

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EPISODE 499 TRANSCRIPT

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host David Feldman. Hello David.

David Feldman: Good morning.

Steve Skrovan: And the man of the hour Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello everybody.

Steve Skrovan: In my lifetime I've noticed that in the beginning wars always seem so clear cut. We know who the good guys are and who the bad guys are. There's a lot of rah-rah. Then as they drag on, as was the case in Vietnam, in Iraq, and in Afghanistan, things get a little murkier. We learn that everybody's motivations are more complex, more nuanced. Pretty soon we forget why the whole thing started in the first place, and ask what the hell are we still doing there? I sense the same thing happening with the war in Ukraine. Ukraine is America's latest proxy war—a proxy war in a long history of proxy wars that many of us didn't even know were happening. We're gonna talk about that history with our guest, award-winning foreign correspondent Stephen Kinzer. Mr. Kinzer argues that proxy wars are “appealing” because they can be fought on the cheap, appalling because they are so very hard to end. As always we will check in with our relentless corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber. But first, let's talk about the incalculable moral cost of proxy wars. David?

David Feldman: Stephen Kinzer is an award-winning foreign correspondent who has covered more than 50 countries on five continents. Mr. Kinzer spent more than 20 years working for the *New York Times*, most of it as a foreign correspondent. After leaving the *Times* in 2005, Mr. Kinzer taught journalism, political science, and international relations at Northwestern University and Boston University. He's now a Senior Fellow at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University, and writes a World Affairs column for the *Boston Globe*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* Stephen Kinzer.

Stephen Kinzer: It's an honor to be with you, thanks.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed Steve. Of all the guest we've had on this program over the years, we've delayed your invitation more than anyone and it's inexcusable, because our listeners should know, that in addition to David's introduction, Stephen Kinzer has written the most revelatory, original exposés of US military empire in one area of the world after another, after being there and reporting on the ground. These are spectacular books and I urge the listeners to start reading them. Let me ask the first question—what do you mean by proxy wars?

Stephen Kinzer: Sometimes big powers want to fight each other but not directly. This was a classic situation during the Cold War. The United States had this idea during the Cold War in the 1950's that we wanted to roll back communism. We weren't just gonna contain it. But when we

started to think about we realized that wasn't very realistic. You're not gonna invade China, or bomb Moscow. So we have to fight someone else. We can't fight the real enemy so we find another enemy to fight. Preferably when we fight another enemy it's friendly with our other big enemy. So a proxy war is a war between two big powers but it's indirect. Each big power uses a smaller proxy to fight for it, or one uses a proxy war to fight against a large enemy. So these proxy wars are devastating to the small countries involved. I was in one very close to the battlefields in Nicaragua during the 1980's, that was a classic proxy war. It was the US and its allies on one side, and Cuba, Soviet Union on the other side, as we saw it. Who paid the price? Not the Soviets or the Cubans, not the Americans, but the Nicaraguans. Both of the armies were made up of little Nicaraguan kids who were killing each other. That wound up with tens of thousands of dead Nicaraguans who were promoted by outsiders and pushed to fight each other. We're seeing something like that in Ukraine. The United States is not prepared at this moment to go into a war directly with Russia, but we found somebody that is, Ukraine. So we're happy to push Ukraine to do our fighting for us, and do our dying for us. You can even find quotes from US senators who think that this is a great war because no Americans are dying. All we have to do is send them billions of dollars and they'll kill Russians for us, and by the way, get killed themselves by the tens of thousands. So a proxy war is a way for you to fight but still be able to wash your hands like Pontius Pilate and say well, my troops aren't involved.

Ralph Nader: We're gonna get to Ukraine in some detail, but let's go around the world a little bit. Is there a proxy war via Saudi Arabia?

Stephen Kinzer: Saudi Arabia is definitely promoting American interests by its fight against the Houthis in Yemen. That's a war that the United States is funding and we are providing the missiles. We are providing the refuelling for airplanes in the air. We are helping the Saudis find targets to bomb. Yet we can say, it's just the Saudis who are fighting; it's not us. Yes, that's a classic example of a proxy war.

Ralph Nader: What about Angola? That's gone off the charts of any recollection by most people. What was that proxy war about?

Stephen Kinzer: Angola was a classic proxy war and it went on for years, and cost something like a million deaths. Here you had a country that was newly independent from Portugal, and rival groups emerged claiming to have the popular support and the mandate to govern. This was just too much for the United States to resist. So a proxy war unfolded in Angola, in which Cuba actually sent thousands of troops to Angola to support one side, and the United States, although we didn't send troops, encouraged our South African Apartheid friends to send troops. So in a sense the US and the Soviet Union were facing off even though there were no Soviet or US troops there. So that definitely qualifies as a classic proxy war—and one that is classic not just because of the geopolitical framework, but because of the terrible devastation that it caused to the country, and the complete lack of interest that the big powers showed in the extent of carnage, death, slaughter, and suffering inside that country.

