



Colonel Wilkerson on Syria, Ukraine, China & the ICC arrest warrant against Netanyahu

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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 remind you that we recently launched our crowdfunding campaign with the goal of continuing our independent and non-profit journalism in 2025. Journalism that is free from any external influence and does not accept any money from corporations or governments. In our last year's campaign, we raised €53,000 thanks to 1,700 donors. And in this year's campaign, we are targeting €55,000 so that we can cover all of our costs associated with our journalism that include for example, website maintenance, insurance, tax advising, video-editing, translation, voice-over, correction and many others. If we do not reach this target, we would unfortunately have to scale back at our capacities and this would come at a time when another perspective, as well as more context, is needed more than ever before. So if you are watching our videos regularly, make sure to donate just €3-5 or Dollars. And if all of our 155,000 subscribers donate that amount just today, we would not only be able to achieve our crowdfunding target but also cover our costs for the next four to five years.

[00:01:07] Today I will be talking to Lawrence Wilkerson. And since it's his last interview for this year with him, we will cover a wide range of geopolitical issues which include Syria, Ukraine, Gaza and China. Lawrence Wilkerson is a retired army colonel who served in the US Army for 31 years. His last position in the government was as Chief of Staff for then Secretary of State Colin Powell from 2002-2005. He is now a senior fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Lawrence, welcome back to the show.

Lawrence Wilkerson (LW): Good to be with you, Zain. Good to be back in Europe.

ZR: I would like to start this interview with yet another crisis that has recently erupted in the Middle East, namely in Syria. Hayat Tahrir al Sham, also known as HTS, launched an offensive in northwestern Syria last week and since then has taken Aleppo, Syria's second largest city, and captured Hama, Syria's fourth largest city. According to the BBC today, they are also now within striking distance of Homs, Syria's third largest city, and if they're successful, they will cut the main road leading from the capital Damascus to the Syrian coast, which is considered the stronghold of President Bashar al-Assad. The conflict between the Syrian government under President Bashar al-Assad and various opposition groups and Islamic factions dates back to 2011, but largely came to an halt in 2020. Depending on which media outlet you consume, some are referring to HTS as an opposition force, while others are considering terms such as rebels or jihadists who they claim are supported by Turkey. Local groups such as the Kurds based in northeastern Syria and Hezbollah from Lebanon have already begun counter-operations against HTS's offensive. At the international level, Russia and Iran are backing the Syrian government, with Russia providing air support. The Secretary General of Hezbollah, named Naim Qassem, even accused the United States and Israel of being involved by supporting HTS' offensive. According to the United Nations, more than 280,000 people have been displaced by the recent fighting, and according to the Syrian

Observatory for Human Rights about 700 people have been killed thus far. Can you give us your geopolitical assessment of this conflict, and then talk about whether you think the United States, or Israel for that matter, are involved, and if yes, for what reasons?

LW: That's a lot of information, Zain. Let me start by saying that I have several contacts on the ground in Syria, in Aleppo, Idlib, and in Damascus, and it is truly a sad situation that we've reignited this other war in Southwest Asia. From what she, the one in Aleppo, is telling me, it was just brutal for a while there, and now, as you've just indicated, it's pretty much calm. It's cleared out because of the onslaught. But let me go to the essence of this. Anytime something like this is happening, particularly in this region of the world, look for the empire. Look for the United States. We had a plan. I was there. I was briefed on the plan by an Air Force three-star general in the Pentagon to take on Syria and Bashar al-Assad immediately following our unseating of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Didn't go according to plan, as you may recall. We had an insurgency developing in Iraq, and therefore, all we could do was covert operations against Assad. But we found something called ISIS, and particularly we found Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and we found a whole lot of Sunnis who were really irritated at the way the Shia were treating them now in Baghdad and otherwise in Iraq. Long story short to say, we began to develop ISIS. We began to develop a number of other terrorist organizations to essentially fight against Assad in Syria for us. We even had one occasion where the military in Syria, there illegally, the U.S. military in Syria illegally, was having a firefight with CIA-backed and CIA agents present with them forces. So we had blue on blue, we call it in the military. Friendly shooting friendly, and vice versa. That's how complicated it was in Syria. That has not stopped. We have never stopped wanting to overthrow Bashar al-Assad. So why did we come to a ceasefire in Israel all of a sudden when it didn't look like either side was really winning and Israel looked like it might be losing a bit?! And you'd say, well, that's the reason for a ceasefire. Au contraire. We came to a ceasefire because the United States asked Netanyahu to help us with the action in Syria, which was going to be ongoing very shortly. Now the one question in my mind, I don't have any sources on this, is Erdogan coordinating with Washington also. It wouldn't surprise me at all that he might be doing so because he sees a great opportunity here, not only to rid himself of some of the people he detests, but also to get a lot of Syrian refugees – I think it's over 2 million in Turkey – out. And he sees an opportunity perhaps even to get himself some buffer space and to keep that buffer space. So you have all these forces, and of course, as you indicated, you have the Russians very much opposed to all of this, including the overthrow of Assad. And asking the Iranians to support as well. I don't think they have to ask them too hard. But you've got everyone in this, and as we've been saying all along, Zain, this has every prospect to be a Southwest Asia region-wide war and pull in all manner of parties. At the same time, just to leap ahead a bit, we are fomenting another velvet revolution, call it whatever you want, in Tbilisi, Georgia. We're trying to get the party that was just narrowly defeated and was very much adamantly on our side, not just for EU membership, but for NATO membership, we're trying to get them in power rather than the party that actually won the election. The election was free and fair for all we can tell, and they won. They want to be more circumspect. They want to balance Moscow and Washington and NATO against one another, not in a dramatically evil sort of way. They just want to survive. They do want to be a member of the

EU. I don't think they want to be, this party, wants to be a member of NATO because they understand that that's a road too far for Moscow. So they want a balanced foreign and security policy, which is pretty smart. But this other party being agitated by the CIA and lots and lots of money pouring in, just as we always do with these things, the printing presses are running, they want a second front, a third front, actually, given Syria being a second front, opened against Moscow, Ukraine, Syria and Georgia. This is preposterous, but it is the hand of the empire everywhere you look.

