



Vijay Prashad - Iran, Israel & Venezuela and the Context Missing in the Media

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today, and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza. Before I start this interview, I would like to share with you that we are taking a summer break from the 10th of August to the 22nd of August, where we will be producing no videos in this time frame. We need to recuperate our energies for the coming period and hence this break is essential for myself and my team. If you want to continue watching our videos, make sure to visit our archive section of the website or our video library on our YouTube section. Even though we reached millions of people during the summer, our donations have dropped dramatically. We only have 510 monthly donors despite having 152,000 subscribers. So if you're watching our videos and not donating, please make sure to take a few minutes to visit the description of this video and you will find all the information to our donation platform via Patreon, PayPal, Betterplace or directly to our bank account. Today I'll be talking to author and historian Vijay Prashad. Vijay Prashad is also the author of more than 30 books, one of them being *The Withdrawal: Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and the Fragility of US Power*. Vijay, welcome back to the show.

Vijay Prashad (VP): Thanks a lot. Great to be with you, my athletic friend.

ZR: All right, let's get to it. Let's start this interview with the escalating situation in the Middle East. Last week Israel assassinated leading figures. First, the Hezbollah commander, Fuad Shukur, in the Lebanese capital of Beirut and a day later the Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in the Iranian capital of Tehran. Since then, Hezbollah has been firing rockets and drones at Israel almost daily, and fears of an imminent Iranian retaliation are growing worldwide. Many believe that this could trigger a global war. Although many international initiatives and calls are underway, led by Russia, the Gulf states and some Western countries calling for restraint and cooler heads, for the moment it seems that Iran will respond in one way or the other. Just today, it is being reported that Britain and Egypt have asked their airlines to avoid Iranian and Lebanese airspace as fear of a wider conflict is growing. One noteworthy detail I like to mention; whenever one of the most primetime news programs, *The Tagesschau* in Germany, reports on the Hezbollah militia, it either states that it is a terrorist organization, or an organization whose goal is the complete destruction of Israel and Israel is

merely responding to Hezbollah's indiscriminate missile fires that are being launched into its territory. Generally, many media outlets here claim that it is an Iranian proxy that is seeking the annihilation of Jews as well as the State of Israel. As a journalist who has spent a lot of time in Lebanon and throughout the Middle East and writing on these topics. Could you first give our viewers some context to Hezbollah and thereafter also address the escalating situation between Israel and Iran?

VP: Yeah, you know, it's really important for people, particularly I think in Europe, to understand Hezbollah. Hezbollah was created really when the Israelis decided to intervene into Lebanon, you know invaded Lebanon, attacked Beirut, controlled areas of the south of Lebanon and so on. The resistance movement to this Israeli invasion becomes Hezbollah. In other words, UN law is pretty clear that an occupied people have the right to resist the occupation. So Hezbollah emerges within the context of international law. It's not a terrorist organization in its origins. It emerges to fight against a military occupation, an illegal military occupation that the Israelis conducted for a very long time, you know, over a decade, and in the middle of the south of Lebanon, Israel and its proxies ran torture chambers. The Khiam torture chamber in the south of Lebanon was where they tortured people. Many people, hardened. Hezbollah fighters come out of those torture chambers. In fact, what's interesting is that Hezbollah initially is a kind of political movement, led by Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, eventually, but very quickly, it forms a military arm. Fuad Shukr for instance, was one of the founders of that military arm. He's been a member of Hezbollah almost from its initiation. He was a very close friend of Imad Mughniyeh. Now, Imad Mughniyeh was assassinated by Israel in Damascus, Syria, in 2008. Israel, has this policy of targeted assassinations of various Hezbollah mid-level and upper level leaders. It's very interesting that Israeli planes and missiles can cross an international boundary and assassinate people. That's not considered an act of terror. That's considered an act of counter terror. You know, this is a political debate. What is the original terror to which something like counter-terror is produced? The people who are in Hezbollah will argue that Israel is the original terror, and they are mainly, you know, merely the counter-terrorism operation trying to prevent Israeli terror against the Palestinians, against the people of Lebanon and so on. This is a political debate, okay?! This question of who is the originary terror is not something that can be established legally. It's a political matter. So I very well understand that the German media, if they call Hezbollah a terrorist group, they've made a political choice, in necessarily calling Hezbollah Hamas a terrorist group. I've had this interaction on a number of occasions with German politicians and German media where if I write something for the media, they say, well, can we add the word terrorist in front of Hamas or in front of Hezbollah? And I say, well, but that's a political decision. That's not a legal requirement. Now, under German law, these may be legal requirements. That's a separate issue. But in international law, there is absolutely no settled opinion that terror is originating outside Israel. In fact, many will argue, as the UN will, that Israel is the original occupying force against the Palestinians. The Palestinians, therefore, have the right to resist. So a Palestinian organization that resists should not be therefore called a terrorist organization. I mean, it's very interesting. The assassination of Fuad Shukr in Beirut was conducted in a civilian area. You know, it was a highly reckless act. Obviously, it was going to bring forth retaliation by Hezbollah. He's a respected senior leader. What did