Ralph Nader: Over the decades, is Israel part of a proxy war by the United States in the Middle East?

Stephen Kinzer: Israel is definitely the single bravest promoter of what America sees as in its interest in the Middle East. So when we want something done we ask Israel to do it for us. When Israel wants something they ask us. One of the reasons why this crisis has gone on so long, and American mediation efforts have so repeatedly failed, is that the United States is not a fair mediator. The United States is on one side, the side of Israel. It now tries to pose itself as the one who can mediate between Israel and others. This is an extreme case where Israel promotes its own interests, and the United States has identified its own interests with those of Israel. There's actually an added factor in this case, which is that Israel has extended its reach into Washington, and has a great impact on the American political process. The intimacy is not just in weapons and so-called communion of goals, but it's actually meaning that the political establishments of the two countries are deeply interlinked. That means that serious criticism of Israel is almost taboo in Washington, because of the strong support that Israel enjoys and cultivates with its lavish gifts to congressional campaigns, and its support for people who promote the Israeli agenda in the United States.

Ralph Nader: The Israeli government has literally admitted to hundreds of unprovoked bombings in Syria, trying to interdict moves of weapons between Iran and Syria, and Hezbollah, and Lebanon. All these bombings are clearly in violation of International Law. They're using US fighter jets for, clearly offensive purposes. Syria is in a great turmoil. It poses no threat at all to Israel. For years now with their Civil War and all kinds of chaos, they remain internally focused. Israel has even bombed Damascus Airport among other targets.

Stephen Kinzer: The Syria case is another real outrage. The United States has no legal basis to being in Syria. We were not invited by the government of Syria, so that makes us an occupation force. What we've effectively done is sliced off something like a third of Syria and announced that this is now our territory, and we're gonna have our own little proxies run this for us. In the meantime we're sending oil out of there. We're stealing Syrian oil every week and sending it in caravans out to places where we need it in Iraq and elsewhere. So Syria is now the target of an extended, and very costly for the people, military occupation. When I heard the chairman of our Joint Chiefs of Staff the other day say that American troops will remain in Syria for many years to come, I found it absolutely horrifying. Now you mentioned Iran. Iran is a boogeyman that we like to use when we intervene anywhere in the Middle East. Part of the reason for that is that Israel has taken up Iran as its number one threat and enemy. One of the reasons Israel has done this is that if Iran is the real crisis in the Middle East, then the Palestinians fade away. If there's no other big conflict or problem in the Middle East, people start to begin to think about the Palestinians, and Israel doesn't want that. So there's a very clear desire on the part Israeli leaders always to point to some place in the region where there's a tremendous threat, and where the real big problem is. Because if we don't see the problem somewhere else, we might see it on the West Bank in Gaza, and that's not what Israel wants.

Ralph Nader: Well, under federal law, US military sales or aide to countries is not supposed to be used for offensive purposes. If they are, they can be cut off, because that's a violation of US federal law. But the Israeli government does this all the time. Is there an effort anywhere to point that out in Congress or elsewhere, or in the press?

Stephen Kinzer: The gimmick is that offensive actions is a very large loophole. You could drive a truck through that one. Our view of Israel is that everything it does is defensive, no matter who

it bombs. If it bombs the Damascus Airport in the middle of the night with our weaponry, that's not offensive, they're defending themselves, with forward defense. You're right that these weapons are not supposed to be used for offensive purposes. But once you're dealing with an ally, the standards that you use to decide what's offensive and what's defensive, are very different from what you might use when you are criticizing another country that's doing the same thing.

Ralph Nader: The mantra in Congress is Israel has a right to defend itself, but no one in Congress ever says the Palestinians have a right to defend themselves. They take casualty counts anywhere from 40 to a hundred times greater in terms of innocent civilians killed or injured. The Iranians apparently have no right to defend themselves. You're one of the world's experts on the US interference in Iran going back to installing the shah, and toppling the elected government of Mosaddegh, the Prime Minister who had the temerity of trying to bring back control of Iranian oil away from the Anglo-Iranian company run out of Britain. Iran was targeted by George W. Bush as one of the three axis of evil, [Iran, Iraq and North Korea] which included Saddam Hussein, a former ally of the US, and North Korea, and of course we invaded Iraq. It's permissible for Iranian leaders, or rulers to think that they were next. What is this inverted sense, this mindset in official Washington, that these countries that are legitimately threatened, that have been overthrown, and that nobody threatened by the US or Israel has a right to defend themselves? You've written a classic book on how many governments the US has overthrown, Guatemala and others, since World War II—[*Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*].

