

Gaslit Nation Transcript

10 January 2024

“The West Must Prepare for a Post-Putin Russia”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/west-must-for-96201770>

[opening clip]

Ali Velshi (00:00:01):

I've lost count of how many times you and I have talked in that period. But there's one conversation that sticks out to me. It was the end of a conversation where I said, “Tim, you can have the conversations you can have and write the books and go on TV, and I can do what I can do. What can most people do to inoculate themselves?” And you gave me a litany of things, including joining voting, running for your city council, supporting and subscribing to your local news. What can people do to inoculate those around them? Because we're finding more and more Americans are believing this lie rather than fewer of them, despite more evidence coming out. What can those of us who believe democracies at stake do for others? How do we have that conversation?

Timothy Snyder (00:00:39):

Yeah, I mean, you and I have the great luxury that we can have this conversation in front of lots of people, but what we all have to be having is the smaller conversations. I was in the Midwest over the holidays. I had some smaller conversations. You have to have small conversations. You have to play the small game. You have to treat this as a kind of... For the next 10 months, 11 months, you have to treat this as a struggle where every little bit matters, where every letter to the editor, every conversation, every subscription, every supporter of a good reporter, all these things are going to matter. Every phone bank, every little thing is going to matter. We have to treat this as—I think, President Biden was right—it's a sacred cause, but the sacred cause doesn't defend itself. It gets defended by a million people doing a million little things.

[opening theme music up and under]

Andrea Chalupa (00:01:29):

Welcome to *Gaslit Nation*. Happy 2024, everybody. It's real. This is happening. There is no escaping the 2024 US election and its massive repercussions for the whole world and human civilization as we know it. This is *Gaslit Nation* and I am your host, Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*; the film the Kremlin doesn't want you to see, so be sure to watch it. And with me today in this very important episode is the world-renowned Russian mafia expert and anti kleptocracy researcher, Olga Laman, of the must-listen-to *Kremlin Files* podcast. Hey, Olga.

Olga Lautman (00:02:18):

Hi. And I just want to add, it's a leap year, which makes everything even more insane.

Andrea Chalupa (00:02:25):

Yeah, it's a leap year. A spooky leap year for 2024. And together, Olga and I are the glam squad that are going to defeat botoxed bitch Putin, with his super solid ping pong table forehead. That man is

nearing death because of all the evil inside of him, rotting him away, and he still makes time for Botox and all that. So Olga and I are in the trenches fighting the good fight in this age of hybrid warfare, which includes disinformation. Just today, useful Kremlin idiot/Kremlin asset (however you want to categorize her) Tulsi Gabbard just announced on X—which the EU found was one of the largest Russian Chinese disinformation platforms—that she's joining forces with apartheid Barbie, Elon Musk, to spread disinformation out into the world. And so that's why, thank God, we've got shows like *Gaslit Nation* and *Kremlin File* and *Black Diplomats* by our friend Terrell Starr that are going to be pushing back against all that, fact checking the nonsense, helping us stay grounded, helping us understand that, you know, believe your eyes, believe your ears, the truth is the truth.

Andrea Chalupa (00:03:38):

And we really are in an existential battle in the world with fascism versus democracy. And there's traitors on the inside. The phone call is coming from inside the house—the House of Congress with Mike Johnson and his Russian ties and so on and so on. So we'll get into all that. In this episode, Olga is going to be walking us through the latest in the major front lines of this war that we're all a part of, that we're all facing. We did not choose this war. We would all like to go on with our lives. Before taping, Olga and I were sharing about how amazing we look because we rested over the holidays. We rested our souls, we caught up on wonderful films and books, at least I did. And we both binged on makeup. And we are not makeup queens, but in this episode, we are.

Andrea Chalupa (00:04:28):

So if you want to see the before picture of what Olga Lautman and I look like at the very start of 2024 and compare it to what we'll look like in late October on the eve of the election, that is an image worth capturing, okay? So if you want to watch this, go over to YouTube to the *Gaslit Nation* YouTube channel. You can see what I'm talking about. We're glowing right now. How long can this glow last? I say forever. I don't want to fight these fascists in misery. I want to fight these fascists in joy. I want to enjoy myself during the fight, and that's what I plan to do. And in this episode, Olga's going to walk us through the latest in the Ukraine war, where we are with that, because that's all of our war right there. We need Ukraine to win.

Andrea Chalupa (00:05:10):

And she's going to walk through why; why it matters to this upcoming election. Keep in mind, the last time Ukraine was so essential to a US election was 2016, and people really didn't want to pay attention to it. They didn't see the connection. Americans notoriously don't care about foreign affairs, especially in a presidential election year. And that is how Paul Manafort, the longtime Kremlin operative inside Ukraine, was able to skate under the radar for so many. And then everyone woke up to this reality, the truth of it, why Ukraine matters in November after the election of 2016. So we're going to go through that. We're also going to look at how Biden's national security team needs to clean house. Who's standing in the way of finally ensuring a Ukrainian victory, which is well within reach? And why might they be doing that? As well as looking at—hopefully if we have time—China. China is making some major moves that we need to pay attention to.

Andrea Chalupa (00:06:06):

And why is China doing that? Why now? So all of this is going to be boiled down to you: the American voter. You may think that, Well, what about my healthcare? What about my rent? What about the fact that we're living in a generation that can't even afford homes anymore? And all of this matters, but understand that it comes down to the global war being between the people wherever they are, whether they're in Ukraine or across Europe or wherever they are in the world, and across North America and so on. It's the people, the civilians versus the oligarchs, the kleptocrats, the super yachts. And they've taken

sides with each other. It's the worst of the American oligarchs and European oligarchs teamed up with the Russian oligarchs and they're trying to dismantle democracy and checks and balances and accountability as we know it so they can further their wealth and live like kings.

