

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 455 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: Hello, Steve.

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

Ralph Nader: Hi. Program on war and peace right down to Ukraine.

Steve Skrovan: This week, Americans marked Thanksgiving by welcoming people into their home, sharing food, and reflecting on their good fortune. The Thanksgiving narrative relies on a fictional foundation story, though. Our earliest European settlers were as likely to rob, kill and displace the first Americans as they were to sit down and break bread with them. Since then, America's military industrial complex has flourished alongside corn, beans, and squash. We waste a lot in war, but there've always been people standing up for the ideals of cooperation, sharing, wisdom, and making peace. So today, we'll be speaking with peace activists, Medea Benjamin and David Swanson.

Medea Benjamin is the co-founder of CODEPINK and has been an advocate for social justice for more than 40 years. She was one of 1,000 women from 140 countries nominated to receive the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the millions of women who do the essential work of peace worldwide. She has organized opposition to brutal conditions in US overseas sweatshops, campaigned for normalized relations with Cuba, and led delegations to Yemen, Pakistan, Gaza, and North Korea to reform human rights abuses. She's written 10 books, turning a critical eye to drone warfare, the US-Saudi alliance, and US-Iran relations. And in her newest book, *War in Ukraine*, she takes on America's latest proxy war. What will it take to look beyond the good versus evil dichotomy, deescalate the conflict and save lives? We'll find out in the first part of today's program.

And we've also invited our resident constitutional scholar, Bruce Fein, to join our interview with Medea to weigh in on the role of Congress with respect to NATO. And as promised, we'll continue on the anti-war thing with our second guest, David Swanson, who is the executive director of World BEYOND War and campaign coordinator for RootsAction.org. He is a lifelong peace activist who is going to share his thoughts on what the public thinks about war once they are told the truth about what's really at stake and where the money is going. He'll also give us his insights on how war profiteering used to be shameful and is now normalized, and how foreign aid used to be food and medicine but is now mainly guns and ammo.

As always, somewhere in the middle, we'll check in with our Corporate Crime Reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, does the US really need another proxy war? No. No, we don't. David?

David Feldman: Medea Benjamin is the co-founder of the women-led group CODEPINK and the co-founder of the human rights group Global Exchange. Her most recent book, coauthored with Nicolas J.S. Davies, is *War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict*.

Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Medea Benjamin.

Medea Benjamin: Hi. Thanks so much. Good to be on with you.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, welcome indeed, Medea. This subject of the Ukraine war is dividing the liberal and progressive constituency in the US. There are a lot of closed minds here because of the horror of the invasion by Russia, and the closed minds are often due to a lack of historical context and other aggressive roles. Don't excuse Russia's invasion, but that's what your book is all about, is to provide the context. So the question I want to pose you must be preceded by this excerpt from your book. Just so people don't immediately prejudge what you were writing about. On Page 18, Medea Benjamin and her coauthor Nicholas J.S. Davies say this, "In our view, the Russian invasion of Ukraine was not only criminal, but also a catastrophic move and a terrible miscalculation. But we also believe that the western nations' treatment of Russia in the decades following the demise of the Soviet Union was a policy mistake of epic proportions. "NATO expansion" – that's the alliances of the eastern European countries bordering Ukraine – "NATO expansion was a disaster waiting to happen, as seasoned politicians, diplomats and academics warned," including American diplomat and historian George Kennan, I might add. "The people of Ukraine were unwittingly caught in a perfect storm, whipped up not only by brutal Russian aggression but also by astonishing Western hubris and stupidity."

Okay, with that background, open your minds, listeners. No matter what side you're on, we have to start somewhere historically. I think the best time to start is 1990 when the Soviet Union collapsed and everybody was talking about a peace dividend, the end of the Cold War. Why don't you start there, Medea?

Medea Benjamin: Yes. Nice to be on with you, Ralph. And it astounds me that people don't want to give any context as if this war just fell from the sky. When the Soviet Union collapsed and there was an agreement between the US and the Soviets that NATO would not expand, that is something that was well known by people in the US government and written about by all kinds of U.S. officials and yet disregarded by US administrations, both Democrat under Bill Clinton and Republican under Bush, as those expansions happened, and not only incorporated countries that were allies of the Soviet Union but were actually part of the Soviet Union. And when people say, well, that wasn't really a problem. We say go back and read the voices, like you said, of George Kennan or of CIA Director today, William Burns, who was so clear over the years saying, "This is a red line that has been crossed. This is going to lead to some terrible results."

So it is important to understand, especially now when you look at 200 years of the Monroe Doctrine in the United States where we said we will not let outside powers, and especially adversarial ones, come into our sphere of influence, how this affected Russia over the years seeing the NATO expansion, US bases, US nuclear weapons in five European countries. This was obviously something that affected the mindset of the leaders of Russia and they felt was something that was an existential threat to their security.

