

Episode 177: “A Nuclear War Scenario” with Dr Peter Vincent Pry

Speaker 1 ([00:04](#)):

Welcome to the Bill Walton Show, featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and thinkers, fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics, and human flourishing. Interesting people, interesting things.

Bill Walton ([00:24](#)):

Welcome to the Bill Walton Show. I'm Bill Walton. We're all watching events unfold as Russia continues its invasion into Ukraine. Is this all about Vladimir Putin or did the United States and the European union create the conditions for it to happen? In part, it looks like we're reaping the whirlwind from catastrophic green energy policies, recklessly pushing Ukraine for NATO membership, years of the EU's refusal to invest in conventional military forces.

Bill Walton ([01:03](#)):

But perhaps, and it may be too late to recover from this, allowing the United States nuclear deterrent to deteriorate, which may have led Vladimir Putin to believe he has the strategic nuclear upper hand. From reports I've heard, he has assumed personal of the world's largest nuclear arsenal from one of his underground bunkers, shielded beneath thousands of feet of granite. Is this true? Has Joe Biden blundered us into a nuclear war over Ukraine?

Bill Walton ([01:37](#)):

I've asked my frequent guest, Dr. Peter Vincent Pry, to join us and give us some insights into this. He's executive director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, served as chief of staff to the congressional EMP Commission, and director of the U.S. Nuclear Strategy Forum. Just recently, he published a piece titled, The Nuclear Crisis Nobody Knows. Peter, welcome. Great talking with you. I'm very eager to learn what you think about where we are right now. Let's start with your thoughts about, I don't know, let's start with wherever you want to start, where we are in this crisis and are we really risking a nuclear war?

Peter Pry ([02:25](#)):

Well, let's start with that issue, because that is ignored completely by the mainstream press. They report Putin's nuclear threats, but they are dismissed both by the press and by the White House and by the Pentagon as bluster and nuclear Sabre rattling. And I think we're facing an unprecedented danger that we've never experienced in the nuclear missile age, a circumstance where we are on the threshold of a nuclear war, nuclear attack, from Russia. But the administration doesn't want to acknowledge that and is lying to the American people about the danger, and I think there's reasons for that.

Peter Pry ([03:08](#)):

The chief reason being that the Biden administration is desperate to avoid appearing weak and to avoid taking responsibility for a blunder that makes Afghanistan pale by comparison. That his misguided Ukraine policy has bumped us into a near nuclear war with Russia. Politically, they don't want to accept responsibility for that. And they also have strategic reasons for doing that, because this is the most anti-nuclear administration that we have ever had. There are many anti-nuclear activists that are serving in the Biden administration and their nuclear posture review hasn't come out yet. Their agenda is to deeply reduce US nuclear weapons and US dependency on nuclear deterrence. But that-

Bill Walton ([04:00](#)):

Well, Biden just announced last week, though, that he had put the Russian nuclear arsenal on high alert. As you've written, there four levels of alertness and he could be on level two or three? What is that?

Peter Pry ([04:17](#)):

Okay. There's constant combat readiness, increased combat readiness, threat-of-war readiness, and full-combat readiness. And I believe they're at least at increased combat readiness, if not threat-of-war readiness. And threat-of-war readiness is the level of mobilizing their nuclear forces so that they're one step away from an all-out nuclear war. At full-combat readiness, in the Russian scheme of things, the way their mobilization process works, you are in a nuclear war. So if you're at the second or third level, you're much closer to a nuclear war than you are on a normal day-to-day basis.

Peter Pry ([05:00](#)):

Although, I would point out that even at their normal state of readiness, at constant combat readiness, one of the things that isn't understood, I'm not even sure the Pentagon really understands it, because they know our own triad a lot better than they know the Russian triad. And they have a real bad habit of only looking at things from our point of view and not their point of view. But the Russian triad is very different from ours. It relies much more heavily on intercontinental ballistic missiles, which have a very high readiness. They can be launched in three and a half minutes, once Putin authorizes them to be launched, and they can basically fight and achieve their damage goals just with that force that's in constant combat readiness without mobilizing the other forces.