Stephen Kinzer: Moral hypocrisy is a deep part of human nature. That's the willingness to judge your friends by standards much gentler than those you use for others. You mentioned the axis of evil, and that was quite a remarkable turning point. After 9/11, Iran was the only country that expressed spontaneous support and solidarity for the United States. There were people going out with candles on the streets of Tehran that night. It's the only Muslim country in the world where that happened. Then the Iranians helped the United States find a partner in Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance, that would help us fight the Taliban there. So the Iranians thought they were on a good track with the United States, and then suddenly they get hit with the State of the Union speech by George W. Bush, placing them in an axis of evil with the very harsh dictatorship of Iraq, and maybe even harsher dictatorship of North Korea. So they were shocked to be put on that list. There was a really bizarre PS to this story. Years later there was an article by David Frum, or an interview with David Frum, who wrote that speech about the axis of evil. He said when he first wrote it there were only two countries in the axis, North Korea and Iraq. But it came back with a suggestion, two doesn't make an axis; you need three. So they said oh, let's think of what number three could be...how about Iran? They threw Iran in at the last moment as kind of a throwaway. That had such an enormous effect. You talk about the lack of rights by other people in the Middle East to defend themselves as we see it. I'm always amused and surprised to see how eager the United States is to accuse other countries of aggression when they attack pro-American or American forces in the Middle East. Wait a minute, what are the American forces doing there? Aggression would be attacking American forces in the United States. But if you're attacking the US every time you attack a pro-US force in the world, then the whole world is practically our enemy. As for the question of what the result of the Iraq war was in Iran, the Iranians, like the North Koreans, learned a very important lesson from the US bombing of Iraq, and the overthrow of that government, and the later bombing and overthrow of the government in Libya. That lesson

was, you got to get a bomb. The reason that Libya was considered a good target was that, thanks to an agreement with us, they had given up their nuclear program. No country will ever agree to do that again. They'll look back in what happened in Libya and Iraq. Had it not been for our attacks on those two countries, the Iranian desire to start up a nuclear weapons program never would have emerged. It's an obvious situation. We attack countries that don't have nuclear weapons. If, like North Korea, you have nuclear weapons, we don't attack you. So this is a great way to promote nuclear proliferation all over the world.

Ralph Nader: Let's talk about Libya. Gaddafi was making amends with the west. He discernibly disarmed some of his weaponry. He was starting to cut deals again with US and European oil companies. Then along came this intellectual in France who called Hillary Clinton and persuaded Hillary Clinton to go over the White House and persuade Obama to bomb Libya and overthrow the regime. Tell us about that. Wasn't Secretary Gates opposed to that?

Stephen Kinzer: Absolutely, Secretary Gates and Vice President Biden actually, were against the idea of bombing Libya. It was Hillary Clinton and Samantha Power who pushed for it. In this classic case, Gaddafi was facing disturbances in a provincial city, and he threatened to go and bomb that city, find the insurgents and ferret them out like rats. So we bombed Libya to prevent that from happening, and probably we saved several hundred lives in that city. But since then the human rights violations have been far in excess of the ones that we intervened to prevent. Thus Libya has become a completely failed state. The decision by the United States to attack Libya was later described by Secretary Gates as being about 51-to-49-coin toss. With this level of focus these huge events happen. What's especially important about Libya is to look at the completely predictable results. When Samantha Powers was asked about how awful Libya has become, she said, well we couldn't have been expected to have a crystal ball about a country whose culture we didn't really understand. Because you don't understand a country's culture is the exact reason not to bomb a country. So what has happened since then? First of all, the most important long-term result has been of course the dissolution of Libya. Libya is becoming a failed state and it's a generator of terrorism all across Africa. When Gaddafi was overthrown it turned out that he had a very large arsenal of conventional weapons. Those weapons were guarded, not by Libyans, but by a special force of Tuaregs who are people from Mali in that area, who Gaddafi have brought in as an elite guard. As soon as Gaddafi was gone, those Tuaregs looted all the Libyan armories and began sending huge caravans down toward Mali where they had always hoped to have a war to create a separate state. Many of those caravans were attacked and captured by al-Qaeda. Those weapons that were liberated from the Libyan arsenals after we blew Gaddafi out of power, are now being used in terrorism all over Africa. When you're reading about security problems in Niger and the Ivory Coast in Mali. You don't hear the back story. There should never be a story written about an attack on a police station in Mali without mention of the word Libya. This is where the weapons are coming from. So that's a huge impact. Let me just finish it by pointing to something that's happening right now. We've had this enormous catastrophe of a dam break in Libya resulting in thousands, upon thousands that have been killed, and entire regions devastated. Why did this happen? There were a lot of warnings that the dam was weakening. But those kinds of warnings are usually made to a government. There's usually a government office that's in charge of making sure dams don't break. But there is no government in Libya. There is nobody in charge of that. So even when technicians show up at the dam and say you better fix this otherwise you're gonna have a catastrophe, there's nobody to tell it to. Gaddafi maintained Libya as a unified state. If

there was still a government in that country this catastrophe would never have happened. So when you're looking for an example of an intervention that we thought would be easy, but wound up having devastating long-term consequences, you can't find a better example than Libya. You mentioned my book *Overthrow* where I talk about the 14 times the US has overthrown foreign governments. I'm getting ready to think that maybe there's time for a Volume 2.

