

# The Great Simplification

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[00:00:00] **Jeffrey Sachs:** Our choice is not national government versus state government. We have different kinds of functions that need to be carried out by different kinds of institutions at different levels. Subsidiarity is a political idea, which is solve the problem at the lowest possible level of government that can actually solve the problem.

[00:00:24] Don't try to solve the problem at a low level of government if it requires a higher level of government. But if you want to get climate change under control or peace and nuclear war. You need global institutions. The U. S. doesn't sign most new U. N. treaties because it says we're sovereign, and so forth.

[00:00:47] But what do we get out of this? We get a world that can't solve its problems, and we're closer than ever to nuclear peace. Armageddon.

[00:01:00] **Nate Hagens:** As violent tensions continue to escalate around the world, both in the Middle East and in Ukraine, I feel a sense of responsibility as the host of this channel to continue to platform those who are promoting peace and pragmatism surrounding the topics and realities of war. As followers of this channel know, a nuclear exchange, probably accidental, is one of my biggest existential worries for the coming years, and is a risk that, in my opinion, is not talked about nearly enough.

[00:01:33] As such, today I'm joined by Jeffrey Sachs for a part one conversation on the United States approach. to the situation in Russia and Ukraine alongside the broader geopolitical implications and behaviors that make global peace increasingly difficult to imagine, let alone achieve. Professor Sachs serves as the director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University and also was the director of the Earth Institute there from 2002 to 2016.

[00:02:06] He is the president of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and co chair of the Council of Engineers for the Energy Transition. he was invited first by Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, and then by

# The Great Simplification

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president Boris Yeltsin to advise on the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy.

[00:02:28] He is widely recognized for promoting bold and effective strategies to address complex challenges, including the escape from extreme poverty, climate change, international debt and financial crises, and national economic reforms. This was our first conversation, a no, holds barred conversation on the risks of nuclear war and the realities of the United States complicity on an unnecessarily escalating the risks of a strategic exchange due to time constraints on his end.

[00:03:02] this is a much shorter episode than I had hoped, and I didn't get to ask him a long list of questions on sanctions. future global financial sediment, speculation, the difference between oligarchs and billionaires and, more as such. I hope to have Jeffrey back in the future for a part two dive into all of this.

[00:03:24] This subject, war, geopolitics, nuclear war lies outside my expertise, but I do know many people involved in trying to mitigate the risks that have been spoken about here by Jeffrey and others on this channel. I feel this is a critical message for people to understand, because a strategic nuclear weapon exchange would mean end of humanity, and earth as we know it.

[00:03:49] It's a lose situation for complex life and all the things that we're working on in, in other domains. Jeff Sachs holds the perspective of someone who has been intimately involved in global relationships over the several decades, since the 1990s on these issues and understands the risks that we currently face with that.

[00:04:13] Please welcome Jeffrey Sachs. Professor Sachs, welcome to the show. It's great to be with you. Thank you. I know how busy you are, and I really appreciate your time and what you're doing. There are millions of people in the USA, but especially in Europe, who consider you a hero of modern public intellectuals, a la Chomsky and others, because of your willingness to speak uncomfortable truths about our current situation.

[00:04:42] I've learned a lot in the last two years about, our political domain and our geopolitical situation. And one might say that there are two wars going on between the West and Russia. One is the kinetic war, fought in the borders of Ukraine. And the other is the propaganda war being fought by both countries.

# The Great Simplification

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[00:05:03] You at, No small personal risk. I've publicly spoken out about the complexities and risks of our current situation that are quite counter to the standard narrative. Why is this so important to be doing this?

[00:05:16] **Jeffrey Sachs:** Well, I'm, speaking out because I'm worried about nuclear war. It's simple. I'm, worried about war in general.

[00:05:25] I abhor the fact that, Eventually, there will be a settlement in Ukraine, but it will be hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians needlessly dead before we get to that. I organized a meeting in the spring of 2022, which laid out how to end the war then, so more than two years ago, two and a half years ago.