Peter Pry ([05:43](#)):

So one of the few indicators that we have are, is the geostrategic situation in the world such, is there a major international crisis going on that would justify a nuclear attack? And second, do we have any indicator that the Russians have moved in the direction of that? And the biggest and single most important indicator is the National Command Authority. Putin has self-deployed himself to his nuclear bunker and put his forces on nuclear alert. If we didn't know anything else, except those two things.

Bill Walton ([06:20](#)):

Is that a confirmed report? Do we know for certain that he's thousands of feet underground?

Peter Pry ([06:27](#)):

Another problem is that our intelligence isn't good enough to know a lot of these things.

Bill Walton ([06:33](#)):

Well, Peter, we've talked about our triad, or the conventional triad, and let me just see if I can give a layman's description. It's submarines, B-52s and ICBMs. And I think you've written extensively about the fact that the submarines are mostly in dock right now, they're in port. They're not really ready to go out to do battle. The B-52s, I think they're almost entirely parked at various air fields in various states of readiness or disrepair. And our ICBM arsenal is theoretically more ready, but we haven't tested most of this arsenal in decades, so we're not even sure if it's going to work for properly.

Peter Pry ([07:19](#)):

That's right. We do periodically test the missiles. Interestingly, we were about to test one of our Minuteman III missiles and do a test launch of it from Vandenberg Air Force Base, but the Biden administration canceled that, because they wanted to deescalate a nuclear crisis that they claim doesn't exist. So if there isn't a nuclear crisis, why did they cancel the Minuteman III launch? [crosstalk 00:07:45] know-

Bill Walton (07:46):

One of the provocative things that we did was, as you pointed out, when the Biden administration came in, they came in with a whole cadre of anti-nuke people who wanted to systematically dismantle what we have. I mean, what were the things they wanted to do as their agenda that they're likely to reveal in this nuclear assessment that they're supposed to be coming out with soon?

Peter Pry (08:10):

They wanted to unilaterally ban US ICBMs, so that we would give up ICBMs, because they consider them to be very destabilizing. And if they couldn't achieve that, then they wanted us to stop modernization of our ICBM force so that the Minuteman III would not be replaced with the new ICBM. So it would basically turn into junk in its silos and be eliminated by obsolescence. They wanted to eliminate nuclear bombers, so we wouldn't have B-52s or B-2s that were capable of performing nuclear missions.

Peter Pry (08:44):

They wanted to cut the ballistic missile submarine fleet in half from 14 boats, in fact, more than half, from 14 boats to six, and basically reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the US strategic nuclear deterrent from 1,500 to about, to a few hundred. So we would basically go to a minimum deterrence posture, which is what the object of the anti-nuclear radicals has been for many decades, because-

Bill Walton (09:14):

So-

Peter Pry (09:15):

... because they don't believe. And why would they do that? Because these people don't believe that any rational actor would ever use nuclear weapons and, therefore, all you need is a bare-minimum deterrent in order to deter anyone. That's one of the things that makes the current nuclear crisis most dangerous, because Biden is acting as if Putin would have to be a mad man to use nuclear weapons, that it was not a rational decision that he would make, despite the fact that Russian doctrine calls for that, that they've exercised it, that they're force structure is clearly designed for war fighting and surprise attack. And that's why the Biden administration are like children playing with nuclear fire. So they have, for example, in the first time in history, flown B-52 nuclear bombers from Minot Air Force Base to Ukraine. And then, for the first time ever, to Poland, and have B-52s flying up and down the border of NATO Eastern Europe, as if that's not going to be provocative.

Bill Walton (10:22):

When we talked a couple months ago, we talked about the B-52s. My impression was that they were all parked. What I'm hearing right now is that, no, they're not all parked and they've got them up flying around just outside Ukrainian airspace?

Peter Pry (10:37):

Well, they are all parked. They're not on strip alert. We've sent a few of them to the United Kingdom. We didn't send the whole force. We have about 50 B-52s, and most of those are still parked on their three Air Force bases, they're not fueled up, the pilots aren't sitting in the cockpits ready to take off. It would take us three days to mobilize our B-52 bomber force, three days. But we have sent some of the B-52s as a demonstration to the Russians about our resolve. It's not clear if those B-52s are armed or not. They're probably unarmed knowing the anti-nuclear bent of this administration, but the Russians don't know that. Nobody knows that. And so that's the kind of stupid thing that can easily lead to miscalculation.