Ralph Nader: And a lot of people in this country don't have the proper collective empathy. If we had a northern border that had the experience of the western border of Russia in World War I and World War II, we wouldn't engage in any niceties; that can be guaranteed. The German invasions of Russia in World War I and World War II took over 50 million Russian civilian lives, destroyed complete cities, massive bloodshed. So you can see that regardless of Putin's

motivations, he knew he could tap into that memory among the Russian people who still mourn their relatives and pay homage to the monuments throughout Russia, reflecting those two wars of aggression.

Now the peace dividend, I remember everybody was talking about the peace dividend i.e., the Soviet Union collapsed. Now, we can shrink the military budget. We can disarm more. We can put the money back into communities and rebuild and restore America's public works or so-called infrastructure. We didn't count on the profit motive of what Eisenhower warned about--the determined, deliberate, limitless greed and power of the military industrial complex. And one of their tools was to turn NATO, which was started as a military alliance against the Soviet Union, into a runaway operation whereas you say in your book, the United States and its allies developed new rationales to use military force even more freely and widely across the world, leading to catastrophic wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Lebanon, Palestine, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. And many of these military operations blatantly violated the UN Charter, which especially prohibits, "the threat or use of force except in self-defense" or when the UN Security Council authorizes its use "to restore international peace and security." So all right, we've provided some of this context. Let's go to 2014 and 2015. 2015 being the Minsk Accords, and 2014 being a very tumultuous year. Start there.

Medea Benjamin: Well, as we go into great detail in the book, we explain that in 2014 there was a grassroots nonviolent populist uprising against a corrupt leader. And that was turned into something very different with the militarization of that peaceful uprising by extremist groups and by US interference. You know, Ralph, we have a history of US making coups in countries around the world and it's oftentimes decades after those coups that we find out the information about the extent of US involvement. That will be the case, and this one as well. But we do have that amazing leaked conversation by Victoria Nuland, who is amazingly still in a position of power today, where she talks to the US ambassador in Ukraine about their machinations for getting the leader out of power and putting in a US handpicked leader. So there you have it; US direct interference in the internal affairs of another country starting in 2014 resulting in putting in a pro-Western leader was that the Russian-speaking areas of Donbas, there was a breakaway republics and civil war starting in that region. And as soon as the civil War started, you see the US pouring in weapons, went from defensive weapons to offensive weapons in 2015, training a Ukrainian military at the level of 10,000 a year and basically setting the stage for Ukraine to be even more of a fighting force for a potential war with Russia. And in a time when almost simultaneously the US has been accusing Russia of interfering in US elections that brought Donald Trump to power, it's quite extraordinary and important to look back at this history and see the US direct interference in the hand-picking of the president/the leader of Ukraine.

Ralph Nader: And people should know that in the eastern provinces, like the Donbas Province, about half the population is Russian, which of course was a much important factor in the civil strife there.

Medea Benjamin: And discriminated against, not being able to use Russian in the public schools, not being able to have a free media in the Russian language. So yes, not only Russian-speaking but not treated equally.

Ralph Nader: And the other point is Victoria Nuland is now back in the State Department and she is a powerful figure in the Biden Administration, probably urging him to be very aggressive. What's her role now?

Medea Benjamin: Well, yes, Victoria Nuland had played such a horrific role in Ukraine and continues through Democratic and Republican administrations to somehow maintain herself in positions of power after having had a large amount of responsibility for the conflict there. And it is interesting to see the relationship that she has had with Biden over the years where she invokes Biden's name in the machinations that were going on in 2014 that we needed his help. So whether it was Biden as the head of the Senate Armed Services Committee or Biden as vice-president and now Biden as president, he has played a very key role in this conflict as well. And keeping Victoria Nuland in his administration I think is a tremendous mistake and one that has been responsible for keeping the US from having ongoing talks with Russia during this time to try to come to a solution to this conflict.

Ralph Nader: Well, what's happening is just what George Kennan warned about. He thought it was a total diplomatic disaster to connect Hungary and Czechoslovakia and Poland into military alliances with the NATO members. And you can see how uneasy the Russians were regardless of Putin, like here they come again. They had serious weapons less than 100 miles from this Russian border; as we speak, military exercises. What do you think the Russians, apart from Putin, are going to be thinking at that time? Describe the Minsk Accords.