Ralph Nader: The one thing I don't hear you write or talk much about is the illegality of all this. We're talking with Professor Stephen Kinzer who is at Brown University. For example, the Libyan bombing was not considered a war because there were no US troops on the ground exposed. This was actually stated by the Obama regime. The overthrow of the Libyan regime was not declared by Congress. Obama and Clinton did not ask Congress for an authorization of funds. They did not ask Congress for an appropriation of funds. It was a completely unconstitutional, illegal war, violating international law against Libya. Why aren't critics like you making a bigger issue of this? Because this gets to the root of criminal wars of aggression. They're unconstitutional; they violate a variety of federal statutes; they violate international treaties led by the UN Charter, which is a treaty that the US helped draft and led other countries to sign in 1946.

Stephen Kinzer: You're absolutely right, Congress has enthusiastically abandoned the role that the Constitution gives it—the power to declare a war. I teach a course here at Brown called the History of American Intervention. The other day when we were talking about Thomas Jefferson's intervention in North Africa, I read a quote from him regarding when he asked for a declaration of war and an appropriation through Congress. Jefferson said, "I am unauthorized by the Constitution without approval by Congress, to go beyond the limit of coastal defence." Whoa, nobody said that anymore. We haven't declared war ever than World War II. We don't do that anymore. We didn't declare war against Vietnam, and Afghanistan, and Iraq. Congress should be insisting on playing its assigned role, but actually there's a wonderful agreement between Congress and the president. The Congress doesn't want this power. They want to close their eyes to their responsibility. The reason is, if the war goes wrong, they'd be on record as having voted for it, so let's just have this agreement. But the president will take us into wars illegally, but Congress won't protest. So they're both equally guilty. You mentioned International Law, and certainly the Libya example is a great violation of International Law because under the UN Charter, countries that aren't attacked on their own homeland can only attack other countries with the permission of the Security Council, which we did not have when we attacked Libya. We attacked Libya in complete violation of International Law. But in accordance with the system that we have used as a substitute for International Law, and that's what we call the rules-based International Order. That's our version; that's our alternative to International Law. The rules-based International Order is great for us, because we are the ones that make the rules. We decide everything. We decide who is making war, who is not making war, who is good, who is bad, who needs to be punished, who doesn't need to be punished. Under International Law we can't do that because countries are treated more equally. This is the real way we have turned away from both international law, and our own domestic law. We've said that they're all superseded by the rules-based International Order, which is a nice way of saying everybody has to do what the United States decides.

Ralph Nader: Let's go to Ukraine now. This is an issue that has been very poorly reported by the media. They never seem to avoid hoopla-ing all kinds of wars that the State Department, the

Pentagon, and the Congress get us into. Let's put the shoe on the other foot. Let's say the US in the 2020th Century was invaded twice in the Southern Borders, by countries in these areas—let's just say ex-country, and 50 million Americans were killed, and a good part of the country was destroyed. Then we rebuilt, and suddenly we saw that Russia had formed a military alliance of various countries, and they started signing up Central American countries in this military alliance, clearly aimed at the United States. What do you think United States would have done to the Central American countries including Mexico if they were part of that alliance?

Stephen Kinzer: I always ask this when I talk about Ukraine—how would the United States feel if China established a military base in Tijuana, or Russia established a base in Quebec? Would we say, well it doesn't matter; we can't do anything about it because Mexico is an independent country and if they want to put nuclear weapons right on our border, we can't protest because they're sovereign. We wouldn't say that, nor should we. When you look at how Russia sees Ukraine, they're seeing the same thing. They're seeing an enemy military alliance. That wants to support a military base with nuclear weapons right on their border. So, you're right, that Americans should reflect on how we would feel if we were in that situation. I don't see what's the problem with non-aligned Ukraine. Ukraine could easily be, even as our old friend Henry Kissinger says, a bridge between east and west instead of a place that both countries fight over. But we're turning it into a battleground because we see it as a way to bleed Russia. I want to pick up on something you said at the beginning of your question, which is the media. The press coverage of the Ukraine war will go down as one of the most shameful episodes in the history of the American press. All of these so-called objective, mainstream media have jumped completely onto the US version of this story. You can't find any contradictory opinion in any mass media outlets in the United States. It's like the journalists had just become stenographers. They go to the president's briefings, and the U.S. Department of State briefings. They write down what people say and they publish it as fact. There's no attempt to challenge the narrative, and there's no attempt to report from the field in any way that would be independent. I'm reading in my own *New York Times*, who I used to work for. Every time the Ukraine war is mentioned, the Russian invasion is described as unprovoked, like it's part of the war, unprovoked invasion. So maybe it is unprovoked, maybe it's provoked, but that's not for the newspaper to say. Let them just present the facts and let me decide whether it's provoked or unprovoked. The media has done a really awful job. I'm in the same position. I write a column in the *Boston Globe*, but you won't see my opinions about Ukraine and Russia in there because they contradict the editorial policy of every newspaper in the United States. The press has done a terrible job in presenting this war to the United States, and I'm amazed that the American public actually seems to be ahead of the press. Because you're seeing steadily eroding support, steadily growing skepticism about the US pouring hundreds of billions of dollars of weaponry into a country that's at war. That second thought, that reluctance, that changed mindset, has not come to Washington yet, but it's definitely happening out in hustings and you're starting to see some political candidates, particularly on the Republican side, realizing this and understanding that opposing the Ukraine war could actually be a vote-getter. That's terrifying for both the political establishment in Washington, and the media lapdogs who so eagerly support their overseas wars.

