

Deterrence Psychopathy Hijacks Europe— It's Getting Worse | Cdre. Steve Jermy

The people who lead Ukraine straight into the bayonets of Russia are working over-time to do the same to the rest of the European continent. Retired Royal Navy Commodore Steve Jermy joins me today to discuss what we need to work toward stopping this: A new "Spirit of Westphalia" for ending the NATO-Russia war. We examine the loss of cooperative security in Europe, weak air defenses, the energy costs of escalation, the human cost of a wider war, and possible paths toward diplomacy, neutrality, OSCE-led confidence-building measures, and Track II talks. Links: Steve Jermy's Substack: <https://stevejermy.substack.com> Steve's Article: <https://stevejermy.substack.com/p/the-spirit-of-westphalia> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction and the Spirit of Westphalia 00:09:03 Support Neutrality Studies 00:09:20 Why Europe abandoned cooperative security 00:14:41 Air defense, drones, and missile warfare 00:18:14 Energy security and the need for diplomacy 00:22:37 How peace talks could begin 00:29:25 Neutrality, the OSCE, and ending sanctions 00:35:19 Who could launch a new peace process? 00:45:25 Where to follow Steve Jermy

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies today with an update by Steve Jeremy, the retired Commodore of the British Navy. Steve, welcome back.

#Steve Jermy

Good to be back with you, Pascal. It's been too long. We've been sort of busy doing other things.

#Pascal

It has been too long, but I saw you in Tbilisi two months ago, then saw you on Tucker Carlson a few weeks ago. Well done on that one. And then you published this new piece here on the spirit of Westphalia with New Thinking: Britain, France, and Germany could help end the NATO-Russia war. So you're one of the people making a proactive argument, actually, about what could be done about this entire tragedy, where still thousands of Ukrainians and Russians die a month. Steve, can you walk us through this?

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, I thought the article was important, Pascal, because a lot of people have been talking about the problems that we're facing. And indeed, I had done an article on the coming war with Russia and what could happen. And the coming war with Russia would be very scary if it happened. So it seemed to me that we need to at least start to think about what alternative pathways could be. So think about it as an alternative pathway for peace. And the reason that I chose the title "The Spirit of Westphalia" was that, as you will know well, Westphalia was one of those events in history which was dramatic inasmuch as it brought to a close the Eighty Years' War and the Thirty Years' War. And it was a complicated event.

But the message to me was that Europeans could do this. So that rather than having to sit back and wait for the Americans to go and talk to the Russians, we in Europe could take a role in this. And not only could we take a role in this, should we take a role in this. So the idea was to actually really start and think initially about what the antecedents of the war were. I won't sort of take too long about that because I think there's a general consensus amongst those of us in the independent media, and indeed most anybody who's got any sense of strategic history whatsoever, that the antecedents started all the way back when NATO started to expand, and that there was that expansion which was ultimately the cause of the war.

And I still hold by that view. I mean, I think anybody who's got any strategic history or mind whatsoever knows it's unavoidable to avoid that conclusion. That's important as well, because when you're thinking about how to solve wars, diagnostics is important. So what we were doing there was diagnosing the causes of the war, which then allows us to apply the right treatment, if you like. But the next thing really was to actually look at the changed context. I mean, it seemed to me that the change of the context has been significant. So since 2022, we've seen the issue of a NATO national security strategy by the Americans, you know, in which Europe is at best about fifth on the priority list.

And as we know, the Americans have got much higher priorities, not least of all Iran and that unfortunate entanglement. We're also in the situation where it's difficult to say whether there is real change yet in European leadership, but certainly we can see that amongst the E3, Britain has just had a change of prime minister, not in the normal way. Merz looks under pressure in Germany, not least of all because he's got the AfD breathing down his neck, and the AfD have an explicit policy of re-engagement with Russia. And, of course, Macron has for some time maintained contact with Putin, we believe. We don't know for sure.

You've also got a couple of other things as well, Pascal. I think the next thing really was that I think we're now starting to see that the fortress belt, which was really the last part of the sort of the main defence against Putin, Russian military movements west, the fortress belt is falling. And when that goes, there's not much left behind it. So, you know, the Russians at that stage will have open fields,

if you like, all the way to the Dnipro and, of course, all the way across Odessa, with the possibility of taking Odessa. And I think probably the last bit of it really, in terms of the context, was that—or the last two bits of it.