ZR: Do you think Bashar al-Assad can survive, given that Russia is already caught up in its own region in Kursk, trying to stave off the Ukrainians, and is already in Eastern Ukraine? Iran is caught up with Israel and its proxy in Hezbollah weakened, and with this ongoing offensive of the HTS. Do you think Bashar al-Assad can survive, given the fragility both Iran and Russia currently are in?

LW: Well, clearly there is a lower strategic objective, if you will. The empire's strategic objective is simply to get rid of Assad and to do to Syria what we did to Iraq and to Afghanistan and a few other places, Libya; think what the empire has done of late. That's one of the sub-objectives, if you will, and that's the reason Israel pitched in so hard, because what they want to do is get rid of Assad and cut that line between Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon and have no traffic going back and forth of any sort. And they see that as a major accomplishment. But back to the details of your question, I don't think the IDF is doing well right now. They are having significant problems in Gaza. They're having significant problems with the reservists not answering their call to duty. They're having problems with the high wounded in action count and a fairly high killed in action count. And I want to make this point to your listeners, in modern warfare with modern states, killed in action count is not really indicative of winning and losing. It's the wounded in action that you want to look at. And just look at Iraq and Afghanistan for arguably the most modern military in the world, look at that and you see it's 15/16 to one. And the reason for that is modern armies have incredibly good battlefield surgery, battlefield hospitals, and they have excellent medical evacuation, helicopter usually, but speedy evacuation. And look at Israel, it's operating basically on very narrow interior lines. So it's a very short distance from the battlefield to surgery. Their WIA count is 15, 16, 17 times the killed account, just like it was for us in Afghanistan and Iraq. That's an indicator that they aren't doing that well. And Hezbollah really did the same thing to them here recently they did in 2006. They handed them their rear end in many respects. They caused a lot of casualties, killed a lot of officers even. So this is a situation that isn't as positive, as you might say, for Israel as it looks. But that doesn't matter to the empire. The empire is going to use Israel as it uses everyone else to fight its battles for it. And it wants to get rid of Assad and it is going to if it possibly can. To your question about Russia, I don't think Russia has the challenge that we do, the empire, with regard to this particular expansion in Syria. Let's look at what they have now. They have a battle-hardened military, probably the most battle-hardened in the world right now, well over a million. It takes me back to our Civil War days, just for a moment, a historical illusion. Europe was really shivering in 1865 because a million men had been put in the field by the Union of the United States of America and they were battle-hardened and ready to go. And most of the

European powers had observers on our civil war battlefields. And all the cables going back from their consuls and other people in this country were: Don't mess with these people, don't get them mad because they've got the largest army in the world and it is totally battle-hardened. Well, think Russia today. Not only that, they have built their defensive industrial base up to the point where they can support the kind of conflict that's been going on, World War I kind of conflict in Ukraine. So I have no problem thinking that they could shift military power where they need to and oppose the empire. And I won't tell you about the state of the empire's conventional might, it's extremely weak. So I don't see Russia having any problem supporting this second, third front, whatever, which is one of the reasons why I think we're trying to open another front, even in Georgia. And look what we're doing, we're not doing it ourselves, we're using proxies. We're killing other people. Tens of thousands of Ukrainians and now people in Syria and people in Lebanon and people in Gaza, of course, because Israel couldn't be doing what it's doing without the empire backing it fully. So we're looking at a high potential for not only a region-wide war in Southwest Asia, we're looking for it to spread from there to Ukraine and perhaps even further.

ZR: Let us dig deeper into Ukraine. Let me first recap some of the most notable developments for our viewers. In August, Ukraine launched an incursion into Russia's Kursk Oblast, and according to the German media, made considerable progress, capturing 1,250 square kilometers of territory. However, according to a recent report by the BBC, Russia has already recaptured 40 % of that territory. Russia, on the other hand, continues to make notable progress in Eastern Ukraine, taking over more strategic territory week after week. In October alone, it is estimated that it took over 500 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory, the most it's taken since the early days of its invasion in 2022. After months of indecisiveness, President Biden finally gave Ukraine permission to deploy the Army Tactical Missile System, also known as ATACMS, citing the arrival of North Korean troops. ATACMS, for our viewers, is a US-made supersonic tactical ballistic missile with a range of 300 kilometers. Shortly thereafter, Ukraine used this, as well as its UK counterpart, the Shadow Storm, cruise missiles to strike a weapons depot in Russia. In response, Russia not only launched new intermediate range ballistic missiles, capable of attacking targets at a speed of three kilometers per second at Ukraine, but also updated its nuclear doctrine, which now says an attack from a non-nuclear state, if backed by a nuclear power, will be treated as a joint assault on Russia, and thus could permit the use of nuclear weapons. Moving forward, Ukraine President Zelensky recently for the first time stated that he would be open for diplomacy if all the territories that Kiev controls would be accepted by NATO. However, this request has been sidelined by Western leaders, as they continue to follow the policy of sending more weapons to Ukraine. The US recently approved a military package of 750 million dollars for Ukraine that includes anti-drone systems and mines, whereas Germany approved a package of 650 million euros that includes air defense systems, Leopard 1 tanks, and armed drones. To the question: Why do you think President Biden decided to authorize the use of ATACMS cruise missiles now, when he had numerous opportunities to do so in the past? And secondly, do you think it will give Ukraine the capability to halt Russia's advance, or at the very least put them in a better negotiating position in the future?

