

Video: Robert F. Kennedy Jr: CIA, Power, Corruption, War, Freedom, and Meaning

By [Robert F. Kennedy Jr](#) and [Lex Fridman](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Law and Justice](#)

Global Research, July 12, 2023

[Lex Fridman Podcast](#) 7 July 2023

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the Translate Website button below the author's name.

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Click the share button above to email/forward this article to your friends and colleagues. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

Transcript of the interview can be read below.

Introduction

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:00:00\)](#) It's not our business to change the Russian government. And anybody who thinks it's a good idea to do regime change in Russia, which has more nuclear weapons than we do, is I think irresponsible. And Vladimir Putin himself has had... We will not live in a world without Russia and it was clear when he said that, that he was talking about himself and he has his hand on a button that could bring Armageddon to the entire planet. So why are we messing with this? It's not our job to change that regime, and we should be making friends with the Russians. We shouldn't be treating him as an enemy. Now we've pushed him into the camp with China. That's not a good thing for our country. And by the way, what we're doing now does not appear to be weakening Putin at all.

Lex Fridman [\(00:00:56\)](#) The following is a conversation with Robert F. Kennedy Jr, candidate for the President of the United States, running as a Democrat. Robert is an activist, lawyer and author who has challenged some of the world's most powerful corporations seeking to hold them accountable for the harm they may cause. I love science and engineering. These two pursuits are, to me the most beautiful and powerful in the history of human civilization. Science is our journey, our fight for uncovering the laws of nature and leveraging them to understand the universe and to lessen the amount of suffering in the world. Some of the greatest human beings I've ever met, including most of my good friends, are scientists and engineers. Again, I love science, but science cannot flourish without epistemic humility, without debate, both in the pages of academic journals and in the public square, in good faith, long form conversations.

[\(00:01:56\)](#) Agree or disagree, I believe Robert's voice should be part of the debate. To call

him a conspiracy theorist and arrogantly dismiss everything he says without addressing it diminishes the public's trust in the scientific process. At the same time, dogmatic skepticism of all scientific output on controversial topics like the pandemic is equally, if not more dishonest and destructive. I recommend that people read and listen to Robert F. Kennedy Jr, his arguments and his ideas. But I also recommend, as I say in this conversation, that people read and listen to Vincent Racaniello from This Week in Virology, Dan Wilson from Debunk The Funk, and the Twitter and books of Paul Offit, Eric Topol, and others who are outspoken in their disagreement with Robert.

[\(00:02:50\)](#) It is disagreement, not conformity that bends the long arc of humanity toward truth and wisdom. In this process of disagreement, everybody has a lesson to teach you, but we must have the humility to hear it and to learn from it. This is The Lex Fridman podcast. To support it, please check out our sponsors in the description. And now, dear friends, here's Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

US History

[\(00:03:18\)](#) It's the 4th of July, Independence Day. So simple question, simple, big question. What do you love about this country, the United States of America?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:03:27\)](#) I would say there's so many things that I love about the country, the landscapes and the waterways and the people, et cetera. But on the higher level, people argue about whether we're an exemplary nation, and that term has been given a bad name, particularly by the neocons, the actions, the neocons in recent decades who have turned that phrase into a justification for forcing people to adopt American systems or values at the barrel of a gun. But my father and uncle used it in a very different way, and they were very proud of it. I grew up very proud of this country because we were the exemplary nation in the sense that we were an example of democracy all over the world. When we first launched our democracy in 1780, we were the only democracy on earth. And there was Civil war, by 1865, there were six democracies.

