlwind of other factors that are creating doubts—unfortunate doubts—about US funding. I should say, it's particularly dangerous right now because one of the ways in which Putin is fighting the war is that he is playing for time.

Anne Applebaum (34:09):

So he is saying... He's planning to sort of wait it out until the Western coalition that supports Ukraine falls apart or until Americans are distracted, or maybe until Donald Trump wins the next election. And he's hoping that by doing that he can win the war. And by win, he still means to conquer all of Ukraine. So he's not just talking about occupying the territory that he has now, but continuing the war. He has never given up on that original goal, and I think history has now told us that we should take his goal seriously. When he says his goal is to occupy all of Ukraine, that's what he means, and that he is waiting for the right moment to continue the battle seems to be unquestionable.

Andrea Chalupa (34:58):

What's in it for us as Americans? You see these polls and discussions on the left and on the right in the US saying “land for peace, Ukraine needs to make some sort of compromise. They need to come to the negotiating table. They need to give up on Crimea and Donbas and so on so lives can be saved, so this war can end.” What do you say to that? And what do you say to Americans who are really just saying, “What's in it for me? I need to make sure that I get my social security. I would like to have universal healthcare. I would like to see more investment in climate infrastructure. Why are we giving billions to Zelensky?” So what would you say to those two things?

Anne Applebaum (35:39):

I think those are obviously two separate questions. The trouble with land for peace, there are two important problems. One of them is the one I've just mentioned, which is that there is no evidence that Putin wants to trade land for peace. If there was something we could give him that would make him stop forever, and he would stop fighting and he would say, “Alright, I'm done now. I recognize Ukraine is an independent country. It's my neighbor. Let's open trading negotiations,” iff there were some version of events like that, then maybe we could discuss it. But there is no evidence that he wants to stop. And the danger is that maybe at some point we could negotiate a ceasefire. And what happens after the ceasefire? So he builds up his army once again and he attacks again next year. And so if you want the war to be over, I mean really over, like it doesn't ever start up again, then what you need is a political change in Russia, by which I don't necessarily mean regime change.

Anne Applebaum (36:35):

I'm not talking about democracy or anything like that. You need the Russians to conclude that they can't win, that the war was a mistake, that they'd be better off going home. You need the French to come to the same conclusion that the Soviet Union came to in Afghanistan, or the French came to in Algeria in 1962 when they said, “Right, Algeria is a separate country, not our country, not part of our empire. We're leaving.” And so you need Russia to get to that moment, and then the war will be over. Anything between that, anything less than that, and the war isn't really over. So it's the first problem. The second problem is it's not so much Russian occupation of land that matters, you know, that it matters where on the map the border is drawn. The problem is what's happening to the people in occupied territory, in occupied Ukraine. There are concentration camps being built.

Anne Applebaum (37:25):

There are random murders of people on the street. There have been mass targeted arrests of teachers, local leaders, police, pretty much all the mayors of all the small towns in Eastern Ukraine and eastern occupied Ukraine have been kidnapped, have been disappeared. You also have the phenomenon of kidnapping of children; children are removed from their parents or they're removed from institutions and they're being taken to Russia, Russified, given new names. So you have unfolding in eastern Ukraine and southern Ukraine in the occupied territories, you have unfolding a genocidal regime of a kind that really we haven't seen in Europe since the Second World war. And so you have to ask yourself, are we going to accept that? Is that okay? Are we fine with that happening in that territory, particularly since these are things that have happened in that part of the world before. Those are the two problems with land and peace.

Anne Applebaum (38:17):

Probably the first one is the most serious in that there have to be two sides to any negotiation and right now there is no evidence that there is a Russian partner. There isn't anyone on the other side to negotiate with. I mean, the second question for Americans—again, that answer has two parts. One of the parts is about the nature of the war, and again, what it's for. So why did Putin invade Ukraine? Partly it was his nostalgia for the Soviet Empire that he remembers from his, when he was a young man, he was a young KGB officer, and when he experienced what for him was the tragedy of the fall of the Berlin Wall, wanting to have revenge for that moment. Part of it is the Russian imperialism that Ukrainians have so correctly written about and pointed to, his desire to recreate a Russian empire.