[00:05:54] When I look at what we said and wrote, I'd stick with every word. basically we said, if this goes on, a lot of people are going to die. A lot of people are going to suffer, but it's not going to solve anything. Russia is not going to lose on the battlefield. whatever, is thought we have to get to the underlying politics of this.

[00:06:15] There are real politics. This is not, that. President Putin is some, delusional, Peter the Great. This is about politics. And if you don't talk honestly about what's at the essence of crises, you don't solve them. you just, kill a lot of people. the, thing that amazes me. Maybe not amazes me.

[00:06:40] The thing that distresses me is if you listen to our officials, our members of Congress and all the rest, they don't even care how many Ukrainians are dying. It's just not an issue. It's not talked about. It's, Oh, it's not. What could we do to stop the suffering? It's just kind of blind foolishness, recklessness

[00:07:03] **Nate Hagens:** that needs to end.

[00:07:04] So my understanding, and of course, my understanding is informed only by personal conversations, not by the U. S. media as such, is there's been four, five, six, almost negotiations in the last couple of years, and obviously those never came to fruition for various reasons. Why do you think the U. S. has been so unwilling to invest any effort in diplomatic negotiation?

# The Great Simplification

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[00:07:29] Why does, President Biden. Keep saying it's time to negotiate in Gaza, but not in Ukraine. When is it time to stop the killing? you mentioned in your recent interview with Tucker Carlson, one to 2000 Ukrainians are dying every day. yeah. Di dying and wounded. we don't know

[00:07:47] **Jeffrey Sachs:** exactly the count, but just to be clear, casualties, casualties right at a huge, cost and, enormous rate because the project that we're watching, is, Almost 80 years in the making now, U. S. foreign policy from 1945 onward was, defeat the Soviet Union and, when the Soviet Union ended in December 1991, defeat Russia. Now, from the beginning, the whole Cold War in 1945, which we, Our taught and raised and reflexively blame everything on Stalin and the Soviet Union was, in no small part an American concoction, there was American grandiosity, there was Russophobia, there were By the way, people who had sympathized with Germany in World War II, in senior positions, in the United States, there was bringing in, the Nazi scientists as part of, the U S anti Soviet effort after 1945.

[00:08:59] The point I'm making is there was a long term project. It started at the very end of World War II, after the Soviet Union had been an ally of the United States, after the Soviet Union had lost 27 million people, in fighting Hitler, immediately, okay, now the Soviet Union is the enemy. It happened very quickly, by the way, it happened, soon after Roosevelt's death, and, hardliners, in, The U.

[00:09:29] S. government said, now our next confrontation is with the Soviet Union. Well, be that as it may, whatever one wants to say about the Cold War, when the Cold War ended supposedly in 1991 with the demise of the Soviet Union itself. and in the years preceding that with Mikhail Gorbachev saying peace, democratization, reform, openness.

[00:09:55] Remember glasnost and perestroika. I. The U. S. was saying, yeah, this is great. now we're going to really be in charge of everything. And my greatest disappointment, cause I saw it close up, from the late 1980s and the early 1990s till now was rather than the U. S. saying, great. Peace, a partner. We can cooperate.

[00:10:24] We said, Oh, now we run the whole world. Now it's finally ready. And starting in 1991 92 was the so called unipolar world, or sometimes called American hegemony, or sometimes called full spectrum dominance, or sometimes called the

# The Great Simplification

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American empire, or sometimes called the indispensable nation. The hubris that came over the U.

[00:10:51] S. was enormous, and one part of the hubris was now we can basically make sure that Russia really falls into line. You know, after all this trouble, We'll have a U. S. led world. Russia could be part of that U. S. led world, but we're going to expand our military bases around the world. We're going to expand NATO, in particular, completely contrary to the promises we just gave to Gorbachev and Yeltsin that we would not move NATO one inch eastward because now the United States can do what it wants.

[00:11:32] That project. Again, that specific project is more than 30 years old, so it's right to talk about Project Ukraine. It's deeply embedded in U. S. strategy, in U. S. mindsets, in CIA operations, in military plans. NATO will enlarge to surround Russia in the Black Sea. Now, for Russia, that was, That was a red line.