LW: Again, let me see if I can unpack a lot of questions. First of all, I think it's very important for your listeners to understand that categorically, Russia has won the war, period. What you're seeing from NATO, and from Washington and London in particular, and from a very embattled German chancellor who could be thrown out at any moment, is desperation to seal some sort of reputation for the Democratic Party and Joe Biden with regard to Ukraine, because he is lost, and NATO is lost. You're also seeing an attempt by them probably to hamstring President Trump as he comes into office, and if he tries to do what he said he would do, which is to – and I think this was very important with a lot of swing voters, they came over to Trump because he said this. They voted for him, maybe holding their nose, but he said he would shut down the war in Ukraine. That's a promise he made and a promise I suspect he wants to keep, and President Biden is contrary to what is being put out by our media, that they're seeing eye to eye and they're talking with one another, including their national security advisors, I think they're trying to hamstring Trump. They're trying to make sure that enough is committed to Ukraine that, one, it won't in any way in history's eyes look like Biden lost. I think that's a futile situation for him, but that's what they're trying to do. And second, they're trying to make it impossible for him to go speedily to a peace agreement, a ceasefire and a peace agreement, negotiations and such. To the ATACMS, the Storm Shadows and the other roughly 300 kilometer range missiles, that was an insane thing to do because it told Putin, as you indicated with your question, it told Putin satellite imagery is necessary or satellite guidance is necessary and technicians on the ground are necessary. Ukraine has neither. Therefore, Washington, London, France, Germany, someone, probably Washington, is right there in the middle of the war and Putin has every right, even under Article 51, the UN Right to Defense article, he has every right to strike a NATO target now because they are at war with him. I would say that he would go after something that is very much identified as NATO and not strictly Polish in Poland. He could go anywhere. He could go to Washington. He could go to any NATO country. He could go to Germany. He could go anywhere he wants to go. I don't think he'd go to Hungary or one of the countries that has less to do with the war in Ukraine, but he could. And look at what we do. Your comment was interesting from the perspective of I put a map down of the country with eleven time zones, Russia, and I said: Okay, here's an ATACMS. Can you even identify it going into Russian territory? It's such short distance. Well, if you had a really high resolution satellite, you probably could, but this is nothing – except what I just explained. Putin has now evidence that NATO, I mean, stark evidence that NATO is involved in the war. Of course, he's had evidence, indirect evidence, all along, but now he has stark evidence, and therefore, he shot a ballistic missile, the Oreshnik, which is a devastating missile. It is – remind me to come back to this if I forget – it is not what he's got that is truly devastating. He hasn't shot one of those yet, but it is a devastatingly conventional, if you want it to be, missile. But he had to announce, because it is a ballistic missile when it fires, he had to announce the notice to airmen and all the other things you do when you fire a ballistic missile. Incidentally, your listeners may not know this, he made the same announcement on the 28th of November and made it go through the 30th of November. We can expect more of those announcements that are made when a ballistic missile clears its silo or comes out. Very interesting. Is he setting us up for maybe Avangard missiles, which are 33,000 kilometers per hour missiles. In U.S. terms, that's about 21,000 miles an hour. There is nothing in God's earth that can shoot these

down, nothing that can stop them. And they can be conventional, just like the Oreshnik. They can be conventional. By the way, there are a lot of other, not a lot, but there are at least two, three other variations of Oreshnik. One is a naval one that was on Admiral Gorshkov when it steamed to Cuba and you had people as erudite as John Mearsheimer said no real power was on Gorshkov. John, you need to go and take a look at these hypervelocity missiles that this ship was carrying. These are extremely fast missiles. One of them shot at a U.S. aircraft carrier and it would be down. It would be down with 5,000 hands, all that air wings and everything else on that carrier. 14 billion dollar weapon of war down. That's what would happen. These are incredibly powerful missiles and they are a technological leap and it's a leap that we are desperate now and we are trying, we're putting all kinds of money into it right now, this minute as I'm speaking, to come up with a counterpart, something that is as undefeatable as this body of missiles is. Back to Ukraine for a moment. I think what we're looking at is Zelensky getting away from his handlers every now and then and principally Washington and making some statements that might seem like they're overarching and that they are insane. But I think what he's trying to do is, because I'm being told by others, that behind the scenes he's saying the opposite. He knows the war has to stop or he's not going to have any Ukraine left to govern. And probably he's going to be taken out by his own people; a very Ukrainian thing to do. But when he comes out in the public and he makes these statements like, I've got to be a member of NATO, what he's doing is he's trying to puff up his position to the point that when he does, hopefully, get to the point where he's negotiating, he's got something to surrender. He's got nothing right now to give Putin when he goes to a negotiation, if it were even possible for Zelensky to be the negotiator for Ukraine, that's questionable too. But he's trying to build up a situation where he can hand some things off. Okay, I'm not going to be a member of NATO. There's no aspiration to be a member of NATO. That sort of thing. I'll give you that. Well, Putin knows that is a non-starter. But Zelensky has got to have some negotiating position. He's got to have some, so to speak, high ground. And I think he's trying to rhetorically create that right now. But I'm very worried because every time anything hints at that sort of thing from him, we slam down on him. And the Brits slam down on him. I don't know about Scholz in Germany or Macron in France, I don't think they're in that ball game right now. I think secretly they would like to see this shut down and like to see the killing stop. And then the statement by Blinken; I was ashamed of my Secretary of State before, now I'm disgusted utterly by him. To come out and say what he said about manpower and need to mobilize more Ukrainians. What are we going to do, mobilize 13 and 14 year olds? Get out there yourself, Tony Blinken, on the front lines with a rifle and fight if you feel so viscerally about Ukraine's position. They've already lost so many people, it's incredible that we're allowing this to go on. And all we're doing in the process, if you understand your Clausewitz and the dynamics of war that Clausewitz talks very precisely and very accurately about, you understand that every day that goes by and the Russians make another three or four kilometers with almost no opposition and their major reason for slowing it all is to accept Ukrainian prisoners who want to come to the Russian ranks to get out of the handle that they're in, you understand that the dynamics of that are: When is the military going to tell Putin, let's just keep going? And they will have made real the stupid things that Blinken and Sullivan and Biden have said, about Putin wanting other things, if we give him Ukraine. He doesn't want Ukraine. He only wants the territory he's now annexed through

