



Dangerous Calls to Capture Moscow Escalate as Western Derangement About Russia Grows

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): All right. One of the topics that I have covered most over the last five years is the obsession that has been deliberately cultivated inside the United States with viewing Russia not just as an adversary or even an enemy but as an existential threat to the United States. And it's been very bizarre to watch the trajectory of this, because if you go back to the very first president who dealt with Vladimir Putin, which was Bill Clinton, and then go through every president after that, George W Bush and then Barack Obama and then Donald Trump, as well as a wide range of diplomats and secretaries of state, they always said the same thing, which is Vladimir Putin is a rational, constrained actor in the world. That you can deal with him, that you can make deals with him, that he's very wise, very smart, very shrewd, and basically takes rational actions to protect Russian interest. Never once did any of these people, these presidents or diplomats, ever claim that he was some kind of genocidal monster or some Hitler figure, or some psychopath. That all appeared overnight. And it happened for two reasons. One, that many Americans were convinced that the reason Donald Trump won in 2016, defeating Hillary Clinton, was because of the Kremlin. And so they really hate Vladimir Putin and Moscow again, because they were convinced that that was the reason Hillary lost. But the other reason, the related one, was the Russiagate fraud. And my biggest breach, my first breach with, let's call it the left, my most serious breach, took place in the middle of 2016 and then for the next several years, when I immediately started doubting and heaping a lot of sceptical scorn on this Russiagate narrative that I knew was coming from the CIA and the FBI. And one of my main concerns was that it was just fake – journalistically. There was no evidence to demonstrate the core claims, as Robert Mueller ended up concluding. But the other concern I had was that it was creating a very dangerous environment between the two world's two largest nuclear powers, to the point where any conversations between American officials, on the one hand and Russian officials on the other were deemed treasonous virtually, and it created a climate where no American official wanted even to talk to Russian officials. Jeff Sessions had two trivial in passing conversations with

Russian officials when he was in the Senate. By then he was Trump's attorney general, and they tried to put him in prison over it. They charged Michael Flynn with felonies because he was the national security adviser incoming in the transition for picking up the phone and calling the Russian ambassador to the United States to try and create good relations. What has always been done during the transition. So the climate that was created was a very dangerous one. It insisted that Russia was our grave enemy and that it was somehow even treasonous to talk to the Russians. And you can see that it had not only a domestic political aim, but also a geostrategic one, a geopolitical one coming from the US security state to turn Russia back into a hard core American enemy. And I would suggest you can draw a straight line from that narrative to all of the anti-Russian phobia inside both the establishment of both parties to the war in Ukraine. And now that it appears likely, almost I would say inevitable, that there's no way that the US and NATO can win this war as they defined victory at the start, which was expelling every Russian troops from every inch of Ukrainian territory, including Crimea. If anything, the Russians are gaining more territory as we go along. People are getting more and more desperate. We talked about Emmanuel Macron openly and repeatedly talking about the potential to deploy NATO troops as combat soldiers to fight against the Russian army inside Ukraine. The Biden administration for the first time just permitted the Ukrainians to use American provided missiles and other weapons to strike Russians inside Russia on Russian soil. This is all escalating still in a very dangerous way.

GG: And just to illustrate just how far away we are from anything even remotely rational, I want to show you a discussion that the Free Press, which is Bari Weiss' media outlet, published and produced. It was on Bari Weiss' podcast, which I believe is called Honestly, I believe that's the name of the podcast, or Honestly Speaking, and the guest host was Michael Moynihan. He's been around for a while, used to work at Vice. He hosted his own podcast. He's a fanatical supporter of aggressive warhawk policy in general, but Israel in particular. That's obviously a prerequisite to working at the Free Press as somebody whose views are published. And he was speaking to a Russian dissident, Ilya Ponomarev, who is a former member of the Russian Duma but has turned into one of those kind of dissidents, like, you know, we heard from all those Iraqi dissidents in the run up to the Iraqi war, assuring Americans that it would be extremely easy to topple Saddam Hussein, that we would be welcomed as liberators, these dissidents who left, who don't speak for the people, but, you know, we hear from Iranian dissidents all the time who say the same thing. So listen to this conversation that Bari Weiss' news site promoted about how easily the United States could facilitate a coup in Russia and then how we could take Moscow. Just just listen to how detached from reality, but how incredibly dangerous this is.

Michael Moynihan (MM): Do you have a leader in Vladimir Putin who has effectively shut down all opposition media controls, the courts, the judiciary is...

GG: By the way, that's all true of Wolodymyr Zelensky as well. He has shut down opposition media. He controls the courts. Any dissent from him or result in prison has happened with the American citizen Gonzalo Lira who died in prison. They suspended elections that Zelensky is the president of Ukraine indefinitely. But we don't talk about that because Ukraine is our ally.