[\(00:04:35\)](#) Today there's probably 190, and all of them in one way or another are modeled on the American experience. And it's extraordinary because our first serious and sustained contact with the European culture and continent was in 1608 when John Winthrop came over with his Puritans in the sloop Arbella and Winthrop gave this famous speech where he said, "This is going to be a city on a hill. This is going to be an example for all the other nations in the world." And he warned his fellow Puritans. They were sitting at this great expanse of land and he said, "We can't be seduced by the lure of real estate or by the carnal opportunities of this land. We have to take this country as a gift from God and then turn it into an example for the rest of the world of God's love, of God's will and wisdom." And 200 years later, 250 years later, a different generation, they're mainly [inaudible [00:05:59](#)], are people who had a belief in God, but not so much a love of particularly religious cosmologies.

[\(00:06:13\)](#) The Framers of the Constitution believe that we were creating something that would be replicated around the world, and that it was an example in democracy. There would be this kind of wisdom from the collective that... And the word wisdom means a knowledge of God's will, and that somehow God would speak through the collective in a way that he or she could not speak through totalitarian regimes. And I think that that's something that even though Winthrop was a white man and a Protestant, that every immigrant group who came after them adopted that belief. And I know my family, when my

family came over, all of my grandparents came over in 1848 during the potato famine, and they saw this country as unique in history is something that was part of a broader spiritual mission. And so I'd say that from a 30,000-foot level, I grew up so proud of this country and believing that it was the greatest country in the world, and for those reasons.

Freedom

Lex Fridman [\(00:07:34\)](#) Well, I immigrated to this country. And one of the things that really embodies America to me is the ideal of freedom. Hunter S. Thompson said, "Freedom is something that dies unless it's used." What does freedom mean to you?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:07:47\)](#) To me, freedom does not mean chaos, and it does not mean anarchy. It means that it has to be accompanied by restraint if it's going to live up to its promise in self-restraint. What it means is the capacity for human beings to exercise and to fulfill their creative energies unrestrained as much as possible by government.

Lex Fridman [\(00:08:20\)](#) So this point that Hunter S. Thompson has made is, "Dies unless it's used." Do you agree with that?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:08:28\)](#) Yeah, I do agree with that, and he was not unique in saying that. Thomas Jefferson said that the Tree of Liberty had to be watered with the blood of each generation. And what he meant by that is that we can't live off the laurels of the American Revolution. That we had a group, we had a generation where between 25,000 and 70,000 Americans died. They gave their lives, they gave their livelihoods, they gave their status, they gave their property, and they put it all on the line to give us our Bill of Rights and that, but those Bill of Rights, the moment that we signed them, there were forces within our society that began trying to chip away at them, and that happens in every generation. And it is the obligation of every generation to safeguard and protect those freedoms.

Camus

Lex Fridman [\(00:09:26\)](#) The blood of each generation. You mentioned your interest, your admiration of Al Albert Camus, of Stoicism, perhaps your interest in existentialism. Camus said, I believe in Myth of Sisyphus, "The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion." What do you think he means by that?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:09:49\)](#) I suppose the way that Camus viewed the world and the way that the Stoics did and a lot of the existentialists, it was that it was so absurd and that the problems and the tasks that were given just to live a life are so insurmountable that the only way that we can get back the gods for giving us this impossible task of living life was to embrace it and to enjoy it and to do our best at it. To me, I read Camus, and particularly in The Myth of Sisyphus as a parable that... And it's the same lesson that I think he writes about in The Plague, where we're all given these insurmountable tasks in our lives, but that by doing our duty, by being of service to others, we can bring meaning to a meaningless chaos and we can bring order to the universe.

[\(00:11:01\)](#) And Sisyphus was the iconic hero of the Stoics, and he was a man because he did something good. He delivered a gift to humanity. He angered the gods and they condemned him to push a rock up the hill every day, and then it would roll down. When he got to the top, it would roll down and he'd spend the night going back down the hill to collect it and

then rolling it back up the hill again. And the task was absurd, it was insurmountable. He could never win, but the last line of that book is one of the great lines, which is something to the extent that I can picture as of his smiling, because Camus' belief was that even though his task was insurmountable, that he was a happy man and he was a happy man because he put his shoulder to the stone.