military power. Oh, he'll go to Estonia, he'll go to Latvia, he'll come after Germany, he'll come after France. That is hogwash. I can't believe that the world wakes up and reads that crap and believes it. I can't believe my own country is so stupid to believe this stuff that Biden has been putting out. Putin has been explicit. He's not Adolf Hitler, that's a bad historical analogy. He's not Neville Chamberlain for sure. He is a man who thought us putting missiles like the Oreshnik, like the Oreshnik, except not quite as powerful and not as technologically advanced, in eastern Ukraine, which is precisely what we were going to do. And having them have a very short flight time to Moscow and other critical areas west of the Urals. So that's why he did it. He's satisfied that need now by the territory he now defacto owns. Let's stop because all we're doing is killing people. But we seem, the empire, down there now in Syria, in Israel, in Gaza and in Lebanon, we seem to want to sacrifice other human beings for our imperial aims and we seem to have no compunction about it. We are bloodthirsty.

ZR: In 2022, in light of the Russian invasion, Germany established a €100 billion military fund to counter what they called an existential security threat that Russia poses to Europe and Germany. According to Euronews, military spending grew in 22 of the 27 European Union member states and as a whole block, the EU military spending is expected to reach €326 billion, which is around 1.9 % of the EU's GDP. However, NATO Secretary General, Mark Rutte, recently came out and stated that the 2% is not even enough to maintain deterrence against Russia in the long term. Taking this militarization into context, many anticipate that perhaps the Ukrainian war could be Europeanized, meaning Europe will have to pay more. The war will continue but with less US funding, which Trump could then sell to his base saying: See, I have made the Europeans pay more for the war. This, after all, is Europe's problem and not ours. In this way, the US could achieve its geopolitical goals such as weakening Russia with European taxpayers filling the bill. Could you provide your assessment of what Europe should expect in terms of militarization and war when Trump ascends to power?

LW: There is some validity to the remarks that you just made and the questions that you just asked with regard to Europe, I think. But it is a validity and a truth, a reality, if you will, that will only come about if the Europeans are stupid, truly. And I sense that Germany might be waking up in its political situation. I sense that France might be waking up a bit, too. I mean, the domestic problems in France right now are keeping – they may unseat Macron, ultimately, with the prime minister now and the situation he's in. So, the political situations in the two principal countries in NATO, other than the United States and Turkey, is dicey at the moment. So, there is some potential for adverse developments like you've just described. But I think what Trump wants to do, and let me preface this, I have no idea on this earth what Donald Trump wants to do. The man is all over the map. He is so mercurial. He is so indecipherable in terms of having any strategic goals at all. And frankly, the cabinet he's putting together right now is about two-thirds neoconservatives par excellence. They are people who want – Marco Rubio, the Secretary of State, he wants to fight everybody in Latin America, from Venezuela to Argentina to Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, he hates him. Look at the guy that he selected, Pete Hegseth, for the Pentagon. A cipher, really, but not

a cipher in terms of his personal life and in terms of where he's been, giving him no bona fides whatsoever for managing the largest not-for-profit organization on the face of the earth, the Department of Defense of the Empire. No skills whatsoever, but he's going to go there. And he is an absolute zealot for Zionism. I've listened to some of his speeches where he says: The Jews are the chosen people and Israel is their state and we are wedded to the chosen people. And you want to say: And we're going to bring about Armageddon. Because that sounds like what he's talking, he sounds like a Baptist preacher. So how do you figure out what Trump is going to do? And then you go back and you look at when he was president before and what he did with regard to North Korea and Kim Jong Un. I mean, all the sentiment he stirred up and desire he stirred up in South Korea, some of it just came to pass in a strange sort of way with this recent declaration of martial law by President Yoon. And then the parliament sat, telling him: No way, you're not going to do that. This is part of the aspirations in the majority party in Korea. Really, not the president's party, but the majority party in Korea or parties, I should say, they always have multiple parties. It's their opinion and their opinion was generated and made hopeful by Donald Trump and then just obliterated by Donald Trump. No follow up with Kim Jong Un at all. And Biden doesn't even know Kim Jong Un exists. And what has he done? He's become a partner with Russia now. This was another repost by Putin because South Korea sent something like, I forget the exact total, but I think it was something like half a million 155 artillery rounds to the war in Ukraine. Korea didn't want to, but we bent their arm and made them do it. So what did Putin do? He makes a defense pact with Pyongyang overnight. Okay, you do that, I'll do this. We have made so many mistakes, so many mistakes that we ought to go down as one of the worst empires at its end that ever existed. We make the Western Empire and Rome look good by comparison. All to say that I think Europe's going to have to grow up. I believe Europe is going to have to grow up and it's going to have to do what we started to do, tried to do, when Chairman Powell wanted to do it, create a European security identity, make it separate from NATO, make it not pull its troops from NATO, make it do things in Europe that needed to be done. Like, for example, then the Balkans, when we wound up and the UN wound up doing the Balkans because the Europeans didn't have the courage or the guts or the wherewithal to do it. We need some kind of force in Europe that is independent of NATO and stands up for – call it a pan-European army, or a pan-European military organization or something. Maybe we would continue to give our nuclear umbrella that kind of support, an Article 5 type support with the nuclear umbrella being the enforcement mechanism. I don't know. Right now, the nuclear situation is so desperate that I'm worried seriously about what we might do to ourselves, the whole human race, because we have no treaties left, no treaties whatsoever. And incidentally, this is a side note, but the Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty, the INF Treaty, negotiated at great pains by the German leaders, the U.S. leaders, ultimately Gorbachev in a time of perestroika and glasnost and ultimately the most successful nuclear weapons negotiations in the world. Because we, as Powell used to say all the time, and he was instrumental in this as both chairman and as national security advisor to Ronald Reagan and then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, we eliminated an entire class of weapons, an entire class of weapons, and these missiles that are shooting around right now are that class of weapons. And we basically said to one another: We understand how these are the most dangerous nuclear weapons on the face of the earth. We understand our monopoly on them