Ralph Nader: But I think more and more people are seeing that there's no exit strategy to US policy on the Ukraine war. There's no peace negotiations being pushed. There's no unconditional cease fire being pushed by the US. It's all belligerent talk, and ever more powerful

weapons which will escalate the war beyond Ukraine into Russia. Then who's gonna control the further escalation, whether it's accidental or not? I want to read you a comment by General Mark Milley who in his career has advanced degrees in international policy, military policy. He's read a lot about military history. For the last four years under Trump and Biden, he has been Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He's retiring at the end of August. He told an Audience in New York that "both parties" and I'm quoting from the *Washington Post*, "must recognize that victory in Ukraine may not be achievable through military means". He drew a comparison to World War I, explaining how strategists a century earlier, had predicted a swift end to the bloodshed, only for it to become an unbelievable standoff that killed millions and set the stage for World War II. General Milley says, "things can get worse, so when there's an opportunity to negotiate, when peace can be achieved, cease it," Milley said, "cease the moment." So it's not just increasing public opinion. It is beginning to say what's going on here. There are people in the Pentagon who are saying what's going on here? Because Biden keeps saying we're gonna keep expanding support, military and other support to Ukraine as long as it takes to destroy Ukraine, to destroy more Ukrainian families, more Ukrainian public services, drinking water and electricity systems, and the horrors that go with it. It's not enough to say that we provoked Russia by denying the wisdom of George Kennan and other Russian experts during the Clinton Administration, and signing up Eastern European countries to join NATO, which is an overt military alliance against the Soviet Union that continues against Russia—to have these countries station US soldiers there, and US advisers, and buy US weapons. As you can see, Putin is a dictator, he's brutal, but he knows Russian history. The only reason he's getting away with what he's getting away with is because the Russian people are saying here they go again. They hit us twice, 50 million people destroyed in our country. The US is signing up Germany. They're breaking the Nordic Countries' historic neutrality and bringing them into NATO. In other words, they're militarizing the entire Western European countries who now have to build up their military budgets and feel threatened as this thing spirals out of control. This is a long way of asking this question Stephen Kinzer, there is descent inside the military. How do you surface it?

Stephen Kinzer: The quote that you read from General Milley is a good start. ~~I would say that~~ I'm not so surprised by that quote because one thing I've observed in Washington, particularly in recent years, is that the most war like people in Washington, the greatest warmongers are not in the Pentagon. They're the civilian policymakers. They don't know anything about war. People who know something about war like Milley understand how these things can get out of control. But there's such a desire by politicians to beat the war drum because it's always been seen as such an effective vote-getter, and then to demonize people who want to make peace. It's nice to see that generals are the ones who are interested in making peace, but it's sad to see that political leaders don't follow them. I read a story recently in the *Washington Post* ~~saying that~~ about another part of that great mass media we were talking about. It said that although there are people in the Republican Party in Washington who oppose continued military support for Ukraine, you shouldn't worry about them taking over the party because they're just a small minority caucus in the Republican Party. I thought to myself, well at least there's a minority caucus in the Republican Party. In the Democratic Party it's 100% for war. I feel like I've watched this movie already. I'm old enough to remember Vietnam, and Afghanistan, and Iraq. It's all the same thing. You are told as an American that the entire future of human freedom on earth is at stake in this conflict. That sounds great, so we all love it and pretty soon, maybe, you ~~know~~, realize that maybe that was a

stretch, and we begin in to doubt that our allies are quite as pure as we thought, and then more weapons go in, and more people die. These terrible long-term consequences linger. So, I see this in a historical perspective, and I hope that people like General Milley, who as you said, is about to retire, will continue speaking out when they're in private life and feel a little bit freer to do so. It's certainly not gonna be the civilians in the State Department who are the greatest warmongers along with the politicians Capitol Hill. So maybe the generals will save us from of the warmongers, which is a kind of a bizarre position to be in.