Peter Pry ([11:31](#)):

The Russians might think, well, that maybe the Biden administration is getting ready to make a demonstration and strike us and do a preemptive strike. Because they know that if Russia strikes first, we cannot win the nuclear exchange. The only possibility we would have for coming out better is if we struck first. Whoever strikes first in a nuclear conflict is probably going to be the winner. Although, our deterrent has so deteriorated, and because we do not have the kind of deep underground command posts that the Russians have, I doubt that even if we struck first that we would prevail.

Bill Walton ([12:10](#)):

How many people understand this? And how many people in the Biden administration understand it?

Peter Pry ([12:15](#)):

Almost nobody understands this, it seems. I mean, there's a handful of people around, mostly retired, from the Department of Defense, who gained their expertise during the Cold War, when nuclear strategy and nuclear war fighting was taken seriously. The last administration that did that was the Reagan administration. There's very few people... I don't really know of anybody. Well, Admiral Charles Richard, I think. He's the head of STRATCOM. I think he gets it, he understands it, but he's pretty much a lone figure. I think most of the expertise we have is concentrated in STRATCOM.

Peter Pry ([13:00](#)):

They don't have the ear of the White House. They're the very people that the anti-nuclear activists in the White House hate and feel are opposing their agenda. And they are opposing their agenda. Admiral Richard has pushed back very hard against all of these ideas that the new nuclear posture review might try to take away the ICBMs and denuclearize bombers. He has opposed all that, as his staff. So we do have part of the Pentagon that still thinks strategically about nuclear weapons.

Bill Walton ([13:38](#)):

Well, how provocative is it for Anthony Blinken to get on Face the Nation, or whatever Sunday morning show he was on, and I want to change his name to Blinking, because he's standing there like a deer in the headlights saying he's given Poland the green lights to send their planes to Ukraine and return. I guess we're supposed to be providing Poland with replacement fighter jets. How provocative is that? How likely is Putin likely to interpret that as invading the airspace and, therefore, a first step towards a nuclear confrontation? And I got a multiple-part question here. People talk about tactical nuclear weapons. Right now, we've got so-called conventional. If he does retaliate with nuclear, if it's tactical, is that a difference in degree or in kind?

Peter Pry ([14:30](#)):

A difference in kind, and in degree. Tactical nuclear weapons are short-range nuclear weapons that would be used on a battlefield. They wouldn't be used against the United States. Weapons that would reach our homeland are called strategic nuclear weapons, and they tend to have higher yields, and the kind of targets they would have would be strategic targets. If you are trying to...

Peter Pry ([14:55](#)):

Their first strike would try to disarm our nuclear forces by blowing up the ICBMs and their silos, destroying the bombers on their bases, destroying the ballistic missile submarines at their ports. A tactical nuclear weapon is designed to be used on a battlefield to destroy a battalion of tanks or to sink an aircraft carrier, or if you had an air-to-air missile, for example. The Russians have tactical nuclear weapons for their air-to-air missiles to win a fighter aircraft duel in the sky.

Bill Walton ([15:28](#)):

A lot of people predicted that the Russian conventional military would just steamroll right through Ukraine in a matter of a couple of days, two, three days and it would be all over. Well, that hasn't happened. And I don't think we've got enough real information about what's happened and why. But the conventional weapons are not necessarily making the rapid progress I'm sure Putin was told he would get. And so does that, what's the probability he then decides, "Well, look, I got to wind this thing up. Maybe ought to use a few tactical weapons in order to bring this to more rapid conclusion."

Peter Pry ([16:11](#)):

Yeah. This is really kind of ironic, because even the anti-nuclear activists among them, and among thinking people, one thing we do agree on is a scenario where Russia would use nuclear weapons if it were fighting a conventional war that was vital to its interests, and it got bogged down in that conventional war and it looked like it might lose that conventional war. And rather than lose, they would resort to tactical nuclear weapons to prevail. And the Biden administration policy is creating exactly that scenario.