right now. Let's start by eliminating these weapons for us and hoping that that precedent, that example, will keep others from trying these things. They're very expensive too, so others have a disincentive to do it. Pakistan, India, countries like that. We failed now. We eliminated that treaty. We eliminated that treaty and now we're in a nuclear arms race that makes the one we were in during the Cold War pale in comparison because we also have these wars going on around the globe that are productive of the possibility that these weapons will be used with nuclear warheads. So we're in a very dangerous situation right now and again I come back to my first and most, I hope, most powerful comment, the American empire is at the heart of all of this. We will be the ones to use a nuclear weapon first, just as we were in 1945. We were the sole owner then, but we will be the ones to first use a nuclear weapon. I say that because our conventional capability, and this brings us back to the previous remarks I made, our conventional war fighting capability peaked with the first Gulf War. It peaked technologically, training, maintenance, equipment, you name it, it peaked in 1990 -91 with the Gulf War that we so resoundingly were victorious in and we fulfilled the UN resolution and left. That was the peak of the American conventional military. Ever since then it's been going dramatically downhill. Afghanistan was not just the problems with the country, it was not just the problems in Iraq in the second war, we really don't have a conventional military that could fight anybody on any battlefield on this earth that was worth a damn, certainly not Russia, China, and not even Iran, and win. So what does that mean? That means that we are strategically, depending on our nuclear arsenal to get us out of the mess we might get in, should the Chinese call our bluff, should the Russians call our bluff, should the Iranians call our bluff by having us attack them. I mean that's what Netanyahu wants. He wants, ultimately, this is his first and foremost wish for the United States to take out Iran. He'd be right there with us, he'd be on our flank, probably in our rear, but he'd be right there doing it with us, take out Iran. We can't do it, Zain. We can't even defeat Iran because our conventional might has atrophied so greatly. And we have, please listen to this, your listeners, we have no industrial base left. We can't build ships, we can't build airplanes, we can't build any of the accouterments of conventional warfare fast enough to defeat a country like China or a country like Russia. China has 6,000 ships in its deep water, not its fishing fleet, tens of thousands in its fishing fleet, it has 6,000 in its deep water fishing fleet, many of which are armed. I'm not even talking about their Navy, I'm talking about their fishing fleet. And they make a ship a month or 20 or 30. We can't make a ship a year. This is really frightening for a person who spent 31 years in the military because I understand just how false is the empire's promise to the world. And I understand how much we are engaged in using proxies like Ukraine, like Israel, like we'd like to do with Georgia to fight our wars for us because we can.

ZR: Let us switch gears and focus on the Middle East, namely the situation between Lebanon and Israel. In regards to Lebanon, at the end of November, a ceasefire agreement was reached between Hezbollah and Israel, brokered by France and the US. The ceasefire outlines a 60-day break in fighting and that Hezbollah withdraws its fighters 30 km in southern Lebanon towards the Litani river, while the Israeli army withdraws from Lebanon completely. However, the ceasefire agreement is being tested to its limits, given that France, which acts as an observer, has already accused Israel of 52 ceasefire violations, while Israel claims it was responding to Hezbollah transgressions. An article by the Times of Israel states that

according to the terms and agreement of the ceasefire, Israel has to report any Hezbollah transgressions to the US-led international oversight body, of which France is also a member, and failed to do so. The Lebanese Health Ministry so far has reported that 4,047 people have been killed and another 15,983 injured in Israeli attacks since they began. You have already talked about this, but I would like to dig deeper into this matter. Why do you think the ceasefire agreement was reached? I mean, the Israeli camp is saying that Hezbollah has been defeated and we took out the leadership and therefore hailed this as a victory. Whereas on the other side, Hezbollah said Israel's army was weakened in southern Lebanon and therefore it was a victory for them. Can you provide an objective view of why the ceasefire agreement was actually reached?

LW: First, let me say that I think that those statements that you were just citing there, most of them are fabrications or outright lies on both sides. I think Hezbollah has been severely degraded, certainly in its leadership ranks. I don't think they've been degraded to the point, though, where Israel could claim a victory at all. On the other side, I think the Israeli Defense Force met a buzzsaw. They really met a formidable opponent and that opponent handed them tactical defeat after tactical defeat. They couldn't even go to their assembly areas with their reserves when they wanted to reinforce when they got to Litani river, for example. They wanted to reinforce because the Hezbollah fighters had targeted their assembly areas and they couldn't assemble to reinforce the front lines. They met a formidable enemy, as they did in 2006. In fact, as they have met since its creation after their invasion in 1982. Hezbollah is no paper tiger. There's no question about that. So what do they do when they have this sort of situation? Go back to the past, they've done it every time. They bomb civilian infrastructure. They just bomb and bomb and bomb. That's what Israel does best. Its air force drops bombs because it does so basically with impunity. Their aircraft cannot be shot down or if they are shot down, it's a freak accident or it's a maintenance problem or whatever. That's what they do. I call them the cowards of the air because what they do is drop these 250-500 pound bombs on civilians. Look at them. Just look at the pictures of Beirut and elsewhere that they've dropped these bombs. It's horrible what they're doing. There's an ulterior motive here, too, though. They're destroying the only country that has the potential close by them to be their economic competitor. So the explosion in Beirut's harbor didn't do enough. The Israelis want to finish it all. I don't put it past the Israelis to covet more Lebanese territory, too, especially that territory that bears water. So watch this very closely. But to the specifics, I think the main reason that the timing of the ceasefire was as it was, was a combination of two things. Israel was taking significant casualties and needed to recoup and reorganize and readjust and look at its strategy again. And second, we asked them to, so that they could divert attention and forces to the imbroglio that's now going on in Syria, which is our deal along with Erdogan. What I would really like to know is who talked to Erdogan? And did Erdogan get talked to? And did everyone agree to do all this? Or did we just ferried out the idea that Erdogan was going to do what he was going to do anyway and just jump in? I don't know. Is there a collusion, is what I'm asking, between Ankara and Washington? I wouldn't be surprised. The other aspect of the ceasefire that you mentioned, though, is clear to everyone who has any contact with people in the region. You can't read about it in our media. Our media is brain dead. And that's one of our real problems right now. Notice the media in