Andrea Chalupa (00:06:58):

That's why it matters to you. I know I'm, like, really going off script right here and I want Olga to chime in, but if you go back to Robert Mueller's Iron Triangle speech from 2011, he warned about all this. He's like, "You, the American voter, will see a change where you live. You'll see a rise in the prices of milk." Robert Mueller boiled it down, why the Russian mafia will screw with you, will get to you eventually through their shenanigans on the global stage. And he was right. Part of the driver of inflation today is the fact that we have one of the world's largest wheat exporters—Russia—invading, committing genocide against another large wheat exporter—Ukraine—and that is driving inflation around the world. And then you have Russia's close ally—China—which is also doing its own shenanigans on inflation and so on. So yes, it does come down to you. So blame the dictators that don't need to face elections on this inflation that we're each being hit with and the impact that's having on our budgets, on our homes, and how many Christmas presents we're able to afford this year for our kids. It all comes down to that. What happens over there matters to where you are right now listening to this. And this show's going to walk you through that. First, I'm going to pause here and say hello to my dear friend, Olga.

Olga Lautman (00:08:08):

Hi. That was a great opening. And it is so true because, I mean, look, what we are faced with... I understand everyone has their own hardships, especially post covid. I mean, I don't think this is an American problem, inflation. We are now dropping to like three point something percent, whereas I look at Turkey, it's at like 67% inflation. Imagine living there. But post covid, everything got extremely challenging. And then when you have dictators uniting, of course prices are going to continue going up. I mean, the Biden administration has done a good job at reversing it, but it is not an overnight thing, you know? And if God forbid we get Trump back into the White House, forget the cost of rent and whatnot; we are going to be watching political persecution across this country like what I report in Russia. I've been documenting this for the past decade of what happens when you speak out against the dictator, how you disappear, how your family disappears, and how, frankly, you either go in line with the system or else you will be destroyed by the system.

Olga Lautman (00:09:23):

And this is exactly what Trump attempted to do during his last term when he tried to install a regime that would be loyal to him and break all American laws and go against the Constitution. And now he doesn't even hide it. I mean, people like me are going to really either have to shut up or find a new country to live in because he does not hide that he will go against anyone investigating him, speaking out against him and whatnot. And it will be everything from federal agencies to people/activists who are working on these issues. So it's a very, very important election and thank you for bringing it up. And it is all part of a bigger fight. What is happening in Ukraine is just one piece of the global fight between democracy and these dictator thugs who want to overthrow all international norms and the whole system

Andrea Chalupa (00:10:19):

Yeah, without question. And if you are feeling panicky, because I'm getting letters from listeners freaking out right now, understandably so, and I want to just go back to our opening clip that you heard at the very start of the show. It was Tim Snyder on Ali Velshi on how to fight for democracy. And as Tim Snyder rightfully reminds all of us, and as I've been saying from the very start of the show, the reason why the show even launched and exists, our power matters. Our little acts, however small they may feel, matter.

They're all part of a larger chain of resistance. So if you don't know where to start to take back your power—because again, don't fight back against these fascists and despair, fight back with joy, fight back with enjoying your power—and if you don't know where to start, go to gaslitnationpod.com and check out the Gaslit Nation [Action] Guide.

Andrea Chalupa (00:11:10):

It's been updated for 2024. Just pick a piece there and just go at it. Just have fun. See who you meet along the way. And we're going to be doing all sorts of events throughout the year to bring our community together. And in celebration of that, I want to thank one *Gaslit Nation* listener, as I've been doing every month, giving them a signed copy of our graphic novel, *Dictatorship: It's Easier Than You Think!* And the listener that I'm giving a big fat thank you to is Patreon supporter James, last initials DL. You know who you are, James DL. You're very chatty on our YouTube. You're very chatty on our Patreon. I love you. So you get the signed copy of the *Gaslit Nation* graphic novel because you're a big sweetheart. Thank you for supporting the show. And if you want to support the show as well and keep us going, go to patreon.com/gaslit or pick up a copy of the graphic novel wherever you get your books.

Andrea Chalupa (00:11:58):

And the other thing I wanted to point out, Tim Snyder, who's absolutely brilliant, he wrote a fabulous book, which I'm sure many of our listeners have read, called *On Tyranny: Lessons from the 20th Century*. Tim is an expert on the interwar period. He wrote *Bloodlands*, how Hitler and Stalin influenced each other, those two madmen, how they joined forces launching World War II and they unleashed an unprecedented nightmare of mass murder the world has never seen. And Tim was one of the historical advisors on my film, *Mr. Jones*. He provided signed copies of *On Tyranny* for the cast and crew. Just a generous, beautiful old soul. And in his book *On Tyranny*, he gives the all-important advice to stand out. As an active resistance, stand out. Don't curl up in a fetal position. Don't hide. Stand out. And that's something that, me, as a natural born hermit... Actually, I'm more of an introvert.

Andrea Chalupa (00:12:55):

I'm a writer for a reason. I'd rather be with a book in my writing than putting myself out there, which can feel very unnatural for me at times. But I understand that standing out is needed now because someone needs to be a voice for the extraordinary people across Ukraine who have survived such great odds for generations. Olga and I have been part of that chorus of voices around the world, whether Ukraine was fashionable or not. We've been there during the tough times and we'll continue to be there. And so I want to just share from Tim Snyder what he wrote, because I think it's such an important reminder to all of us. He writes, "Stand out. Someone has to. It is easy to follow along. It can feel strange to do or say something different, but without unease, there's no freedom. Remember Rosa Parks. The moment you set an example, the spell of the status quo is broken and others will follow."

Andrea Chalupa (00:13:47):

So that's what we all need to be doing now, whether it feels comfortable or not, and we're going to be having a workshop at *Gaslit Nation* on Thursday, January 18th at 8:00 PM Eastern. The wonderful Rachel Brody will be there. She's an organizer who helps all sorts of campaigns with their social media strategy. So if you're a social media wallflower, if you are mourning the loss of Twitter, if you want to get the hell off of Twitter, this is the workshop for you. I check all those boxes. So I'll be there hosting it with Rachel Brody. And if you want to sign up for that, just look for the link in the show notes. I'm really excited about it. It's a way for us to jumpstart the year and stand out and raise our voices for people that need us to right now.