[\(00:11:59\)](#) He took his duty, he embraced the task and the absurdity of life, and he pushed the stone up the hill. And that if we do that, and if we find ways of being service to others, that is the ultimate, that's the key to the lock, that's the solution to the puzzle.

Lex Fridman [\(00:12:21\)](#) Each individual person in that way can rebel against absurdity by discovering meaning to this whole messy thing.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:12:28\)](#) And we can bring meaning not only to our own lives, but we can bring meaning to the universe as well. We can bring some kind of order to life and the embrace of those tasks and the commitment to service resonates out from us to the rest of humanity in some way.

Hitler and WW2

Lex Fridman [\(00:12:51\)](#) So you mentioned The Plague by Camus. There's a lot of different ways to read that book, but one of them, especially given how it was written, is that The Plague symbolizes Nazi Germany and the Hitler regime. What do you learn about human nature from a figure like Adolf Hitler, that he's able to captivate the minds of millions, rise to power and take on, pull in the whole world into a global war?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:13:24\)](#) I was born nine years after the end of World War II, and I grew up in a generation with my parents who were fixated on that, on what happened, and my father. At that time, the resolution in the minds of most Americans, and I think people around the world, is that there had been something wrong with the German people, that the Germans had been particularly susceptible to this kind of demagoguery and to following a powerful leader and just industrializing cruelty and murder. And my father always differed with that. My father said, "This is not a German problem. This could happen to all of us. We're all just inches away from barbarity." And the thing that keeps us safe in this country are the institutions of our democracy, our constitution. It's not our nature. Our nature has to be restrained, and that comes through self-restraint.

[\(00:14:38\)](#) But also, the beauty of our country is that we devise these institutions that are designed to allow us to flourish, but at the same time, not to give us enough freedom to flourish, but also create enough order to keep us from collapsing into barbarity. So one of the other things that my father talked about from when I was little, he would ask us this question, "If you were the family and Anne Frank came to your door and asked you to hide her, would you be one of the people who hid her, risk your own life, or would you be one of the people who turned her in?"

[\(00:15:24\)](#) And of course, we would all say, "Well, of course we would hide Anne Frank and take the risk," but that's been something kind of a lesson, a challenge that has always been near the forefront of my mind, that if a totalitarian system ever occurs in the United States, which my father thought was quite possible, he was conscious about how fragile democracy actually is, that would I be one of the ones who would resist the totalitarianism or would I be one of the people who went along with it? Would I be one of the people who

was at the train station in crack hour, or even Berlin and saw people being shipped off to camps and just put my head down and pretend I didn't say it because talking about it would be destructive to my career and maybe my freedom and even my life? So that has been a challenge that my father gave to me and all of my brothers and sisters, and it's something that I've never forgotten.

Lex Fridman [\(00:16:39\)](#) A lot of us would like to believe we would resist in that situation, but the reality is most of us wouldn't, and that's a good thing to think about, that human nature is such that we're selfish even when there's an atrocity going on all around us.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:16:57\)](#) And we also have the capacity to deceive ourselves, and all of us tend to judge ourselves by our intentions and our actions.

Lex Fridman [\(00:17:08\)](#) What have you learned about life from your father, Robert F. Kennedy?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:17:12\)](#) First of all, I'll say this about my uncle because I'm going to apply that question to my uncle and my father. My uncle was asked when he first met Jackie Bouvier, who later became Jackie Kennedy. She was a reporter for a newspaper and she had a column where she'd do these pithy interviews with both famous people and man in the street interviews. And she was interviewing him and she asked him what he believed his best quality was, his strongest virtue? And she thought that he would say courage because he had been a war hero. He was the only president who... And this is when he was Senator, by the way, who received the Purple Heart. And he had a very famous story of him as a hero in World War II. And then he had come home and he had written a book on moral courage among American politicians and won the Pulitzer Prize, that book Profiles and Courage, which was a series of incidents where American political leaders made decisions to embrace principle even though their careers were at stake, and in most cases were destroyed by their choice.