South Korea when the martial law was declared. South Korea has incredibly good media. They span the spectrum. They speak to all the subjects. And guess what? South Koreans read and watch their media because they know that and they understand it. So it's a real part of their democracy, a powerful, strong, healthy part of their democracy. We don't have it anymore in America. All we have is people who sing the administration's tune. And they're having trouble right now because they're trying to figure out what tune to sing for Donald Trump. And they haven't figured it out yet. They only have the evidence of the first term. But what I'm heading at with this is the ceasefire is being violated on both sides. No one's paying any attention to it, so it's not really a ceasefire. What it is is a respite for Israel to do what the US asked it to do with regard to Syria and to lick its wounds and try to figure out a better strategy if they resume the war with Lebanon. It really is a war with Lebanon and with Hezbollah. And my prediction would be 60-40, 60 % that they'll resume the war once they get their act together and they think they can do the damage they want to do and the way they want to do it. And that'll depend partly on how much damage they do to Hezbollah and Iranian contacts they're with in Syria. Because that's really why they're there with us in Syria is to try and destroy that link that exists across Syria with Iran to Hezbollah. And therefore probably, you know, like cutting the roots of a plant, you would probably do Hezbollah existential damage. And Hezbollah knows that, which is why they're pouring into the conflict in Syria too. I mean, we've got everybody down there now. Pretty soon we'll have the kitchen sink down there. So this is all connected, but again I go back to my principal point, the thread in the center of it is the American empire trying to do what it has tried to do since it started after Bashar al-Assad and has failed to do. And now I think it's even some spite on the part of the American empire and its leadership that they can't get rid of Bashar al-Assad. When the Arab League invited him back in, when those people began to talk to him again, we were furious. We were furious. We let everybody there know, and they told us, middle finger, you know, we'll do what we want to do in our region, which is, well, what they should do, not the empire's bidding. And now this is an attempt to thwart that too. And the negotiations with the Emirates right now are significant in that respect because they were doing the most, apparently, at least to welcome Assad back into the fold. So we've got to go whip up on people who are not following our lead. It's a convoluted situation. There's no question about it. But again, I want people to know, at the center of this situation is the empire, still trying, with regard to Syria, still trying to rid itself of Bashar al-Assad.

ZR: Let us now look at Israel's other war, namely in Gaza, where the death toll has exceeded 44,600. In November, Human Rights Watch published a report holding Israel responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. And this month, Amnesty International also released a report which documents how Israel is violating the Genocide Convention with specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza. And let me quote their General Secretary Agnes Callamard here: "Month after month, Israel has treated Palestinians in Gaza as a subhuman group unworthy of human rights and dignity, demonstrating its intent to physically destroy them", unquote. Further on, the General Secretary of Amnesty International states, and let me quote her here: "All states with influence over Israel, particularly key arms suppliers like the USA and Germany, but also other EU member states, the UK and others, must act now to bring Israel's atrocities against Palestinians in Gaza to an immediate end",

unquote. End of November, the International Criminal Court, ICC, issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as Hamas military commander, Mohammed Deif. Regarding the arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant, the ICC stated that they are responsible for the war crimes of using starvation as a method of warfare, and are guilty of crimes against humanity through murder, persecution and other inhumane acts. The US fundamentally rejected these arrest warrants, accusing the ICC of drawing a false equivalence between Israel and Hamas, as well as the ICC employing a flawed process to come to this conclusion. When the ICC issued arrest warrants for Russian President Putin for the war crime of the illegal deportation and transfer of children during the Russian war in Ukraine, the US welcomed it. Now that the ICC has issued arrest warrants against a US ally and Netanyahu, the US is fundamentally objecting it, even though both the US and Germany rhetorically champion a rules-based order that they claim is continuously being violated by countries like Russia and China. Can you comment on the United States' historical position as well as recent reactions towards the International Criminal Court?

LW: You have given me another complex question. I have an almost intimate relationship in terms of in and out, in and out, in and out, both as Chief of Staff to Secretary Powell and Special Assistant to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Powell, and in the interim between, and in my collegiate experience with the ICJ and the ICC. I've met some of their best prosecutors, their best judges, if you will, and even more so some of their best investigators. And let me go back to your first part with Amnesty International. Let me just end that by saying the Empire is trying to end the ICJ and the ICC. In other words, we're trying to end international humanitarian law, international humanitarian justice, and international humanitarianism, period. We used to have a saying in the military. It was the ICCB. You know what the B stood for? Black. The International Criminal Court went after only, at the behest of the United States, Africans. Then they went after Milosevic, and so we changed it to the ICCBS, Black and Serb. Because the ICC, people think the ICC and the ICJ were operating, you know, with the United States, sort of just a mad sandbox kid, you know, who didn't want to play in that game, and that they could do with it. They were doing our will every time they went after somebody, basically. Because, let's face it, the empire is powerful, very powerful. So we could stand back and say: We don't like you, we don't like what you're doing, we're not going to sign up to your protocols, we're not going to be a signatory, we're not going to sign the Rome Statute, we're not going to do this. And then in the background, we made sure we manipulated everything they did. So this is one American who is very pleased and happy to see, not completely, because they still haven't divorced themselves, and Putin is a case in point, from our wishes, but they are actually doing other things now, that are right, proper, decent, and lawful, in terms of international law. This is terrific, and we're trying to stanch them, we're trying to kill them, we're trying to get rid of them. Oh, we got congressmen who stand up on their hind feet and say they're going to sanction the leaders of the court, and the people in the court in general, and they're going to sanction the court, and such and such. This is nonsense, but again, it's the empire, it's the empire doing its thing. Let me go back to Amnesty International, you asked me so much. Do you know the Amnesty International group in Israel disowned the Amnesty International group writ larges report,