Andrea Chalupa (00:14:33):

And that brings us to: Over the holidays, In just five days, Russia targeted Ukrainian civilians with over 430 supersonic missiles and drones, causing mass death and destruction in cities across the country. Some of the victims included an 11-year-old celebrated pianist, a professor of environmental studies and a professional beloved basketball player who competed in European championships and was a beloved popular basketball coach in Lviv. Meanwhile, Russian athletes are getting to compete in the upcoming Olympics. You have North Korea, Iran, China pumping Russia full of ammunition, and being a big ATM machine of all that Russia needs to keep its war machine going. What are we in return doing, Olga, to stop the genocide in Ukraine? I've seen reports online that Ukrainian soldiers are running out of ammunition. They're forced to retreat from positions they've held for several months. Would you say that Russia's now winning and Ukraine is losing? Where are we at this point in the war?

Olga Lautman (00:15:43):

Look, okay, you know better than I that Ukraine will win in the end. I mean, there's absolutely zero Ukrainians, for all those pushing the Kremlin bullshit propaganda of "We need peace talks and negotiations!" Russians want to eliminate all Ukrainians. Ukrainians know what it is like to live under Russian occupation. They have lived under Soviet occupation, under Russian Imperial Empire occupation, and in 2014, they saw a very, very hard reality of what happens when Russia illegally annexed Crimea and set up concentration camps and disappeared Ukrainians and tortured them. And they did the same in Donbas. And I mean, this is... We're nearing 10 years of war. I don't know why our media, it's so hard for them to understand. And they will be, without even, I can put my life on this, remembering two years of war coming up next year, but it is 10 years of war.

Olga Lautman (00:16:48):

The end of February, 10 years ago, is when Russia illegally invaded Ukraine. Since then, there have been countless tortures, kidnappings, executions, thefts of property. They took all the businesses from Ukrainians in Crimea and in Donbas and whatnot. So, I mean, this is something that we need to put an end to. I mean, and we will win. Ukrainians are not going to live under Russian occupation. The problem is at what cost? If the West continues to hesitate like they have been, frankly, I am beyond... I don't even have words for what Europe and the United States are doing the past several months. That means more Ukrainians will die. That's the only difference. Ukrainians will prevail in the end, but it's a matter of how many have to die before Russia gets defeated. And frankly, if the United States and Europe provided more weapons, you know, over the past year, last spring, if Ukraine was fully equipped with tanks and F-16s and everything, we wouldn't even be discussing this.

Olga Lautman (00:18:00):

This war would've been over. Russia would've been defeated, potentially Putin's regime would have collapsed, even though this war is bigger than Putin. This is the whole Russian system and everyone who is part of it, who is conducting this war. So I am extremely disgusted with what I've seen both in the United States and frankly in Europe. Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe. Europeans know that if Ukraine should fall (as Russia has claimed) that Moldova will be next, that the Baltics will be next. Russia has played scenarios of military invasions of the Baltics, of the Suwalki corridor over the past decade. We saw Russia annexing Georgia in 2008. So, I mean, Europe and the United States, hopefully everyone was on holiday and unfortunately with Western mentality, you can't disturb people on holiday. So hopefully now that we are back from holiday, they will wake up and realize that this needs to come to an end.

Olga Lautman (00:19:06):

Because the past week was one of the deadliest weeks that we have seen, with the most missiles falling on Ukrainian cities across the whole country. This could have all been avoided. We didn't have to see

this. I didn't have to be on the phone with one of my friends and listen to missiles exploding in the background. This can be all avoided. We just need Ukraine to get all the weapons and aid they need. As far as progress on the front lines, look, yes, Ukraine will have to retreat from territory that they've been holding and fighting due to lack of ammunition, but it's not at a large scale. Right now, you have frozen grounds in Ukraine. I mean, frankly, until basically the end of April, you can't even start a counter offensive because right now everything is frozen solid. All the trees are bare. So it's more difficult to make progress in the cold winter.

Olga Lautman (00:20:07):

This is when you make preparations and then after that you have all the melting and mud. So it becomes even more difficult in early spring. And then April is when you start seeing any kind of significant movement. So you're going to see this back and forth right now, but not at a large scale. On a positive note, Ukraine has kicked Russia's ass in the Black Sea. They have pushed back Russia's Navy. And mind you, Russia destroyed Ukraine's Navy in 2014 and over the past decade, and Ukraine has been extremely innovative in pushing Russia back, reopening the corridor so they can resume moving grain. But again, for how long will that last? They need weapons and we need to provide weapons because this is the biggest. If we fail with this, we are going to have an unrecognizable Europe and frankly, an unrecognizable world. We are already seeing what happens when we didn't push Russia back when they needed to be [pushed back].

Olga Lautman (00:21:15):

I would go as far as saying in 2007 and 2008. And what happens now with all the dictators globally uniting, and now they are all supplying weapons to each other. They're assisting in atrocities across the globe. And at this rate, they will be preparing their own invasions. And we cannot have an unstable world where one country says, "Look, my neighbor has these resources. I think I'm going to go and move in and take that part of the territory." We can't have that. We have international laws and norms post World War II for a reason, and the West really, really needs to start abiding by them.

Andrea Chalupa (00:21:56):

So George Orwell wrote in his letter to Ukrainian refugees, which became the preface to the Ukrainian translation of *Animal Farm*, and this was all at the end of World War II, George Orwell wrote to these Ukrainian refugees that were one of the earliest batch of Orwell fanatics because they discovered his book over radio and so on, he wrote to them, "The West, the average citizen in a western country, cannot imagine what it is like to live in a dictatorship." There's just a total disconnect. That's why you have so many in the West, especially on the far left/the far right, screaming about how Ukraine just needs to negotiate, Ukraine just needs to give up land for peace and so on. "Why can't Ukraine just stop taking our money and just lay down and die already? Just get this over with. Give Putin his off-ramp to save face and just let him keep the massive amount of land he seized where people are living in the Soviet prison detentions systems and so on."