[00:12:01] that's why we have this war in Ukraine, because Russia kept saying, don't do it, don't do it, don't do it. We kept saying, you have no say, we can do what we want. You literally have no role in our decision over NATO. It's none of your business. it would be like Russia establishing a military base on the Rio Grande, on the Mexican side.

[00:12:28] And, Russia and Mexico celebrating this and the United States saying, don't do it. And Russia saying, but it's none of your business. It doesn't, it's nothing you can have any say over. This is Mexico's choice. If the U. S. would say that, I'd be impressed. We said the opposite 201 years ago. We call it the Monroe Doctrine.

[00:12:50] We say it repeatedly. Don't you dare come close to the United States. you overseas, powers and threats. By the way, just to show you the double standard, I know of a country in the Caribbean where China proposed to build A hospital. Oh, the U. S. was all over this government. Don't you dare accept that.

[00:13:17] A hospital. Because that would be interference in America's backyard. Here we're talking about NATO in Russia's 2, 100 kilometer border. At a time, by the way, when the U. S. is putting in missile systems. Again, where the U. S. says, Now it's none of your business whether we put in Aegis missiles in Poland or Romania or any other place.

# The Great Simplification

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[00:13:43] So basically for 30 years we told Russia, you're nothing. You listen to us. U. S. led world. All can be fine. We can do what we want. We can go to war where we want. We can overthrow your allies whenever we want. We can divide your allied countries like Serbia, breaking apart Kosovo when we want. And we can change regimes when we want, like we did in a coup in Ukraine in February 2014, where the U.

[00:14:14] S. was deeply involved. And it's none of your business because we are the United States of America. Well, eventually that gets you into war. That's the war we're in. Biden has been deeply part of this. All along. That's important to understand, to answer your question, why Biden doesn't want to negotiate.

[00:14:36] Since the 1990s, he's been the senator, and then the vice president, and the president of the military industrial complex.

[00:14:44] **Nate Hagens:** I have so many questions, Let me just start with this, for someone that hasn't followed the history of this, situation in Ukraine and Russia, your comments sound, on the surface pro Russian and anti American, yet you and I are both, residing in the United States.

[00:15:06] what is your response to that?

[00:15:08] **Jeffrey Sachs:** Well, I'm pro American. I'm pro Russian. I'm pro China. I'm pro Earth. I want us to get along. I'm completely anti war, especially in the nuclear age, because I actually don't want our world blown up. I want my grandchildren. to have a future. And I know how many stupid people are around, and I know how many nuclear weapons are around, and I do not want us, trying to find out whether Russia's bluffing or not, when it says this is our red line.

[00:15:46] I mean, that's fine if you're playing a board game, but not if you're playing with the future of the planet.

[00:15:53] **Nate Hagens:** Well, you know, that's why I asked you on the show. This is not my issue. my issue is biodiversity and the sixth mass extinction and, post growth economics on what we do at the, cresting of the carbon pulse, but unless we solve this, none of those issues matter.

# The Great Simplification

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[00:16:10] So you, you mentioned earlier, the word full spectrum dominance. Can you describe what that means and what happens if the USA no longer has a full spectrum dominance or is perceived to no longer have pro, full spectrum dominance? Well, full

[00:16:26] **Jeffrey Sachs:** spectrum dominance is a formal term of the Defense Department that goes back several decades where the idea is that the United States should be the dominant power in every potential military theater of the world, in Europe, in Africa, the Americas, in East Asia, and so on.

[00:16:52] And full spectrum dominance means dominance in all dimensions of military and security related areas. So from all of the different theaters of war, all of the different relevant technologies, cyber, and others, the U. S. should dominate. I We say, well, this is necessary for America's security. How weird that this is necessary for America's security, but there are 192 other countries that we are to dominate that by definition could not have quote, such security.

[00:17:38] So rather than the so called the Kantian idea or categorical imperative, or you could call it the golden rule, that we should behave in a way that we would like others to behave. We say we run the show and you must not in any way dream of having any say in our show, and then we can be secure. Well, the rest of the world doesn't see it that way.