Anne Applebaum (39:05):

But thirdly, the invasion was also, it was an attack on a whole series of institutions that the United States created and a whole series of norms that the United States promulgated and which have been of great advantage to us and to our people and our companies and our allies over the last 60 years. And this is rule of law, the principle that borders aren't changed by force, the idea that human rights are universal, that there are fundamental natural laws that dictate what kinds of rights people have, that all these ideas about how the world is run—UN conventions on human rights, UN conventions on genocide—all of these protections that have created the international community that we live in that the United States led for so long are being directly challenged by Putin. He's saying, "I don't care about your institutions. I don't want to live in an American-led world anymore."

Anne Applebaum (40:00):

"I don't want human rights to be a value that matters to me or matters to anybody else." And the rest of the autocratic world is watching him. China is watching him. Venezuela is watching him. Iran is watching him. Zimbabwe is watching him. Other states who would also like to begin breaking those rules; either invading their neighbors, or in the case of China invading Taiwan, or in the case of oppressing their own people, all of that would be allowable and unleashed if Russia wins this war. So if Russia wins, that's a victory for this new idea of international politics that might always makes right, that there's no such thing as international law, that there's no such thing as decency really in international politics at all. And admittedly, it's an aspiration sometimes more than a reality, but it would establish the idea that the institutions that the United States helped create after the Second World War don't mean anything anymore.

Anne Applebaum (40:53):

And this would have all kinds of repercussions for the United States, for our partners, for Americans working and trading abroad, for our companies that do work in foreign countries, which has an immediate impact on US consumers. So this isn't really just about Ukraine, it's really about... And I should say this war more so than many others. I mean, in some sense, all dictatorships want to change

those rules, but this is a direct challenge to the status quo in Europe. It's a direct challenge to the transatlantic alliance, and it's understood that way by Russia's partners around the world. So that's the first answer to the question. The second answer to the question is when we talk about aiding Zelensky, we aren't sending him dollar bills that he can spend however he wants. We're sending him stuff. We're sending him tanks that are produced in American factories in the Midwest or in the South.

Anne Applebaum (41:47):

We're sending him ammunition that's made in the United States. We're sending him the products. We're sending him things that we have invested in and that are produced by American workers. These are actual... Some of what we're sending him... Actually, so far almost everything that we're sending him are things that have been in warehouses in Nevada or New Mexico or elsewhere in the United States. Some of it was gathering dust, some of it was going to eventually have to be thrown out anyway. We're sending him the material that we already have and that he is using to destroy the Russian army, which would be, in theory, one of our allies. So he has destroyed, already, about half the Russian army using our weapons and our arms made, again, by American workers employed at American factories in the United States of America. That's what we're sending him. And we're doing so in conjunction with European allies who in terms of pure money and cost have sent him more.

Anne Applebaum (42:43):

So this is not something the United States is doing by itself. It's not some whim of Joe Biden. It is America acting in concert with a whole ray of European countries plus allies in Japan, in Australia, in South Korea and all over the world. We are participating with the rest of the democratic world in protecting the rule of law in the world so far as it exists in Ukraine. So I would think of it in those terms. It's not as if the money being used in Ukraine is somehow money that would go to something else in a different way. It's money that's already in the defense budget that's already been spent on building weapons, and we're sending it to the Ukrainians to harm one of our enemies.