Andrea Chalupa (00:22:57):

When you live in a kleptocracy, when you live in a dictatorship, there's no rule of law anymore. It is the law of The meanest, biggest, richest dog in the fight wins. So if Putin, if Russia gets Ukraine, what you are essentially doing is letting the whole world operate by those rules: The biggest, the meanest, the richest dog in the fight wins. Do you understand? On a global level, we will all be living by Russia's rules, no matter where we live, no matter where we are in the world, because that emboldened violence is going to breed more violence. And one of the ways they fight their war against us, as we've seen, is through propping up candidates like Trump, by allying with other aspiring autocrats like Orbán in Hungary, who is holding up EU aid to Ukraine right now. There's a new development out today for sort of a Hail Mary

pass to try to circumvent Orbán in the EU. It would be a very bold measure by EU standards, but it's time for that. And given how much money Russia pumped into Brexit, if Hungary doesn't want to play by the EU rules, Hungary should get the hell out. You know what I mean? Why are you in the EU anyway if you'd rather be in Russia's sphere of influence, if you'd rather be aligned with Russia? Get out. And obviously Hungary wants to benefit from the EU being a powerhouse global economy and all that that means, but it's like, they're the ones that should have Brexited.

Olga Lautman (00:24:38):

And to add onto this, people don't have to imagine what it is like living. We got a glimpse of it under the Trump regime. I mean, in the United States, we have laws. We have agencies that have clear insignia identifying who they are. Trump not only wanted to order military on protestors, which is, I mean, unheard of in this country and illegal; he put a whole bunch of thugs that no one could identify. Congress didn't know who they were, no agency knew who they were. I mean, this is not the rule of law we want in this country. And yes, we have our own corruption issues to deal with. But under Trump, he absolutely admires and is obsessed with the Russian system. This is since the 1980s. He went to Moscow in 1987. He went to Leningrad in 1987. And he worshiped that system. He worshiped not only dealing with the mafia, but with that power, where one person can order the murder of someone, or if someone's investigating, get rid of them.

Olga Lautman (00:25:49):

This is who Trump is. And we saw this over the years that he was installed. And God forbid he comes in, I mean, hell, in Russia, you could murder your wife, pay a cop a few bucks—not a lot—and say, “Hey, just say she fell down the stairs.” Is this what we want here? Because once the corruption is at the top, it goes down and trickles down to everything. One grateful thing we have for Russia's corruption is their horrific performance on the battlefield. Because like I said, Putin has stolen everything from the country with all the bandits surrounding him. It all trickled to the bottom. So literally every single person in the defense ministry is pocketing something. And this is why we saw, I mean, the Russians are extremely evil because when they fight a war, they target specifically civilian targets. But from a military perspective, zero logistics, zero discipline.

Olga Lautman (00:26:47):

I mean, you'll see them drunk, drinking ethanol in a ditch somewhere along the front lines. But this is what happens when you have corruption at the top. And this is exactly the system that Trump tried to bring in. And I am not a public person. I frankly never wanted to be a public person. I got involved after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. But when I saw the same tactics being used to install Trump in 2015 that were used in Ukraine over the past few decades, I was like, “Oh my God, we are under attack.” And we were under attack. And Trump gave us a glimpse of what will come if he comes back into office. And we all have control over this. I mean, people can go and vote. Ukrainians got rid of a treasonous, Kremlin-frickin-owned puppet. I mean, they were standing close to a million people in 2014 in cold weather, minus 10 degrees, minus 20 degrees, night after night after night, for months until Yanukovich fled.

Olga Lautman (00:27:57):

And, of course, fled to Russia, living under Russia's security services' protection. We have the control. And this is why, for me, it is so mind blowing how our media, knowing the danger, knowing that they will be shut down, knowing that reporters will be arrested if Trump gets back into power, how they make this into a normal election, and how they cover Trump almost as a normal candidate. This is not a normal candidate. I mean, look, I'm not a big fan of Republicans. Trump is not a Republican. He's not even an American. The man uses everything he has learned from his dealings with Russian mafia for the past 40

years and dealings with the Russian system, and frankly, all the corrupt systems. I mean, you saw Qatar money flowing into his holdings. You saw money from China, from everywhere. And that's the thing, they don't differentiate.

Olga Lautman (00:28:57):

It's not that Trump is just loyal to Russia. He'll take money from anywhere—corrupt money—and with no questions asked. I mean, I remember in 1984, a Russian mobster walked into Trump Towers, handed him \$5 million in suitcases—personally, to Trump, he was at that thing, \$5 or 6 million—and he sold the apartments. Did he ask who it is? Where is this? Why is someone even walking around New York City with millions of dollars in cash? I mean, this is 1984. Now, this would be equivalent probably to \$20 million now. I mean, did he ask? No, he didn't care as long as he got the money. And this is where the Russians saw an in at the time because they saw he had zero moral compass and he will do whatever needs to be done as long as he, you know, can make himself rich. And that's it. So we have the choice to change all of this.

Olga Lautman (00:29:52):

And you touched on Orbán. I mean, Orbán, for the past... Look, Russia started their operations via the far right and I've actually been working on mapping out the far-right connections across Europe and their operations through Russian intelligence services. Orbán is part of it, and there's absolutely no coincidence that Bannon worked with Orbán, that Tucker's father, I believe, worked with Orbán, that Tucker Carlson was there interviewing Orbán, and that Orbán has tapped into the whole far right of the United States. And for the past year, I have been warning that Russia will use Hungary and Hungarian agents as a cutout for 2024 elections.

Andrea Chalupa (00:30:38):

Yeah, because a lot of their Russian cutouts have been arrested or are on the radar already.

Olga Lautman (00:30:43):

Yeah, no, and they will use it because they cannot use Russian agents in Ukraine because that's burned. They can't use their own agents like they did in 2016, that's burned. They're going to use Hungarian agents and you're going to see lots of money (it has been, and it will continue to) flow through DC in order to influence our elections. And frankly, we cannot be a country that has foreign states that want to see our demise pick the people who will be in the White House.