[00:18:05] First of all, because they feel that this makes them. Insecure. We say, well, we're peace loving. Yes. And we overthrow governments left and right. We go to wars left and right. we're not peace loving as a country. We're one of the most violent countries in history. we have bombed civilian populations all over the world.

[00:18:29] By the way, is that anti American? No, it is anti military industrial complex. Yes, it's, I like America. I want to live here. That's in my home. it's where my family lives. So, but I don't want us to get into perpetual wars and especially wars with superpowers that can escalate to. nuclear annihilation.

[00:18:54] I don't know, by the way, whether, you and listeners have, read, and I listened to Annie Jacobson's book, this spring called Nuclear War, A Scenario. What a brilliant book, first of all. How terrifying, but basically it's a book about the

# The Great Simplification

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end of the world in two hours told with meticulous precision, and it is a realistic account because it is not some fanciful science fiction.

[00:19:26] It's drawing literally upon the published record about nuclear warfare and consulting our country's leading experts about nuclear war. And then it is a, it is a terrifying, riveting, breathtaking, heartbreaking account of minute by minute, second by second, in some cases, how the world comes to an end.

[00:19:56] And, I have now worked in every part of the world. I've been engaged in economic diplomacy all over the world, but you know, I, it's like you, I catch wind of these things because, you see with your own eyes, things you don't quite want to see, you get to gauge how intelligent are these people at the top?

[00:20:24] And the answer is, it varies a lot, but don't count on intelligence to save us. don't count on prudence to save us. and when I see how, when I get the, and please don't anyone send me an email saying you're worrying too much about nuclear war. Because if you write that, you just don't know, sorry to say it, frankly put, you don't understand how close we have come to nuclear war, how many American senior officials wanted preemptive first strike nuclear wars that would have ended the world, how casual we are about squandering lives by the hundreds of millions of Americans.

[00:21:14] of thousands or millions, how it's viewed as a game, and even the name Game Theory, frankly, it's a giveaway. you could call it strategic theory, we don't call it strategic theory, we call it game theory, and it's a kind of mindset. and the mindset could be completely disastrous.

[00:21:36] **Nate Hagens:** I'm quite well aware of the logic underpinning that.

[00:21:40] I'd like to have Annie Jacobson, and maybe you and others on a round table because I think this is, so important, to be discussed. let me ask you a question I planned to ask at the end, but it, follows on what you were just saying. I'll, start with a quote. maybe you know the author of the quote, quote, unless we establish some form of world government, it will not be possible for us to avert a third world war.

[00:22:06] Do you know who said that? Winston Churchill. So, my question is Great



# The Great Simplification

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[00:22:11] **Jeffrey Sachs:** quotation. When did he say it? Do you know offhand? I don't know. I don't know.

[00:22:16] **Nate Hagens:** We'll look it up. Given what we face, climate change, resource depletion, a move, as you were saying earlier, from a unipolar to a multipolar world, do you see any path possible path of avoiding future resource wars.

[00:22:30] Such wars have been the most common reason for organized conflict throughout human history. But now, as you were saying, in an era of mutual assured destruction that could happen within hours, could there be mechanisms put firmly in place that prevent or reduce the risk of civilization ending moments of strategic escalation?

[00:22:54] Of course there can be,

[00:22:56] **Jeffrey Sachs:** and of course there need To be, such, institutions built. And let me say a couple of things about this first on, on the positive side. And it's really important. We are not in a struggle for survival where it's the U S versus China versus Russia versus others. We are not in a struggle for survival, even taking into account the all of the stresses on biodiversity and the earth's carrying capacity and so forth.

[00:23:30] We have the means and the technology to actually see our way through for everybody to live decent lives on this planet without the need for some to die and others to survive. You know, Hitler's phrase was Lebensraum. You know, we're going to, invade the Soviet Union because we need living space for the German people.

[00:23:59] and that idea actually goes back to Malthus, who said, we are physically limited. It goes back to Charles Darwin, who said, Oh, Malthus gave me the idea of. What the mechanism of natural selection really is, which is the propensity of organisms always to push against the limits of the caring capacity for their species.

