

Lawrence Wilkerson: How the U.S. Turned Europe's Leaders Into Puppets

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson is a retired Colonel in the US Army and the former Chief of Staff to the US Secretary of State. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glenndiesen.substack.com/> X /Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@GDiesen1> Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Support the research: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, the former chief of staff to the U.S. Secretary of State. Thank you for coming back on the program.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Good to be with you, Glenn, even if you Europeans are just proving to me over and over again every day that you've gone insane.

#Glenn

Well, actually, let's start there. I don't disagree, but there's new evidence of this every day, so I will have to ask for specifics.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Well, I've just gone through preparation for, and I've changed my whole approach to it, an address I'm going to give in Williamsburg to actually the 50th anniversary of the graduating class, 1976, of the U.S. Military Academy. John Mearsheimer being the person who put my name forward, and they said, "Come do it." So I've been doing a lot of research on something I had not looked at for a long time. And some of this involves looking at what NATO means, what NATO meant, how NATO came about, how the intelligence agencies had much to do with that, including, most materially and most disastrously, in my mind, the Dulles brothers after, of course, Truman had left—Allan Dulles in the beginning, and John Foster and Allan together—all to say that NATO is a very strange creation if you look at our history.

And one of the things that was most prominently strange, if you will, was the fact that we were able to divert billions of dollars from what was appropriations prompted by the sudden attack on South Korea by North Korea in 1950, from that, and thus make that an economy-of-force theater. That is to say, the forgotten war was indeed the forgotten war, and funnel that money into NATO. And how close a vote that was in our Congress. We overcame the Republican diehards, if you will, for not isolationism—I've never liked that term—but for a more sane foreign policy, and certainly one that did not base itself in any intrinsic and fundamental way in another country, let alone other countries, plural.

And what we've done now—and Trump has been the architect of this, unknowingly, I'm quite sure, but maybe a couple of people in his administration, not unknowingly. And I don't mean the big guys behind the scenes, but I mean people like Elbridge Colby and Steve Miller and others. He's begun the recognition of that and the attempt to change it. And what the Europeans are doing is aiding and abetting that process. And that's very stupid, really, to do it in the way that they're doing it. But it is nonetheless understandable. And what we're expressing in our explanation of what's happening is just now beginning to leak out. It's leaking out from people like Hegseth and people like Vance and people like Donald Trump himself.

And it's coming out as not necessarily a retrenchment, but to hell with the rest of you people, including South Korea and Japan and anybody else out that way, and of course Europe. And we're going to retrench in our own hemisphere, and we're going to be the dominant force in this hemisphere. And what it really is, is a recognition, however inchoate, of the fact that the Europeans have screwed themselves up badly. And it's almost without exception in the governments, with some bearing more culpability than others. Germany, France, and Britain come to mind, and are going to make it all the more difficult, but not impossible, for us to do what we want to do.

All to say that what we're really doing is recognizing the inexorable march of China and going back into a fortress in order to fight that inexorable march. And the Europeans are aiding and abetting the process, and in doing so, I think, are being quite stupid. What they should be doing is recognizing what's happening. It's not something new: America going home. And I don't mean it in the sense that we're going home to do any good. I mean we're going home to do harm in our own hemisphere, and act accordingly. That is to say, really get their act together in terms of their own European security identity and such. It isn't happening. And that's very noisome, and it's very irritating because Europe is supposed to be smarter than that.

#Glenn

No, I don't think they are. I think Europe, one of the problems, has become too ideological. What often happens when you have countries bent on hegemony and ideology, they begin to come up with this new language to justify it. So, you know, freedom, justice—these are the slogans they use, but these are essentially empty vessels, and they just tend to fill up these vessels with their own

meaning, which, you know, contrasts with other states. And, well, essentially what you said, when the Americans—we keep saying in Europe—the Americans have given up their leadership role.

They're becoming isolationist. I mean, what is the leadership role? I mean, the idea that this is a fixed term in terms of, you know, that means continue NATO, continue fighting the Russians, continue... I mean, it's always written in stone, and they always use these loaded terms. They don't want to unpack it. They say, more to do with Ukraine. So we have to have empathy with Ukraine. We have to stand with them. And that, you know, always translates to the Europeans as boycotting diplomacy and fighting to the last Ukrainian. Things that make no sense, but this is the language we have on this continent.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

You're right. You're right. And in preparing for this, and I'm in no way complete yet, I'm really fascinated by the research I'm doing. Some things I knew but didn't know in the detail. Other things that I didn't know at all. Like, for example, having reread Philip Knightley's book about how the intelligence agencies are taking over the world. Never has it been more true than today. But I came across this Asia scholar whom I hadn't read for a while, and he had an expression of things that just fit it so well. He said, "What happened? Well, Ukraine barked and we got the war there. Japan barked, and we got the tariffs there." In both cases, the trainers of the dogs and the barking were the United States, particularly CIA. And what Japan is going through right now as a result of that barking is 15% or better tariffs on almost everything that they're doing with China right now, which is devastating for them.

It's impacting the yen. It's impacting, for the first time in Japan's modern history, what is so comfortable—that is, their postal savings accounts and the fact that, even though they're dying as a country, certainly as a nation, they're happy. They're very happy. It's impacting that. And it's impacting Korea too. And Donald Trump has acknowledged that by essentially making statements about Korea that the Koreans are kind of like, "Oh, God, we're doing it again." And so where do they go? Where did they go when the dogs barked? Well, they stayed with the comfortable. They stayed with the alliance. And the dogs were barking all before this guy wrote this article. That's what they are trained to do.

That's what they've been educated to do. Well, now it's finally coming home to them that that was not the thing to do. Where do they go, though? Well, there's only one place Japan can go if it wants to survive. Now, there's some question in my mind that it will make this decision. But the only place it can go is to stand up its own capacity to deal with China. And where can Korea go? Well, Korea has to do that too. It has to keep a weather eye on North Korea. And it also probably needs to think about allying itself with Japan in a bilateral security agreement. Maybe that's too much. Maybe that's enough. If you let it leak out you're going to do that, then China backs off a little bit.

I don't know. But in any event, there have to be some new arrangements. And who's talking about 300 million almost people down there in that very, very fast-growing and powerful country, in many respects, got a great navy, Indonesia? Who's even talking about that? Who's even looking at it? Oh, they're having volcanoes and all kinds of other troubles. They're not anything to look at. I think you probably better start taking a look at that, not to mention others in the region, such as Australia, which might get their act together in the next thousand years. But things are changing, and they're changing so fast that people don't know how to keep up with it.

And we have such an incompetent government that we aren't keeping up with it. We're pronouncing such things as, "We're coming into our hemisphere and we're going to rule." Ooh, if I were Lula, I'd be really concerned about that—the only country in our hemisphere that really counts anymore. So Europe is over there doing what they shouldn't be doing. And I think that'll change just as soon as we get rid of Merz and this guy who replaced Starmer and looks like a Starmer-lite, and Macron and others. But it's not guaranteed. It's not guaranteed in any way. We could fall apart in Europe just as badly as we're going to fall apart in this country, I think.

All to say that it's clear that this incredible dynamic coming out of the East is just pushing before it everything that used to be power, including Europe and including the United States. And it has its residual impact, if you will, the other direction, Korea and Japan. That power is so awesome now. And it even has a maritime dimension now with the 53% of the coastline that runs along Russia. That will be a Chinese-Russian consortium for the Northeast Passage, as it were, and the first real meaningful passage of major commercial ships through the Arctic. And it will bring other things with it too, like mining and exploration of the seabed and such.

We're losing. We're losing so badly that it's just chronic that we're losing. And we have Pete Hegseth get up today—yesterday, I guess—and give a talk wherein he describes what's happening to Iran there today. Ballistic missiles are destroyed. Their ability to build new ballistic missiles, their industrial base, he calls it, is gone. We destroyed it. Their nuclear program is gone. We destroyed it. Everything about Iran that was consequential has been destroyed. And you go through that set of remarks. I did it three times. I couldn't believe he said it the way he said it and in the sequence he said it. He was describing what's happening to his own country.

In vivid detail, he was describing what's happening to his own country and, by extension, to the GCC and other states in the region, who are going to collapse before this is over, with Saudi Arabia leading the pack. And I asked myself the question: Why is everybody reacting so incoherently to this inexorable, clearly recognizable shift of power in the world, rather than trying to accommodate it in a fashion, if you will, diplomatic, understandable, clearly advantageous to all, or as much as could be? We're not. We're all fighting, and we're fighting tooth and nail, and we don't, Glenn, even know what it is we're fighting, other than it looks bad.

#Glenn

I think I often make the point, and I think that's the key thing the U.S. might be doing wrong now: that it should accommodate the new realities instead of resisting it. I mean, the Europeans also want to resist it, but they essentially want to go back to the way things were. But that's also play pretend, because you can't go the way back. And in this regard, I think the Trump administration is more rational than the Europeans because, well, the way I see it, I think the U.S. recognizes that the former hegemonic model, which the Europeans want back, that is gone. Or call it an imperial model.

It's no longer sustainable. There's no longer the economic power to sustain it. And to me, it seems that to resolve this, Trump wants a better return on investment on the empire. That means, you know, he's always talking about allies having to pay, even cannibalizing their industries. And he doesn't shy away from bragging about how he's stealing resources from adversaries, be it Venezuela or Iran. And, well, I'm not advocating for this, but it does make sense. I mean, if you want to get the empire back going, you have to cut costs and increase the revenue. So I see the logic, but sorry.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

How do you reconcile that with his statements, for example, about Oman, his statements about the Southwest Asian conflict in general, and his statements that just make no sense whatsoever in line with what you were saying in particular? But they don't make any sense just in general. And I have to come back to Israel, I guess, and say that's the reason he's making these comments and making comments that sound like they're insane, and even having people in the Pentagon now working seriously on using nuclear weapons against Iran.

#Glenn

I saw Marjorie Taylor Greene tweeting about that. She's got good information that people inside the administration are now talking about using nuclear weapons against Iran.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I had a discussion. I put on my military cap and I said, look, let's face it. Nagasaki and Hiroshima are the only experience that we really have nuclear weapons used against other human beings. Um, admittedly, those weapons were heinous, and maybe even the use of them. The verdict is still out on that, I think. You could argue both ways. But basically, Curtis LeMay and his firebombings of Tokyo and environs did far more damage than the nuclear weapons did. So all I'm saying is, in this argument, I was about to say, all I'm saying as a military professional is tactical nuclear weapons are not all that awesome. They're just bigger bangs, as the military said at the time. I remember the front page of the New York Times. There was an atomic cannon shooting, and the New York Times headline above the cannon and the mushroom cloud in the background was, "Atomic cannon shoots and GIs watch."

And they were only about two and a half miles, as I recall, maybe kilometers, from ground zero. And that's the way we looked at these weapons in 1950 and 1951 and 1952. Eisenhower changed that a little bit, but not a whole lot within the military. All to say that the use of tactical nuclear weapons in a discrete way, militarily speaking, would not be that awesome. It's just a bigger bang. Would it be the opening of Pandora's box? Would the nuclear genie be going out and us not be able to do anything about it? Not if they were used as discriminately as they could be. And there are some of these weapons that are not of very high yield. Airburst, surface burst, subsurface burst, all those things make a difference. Blowdown, winds, all the things you have to consider about it.

All to say that, as a military professional, using these things—and I'm making the argument that several people are making in the Pentagon right now—would not be all that awesome. The question in my mind, both as a military professional and a former member of the security establishment at the highest levels, is: would that stop? Would we be able to harness it at that point? And then the second question is, to what effect would we be doing this? Other than to show the other side that we were deadly serious. In the case of the Iranians, they might come back and be just as deadly serious and put two or three on the region, someplace very, very strategic, like many of the facilities in Saudi Arabia that they thus far haven't struck.

And if it were Russia, all bets are off because they have a bigger stockpile even than we do. So tit for tat could get started really spiraling upward. My argument is simply that it is not going to be that awesome to these people who don't mind killing people anyway and have demonstrated it in spades, to kill a few more and to kill them more efficiently and more effectively. Would that change any of the dynamics associated with Ukraine or with Southwest Asia? Well, it would in one way, and the one way I've just suggested: it would be the first, second use of nuclear weapons against human beings. One assumes that there would be some human beings under the bombs.

But it would not be that big an impact, militarily speaking. Would the drama of doing it, as Trump is clearly having it appeal to him right now, be enough to change the dynamics of the war? No, it wouldn't. Iran would just be more resolute and, as I said, maybe use one of its own. Russia is a different matter altogether because then you're poking the bear in the cave and asking it to come out and shoot you back. Would Russia be the converse of this? Could be, particularly if the Oreshniks used on Lithuania, NATO targets in Lithuania, didn't work. So we're playing with fire here. There's no question about that. We're playing a very dangerous game with contemplating using nuclear weapons, but all at the same time to say, I think it's probably inevitable.

#Glenn

Well, I can see Russia possibly using it. That is, if NATO continues to escalate now in terms of—and they do almost every day. Now you see the British providing long-range drones to strike inside Russia. So it's something every day. I'm thinking if the Russians retaliate against the Baltic states, for example, just take out some warehouses or logistics centers, it's not inconceivable that NATO

would go after Kaliningrad. At this point, I think the nuclear option is definitely on the table for the Russians. So I can see a very clear pathway. And especially if the Americans use it first against Iran, then it's almost guaranteed. So, no, we're walking down here a dangerous place.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

All the reason to do what you said, become an accommodating power rather than a challenging power, especially when you're on the lower end of the stick in terms of power. But then again, history teaches us, I think, a lesson: that the one on the bottom of the stick is the one most apt to be the recalcitrant character, and the one on the top, the most accommodating character, because it's winning. Why should it disturb that victory?

#Glenn

But I'm thinking if what Trump is really doing here is trying to recalibrate the empire, that is, to increase the revenue and reduce the cost, there seems to be some flaws there, though. As you said, with the allies, for example, as you referred to, he just made a comment to Oman that if they make a deal with the Iranians, in Trump's words, and this is a direct quote, "We'll bomb the shit out of them." So I apologize for the language, but that's a direct quote. And, you know, so this is how they're treating the Omanis. And then, of course, this message goes around the Gulf states. And then you have South Korea, where he essentially said he would scale down the military exercises not to, you know, provoke the North Koreans because he wants to get along with them, and essentially looking to punish the South Koreans, I think, for not helping him with attacking Iran.

And it's just, you know, if you add to that pulling the air defenses out of South Korea, and now, of course, as the USS Abraham Lincoln has to leave, they have to replace it with the George Washington, which means they're taking it out of East Asia. It's a pivot to Asia in reverse. If I was in South Korea, being one of the most loyal U.S. allies, I would begin to reconsider. And one day, maybe even the Europeans would, because I think their calculation was if they just bow to Washington, surrender their national interests, their economic interests, security interests, their dignity, then somehow they would be proven to be loyal and then they would get Washington's full support, especially with the war against Russia.

But instead, we see the Europeans getting weaker, and the Americans—in all fairness—you see that the Europeans are no longer a force amplifier because their submissiveness is making them weaker. So everything they're doing is wrong, essentially. And I'm thinking, you know, certainly, though, this must begin to unravel because the U.S. can't just start to squeeze it and try to weaken its adversary without the adversaries coming together and eventually the allies being drained so much of strength or forced to diversify away from the U.S. What are your thoughts on this? Do you see—I mean, it is not sustainable, that's for sure. Yeah.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

No, it's not. And I point out also, I was just looking yesterday at the American Meteorological Society and NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. NOAA I know really well. The AMS I don't know that well, but there's some pretty good names in there and their scientific repertoire. NOAA is probably one of the most efficient and forward-leaning organizations in the United States, and internationally too, with regard to the oceans and particularly with regard to what's happening in the warming of the oceans and such. And this report is scarier than the last one from the United Nations. And it's got some real solid scientific names associated with it. In fact, when I read the summary, I was reminded of the simulations we ran at the Center for Naval Analyses many years ago.

'06, '07 comes to mind, when we said by 2065 we would have these conditions, and we—worst case, best case, middle case, and so forth, as you usually do. And the worst-case one was quite dramatic by 2065. And I'm reading in this report that we're already there with some of the happenings. So you're looking at another phenomenon outside the nuclear phenomenon itself, which is dramatic enough and potentially dangerous enough. We're looking at another one that's going to wipe us out if we don't do something, and do it rather rapidly, because we're passing the point of no return in so many different criteria. So why is it that we're marching towards our own destruction? The planet won't be influenced.

It'll be here for another four and a half billion years, till it runs into the sun and burns out, but we'll be gone, or we'll be significantly gone. Civilization will be significantly set back. So why is it that these two major catastrophes—nuclear weapons on the one hand, which stare us in the face even as we're talking, and the climate crisis, which is doing things that people ought to be waking up to, like in France and Spain and in our West and elsewhere, where floods are just dramatically different, where drought right alongside the flood is dramatically different, where we're burning ourselves up, where the wine industry in the world is being put out of business, so to speak, where all of these things are happening that are clear signs, even for the people out in the hustings—why are we not doing what we should be doing?

That is the question of the hour in my mind with regard to both these wars and their potential of going nuclear, and to the climate crisis. Why is not accommodation the name of the game? Because the only way we're going to meet either of these crises, let alone both of them, which is mandatory if we're not going to get wiped out in some way, why aren't we working together? Will a set of elections in Europe bring new people to the helm in Europe that will discard these old people who don't know what they're doing? Call them the interim people, between those who had their feet in the war and those who knew nothing of the war, to the ones who now will know something of war through Ukraine and the disaster it has become, or elsewhere, maybe even looking down to Southwest Asia?

Will it wake us up? I think that's a huge question. It's a huge question for the world, not just for the American Empire, the Europeans, the Russians, the Chinese. Will we wake up in time to save

ourselves? We have the technology. We have the wisdom. We have the wherewithal to save ourselves from both crises. The question is, do we have the will, and do we have the political apparatus to execute that will? I don't know. The answer to that question is a huge, huge answer, though.

#Glenn

I think it's a difficult time. If the international distribution of power was more stable, then the politicians would probably look towards the environmental degradation which is taking place. But with this massive redistribution of power, it looks as if they're all in panic. The idea that, well, first we have to defeat the Iranians, the Russians, and the Chinese, and then after that, we'll have a look at the environment. But of course, it is nonsense. But nothing in politics these days makes any sense at all. But I...

#Glenn

Sorry?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Change the politics. I think that's inevitable in Europe in particular. I think you're going to have a series of elections. I've said this a number of times, a series of elections, maybe starting in Germany, across Europe. And in the next year to 18 months, I think you're going to see different approaches to the problems we're enumerating here. And you're going to see different outcomes of political arrangements, if you will, that will, I hope, not just do more of the same, but change the whole outlook of Europe. I wouldn't be surprised to see the complexion of the EU change too if this happens.

Don't know that for a fact, but I don't think the farm community alone in key European countries is going to allow this EU to exercise its mandate the way it has up to this point for very much longer. And I think the politicians are going to have to be into that. I remember that old tale. I can't remember what prime minister it was, but in France, where the guy's in a debate with his cabinet or members of his team, and all of a sudden there's a big roar outside the window. The prime minister or the president gets up and he goes to the window, and someone says, "Where are you going?" And he says, "I'm going to see what's happening." "Well, why are you doing that? We've got an important meeting going here."

I'm going to see where the people are going because I've got to go there too. It may be apocryphal, but that's what's going to have to happen. These leaders are going to have to see which way the people want to go, the majority of them, and they're going to have to go there. That assumes, as John Adams might have said back when, that the American people, or the people we're talking about, are reasonably well-educated and reasonably conscious of what's going on around them. That

might be a big assumption. It might be a false assumption, because I think we're getting more and more stupid in our democracies. We're getting more and more stupid, truly stupid, seeking after that which is unwise.

#Glenn

Well, I think part of the stupidity in Europe, I think it grew exponentially due to this war against Russia, because in my opinion, I think the war could be resolved quite easily. That is, if we are allowed to challenge the premise. And that is, in my opinion, I don't think Russia is an imperial power in the regard that they didn't go to war to restore the Soviet Union or simply to get territory. The Russians saw this NATO expansion as an existential threat, and as a rational actor, that's what they responded to. But if you want to make this comment, I think then it would be, if you recognize this reality, you have many pathways to put an end to this thing.

But in Europe these days, that's treasonous to say. If you try to make this argument, then you're legitimizing what they're doing. You're supporting it. You are blaming NATO instead of appeasing Russia, all of these problems. And I think they ideologically dug themselves into these positions to support this forever war. And now that they're losing, they're already locked in this position. What are they going to do suddenly now? Say the words which weren't allowed, that, oh, perhaps, yeah, they do see this as an existential threat, and perhaps if we recognize security competition, we can mitigate it. But there's no room for this. There's no debates, nothing.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I take some hope from the fact that I was there. I know what we did. I know what we did to Europe. I know how painstakingly the agency, CIA, how painstakingly SIS, MI6, and to a certain extent Mossad—though they weren't, in the beginning, willing partners—they became partners because they saw how much money was going into it. How we, in this Asian scholar's words, taught the dogs to bark. We bought newspaper editors. We bought labor union heads. We bought parliamentarians. We bought two secretaries general, Jens Stoltenberg and Mark Rutte. We bought whole countries in terms of their political apparatus and what influences them.

But starting in 2002, really putting the rubber to the road, as in billions of dollars to the CIA and others, USAID was an instrument. They weaponized liberal democracy. In that respect, I supported what Trump and Rubio did to USAID, to the extent that they were getting rid of the people underneath who did that sort of thing. I didn't support their getting rid of the bureaucrats at the top. But we created the Europe that exists right now on purpose. And now we're paying the piper for that, I think, because it's going to take another six to 12, maybe 18 months to get rid of some of these people. And the parliaments, God knows how long it's going to take to get rid of the people there. We painstakingly crafted Europe in the image we wanted.

#Glenn

No, you can't believe that. No, I do believe that. But again, I remember back in 2003, the rhetoric around the United States attacking Iraq, how it was seen as outrageous, so aggressive, so counterproductive. But the hawks, which were despised and often ridiculed in Europe—you know, those days are gone, and the European leaders today, indistinguishable.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

That reaction from George W. Bush was a call to battle. And a call to battle, I have to say this, to a certain extent, a call to battle for Colin Powell, Dick Cheney, and those of the others. I mean, they set all this in motion. Never in the history of the CIA, since it was formed by Wild Bill Donovan as the Office of Strategic Services, I guess, and then we made it into the CIA. Harry Truman greatly objected, he said, and the record shows he did initially, but then he got sold on it principally by Donovan and Hoover, and Hoover hated Donovan.

So this is a strange story, but nonetheless... The agency bought this lock, stock, and barrel because it knew billions of dollars would pour its way. Indeed, they did. And they set about making, using what you just described as the example of the worst that could possibly happen: They don't like us anymore. Look at those anti-war riots. Look at the thing that happened in London. I was in the middle of the one in London, the largest anti-war rally in Europe's history, I was told, certainly probably in Britain's history. We didn't like that at all, and we set about to change it.

#Glenn

How close were you to this, though? I mean, the...

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I was up close to, cheek and jowl, to getting Jens Stoltenberg to where he was.

#Glenn

What was it about Wolf, a former NATO Secretary General, and Jens Stoltenberg that made him, I guess, someone to be elevated in Washington?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

We saw what he did within his own government, and we saw how malleable he was and how susceptible he was to our message, and we sort of used him as a center pole from which to extend ourselves out and work on other governments. And he was most willing because he knew it meant, at that particular moment in time—he knew we had promised him, and he knew it meant we would,

I think he calculated, follow up—he'd be the new NATO Secretary General. And he would be the one who, on the NATO, the Brussels side, if you will, he would be the one to make sure that all this happened.

What I did not see up close and personal, but I was told by others was happening too, was our infection of the EU. But I'm sure it went chapter and verse right along with our infection of the NATO leadership. And that wasn't hard at all because, well, you have to know the history of how NATO grew to be so flag-heavy. You know, every time we would—and we were terribly guilty of this, but the CIA took advantage of it—we would build a headquarters, literally build a headquarters, and put a three- or a four-star there. And the Europeans would say, "Oh, if they've got one, we got to have one." So we built this enormous overhead of flag officers, both Navy and Air Force—Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps—not Marine Corps for Europe.

Well, one or two places. But we built this incredible flag officer country in Europe that was so influenceable that all you had to do was whisper in their ear. And so you suddenly had this top-heavy NATO military leadership that would do your beck and call. No, no problem whatsoever. And all you had to do, if you were CIA, all you had to do was whisper in their ear about Russia. And you built that up as you needed to. This Russia business started very early, too. It started with Yeltsin's disappearance and Putin's arrival on the scene. That's where it started big time in terms of using Russophobia as an instrument of our propaganda.

#Glenn

In the Dutch media, though, where the current NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, as Prime Minister, the Dutch media exposed that he looked at how he could excuse whatever Israel did. And not just excuse what Israel did, but was also extra hawkish on the Russians and also backed the bombing of Yemen, all of this to make sure that, you know, it would look good on his job application to become, because they knew this is what the Americans wanted, what they would reward.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

We were very much aware of how much, in Germany in particular, but others too, how much the Holocaust still lingered over Europeans. And with Mossad helping, we exploited that to the maximum. People wonder today why Germany has some of the rules, laws, regulations, and so forth it has with regard to anti-Semitism and so forth. We helped them build them.

#Glenn

It's extraordinary, though. But I did want to ask about what is happening now in the U.S. military, because of course, yes, the Americans are helping to build up the Europeans as the proxies, and I think our leaderships are going quite crazy, at least the new ones. But within the U.S., I mean,

there's a lot of institutions which are now flailing a bit, and the one that's really strong, though, is still the U.S. military. But before, you were mentioning, you know, the USS Abraham Lincoln, and there's been a lot of reports on the poor conditions on it. Trump dismissed it as fake news, but overall, what is Trump doing to the military now, though? It's seemingly becoming much more politicized. Very much so. Yeah, and it's... I mean, this is an institution that enjoys legitimacy. I mean, if they fall in line with Trump and it becomes, you know, then I guess they would lose this legitimacy. If they push back, you don't want a civil war either—not that it's in the cards yet, but still. What are the problems in the military these days?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

They're huge. And Bradley Cooper, Admiral Bradley Cooper, the present Central Command commander in charge of the war in Southwest Asia, his visit to Abraham Lincoln was one of the most egregious things I've ever seen happen in the military. And his statement on her flight deck was even more egregious. You're looking at a circumstance that was caused largely by the war, of course, Trump's war of choice. But in terms of that specific circumstance and Lincoln's condition, and other surface warfare ships too, the elimination by the Iranians of Bahrain in the decisive, destructive way that they did it, and other ports of call, if you will, in the region, put the logistics chain for any of the ships, but particularly the carriers, which are hanging so far off of Iran out of fear of being sunk, into a 2,200-mile trip all the way to Diego Garcia and back for supplies.

Well, you can't maintain the kind of things you have to maintain on a carrier to keep the crew reasonably content, especially with the exposure that they have to that vast seawater and nothing but that seawater forever and ever, out 1,000 miles off of Iran's coast. So it was unconscionable for him to go out there and make the statements that he made, which are simply cover-your-ass statements. That said, I don't know how we get out of this mess that Trump has largely put the United States Navy into, and people like Bradley Cooper are complicit in it, without really exposing yourself to what is the truth about your military and your military capability.

And in that respect, there is a most curious speech by Pete Hegseth, which I stumbled on at 4 a.m. this morning. It was on YouTube, and there he was. I listened to it three times, and I couldn't believe that what he was doing in that speech, what he ostensibly was doing, was describing the condition of Iran. He said things like, "They have no industrial base. Their ballistic missiles have been destroyed, and they can't make new ones. Their entire posture in terms of defending against further U.S. onslaught is virtually gone." He went through that item by item. And the whole time, he's describing not Iran. He's describing his own forces.

He's describing the United States military to a T. I recommend that speech to you. I mean, Hegseth is to a T describing his own military's condition right now: shortage of missiles, shortage of weapons, and no industrial base to reproduce them, and so forth. He's doing all of that in an attempt to describe the condition of the country that is anything but that in most of those categories. In fact, its resilience is incredible. And the leadership that's put in place right now is adamant about staying that

way. I've seen the list. I've read their biographies. They are tough, tough people. They are not going to be beaten, certainly not by this Netanyahu gang.

And also thrown into that is Ansar Allah and the Houthis and what they're doing, and the impossibility of Saudi Arabia beating this. I mean, you know, just putting Saudi ground forces into the struggle was a tragic mistake. It exposed all the weakness of Saudi Arabia, in particular with regard to the military. But why is Hegseth doing this? Is this reverse psychology warfare? I don't know. But to an almost incredible degree, he described Iran, and he was describing the United States. So, all to say, we're in bad shape. We're in really bad shape. And I understand people like General Grinkevich, for example, SACEUR, who's bellyaching, bellyaching, complaining to Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, because we have bled down a lot of the weaponry that he would need if he had—and this is his main mission—if he had to defend NATO, particularly against Russia.

So he's angry. He is an angry combatant commander, as are some of the other combatant commanders, because we've drained our stockpile of critical weapons. We are robbing them from other people in the world, like the South Koreans, in order to not look quite as bad as we really are. Israel has helped us, of course, majorly in this draining of our weaponry. We are in sad shape right now. Not only that, our industrial base cannot respond, regardless of the money we throw at it, because, one, they don't have the production facilities and must gear them up at great cost to themselves. Two, they can't produce many of the weapons we want because they require ingredients in them that only one country in the world can give us and won't, namely China. And thirdly, because we do not have the capacity in some cases to do what it is that's necessary to be done at all.

Case in point, big newspaper article the other day. Most people missed it, but Hegseth didn't miss it and is on it, you know, trying to figure out what to do about it. A \$533 million contract to a Turkish company that produced the robotic structure for the 155 howitzer round facility. I think it's out in the Midwest somewhere. It's broken, completely broken. So that \$533 million was completely wasted, completely wasted. And it was all an attempt to automate this production line so we could get these rounds, which are critical for artillery units, out faster. Well, they aren't getting out at all now. Glenn, we're broken. In many respects, we're broken. And I think Hegseth—I won't blame him for all the breakage, but I will blame him for the lies covering it up.

#Glenn

Well, again, I can see how the U.S. ends up in this place. That is, it's quite important if the U.S. wants to still be this hegemonic power, it has to portray itself as being all-powerful. And, of course, going all-in during this Iran war, using and depleting its weapons stockpile, the more it bombs Iran, the weaker the U.S. gets. And at the same time, as the rest of the world watches that it can't defeat Iran, that also its capabilities are being depleted, the whole image of the U.S. as all-powerful, which was a very important component in the hegemonic era, all of this is just going away. And, of course, when you get these lies on top, like denying the conditions on the Lincoln aircraft carrier, I mean, it

seems that the worse position the United States is in, the more Trump has to compensate by selling this as a victory, which is why we end up with these statements, such as what Hegseth was saying, which runs counter to reality.

But, you know, it seems this can only go on for so long before Trump is pushed into a corner where he has to do something dramatic, like use nuclear weapons, as you suggested before. But is there any other path you see here to course correction? I mean, besides the Trump administration, can the deep state, the plutocracy, something intervene? Because you can kind of see where this is going. The rhetoric of victory is going up while, at the same time, the U.S. position is weakening. At some point, this is going to break, and either Trump is going to have to have a very humiliating withdrawal or he's going to have to do something quite radical.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I think you're seeing that sort of thing you just suggested develop, however incoherently and imperfectly. He's trying to create a situation, mostly full of lies and subterfuge, that we've won, convince enough people that that's the case. And as Karl Rove used to say, if I lie to you again and again and again, you will eventually believe what I'm saying. Then that will be his way out. In other words, he will describe a victory and he will essentially leave. That's going to be hard to mask, ultimately, but he only needs to mask it through the midterms. At least that's probably the way he thinks. And I'm assuming that that means the midterms would be reasonably fair. He could do it other ways, forcefully, and wouldn't have to worry about it, of course.