Ralph Nader: ~~Yeah, well,~~ Apropos your earlier point, in the run-up to the clinical invasion of Iraq, the generals in the Pentagon, with one exception, were against it because they would ask the question, after ~~okay~~ you topple Saddam, what do you do next? What are you gonna do with the country whose leader you've overthrown, you're gonna occupy it, and then what? Are you ready? Have you planned the humanitarian aspects, the strategic aspects, the possibility of spillover into other countries? Only one general supported George W. Bush on this, and he was placed next to Don Rumsfeld at the press conferences. People who remember that can see that he had all those uniforms on. Underneath, the generals were very skeptical. But the warmongers were largely draft dodgers, and the neocons as Sy Hersh ~~I heard she's~~ called them, in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill. So you have his reversal of our founding fathers who thought that it was the military that had to be restrained by civilian authority; that's why they wanted civilians to run the war department (US Department of Defence/DOD. But now it's turned around and part of it is the ending of the draft, and there isn't any connection with the horrors of war to come back and populate positions in the federal government. So let's go back to Ukraine now and ask you a general question, what would you want the US to do? Because the US is basically running the show. The European powers are following the US role here. US is spending the most money with very little monitoring. The Democratic Party by the way, turned down a proposal to have an inspector general as there was over the Afghani war, to monitor the use of all of these tens of billions of dollars that are going into a country that was notably corrupt and pocketed by klepto-type oligarchs the way Russia was. So what would you now want the United States to do?

Stephen Kinzer: Well first of all, I agree with your premise that if the United States decides to make a change in the Ukraine war, the Ukraine war will change. It's all up to an American president. All of this is being driven from Washington; this whole idea about Ukrainians having their own agency is wildly exaggerated. So, a change in policy in Washington would be decisive. It would affect everything in Ukraine. So what should that change in policy be? Well I'd like to see a real diplomatic effort underway. It shouldn't be too so hard to arrange. We have the Minsk Accords in 2014, 2015. They laid out a perfect solution to the situation...let Ukraine essentially follow what Austria did after the 2nd World War. You might remember the foreign troops did not pull out of Austria for ten years after the 22nd World War. The Soviets were there and the Americans were there, and neither one wanted to pull out. Finally, something called the Austrian State Treaty was reached. That was, the agreement that both countries withdraw their foreign military forces; Austria will agree never to have any foreign soldiers on its soil, never to join any military alliance, and to include this commitment in its constitution, which all happened. That has been a great success for Austria. I'd love to see that be the model for Ukraine. Ukraine will have no foreign troops from any country. If there are regions close to Russia that feel they need to be self-governed; let there be a UN-supervised referendum to see if they can be self-governing within Ukraine, or what their future should be. Ukraine should remain a non-aligned nation the way

Austria is. The idea of what a solution should be is easy to come up with. The hard part is getting people to decide that we need an alternative to war. We're not at that point yet. First we're feeling like we want to keep trying to kill as many Russians as we can without losing any Americans. It seems so sanitary to us, as if a Ukrainian life means nothing compared to what an American life would mean. So the outlines of a peace accord are very clear. What's missing is the political wheel will to move away from the policy of escalating war.

Ralph Nader: What do you think of the early negotiations after Russia's criminal invasion of Ukraine, however provoked by NATO over the years? What was your view of the negotiation between Russian and Ukrainian representatives about a month after the invasion, when they met in Turkey to try to iron out some resolution of the conflict, and the US didn't look positively on this and undermined it? Can you enlighten on what happened there?

Stephen Kinzer: You put it very well. The Ukrainians negotiating with anybody are going to be heavily influenced by the United States. The Americans are reminded of some Ukrainian delegation going to Turkey to talk to Russians, but they made sure that there was no serious agreement reached. It was very clear from the beginning of that negotiation that the United States wanted to stop the prospect of a peaceful solution. That's what happened to the Minsk Accords. It was only about six months ago that I read this amazing interview with Angela Merkel, the German leader who went along with the French, the Germans were the co-signers of the Minsk accords, and she said, [paraphrased] We never intended to abide by it; it was only to buy time so that we could arm Ukraine. Then some reporter in France got the idea to call the guy who was Prime Minister of France and ask him what he thought about what Merkel said. He said, it's exactly true, yeah, we agreed that. We're gonna sign this, but we're not gonna do it. So this was already the plan from the beginning. Even I who is pretty used to these kind of things, was shocked by that. The United States is not gonna permit any peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine unless the United States is in charge of the Ukrainian delegation.

Ralph Nader: It seems that the US Empire is now running amok across the whole globe. The idea of pushing Germany and Japan to rearm, increase their military budget, become viewed as a threat to certain neighbors like China. China is rather sensitive about Japan. People recall, Japan invaded China, and millions of Chinese were killed in World War II. People have memories; they have relatives who lost their lives. Here we are going to Japan and pushing them more and more to expand their military might and arc. Now we're doing it to Germany. The only opposition is its right-wing plea to the Republican Party. Where is the progressive arm of the Democratic Party? Every one of them voted for the first 40 some billion-dollar aid package to Ukraine without any conditions at all. That included AOC, Rashida Tlaib and others. Can you give us some light on why the progressive wing, however small, of the Democratic Party, has folded into this boundaryless empire aggression of the executive branch?