[00:24:26] now one thing that Malthus, believed was that, as People got richer, they would have more children and more procreation. the thing that, enables us to escape from Malthus's, particular prediction is that as people get richer, they have

# The Great Simplification

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fewer children. So the population tends to stabilize not by, the, the positive checks that he said, war, pestilence, disease, famine, but actually by people choosing to have smaller families, and that's a pattern all over the world.

[00:25:06] That's a voluntary pattern, and it's leading, by the way, to a stabilization of the world population, probably around nine and a half to ten billion people, depending on the details. Can the world manage that peacefully? Thank God the answer is yes, but we are primed to see enemies everywhere. And we are absolutely not, mentally set for the nuclear age, because we have had wars from time immemorial, but we can't have more of these without ending everything.

[00:25:50] And so we have to think differently. Albert Einstein was very clear about that, and others were very clear. We're in a new era. Age. And President John F. Kennedy said in 1963, in a, My favorite speech of any American president, known as his peace speech on June 10, 1963, he said, I speak of peace because of the new face of war, saying war makes no sense when you have nuclear powers that have nuclear arsenals that are relatively protected and that can end the world.

[00:26:28] Makes no sense anymore. Now, you come to the very crucial question, and I have to track down, I should know, but I didn't know a Churchill statement about world government. Here's another huge misunderstanding. The idea of world government is maybe one of the greatest anathemas in America. No one's ever gonna tell us what to do.

[00:26:56] world government, that's totalitarian and so forth. This whole approach is a mistake because we don't have one government. Our choice is not national government versus world government. Our choice is not national government versus state government or state government versus city government. We have different kinds of functions that need to be carried out by different kinds of institutions at different levels.

[00:27:32] And so there's a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, which I like very much, called subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is a political idea. It's a philosophy of the Catholic social teachings, but it's a philosophy that was also expressly adopted by the European Union, which is solve The problem at the lowest possible level of government that can actually solve the problem, but don't solve, don't try to solve

# The Great Simplification

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the problem at a low level of government if it requires a higher level of government.

[00:28:08] So here's the point. Our cities are By and large can, can, have the schools and the, clinics, the first, level of a public health system and so forth, and the local roads and bike paths and so forth. That's not the job of a federal government. That's a job of a local government. Wonderful. The job of a federal government may be to build the intercity fast rail or a Power distribution system that carries renewable energy across the country.

[00:28:45] It turns out for a zero carbon power grid, pretty much you need to link a number of countries together because when you've got clouds, someone else has sunshine and to make your system work effectively and it. reasonable cost, it would be good for the U. S. and Canada and Mexico, for example, to join up. We can use Mexican sunshine, Canadian hydropower, and, U.

[00:29:13] S. solar and offshore wind and so forth to build a zero carbon power system in the North America. So then you need a higher level of governance. But if you want to get climate change under control, You need global institutions. No question about it. Or nuclear

[00:29:33] **Nate Hagens:** war.

[00:29:34] **Jeffrey Sachs:** Or peace. Yeah. And nuclear war.

[00:29:38] That's why, thanks God, we have at least the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, but we don't make it work. And one of the terms of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, by the way, is that the nuclear armed countries have a path of nuclear disarmament. The idea of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty was not to freeze the nuclear arms into a small set of, Countries that are kind of the oligopoly or oligarchy of the world.

[00:30:13] It was to phase out nuclear weapons first by stopping new countries from getting nuclear weapons, but then those that have them were not to have a permanent monopoly. Now this goes back to the 1960s, but of course we're not doing that. The U S doesn't abide by these treaties. doesn't sign most new U. N.

# The Great Simplification

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[00:30:37] treaties because says we're sovereign and so forth. But what do we get out of this? We get a world that can't solve its problems. And the point that I make, it's grim, it's not my point, but it's pointing to it, is that we're closer than ever to nuclear Armageddon. And we have the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists and their Doomsday Clock as the best, single, point of, reference because that is a clock which is a metaphor for how close we are to nuclear war that is, the end of the world.

[00:31:18] informed by extraordinarily sophisticated opinion, and, the bulletin moves the clock with the hand closer or farther from midnight, depending on our state of affairs, and we are just 90 seconds to midnight, now the closest that the doomsday clock has been since it was launched as this, public education vehicle in 1947.