Andrea Chalupa (00:31:15):

Yeah, So it really seems that the Russians at this point, they're entrenched. They have their tentacles deeply in, if you look at, for instance, Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, there's a nightmare for you there. He got caught in 2018 taking Russian money. It was not just Russian money. It was from an oligarch close to Putin who was the handler of Russian spy Maria Butina. And of course he did the whole song and dance of giving it back and so on. But what's very clear is that he's someone who was mentored by Jim Jordan, who is staunchly anti-democracy, staunchly anti supporting Ukraine. And Jim Jordan is a barking dog for Trump. So aid to Ukraine passing through the House comes down to the rotten center of this Russian nesting doll, which is Mike Johnson. Do you honestly think that the Republicans, that they'll manage to get this through? The reason why we're having this conversation over the massive buffet of horror topics that we could be discussing—

Andrea Chalupa (00:32:25):

And I did have a very long outline of stuff I wanted to cover on this show that just wouldn't fit into today's episode like Elise Stefanik and her weird comments and so on. But we're really focusing on Ukraine out the gate in 2024, with the first new episode of the year because we're ringing an alarm, people. We desperately need your attention on this issue. We're not saying Ukraine's on life support, it's just... People need to wake up that this is bad. This is very, very bad. And what we need everyone to do in response to this is just simply call your rep, just like you've called your rep before for any sorts of issues. Call your rep and just let your voice be heard and say, "Please, please, please make sure that Ukraine gets the support it needs." Put pressure on, be a voice to all those who've lost so many over there. We cannot let Ukraine fall. We're going to continue on with the stakes and what to do about this. But do you think there's any way, Olga, because you've been visiting DC, especially in recent months, do you see any chance of Mike Johnson getting this aid passed as part of the larger budget package?

Olga Lautman (00:33:31):

First of all, what is happening in Congress over the past few months infuriated me. What we are seeing... Again, Ukraine matters extremely, not because we're Ukrainians, because Ukraine is right now fighting a Cold War, and Russia can be stopped in Ukraine. And if Russia is stopped, you're going to see all the other dictators pull back, and it's going to send a very, very strong message to all the dictators around the world that if you attempt to invade a sovereign country, that there will be consequences. So when I saw our Republicans taking a domestic issue... I understand the border is a problem. I agree. I mean, for decades we've been trying to solve the border issue, and we definitely need more judges. You know, and again, it's a whole separate podcast episode on how we need immigrants to come into this country. This is what makes a—

Andrea Chalupa (00:34:32):

Yeah, [we did a whole episode on it](#), *Missing in Brooks County*, which provides common sense border reform.

Olga Lautman (00:34:37):

Exactly. But for Republicans to take a domestic issue and mix it with a foreign policy issue, it's so dangerous that I can't even emphasize how dangerous it is, because you have countries like China who are sitting there and like, "Oh, this is how we distract America's foreign policy: by ramping up a domestic issue for them." You have the same thing with Iran, same thing obviously with Russia. I mean, I would not be surprised if Russia is behind a lot of the influx because Russia has a very long reach for a very long time in central and South America, and they can be funneling a lot of this migration towards us as an operation—

Andrea Chalupa (00:35:23):

Well, they're propping up Venezuela. They're financially propping up Venezuela and Cuba, which are both failed regimes.

Olga Lautman (00:35:28):

Well, and they did this too in Finland. They did it in Finland, they did it in Belarus, where they sold packages to migrants in the Middle East in order to bring them to the border and try to push them and overwhelm the Polish and Lithuanian border and then the Finland border in order to get them into Europe. And again, with that, you have also mixed in agents. So it's not just migrants. It's a combination of migrants with mixed-in agents who are put on European soil or for that matter, American soil to set off

some kind of an attack or to be activated when needed. So we cannot do that. And just a fact, the damage has been done. What the Republicans did is put their own political talking points ahead of the safety and national security of the United States. And we must demand that our representatives, they are tasked with defending the United States domestically and abroad.

Olga Lautman (00:36:31):

We have to tell them, one, they need to help to pass this aid package and the weapons package. I mean, Ukrainians are sacrificing with their own blood. Imagine you can... I mean, here we are like, "Oh, Americans need to be activists and come out and speak out." Imagine doing it under a reign of missiles falling on top of your head. I mean, this is what Ukrainians are doing. They are fighting under missiles and they're fighting both: They're fighting domestic issues and they're fighting Russia. So we must make sure that the aid package is passed. But at a bigger point, we need to put Republicans... Call them out. They cannot mix domestic and, hey, call it foreign issues, together, because what's going to happen is that you're going to see every dictator find our vulnerabilities very publicly because the Republicans are telling them where the vulnerabilities are, and then they can ramp up attacks and use it against us.

Olga Lautman (00:37:36):

So this is something extremely important. But at the same time, I have a very huge critique for the Biden administration because his National Security Council, Jake Sullivan and crew, have to go. They have this unfounded fear of the collapse of the Soviet Union, that if we give Ukraine too much, if they win too much, then Russia will collapse. First of all, Russia's heading for a collapse anyway. I mean, it's an unsustainable country and there's just too much corruption. And with the Russian officials, and again, I'm not going to put this on Putin, this is all Russian officials who are carrying out this 10-plus year war against Ukraine. With the Russian officials carrying out this war, it is creating political instability domestically. But what do we care? Why does Sullivan and why do others in national security care if Russia collapses? We should have an isolation and containment policy for Russia because, I mean, if anyone is under any impression that Russia will ever be a democracy in this lifetime, definitely not in my lifetime it'll happen. And at the same time, we need to prop up countries that want to be democracies, that value Western human rights and the Western system. This is where we should be putting our direction and focus on. So, I mean, honestly, Biden has hesitated with providing Ukraine, the weapons they negotiated, I mean, my God, with Germany. And this is not only on Biden, this is on all European leaders, specifically Germany and France, because eastern Europe understands the danger of Russia if it's not put into check.

Andrea Chalupa (00:39:26):

And so do the Scandinavian nations, who are some of the staunchest allies for Ukraine right now.

Olga Lautman (00:39:31):

Exactly. I mean, they've had tanks rolling through their countries. They've had Russia executing tens of thousands of their citizens. They know what it is like and what can happen if Russia gets too strong and has a victory in Ukraine, which we won't let happen. But the thing is that, I mean, a perfect example, the United States under Biden and Germany hesitated with sending Ukraine tanks. Six months, they haggled back and forth: "Should Ukraine have tanks, should they not? Is it going to make Russia angry? What's going to happen?" You know what happened in those six months? Russia fortified the front positions. They dug in and they mined the hell out of everything. So by the time we finally did send tanks to Ukraine, then you have all our armchair generals, saying, "We don't understand. Why is the counter offensive not going as fast as it can?"