Medea Benjamin: Well, the Minsk Accords were something that actually brought a certain level of peace to the region. The level of fighting that was going on in 2014 died down significantly once the Minsk agreement was agreed upon in 2015. And 1300 monitors and staff from the security organization of Europe came in to be part of the implementation of those Minsk Accords. Unfortunately, the political side of the Minsk agreement, which is that the people in the Donbas region were going to be able to have a referendum to decide if they would be autonomous to be given the chance to have meetings directly with the head of/president of Ukraine, that political side of the agreement, was never implemented, because every time a leader of Ukraine, including Zelenskyy, who campaigned as wanting to implement those accords and speak to the leaders of the breakaway region, tried to do it, they were threatened by the extreme right. Zelenskyy threatened that he would be hanging from a tree if indeed he went ahead and implemented the accords. So the accords are something that are important to look back on, because as we look forward to solutions, while Zelenskyy himself said there will not be a new Minsk Accord, in the end, if there is an agreement, it will look similar to that in which the people of Donbas will have a chance to decide for themselves whether they want to be an autonomous region inside of Ukraine, whether they want to be independent or whether they want to be part of Russia. That is for them to determine, not under military conditions like has happened recently in what I would call sham referendum, but in internationally monitored referendum.

Ralph Nader: What people don't know is that Joe Biden doesn't have the authority to trigger the provision in NATO which says impliedly, "An attack on one member of NATO is an attack on all members of NATO," without defining what attack means, an errant missile or an outright invasion. And as Bruce Fein has pointed out repeatedly, Joe Biden doesn't have the authority to do this. Why don't you explain, Bruce.

Bruce Fein: Well, there are two foundations for that conclusion, Ralph. First of all, NATO has a Section 11; you got to read the whole treaty. Section 11 says the NATO sanctions are not self-executing, that they will be implemented according to the respective constitutional processes of the respective signatories. In the US, our constitutional process is entrusted exclusively to Congress, the authority to go to war, even without, however, Section 11. You remember the "declare war" clause means – and James Wilson, who was the delegate at the convention stressed this – that both the House and the Senate must approve moving from peace to war. A treaty only involves the Senate, not the House. And James Wilson made it very clear at the Convention that the Senate and the President together cannot decide to go to war. So these claims and assertions of President Biden are totally false. I would just add this as well, when we talk about NATO expansion, it's not simply the complicity of the President. NATO expansion only happened because the Senate ratified the inclusion of all of these new countries in amending the NATO treaty. So Congress is a partner with the President in flouting the pledges to Gorbachev (at the time) against further NATO expansion east after the collapse and dissolution of the Soviet Union, just another example of congressional dereliction.

Medea Benjamin: Well, can I add something about how Congress is entrusted with approving the money for this war, and when the \$40 billion package came before Congress in September, there was not one Democrat that opposed it, but there were 57 Republicans in the House and 11 senators who did vote against it. Now there's another \$37 billion that the White House has asked for that will be coming up soon, and unfortunately, we can expect that not one Democrat will stand up against that either, not even calling for auditing of that money, as Rand Paul has done and as there is a call for in the House from the Republican side as well. And that shows that war is unfortunately is also partisan issue. So when it's a Democrat in the White House, the Democrats are supposed to all fall in line. And when it's a Republican in the White House, maybe our progressive Democrats wouldn't be shut down when 30 of them signed a letter calling for negotiations and then within 24 hours had to withdraw it because of pressure from the Party itself. And that's why it's so important that we build a people's movement that is not connected to partisan politics, but puts the pressure on all of our elected officials, and especially those who are supposed to represent us in Congress, to say stop this blank check that will be over \$100 billion by year's end to a war that the people inside the Pentagon say is not winnable on the battlefield.

Ralph Nader: And before we extend that comment of yours, Medea, the Congress is starving the budget, the public health budget, for pandemic response and other public health menaces that are taking thousands of lives of the American people every week. So that always has to be kept in mind.

We're talking to Medea Benjamin, who has been one of the most prolific ad hoc witnesses at congressional hearings before being escorted out. They would almost never allow her to be a formal witness at a congressional hearing. She was the founder and head of one of the major peace activist movements in America. You can only sense this, Bruce, who was invited 200 times to testify. And as far as I know, you were never escorted out of the committee.

Bruce Fein: No, not once although I witnessed Medea being escorted out.

Ralph Nader: The title of the book is *War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict* by Medea Benjamin and Nicholas J.S. Davies. All right, so you're a mobilizer, Medea. What do you think of the sequence? They rose up temporarily and blocked Obama from moving into Syria.

That was a bipartisan effort that turned members of Congress around and they told Obama no, both Republicans and Democrats. What do you see as the movement here in the USA?