[\(00:18:37\)](#) She thought he was going to say courage, but he didn't. He said curiosity, and I think looking back at his life that the best, it was true, and that was the quality that allowed him to put himself in the shoes of his adversaries. And he always said that if the only way that we're going to have peace is if we're able to put ourselves in the shoes of our adversaries, understand their behavior and their context, not context. And that's why he was able to resist the intelligence apparatus and the military during the Bay of Pigs when they said, "You've got to send in the Essex, the aircraft carrier." And he said, "No." Even though he'd only been two months in office, he was able to stand up to them because he was able to put himself in the shoes of both Castro and Khrushchev and understand there's got to be another solution to this.

[\(00:19:40\)](#) And then during the Cuban Missile Crisis, he was able to endure it when the narrative was okay, Khrushchev acted in a way as an aggressor to put missiles in our hemisphere. How dare he do that? And Jack and my father were able to say, "Well, wait a minute. He's doing that because we put missiles in Turkey and Italy, and the Turkish ones right on the Russian border." And they then made a secret deal with Do Brennan, with Ambassador Do Brennan and with Khrushchev to remove the missiles in Turkey if he moved the Jupiter missiles from Turkey, so long as Khrushchev removed them from Cuba. There were 13 men on what they called the [inaudible 00:20:36] Committee, which was the group of people who were deciding what the action was, what they were going to do to end the

Cuban Missile Crisis.

[\(00:20:45\)](#) And virtually, and of those men, 11 of them wanted to invade and wanted to bomb and invade, and it was Jack. And then later on, my father and Bob McNamara, who were the only people who were with him, because he was able to see the world from Khrushchev's point of view, he believed that there was another solution. And then he also had the moral courage. So my father, to get back to your question, famously said that, "Moral courage is the most important quality and it's more rare," and courage on the football field or courage in battle than physical courage. It's much more difficult to come by, but it's the most important quality in a human being.

Lex Fridman [\(00:21:33\)](#) And you think that kind of empathy that you referred to, that requires moral courage?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:21:37\)](#) It certainly requires moral courage to act on it, and particularly in any time that a nation is at war, there's a momentum or an inertia that says, "Okay, let's not look at this from the other person's point of view." And that's the time we really need to do that.

War in Ukraine

Lex Fridman [\(00:22:03\)](#) Well, if we're can apply that style of empathy, style of curiosity to the current war in Ukraine, what is your understanding of why Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:22:16\)](#) Vladimir Putin could have avoided the war in the Ukraine. His invasion was illegal. It was unnecessary, and it was brutal, but I think it's important for us to move beyond these kind of comic book depictions of this insane, avaricious Russian leader who wants to restore the Soviet Empire, and who made unprovoked invasion of the Ukraine. He was provoked and we were provoking him and we were provoking him since 1997. And it's not just me that's saying that. And before Putin never came in, we were provoking Russia, the Russians in this way unnecessarily. And to go back that time in 1992 when the Russians moved out of... When the Soviet Union was collapsing, the Russians moved out of East Germany and they did that, which was a huge concession to them.

[\(00:23:27\)](#) They had 400,000 troops in East Germany at that time, and they were facing NATO troops on the other side of the wall. Gorbachev made this huge concession where he said to George Bush, "I'm going to move all of our troops out, and you can then reunify Germany under NATO," which was a hostile army to the Soviet... It was created with hostile intent toward the Soviet Union. And he said, "You can take Germany, but I want your promise that you will not move NATO to the east." And James Baker, who was his Secretary of State famously said, "I will not move NATO. We will not move NATO one inch to the east."