He'd have to worry about the Civil War, I mean, of course, but otherwise. And what's really a fly in the ointment right now, really an indeterminate factor, is, of course, Bibi Netanyahu. Maybe Netanyahu is not going to let go of Iran. Not ever. He will have to be in his grave and a silver stake put through his heart. So how does he deal with that? I mean, Jared Kushner tried, and Jared Kushner more or less wound up being subservient to Bibi Netanyahu. I think Jared went in with the idea that he was going to be that way. But nonetheless, it didn't produce what I think probably Trump ultimately wanted, which was a guarantee that no matter what I say in this election, I am not going to restart the war with Iran from my side. Bibi's lying through his teeth if he said that to Trump.

He will not turn loose of Iran, not now that he thinks he's got them by the jugular. I, for one, don't think he does at all, but I think he thinks he does, and this is the last moment in his life, political or otherwise, that he will have this opportunity. So he has to finish off Iran. Whether that means stoking Lebanon to the point where Iran recommences and then he has to respond, and the U.S. too, I don't know. But that's what he wants to do. And whether it means, as we discussed, that he'll use the nuclear weapon ultimately, or to retreat, I don't know. But you can't get away from the fact that Trump is trapped by Bibi Netanyahu. No matter how he fashions this retreat from this war, which he's got to even know by now is disastrous, Bibi will not let him go.

#Glenn

Last question to finish off where we started. The Europeans, which the U.S. expressed some frustration with. Where do you see the United States going with Europe from now on? Because it's still a bit unclear what the U.S. wants. Does it still want to push for removing some of these regimes which it helped bring into power? Or do you see the U.S. cutting itself off from Europe or cultivating it as a frontline state to be used against Russia? What will define the U.S.-European relationship moving forward?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I'd like to say that Donald Trump, rebounding from his disastrous experience in Southwest Asia, would suddenly turn to Putin and say, "We got to talk," and drag Zelensky into it, kicking and screaming, whatever. I don't for a moment think we could have a reasonable peace agreement and a reasonable period of peace afterwards. But we could have a cessation of this bloodletting, and we could have a cessation of the potential for much more bloodletting and other people joining in. That would be, I think, a strong message to Europe, were he to do that. Do it over their heads if you have to. And that would be Trump's preference, probably just a meeting with Putin and come out of it and announce that we're going to have a deal, and get Zelensky, bend his arm behind his back, and tell him to withdraw his Ukrainian Nazis from Syria.

Saudi Arabia, everywhere else, he's got them. Just put your foot down with Zelensky or, you know, easy enough, have the CIA take his life. Do whatever is necessary, but get this thing shut down to the extent that you can. Not saying it won't take 10 or 15 years before there'll be some reasonable peace, if ever, but shut it down and quit the prospect of destroying the whole damn place in a flash of a gun. Will Trump do that? I don't know, but it would be a dramatic move away from the kind of move he's made in Southwest Asia, which I think was compelled more or less by Bibi Netanyahu. Trump should never have walked into the trap, but he did. But will that happen? Shoot, who knows? But I do understand that Lavrov and Putin are talking once again with people whom they weren't talking to before. And I understand there's an inclination of Trump to talk to Putin again.

So, I mean, in a meaningful way, could he salvage his whole presidential reputation, if you will, by effecting some kind of decent end to the war in Ukraine and the potential for spreading and becoming much more intense and much more difficult and even nuclear? Yes, I think he could. Is he willing to do it? Does he want to do it? I think yes. Can he do it, though? Can he break away from the apparatus that he's created around himself to do that? And can he mask the fact that we're in so bad a shape, both physically and militarily, security-wise as a whole, while he's doing it? Those are huge questions in my mind. You've made your bed, now sleep in it. But in sleeping in it, do some good. I don't know. I'm probably calling on a man who has limited capabilities to do any of this to do all of it.

#Glenn

It is a bit terrifying that putting an end to this might actually depend on Trump.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Yeah, isn't it? I said that to someone the other day, and they said it back to me in spades. I said, "You really believe that?" And they said, "Well, I think he could." Okay, go work on him.

#Glenn

Well, thank you for taking the time. It's, yeah, quite a depressing topic. But, yeah, that's nonetheless quite important, where this is headed. But no, I'm just—one gets frustrated after how long they can continue to double down on these horrible mistakes.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I'm with you on the frustration. I don't think I've ever, in 81 years on this planet, I don't think I've ever been as frustrated as I am now.