We only pretend to be concerned about that sort of thing when it's our enemy, which is Russia.

MM: ...really in the hands of the state, invades countries, you know, participates in the 500 and 600,000 dead in Syria, can poison people multiple times, can assassinate them in foreign countries, and no one does a thing.

GG: By the way, the United States also invades other countries. The United States assassinates people in other countries with no due process. No one does a thing, but these people are so drowning in nationalistic propaganda that – I mean, Mike Moynihan, I know him reasonably well. I've been on that podcast a couple times. I think I've met him a few times, talked to him. He's a reasonably smart person. It's just that they get so blinded by propaganda that he can say all these things about what Putin does, without realising that Zelensky does the same things without realising that the United States does the same things far more than Russia does when it comes to invading other countries, bombing other countries, killing people around the world, including American citizens, as happened under President Obama, where he claimed the right to assassinate by drone even American citizens with no due process. And then carry that out twice in Yemen, where he killed two American citizens. And see, that's how you get a lot of these deranged conclusions, is by beginning with a world that is completely made up and is just drenched with propagandistic blindness.

MM: I mean, how do you dislodge a person like that when the international community kind of shrugs their shoulders and says, you know, we can supply Ukraine with weapons, but even that comes up against resistance in most Western countries.

Ilya Ponomarev (IP): You know, yes, there is a problem because many countries and, first of all, the United States, are very shy to support this Russian resistance. They find a gazillion different excuses why it shouldn't be done.

GG: Okay, remember how we're always told that one of the worst things that ever happened was that the Russians interfered in our domestic politics. Think about what they're saying, what they're angry about, which is that the United States is too cautious, too reluctant, to go arm and fund and finance opponents to Vladimir Putin inside Russia. So we're supposed to go and massively interfere in their politics, but if they produce a few Russian Facebook bots and a few fake Twitter accounts, this is a grave assault on everything decent. And by the way, it's amazing to say that we're reluctant to interfere in Russia since you can find a Time Magazine cover story, when the fall of the Soviet Union happened and the Russians had an election, and Boris Yeltsin, a good friend of the West, was elected and the Time Magazine celebrated the cover on its cover story, the fact that it was Americans responsible for his election, that we facilitated his election. But even more recently, one of the reasons Vladimir Putin hates Hillary Clinton is because when Hillary Clinton was secretary of state under President Obama, they openly funded opposition groups to Vladimir Putin openly, through things like the National Endowment of Democracy, which is a fund that the United States government uses supposedly to promote democracy, as if that's our aim in the world, that's designed to do not interference in other countries through fake Facebook pages or Twitter bots, but by

financing opposition groups and riling them up like we did in Ukraine to overthrow the elected president in 2014. And he's complaining we don't do enough of that inside Russia, that we should be controlling and manipulating domestic Russian politics even more. It gets so much worse.

MM: The government is not going to meet with you.

IP: You know, we meet in private with a lot of different people. But not officially. They're very much afraid of showing and expressing any public support. They like people who do like human rights things, you know, maybe a little bit of counter propaganda, but those who have a real role in actually resisting and fighting for freedom, no, you know, they prefer to keep out.

GG: And so, according to him, the United States government is very happy to interfere in Russia by pushing human rights narratives, by engaging in counter propaganda, meaning spreading all kinds of agitation and riling up the Russian population against Putin. The exact thing that we claim we were so offended by when they did to us in the 2016 campaign. He's saying, no, the US government is very happy to do that out in the open. And even for those of us who engage in real resistance against Putin, which, as you're about to learn, means that they want to overthrow him in a violent coup, he's saying the US government will meet with us in private. They just don't want to meet with us out in the open. They don't want to admit that they are working with people who want to facilitate regime change and a coup against the president of the country with the largest nuclear stockpile in the world. This is the mentality that you're hearing here.

IP: The regime is actually way more fragile than it actually looks. And if you saw the mutiny that was done by Yevgeny Prigozhin, that's the illustration of my words. I had many people in Washington, D.C., after that happened, I was saying this all the time that if you have 5000 armed and trained people, you can actually go and capture Moscow. And they say it's a fantasy, you know?