Stephen Kinzer: It really is one of the most bizarre aspects of this whole situation, that what we thought was the anti-war or progressive wing of the Democratic Party completely folded. I too was shocked to see every single Democrat in the House, and every single Democrat in the Senate vote in favor of that first tens of billions of dollars for Ukraine. I don't know the story because I'm not a Washington insider, but I have to presume that the word was sent from the top. You can't dissent on this one. It shows you how weak is the anti-war sentiment, certainly with

Democratic Party. It's really remarkable. We're talking about America running amok; there are a lot of people in the world who would say that this is an old tradition. It's just that we have more weapons and things are more dangerous now, but running amok is us. That's what's called the rules-based international order. Another phrase for that would be running amok, image and memories too. Historical memory is something that we in the United States are very short on. Our memory goes back like a few weeks. Other countries where we intervene though are not like that. We forget our interventions right after we carry them out. But for people in the target countries, these interventions fester and burn in their hearts and souls, and they pass through generations. Then we become shocked and wonder why they're so irritated about something that happened a long time ago, because we forget, but the targets of our running amok do not forget.

Ralph Nader: Let's get down to the campuses here. Usually the campuses are the hotbeds of anti-war, and the Vietnam War. When Nixon draft he knew what he was doing. Because when the students were not part of the risk, they were not part of the solution, as they used to say in those days. Are the campuses pretty much dead zones on issues of war and peace?

Stephen Kinzer: I don't see a groundswell of student activism aimed at ending the Ukraine War. Part of that is because of the mass media bombardment saying that any such protest would be downright treasonous. But I do see something interesting on college campuses and in progressive movements—a great focus on climate change, and all these movements for racial justice, and social justice that have popped up in recent years. Those occupy a tremendous amount of space in the college campus world and beyond. But those movements are missing something very important. They don't often seem to grasp the connection between the domestic problems against which they're protesting, and foreign wars. They are always hearing, when someone proposes something like Medicare for All—where are we gonna get the money? We can't afford that. Well I know where you can get 800 billion dollars, and that's in the Pentagon. There's a lot of money out there. But I don't think these social justice movements have made that connection that the reason why there can't be free school lunches for poor kids is that we're sending billions of dollars in weaponry to Ukraine. So, my advice to those people involved in movements aimed at changing American domestic policies is to realize that those policies go hand in hand with our foreign wars. Unless you start curbing the running amok to which you referred, there's never gonna be money for the social programs that these activists are promoting. I don't think they've always made that connection, and that should be the next step.

Ralph Nader: Okay, you've observed the student scene, what about the millions of faculty? They should be able to make connections? Are they dead zones too, when it comes to the great questions of war and peace, and the diversion of public budgets to destruction overseas instead of meeting the needs of the American people and their children and grandchildren?

Stephen Kinzer: I don't think so. Here at Brown we have a wonderful initiative called the Costs of War project [<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/about>] where professors say exactly how many lives are lost, and how many millions of dollars are paid for all these projects around the world. This is a great project. But I had lunch just this week with a colleague who sat down and immediately told me, I'm a person who has always thought himself as very much on the left. Then he went on and talked about the horrors of Russia and the saintly virtues of Ukraine. So, there's kind of an exception. People are against imperialism and war, but that's not Ukraine. For Ukraine

they think really it's anti-imperialist to be supporting the war in Ukraine. I've heard people say this. Since it's Russia that's being imperialist, we should pour billions of dollars into Ukraine so Ukraine can fight back. So, this to me takes you away from the real issue, which is we're destroying a country, and we are chewing through an entire generation of Ukrainian men, all to decide where is gonna be the border of Donbas? The possible benefits are nowhere near the devastating consequences being suffered. Even many progressive intellectuals seem to have carved out an exception for Ukraine and have somehow found a way to fit being in favor of the Ukraine war into a progressive international view, which I consider quite absurd.

Ralph Nader: President Zelenskyy is a fierce defender of his country, and he is very good at it. Do you think that he is willing to escalate the conflict beyond the Ukraine and the Russian border to defend his country? Are you worried about the arc of his advocacy here?

Stephen Kinzer: Absolutely. I can see the Ukrainians feeling like maybe attacks are being launched from Belarus, so we got to bomb Belarus. I can see situations in which even a NATO country like Poland could be dragged into it. So yeah, I do see the possibility of this war spreading. Even people that I know that support the war totally agree, that this is gonna go on for a really long time. So, once you even make that admission you realize this war's gonna go on for a long time. The next step should be, can't we stop it? What can we do to make it not go on for a long time? But we're not there. The idea is it's gonna go on for a long time and that's fine. The number of so-called progressive intellectuals who embrace this idea is really depressing. That goes for Congress as well.

Ralph Nader: Indeed, Congress never had Senator Fulbright type hearings that he held on the Vietnam War, which helped end the Vietnam War. They never had these kinds of hearings on the Afghan War, on the Iraqi War, on the Libyan War, and they don't have any hearings on the Ukraine War.