Andrea Chalupa (43:23):

Why does it feel like Russia is winning on the home front? You have Matt Gaetz, who spreads a lot of Kremlin disinformation, essentially closing down the House. It's a government shutdown by another name with this Speaker debacle in the House over Ukraine aid. What was central to all this was Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene and others, who are hugely sympathetic to Trump and Putin, trying to block aid to Ukraine. Then you have Twitter, which was a powerful organizing tool for human rights activists and journalists taken over by Elon Musk. And that EU report said that Twitter's become the largest Russian disinformation outlet in the world. And then, of course, you have Trump despite his many indictments leading in many polls against Biden in a general election matchup, and none of his competitors in this Republican primary seem to even make a dent in him, and his movement just keeps steamrolling forward. So it seems that Putin is doing very well on the home front in the US. What are your thoughts on that and what are some ways that our institutions especially should be countering that to protect our democracy?

Anne Applebaum (44:34):

What's happening in Congress is not just about Russia, to be clear. I mean, I think the existence of a small group of very radical Republicans who are opposed to the normal operation of government in the United States has a lot of sources and causes aside from Putin and Putinism. We could start this podcast from the beginning and begin talking about what went wrong in American politics a while ago, and that would probably get us to a set of different answers. It's also true that the government shutdown is not only about Ukraine. It's about other issues. I feel that Ukraine was caught up in it and is sort of accidentally,

unfortunately... I don't know that it's the main issue at stake. I mean, the main issue, as I said, is that Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene and others don't want the United States government to operate smoothly.

Anne Applebaum (45:22):

They're trying to prevent it from functioning. And they have all kinds of reasons why they think that's going to help them personally, that's going to get them re-elected in the districts that they live in and work in. And that's the cause of it. I mean, taking a step back, you're right that there is something broader going on, and that is that, as I said in my previous answer, there is a kind of competition now between the autocratic world and the democratic world. And the autocratic world is willing to use any tools that it can to intervene in our politics in order to achieve their aims. And as I said, they didn't invent American dysfunction. They don't have to. They didn't invent Marine Le Pen's far-right party in France. They didn't invent Viktor Orbán. They don't invent these things, but they do seek to amplify and help them and they do so through the use of their own propaganda.

Anne Applebaum (46:16):

That was what the one piece of evidence that the Mueller investigation produced some years back, showing how they try and play games online. But they also do so through co-opting Western businessmen and Western companies and persuading them to go along. And they do that through... I mean, famously the former Chancellor of Germany became a board member of a German Russian company that was building the Nord Stream II pipeline. So they look for influential people in our societies who they can co-opt into playing their games or going along with them for business reasons. I don't know if that's what happened with Elon Musk. It's one of the guesses. I dunno what his other motivation would be other than that he needs... Maybe he's afraid the Russians will shoot his satellites down. Maybe he needs minerals in Russia, and we know he needs access to markets and other things in China.

Anne Applebaum (47:11):

Maybe that's the explanation for his behavior. I haven't seen that laid out yet. But that's certainly part of the pattern of what the Russians do, and the Chinese in a slightly different way and with slightly different goals do as well. So all of them are interested in finding ways to undermine our political system, increase extremism, to increase polarization, and also to buy off the business community or whatever part of it they can persuade to join them. And they've done so pretty successfully over the years in Europe, in the US, but also all over Africa, all over South America they have exactly the same goals. And while they've been doing this, while, for example, China has bought up an enormous number of media properties in Africa to the extent that they control quite a lot of what's said in broadcast media in Africa, while they've been doing this, we haven't really reacted.

Anne Applebaum (48:02):

We are still playing by some kind of rules of fair play where we can't possibly intervene in somebody else's political conversation, even though they're aiming at us. We don't have the same mentality. We don't push back in the same way. American companies haven't been buying up African media properties or South American media properties. We haven't been thinking about how to reach broadcast audiences in South America or Asia. We don't have the same mentality. Our State Department doesn't think that way. I don't even think our security services think that way. I don't think the CIA thinks that way anymore, even if it once did. We don't think about... It's not about propaganda. It's about how do we reach foreign audiences? What's the right language to talk to them in? What's the right means to reach them? All those tactical questions aren't really part of what the American government does anymore.