Medea Benjamin: Well, I think on the right there are organizations, both libertarian and what's called the new right, that are mobilizing. In fact, when those 57 Republicans voted against the \$40 billion package, many of them said it was because they were hearing from their base. And I think it's important to recognize that Trump, as he is going around the country and using social media, and even when he made his speech saying that he was going to run for president again, talked about the issue of Ukraine, saying that if he were president, he would talk to Putin and the war would be over, which is something that Biden refuses to do. And people like Tucker Carlson on Fox News are calling for negotiations. On the progressive side, we have people who are going and meeting with their members of Congress. It's why 30 of them signed on to this letter that was unfortunately rescinded. But that will keep going. And we're working in other sectors. For example, right now we have a letter that we wanted to get 100 religious leaders to sign, introduced it three days ago, and we've way surpassed that. And it's calling for a Christmas truce like happened in 1914 during World War I. We have people in the environmental community that are able to mobilize large numbers of people, especially young people, and we're talking to them about the need to join forces because this war has been catastrophic not only for Ukraine environmentally, but also for the planet, because of the green light it's given to other countries to try to be the ones to substitute for the energy that's being boycotted in Russia.

So we are looking sector by sector about how to mobilize and put pressure on our Congress and directly on the White House, because I think that it's the only way that we, in this country, can use our influence. And we must do it. We must build up an antiwar movement that is able to go to both the Democrats and Republicans and say this hundred billion dollars, we need to be used for X, Y, and Z. On the right they might say, to be fiscally responsible. On the left they might say to deal with the climate crisis or the lack of healthcare. Anybody can say what they think that money should go towards. But I think there has to be a unified growing cry to say that it shouldn't be for keeping a war going in which it's the Ukrainians who are fighting and dying and that that is not acceptable to us.

Ralph Nader: Well, I think the message from our listeners has got to be to the senators and representatives--negotiations now, negotiations now. Actually the Ukrainians and Russians met in the early weeks of the Russian invasion in Turkey and they started negotiating. It's not like they're ironclad opposed to negotiation because Ukrainians know what's coming in the winter and the Russians know how it's deep-sixing more and more of their economic necessities. And of course, the larger aura of dread here is the conflict going out of control and spiraling into the use of nuclear weaponry.

Medea Benjamin: People should be terrified at the war that's going on now and at the possibility of this expanding to a nuclear confrontation. When we saw the missile that landed in Poland, and unfortunately killed two people, that was a moment when I was holding my breath and saying, "Uh-oh, this is what we've been dreading. This is going to invoke Article 4 of NATO that would then lead to Article 5 of NATO and could lead to a direct confrontation with the West." And fortunately, that did not happen because it seemed that that missile did not come from Russia. But it could easily happen. We know what the fog of war is all about and that,

whether intentionally or unintentionally, this could go beyond the borders of Ukraine very easily. And if you push Putin into a corner, as JFK said in reflecting on the missile crisis of 1962 in his talks with Khrushchev, never in a confrontation with a nuclear power put them in the position of either a humiliating retreat or the use of nuclear weapons. And that is such an important reflection to think on today, that while the West might want to, and of course Ukraine, push Putin into a corner, he's not going to leave with his tail between his legs and just go home. He has staked his entire reputation on this.

And one more thing, Ralph, in terms of the possibility of negotiations, let's remember those negotiations in March and April actually were coming to a 15-point plan that looked very positive until the West, in the form of Boris Johnson and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, came and torpedoed those negotiations. In the meantime, as the war has dragged on, there have been negotiations around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant, negotiations around the grain deal, getting grain out of Ukraine, negotiations in prisoner swaps. And so negotiations are possible. The two sides are extremely far apart now, with Volodymyr Zelenskyy saying we want every inch of Ukraine back, including Crimea. The Russians have pretended they now have an expanded area along the Donbas. And these two sides are positions for negotiating. And that's why we have to get involved, and do what we can do as US citizens to say that we want our elected representatives to call for a ceasefire and negotiations.

Ralph Nader: Exactly, listeners, ceasefire plus negotiations. That's the couplet that you have to send to your senators and representatives. Do you think there may be a silver lining for this cliffhanger victory by the Republicans in the House of Representatives that they may have serious hearings on US policy on Ukraine, and stop allowing the policy of the US to be repositied in the hands of one person, in this case Joe Biden, who doesn't really talk about the congressional role in initiating the war under the Constitution as he's obligated to. What do you look forward to with this motley crew that's about to take over the House of Representatives.

Medea Benjamin: Well, it's interesting that Kevin McCarthy said there won't be a blank check, but then he's kind of walked back on that. While Mitch McConnell in the Senate is every much of a hawk as the Democrats are right now calling for more and more money for Ukraine. I think the money will unfortunately sail through Congress during this lame duck session. And then if we don't build a strong enough movement against it, it will keep going. The 57 who voted against that package earlier on don't represent the mainstream of the Republicans who are into this war, just as the Democrats are. I think there will be some hearings and that will be positive. I think there are calls for auditing where that money is going, which is positive. But in the end, I think it's going to take a couple of things. One is a groundswell from below and the other is that there is growing division inside of Europe itself, with the majority in Germany right now who are really feeling the effect of the sanctions, calling for negotiations. There will be stronger calls and more European countries that are feeling the real pinch of the blowback of these sanctions. That kind of division within Europe will be helpful in moving us towards a more realistic position.