Peter Pry ([16:46](#)):

Our object is to keep the war going as long as possible to turn Ukraine into a new Afghanistan, to kill as many Russian soldiers as we can and bleed Russia white, and leave them broken and humiliated on the world stage. It's creating the very scenario that even the Biden anti-nuclear activists have agreed could lead Russia to use tactical nuclear weapons. We have to be enormously skeptical about the progress in terms of Russia's general purpose force, the normal conventional war that's going on, because almost all of our information is coming from Ukraine and it's coming from a Biden administration that's very biased to make the Russians look as bad as possible.

Peter Pry ([17:29](#)):

And the reason for that is because the media and the Biden administration wants everybody to forget that Biden put America's national security credibility, our superpower credibility, on the line in Ukraine. He drew a line in the sand in Ukraine and dared Putin across that line, then Putin crossed it. That's far more important than whether Russia comes out the winner or the loser in Ukraine. The fact of the matter is, our superpower credibility was put on the line and now our response to helping Ukraine is extremely weak.

Peter Pry ([18:03](#)):

It's employing the feather of economic sanctions and fighting to the last brave Ukrainian basically is what comes out. So all of our allies around the world, regardless of what their opinions are and the passion of the moment, when they have an opportunity to think about this in the future, Japan and Taiwan and our European NATO allies are all going to ask the question, "Well, is this what the United States is going to do for us? If Russia attacks us or China attacks us, is that our bold response going to be economic sanctions and letting us fight the last brave Japanese-

Bill Walton ([18:38](#)):

Yeah, we're going to-

Peter Pry ([18:40](#)):

[crosstalk 00:18:40]-

Bill Walton ([18:40](#)):

Here's our position. We're going to let you fight to your last man standing.

Peter Pry ([18:44](#)):

Right, exactly.

Bill Walton ([18:46](#)):

It's great.

Peter Pry ([18:46](#)):

So, in other words, it destroyed the foundations of the world order that's based on US security guarantees. Moreover, Putin-

Bill Walton ([18:55](#)):

So, has Putin pushed all of his chips onto the table-

Peter Pry ([19:00](#)):

Oh no.

Bill Walton ([19:00](#)):

... in terms of his power and his life? Where is he in terms of what his options are right now?

Peter Pry ([19:08](#)):

I think he's, what he's doing is he's going to, apparently he's going to just keep using his conventional forces to overwhelm the Ukrainians and eventually achieve victory in Ukraine at a conventional level. But we haven't seen him, things he has and that NATO does not have, he could've used cyber attacks to black out their electric grid. He could have used nuclear or non-nuclear EMP to black out the whole European NATO grid, or Ukraine's NATO grid with non-nuclear EMP weapons. He could've used chemical weapons, he could use biological weapons. Russia has a unilateral advantage over both Ukraine and the NATO member states in all those things.

Peter Pry ([19:53](#)):

He has not unleashed his air force, for some reason, and these are mysteries as to why not. Why didn't you not from the outset take advantage? He's violated some fundamental principles of Russia's own military doctrine. For example, and I have to admit I was surprised that he decided to attack now. I thought he was going to stand down and then attack it during the summer. Right? And leave the forces in place to build up even further and then attack during the summer. But fundamental to Russian military doctrine is to achieve tactical and strategic surprise against an adversary.

Peter Pry ([20:32](#)):

And he completely gave up strategic and tactical surprise because we saw him coming and he escalated, mobilized his forces and went in without any surprise at all. That might be a bad thing for us. It demonstrated such contempt for NATO and America and Ukrainians, themselves, that he didn't think he needed strategic or tactical surprise, and so he went all in. He didn't destroy the Ukrainian air force, which is the first thing he should've done to gain air superiority. Or, at least I assume he didn't. I'm not sure I, we can believe anything we're being told, all right?

Bill Walton ([21:13](#)):

That's the issue.

Peter Pry ([21:14](#)):

Yeah.

Bill Walton ([21:15](#)):

This thing is shaping up again along partisan lines, and it's fairly stunning. It's almost reminiscent of what we went through with the virus and the lockdowns and all the news. It's being covered in a particular way and you're not allowed to see other points of view. I'm not sure we've got a clear picture.