Anne Applebaum (48:54):

And so beginning to rethink that, beginning to rethink US messaging, what is our attitude towards media regulation, internet regulation around the world, beginning to think about kleptocracy, how that's regulated, how we can work with other countries, all those things which are both domestic and foreign issues that would help us defend against the new style, the new manner of autocracy, I don't think we have really yet begun to grapple with this yet. I actually testified before the Senate... I guess it was about a year ago, on some of this. And afterwards, people came up to me afterwards and they said, "Well, what you described makes a lot of sense, but we're so far away from either legislatively or even within the Executive being able to recognize and carry out any of these policies." I mean, even just the media piece of it alone, let alone changing the rules to make it, for example, more difficult to launder money in the United States, some of which is done at the state level, some of which is done in ordinary American places like Delaware or South Dakota. We're still pretty far away from understanding how dangerous those weaknesses in our financial system are.

Andrea Chalupa (50:03):

So everything you outlined sounds just common sense brilliance, right? Very obvious. So why don't they have that prioritized? What is going on with American foreign policy over the last 10 years or so that has allowed Russia to make so many inroads to destabilizing democracies and struggling countries and regions around the world? What is our ownership on this problem?

Anne Applebaum (50:35):

I think there's several things going on. I mean, one of them is the sense of the current generation of diplomats and others in the... It's not just this White House, actually. I would say it's broader than that. A sense of lack of confidence, the feeling of failure; the failure in Iraq, the failure in Afghanistan; questioning whether we are even able to do good in other places. You heard this in the Obama administration. There's a version of it in the Trump administration, which is just isolationism. "Let's just go home." And you have that on both political parties using slightly different language; the sense of impossibility. You have in addition to that, partly thanks to the paralysis in Congress, you have a paralysis of the Executive to some degree as well. You have the sense that these are really big changes and we just don't have the bandwidth to do them.

Anne Applebaum (51:28):

We can't break through the bureaucratic mess to make it happen. And I suppose those things combined, the lack of confidence plus the feeling that it's an overwhelming task just to rejigger our foreign broadcasting service to make it more efficient and effective, that those things can't be done. I think it's probably some combination of those things. You mentioned the far left. I mean, there's also the far right. I mean, anybody who does say, "Russia has an information war plan for the United States, why don't we have one for Russia?" Try and say that in a major public forum, and people on the left and on the right will come down, "Oh, you're a NeoCon, or you're a war monger," or you're this or that. I mean, there's a loud domestic audience against any of that. I mean, I think something that has also happened on the left, in particular in the last couple of decades, is that we complain a lot about right-wing Isolationism and America First language and so on, but the left has also become very parochial, inward looking. Our problems are we're fighting at the intra university squabbles about faculty appointments and we don't think anymore about—or the left doesn't think anymore about—what happens in other countries, what's our role? What can we do that's good? What's America's role in the world? I mean, there's been a shrinking, in a way, of interest and engagement. And I think that's a part of the story too. If the politicians felt pressure from the activist parts of their political parties, they would also behave differently.

[outro, theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa (53:11):

Our discussion continues and you can get access to that by signing up on our Patreon at the Truth-teller level or higher. To help people in Maui rebuild after the fires, donate to the Maui Strong Fund at hawaiicommunityfoundation.org. Since Matt Gaetz and the rest of the Kremlin Kaucus went to hurt Ukraine, Ukraine needs all the help it can get as Russia's genocide continues. Donate to Razom for Ukraine at razomforukraine.org. We encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Ukraine, Syria, and 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 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.

Our production manager is Nicholas Torres and our associate producer is Karlyn Daigle. Our episodes are edited by Nicholas Torres and our Patreon-exclusive content is produced by Karlyn Daigle. Original music in Gaslit Nation is produced by David Whitehead, Martin Vissenberg, Nik Farr, Demien Arriaga, and Karlyn Daigle.

Our logo design was donated to us by Hamish Smyth of the New York-based firm, Order. Thank you so much, Hamish.

Gaslit Nation would like to thank our supporters at the Producer level on Patreon and higher...