Two silver linings that I want to say if there is anything from this brutal, horrific war is that more people know now what NATO is. Before it was very hard to do any organizing against NATO

because people had no idea what it is. And maybe we can build a stronger movement with our European allies to show NATO as not the defensive organization it's portrayed, but as the offensive, dangerous alliance that we should try to dismantle. And the other is nuclear weapons. And to be getting out educating people that there is a UN ban on nuclear weapons right now and that we must build up the power of people to get their countries to join that ban, especially the countries that are nuclear powers. So those are two big things that we can work on after we end this war.

Ralph Nader: Could you tell our listeners of a little vignette when one of your colleagues went to a meeting between the political journalism group and Lockheed Martin just very recently?

Medea Benjamin: Yes, she got up on the stage with the sign that says, "Lockheed Loves War," and started talking about what real security is about dealing with the climate, with people's health and not with making wars, and how Lockheed profits from war and destruction and death. And it was a great example of getting up in the face of power. We've been talking about how CODEPINK has been going into Congress for years. We can't even get into Congress anymore because now they're using the excuse of the January 6th uprising and COVID to not let people into the people's house unless you have a prior meeting; quite telling that *Politico*, that calls itself a journal of reporters, is sponsored by the military. They even say it every time "This comes to you by Lockheed Martin." "This comes to you by Northrop Grumman." "This comes to you by Boeing." There's no separation between *Politico* and the merchants of death. So yes, it's important to get up there and call it out whenever we have the opportunity.

Ralph Nader: I can feel the vibes from Steve and David. They want in. Steve?

Steve Skrovan: I just want to pick up on the corporate angle because that's what we do on this show. It's my understanding that if you sign on to NATO, you need to have NATO-approved weaponry or at least coordinated with other NATO countries. So that seems to be a huge spur to signing up more and more countries because the weapons makers make all of that money. Can you just confirm or elaborate on that for me?

Medea Benjamin: Absolutely. They call it interoperability. They have to be able to work together with the same kind of weapons, which was one of the reasons they said Ukraine would have to wait to be incorporated into NATO because they had a lot of Russian weapons. It's a tremendous boon, not only forcing them to buy their weapons from the United States or each of the Western companies, but also it's to spend more of their money on weapons. So 2% of your gross domestic product is supposed to be spent on the military according to the goals of NATO. And there are so many countries in Europe where the people have been fighting back and say we want our money to go for healthcare; we want our money to go for college education. We don't want it to go to militarization. And yet NATO's goal is to get all 40 NATO members to spend more money on the military.

Bruce Fein: Finland and Sweden came in recently without any opposition whatsoever. It was actually virtually unanimous in the Senate. There was a couple of abstentions, but that was it. Two new opportunities to sell US weapons now to new countries.

Ralph Nader: David?

David Feldman: Thank you. Medea, last year at this time, President Biden spent Thanksgiving in the home of David Rubenstein, founder of the Carlyle Group. Is David Rubenstein a war profiteer? And could you tell us the specific names of the war profiteers advising Joe Biden?

Medea Benjamin: Well, I focus on the ones who actually make the weapons, like Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, General Dynamics, General Atomics, and Raytheon. You don't have to look very far because these people are all over the White House. They're in the White House. Let's recognize that Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense, came from the board of Raytheon. And we have had other secretaries of defense and secretaries of state that come directly from these weapons companies. They are everywhere and of course, make their money from investing in these companies. But it's all so intertwined because they aren't the ones that make the policies, but they certainly have a lot of influence in making them.

Ralph Nader: The book is *War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict* by Medea Benjamin and Nicholas J Davies. Medea Benjamin is arguably one of the top peace advocates in the country. She has been arrested in peaceful protests and dragged away. She has highlighted sweetheart congressional hearings that excluded the public. Thank you very much, Medea Benjamin. Thank you very much, Bruce Fein. To be continued.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking with Medea Benjamin. We will link to her book, *War in Ukraine*, at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Up next, we're going to ask the question, is there a world beyond war? But right now we're going to check in with our Corporate Crime Reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, November 25, 2022. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

The watchdog group, Better Markets, is calling for an investigation into the Commodities Futures Trading Commission's push for crypto friendly legislation. The CFTC chair is using scare tactics to push Congress into blindly passing crypto friendly legislation that installs a weak regulator as quickly as possible even before anyone has examined how that regulator, the CFTC, has already failed to do its job to regulate FTX before anyone even knows how FTX (Field Training Exercise) imploded, much less how that might have been avoided by new legislation, said Better Markets CEO Dennis Kelleher. 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. As we continue on our theme of anti-war, our next guest insists that we can live in a world beyond war. David?