[00:31:45] **Nate Hagens:** So I eventually want to get back to the specific situation in Ukraine, but I have so many follow up thoughts to what you just said here. Here's one. We kind of just generally think of the United States is this megalith. that is all together. But first of all, Very few people know what you're saying, and it feels like the United States knows about domestic issues, and we look at Trump versus Kamala Harris in the election, and very few people look at what's happening internationally, so is it a, are we a monolith, Or are there factions within the U.

[00:32:25] S. government that are stripping away what's best for, the long term sustainability and prosperity and stability of the United States due to special interest? Like, I think exactly the right way to look at

[00:32:38] **Jeffrey Sachs:** things, which is that, our, political system. in general has been hacked, meaning that special interests own their piece of the pie.

[00:32:52] So Wall Street really determines financial regulation. Big Ag really determines FDA and nutritional standards and what the Department of Agriculture does. Big Health insurance really keeps our health care prices at about twice the level of, all our, peer countries in Europe and Canada, The military industrial complex owns foreign policy.

[00:33:26] The American people have almost no say or even awareness or truth telling about foreign policy. Foreign policy is maybe the worst of all of it because it's all under classified information. information, and the lying is non stop. It's

# The Great Simplification

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amazing to me. It's so hard to get even basic facts into mainstream discussion, partly because everything is a lie and classified, and partly because the mainstream media.

[00:34:02] Just lost the whole idea that they are a restraint on government rather than a handmaiden of government. So the wall street journal, the New York times, the Washington post, MSNBC became the mouthpiece of government. The stories are generally sourced by unnamed senior us officials. Okay? Most stories are unnamed senior U.

[00:34:33] S. officials. I know most of the time who they are, because it's obvious. But in any event, what kind of story is that? But these media, they like the inside, or They get the advertising or they're filled with the government plants inside the organization. It's all, of those things. We don't have a foreign policy discussion in this country.

[00:35:00] And by the way, I know a lot about foreign policy because for 44 years, I've been engaged in international economic policy. I tried to get 700 words. Online into the New York Times. I tried to tell them even, you don't have to give me print, just, it's free. You can add an extra column. I want one column to describe the Ukraine war and its origins.

[00:35:24] No, never got it.

[00:35:27] **Nate Hagens:** So this is something that concerns me not only for the Ukraine situation, but for climate and resource depletion and biodiversity and any other thing that goes counter to the public narrative on these issues. I try to be apolitical. I try to describe what's happening, but are we headed towards an Orwellian future where the media that's.

[00:35:50] Consumed by the general public in a right to know, is going to be filtered and censored and constrained so that we don't know what's really going on this issue and other ones. Are you worried about that? We're already

[00:36:04] **Jeffrey Sachs:** in that world to a very large extent. We're already in a, in a newsfeed world.

# The Great Simplification

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[00:36:14] comes from Washington, where there's one narrative and we don't have a public debate and we don't even have the idea. It may be a little more complicated or I don't know. I mean, actually, I don't, I, there are many possible reasons. I would like a newspaper to say, There are two sides of the story and here's the debate, and, then feature side by side, a discussion of the issue.

[00:36:43] That would inform people. That's in academia. That's how we live. We attack each other, you know, all the time. You know, you say anything. No, that's stupid. but that's the, whole life of it. Not just name calling, but you have to show the evidence where the data and so on, and then to watch. That you can't even get a word in edgewise from the official narrative.

[00:37:08] Now, this goes back a long time. We have been in the foreign policy domain in a security state since 1947, actually with the passage of the national security act, which created the CIA and created unbelievable secrecy. Unbelievable overclassification of everything, unbelievable lies. That's why Daniel Ellsberg came out with the Pentagon Papers, because he was a brilliant analyst inside the government, and he read thousands of pages about the actual history of the Vietnam War, and he knew My God, this is completely contrary to what we are saying in public.

[00:37:55] Well, this is how the Ukraine war is for me. I haven't read all those internal documents. I'd love to do so, but I'm not ever going to see them because they are so deeply classified, but I know the lies that they're telling every day.