you expect, an armed wing of Hezbollah to sit back and allow the general to be killed? They will respond in kind. Equally pretty ridiculous that the Israelis in the middle of whatever they are dealing with, and there's a domestic problem inside Israel as well, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is deeply unpopular within the country, a reckless act of terrorism to fly across the region plan to bomb inside Tehran, and wait for the political leader of Hamas, Mr. Haniyeh to be present there and then ignite the bomb and kill Mr. Haniyeh. Now it's interesting, the Israelis said, okay, well, we've killed the political leader of Hamas. We have good play on you, because the new leader chosen by Hamas, Yahya Sinwar, is far more radical than Mr. Haniyeh. Mr. Sinwar is far more radical than Haniyeh, he spent 23 years in an Israeli prison, he is a deeply hardened Hamas leader, very much comes out of the working class neighborhoods of Khan Younis. You thought Mr. Haniyeh, it was a problem. Just wait till Mr. Sinwar begins to run things. And this is a good indication of how Israel has been intransigent in its negotiation with Hamas. They knew that if they killed Mr. Haniyeh, who was a pretty moderate guy, that the negotiations would flounder with Hamas. And they probably expected that somebody like Yahya Sinwar would become the next leader of the political wing of Hamas, which means that the negotiations would be hard. This is a very good indicator that Israel neither wants to negotiate with Hezbollah nor with Hamas. You can't end wars without negotiation. So they are, in a way, putting themselves into an intractable conflict of their own making.

ZR: Do you think the situation will escalate to a regional, if not a global war? We are seeing that the United States is positioning its aircraft carriers there, that the Gulf states are readying, for a possible airstrike on Israel. And we are seeing that Russia is standing behind Iran. How do you see this playing out?

VP: Well, look, I know that Iran will have to retaliate. Its honor is being put on the stake. Iran provided a harbor for Mr. Haniyeh to visit the country. He came to Tehran, he was under the protection of the Iranians, and he was then killed. I mean, the Israelis have done this to the Syrians, the Lebanese to the Iranians, to others, you know, they've just completely violated national sovereignty to conduct these acts. They didn't go to Iran to kill an Iranian. They went to Iran to kill a guest of Iran, a Palestinian political person, a leader of Hamas, which is a major political organization. They did this just after, in Beijing, China, 14 Palestinian factions, for the first time in a generation, have come together, been brought together by the Chinese, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Fatah, all of them at the table and they produced a joint declaration. I mean, this could have been a very important path forward for negotiation that now, after so many years, you have a joint Palestinian working group. The Israelis could have directly interfaced with them. Rather than deal with it on the surface of politics, Netanyahu wagged the big stick and went and killed Mr. Haniyeh, a very reckless act. Iran is feeling duty bound to respond. But the Iranians are very clever. There is no scenario that the Iranians can see that would not end poorly for everybody. They understand that. They are not a reckless power. I mean, Iran, for instance, after Israel violated international law, flew over Syria, bombed an Iranian embassy compound in Syria, after they did that, what Iran did was they fired a series of rockets at Israel, which there was an understanding, would be detected and destroyed by the Iron Dome system.