Peter Pry ([21:36](#)):

Sure the [crosstalk 00:21:37]-

Bill Walton ([21:37](#)):

Peter, you're probably the world's leading expert in EMP, which I forget exactly what our acronym stands for, but it's-

Peter Pry ([21:47](#)):

Electromagnetic pulse.

Bill Walton ([21:49](#)):

Electromagnetic pulse, and that's where you can take out an electrical grid. Why hasn't he done something like that in the Ukraine?

Peter Pry ([21:56](#)):

Well, he could, and maybe he has on a limited basis. You can use non-nuclear EMP weapons, make very selective attacks. He could've used... I did an article that reminded everybody about analysis done by the

EMP Commission, that with a single nuclear EMP attack, if he detonated a weapon 70 miles above NATO headquarters in Brussels, the EMP field would black out electric grids from Ireland to Poland, and it would create a red carpet for Russia to just walk to the English Channel if they wanted to. He hasn't done that, obviously, because that would escalate into a third world war, but he could do that.

Peter Pry ([22:41](#)):

I think, and I agree with those analysts who were, I still agree with those analysts who said, when you compare the forces that Russia could, if they had fought against Ukraine the way they planned to fight against a NATO member state, that they could've quickly defeated Ukraine and walked right over them. But there are reasons people are forgetting, there are reasons the Russians haven't done that. Putin wants Ukraine to be part of Russia. He doesn't want to completely destroy the whole country, which is what he would do in an all-out war against a NATO member state.

Peter Pry ([23:24](#)):

He wants to capture the critical infrastructure intact. He wants to limit the civilian casualties despite what we're hearing on the media propaganda. Wants to limit civilian casualties as much as possible. I think he wants to destroy the Ukrainian army in the countryside and not engage in the destruction of the cities by fighting them street to street, building to building in the cities. And so the way to do that is, it's called fixing the enemy forces out in the countryside and wearing them down so they run out of fuel, ammunition, personnel.

Peter Pry ([23:58](#)):

And this is a slower process than your classic blitzkrieg, which is how they would fight against a NATO member state, where they don't care about your critical infrastructure. In fact, the critical infrastructure is a target and they would go after and destroy the critical infrastructure and gain air superiority so that they could destroy bridges and destroy columns of tanks and achieve quick victory that way. They wouldn't care about limiting civilian or military casualties.

Bill Walton ([24:32](#)):

So, if I could interpret, though, there are a lot of people now who I don't think know very much, who are crowing about the fact that the Ukrainians have slowed the Russians and the Russian's military is not nearly what it's cracked up to be. I think what you're saying, if I'm hearing you, is that Putin's deliberately engaging in strategic forbearance, because he really wants Ukraine to be part of the greater Russia, and taking the more draconian military measures doesn't suit that interest. And so, he's willing to spread this out over a few weeks, a month or two months, something like that, and then end up with some sort of strategic outcome where he gets most of Ukraine, maybe not all of it, but that would satisfy him. Is that-

Peter Pry ([25:17](#)):

Well, yes.

Bill Walton ([25:19](#)):

... Is that a-

Peter Pry ([25:19](#)):

This is a theory that I think explains the evidence better than what's being put forward on television. I don't know if I'm right. It might be a wrong theory, but I know I'm right about this, that we shouldn't believe anything that we're being told right now, and we should be suspending judgment and not jumping to conclusions that the Russians aren't 10 feet tall. And therefore, because this is also being used by people like Lindsay and other irresponsible people to say-

Bill Walton ([25:49](#)):

Lindsey Graham.

Peter Pry ([25:50](#)):

... "Oh, let's jump into this fight. Let's join the glory and cover ourselves with glory by beating up on the Russians in Ukraine, because obviously the Russian army is a paper tiger." I would please remind people, let's think. We have such short memories. Who was a paper tiger in Afghanistan? How well did we do in Afghanistan? How well did we do in Iraq? How well did we do in the Vietnam War? Think about any of our wars, where we've had reporters embedded, where we've had all kinds of information that is much more objective, various sources that could tell us information.