[00:38:12] **Nate Hagens:** How much of this do you think is cognitive dissonance at the largest scale that the implications of moving from a unipolar world of United States hegemony to a multipolar world where power is shared roughly equally with multiple nations, that the implications of what that would mean to our lifestyles and our economy are just too large to, to ponder at high government levels.

[00:38:38] So therefore we continue with this censorship and narrative,

[00:38:45] **Jeffrey Sachs:** seeking. Yeah, I think that's the a trillion dollar or a hundred trillion dollar question. my own view is, we are in a multipolar world. it's the only real world that. that we could possibly have. Russia has 6, 000 nuclear warheads.

# The Great Simplification

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[00:39:03] We're not going to defeat Russia. And God forbid, if Russia were close to defeat, we'd all be dead. China has That's

[00:39:12] **Nate Hagens:** something that I never understood. I mean, what does even winning look like? Winning

[00:39:16] **Jeffrey Sachs:** makes no sense. and if you say that, two things are pulled out, of the hat. One is, oh, Mr. Sachs, you're succumbing to nuclear blackmail.

[00:39:29] In other words, sure, we're gonna play chicken, with the nuclear war, sure. And again, I get these emails, Oh, you're worried about nuclear war. Yes, I am. Thank you very much. and, so that, that's, one thing that's pulled out of the hat. The other is regime change. Oh yeah. Russia's a hostile right now, but that's Putin, but the Russian people are going to overthrow, Putin.

[00:39:57] Now this is, also a deep. American idea. The deeper idea, of course, is we're going to overthrow Putin because we are addicted as a country to covert regime change operations, which most people aren't even aware of because they're covert. And the U. S. doesn't stand up and say, we overthrew this government.

[00:40:25] It says the opposite. We had nothing to do with that. That was a popular uprising. So this is a big Part of the problem. So to go back, we have several major countries, China, India, Russia, to start with, because I count those three plus the U. S. as truly, indisputably, the world's superpowers right now. not one of them can defeat the others.

[00:40:53] They're all nuclear powers. They could all end the world. they're all big, with the, but the truth is none of them threatens the others, except in nuclear war. China's not going to defeat the United States in a conventional war. What Send its, send its, army across the Pacific in a, in, in, the Navy.

[00:41:18] Come on. This is absurd. China doesn't threaten the United States. except if we stumble into a nuclear war. So, what's the lesson of that? Avoid nuclear war. Don't press each other's red lines. Don't step on each other's toes. Don't humiliate each other. Speak respectfully, and look for the mutual areas.

# The Great Simplification

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[00:41:44] Russia does not threaten the United States, except if we provoke a nuclear war. This is hard for Americans to understand, perhaps, because we're told the opposite all the time. The opposite is the message of the military industrial complex, which, by the way, doesn't mind a trillion dollar a year business program.

[00:42:09] So, that's not the only reason we have this, we have grandiosity, we have hubris, we have, a long standing messianic, view, a belief that we're the only ones that can run the world, blah, blah, blah, you're living in a Past world, Mr.

[00:42:27] **Nate Hagens:** Biden. You, were a, an advisor to, Boris Yeltsin, after the collapse of, the Soviet Union.

[00:42:38] And to Gorbachev before that.

[00:42:41] **Jeffrey Sachs:** I didn't know that. Yes, because I worked with his economic team. trying to get Western help for a kind of soft landing for the financial crisis that the Soviet Union felt so that we wouldn't get into

[00:42:57] **Nate Hagens:** disaster. So how does the current situation between NATO and Russia rhyme with the USA and the Soviet Union 30 years ago when you were directly involved?

[00:43:07] what's similar and what's different

[00:43:11] **Jeffrey Sachs:** in 19. 89, 90, 91, 92, when I was working in Poland, in Central Europe, in Ukraine, in the Soviet Union, then Russia, in Estonia. It was like a miracle. Peace, the Cold War, the possibility of nuclear war, done. Russia, we want to be a normal country. We want to be a democracy.