First is that we now know that the West cannot defend ourselves against air attack. I mean, if anybody thought that it wasn't true and anybody ignored what was happening in Ukraine, then just look at what's happened in Iran, where essentially the United States have been driven out of the Gulf and have retreated. And it is a retreat, have retreated as far back as Jordan. In Jordan, they weren't safe, and as far back as Israel. And of course, the carriers have drawn further back. So we know we can't defend ourselves against air attacks, which in turn plays into the issue about Western air defence. You know, the fact is, if we can't defend Ukraine's skies against air attack, then neither can we defend Europe's skies.

So surely this is the time to start talking to Russia. I also had a good look at NATO. The fact is that NATO, as I've said before, when I was operating in a NATO formation, we used to joke that NATO stood for no ability to organise. Sorry, tell me again. We joked that NATO stood for no ability to organise. And, of course, that's not true, but it was how we thought about it, light-heartedly. But NATO is not this great coalition that people talk about. Its sort of overseas operations—Kosovo was done under very dubious legitimacy. It certainly wasn't a legal operation. I have now, looking back on it, great doubts about the operation. NATO was defeated in Afghanistan against a ragtag bunch of people armed with Kalashnikovs and IEDs over a nearly 20-year campaign.

And the great moment of NATO surely was when the Russians invaded Ukraine, because NATO's purpose from the outset was to avoid war in Europe. And yet at that moment, NATO had done something which caused the war in Europe and yet had not been prepared for the war that its actions must have been able to cause. So to me, that was a huge failure in strategic thinking. And it shows to me that NATO is not strategically competent. Last but by no means least, NATO's support to the war in Ukraine has not worked. So to me, it's time to have a very, very good look at NATO. So I began to really think, what might the structure of peace talks look like? It's difficult to start this, but necessary, I think.

I think the interesting thing is that from a Bloomberg article, I think it was about a month ago—it was in July, Pascal—it became clear that there have been Track Two talks organized by the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue between the E3 nations—that's Britain, France and Germany—and Russia. I think, from the sound of it, the E3 nations got a fairly stark message from the Russians. And it does not entirely surprise me. I think the Russians have just about given up on negotiation. But anyway, at least that conversation started. But what might a peace plan look like? I mean, there are a number of elements that it might look like. I think the first thing is that we need to move from a sort of philosophy in NATO and in Europe that actually we deter the Russians.

Now, what deterrence really means is confrontation. It means we confront the Russians, and we confront the Russians. The deterrence is achieved through the effect of marching all the way up to

Russia's borders. And we should not be surprised that Russia found that threatening. Indeed, that's the cause of the war. So the first thing is, let's go philosophically for an approach which is to do with cooperation as opposed to deterrence. Let's look at the way in which we work with the Russians, or could work with the Russians. Let's think about those measures. But shall I just stop then, before we sort of run into what that peace process might look like, Pascal?

#Pascal

Yeah. Hey, just a very quick note. The best way to support this channel is by signing up for my free Substack. You can also help with a paid subscription there, or you can get some of our new merch on neutralitystudies.com. Links below. See you there. I do have a couple of follow-up questions that I would like to clarify first. One of them being, where do you think it's coming from? Because I realize that I'm currently in Switzerland, and we're going to have a public referendum at the end of next month, and the whole political debate is really heating up right now about Swiss neutrality.

And the people who are against what we are proposing and would like to have affirmed next month, they are arguing that, you know, even in Switzerland, Russia can only be deterred. You cannot have any kind of constructive dialogue with them because they're evil and whatnot and blah, blah, blah. But the whole point is that even in Switzerland, the idea is that deterrence is the only path to security. Even over here, a good number of the population swallowed the pill that, you know, a state needs to have the capacity to obliterate the other one, otherwise it will never be safe. And that's, of course, the root cause of the security dilemma and how then the other one will perceive you and whatnot.