GG: Okay, listen to this rationale. He's saying that all you need are 5000 armed people to take over Moscow, overthrow the Russian government, and his proof of that, his proof of theory is what happened with the Wagner Group and Prigozhin. Now just to remind you of what actually happened there when Prigozhin did his little rebellion, his little insurrection that wasn't even aimed at Putin, really, but it was aimed at the defence officials who he had decided were constraining him in Ukraine. He had 25,000, not just armed men, but highly trained soldiers. I mean, these were people who were working for him as mercenaries who were extremely good fighters. The people under Prigozhin were the ones who had some of Russia's most important victories in Ukraine. These were hardcore fighters. And he didn't have 5000 of them. He had 25,000 of them. And although I remember so well when it happened, pretty much every alleged Russian expert and fake Russian expert in the United States on social media and in Europe, were acting as though this was the end of the Putin government, that this was a real coup. The Russian government crushed that in 12 hours. By the time you woke up the next morning, there was no more rebellion. There was no more

insurrection. And then Prigozhin, of course, ended up dead two months later. And they crushed it like that. And someone saying, Oh, all you need is 5000 people to march into Washington. All you need is 5000 armed people, you can take over the government. You can overthrow Biden. Enter the white House. That's how insane that is. Russia is a major military power, even more so now than they were two years ago when they ended up in a proxy war with all of NATO. But this is the kind of thing we heard before the Iraq War: Oh, don't worry, you just go in. Everyone hates Saddam Hussein. The minute you're there, the whole population will turn against him. They're way more fragile than you think. And we ended up stuck there for over a decade with thousands of our own soldiers and over a million Iraqis ending up dying from that conflict. Again, this is what Bari Weiss' media outlet, her podcast called Honestly, is promoting. He's saying the proof that all you need is 5000 people is what happened with Prigozhin. What happened with Prigozhin was he had 25,000 extremely well-trained fighters and they took a Russian helicopter out of the sky, that's how sophisticated, well-armed they were. And within 12 hours they didn't exist anymore.

IP: You are dreaming. And, when they saw it, they actually called me and said, Ilya, looks like you have proof of your concept.

GG: There it is: Honestly, with Bari Weiss. People called him after the Prigozhin coup, that lasted barely 12 hours with five times the number of soldiers that he says he needs to perpetrate a coup inside Moscow and someone apparently told him this is proof of your concept, as if that coup succeeded. But I think the more important point here is that if you are a minimally sane person, the idea that you think the United States should perpetrate a coup inside Russia and overthrow the government of Vladimir Putin – and that's what Michael Moynihan was saying. He was saying, how do we get rid of this guy? What do we need to do to get rid of this guy? Obviously, the international community won't. Yeah, you know why they won't? Because it's unbelievably insane to even muse on the possibility, let alone contemplate a plan for overthrowing Vladimir Putin, in part because, again, they have the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons on the planet. But also precisely because of that, you have no idea who would come next after Putin, who would then take over after Putin. And why would anyone want to roll the dice? As I said, Putin for 25 years has obviously been a responsible steward of the nuclear arsenal that Russia is sitting on, because there's been no use of nuclear weapons. And every president, if you go back before Biden and look at what they said about Putin and the government's position was about Putin, you all hear the same thing as I said. So the fact that anybody with any kind of platform, let alone one on this Bari Weiss' site, can seriously sit there and talk about how the US government should be doing more to overthrow the Russian government and overthrow Vladimir Putin in a coup that the United States openly finances arms and supports, is a level of insanity that is hard to describe. But the reason why I wanted to show you this, is because, you know, you go back to the Cold War and fear of nuclear war was a driving factor and that's because we should fear a nuclear war. It will end the species. It will end the war. It will end the world. The United States and the Soviet Union came very close on at least two occasions, of blowing up the entire world through their use of their nuclear arsenals. And everything the United States did in the Cold War and everything the Soviet Union did in the Cold War, was about trying to ensure whether

it was through miscommunication or misperception or unintended escalation, that the countries didn't end up in a nuclear conflict unintentionally. And it succeeded, though barely. These are like little kids playing with like a machine gun and thinking it's funny. We have completely lost the fear of nuclear weapons, even though the kind we have now, are infinitely more powerful than the ones that almost blew up the world during the Cuban Missile Crisis and during the Cold War. Trump talks about that a lot. He was obviously affected when he got briefings about what these weapons are and what they will do; talks about that a lot. And obviously that's of course true, but we are so drowning in this kind of antipathy toward Moscow and to this view that Russia is the supreme enemy, so they're a threat to our country and to our way of life and to our government, as if it's 1957. That it is not just that people want to go to war with Russia, there are a lot of people wanting a lot more US involvement in Ukraine against Russia, it's that they scoff at this point, at the fear of nuclear weapons. In fact, there were articles written in places like The Atlantic trying to claim, we don't need to worry about nuclear weapons. There's a survivable nuclear war. There are limits to nuclear war. That would probably happen. It wouldn't destroy the entire species, but can't be blackmailed by it any longer. I mean, this conversation, though, it seems like it's kind of a rational and reasonable one, because the way they're talking and the platform from which they're talking is a kind of insanity that I would suggest to you, is beyond dangerous and is much more pervasive in the United States than we typically realise, because of how normalised it's become.

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