[\(00:24:07\)](#) So then five years later in 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was the "father of the neocons," who was a Democrat at that time, served in the Carter administration, he published a paper, a blueprint for moving NATO right up to the Russian border, a 1,000 miles to the east and taking over 14 nations. And at that time, George Kennan, who was the deity of American diplomats, he was arguably the most important diplomat in American history. He was the architect of the containment policy during World War II. And he said, "This is insane and it's unnecessary. And if you do this, it's going to provoke the Russians to a violent response. And we should be making friends with the Russians. They lost the Cold

War. We should be treating them the way that we treated our adversaries after World War II, with a Marshall Plan to try to help them incorporate into Europe and to be part of the brotherhood of man and of western nations. We shouldn't continue to be treating them as an enemy and particularly surrounding them at their borders."

[\(00:25:26\)](#) William Perry, who was then the Secretary of Defense under Bill Clinton, threatened to resign. He was so upset by this plan to move NATO to the east. And William Burns, who was then the US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, who is now at this moment, the Head of the CIA, said at the time, the same thing. "If you do this, it is going to provoke the Russians toward a military response." And we moved all around Russia. We moved to 14 nations, a 1,000 miles to the east, and we put ageist missile systems in two nations, in Romania and Poland. So we did what the Russians had done to us in 1962 that would've provoked an invasion of Cuba. We put those missile systems back there, and then we'd walk away, unilaterally, walk away from the two nuclear missile treaties, the intermediate nuclear missile treaties that we had with the Soviet, with Russia, and neither of us would put those missile systems on the borders.

[\(00:26:31\)](#) We walk away from that and we put ageist missile systems, which are nuclear capable. They can carry the Tomahawk missiles, which have nuclear warheads. So the last country that they didn't take was the Ukraine. And the Russians said, and in fact, Bill Perry said this, or William Burns said it, now the Head of the CIA, "It is a red line. If we bring NATO into Ukraine, that is a red line for the Russians. They cannot live with it. They cannot live with it. Russia has been invaded three times through the Ukraine. The last time it was invaded, we killed, or the Germans killed one out of every seven Russians."

[\(00:27:11\)](#) My uncle described what happened to Russia in his famous American university speech in 1963, 60 years ago this month, or or last month, 60 years ago in June, June 10th, 1963. That speech was telling the American people, "Put yourself in the shoes of the Russians. We need to do that if we're going to make peace." And he said, "All of us have been taught that we won the war, but we didn't win the war. If anybody won the war against Hitler, it was the Russians. Their country was destroyed, all of their cities." And he said, "Imagine if all of the cities from the East Coast to Chicago were reduced to rubble and all of the fields burns, all of the forests burns. That's what happened to Russia. That's what they gave so that we could get rid of Adolf Hitler."

[\(00:28:08\)](#) And he had them put themselves in their position, and today there's none of that happening. We have refused repeatedly to talk to the Russians. We've broken up, there's two treaties, the Minsk Agreements, which the Russians were willing to sign, and they said, "We will stay out." The Russians didn't want the Ukraine. They showed that when the Donbas region voted 90 to 10 to leave and go to Russia. Putin said, "No, we want Ukraine to stay intact, but we want you to sign Minsk Accords." The Russians were very worried because of the US involvement and the coup in Ukraine in 2014, and then the oppression and the killing of 14,000 ethnic Russians, and Russia hasn't had the same way that if Mexico would ageist missile systems from China or Russia on our border and then killed 14,000 expats American, we would go in there.

[\(00:29:13\)](#) Oh, he does have a national security interest in the Ukraine. He has an interest in protecting the Russian-speaking people of the Ukraine, the ethnic Russians, and the Minsk Accords did that. It left Ukraine as part of Russia. It left them as a semi-autonomous region that continued to use their own language, which is essentially banned by the coup, by the government we put in 2014, and we sabotaged that agreement. And we now know in April

of 2022, Zelenskyy and Putin had inked a deal already to another peace agreement, and that the United States and Boris Johnson, the neocons in the White House and Boris Johnson over to the Ukraine to sabotage that agreement.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:30:03\)](#) ... Boris Johnson over to the Ukraine to sabotage that agreement. What do I think? I think this is a proxy war. I think this is a war that the neocons and the White House wanted. They've said for two decades they wanted this war and that they wanted to use Ukraine as a pawn in a proxy war between United States and Russia, the same as we used Afghanistan.