Olga Lautman (00:40:34):

Well, maybe if you wouldn't have spent six months negotiating over tanks, Russians wouldn't have had a chance to mine the whole front lines, and you wouldn't have Ukrainians who have to sit there and methodically pick out mine after mine after mine. So, I mean, this could have been over. All of this could have been over if the United States *and* Europe did not hesitate, provided Ukraine everything. They saw Ukraine had a successful counter offensive in the fall of '22. We should have shipped them everything that we had available. This would've been done last year. So right now, we need to make sure the United States and Congress approves a package, and we send everything to Ukraine for this spring so finally we can finish this and we won't have to discuss another winter of Russia's atrocities across Ukrainian cities.

Andrea Chalupa (00:41:31):

Lord Almighty, Olga, it's just such a... Yeah. So, listen, just to give an example to everyone how the liberation of the Russian mind that has been so gaslit by generations of Soviet terror and corruption, this is what we're dealing with. There's a textbook inside Russia for 11th graders that claims Donald Trump lost the 2020 presidential election in the United States due to the corruption of the Democratic Party. So you have textbooks inside Russia teaching Trump's Big Lie to the next generation of Russian leaders. So if anyone's placing their chips on Russian society, don't.

Olga Lautman (00:42:31):

I mean, they're training little kids on weapons. I mean, this is not what you go to first grade for, to learn how to put together weapons.

Andrea Chalupa (00:42:41):

Yeah, so let's talk about the collapse of Russia. We saw the collapse of the Russian military under corruption. It was going to take Kyiv in three days, and it was just a house of cards because people were stealing top to bottom all the way through. The war has managed to go on as long as it has because Russia is really a mercenary terrorist regime that has been acting like a terrorist police force for Chinese imperialism across the continent of Africa and so on. And the war machine was already warmed up from destroying Syria and establishing a Russian military base for the first time in the Mediterranean, in Syria. The Democratic party under Obama's foreign policy team, which includes the same people we're dealing with now—Jake Sullivan and Biden—they abandoned Syria. They drew a red line and never enforced it. And lo and behold, that gave the green light for Russia to launch a total invasion into Ukraine. So do you understand the stakes? Think of those... That's where we're headed. Just a total escalation of more and more war, more and more refugees, more and more global destabilization, more and more candidates like Trump around the world. They're doing a big target right now, a Trumpian level operation on France, for instance, right now.

Olga Lautman (00:43:57):

Again.

Andrea Chalupa (00:43:58):

Again. They're always chipping away. They're always trying. They're very brazen.

Olga Lautman (00:44:02):

In 2015, not only were they attempting to install a far-right leader, Le Pen—I mean they even painted portraits of Le Pen taking France and Trump taking the US—but they also assisted in carrying out terrorist attacks. So, I mean, when you say Russia is a terrorist state, they use terrorism in order to

achieve their gains. And we saw a mass wave of terrorist attacks across Europe as Russia was helping Assad murder 750,000 if not more Syrians. The rest were being pushed out of Syria, seeking refuge in Europe. And at the same time, Russia was propping up the far-right candidates who wanted to close all borders and made a migration like the main issue, which again sounds very familiar. And then at the same time, we saw it ending with terrorist attack after terrorist attack after terrorist attack. I think in one week, every other day there was breaking news that there's a terrorist attack in Europe. I mean, so this was all part... When we say hybrid warfare, this is what it looks like on top of the disinformation and propaganda that is sowed.

Andrea Chalupa (00:45:20):

When you say that part of the reluctance of the Biden team to give Ukraine everything it needs right now to have ended this war already, and just a trickling of aid as well as rotten, rotting, dusty hand-me-downs that are just shit weapons that they have to make the most of when they're going up against weapons, innovative weapons by the Russian military that no US soldier has ever had to fight against. So when you say that the collapse, the idea that Russia is collapsing and that is forcing the global Democratic alliance to hesitate and not do anything that would hasten that collapse, obviously the concern is if you see a collapse of Russia, like Prigozhin, his attempted military coup came within a few hundred miles of Moscow and nobody dared stop it. It took a very long time before... Prigozhin himself was the one who stopped it, but the roads were open to him for a very long time until he finally was like, "Eh." And now he's gone.

Andrea Chalupa (00:46:20):

And so that was a close encounter there. But what are we looking at with the collapse of Russia? Obviously you have a nuclear state, probably with a lot of rotten nuclear arms. You'd have in the power vacuum that would follow where the Michael Flynns, Patrushev and others, who surround Kremlin currently, just like a team of Michael Flynns that advise him in their alternative reality as well as their children who are part of the architecture of the corruption of Russia, that are propping up the state, working within the industries of the machine. They would be fighting each other because, you know, Putin is vain. Putin thinks he's going to live forever. Putin plans on his cult outliving him. That's why he brought back the cult to Stalin to be arm in arm with Stalin, attaching himself to this great immortal leader for Russians to look up to forever.

Andrea Chalupa (00:47:10):

And that's what Putin sees for himself. And so Stalin failed at the game of succession, and Putin will inevitably too, leading to some sort of war between the survivors. And that leaves a blind eye on the nukes. And you're going to have the Russian mafia coming in for the nukes, trying to grab what they can when no one's looking. You're going to have the locals selling off the nukes for a bottle of vodka. You're going to have Iran and China and North Korea trying to grab what they can at that yard sale. And that's certainly a factor here with the US' thinking. So what can the US do to counter that? To be like, "Okay, we have a powder keg situation here. If we do some big lightning speed... If we give Ukraine everything that it needs, that we know it needs to finally finish the job, like we gave the British in World War II against Hitler—"

Andrea Chalupa (00:47:58):

"—obviously it's very clear that part of the path to victory for Ukraine, and therefore the whole world, is for the United States to game out and have a plan in place for the inevitable collapse of Russia because Putin cannot live forever and there's increasing reports of his health. He physically is showing this. He's increasingly unhinged. He was one of the many that the pandemic clearly broke. He's been broken, right? There's a reason why during the insanity of the pandemic, when so many people became

untethered to reality, there's a reason why Putin did the unthinkable and finally launched his romantic total war, his Catherine the Great war. So I'm just speaking now to Jake Sullivan, his mother. I know she listens to this show. That's what I like to believe. [laughs] Somebody needs to get through to Jake Sullivan because you are leaving behind a legacy of bones, okay?