So the entire idea of building cooperative frameworks, and that the security of the other will add to your security, and that friendship is better than deterrence, is completely—I mean, is gone out of those circles of society. Not everywhere. There's still a good number of people understanding that. But we don't talk about this. The newspapers don't talk about it. Everything is about the importance of being strong against Russia. In your analysis, what do you think is the reason for basically Europe having completely, utterly lost the idea of cooperative security? I mean, we had it. Helsinki was built on that. The Final Act in 1975 was built around that concept. If you're secure, then I'm secure. And it's completely, utterly gone. What do you think led to this?

#Steve Jermy

I think there's probably two things, Pascal. I mean, there are a number of things. And like you, I've really struggled with this. I think, like all of us in the independent media, I've really struggled with this. I think that there has been a sort of sleepwalk. We didn't really notice much as NATO was marched up to the borders. People were interested in other things. There were events going on in Afghanistan. There were events going on elsewhere. People worried about climate change and so on and so forth. And I think that we've sleepwalked—at least the press sleepwalked up to it. And I think, indeed, most of the government sleepwalked up to it as well. And we know this because

everybody was surprised when Russia responded to the events in the Donbass. I mean, I don't know why we were surprised, because the signs were so clear and the Russians kept on telling us.

#Pascal

Yeah, Mearsheimer, the others, Matlock and so on. A lot of people kept saying, like, this will end in war. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

#Steve Jermy

So you get to the stage where you've got a population who were not expecting this. And unfortunately, the response of the press, and I think the government's, was to move straight into defence, deterrence, and confrontation rather than actually going back and doing the analysis. So you have the press, and I think it sounds like it's the same in Switzerland as it is here, which is the press is largely speaking in support of any operations to defend Ukraine. I mean, we're not doing very well in defence. I think as well, because of that, you've sort of got this sense in the press that they suffer from what I would call cult thinking, which is that they're bought into the deterrence, they're bought into the conflict, they're bought into Putin being a Hitlerian figure and the Russians being terrible people who need to be deterred.

And they haven't done the diagnostics. And because of this, when you get into cult thinking, people tend to rationalize everything in the way that the cult operates. So, you know, you get to this situation where we find ourselves now. And I think it's a very, very big problem because we've got to, us and the independent media and others, overcome it, I think. I mean, the reason that we will almost certainly overcome it is because the simple point is that we can't afford fiscally and monetarily to keep defending Ukraine. It's a question of money, but also militarily, it would take us 10 years, as a minimum, to get to the levels of industrial capacity needed to actually be able to confront meaningfully the Russians. So, for all of these reasons, you know, we are unable to do this.

#Pascal

And, you know, there are people who would sacrifice even the last Ukrainian to this war, even if it meant just fighting with your bare hands. And then they would go on to sacrificing every European that they have, even with their bare hands. I mean, there's people who think like that. We know that. But this is also a classic thing: the militarists in Japan, you know, at the end of the Second World War. One faction wanted to surrender. The other faction said, like, no, 100 million martyrs. We're going to sacrifice everybody. You always have these kind of lunatics in any kind of these war scenarios. They are lunatics, and they are utter imbeciles. In Japan, at least those who were serious.

They had the honor to actually shoot themselves once it ended, but I don't think that ours will do that. Anyhow, let me not go there. I wanted to ask the second question, actually, which is what you described at the beginning. We are learning that air superiority is a thing of the past. You cannot

have it anymore. The United States is not able to take out all of the weaponry of Iran, and the drones have completely changed the picture. Even Russia is not able to secure its airspace against what Ukraine can still throw at them. So we now live in a world where the air is the place from which, at any point in time, the other one will always be able to strike you back. Do you think that this will actually now alter military strategy, naval strategy, what can and cannot be done anymore?

#Steve Jermy

I mean, it's altering it already, is the short answer. And I think this is to do with a couple of reasons. So the technical issue going on in air superiority, or as we used to call it, is that there is a technical issue which our Western weapons are unable to take down the key conventional and hypersonic missiles that are used by the Russians and indeed the Iranians. So, you know, we cannot defend ourselves against these. The Russians actually have better capability. It's still difficult. The second thing is about the system. So it's not just about the missiles themselves. It's about the radars. It's about being able to detect the missiles in good time.