[00:43:38] We want to be your best friends, United States. This was not rhetoric. This was the real possibility. And what did the United States do? By U. S. I don't mean the people of the United States. I mean, our security state. Ah, yes. So now we run things. We get it. no. We want to be partners with you. We want to cooperate.

[00:44:04] Yes, we understand. Now we run things. Now we determine everything. no, that's not exactly what we mean. We mean we should have treaties. We should



# The Great Simplification

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respect. No, we understand perfectly. We run things. This was basically the response. So. Where we are today is exactly the opposite of where we should be and where we could have been.

[00:44:29] And I sat across from Boris Yeltsin and heard from his own mouth, without question, we just Want to be a normal, cooperative country. Thank you, Mr. Sachs. Can you help us with that? And it wasn't some crazy rhetoric or spy novel or anything else. It was the real belief. Okay. That whole Bolshevik detour, it wasn't good for us.

[00:44:57] It wasn't good for anyone. We don't want it. We want to be normal. We don't want to be, you know, a Bolshevik regime. The United States could not say, Oh, thank God. Now we have a friend, a partner, let's, work on this and, you know, figure out how to move forward. To this day, we can't do that.

[00:45:18] We see everyone big. as an enemy because it threatens U. S., full spectrum dominance because it threatens U. S. hegemony. So on your question, why don't we say this? It's not because it would be hugely costly to the American people. it's not, even because the U. S., the American people demand supremacy or hegemony, but it is because it's deeply embedded.

[00:45:50] in the U. S. security state. And it is the mission of the security state. And it is the, the gravy train of hundreds of billions of dollars of military contracts each year. Though I don't think that's the only reason, but it's one of them. It's the mindset. Because peace with Russia and China is not expensive for the American people.

[00:46:14] It's cheap. We have a trillion dollar a year military budget. Now that's just counting the baseline because there's a lot above that, like veterans benefits that are, another very heavy load, not even counted in that first trillion dollars, this is expensive. These wars have cost us many trillions of dollars.

[00:46:35] So. It's not costly to be peaceful. It's only beneficial, but our mindset has to change.

[00:46:43] **Nate Hagens:** Listening to you, and I think probably many of the viewers and listeners might, feel the same, as residents of the United States, this

# The Great Simplification

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makes me feel kind of crappy, to be an American, even though this isn't what I stand for, and this isn't what a lot of our countrymen and women stand for.

[00:47:02] stand for. We are used to 200, 000 kilocalories a day worth of primary energy, and these wars have controlled, oil and the flow of spice, metaphorically in the world. How can the, you know, I travel a lot and I love meeting people in other countries and they used to really admire the United States.

[00:47:31] And I'm seeing that tarnish a little bit as people, as individuals, we have camaraderie and trust and love and. Collaborate on world issues on biodiversity and climate, but there's this government. it's, feeling like it's shifting a little bit and, we've lost that international goodwill. How can we get that back?

[00:47:53] And what are your thoughts on that?

[00:47:56] **Jeffrey Sachs:** We need not our security state, we need, our, our republic. you know, the Roman Republic became the Roman Empire. the American Republic became the American Empire. We didn't name it that, we didn't call it that, but we became a security state already in January 17, 1961 in his farewell address, Dwight Eisenhower.

[00:48:24] warned us about this, and he knew that we had the military industrial complex. We've had one review of the CIA since its inception, 77 years ago. Are you kidding? One time, the church committee. Since then, no public scrutiny, no understanding, no review. So we need to get our country back in a very direct way.

[00:48:54] Stop the secrecy, make foreign policy a matter of national discourse and Republican Virtues. And by Republican, I mean small r. I don't mean the party. I mean the Republic, that this is a matter for the American people, not for a few security officials to determine the life and death of the planet. Nate, thank you for having me.

[00:49:22] I have to run right now. We went a little bit over, which is wonderful because it's a great conversation. And I appreciate it. And I look forward to the next chance.

# The Great Simplification

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[00:49:32] **Nate Hagens:** Thanks so much, Professor Sachs. I have 26 questions unasked for a later date. We'll do it. Thanks for your work. We'll do it. Thank you. If you enjoyed or learned from this episode of The Great Simplification, please follow us on your favorite podcast platform.

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