[\(00:30:26\)](#) And in fact, they say it, "This is the model. Let's use the Afghanistan model." That was said again and again. And to get the Russians to overextend their troops and then fight them using local fighters and US weapons.

[\(00:30:40\)](#) And when President Biden was asked, "Why are we in the Ukraine?" He was honest. He says, "To depose Vladimir Putin. Regime change for Vladimir Putin." And when his defense secretary Lloyd Austin in April 2022 was asked, "Why are we there?" He said, "To degrade the Russians' capacity to fight anywhere... To exhaust the Russian army and degrade its capacity to fight elsewhere in the world."

[\(00:31:05\)](#) That's not a humanitarian mission. That's not what we were told. We were told this was an unprovoked invasion and that we're there to bring humanitarian relief to the Ukrainians. But that is the opposite. That is a war of attrition that is designed to chew up and turn this little nation into an abattoir of death for the flower of Ukrainian youth in order to advance a geopolitical ambition of certain people within the White House. And I think that's wrong.

[\(00:31:39\)](#) We should be talking to the Russians the way that Nixon talked to Brezhnev, the way that Bush talked to Gorbachev, the way that my uncle talked to Khrushchev. We need to be talking with the Russians, we should, and negotiating. And we need to be looking about how do we end this and preserve peace in Europe.

Lex Fridman [\(00:31:58\)](#) Would you as president sit down and have a conversation with Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy separately and together to negotiate peace?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:32:07\)](#) Absolutely. Absolutely.

Lex Fridman [\(00:32:09\)](#) What about Vladimir Putin? He's been in power since 2000. So as the old adage goes, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Do you think he has been corrupted by being in power for so long, if you think of the man, if you look at his mind?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:32:27\)](#) Listen, I don't know exactly. I can't say because I don't know enough about him or about... The evidence that I've seen is that he is homicidal. He kills his enemies or poisons them. And the reaction I've seen to that, to hit those accusations from him have not been to deny that but to kind of laugh it off.

[\(00:32:58\)](#) Oh, I think he's a dangerous man and that, of course, there's probably corruption in his regime. But having said that, it's not our business to change the Russian government. And anybody who thinks it's a good idea to do a regime change in Russia, which has more nuclear weapons than we do, is I think irresponsible.

[\(00:33:22\)](#) And Vladimir Putin himself has said, “We will not live in a world without Russia.” And it was clear when he said that he was talking about himself. And he has his hand on a button that could bring Armageddon to the entire planet.

[\(00:33:40\)](#) So why are we messing with this? It’s not our job to change that regime. We should be making friends with the Russians. We shouldn’t be treating him as an enemy. Now we’ve pushed him into the camp with China. That’s not a good thing for our country.

[\(00:33:55\)](#) And by the way, what we’re doing now does not appear to be weakening Putin at all. Putin now, if you believe the polls that are coming out of Russia, they show him... the most recent polls that I’ve seen show him with an 89% popularity that people in Russia support the war in Ukraine, and they support him as an individual.

[\(00:34:25\)](#) And I understand there’s problems with polling and you don’t know what to believe, but the polls consistently show that. And it’s not America’s business to be the policemen of the world and to be changing regimes in the world. That’s illegal.

[\(00:34:41\)](#) We shouldn’t be breaking international laws. We should actually be looking for ways to improve relationships with Russia, not to destroy Russia, not to destroy, and not to choose its leadership for them. That’s up to the Russian people, not us.