Stephen Kinzer: Let me point out, who was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who refused to hold hearings like that on Iraq and made sure that every witness who came to testify was in favor of the invasion, wouldn't let any criticism of the possible invasion unto the *Congressional Record*? That was Senator Joe Biden. He was the one who did that. So Biden has supported every war he's ever been involved in. I remember when he loved the Contras. Him and Al Gore were great promoters of the Contras in Nicaragua. So the idea of these people feel like war is a solution, is nothing new. Biden for me is too old, and not because of his years. It's his ideas that are so old. He's a product of the Cold War and he hasn't been able to evolve towards a new world. He's still feeling like he wants to bring down the Soviet Empire. That's why we would need some new voices. I'm looking forward to seeing whether the presidential campaign will produce any.

Ralph Nader: Well, Biden is really the ultimate war hawk. He's been that way for many years. He's part of the problem you describe in one of your articles when you say, "one of the worse results of the Ukraine war is already clear; it has led to a new closing of the American mind". In just the few minutes we have left, please let Steve, Hannah and David ask you a quick question.

David Feldman: Can you think of any proxy wars that America participated in that were net

positive? I know all war is wrong, but if you're speaking from the point of view of somebody from the Pentagon, where they look back and say, that proxy war worked out; I'm glad we did it.

Stephen Kinzer: Some of them would, I think, look at Nicaragua and say that. So we promoted the Contras for years, and finally through a peace process that President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica produced, there was an election and the Sandinistas were voted out of office. Great success. On the other hand look at Nicaragua now, that's the problem. These stories don't tend to end. So I think there are times when the United States has felt that it can promote its own proxies in the world, and we still do it. We still have them working in Syria. Those are all our proxies. That's an example of an ongoing proxy war, that is Syria versus say Israel and the United States, that's still ongoing and reflects all of the devastating effects of proxy wars that we've discussed.

Ralph Nader: Also we have about 3,000 soldiers in Syria so it's more than just a proxy war. Hannah?

Hannah Feldman: There has been reporting with an incredulous tone that Morocco is hesitant to accept foreign aid following the recent earthquake. Is there any historical reason that a country like Morocco might be dubious of say USAID offering support?

Stephen Kinzer: USAID, which is on a principal foreign aid organization is not widely trusted in much of the world. It's seen strictly as an arm of American policy using American money and American ships, and American products essentially to seem like we're giving aid. But actually much of our foreign aid program is just subsidies for American companies. All of our foreign aid has to be shipped on American ships, which already greatly increases the price. Then when it gets there we're only selling our own products, not necessarily the products that the people in that country want. It's a very enlightening decision to see the Moroccans being a little suspicious. The outside world and the Americans might say what are they doing? Americans are offering the hand of friendship and the Moroccans are spitting on it. That hand isn't really a fully hand of friendship. There's a lot in that hand and more and more countries are coming to realize that.

Ralph Nader: Before we conclude, is there anything you'd like to say to our listeners or urge them to do that we haven't covered?

Stephen Kinzer: All I can say is to try to speak out those sources of information that get around mainstream media. One of the ways you can do that is by listening to this program. Thanks for having me on.

Ralph Nader: Is there one of your many books you'd like particularly to be read by our listeners?

Stephen Kinzer: My book *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* is a good primer for what the real foreign policy of the United States has been. It's strictly a set of factual stories that will tell you how the United States overthrew foreign governments. I defy you to read that book and not be thinking about things that are happening today.

Ralph Nader: You've been listening listeners to one of the greatest investigative reporters in American history. He has penetrated historical material in one book after another, after having

been in these areas reporting for leading newspapers, and also pursuing the truth, pursuing the facts. If there's a reason why you don't hear him on NPR or see him on public broadcasting, or other mainstream media, it is because he pursues the facts, he pursues the truth. That is the greatest reflection of what's going on in our decaying political economy at the present time. Thank you very much Stephen Kinzer from Brown University.

Stephen Kinzer: It was an honor, thank you.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Stephen Kinzer. We will link to his work at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Now let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From National Press Building in Washington D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, September 29, 2023, I'm Russell Mokhiber. The virus lab at the heart of the contentious debate around Covid-19's origin has been cut off from US funding opportunities for likely violating National Institutes of Health biosafety rules. That's according to a report from ABC news. The Department of Health and Human Services has suspended the Wuhan Institute of Virology's access to federal funding and proposed banning them longer-term, after the lab failed to provide sufficient documentation on their biosafety protocols and security measures. According to an internal memo, immediate action is necessary to protect the public interest. The NIH said that its conclusion that the Wuhan lab research likely violated protocols of the NIH was undisputed. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph, and the rest of the team, and that's out show. I want to thank our guest again, Stephen Kinzer. For those of you listening on the radio we're gonna cut out now. For you podcast listeners stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up", featuring Francesco DeSantis and "In Case You Haven't Heard". A transcript of this program will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* Substack site soon after the episode is posted. The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran, and our Executive Producer is Alan Minsky. Our theme music "Stand Up, Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our Associate Producer is Hannah Feldman. Our Social Media Manager is Steven Wendt. Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you everybody and remember there's a new book out by the two presidents of Public Citizen, Robert Weissman and Joan Claybrook. It's called *The Corporate Sabotage of America*. It's very cogent, very readable. Go to Citizen.org and see how you can get a copy.