It's about being able to allocate the weapons to the different missile targets and do this. I was once the captain of an air defense destroyer, so this is an area that I know very well indeed. But what we're also seeing is that the volume of things like drones together with conventional missiles and hypersonic missiles means that almost any air defense system that you have the capability to saturate it. And I don't know if you can remember back to the days when we used to play Space Invaders and all the things coming from the sky. And one or two or three things would come from the sky, and you would shoot them down. Imagine 100 coming down, 200, 300. That's what it's like in the air defense battle now.

I think the fact, though, is that unlike the West, where we have tended not to think about missiles, so long-range missiles, the Russians and the Chinese and the North Koreans and the Iranians have had a history of using these weapons. So they are at least five years ahead of us, and I'd say probably nearly like 10. So what it means is that as we start to, in the West, let's take the F-16 in particular, provide F-16s to actually fly into Russia, we're sitting here naked, completely naked, and unable to defend ourselves against any Russian response. And I think that's a thing that is not understood. I have heard recently an air marshal, a former air marshal, I know, Sean Bell, actually say that Britain cannot defend itself against these weapons.

And it would be a good thing for us to really get this out into the public debate. And indeed, this is what I think needs to be done. I think that the activities of people like us in the independent media are essential. And the thing that I find from my podcast is, time and again, people say, "Russia is not my enemy." The Tucker Carlson interview, I must have seen that comment at least a hundred times or more, and from across the world, Pascal. So I think that although the maniacs, if you like, or those people who are in the cult and want to increase defense spending so that we confront Russia, may have the noise at the moment, within the general population, I think there's very little appetite for war with Russia.

#Pascal

Indeed, I believe the same. But the question then remains, you know, if the ability of the other one to throw weapons at you, or to throw missiles at you, right, is given. And Iran is kind of making that point at the moment, right? Iran has this strategy of saying, "You can bomb us. We cannot stop you. You can kill many of us, but you cannot stop us from second-striking you conventionally. We can always throw back. So you will always suffer if you do that to us," right? And kind of the Russians are doing this. And actually, even the Ukrainians are kind of trying to follow that strategy at the moment.

So wouldn't that naturally lead, at some point, the warmongers—even the warmongers—to realize that, in order not to be hit, I need to convince the other one not to want to hit me, which means I need to show them that I don't want to hit them? I mean, wouldn't we naturally need to, at some point, get into a virtuous process where the security dilemma inverts, and we kind of get an idea like, yeah, fine, we need to get back to diplomacy in order to convince the other one not to throw, so that we don't have to throw this thing.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, if you like, we're back to the theories of the nuclear era before, you know, mutually assured destruction. And it's like this, except on a slightly lesser scale. You know, but the consequences of hypersonic missiles arriving in Rotterdam at a liquefied natural gas facility, or Southampton, or Milford Haven in Wales, would be profound, Pascal. So you're right. We must—although I must think of what I'm suggesting there—you don't get immediate destruction that you would in nuclear attacks, which would be devastating. But what you do get is the destruction of your infrastructure, and in particular your energy infrastructure. And if you get that destruction, then eventually you get the same effect, just much more slowly.

So suddenly, if you're running out of oil and gas—and let's face it, we're already in Europe in a very precarious situation. We very cleverly sanctioned Russian oil and gas, and suddenly are surprised that oil and gas price rises are occurring in Europe. The next thing, of course, is that the United States very cleverly attacked Iran, and surprise, surprise, the Straits of Hormuz were closed. And surprise, surprise again, the oil and gas prices went up. And now we're attacking from the E3 deep into Russia, who stopped their exports of refined products, in particular diesel and kerosene. And surprise, surprise, prices are going up. I say—I've said before—that if people think there's a cost of living crisis, they're wrong.

There's a cost of energy crisis. And one of the key issues is the cost of living crisis. So if you're sitting in a European country and complaining about the cost of energy, look no further than your own government's policy and the measures that they're taking to confront Russia and Iran. These are, largely speaking, a very, very significant reason for actually the rising prices. And ultimately, it

wouldn't surprise me if the economic consequences of these energy price rises—and I'm expecting things to get worse as the Straits of Hormuz goes on—that these start to tip the European economies and the global economies into recession, and indeed even further. And it's that which might bring the war to a close.