Lex Fridman [\(00:35:00\)](#) Step one is to sit down and empathize with the leaders of both nations to understand their history, their concerns, their hopes, just to open the door for conversation so they’re not back to the corner.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:35:12\)](#) Yeah. And I think the US can play a really important role, and a US president can play a really important role by reassuring the Russians that we’re not going to consider them an enemy anymore, that we want to be friends.

[\(00:35:26\)](#) And it doesn’t mean that you have to let down your guard completely. The way that you do it, which was the way President Kennedy did it, is you do it one step at a time. You take baby steps. We do a unilateral move, reduce our hostility and aggression, and see if the Russians reciprocate. And that’s the way that we should be doing it.

[\(00:35:50\)](#) And we should be easing our way into a positive relationship with Russia. We have a lot in common with Russia, and we should be friends with Russia and with the Russian people. Apparently, there’s been 350,000 Ukrainians who have died, at least, in this war. And there’s probably been 60,000 or 80,000 Russians. And that should not give us any joy. It should not give us any...

[\(00:36:21\)](#) I saw Lindsey Graham on TV saying something to the extent of, “Anything we can do to kill Russians is a good use of our money.” It is not. Those are somebody’s children. We should have compassion for them. This war is an unnecessary war. We should settle it through negotiation, through diplomacy, through state graft, and not through weapons.

Lex Fridman [\(00:36:50\)](#) Do you think this war can come to an end purely through military operations?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:36:55\)](#) No. I mean, I don’t think there’s any way in the world that the Ukrainians can beat the Russians. I don’t think there’s any appetite in Europe... I think Europe is now having severe problems. In Germany, Italy, France, you’re seeing these riots. There’s internal problems in those countries.

[\(00:37:12\)](#) There is no appetite in Europe for sending men to die in Ukraine. And the Ukrainians do not have anybody left. The Ukrainians are using press gangs to fill the ranks of their armies. Military-age men are trying as hard as they can to get out of the Ukraine right now to avoid going to the front.

[\(00:37:35\)](#) The Russians apparently have been killing Ukrainians in a 7:1 ratio. My son fought over there, and he told me... He had firefights with the Russians mainly at night, but he said most of the battles were artillery wars during the day. And the Russians now outgun the NATO forces 10:1 in artillery. They're killing at a horrendous rate.

[\(00:38:06\)](#) Now, my interpretation of what's happened so far is that Putin actually went in early on with a small force because he expected to meet somebody on the other end of a negotiating table once he went in. And when that didn't happen, they did not have a large enough force to be able to mount an offensive.

[\(00:38:32\)](#) And so they've been building up that force up till now, and they now have that force. And even against the small original force, the Ukrainians have been helpless. All of their offenses have died. They've now killed the head of the Ukrainian special forces, which was probably, arguably, by many accounts, the best elite military unit in all of Europe.

[\(00:39:01\)](#) The commandant, the commander of that special forces group gave a speech about four months ago saying that 86% of his men are dead or wounded and cannot return to the front. He cannot rebuild that force. And the troops that are now filling the gaps of all those 350,000 men who've been lost are scantily trained, and they're arriving green at the front.

[\(00:39:36\)](#) Many of them do not want to be there. Many of them are giving up and going over to the Russian side. We've seen this again and again and again, including platoon-sized groups that are defecting to the Russians.

[\(00:39:48\)](#) And I don't think it's possible to win. Of course, I've studied World War II history exhaustively, but I saw... There's a new... I think it's a Netflix series of documentaries that I highly recommend to people there. They're colorized versions of the black-and-white films from the battles of World War II, but it's all the battles of World War II.

[\(00:40:15\)](#) So I watched Stalingrad the other night. And the willingness of the Russians to fight on against any kind of odds and to make huge sacrifices of Russians, the Russians themselves who are making the sacrifice with their lives, the willingness of them to do that for their motherland is almost inexhaustible.