even though that report was very well done, and was to the point?! I understood yesterday that four or five of the members of the Amnesty International Israel group turned and walked out, because they were so angry with their own AI group disowning the larger AI group's finding. That should happen more often. There are some decent people left in Israel, and this needs to get out. Netanyahu has done the same thing to his press and his media that we have done in our country. They sing his tunes. Sheldon Adelson, before he died, bought Netanyahu about three quarters of the press around Tel Aviv that meant anything, media, and gave it to him. And he's been using it ever since. Haaretz, the oldest newspaper in Israel, is about the only holdout, and right now, you may know, he's pretty much put Haaretz on warning that he's going to stifle them completely. Just like he did Al Jazeera with regard to operating inside Israel. So, you're looking at a situation where everything that's been done by the ICJ and the ICC, and the warrants that have been issued with respect to Israel, are at best what they should be, but at worst, not what everybody's saying in the empire, the worst is they should have indicted a lot of other people. Right off the bat, Ben Gevir and Smotrich. They should have been right in the dock with Netanyahu and Gallant. It doesn't make any sense that these two criminals, arch criminals murderers, they take joy in what they're doing. They revel at what they're doing in Palestine, in Gaza. They should be right there with him. So, that's the criticism I would have, that they should have put those guys in there too. In terms of putting a dead Hamas fighter in there, that's an attempt, typical of the court, again, to balance the finding. It really makes no sense. I probably would have, I would have made it a more thorough look at the Hamas side of it. Maybe they did. Maybe they did. And here's an aside, Zain. When I was in Paris in January of 2019, I was there at the invitation of a German delegation, which was meeting in Paris with a number of Americans, to meet with terrorists, 9/11 terrorists, supposedly, who'd been detained in Guantanamo and were being freed because they were being turned over finally to the states to whom they belong, in this case France, and we wanted to interview some of them. And we wanted to talk with the French and the Germans about the very public torture program that President Bush had started in the United States. All to say, on the third day we were there, we got to meet with one of the very talented investigators for the court, for the International Criminal Court, who was then investigating in the first stage, which is not ruled so much by the rules of evidence and the constraints that other investigations would be, the second phase or the third phase, but just is out there to determine whether a case exists, and so they're not really constrained. And she was a very impressive woman, and she briefed us on the case against Afghanistan, the government of Afghanistan, the Taliban, and the United States and NATO. And we asked her at the end of a very, very good briefing, do you think it'll make it to the second phase where the rules of evidence and such will pertain, where it's much harder to do your investigations and come out with a case that a judge would approve prosecuting? Maybe, she said. And we said: Why? Well, after all, it is the United States. And sure enough, it got killed. I think it made it into the second stage, and then they realized during that stage, very shortly after it started, that they weren't going to go anywhere because the United States was pressing on them so hard, and so they killed the thing. But she had a very good prima facie case that she had built up that there were war crimes. And damn well, I know there were war crimes in Afghanistan by all three of the accused parties. But, you know, that's how it operates. That's how this system works. Justice is not blind so much as justice belongs to the empire. And

that's a long way around to say: I don't think we're going to ever see the fulfillment of any of these warrants, as it were.

I do remember, however, I remember this vividly, George W. Bush, president of the United States, later not traveling to a specific country because there were existing warrants out for people who had done certain things with regard to torture, of which he would be the prime one. And so he canceled his trip. So that might have some impact, for example, more widespread impact on people like Gallant and Netanyahu, because there are countries that have said, we are signatories, and therefore we would have to enforce the rules if he were to travel here. Now, I think Britain has backed off of that a little bit. Maybe Macron has backed off of that a little bit. But they would be put in a difficult situation if Netanyahu were to defy the edict and travel to a country like that. I don't expect him to, because he's as circumspect as George W. Bush was, and he's in more trouble than George W. Bush was. I once had a conversation with Sir Nigel Rodley in Syracuse, Sicily. Incidentally, we were there to talk about international criminal justice under the guise of a very brilliant Egyptian by the name of Cherif Bassiouni, I believe, if I remember right. My memory is terrible these days. But we were in our cups, so to speak, in a restaurant in Sicily, about 22:00 in the evening. And Sir Nigel had been the judge on one of the Sierra Leone courts, as I recall. And I turned to him because I'd learned in the previous three days that he was just an incredible lawyer in terms of international criminal justice. And I said: Sir Nigel, tell me, do we do any good? And he said: Who is we? And I said: We, the people who believe in international law. Do we do any good? And he looked at me and he said: We bother the buggers. And the buggers to him was Washington and London. And I think that's it. That's what the courts do. They make us think about our immorality. They make us think about killing people, women and children in Gaza. They make us consider the crimes we're involved in. Now does it make us stop? Not often. But at least it makes us think.

ZR: There are so many crises around the world. And whenever we get to the end, we never come to talk about this critical issue. Nevertheless, I made a point to address this issue, no matter what happens, namely, the issue around Taiwan and China. Recently, China was enraged after US Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson announced that he had a call with the Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te. China's foreign minister then swiftly announced sanctions on 13 US military firms. Last month, Washington also approved a \$387 million defense package for Taiwan, which included spare parts for fighter jets, which China asserts seriously damaged its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Beijing's foreign ministry last week called on Washington, and let me quote them here, quote: "To deliver on the promise of American leaders not to support Taiwan independence, to stop interfering in China's internal affairs, and to stop sending wrong signals to Taiwan separatist forces", unquote. Regarding the Taiwan policy, I looked up the US State Department's website, and I found the following passage, quote: "The United States has a longstanding One-China policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three US-China joint communiques, and the Six Assurances. We oppose any unilateral change to the status quo from either side. We do not support Taiwan independence and expect cross-Strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means", unquote. Can you first talk about the so-called longstanding One-China policy of the United States,

and then elaborate why the US is so keen on providing protection to Taiwan, a country which is 11,481 km away from it, if it means provoking a nuclear superpower in China?