But to come back to your question, yes, of course, we should be talking. To me, it's diplomatically incompetent not to be talking to the other side. I think we're in a difficult situation because I think the Russians have just about given up on talking to the E3 and to Europe generally. But that doesn't mean to say that we shouldn't start. And indeed, there are things that we could offer as well if we were to talk. And the problem, I think, is that the Russians don't trust the West after Minsk and watching what's happening in the United States. But we've got to start somewhere. And so that was the real purpose of the article, really, was to show that not only should we start, but could we start? But also, we should start.

#Pascal

Where would that start be? Because I agree. I mean, if I was Russian, I would slap anyone who says we should trust the Europeans. No, I mean, the only thing you can do is actually have a process which works also through verification. But how would you structure a realistic approach toward a return to diplomacy, supposing that that was something that people in Brussels and London would actually properly think about?

#Steve Jermy

Well, I think if Track Two is started, and Track Two essentially means measures which are not official, so they don't have official sanction, but conversations are starting. So as soon as I heard that, I thought, well, that's a start. The person the British sent was a person called Tim Barrow, who—you and I know Ian Proud very well, and Ian holds Tim Barrow in the highest regard. He was the ambassador in, I think, Moscow and Kyiv. I might be wrong on that, but he's certainly one or other of those. He was the ambassador to the EU. So he knows the whole context very well. And when you're sending a very high-class former ambassador like that and a diplomat, as opposed to a real estate agent, is actually helping to start those talks, then that's a start.

Now, they may have had a fairly frosty response from the Russians, but the fact that a Russian non-official, so a former official, went is a good thing. And it's really starting just to open up that track and the sorts of things that I was thinking about in what that track might include. And in a way, what we need, I think, is something like a Westphalia II. And I think it's a Westphalia II where the Europeans are thinking as much about themselves as they are about Ukraine. Because holding on for measures which we know that we cannot enforce in Russia is simply going to lead to the continuation of the confrontation we're currently in. I think the most important thing in those dialogues is that we really need to start listening to Russia and understanding what they've been telling us. It's not that difficult, because it's all out there.

#Pascal

It is very difficult for these people because I realize that time and time again, the ones inside the cult, they cannot even contemplate that Russia might have a legitimate anything—not just security interests, but legitimate interests. Everything is illegitimate. It's basically—that's why they come back to Hitler. Would you have negotiated with Hitler? Had Hitler a legitimate interest? That's constantly—so they don't.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah. Again, I think this is the thing to, at least in the West, the more that we can get this out into the public discourse, the better. Because if people understood the consequences of going to war with Russia, I mean, there's so much talk of it in the press. We need to be ready to fight Russia by 2030. And indeed, the article that I discussed with Tucker Carlson was on the coming war with Russia and starting to paint what that would look like. And I think it would have consequences which were more damaging than the First World War did on Europe. I'm sure that they would be more damaging because of the nature of the weapons that could be deployed.

And I think if people started to understand that, and the general population understood it, then I think we'd be in a better situation. And I look as well at the casualty figures. Over a 20-year period in Afghanistan, I think the British lost 450 people killed in action. Now, each of those persons who was killed in action would come back into Brize Norton, which was a Royal Air Force base, and they were very solemnly taken in hearses back to wherever their place of burial was. Four hundred and fifty—it was a big thing in the country, and people eventually got worn out by it. But 450 is tiny compared to what we'll be looking at.

We will be looking at tens of thousands of killed in action across all the countries involved, tens of thousands of people killed. We would not be able to take the hearses. And even if we could, the motorways from Britain to wherever, from the location where these bodies arrived, would be full. They would be blocked. So I think people, again, haven't understood the consequences. Just think of the casualties that we know Russia has taken. Russia, we think, has taken something on the order of 160,000 killed in action. I would imagine 160,000 killed in action in Britain, in France, in Germany, in Switzerland. Even 10,000 would be a huge number. And I don't think that any of our countries are ready to take these casualties.

In fact, I'm sure they're not ready to take these casualties, because I see it time and again in the commentary. And again, unfortunately, the discourse is that actually we need to be ready to fight Russia, that people don't say we need to be ready to fight Russia and for tens of thousands of our people to be killed, because that's a very, very different thing to say. And I think that's the sort of thing which may start to break people out of the cult. There are signs of it, but it's very early signs. And it's a thing that worries me. But again, that's why I do this, and I'm sure this is why you do this.