David Feldman: David Swanson is an author, activist, journalist, radio host, and Nobel Peace Prize nominee. He is executive director of World BEYOND War and campaign coordinator for RootsAction.org. His books include *War Is A Lie* and *When the World Outlawed War*.

Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, David Swanson.

David Swanson: Honored to be here. Thank you very much.

Ralph Nader: Indefatigable David Swanson. First question, tell us what your knowledge is about public opinion polls for peace and against war, both generally and on military budget against spending the money on public works here. Let's give our listeners some idea of where people are coming from when they're polled on these subjects.

David Swanson: Well, not my area of expertise, but I have looked at some of them in recent months and years and decades. And of course, for decades now, the general response of the US public, when asked, has been in favor of moving money out of militarism and into things like education and the environment. And there was an institute at the University of Maryland that used to sit people down and tell them some useful information and then ask them again. And when people were shown the federal budget, overwhelming majorities dramatically wanted to move lots of money out of militarism and into education, environment, et cetera. In terms of Ukraine, if you ask Gallup and Reuters and some of these big corporate polling companies that always angle their questions a little bit in favor of what they're looking to get, they get majorities wanting to keep the money flowing, the weapons flowing to Ukraine.

If you look at groups like Data for Progress that have given people a teeny bit of information and asked a little more probing questions, you find that to be quite shaky and there to be fertile ground for resisting the endless flow of money into Ukraine. The way that I misspoke is something that drives me crazy when millions of people do it, because of course most of the money never leaves the United States or even the Washington, D.C. suburban area. It mostly flows in the form of free weapons to Ukraine. So when you see these videos contrasting all the money going to Ukraine and the homelessness problem and the poverty problem in the United States, we shouldn't imagine this money as benefiting the people of Ukraine at the expense of benefiting the people of the United States. It's exacerbating and prolonging a war that is devastating the people of Ukraine. And if you look at public opinion polls in Ukraine, you cannot of course, poll the people who have fled in huge numbers and the people who have tried to, and the people who are afraid to say what's on their minds because of the sort of society they're now living in during this war, you find much higher numbers, very close to 50%, wanting ceasefire and negotiations in the areas of Ukraine where the fighting is happening. And you find much stronger support for the war in the parts of Ukraine that are farther from the war.

Ralph Nader: You make an interesting point, David, about informing people before you poll them, because years ago there was a lot of opposition to foreign aid in public opinion polls. And someone decided to poll people and ask them what percent of our economy do you think is devoted to foreign aid. And the major answer came in at 15%, when the actual number was less than 1%. So when people realize that less than 1% is going to foreign aid, much of it, as you say, back into contracts for US companies, suddenly the opposition to foreign aid declined significantly. So we need more informative polling, not just setting something like do you believe in peace through strength? Who's going to say no to that? Tell us what you're doing now,

David Swanson, you're at the hub of a lot of the peace movement in this country, anti-war movement over the years. Tell us what you're doing now.

David Swanson: I was just going to say, imagine if you also told those people that unlike other countries' foreign aid, some 40% of US foreign aid is weapons, not the usual conception of aid. It's not food or medicine, it's weapons. And that the US is the top supplier of weapons to brutal oppressive governments, dictatorships, as well as so-called democracies around the world. So one thing I do is try to talk to people about the things you aren't allowed to say. You watched the whole spectrum of US media this week, from right to left, with the left being something like a John Oliver video denouncing FIFA for having the World Cup soccer tournament in a place like Qatar that has enslaved labor and abuses women and abuses gay people. And nowhere, including there, can there be any mention of the fact that the US military maintains permanent bases in Qatar, props up a brutal dictatorship there, sells them billions of dollars of weapons every year, funds their military with US tax dollars, buys huge quantities of oil from there, and of course, similarly has bases and troops in every country neighboring. And you're not allowed to say that, even though it fits exactly into the topic you're reporting on. So one thing we just did this past week at World BEYOND War was published a tool where you can scroll around the globe and zoom in and get the details on any of nearly 900 US military bases that are outside of the United States.

Ralph Nader: And what's the website?

David Swanson: This is at worldbeyondwar.org. And then click for the section on bases.

Ralph Nader: During the Iraq war and Afghanistan war, we would see full-page ads in the *Washington Post* by anti-war groups. One was called the World Can't Wait, and we don't see those anymore. What's going on? Is the anti-war movement getting weaker, getting more budget-restricted or what?

David Swanson: That's certainly a big part of it and has been since around '07, '08 when, as you know, the Democratic Party shifted its resources into electing Obama, and before that, whoever the nominee would be. And a couple of professors who interviewed peace activists at rallies and not at rallies for years, and wrote a book called *Party in the Streets*, determined the major factor in the rise of peace activism in '02 through '06 and declined thereafter, was party identification. If the Democratic Party was pretending or somehow honestly opposing war, people would oppose war. And when the Democratic Party wasn't opposing war, people wouldn't oppose war. And so there was a loyalty to party identity that weakened loyalty to a position in favor of peace.