LW: This is perhaps your most solid question in terms of reality today, and one that I know a great deal about because I've been immersed in US-China relations for almost 25 years. I made my first trip to China in the 80s when the Navy, I was working for the Navy and we made a trip there to begin to open some sort of military-to-military relations. I would bet you that Tony Blinken, the worst Secretary of State in the history of the United States of America, the worst Secretary of State since Thomas Jefferson, has never read that policy. I would almost be willing to bet he has never read that policy. Just like apparently he's never read any of the laws that restrict him from lying to the Congress about the use of American weapons to kill men, women, and children, and then to starve them to death in Gaza. This is an unconscionable Secretary of State, despicable Secretary of State, and he's joined at the hip with the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, and they're all joined with that dementia-oppressed president called Joseph Biden, one of the worst presidents in the post-World War II era, in my view, and I've taught that era for a long time on two campuses. Where do we go from here, though? From a president that I served, George W. Bush, who had many peccadilloes and created a lot of problems and created war crimes, and certainly with torture he did, and the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003, but even with George W. Bush, he understood the US-China relationship, and as a consequence, he left it almost exclusively to Colin Powell, the one true issue that Powell dealt with for his entire four years as Secretary of State was China. We understood what you just read, and we understood how important living up to that communique and that policy was. Strategic competition, we called it, both in the financial and economic sphere and, if necessary, in the military sphere, but not to the point that we would, in fact, invite a war over Taiwan. Keep Taiwan strong under the TRA, the Taiwan Relations Act, but not do anything that would pique Beijing's interest to the point where they would feel like they needed to take Taiwan by military force, which is what they agreed not to do. If we agreed to what we agreed to, they agreed not to use military force. Of late, people like my old boss, Richard Haass, Ambassador Richard Haass, have talked about the need for strategic clarity, that we need to divorce ourselves from that past. Richard is wrong. He is deadly wrong. That has worked, and it will continue to work if we don't have idiots like Biden, Sullivan, and Blinken, but it is a pain to people who now have this arrogance and this hubris of empire that says we must rule everywhere, and that includes the South China Sea and Northeast Asia, where we have been ruled out by China already. Just look at the correlation of forces, as this the old Soviet Union used to call it. China could rip our ass anywhere in East Asia, anywhere, including the South China Sea. They would devastate us, so they are the hegemon out there now. Well, does that change their policy with regard to Taiwan? Apparently not. People have said, like Richard Haass, well, Xi Jinping has been so explicit, he is going to use force. He is going to take Taiwan back. He is going to use force. So we should be strategically clear and tell him not to do it. Well, what does that do other than invite him to do it? And what does it do when we can't do it? What does it do to our reputation? Like Ukraine is going to do to our reputation, Zain. When NATO loses, when we lose in Ukraine, and we have already lost, we are just having a hard time admitting it, that is going to stain our reputation majorly, almost as badly as Afghanistan did, and that stained

us greatly. And so did Iraq. We are doing nothing but staining our reputation all over the world with these blundering moves we make, like that one in Ukraine and like the one we are making in Syria right now. But we keep on doing it. We keep on doing it regardless of that. Are we going to do it with Taiwan? Are we going to let the Chinese get so convinced, as Putin is now, that we are deceptive? That we lie? That we cheat and steal? Look at Angela Merkel's comments about what Minsk was about, you know, giving Ukraine time to rearm. It wasn't anything about a peace treaty. If China comes to that conclusion that we are that arrogant, heuristic beast, and remember I said they are the hegemon in Northeast Asia now, sorry, they are economically, financially, and militarily, they are, do they say, okay, we are going to take it? And you know what the United States is going to do? Nothing. Nothing. Because we know we'd be defeated if we did it. 23 million people on Taiwan, beavering away and having good jobs and a good civilization in society, will be taken over by China. Will that be so bad? I mean, they're already taken over by China in terms of trade and cross-strait work and people traveling and everything else. Well, it will be a blow to the democracy, there's no question about that. And one wonders if it won't be as bad as it was with Hong Kong, maybe even worse. But we won't do anything about it. Because if we do, we'll lose. We'll lose decisively. And that loss, that loss will do what I said before. That loss will cause us to go nuclear. Every war game I ever participated in, over 30 of them in the course of 31 years that we did on China, and the last ones we did were with all the war colleges, they were called JLASS, Joint Land Air Sea Simulation, war games, and I had to coordinate some of them with all the prestigious colleges and all the military forces in the United States of America. And every time we would wind up, and my Marines, my Marines at the Marine Corps War College when I was there, they called it the dilemma of the shark and the elephant. And it's a dilemma that the elephant is ashore with two to four million men and women under arms and bristling to take on the puny little American military, which would be insane if it tried to land in China. And the shark out in the ocean, the US Navy, now, the shark was pretty formidable at that time. The shark has lost a lot of teeth. So it's not quite the same situation. But we would get in there and we would start fighting and we would attrit, we would destroy a third or better of each Air Force and maybe a third or better of each fleet, Navy assets. And then we'd be looking at each other. And the shark couldn't come ashore and the elephant couldn't go to sea. We'd go to nuclear weapons. And we always did in the war games. And the civilian who was playing the president at the war game, a former Secretary of Defense like Bill Perry or someone like that, would always say we're not going there and stop the game. But that's what's going to happen. That's what's going to happen if we go to war over Taiwan. So watch closely this other arena for a potential nuclear war.

ZR: Lawrence Wilkerson, retired Army colonel and former Chief of Staff to then Secretary of State Colin Powell, thank you so much for your time today.

LW: Thank you for having me.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you watched this video until the very end, please take a few moments now to support our crowdfunding campaign via Patreon, PayPal, Betterplace or directly to our bank account. You'll find the links to all of these platforms in

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