There was almost no damage inside Israel for that attack. That was the point of making a dignified response. Like you attacked an embassy compound, we are going to fire. Okay, that was case closed. Nobody escalated after that, right? Case closed. Even the Israelis didn't fire back. Now the Iranians are feeling even more pressure to stand up for the honor. So the Israelis are playing a very reckless game here, and I do not understand why European powers, Germany and so on, don't recognize this. I mean, it's not Iran being reckless. Iran is not doing anything recklessly. They are not firing back recklessly. Why doesn't Iran, for instance, say, okay, you killed Ismail Haniya in Tehran. We are going to go and see who we can kill. We will kill the leader of the settlement movement, or something, that lives inside Tel Aviv. They are not going to do something like that. They are not crazy. At most there might be some limited exchange. Because Iran is not reckless, despite being backed by the Russians and others. They do not want a regional war. What they want is the genocide against the Palestinians to end, a political solution to begin, and they want to normalize relations with everybody. They've shown that by the seriousness of the purpose of coming to Beijing with the Saudi Arabian government and starting to have some grand bargain in the making between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Iran has shown that they are keen on settling the peace in the region. They don't want a war. Israel is trying to provoke a broader war. Israel is the one here that is really the principal actor of war, not of peace.

ZR: Let us now look at some internal factors within the Israeli government, which seems to find itself in a very precarious situation. Germany's most watched primetime news segment, the Tagesschau, reported recently on an internal dispute taking place in the Israeli government, with the military accusing the government of sabotaging negotiations with Hamas by constantly imposing new conditions, which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to deny. Protests in Israel are swelling as well, especially in Tel Aviv, where people are demanding a hostage deal with Hamas, which Benjamin Netanyahu also seems to be undermining. Even when we observe statements of Western political leaders, they keep emphasizing the need for a cease fire. In addition, I would like to mention a major event that made little to no news in Germany and showed significant tensions within the Israeli state. It all started with a UN report published on July 31st, describing the conditions of Palestinians being held in detention in an Israeli military prison called Sde Teiman. The report states that at least 53 political prisoners have died there due to neglect, starvation, torture and denial of medical care. Israel authorities decided to investigate a group of soldiers and prison guards that were suspected of raping Palestinian prisoners. One of them was even allegedly raped with tools. According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, some of the members of the Israeli parliament, as well as ministers, attended to overrun the military base with an angry and armed mob, and were also accompanied by heavily armed militiamen that were there to prevent the arrest of the prison guard who had committed the rape. Eventually, the Israeli authorities moved the soldiers and prisoners to another military base, but the protesters turned up there as well, burnt wood at the gates, and tried to infiltrate the base. Israeli police did not arrest anyone and were unable to prevent the riots. The next day the Israeli newspapers across the board reported on the event, describing it as chaos, anarchy and the collapse of the state. We talked about the external factors earlier that are already threatening Israel, but internal contradictions and pressures are also quite evident. How do you see these

internal political developments? Will Israel be able to continue with all of these internal fractures?

VP: I mean, look, it's very difficult to say. Israel has kept reelecting Mr. Netanyahu over the past several decades. He is the longest serving Israeli prime minister. We keep being told that is very unpopular in Israel. A recent Channel 12 poll suggested that 72% of Israelis want him to quit. I find all of that to be very difficult to believe. If 72% want him to quit, if he's been deeply unpopular from October 7th, why haven't any of the other political forces moved against Mr. Netanyahu? Why haven't different forces left his government? The fact is that whatever his popularity might be in Tel Aviv or wherever, Mr. Netanyahu was able to cobble together a pretty stable government. It has not gone anywhere. He keeps doing this. Obviously, he's popular somewhere. I mean, otherwise, it's not a democracy. You can't have it both ways. You can't say, well, Israel is good, but Mr. Netanyahu is bad and he is unpopular and then say, well, there is also a democracy, then it's not a democracy. You can't have it both ways. It doesn't work. Mr. Netanyahu keeps coming back to office. That means the Israeli voting public, one way or the other, finds him to be a good leader. This is the good leader who has overseen torture camps. Now, we've all watched the videos, horrendous, where elected officials of the Knesset, of the Israeli parliament participate in defending torturers, human rights violators. I mean, that's become, in a sense, a deep problem for Israel, for the half dozen people who want to be peace lovers inside Israel, I say half a dozen ingest. But, I mean, for God's sake, you are getting less and less powerful. This so-called peace lobby. You know, people have been protesting against Mr. Netanyahu. But that's not because they necessarily find his overall actions to be bad or want peace with the Palestinians. What they say is he's been poorly handling the negotiations with Hamas and Islamic Jihad and others. That's different from saying they want peace or negotiation. So we have to face it that there is a serious political crisis inside Israel, a crisis regarding human rights. I mean, in Europe, the Europeans make such a big deal of the European Convention on Human Rights, correct? When the government, former government of Rishi Sunak, in the United Kingdom wanted to deport asylum seekers, refugees and others to Rwanda, the British had a problem with the fact that they still were part of the European Convention of the Human Rights framework. That's the UK deporting asylum seekers through Rwanda. In Europe, there was a problem. People were like, oh, this is terrible. Meanwhile, there was no real terrible when people drowned in the Mediterranean trying to cross over. Here you have Israel participate in Eurovision singing songs alongside European acts. Israel participates in European soccer and other tournaments inside Europe. That's okay. Even though they are conducting a genocidal war. And inside Israel the political class is okay with torturers and so on. I mean, what? 20 years ago, European high representatives were so upset about what was happening in Guantanamo, in the so-called black sites in Eastern Europe. You may remember that during the war against Iraq, people were brought to be tortured in Eastern Europe, in CIA black sites and so on, collaborating with the prisons in Eastern Europe, Poland and other countries. People in Europe were outraged, you know, European high officials outraged. I mean, here's a video of people being basically strung up and beaten and there's no problem. I really don't understand the European project any longer. I had really failed to grasp the kind of political legitimacy of Europe. I fail to grasp it.

ZR: I want to switch gears here and talk about Venezuela's recent election and the internal and external reactions towards it. Last Sunday, the Venezuelan authorities declared President Nicolas Maduro that he won the election. However, the United States did not recognize his victory and instead declared the opposition candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez, the winner. The European Union has called for a further review of the results and released a statement that stated, quote, "the election does not meet international standard for integrity of elections", unquote. The criticism that the EU and US have is directed at the Venezuelan National Electoral Council, CNE, which, according to the German media and the government officials, did not publish the results of all these tricks transparently. I would like to add that the German media, whenever their report on Venezuela, uses the adjective authoritarian when describing Nicolas Maduro, and that he very often mobilizes armed biker gangs to repress his opposition. Could you first, for our viewers, give a historical overview of Venezuela's political history and its relations with the US and then comment on these elections?

VP: Well, the United States has been very happy with Venezuela right up to the end of the 1990s, you know, even during the period of actual dictatorship in Venezuela. There were long periods of actual military dictatorship in Venezuela, the US government perfectly happy. There was a situation in the 1990s when Carlos Andres Perez, a very nice guy, social democrat, he would fit into a dinner party with with people such as your former West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt and even Willy Brandt would be – actually Willy Brandt and Carlos Andres Perez would get along very well, both social Democrats. Carlos Andres Perez wins an election, saying, I'm not going back to the IMF. I'm never going to go back. The austerity is too bad. He comes to power and he goes back to the IMF. It's called a Paquete. And there's a big protest called the Paquetazo, a big, massive protest, which leads to the Caracazo of 1989, mass uprising in Caracas, thousands of people were killed, actually by the police forces. It's out of that that Hugo Chavez becomes political. I mean, he's very deeply politicized by the Caracazo of 1989. When Chavez wins the election in 1998, he begins a process of negotiating with mainly US oil companies. 99 to 98% of Venezuela's revenues came from the export of oil. So he said, look, we're not going to do a 50/50 split of revenues. We're not even going to do, you know, 60/40 or anything. We want to control our oil. And he renationalizes the oil of Venezuela. And at this point, Chevron, Exxon, all of them put a lot of pressure on the government, other mining companies. Peter Munk of Barrick Gold writes an article in the Canadian The Globe and Mail and says that Chavez is a dictator. Chavez had won more elections than Peter Munk. You know, he won his election in 98. He beat back a coup d'etat attempt in 2002, pushed the new constitution in 1999, won a recall referendum in 2004. And Peter Munk then says, you're a dictator. I mean, the words are used in such a racist way. You know, Munk, as I said, he was a founder and owner of Barrick Gold. You know, I don't think he won a fair election even in his boardroom., compared to Chavez, who had millions of people voting for him. So this discourse of the dictator goes all the way back to Chavez, and so does the discourse of fraud. When Chavez beat back a referendum, a recall referendum in 2004, the opposition said, there's a fraud. Now, one interesting feature over the past 20 years is that the Chavez government initially, and then this Bolivarian process has built a massive body of supporters, through the communes that they've built, the missions that they created, Mission Vivienda, which provided housing for homeless people or people who

lived in shacks and so on. You know, if you add up all the beneficiaries of the Chavez years and you add up the militants of the various Bolivarian kind of formations, including the youth, women, trade union formations, you have about half the voting population. It's very difficult for the Bolivarians to get less than 50% of the vote. Equally, the opposition wants to privatize the oil. The opposition wants to expropriate back the land that Chavez took away from the rich. The opposition wants to create neoliberal policies of austerity and so on. The opposition has a barrier. They cannot get above 40% of the vote and that includes people deeply angry with the Bolivarian government. So both their actual ideological supporters and those who just hate Mr. Maduro and the policies. So that 50/40 split is actually pretty realistic. You don't need to conduct election fraud to get the 50/40 split, but the discourse of election fraud is there. Interestingly, a few days before the election, a so-called exit poll was released. Now, in Venezuela there are no exit polls. I mean, most countries in the world don't have the capacity to do either exit polls or pre-election polling. That's because the infrastructure is not there. The habits of that are not there. But this pre-election poll was released in the United States by a company called Edison Research, based in New Jersey. If you just look into it for five minutes, you'll discover Edison Research is effectively a contractor of the Central Intelligence Agency. They do work for Radio Free Europe, Radio Free Liberty, you know, all these US government cutouts that are part of the US government ensemble to influence world affairs. That's what Edison Research does. If you go to their website and you see this so-called pre-election poll, there's really no data on the poll. They just announced that the opposition is leading by 40 points. What's the methodology of the poll? How many people did they talk to? Where were those people? Who conducted the actual surveys? You know, most polls, you get the bottom line number, right? And then you get another downloadable PDF, which is their methodology. In this case, there's nothing. It's just a number. They just announce that there's the opposition. So when the results came out, the opposition said, look, there was a poll that said we had a lead of 40 points, how did we now lose by seven points? And that's what was reported around the world. You know, the variance was based on a CIA contractor. I find this extraordinary that, you know, good journalists around the world are motivated, one, by this ceaseless propaganda that this is a dictatorship, secondly, using a CIA poll without any consideration of the source. Come on, you're supposed to check things, you know, checked nothing and repeated this thing. Now, look, let's be quite honest. The situation in Venezuela is difficult. You know, a large number of people have migrated out of the country. The moment the US tightened sanctions on the country – you've got 99% of your revenues come from oil, if you can't sell oil, your government revenues collapse. As a consequence of that the government of Nicolas Maduro had to privatize sections of the economy because the government was under sanctions. If you continue to maintain government control of the economy, people would starve. To prevent starvation, they privatized parts of the economy so that they could go and trade without sanctions. And that became a problem because that then increases forms of petty corruption and so on. That also happens. There are problems in Venezuela, no doubt about that. But the Venezuelan people are given a choice between trying to improve things or to go back to 1995. And in fact, I think 50% chose to try to improve things. And that is a margin that, I mean, it's not like Rwanda, where Paul Kagame wins 96% of the vote and the Europeans send him congratulations. The French congratulate Paul Kagame for his victory, 96% of the vote. I

mean, how is that a fair election? Nicolas Maduro said I won near 52%. That's somewhere near the margin in the United States. You know, in the 2013 election, he won 51 to 49. That's the same CNE that was just eleven years ago. So this whole thing strikes me as kind of ridiculous, and I would like to ask high officials of the European Union who are now blathering on about election malfeasance in Venezuela, what did you say after the last Rwanda election?!

ZR: Let us not look at developments in the war in Ukraine. NATO in the last summit decided to send more F-16s as well as air defense patriot systems to Ukraine. In addition, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, the US will deploy long range Tomahawk missiles in Germany by 2026. The Tomahawk cruise missile is not only hard to detect on radar, but also has a range of 2500km. Moscow is around 1600km away from Berlin. This deployment does give NATO the capability to strike Moscow. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock defended this deployment by stating that Russia has been continuously violating international arms agreements by expanding its nuclear capacity. She went on to further state and let me quote her here, quote, "We must protect ourselves and our Baltic partners against this; including through increased deterrence and additional stand off weapons. Anything else would not only be irresponsible, but also naive in the face of an ice cold Kremlin", unquote. A few days ago, the Ukrainians deployed for the first time their F-16s, since received from the US in its war against Russia, while Russia continues to make headway in eastern Ukraine in capturing territory. Can you provide your assessment on these long range missiles? And whether you think the deployment in Germany, as the foreign minister stated, will protect Europe and provide deterrence against the ice cold Kremlin? And secondly, how do you view a future presidency of Kamala Harris or Donald Trump in the big scheme of things? Which presidential candidate do you think will not only be more open for peace and diplomacy in Ukraine, but also in Israel and Palestine?

VP: A very, very important issue for you, particularly because you are in Germany. What does one want to say? If you look at the situation, if you look at a map of Ukraine, and you look at it from February 2022 to the present, okay? Maybe let's not go with February. Let's go with April 2022 till the present, when Mariupol was taken by the Russians. The front line actually hasn't changed much over these two years. The front line has not changed much. That means this is a moment where you must negotiate because the battlefield gains are not being made. One month the Russians make some advance, next month elsewhere the Ukrainians, maybe in the same front they push them back and so on. It's well worth opening up a discussion to talk about having a negotiated settlement. Now, there are some red lines that people don't want to give up. Like the Ukrainians may say, look, we insist on retaking Crimea. Frankly, Ukraine is not going to retake Crimea by the battlefield, and it's unlikely that they will be able to negotiate Crimea back into Ukraine. There are all kinds of things that each side is going to have to give up on. The Russians may say, okay, we'll give up the land bridge from the Russian border to Crimea, we will give you back Mariupol, but we want guarantees of water supply, and so on. I mean, there's actually a lot of space for negotiation. Why hasn't negotiation happened? I mean, we know that the sections of the Ukrainian government have wanted to negotiate. They seem to be under pressure not to negotiate. Mr.

Zelensky, in fact, left the meeting in Switzerland, a very strange peace meeting, Russia was not invited. How can you have a peace meeting without the belligerents at the table? But anyway... But Mr. Zelensky, even at that meeting, made a kind of gesture towards the need to open negotiations again, as they had had with the Russians in Turkey and in Belarus and so on. Russia has opened negotiations, they've said so. Ice cold Kremlin? Well, it's certainly cold because Russia is cold in the winter. Now it's the summertime. I don't know how ice cold they are. You know, the Russian athletes have been doing pretty well at the Paris Olympics, despite the fact that Russia has been barred from participating officially. They have to participate as individual athletes. It's absolutely ridiculous that in 2024, these games are being played, where you have politics intervening at the Olympics. I know it's happened before. It happened in 1980. There was a boycott by the West of the Moscow Games because of the invasion of Afghanistan in 84. Then the Russians didn't come to Los Angeles. I know all that, but I mean, there have been athletes who have spent their lives preparing for this. You are an athlete yourself. You know what this feels like when you're at the peak of training. You want to go and participate, and fight for your country where your anthems can be played. And in that to Paris, I mean, when the South Sudanese athletes were on the stand, they played the Sudan anthem, shows you how much they care about Africa. Forget Françafrique or whatever the French like to imagine. The point I'm making is that there is a lot of scope for negotiation and what Europe is doing, and what Europe has done by, in fact, reelecting Ursula von der Leyen as the commissioner, what Europe is saying, is they want to continue this project alongside the United States of trying to use the Ukraine battle to weaken Russia. I think this is highly irresponsible of Europe, and it's extraordinarily dangerous because they're providing weapons into the battlefield that would allow missile strikes into Russia. I don't know if that's a good idea, because that will seriously bring NATO into a direct confrontation with the Russians. I mean, we know that now the chairmanship of the European Commission is with the East, as it were, and there's a little more practical thinking in Hungary, Poland, and other countries about the situation. They are not necessarily ideologically aligned with Russia, but they also understand that they have to live in the region. I mean, the Ukrainians need to understand one thing. At the end of the day, Ukraine is going to be a neighbor of Russia, and therefore you need to start negotiating now. If you keep letting this go on, it's going to take decades, if not a century, to undo the kind of emotional and national damage that these neighbors will face. It's one thing, for, say the United States to want to accelerate conflict, it's another for Ukraine. The US is far away from Russia. It can ignore the Russians. The Ukrainians can't. The day the fighting stops, they're going to start trading with the Russians again.

ZR: And what do you think about the long range missiles that will be deployed in Germany in 2026? Do you think that will change the calculus in terms of the Ukrainian war?

VP: I don't really know. I don't want to speculate about that because, I think it well behooves every single European citizen, every citizen of a country within the European process, to be aware of the deep dangers and threats posed by this escalation around Ukraine. And so I would hope that people in Germany, I mean, right now Germany has an extremely unpopular government. Their political parties took a hammering in the European elections, in the

regional elections, they are not doing well and so on. I mean, the Green Party's arrogant bubble has surely burst at some point. The Green Party has become almost more right wing than the right wing parties. Their green credentials are near zero, meaning that they are willing to reopen nuclear power plants and so on. What's left of the campaigns that built the Green Party of Germany? Nothing. The Social Democratic Party, it's also been for a long time, even under Gerhard Schroeder, a shadow of its former self. Earlier I talked about Willy Brandt. I mean, Willy Brandt was the social Democrat, the last social Democrat that we all respected, even though we may have had political differences with them. Mr. Brandt, for instance, used his years of office with Ost-Politik, to have a good relationship with the East. And then he had a kind of Süd-Politik, where he built the Brandt commission on wealth and equality between North and South in the world. Willy Brandt was a genuine statesman in that sense. Olaf Scholz is a caretaker, you know, what is social democratic politics now in Germany? Germany has got a real internal crisis in my opinion, and it's really important for German nationals and others to fight to build some sort of integrity for Germany within Europe. I mean, what is the German project inside the European project? What is the German project vis-a-vis, say Russia or China? I mean, Germany cannot afford the United States new Cold War against China because so much of the German industry takes place in Hubei province with Wuhan as the capital. You travel to Wuhan, you see German companies all over the place. Germany cannot afford to delink or decouple from China. They are under pressure from the United States to do that. Is there a German national interest? Not sure.

ZR: Lastly, in terms of Ukraine and the situation in Israel and Palestine, who do you think, Kamala Harris or Donald Trump will be better in terms of these two issues?

VP: I mean, it's hard to say, because in the United States, obviously, there's a real debate happening between these two political camps, but for the rest of the world, I don't think it really matters who becomes the president. I think they are both going to be extremely dangerous, because neither of them is willing to come to terms with the fact that the United States is not the most important country in the world. I mean, that's the bottom line. I would say there'd be a difference between them if one of them said, look, the United States, just a member country of the United Nations, but both of them believe the US has some sort of destiny. That's a very dangerous approach to international relations. The US doesn't have a destiny. I mean, no country has a destiny. People don't have destinies. We just have the lives we live and we try to construct the idea of destiny to motivate us. But the United States doesn't have a destiny. Both of these candidates believe that, which is why they are willing to use terrible armed force against the rest of the world to meet what they consider their destiny. They're dangerous people.

ZR: Vijay Prashad, author, journalist and historian. Thank you so much for your time today.

VP: Thanks a lot.

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