I have mixed thoughts on dumping huge amounts of money into something as awful as the *New York Times*. But World BEYOND War has just dumped some money much smaller than that into the Washington, D.C. metro system. There will be ads in the Metro Center metro station now saying Peace on Earth with worldbeyondwar.org at the bottom. And I have to confess, we did that because I was certain they would refuse. And we could try to get a news story out of the fact that you couldn't say peace on earth, because the general rule is, with billboard companies, with the metro station ads and all kinds of other advertising fora, you can't buy an ad if it can be characterized in any way in the broadest possible sense as political, or if it's not selling a product,

you just can't. So you can have the Pentagon metro full of ads for fighter jets and Capitol Hill metro full of ads for fighter jets, but you generally can't put up something; you certainly can't put up something that says end this war. I didn't think we would get away with Peace on Earth during the holiday season. But we did. So there is a little bit of advertising going on.

Ralph Nader: Well, I always look at trends in civic mobilization, David, and it seems to me that the trends are reducing the influence of the peace movement. You have Congress being closed out now. As Medea pointed out, you can't really go into Congress and go door-to-door. You have to get a special dispensation by a member of Congress. You have a situation where the membership of these groups is shrinking. You remember the tremendous number of people who supported the moratorium, the nuclear freeze under Reagan; you don't have anything close to the 200 to 300 thousand people who marched in Washington in 2004 and 2005 against the criminal war in Iraq by George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. You have almost no champions in Congress. You had a unanimous Democratic Party, as we discussed earlier, supporting appropriations for Ukraine.

Usually you have people like Senator Wayne Morse or Congressman Dennis Kucinich or Congressman Walter Jones. You don't have anybody anymore who's willing to stand up and give you a foothold, and you certainly don't have any congressional hearings on tap. I'm just pointing to a few of these now. You have less attention by the press; even the independent media doesn't seem to be as interested as they were years ago. Give us your view on all this. Do you see sort of a closing out trend here?

David Swanson: I think the Iraq syndrome on the model of what the Vietnam syndrome was where opposition to war is an illness, wore off. There were years when you couldn't elect somebody like Biden or Hillary Clinton or John Kerry. There was a problem with having supported the war on Iraq because some truths about it came out in such a powerful way. That wore off. I got this email yesterday from the National Endowment for Democracy just celebrating the brilliance of having moved from fighting these wars with US men and women, with lives that matter at risk, in what they called inhospitable countries, like these countries that were not really democracies and were just really not grateful for being bombed and occupied, to instead shipping weapons to a democracy like Ukraine. I mean, the pretense that Ukraine is some sort of democracy is really central here, where they would use the weapons and the US would thereby be spreading democracy without risking any lives that matter, just fighting to the last Ukrainian and Russian. And this is what they've done. They've made war something that involves no US lives – or Congress members' families or otherwise, or very, very few, and not officially a US war –and they've made it all about assisting a "struggling little democracy" against a "brutal authoritarian dictatorship." And it has been the most phenomenal propaganda success I can recall or have read about in history.

I mean, you went in a matter of weeks back in February, from people who couldn't find Ukraine on the globe to people whose first topic of conversation when they came up to you, even strangers, was all about Ukraine and the need to help Ukraine. And to this day, you have half the peace activists who are still showing up at peace things as peace activists supporting war on Ukraine. So yes, there's a problem with Congress; the Progressive Caucus is a disaster.

Congresswoman Jayapal just came out for Biden being president next time as well. There's not a single Congress member for peace, but there's a problem outside of Congress as well and in the media as you know very well.

Ralph Nader: Well, what's your take on the extension of the US empire in the Middle East through the US blank checks support for Israel over the years, and now Israel feels it can bomb and destroy any site anywhere in the Lebanon, Syria. They've gone into Syria by their own admission hundreds of times with their jet bombers. You know what they're doing in Iran and Iraq and they're everywhere. I mean, they feel like it's their zone of influence. And a lot of the US peace movement is not aligning with Peace Now, which has actually more members than some of the more pro-Israeli military groups in the US. And there is a collaboration between Palestinian-Americans, Arab-Americans, Jewish-Americans to try to restrain the spread of militarism that the US is so involved in with billions of dollars, diplomatic support and other means in Israel and the neighboring countries.

And it's getting even more difficult because Israel's concluding agreements with some of these dictators that you pointed out in the surrounding areas and this could be a real obstacle to any kind of mobilization in the US. What's your take on all this?