[\(00:40:40\)](#) It is incomprehensible to think that Ukraine can beat Russia in a war. It would be like Mexico beating the United States. It's impossible to think that it can happen. And Russia has deployed a tiny, tiny fraction of its military so far. And now it has China with its mass production capacity supporting its war effort. It's a hopeless situation.

[\(00:41:11\)](#) And we've been lied to. The press in our country and our government are just promoting this lie that the Ukrainians are about to win and that everything's going great and that Putin's on the run. And there's all this wishful thinking because of the Wagner Group-

Lex Fridman [\(00:41:30\)](#) Prigozhin.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:41:30\)](#) ... Prigozhin and the Wagner Group, that this was an internal

coup, and it showed dissent and weakness of Putin. And none of that is true. That insurgency, which wasn't even an insurgency...

[\(00:41:44\)](#) He only got 4,000 of his men to follow him out of 20,000. And they were quickly stopped. And nobody in the Russian military, the oligarchy, the political system, nobody supported it. But we're being told, "Oh yeah, it's the beginning of the end for Putin. He's weakened. He's wounded. He's on his way out." And all of these things are just lies that we are being fed.

Lex Fridman [\(00:42:07\)](#) To push back on a small aspect of this that you kind of implied, so I've traveled to Ukraine, and one thing that I should say, similar to the Battle of Stalingrad, it is not only the Russians that fight to the end. I think Ukrainians are very lucky to fight to the end.

[\(00:42:24\)](#) And the morale there is quite high. I've talked to nobody... This was a year ago in August with Kherson. Everybody was proud to fight and die for their country. And there's some aspect where this war unified the people, gave them a reason and an understanding that this is what it means to be Ukrainian and, "I will fight to the death to defend this land."

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:42:48\)](#) I would agree with that, and I should have said that myself at the beginning. That's one of the reasons my son went over there to fight because he was inspired by the valor of the Ukrainian people and this extraordinary willingness of them.

[\(00:43:02\)](#) And I think Putin thought it would be much easier to sweep into Ukraine, and he found a stone wall of Ukrainians ready to put their lives and their bodies on the line. But that, to me, makes the whole episode even more tragic, is that I don't believe... I think that the US's role in this has been... There were many opportunities to settle this war, and the Ukrainians wanted to settle it.

[\(00:43:34\)](#) Volodymyr Zelenskyy, when he ran in 2019, here's a guy who's a comedian, he's an actor. He had no political experience, and yet he won this election with 70% of the vote. Why? He won on a peace platform, and he won promising to sign the Minsk accords. And yet something happened when he got in there that made him suddenly pivot. And I think it's a good guess what happened.

[\(00:44:02\)](#) I think he came under threat by ultra-nationalists within his own administration and the insistence of neocons like Victoria Nuland and the White House, that we don't want peace with Putin. We want a war.

Lex Fridman [\(00:44:20\)](#) Do you worry about nuclear war?

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:44:22\)](#) Yeah, I worry about it.

Lex Fridman [\(00:44:25\)](#) It seems like a silly question, but it's not. It's a serious question.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr [\(00:44:29\)](#) Well, the reason it's not is just because people seem to be in this kind of dream state that it'll never happen, and yet it can happen very easily and it can happen at any time.

[\(00:44:48\)](#) And if we push the Russians too far, I don't doubt that Putin, if he felt like his regime or his nation was in danger, that the United States was going to be able to place a quisling into the Kremlin, that he would use nuclear torpedoes and these strategic weapons

that they have. And that could be it. Once you do that, nobody controls the trajectory.

[Click here to read the full transcript.](#)

*

Note to readers: Please click the share button above. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter and subscribe to our Telegram Channel. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

Featured image is a screenshot from the video

The original source of this article is [Lex Fridman Podcast](#)

Copyright © [Robert F. Kennedy Jr](#) and [Lex Fridman](#), [Lex Fridman Podcast](#), 2023

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Robert F. Kennedy Jr](#) and [Lex Fridman](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca