

Ray McGovern: Russia-Japan Tensions Grow & U.S. Involvement

Ray McGovern was a CIA officer for 27 years, he chaired the National Intelligence Estimates and prepared the CIA's Presidential Daily Briefs. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. Ray McGovern joins us today, a CIA analyst for 27 years who chaired the National Intelligence Estimates and prepared the President's Daily Brief. And we can add, very recently, also a recipient of the very prestigious James Joyce Award. So congratulations on the award, and thank you for coming back on the program.

#Ray McGovern

Thank you, Glenn, for having me.

#Glenn

I wanted to discuss with you today the developments in the proxy war between NATO and Russia, because it seems to be escalating in many ways. I thought one interesting aspect was President Putin's recent visit to what the Russians refer to as the Southern Kuril Islands and the Japanese refer to as the Northern Territories. That is, well, disputed territory, but nonetheless, it's under Russian administration since World War II and is, well, considered by Russia to be their sovereign territory, inhabited by Russian citizens. So this did not go down well with the Japanese, but obviously, from the Russian perspective, they had attempted to have good relations with Japan, and Japan essentially jumped on the, well, let's call it the anti-Russian bandwagon of sanctions and hostilities. So the Russian logic is, "Who cares what you think?" Or am I reading this incorrectly? What is actually happening? Because, you know, none of us need a further expansion of this conflict, it seems.

#Ray McGovern

Well, Glenn, I go back several decades, as you know, and one of my first portfolios included Soviet foreign policy towards Japan. And so I was thinking this morning, do I still remember the names of those islands? Well, I do, actually. It's Habomai, Shikotan, Kunashiri, and Etorofu. Wow. Why was that important? Because they're disputed only by the Japanese. The UN has ruled that those were Russian territory, conquered by war. And the fact that the Japanese have prevented a peace treaty ending the state of war—now, when I say war, I go back to World War II, right? In other words, a peace treaty has been prevented by Japanese claims to these four islands.

They're of marginal strategic significance, but they mean a lot in terms of the symbolic end of World War II, and they have been recognized internationally under international law as Russian territory. So, an agreement was quite close to making out an arrangement on this under Japanese Prime Minister Abe. The Russians proposed some joint administration, economic development, and so forth, you know. But the new leadership came in in Japan, and now with Russia feeling, well, not only angry, able, but required to show its strength. And I mean, in both Europe, Ukraine, and in the Far East, because of NATO meddling in the Far East.

I think Putin just decided, well, you know, how long has it been since a Soviet leader or a Russian leader visited Etorofu? Oh, it's not in the records? Must be about 40, 50 years or so. Well, why don't I go just to show these Japanese that really they don't have any real cards. Why would he say that? Because the Americans have cannibalized or withdrawn some of the missiles that were supposed to protect Japan, and they brought them to offshore Iran or Ukraine. And so even the Saudis and the Gulfies are wondering whether this U.S. guarantee to come to the—whether that really is worth anything. So why don't I go there to see some of the folks there, plant the flag again and say, look, you know, don't fool around.

You can rant and rave in your media, as the Japanese are doing. You can have a very far, very, uh—well, what's the word? This prime minister, she's really kind of trouble in terms of attitude toward Russia. So let's remind these guys that, where are those missiles that the U.S. gave? Oh, they're not there anymore. And besides, China is our ally now. We recognize what you did to China, and China feels as much threatened by your new militarism as we do. That's kind of a long-winded answer, but it's really important because, number one, Putin feels very strong. Number two, Putin feels very threatened. Now, this doesn't come out with his joie de vivre and his meetings with these.

I mean, in Etorofu, if you saw the film, he's there, and these very, very comely women are there. And you think, well, they're teenagers. Well, he says, you know, this weather is terrific. And one of them says, "We thought you ordered it." I mean, that's not somebody who is intimidating. Anyhow, he's got strong support, but—and this is what I'd like to get into later, if you would—he's afraid of Trump. He's afraid of his deteriorating mental and physical condition. And that, of course, is 90% of Putin's preoccupation. And he will show the flag in places like Tokyo or Etorofu, and actually more increasingly in Iran and Ukraine.

But he's overwhelmingly worried, I would say, that the next time he calls Trump—and I just emphasize this—when Putin calls Trump, it's because Putin wants Trump to do something. Okay? Now, why do I say that? It was last October. Trump was saying, "Oh, I think I'll give Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine." It was very much in the news that Zelensky was coming to seal the deal. What happened? Putin called Trump, and he said, "This is a no-go. You don't want to do this, okay? Please don't do this." They spent over an hour and a half, if memory serves, on that conversation. Next day, Zelensky shows up to the White House, and Trump says, "Well, you know, I'm really sorry, but we need all the Tomahawks that we have, so..." The answer is no.

More recently, the May Day celebrations, May 9th, in the Kremlin. Zelensky was threatening to send drones in there to disrupt the whole thing. Now, air defenses in Moscow are pretty damn good, but you can't exclude the notion that one of those drones would get through. So what does Putin do? He tries to get Zelensky to back off, and he can't, so he calls Trump. Another hour and a half. Okay, what happens? He says, "Look, Mr. Trump, you pretend to have some influence on Zelensky. Tell him it's a no-go. He can't disrupt the military celebrations on the 9th of May." What happens? That's precisely what Trump does, and he admits it. He leans on Zelensky, and there's a four-day, not just a one- or two-day ceasefire promised by Zelensky not to disrupt the parade.

And so what am I saying here? I'm saying that, on the one hand, Putin thinks he has some leverage over people like Zelensky because he can persuade Trump to work his will where he has influence. Now, does he have complete influence over Zelensky? No. He's still giving them intelligence. He's still giving them support that they can't do without if they're going to hit deep inside Russia. So that worries Putin. And the whole notion that the fellow on the other side of the Atlantic has his fingers on the nuclear codes and is unpredictable—that's 90 percent, in my view, of Putin's worry here. He'll show the flag. He'll show how Russia is going to win in Ukraine. But he's got to be really cautious. Last thing I'll say is when I was about two weeks ago.

I guess it was at the Duma thing, Q&A. Putin was asked, well, you know, why don't we go faster? Or are we going to finish the job there? And words to that effect. And I'll be happy when we go faster. And Putin says, "I hear you. I hear you. But we have to be cautious. We have to proceed along the lines that we're proceeding along. And, you know, it's going to turn out all right." And I think that the Russians are probably at the point, just my guess because I'm not in Russia anymore, right? But I think that when they see Ukraine blockaded from the sea, a basket case economically, in the Donetsk and Lugansk and Zaporozhye and Kherson regions, the Soviet—the Russian military—I mean, I think that they can be persuaded that, look, these pinprick attacks way inside Russia, yeah, that's a last gasp effort.

We're winning. Let's be patient, as Putin very openly acknowledges. One last thing: he was up in Murmansk. He was in a submarine about 15 months ago, and he's talking ad lib, no notes. He's talking to these sailors, and he says, you know, "I hope I'm not being too trusting of the Americans. I think about that as well." That was 15 months ago. Even then, he was willing to raise the issue, right? And he said before, Minsk, all these other deceptions, we remember all that. This should not

have happened, this Ukraine thing. So he's mindful of that. He's not reluctant to raise it. But the way he advises caution is, I think, good for all of us because nobody, least of all Putin, knows what Trump will end up doing in his very feeble psychological, psychiatric, if you will, and physical condition.

#Glenn

I think that's a good point. Also, if you would look at the, well, not yet defeat, but ongoing defeat of the United States in Iran, you can interpret this in a different way. On one hand, for the Russians, they can say, yes, it exhausted some American vital military resources they can't use against us. Ideally, the United States would be a little bit humbled and more cautious going against Russia. An alternative thesis, though, would be that the U.S. could be seen, especially Trump being in a more vulnerable, desperate position, willing to take much greater risk, in need of a victory. So I get the cautionary, the whole idea, the efforts to be a bit cautious, because you don't want to back your opponent into a corner. This is why, in great power politics, you don't want to defeat your opponent.

I think this can be a very dangerous thing. Just a very quick note on the issue with Japan and the territorial dispute. It is interesting, though, that back in 1956, Japan and the Soviet Union were actually negotiating a diplomatic solution to this in order to get a peace treaty, which never came. But I think, if I'm not mistaken, the Soviet Union offered to return either only Habomai or Habomai and Shikotan in return for getting an agreement that they would have Kunashir and Iturup. And it was the United States who essentially blocked this because they said, well, if you're going to essentially accept Soviet control over these islands, then maybe we'll take Okinawa.

And again, why the U.S. did this, people speculated on. I think the thesis, if you will, with the most support is that if you would have this peace deal, then it wouldn't be ideal for the U.S. alliance system they were building up in the region. I mean, once peace breaks out, you know, your adversaries will not be contained and your allies will no longer be obedient. So again, this is one interpretation of that U.S. intervention. I'm not sure if you have any—well, again, this was your job, so I should ask you.

#Ray McGovern

This is, you know, my job was a glorified analyst-journalist. Okay, not so glorified, actually. We had access to all kinds of sensitive information, but it was day to day. Every other day, I briefed, actually in person, under Reagan's regime, the first four years, the President's Daily Brief. So it's a myopic look at what's going on today. Now, over a period of years, you learn a lot about the rest of the history, but I really compliment you. I keep forgetting you're a real historian. I'm not. I didn't know what you just said. I'm not surprised by it. But in 1956, that's exactly how the U.S. would act, okay?

So if you look at why the Northern Territories or the Southern Kurils, whatever you call them, are the way they are today—well, as usual, a very myopic view by the United States for its own little

Weltanschauung, right, that made it that way. The other thing I'll say is, I think, Glenn, that you and I are probably the only people, historian and current intelligence person, that can say Habomai and Shikotan. And remember, Kunashiri and Etorofu were the other two of the four. So my compliments to you. My God, you remember as much as I do. But I go back a ways, so I remember a little bit more, but not the historian part of what's going on. So thanks. I learned a lot.

#Glenn

I wrote a book a decade ago with the title Russia's Geoeconomic Strategy for Greater Eurasia, and essentially how I saw the political economy, the incentive for Russia to organize its political economy. And Japan has an important role because they can... The Russians would ideally, as they pivot to the East and become less reliant on the West, they would ideally not put all their eggs in the Chinese basket because of the asymmetry between their economies. So the Russians want to diversify. And this is also in Japan's interest because if the Russians and the Japanese can connect their economies well, then the Russians would be less compelled to take sides with China against Japan in any of that bilateral dispute.

So kind of the Japanese and the Russians have a common interest in promoting deeper economic ties. And this was kind of commonly understood. But then, of course, the Ukraine war started, and the Japanese jumped on it, and that whole—yeah, all of those considerations, all of it began to fall apart because both sides kind of agreed we have to move forward with our economic connectivity, even though we have a territorial dispute. But again, now that's all burned down, it seems, almost. Again, that's why I thought it was quite significant that Putin visited. Sorry. Now, let me just interject here.

#Ray McGovern

I spent decades putting myself in the position of people like Putin, rulers of Russia, the Soviet Union. And I was a child of World War II. I was alive during the whole four, five, six years. I can sort of—and I've spent a lot of time in Russia, as well as five years in Germany. Now, if I'm looking at this as Putin does—Putin, whose big brother, Vitya, perished in the blockade of Leningrad, where not only the Nazis in Germany but the Finns kept that blockade on for over 900 days—you know, I would be, as Putin reminds us, mindful of that. And then the whole business about 27 million Soviet citizens dying in this war from the Nazis. Where were the Nazis? Oh, my God, they were in Germany, but they're gone now, right? No, they're not. Oh, they're in Ukraine as well. And what about Nazi-like activity in Japan? Oh,

#Ray McGovern

Since we are stronger than they are now, we have to show our strength by demonstrative gestures, like visiting Iturup and sort of shooting or firing an Oreshnik or two as the situation warrants, just as a warning that they're not going to let this happen again. Nazism is something ever-present in

Russian calculations. The Great Patriotic War, which they call that for patriotic reasons, for God's sake—it's not just the sobriquet that they put on this damn war. And so now it looks like the U.S. is receding. It's time for Putin to show the flag in places like almost-Nazi Japan, the way their prime minister is talking, and just kind of lay out the land in a demonstrative but cautious way so that the Japanese know their place.

They know they come second to whatever the U.S. wants. If the U.S. wants to pull its missiles out of Japan to put them around Iran, they'll do it. And they have done it. And the same with South Korea. Big thing, of course, is China and Russia are joined at the hip now. So it's time to show the flag in demonstrative ways while at the same time not succumbing to these people who want to say, "Oh, Vladimir Vladimirovich, for God's sake, don't be such a coward. Finish him off. They're in Ukraine." I think he really wants to avoid that, number one, because it's not necessary. Number two, that you don't want to provoke an unpredictable person with his fingers on the nuclear codes. That's my view anyway. Let a hundred flowers bloom, as I think it was Mao used to say.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, I think that's often—you hear these comments. I also see them on the, well, especially on the Russian side, that, you know, it's, well, more on the hawkish side, that it's time to teach the Europeans and Americans a lesson, that it's not just out of vengeance, but out of strategic necessity—that is, to restore their deterrence. But I guess the counterargument to that would be, as soon as the missiles are in the air, no one's going to have any escalation control anymore. There's no knowing how each side will respond. I think even the politicians who are making decisions will not be able to control this anymore. So, well, once that decision is made to essentially teach the other side a lesson, it's a very dangerous place to go.

So I think people are oversimplifying often when they say, well, let's just hit them a few times, strike and blow up a couple of weapons manufacturers in Germany, and then the Europeans will step back. I think perhaps that could happen, or they could go after Kaliningrad, or the nuclear weapons would be in the air before the weekend. There's a lot of risks here, so I'm glad that the Russians are restrained so far, but I'm also worried that their restraint appears to be interpreted as weakness on our side, that is, on NATO's side. On that, though, I did want to ask you about Lavrov's comments recently, because he has apparently formally asked the U.S. State Department regarding evidence that they have of U.S. involvement in strikes on Russian civilian infrastructure, not near the front line, but deep inside Russia.

So essentially, and making the point that the U.S. is effectively at war with Russia. The U.S. is participating in strikes deep inside Russia on even civilian targets. But of course, military targets would also be an act of war. And the anger is boiling over, though. Yeah. And there's also, as I said, a recognition that any restraint now on Russia's side is simply seen as weakness in the West. That is, Russia doesn't dare to do anything—we have Article 5, they're too weak. This is also dangerous. So how do you see this change, I guess, in the rhetoric of Russia? Because they wouldn't bring these

things up unless they are prepared to do something about it. I mean, they're not looking the other way anymore. They are bringing this up. So if you bring it up, you have to back it up with force at some point. Or am I reading too much into this?

#Ray McGovern

Well, who knows, Glenn? That is one school of thought. As you know, I have not subscribed to that, taken to its natural end. Medvedev, even Lavrov now, and Ryabkov, they're taking a much harder line. I mean, Lavrov, the foreign minister, has said, you know, "I've concluded that this whole Anchorage episode was just another deception, like Minsk, like Istanbul, like the promise not to expand NATO, just all made out of the same cloth." My God, there is no spirit of Anchorage anymore. And Rubio, three days later, says, "You're right, there was never any understanding at Anchorage." And then three days later, Putin says, "There was an understanding at Anchorage, and it was violated." Now, I'm a Kremlinologist, right? I don't know how to put Lavrov's views together with Putin's that make a lot of sense out of it, other than to conclude there is a freedom of expression there and that Putin sees some merit in people taking a harder line than he does.

I mean, look at Medvedev, for God's sake. He's threatening deleterious consequences of major proportions against Japan if it moves. So what I'm saying here is that I am overly influenced by this backdrop that I see, and I have seen ever since Trump came in, of this overriding, this overweening desire on the part of Putin not to exacerbate a fellow who is totally unpredictable. Even, you know, even on Ukraine, the last sentence is always, "Well, we're ready to talk when other people are ready to meet our terms, but we are willing to talk, and the Americans sincerely want to help us. They can't help us right now." So the rhetoric is of that nature. Now, on the ground, you have the U.S. intelligence enabling the firing of these drones and other missiles into deep Russia.

How do you figure that out? Well, there is such a thing as the deep state, and Trump does not control it completely. That comes through, well, for those who watch the American political scene, that comes in bas-relief in the hearings about Dr. Fauci. Who ordered this? Was it just Dr. Fauci? Who ordered the cover-up? You have the head of the intelligence agencies, a woman named Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence, running the cover-up. The cover-up of what? Of how that COVID-19 virus escaped that Wuhan lab where Fauci had funded gain-of-function research. So these senators are baffled and say, well, who ordered that? Who's in charge here? I mean, the president? So there are forces here that are kind of autonomous in a way, and I think the Russians sort of agree to that.

When—and you didn't mention this before, but it fits this pattern—when this bunch of drones hit the president's residence near Valdai at the very end of December, the Russians, as you know, collected the control mechanism that came from one of these drones and very ostentatiously presented it to the U.S. defense attaché in Moscow and said, "Take this home. Make sure you find out why. Particulars about where this thing was targeted, and don't give us any more BS about it being targeted against some nearby weapons depot, okay? It was targeted on the president's house.

Verify that and get back to us." Well, that was about two months ago, as memory serves. What happened? Well, the CIA and the other technical people had the option of saying, you know, "Well, they got us on this one. Yeah, of course it was programmed right on that."

We thought he was there, you know. Or they can obfuscate and say, "No, no, it wasn't." But the Russians know, okay? The Russians know where it was targeted: the president's residence. And there is this story about Trump being on the phone with Putin, I guess it's true, at the time, and Trump saying, "Oh, would you hold for a second? I've got to do something here." And that's when apparently those drones were sent. Now, I don't know if that's 100% true, but if that also is true, then the Russians conceive that somebody, whether it's Trump himself or somebody, thought that Putin himself was there in that house near Valdai, and that they wanted to assassinate him. I mean, it wouldn't be the first time that the deep state did this kind of thing.

So what I'm saying here is that Putin is especially, especially cognizant of the fact that the president isn't necessarily in charge of everything, and he doesn't bless everything. He doesn't even know about everything. And I'm just thinking now of Putin's famous remark. He says, you know, and this goes about seven years back, he said, you know, when new presidents come in, we expect a fresh start, and they say really good things initially. And then the men with the attaché cases and the hats and the big overcoats come in, and they sit them down and say, "Well, this is the way it works, Mr. President. You're not completely in charge. We're the deep state. Please understand that your predecessors had to learn the hard way sometimes, but we're telling you right up front." Now, Putin says that, right?

Is it true? God, I have to confess that it took me a while to believe it, but yes, it is true. And I think that's what's going on. It makes Putin even more nervous. And he only calls Trump when it's really necessary. And he can't be sure that Trump will do everything he wants. One prime example, of course, is Trump's inability to—I think it's inability to prevail on those in the CIA and the Defense Department who insist on giving Ukraine the wherewithal to target these depots and Amazon-type warehouses and all that kind of stuff in Russia. So, in a way, it's good that Putin is aware that Trump can't get at everything. But in another way, my God, is that any better? It makes it even worse. And that, I think, accounts for Putin's caution. I'll just say one more time what I've said on your show before.

#Ray McGovern

And saying, all right, look, you guys, or at least the military, say, why the hell don't we take out those manufacturing places in Ramstein, in Holland, and in other places where we know they're making those damn drones? Okay, so you think that's a good idea? Yeah, we ought to do that. Well, what do you think the chances are that Estonia or Finland or some other country that we hit—Ramstein, Germany—that they'll invoke Article 5 of the NATO Treaty? Attack on one is attack on all.

Ah, 5%, 10%. Okay, you. You're head of the psychological union in our CIA equivalent. What do you say about that on the part of Trump? What did you say again? Zero, huh? Zero. Okay. So we have zero predictability on the part of Trump.

And you guys are saying that we ought to risk his reacting to invocation of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty. That's only 10%. That's too high, for God's sake. You don't want to take risks when we're winning already, when we've sealed off naval or maritime access to Ukraine, without which they have no economy, when we're winning. Why do you want me to take this 10%? I don't understand that. We're not going to do it. That's how I diagnose this thing so far. With these latest indignities, I do not rule out the fact that Putin will persuade himself, well, just one Oreshnik might give these people pause. And I don't see that Oreshnik being fired at London or any of the places in Germany or Holland or any place else. It would be fired right at Ukraine, as has been the case.

After all, the Russians are escalating, okay? And that hopefully would give everybody some religion and say, "Oh, they could do that to us as well," and maybe they'd back off. In other words, I see right now, I'd say, a 50-50 chance that Putin, in his own calculations—not because of great pressure from the Russian populace, but saying, you know, these guys need to be taught a lesson—"I'll not only go and visit the Kurils at Etorofu, but I'll send an Oreshnik into one of these decision-making centers in Kiev. All's fair in love and war." And maybe that would give them a lovely example of what we can do, and maybe it'll just give them some religion. Meanwhile, we're winning, for God's sake. Let's not even take a 10% chance of getting NATO back together again.

#Glenn

It's an interesting point there about Trump, though, whether or not, you know, if Trump is deceptive towards the Russians, such as he's been towards Iran, or if he's incompetent or, you know, not in control. At some level, you would think they would ask in Moscow, though, what was the difference for us? It's still a war, but... But no, you're probably right. I think that what you're seeing now, the efforts to deter NATO, it seems that this is being done, that the Ukrainians have to pay the cost of this. That is, be more ruthless against Ukraine, pummel Kiev, landlock the country, just go after targets which were previously not gone after. And we haven't seen the end of it.

It wouldn't surprise me if the Oreshnik would be put into greater use and then essentially hope that this will send a message to the NATO countries. Otherwise, there's always this—again, this is not advocacy, just recognition that it's not either strike Europe or not. You also have sabotage possibilities. Now, I'm not saying that that's what the Russians are doing, but recently a manufacturing plant went up in smoke in Bulgaria, then in Italy. I mean, it's... I have no information if this was sabotage or not, but it is an option if you want to go up the escalation ladder. Doing a massive surprise attack, I think, isn't necessarily in the cards.

But this gradual escalation, it is possible that this is the case. Again, I have no reports or anyone saying anything to me, so I have no way of knowing. Yeah, sorry. No, no, go ahead. I wanted to ask

just the last question about the possible—if you see any more possible paths to peace, because, again, the Europeans keep talking about, you know, unconditional ceasefire, which is a non-starter. I saw, you know, Ukraine, backed up by Turkey, suggested, you know, let's have a ceasefire in the Black Sea. But that's just because, you know, the way the Russians see it, the Ukrainians and NATO started this 40-day campaign striking Russian ships and deep strikes.

And now that Russia's retaliating now, you know, any peace is just because the advantage has shifted. So they're not going to go with this. But, and of course, the U.S., you know, proposed the deal in Anchorage, the Russians accepted, and then they say the Americans walked away from their own deal. I'm not sure. Again, there's been very few details. But anyways, I guess my question is, do you see any potential—do you see the possibility of a negotiated end to this? Because, you know, fighting this till the end, it looks like that would very likely end in a Russian victory. But as Professor John Mearsheimer often points out, it would be a very ugly victory.

It would be... Ukraine would be a landlocked country, would be destroyed. It would be a dysfunctional rump state, something that couldn't threaten Russia. But this is a horrible mess, not just horrific for the Ukrainians. It would be destabilizing for the Europeans and the Russians as well. Anyways, getting to my long-winded question, we saw Lavrov also arguing that the demands from the Europeans for an immediate ceasefire, that this is not acceptable. He argued that we need this long-term, reliable, and sustainable solution. So I guess my question is, how do you read this, what Russia means by a long-term, reliable, and sustainable solution?

#Ray McGovern

Well, Putin plays the long game, is cautious in the extreme. He's been criticized for that, but I think he successfully rebuffed that criticism. He's on the offensive. He is escalating in Ukraine. And as we both believe now, it's not to be excluded that the Oreshnik might be used for the first time in an operational mode. Those three earlier firings were experimental. I mean, even Putin himself. Now, that last one that hit a place where nobody really thought anything was there, that was deliberate because we wanted to measure the crater. And what we did, we sent drones into that crater and started to think, oh, so that goes that deep, and that's the kind of granite.

Okay, so now we know. Now we can field them operationally. And if they are being mass-produced, I mean, there's a formidable defense right there. Offense being the best form of defense, or vice versa. Now, I'd like to just talk about Anchorage just one more second. And that is that it seems to me clear that at Anchorage, Putin thought there was a good chance that he had prevailed. He had dissuaded Trump from calling for an immediate ceasefire. He had convinced Trump that Trump had the wherewithal to get those Europeans and Ukrainians in line, and let's deal, for God's sake.

#Glenn

The latter didn't happen.

#Ray McGovern

Now, at the final ceremony, as you'll recall, only Putin gave a real kind of substantive sum-up of the things. And bear in mind that he finished up by saying, "Next time in Moscow." And what was Trump's reaction? "Oh, that would be really hard to do." Well, yeah, maybe. Is the President of the United States hosting a summit? Putin says everything went quite well, next time in Moscow, and the President of the United States can't say, "Deal, you give us a date, we'll continue these discussions." No, he's got to say, "Oh no, that would be an uphill stretch." So what does Putin take away from that? That Trump is not 100% his own man. Maybe he's only 60% his own man.

That's big. Now, who are these people in the deep state that are making it possible for the Ukrainians to strike deep inside Russia? Who are they? Are they the kind of people who might have enough people in the military to think they could use a nuclear weapon? I think that my fear about a nuclear weapon is much larger than the United States or that Israel might use a nuclear weapon, much more than the Ukraine situation. So let's look at that. In extremis, can you predict what Trump might do? I can't. I don't think Putin can. In extremis, can you predict what Netanyahu will do before the September election, I think? September or October, I guess?

#Glenn

I can't.

#Ray McGovern

And so how do I, as Putin, act very, very gingerly? I cause no big provocations. I tell the Iranians, me, Putin, I tell the Iranians, look, back after the Cuban Missile Crisis, the American president then, John Kennedy, said, "The main thing we have to do is prevent a situation where one nuclear power faces the other with a choice between humiliating defeat and using nuclear weapons," okay? So Putin to the Supreme Leader, or whoever he talks to, so please, you got the upper hand now, right? You have put the Gulfies in their place. Don't sink one of those aircraft carriers, for God's sake. What would—what would Trump do if he does that, you know?

If you do that. So, look, it's worked in Ukraine for us. It'll work for you. We'll give you lots of support. The Chinese will as well. Very, very important intelligence and other support. Don't do anything really stupid that would face Israel or the United States with a choice between humiliating defeat and the use of nuclear weapons. I don't see where Putin can be relaxed about that at all. And if it were used in Iran, well, that would be almost as bad as if it were used by the U.S. in Ukraine. So all I'm saying here is I don't think this subject has been addressed adequately. I'm, well, not an amateur at it, but I know some of this stuff.

But what bothers me greatly is that when the discussion gets into this, very often people say, "Well, I didn't want to think about that. Oh, my God," you know. But we have to think about that. And I

think it's a godsend that Putin thinks about that all the time, in my view. And maybe we'll get through all this stuff without the worst happening. But, you know, I think we, like Putin, have to be preoccupied with this terrible prospect that this might happen. And I think that in my 80 years of watching this stuff, it's more likely that this could happen now than at any other time since we developed the bomb and used it on Japanese people in Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

#Glenn

That's always been a key problem with nuclear deterrence, that it's such a powerful weapon that often it might not be credible that it would be used. But again, I think this is also dangerous, as you said, the whole sentiment that it would be so much over the top that we shouldn't even think about it. But I think once we dismiss the possibility of nuclear weapons, it's more likely that it would be used. I mean, people have to appreciate the nuclear piece, the fact that it restrained all sides during the Cold War.

And this is why I'm, yeah, very frightened, especially by the European rhetoric, because European leaders now refer to nuclear deterrence as nuclear blackmail, and we can't let the Russians get away with nuclear blackmail. We have to call their bluff. I mean, they become like a cult. This is just insane. I mean, you have to recognize the nuclear peace. You have to recognize that if the great powers do not have a deterrent, they will do something quite dramatic. The idea that you're just, well, we'll call their bluff and Russia will capitulate. I mean, it's insane. It really is, though.

#Ray McGovern

Yeah. Glenn, you have said many times, and I watch you all the time, that you don't understand the Europeans. And that has been a big affirmation for me because I don't understand the Europeans either. You are one. I lived there for over five years. So what's my takeaway of that? Well, neither does Putin, okay? But he does know that he plays the long game. He does know. I'd give Macron less than a year, okay? Starmer, Starmer is already gone. Scholz, he's got the lowest approval rating of any German chancellor in history, okay? The AfD is coming in, much more benign look toward Russia. And one thing I'll just say that nobody has mentioned: Putin, in one of his long Q&As, I think it was on May 9th, he said, look, you know, one of those Nord Stream pipelines is open.

All you have to do is turn the valve. Push your button, and you can get Russian gas again. Whoa. Do you remember him saying that? Well, you know, nobody reported that. What the hell's going on with these Germans? I mean, are they so browbeaten into thinking, well, even in extremis, economically, they're not going to take advantage of this one kind of side offer? Hey, we'll open that thing and we'll let you have gas again. I mean, it reminds me of—well, I'll finish with this. It reminds me of 1933, when a young German lawyer named Raimund Pretzel was studying to be a judge. And as he watched what was going on after the Reichstag fire, he pointed out that the Germans reacted with...

#Ray McGovern

Now, the English is just as hard to pronounce, okay? Submissiveness. Submissiveness. My God, I couldn't understand why this most cultivated, most well-educated people in Europe succumbed to the Third Reich. I can't understand why they still succumb, a good portion of them—not all of them anymore—to this notion that they have to bow and be subservient. And when the U.S. cuts off their lifeline of gas for their industry and their heating in their homes, they act like sheep and they submit. Maybe that will change, but my God, it's an eye-opener for me. The last time I was stationed in Germany was 1980. I mean, that's a long time. They still haven't learned much, in my view.

So, all the more reason for Putin, who I think has the same conceptual problem as you and I have, to be really cautious. And so just watch what happens, because Merz and Macron will be gone. And maybe the people in these democratic socialist countries will start acting like democratic socialists and realize that their societal needs are being sacrificed on the altar of the military-industrial complex. And maybe, just maybe—you'll know better than I do—this will ameliorate the situation over a period of years. And I think that's what Putin thinks, in terms of a period of years. And I hope nobody assassinates him in the interim because, God, I don't know what would happen if Medvedev—probably not he, but somebody else—came in and was less cautious.

#Glenn

I think we very quickly would miss Putin. I always make this point, that he is not one of the hardliners. A common comment was always that he was too liberal and too committed to integrating into the West along the Gorbachev Common European Home line. So, careful what you wish for, because you might just get it. Anyways, Ray, I want to thank you for coming on, and I also wanted to congratulate you again on your very well-deserved award. So thank you.

#Ray McGovern

Thank you very much, Glenn.