David Swanson: Well, I agree with how you framed it and I do think there are horrendously negative developments in terms of the impossibility of any two-state solution and the delusional pursuit of it, and the incredible expanse of settlements and militarization of Israeli society and culture. There are some positive developments in terms of US public opinion and awareness and information, particularly among young people, but then there's pushback. Jeremy Corbin would have been a peace activist prime minister if it were impossible to call someone an anti-Semite unless they actually were an anti-Semite. McCarthy is trying to remove two Democrats from the armed so-called Services Committee. One of them is Schiff for the crime of lying, which is great but who would be left if they did that consistently? And the other is Ilhan Omar for being an anti-Semite despite not being an anti-Semite. So this is their tactic now that we're up against. I think that there are some important positive steps. I'm happy to give you millions of negative ones as well. I'm not trying to sell optimism here, but the fact that the peace movement and public pressure were a big factor in stopping a massive bombing of Syria in 2015, and European pressure and the vote in Parliament in that year that led Barack Obama to admit the last thing any of them ever want to admit, and that is that public pressure had an impact and they didn't bomb every inch of Syria. That's a good thing. And every time there's an urgent push for a war on Iran and it doesn't happen, makes it a little bit easier to say we don't need it the next time they push for that. But memories don't last. And if people remembered what they knew about the war on Iraq some years back, we would be in a much better situation now. And so we have to keep alive what people manage to learn, what whistleblowers take great risks to expose about past wars when they come up with these new ones, or we're never going to survive.

Ralph Nader: Well, your point about pushback is true, because every time there's an effort to promote a more peaceful resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, there's all kinds of retaliation. About 20 years ago, when Israeli bulldozers, maybe less than 20 years ago, maybe 15 years ago when Israeli bulldozers were collectively punishing Palestinian families by

demolishing homes, 400 rabbis in the US, many of them from significant synagogues, protested, citing Judaic philosophy about destroying homes and collective punishment--four hundred. And they were given good publicity at the time in the *New York Times* and elsewhere. And after that, no one heard anything more from them. Well, you can imagine what the pushback was. So how do you deal with pushback when people do act courageously and morally and step forward, and then all kinds of strictures come in on them? If they're in the business world, they start losing their business contacts. And if they're in the university world, they may not get tenure. There are all kinds of subtle ways to retaliate and shut people up. How do you deal with that?

David Swanson: I think we have to celebrate courageous acts of truth speaking even by people and groups that we disagree with on many things. And we have to go after those who attack them, groups like the Anti-Defamation League that engage in defamation of the better members of the US Congress. I know it's a very low bar, but the better members of the US Congress when they speak out and get called anti-Semites and so forth, and when people speak out simply for a ceasefire and negotiations, as you were discussing earlier, and get called Putin lovers and Russian slaves and haters of democracy. We have to defend and celebrate those who engage in these sorts of acts and condemn the censorship and the libel and the slander.

So one thing that World BEYOND WAR does is we give out annual awards to activists, including the dock workers union in Italy that's been blocking the shipments of weapons to Ukraine. That's had an impact on Italian society where you have leading politicians at big peace rallies demanding no more weapons, ceasefire, negotiate--saying the very things that would get you booted out of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, because the culture in Italy has not moved quite the way that it has in the US and of course, much of the world. You're able to say things that you can't say about Ukraine and Russia in the US. And so building global organizations that communicate globally and inform people what's happening in other corners of the world is very, very helpful.

Ralph Nader: Well, we've run out of time. We've been talking with David Swanson, who is an indefatigable and knowledgeable peace advocate. He's written a lot. He's spoken a lot. He's networked a lot. He's mobilized a lot. And he needs to hear from you. He needs to see whether you want the materials that he and his groups have written so accurately and so pointedly. So give the website slowly, the two websites slowly, once more, David.

David Swanson: Those would be worldbeyondwar.org and rootsaction.org. And thank you very, very, very much.

Ralph Nader: You're very, very welcome.

Steve Skrovan: I want to thank our guests again, Medea Benjamin and David Swanson. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up." A transcript of this program will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph's weekly column, it's free, go to nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

Steve Skrovan: The American Museum of Tort Law has gone virtual. Go to tortmuseum.org to explore the exhibits, take a virtual tour, and learn about iconic tort cases from history.

David Feldman: To order your copy of the *Capitol Hill Citizen*, "Democracy Dies in Broad Daylight," go to capitolhillcitizen.com.

Steve Skrovan: And remember to continue the conversation after each show. Go to the comments section at ralphnaderradiohour.com and post a comment or question on this week's episode. We'll pick some standout comments, ask Ralph for his response, and post his reply.

David Feldman: The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

Steve Skrovan: 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.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you everybody. Remember, especially Congress club members, get a hold of the *Capitol Hill Citizen*. It's in print only and pass it along. It's a great discussion piece. It's covering Congress unofficially.