Peter Pry ([26:28](#)):

I mean, I remember during the Vietnam War, we were being told right up until the 1968 TET offensive that we were winning decisively, and then we were surprised. So, in Ukraine right now, all of our information is coming from two biased sources that have an interest in making the Russian army look as bad as possible, and that's the Ukrainians and that's the Biden administration. So I don't trust any of them. I don't trust any of the maps that they're showing us on TV news at night.

Peter Pry ([26:58](#)):

It'll probably be sometime after the war is over that we find out what the real truth is. We already know there's all kinds of disinformation. I mean, the MIG-29 ghost pilot, for example, has turned out to be not true. The events on Snake Island were a lie. I see there are patriotic writing... Last night, I saw on television on a blown out building patriotic slogans for people to hold on and keep fighting, written in English, okay? Which is obviously aimed at us, you know?

Bill Walton ([27:34](#)):

Yeah. NBC, I'm sure, will use that.

Peter Pry ([27:37](#)):

Right. Well, even Fox News did. That's where I saw it.

Bill Walton ([27:42](#)):

Fox has come in on that side of it as well.

Peter Pry ([27:45](#)):

Exactly. And not even they said, "Why are these invitations for us to join the Ukrainian war written in English on the side of these buildings, you know?" Now, I'm not a defender of Putin or Russia. I think Putin's an evil man and Russia's an evil empire, but bottom line is, is that, and one of the other things I find most frustrating about this, is what a blown opportunity this was for the Republican party, that has

rallied behind Biden basically, and has swallowed hook, line and sinker this whole thing. It's almost as if somebody told Biden you can rally the American people behind you by getting in a little confrontation, eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, with Russia, that your friendly media will tell the American people you've won to turn you into a hero and save yourself during the midterm elections and distract people from your terrible domestic policies.

Bill Walton ([28:48](#)):

Yeah. This has become Biden's wag the dog in a sense.

Peter Pry ([28:55](#)):

Yeah. Where are the Republicans with... We're supposed to have an America First nationalist foreign policy. If you're a conservative, that's what you're supposed to believe in. Where are the Republicans demanding, "Mr. President, what are US vital national security interests in Ukraine that are so great that it's worth getting into a nuclear war or a large-scale conventional war with Russia?" Well, there are none.

Bill Walton ([29:19](#)):

We've got a couple of minutes, so I wanted to get... You and I talked about we're really going after the wrong empire, in a sense, that the China looms much more threatening in the long term, or even the medium term, especially with regard to Taiwan. And China seems to come into this at Russia's back, because this serves China's longer-term interest. I mean, how do you see this playing out with China?

Peter Pry ([29:49](#)):

Well, I think that this is clearly going to strengthen further the alliance between Russia and China, and between those two actors and their client states, North Korea, Iran, and international terrorism. And this is the most formidable block of military and economic power that we have ever faced in our history. If we continue to help the Ukrainians to kill Russians and escalate this situation, it's going to further strengthen. And in fact, we may find ourselves stumbling into a World War III that we will lose against Russia and China.

Peter Pry ([30:28](#)):

Because in the theaters of conflict, in Ukraine, we can't win. We can't even defend the frontline NATO states against a Russian attack. Our own war games showed that. We can't defeat China over Taiwan. We've had 19 war games show us losing there, you know? And we specially can't win if this thing escalates to the nuclear level. But we can't even win at the conventional level. We need time to rebuild our conventional and our nuclear capabilities. We need to follow a smart grand strategy.

Peter Pry ([31:01](#)):

The smart move always has been on this chess board is try to split the Russia-China access, to try to get Russia to be at least neutral, if not a US strategic partner. And we blew a golden opportunity before the Ukrainian invasion, because Russia had offered up a peace treaty that was not unreasonable. It was not unreasonable. We could use that as a basis for negotiating a strategic partnership with Russia that would've split the Russian-Chinese alliance.

Peter Pry ([31:28](#)):

Now that the Ukraine war is on, we obviously can't go back and try to make peace with Russia under these circumstances, but we can be neutral and take no side, that Ukraine will either fall to Russia or it will become a long-protracted guerrilla war. We shouldn't want either part of it. Our interests are not involved there. Our interests are to rebuild our military and our nuclear strength, protect ourselves from cyber and EMP attacks, so that we can once again be a strong nation. And when we have recovered that strength, then we could offer, go to Russia and offer strategic partnership with a strong America, you know?