Andrea Chalupa (00:48:54):

You are leaving behind generations of trauma and furthering the cycle of violence. You need to wake up. You need to understand that you did not choose this war, but they're at war with us whether we like it or not. And so you have to step up. You have to pay the price. And you need to be very clear that Ukraine will win. None of this "as long as it takes." You need to say, "Ukraine will win and Putin's not going to last forever and we've got a plan in place for when things inevitably collapse under that house of cards corruption." What do you think the plan should be to prepare for Russia's collapse? How can the Jake Sullivans sleep at night and stop being afraid of their shadow? What would you advise Jake Sullivan there on preparing for the collapse of Russia? And when do you think the collapse of Russia may be? Do you think it'll be sooner than later? And what forces would bring that about?

Olga Lautman (00:49:48):

I think the collapse of Russia is inevitable. I mean, it really is inevitable because Putin has been slowly losing power. And at the moment, and this... Again, I want your listeners to understand this is not about Putin. I know the West loves to put everything, package it pretty, and put a little bow on it and like, "Oh, Putin removed. Everything is perfect now." No. This is the way Russians have been for centuries. Nothing will change. This was the same under the tsarists. I mean, just to give you an example, under tsarists. Okhrana, the security services, which is then KGB and now FSB, SVR, they did the same thing. They carried out the same torturous methods on Russians inside the country. They did the same spying on Russians, created the same paranoia and whatnot. So, I mean, the systems, whether it was the tsarist system, the Bolsheviks, Stalin and other communists, and now the Putinists, I mean, it is still the same system. Nothing has changed and nothing will change in a very long time because there's zero civil society inside of Russia, despite the West romanticizing this civil society. You don't see a civil society in Russia. Other countries—Kazakhstan, Georgia, obviously Ukraine—you see something goes wrong and in a minute's notice people are literally burning shut down. There, there's nothing. They come out a handful. 1%, 2% of the country might come out for protest, and people are like, "Oh, look at these big protests in Russia."

Andrea Chalupa (00:51:33):

I think it's because the Russians by and large take pride in their place as being the heart of the empire. It was the Russian Empire. The Soviet Union was the Russian empire. Russian was the language of the captive states.

Olga Lautman (00:51:46):

It's a combination of imperialism and victimization, which is the most two dangerous traits that one can have. On one point, you think everything is owed to you and that you own everything. And then on the other hand, if someone points out, "No, not really," then you go into victim mode. And this is the same thing. And then trickle in the paranoia that has existed for centuries, and I think by now it's probably in the DNA. I think everyone's born with these traits. This is what it is. For us, frankly, we shouldn't care what it is inside of Russia. If Russia collapses, what the United States and Europe need to do is make sure all the borders are sealed. That's it. They need to put parameters and say, "Here are the borders. You

step one inch outside of your borders, there will be repercussions.” And show them that there will be repercussions.

Olga Lautman (00:52:43):

Seal all the borders to make sure no nuclear material gets out. And, I mean, except through China. But then obviously we'd have to monitor China. But China also, by the way, as close as they are with Russia, they don't want to see nuclear material floating around the world. They actually have a bigger fear of nuclear war and nuclear materials than even the United States, I think. So we need to work with our allies and make sure, look, we saw the collapse in 1991, and for the most part, everything was so secure, minus Russia supplying bin Laden, you know, stinger missiles. But they're doing the same thing now to Hamas and Hezbollah. They supply them weapons and they work very closely with them to carry out operations. We saw, I mean, I never thought in my life, but after 2014, Russia set up logistical bases with Hezbollah, sharing intelligence, a terrorist organization inside of Syria and in Iraq, in order to help massacre Syrians and keep us out in power.

Olga Lautman (00:53:54):

The problem with the West is we have these wonderful set of values, but we can't put conditions like, “Oh, genocide is bad *unless* it's this.” We need to follow through with our values and follow through and make sure to secure human rights around the world, make sure western institutions are solid. We have to do it despite what dictators are threatening. Russia is a terrorist regime. For starters. I still don't understand why the State Department has not designated Russia even a state sponsor of terror. They're kidnapping American citizens. Another one was kidnapped yesterday in Moscow, although I don't know why Americans are still there. They are supporting, financially and with weapons, terrorist organizations. They carry out terrorist attacks in Ukraine, across the Middle East, in Africa. They commit the worst mass atrocities wherever Russians—

Andrea Chalupa (00:54:56):

That's where the refugees are coming from that are flooding our southern border. Russia does not need to fly them there or transport them there themselves. Russia's committing atrocities in Africa, in Syria—

Olga Lautman:

Everywhere.

Andrea Chalupa:

Everywhere.

Olga Lautman (00:55:12):

There's not one place that Russia has stepped foot in. You mentioned China and Russia, just to give a little difference between the two. Russia walked into African countries and, I mean, there were reports of the massacring villages. Massacring.

Andrea Chalupa (00:55:28):

Oh, raping women that had just given birth in a maternity hospital. Drunken, sweaty, disgusting Russian mercenaries.

Olga Lautman (00:55:34):

Chinese walk in, they try to buy everything. They're trying to funnel money there and buy everything and find a way to get the resources. But you don't see them walking in, raping everyone and committing these mass atrocities. This is Russia's tactic and that's why Russia needs to be designated a state sponsor of terrorism at a minimum. Personally, I'd designate it a terrorist state. But we need to follow our values as the West and not hesitate because we worry about X or Y, because it will happen anyway. Russia in 2007 attacked Estonia. They caused the biggest cyber attack of a nation where Estonia was paralyzed for weeks. At the same time, they ran disinformation, they had protests that were turning violent. I mean, it was a whole package of an attack. We didn't stop them. Okay, then comes 2014. Russia illegally annexes and occupies Crimea, Donbas: sovereign country that we promised guaranteed security.