We do this in the independent media so people can have access to this. And for people who are listening to this, please spread the message.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, that's the thing. The consequence of this kind of war rhetoric and war thinking is going to war with Russia. That's the logical consequence. If you do not want to have negotiations and some form of agreement with the Russians, and if you want to treat them like Hitler, you need to do to them what the Allies did to Hitler. You need to go into the bunker, get the guy, right? And we are talking here about a clearly nuclear-armed state, which also has Oreshniks and everything. So, but that last logical step is then usually where they stop, and they just imply it. And that's then how it plows on, which is why it's important to think about realistic ways out. So what are, apart from Track Two, the ways forward that could be taken if we had a societal momentum to kind of, you know, sideline our war hawks and give the staff to the doves for one moment?

#Steve Jermy

Well, the first thing, I think, is to re-engage diplomatically. And indeed, I don't think we have looked at this enough. I mean, it's extraordinary that we in the West can actually run peace conferences for the Russia-Ukraine war without inviting Russia. I mean, diplomatic incompetence of the very highest order. But we need to have conferences and we need to have discussions where we're actually beginning this conversation. And the most important thing in those early conversations is to listen, is to listen and really understand the other side of the story, to understand how the Russians see this, and to start to have a dialogue where we can both start to exchange views.

These are not going to be easy conversations. They're going to be very difficult conversations, but they need to happen anyway. This is the sort of thing which, again, happened in Westphalia, and it's the reason that I use the spirit of Westphalia as an example that this can be done. This is after 30 years and 80 years' war. You know, I'm not saying that Westphalia, the structure of how that happened, is necessarily the, you know, how we might sort of do this, but rather I'm saying that actually it can be done. Historically, we've done it, and actually out of Westphalia came many good things.

But if you look at the sorts of things that can be done, I mean, I've said in the article on the spirit of Westphalia, you're getting from a confrontational approach to a cooperative approach where it isn't zero-sum. I think, getting thinking about how Ukraine is provided with security guarantees. And the irony is that all the security guarantees that the West can provide are meaningless. We can't provide through NATO a security guarantee. The United States are unwilling to provide a security guarantee. So the only obvious security guarantee for me is through neutrality. And the Russians are open to that. Indeed, it was one of their opening gambits. The next is confidence-building measures.

And here, the institution which I think has been sadly missed in this is the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, based in Vienna, which includes Russia amongst its members. And I could imagine that in Ukraine, whilst the Russians will never accept NATO members as part of the security and confidence-building measures in Ukraine, I could imagine that they would accept non-NATO OSCE members, of which there are many. Next is starting to talk again, perhaps, about arms control. But I think a very, very interesting one, and for me it's fundamental, is NATO. I mean, NATO is an example of failure after failure after failure. And the question is, why would we then simply want to keep investing in it?

It was never a great structure, although it did its job during the Cold War. But after the Cold War, I mean, if you can point to me a single success of NATO... And yet people want the cornerstone of European security. Surely something which was to do with talking to Russia and not spending huge amounts of taxpayers' money investing in military capabilities, which will never catch up with the Russians because they've had a five-year start on this. And they're very, very well organized and ready for a war. Surely better to actually get into a sort of situation where we're talking about cooperative measures. And the last of the measures that I've been thinking about is economic.

I mean, why not remove the sanctions on Russia? I mean, the fact is that it's a win-win because those sanctions on Russia are damaging European economies. And they're obviously damaging European economies. It's staring us in the face. You know, why not remove sanctions on Russia, which would be a terrific signal of intent from the Europeans? And we could do that unilaterally without the agreement of the Americans. And again, then we could perhaps start to recover our energy situation, which, as an energy professional until very recently, will not be solved by renewables in the short term. So there are some things which could be done. But again, as you are rightly saying, this isn't easy, but it does have to start somewhere.

#Pascal

Yeah, but, you know, that would require that the people who take the decisions actually have an active interest in the well-being of Europe. And the people who do take the decisions actually have a much higher interest in the well-being of the transatlantic world, right? It's not Europe. It's us and the Americans and Mr. Merz, Chancellor of Germany, who knows that once he's done with this one, he will go straight back to BlackRock. Mr. Stubb and so on, who's looking at, you know, the next transatlantic kind of position. Mr. Rutte, the former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, who's now the political leader of NATO.

I mean, the transatlantic integration has worked so well that a lot of the political class and the political elites are much more loyal to that kind of integration than they are to the well-being of the continent itself. I mean, you see it even with Mr. Zelensky, right, who is by far more prone to go to all of these schmoozing events with the West than he is to try to think about off-ramps with the Russians. It's politically unfeasible for him to do that, also because of how the entire political

underground in Ukraine is working. So the question to me, in order to get through this deadlock then, is: who could initiate it?

And I have this strong feeling that the Europeans are, like the Ukrainians, deadlocked within their own solipsistic little world, and that we would need something like in 1969, you know, when it was an invitation of Finland. Finland sent out the invite to start the CSCE process. If we had somebody, like, let's say somebody very, very unsuspecting, let's say Mongolia—they have an Ulaanbaatar Dialogue. If Mongolia sent out an invitation, said like, "Hey, how about you join our dialogue? Please come, a couple of diplomats," and then that invitation went out to everybody, maybe something like that could get it started. But how do you think can we get the ball rolling?

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, it's a very good question. I mean, I think a Track Two conference would not be a bad idea. I was thinking about all our time together in Tbilisi, and, you know, if you were to have a conference, indeed, I sort of looked at how this might be done and discussed it with one of our other colleagues, Nicolai Petro from the University of Rhode Island, and been thinking about what it might look like. But a conference would not be a bad start. I'm not saying it's the only thing, but a conference with, again, a conference with some publicity. Because as soon as you get some publicity and people are working, people are seeing Russians and Europeans and others talking together. That's not a bad thing.

I think that... Again, the people who really need to be engaged in this are the people of Europe, because the people of Europe are the ones who will suffer the consequences if we keep going down the road that our leaders are taking us down. And of course, as soon as the people of Europe are engaged in this, then this has to be a good thing, because the leaders in the cult will need to think very carefully, for political reasons, about doing things which the people don't want to do. I mean, we will see this soon, I suspect, in economics, as the consequences of the Straits of Hormuz and the energy price shocks hit. And when we start to see European countries slip into recession, then I think people will ask questions about doubling your spend on the military.

If we're actually in the situation where people are starting to gain visibility that the war isn't going well, that the Russians are winning in the Donbass and on the four eastern oblasts, and that they have the potential to go much further and look to me like they intend to go much further, and we can't do much about it, surely at that stage people will start to say, "Do I want to spend money on guns or butter?" And to me, it's butter eventually will be the thing to spend on. I mean, the fact is that money spent on weapons and on destructive things has no benefit ultimately for the economy. I just don't believe in Keynesian militarism anymore. It's a sham. What you really need to invest in is infrastructure.

I mean, energy infrastructure, obviously, and those other things which make economies successful. And the idea that you can do this by spending more money on weapons is just fantasy. I think, you

know, I'm not saying that we shouldn't have security forces. Of course we should, but actually a figure of 2% to 2.5% ought to be enough. And if we're not spending that money well, then that's not a factor of how much money we're trying to spend. It's a factor of not spending the money well. Unfortunately, I do think that the military-industrial complex are invested in this, and I do think they see it in their interest for this to continue.

I heard recently the chair or the chief executive of BAE Systems, a very big company, defence entity here, talking, saying that we were now in a position between war and peace. And in a way, he's right, but we're largely in a position of war and peace because we've navigated ourselves into it in Europe, rather than sort of look more carefully, more cleverly, about why the situation has arisen. So it's a long answer to a short question. I'm sorry that I don't have the exact answer. But I do think this is the area that we really need to keep talking about and start to think about how we can get these conversations going. I mean, we've seen this a little bit.

We've seen people like Larry Johnson and Judge Napolitano go across to Russia and talk to the Russians. So it is possible. But I think you're right that... that's something that was independent. I mean, if you ask me which country would be best fitted to do it, ironically, I think it would probably be China. It might not necessarily be attractive in some of the West, but China had quite good relationships with Ukraine and quite good relationships with Russia. So China would be an alternative. And there may be others as well, perhaps someone from the rest of the world. I'm not going to say Brazil, but somebody from a BRICS country, somewhere like that. But a country that was sensible.

#Pascal

Yeah, it's countries that are sensible, people that are sensible. And at some point, I wonder, seriously, at this point, I do think that a lot of the concrete issues—I mean, there's many issues, including, like, the impact of faith and, you know, alternative kind of belief structures and whatnot—that influence this. But one of the key issues at the moment is that we have a political elite in Europe that is dead set, for various reasons, to continue the course that they are on because they believe they're right, they believe they're good, they're virtuous and whatnot. And unfortunately, they are firmly in the saddle.

So in a sense, what we would need is a platform in order to allow for citizen-to-citizen kind of dialogue with the other side. We have it to a certain extent. I mean, social media is playing that role to a certain extent, but it's not structured enough in order to get a mass peace movement on all sides going. We would need mass peace movements in Ukraine, mass peace movements in Russia, and mass peace movements in the West, in the US, and so on, that push toward the inevitable kind of rapprochement. We don't properly have it yet. So I just wonder if somebody could technologically help us, dear China, to figure out a way to do this.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, I mean, I think it's possible. And one of the things I've been thinking about as well is that we have the facility in Britain—I don't know what it's like in Switzerland—to actually approach the whole country and ask if the country wants to have the politicians discuss something. So, you know, that's an internal thing within the British parliamentary system. So we could actually ask for a—what's the right word now?—but essentially a sort of petition to be run on this. And this is an official petition. But I think you're right. Having the people-to-people discussions matter. I think you were involved in these in Russia quite recently, and I was very struck by some of the things that came across from your discussions in Russia.

But I think a sort of semi-official thing as well—the Track Two—would be a good thing, because what you really want in this is not just the people, but people, the professionals who have been involved in this, the professionals—the military officers, the diplomats, the security people, and people with a professional background in peace and conflict resolution. There are loads of them out there, and we know they're all across the people who you and I and others listen to and talk to in the independent media. So I think some sort of Track Two approach would be a good thing to do as well. You know, who knows where it could be. But I mean, an obvious place to me would be Vienna, neutral Vienna, where the OSCE is located, based and under OSCE auspices.

I mean, I'm afraid the OSCE has been rather downplayed throughout this because of, again, because of this fascination with confrontation and deterrence and being ready to fight Russia. But actually, the clue to me about the OSCE and about the utility of the OSCE is in the title: the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. And so something under a Track Two initiative, perhaps run under OSCE auspices, would be a good thing, I think. So I don't know about you, I'm putting out feelers to people I know who, you know, places like the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and others, to see whether we might be able to do something together. But another location, if it wasn't to be Vienna, I would say, would be Georgia, Pascal, a very open-minded location and a country in whose interest it is, I should have thought, for this war to be brought to a close.

Again, the Tbilisi war—the Tbilisi event that we both attended—I think gave me an extremely good sense of people close to Russia who understood both sides of the equation and seemed to me to have no interest in war in Europe. So that might be another location, who knows. But as you say, getting an independent entity into this—an independent government entity—and the ones that I'm most resistant to are NATO and the European Union, both of whom at the moment are institutions which seem to be running on the war as a reason for their being, certainly for NATO, but to a lesser extent for the EU as well. So I think that the current leadership in both institutions is acting against Europe's interests rather than because of Europe's interests on this particular issue.

#Pascal

I agree to that. And I know that you have another thing coming up in about three minutes from now, so we do have to wind it down. Steve, if people want to find you, they should go to your Substack. Where else should they go?

#Steve Jermy

It's just Substack for the moment, Pascal, but I plan next month to launch a YouTube channel, which will be called The Strategic Arena. And it'll be a slightly deeper dive than the excellent news which so many other people, such as you, provide, and slightly longer term.

#Pascal

We are working currently at expanding the network, everybody and everywhere. And maybe that's a step forward as well. I will put the link to your Substack into the description box below. And we will talk soon again. Steve, Jeremy, thank you so much. Great time today.

#Steve Jermy

Terrific. Thanks very much, Pascal.

#Steve Jermy

Keep up the good work.