Peter Pry ([32:10](#)):

I think that's what President Trump wanted to do all through his administration and Putin was waiting for him to do it, but he wasn't able to, because the Democrats created this fiction that he was Putin's puppet and his presidency was illegitimate. I think Putin is smart enough understand that in the long run, China is a bigger threat to Russia than the West and the United States. And so he has incentives, too, to want to make peace with us, if we will only let him.

Bill Walton ([32:39](#)):

Well, I'm thinking that time has passed for the first chance to get it done, but we may have a chance in the future, and let's all keep our, let's all pray that we end up with a reasonable outcome here and that we can continue to think long term strategically. I think the thing I wanted to, and we've established that, I want people to understand is that we got to be very careful about being provocative about airspace and assassinating people, and trip us into some, a nuclear war, because it's a nuclear war we won't win.

Peter Pry ([33:17](#)):

That's right, we won't win. We don't believe we can win either. We've brainwashed... That's one of the things that makes it so tempting, too, to the Russians and the Chinese, to escalate to the nuclear level. They believe you can win. And from their perspective, the way they calculate victory, they're right. They were willing to make, take tens of millions of fatalities during World War II, and they consider that a glorious victory. We've never taken more than 750,000 dead in a war, and that was the American Civil War. We have no conception what it's like to lose millions and millions of people in a war-

Bill Walton ([33:55](#)):

Didn't Russia lose 30 million in World War II?

Peter Pry ([33:57](#)):

They did, there was a 30 million dead, not 30 million casualties.

Bill Walton ([34:01](#)):

Dead. Yeah, casualties were 50 or higher.

Peter Pry ([34:05](#)):

Yes, that's right. And China also lost tens of millions during World War II, as well as during their own Cultural Revolution. These countries are willing to sacrifice millions of their own citizens, even for domestic purposes, during the terrors that they had. So they have a very different mindset, that one could almost argue that in a way it's impossible for a democracy to win a nuclear war, because our

highest value is the lives of our citizens. And when you have the mass destruction of the lives of citizens, the thing that is most important to us, the mission of the state is defeated, which is protecting the lives of those citizens.

Peter Pry ([34:48](#)):

This is not the case with totalitarian states. Their most important goal is to protect the lives of their elites and the people of those are just a means and to an end of the elites and they can be sacrificed. So that's another reason why we want to avoid getting into a conflict, because the political will that we would have to engage in that kind of sacrifice is just not there. And that's one of the reasons why we are so intimidated by the concept of a nuclear war.

Peter Pry ([35:15](#)):

But we make the mistake of thinking that these tyrannies share our values and that they think of nuclear war the same way, they do not. They know they can win against us, because they're willing to take the loss. And they love nuclear weapons, too, by the way, and have gotten many technological advantages. They're far ahead of us in the sophistication of their capabilities. Military dictatorships tend to put their creativity into military technology, not into art and culture and the things that make for a good life, which is where our values are.

Bill Walton ([35:53](#)):

Peter, thanks for your insights and let's continue this conversation in a few weeks when we know a little bit more about how this is going to unfold, assuming nothing terrible has happened between now and then. But, as always, your deep knowledge and wisdom. And I think few people understand you've got a great background also in history. I think you've got two PhDs, the other one's in what, classical studies?

Peter Pry ([36:23](#)):

Yeah, it's in history and archeology.

Bill Walton ([36:25](#)):

Yeah. So anyway, to be continued, Peter. Thanks so much and we'll be back. This has been the Bill Walton Show, with Dr. Peter Vincent Pry, talking about tough subjects like nuclear war and likely outcomes. Join us next time and we'll be back with more to inform you and help you understand what's going on. So thanks much. Thanks for joining us. Bye.

Bill Walton ([36:52](#)):

I hope you enjoyed the conversation. Want more? Click the subscribe button or head over to the billwaltonshow.com to choose from over a hundred episodes. You can also learn more about our guest on our interesting people page, and send us your comments. We read every one and your thoughts help us guide the show. If it's easier for you to listen, check out our podcast page and subscribe there. In return, we'll keep you informed about what's true, what's right, and what's next. Thanks for joining.