Olga Lautman (00:56:45):

We—us and the Brits—promised Ukraine in 19, what was it, 94, with the Budapest memorandum, “Give up your nuclear weapons, Ukraine, and we will make sure your borders have sovereignty.” In 2014, when Ukraine's borders were breached, did anyone step up? No. The United States looked the other way. Britain didn't do a thing, and that's it. And Russia, again, got away with impunity, not to mention Russia using chemical weapons across Europe to assassinate people. How do you use Polonium in London to assassinate someone and get away with it? Or use Novichok to attempt to assassinate someone (they survived) and get away with it? What are we doing? And the only thing that Russia got in return was increased deals on energy and various resources and whatnot.

Andrea Chalupa (00:57:43):

They kept getting rewarded.

Olga Lautman:

Yes.

Andrea Chalupa:

What is the timeline and what would have to happen to finally get the collapse?

Olga Lautman (00:57:50):

Russia has to be Russia. There's honestly no timeline because with Russia, as we've seen from all the revolutions and collapses over the past few centuries, I mean, you could wake up and it's like breaking news, Russia collapsed. It can happen overnight. There are signs to monitor which are happening. You see over the past year, more friction within groups. You see, obviously, when you're a corrupt state, if you are not able to provide money across the board to maintain all the regions and the governors and keep them in check, you're going to start losing loyalty. The people are not being paid salaries in some regions, that's going to build up pressure. So it's a whole catalyst of things that will happen. But with Russia, I mean, over the past few centuries, in 1991, no one knew that Russia was going to collapse. It was literally overnight. You wake up and it's like, “Okay, that's it. Gone. Byebye.” And same thing with the '17 revolution. Nobody knew. It just happens. But the problem with what I have is that the West has a very Russia-centric vision. We need to stop worrying about Russia. Stop thinking about Russia, but

Andrea Chalupa (00:59:03):

But they have all the money, Olga. Putin and his court of oligarchs combined are the richest entity in the world. And he has those oligarchs under his thumb. They've all pooled their money together.

Olga Lautman (00:59:13):

Well again, and this is why Europe and the United States needs to figure out what their foreign policy is. Are we going to... And what the values are. Are we going to abide by our Western values? I mean, or are we going to have a clause that we abide by Western values unless a trillion dollars is injected in blood money?

Andrea Chalupa (00:59:33):

I would even call it Western values because, I mean, Japan is one of Ukraine's strongest donors. I think there's a Japanese foreign minister, she was in a bunker, a bomb bunker in Kyiv meeting with her counterpart. Japan has been ride or die for Ukraine. I don't know if most people know that. And I was really amazed by what an extraordinary distributor jumped on *Mr. Jones* out of Japan. There was a lot of enthusiasm.

Olga Lautman (00:59:59):

But Japan is Westernized.

Andrea Chalupa (01:00:02):

I would say, like, democratic. Small "d" democratic. Democratic values.

Olga Lautman (01:00:07):

Exactly. Yeah, so you're right. Democratic values.

Andrea Chalupa (01:00:11):

I just need it to collapse now. [laughs] I need a reason. I need a reason to have a real *Gaslit Nation* night out.

Olga Lautman (01:00:18):

I just want to make one point that's extremely important. For everyone who sits and says, "Why Ukraine? Who cares? It's so far away. We can't even find it on the map." And yada, yada. Russia has been attacking us. They have been attacking us since, I mean, well, for decades and decades since the Soviet Union, but they resumed a direct attack on us after Obama got elected. They have not stopped. I mean, Americans should not be able to forgive the fact that a third of Americans are completely brainwashed freaks who welcome a military coup without even understanding what the hell a military coup is. I mean, I've seen... After January 6th, I could not believe some of the things: "Oh, we need the military to take over our country. We need this." I mean, they are welcoming dictator tactics and this has to do with the fact that Russia has run one of the strongest disinformation and propaganda operations on Americans over the past few decades, and this is the result of it. We should not have one third of our country who is sympathetic to war criminals who are attacking us. And the same goes for Europe. I mean, Europe is under attack. Germany—another one who has been very taking their time in providing Ukraine with weapons—for God's sake, they had a plot, a violent plot where some lunatic prince wanted to violently overthrow the German government, overthrow democracy, massacre all the parliamentarians, massacre everything, and he had a whole contingency monarchy in place of who to install monarchy. Guess who they met with? The Russians.

Andrea Chalupa (01:02:21):

Of course they did.

Olga Lautman (01:02:22):

In the Russian Embassy.

Andrea Chalupa (01:02:23):

Yeah, there's a whole Russian-linked infiltration of German intelligence, German military going to the highest levels that are deeply sympathetic to the Kremlin.

Olga Lautman (01:02:34):

But that's the thing. They're attacking us. They are attacking us. So for people who do not care about what is happening in Ukraine, at least care what's happening in your own country. We are under attack. We have been under attack. Hillary, for instance, I mean you say Hillary, the only thing you know is emails because of Russia's continuous over a decade repetition—emails, emails, emails—via the Republican Party. And I remember after January 6th, it wasn't even a few days after, where one of Russia's parliamentarians came out and said, “These are political prisoners who are being arrested and sought after by the FBI.” Guess who came right after that? Senator Johnson. And then you had a whole slew of Republicans literally repeating Russian propaganda that these people who broke into a federal building... Imagine. I mean, can you imagine breaking into a federal building and committing... breaking everything, breaking into Congressional people's offices, having them trapped, threatening to execute the Vice President of the United States?

Olga Lautman (01:03:47):

I mean, there are so many crimes across the specter. And we had Republicans who were calling it political prisoners shortly after Russians did. And now this is all we hear. Now, Trump changed them to hostages, which I should go and check to see if maybe Russia gave him that idea. But the “political prisoners” talking points came from Russia. And then went via the Republican Party, and that's it through here. I mean, so we are under attack and people really need to wake up because we are not going to have a country unless we protect and defend our country. And Russia is so desperate right now. They will do everything to attack our election this year and to cause the biggest chaos we have seen in the United States that will make 2016 look like child's play. So we really need to be on point, very vigilant, be on top of our congressional people, and not only make sure that Russia is defeated abroad, but that Russia is defeated here.

[closing theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa (01:04:59):

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