

Joe Kent: Escalation Against Iran & Russia

Joe Kent is the former Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, who resigned in March 2026 due to the war against Iran. Kent discusses the risk of nuclear strikes against Iran, the assassination of Charlie Kirk, a direct NATO-Russia War, political propaganda, and being in the early stages of World War III. Please like, subscribe & share! Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack:

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#Glenn

Welcome back, everyone. We are joined today by Joe Kent, the former director of the National Counterterrorism Center, appointed by President Trump, but then resigned in March of 2026 in opposition to the war against Iran. So thank you for coming back on the program. I wanted to ask you, where do you see this war headed? Because there seems to be a lot of risk at the moment for escalation. On one hand, we see that in Washington, there's an unwillingness to accept the terms of peace, which, in all fairness, are difficult to accept. But at the same time, there's no convincing path to peace, it seems. And meanwhile, Trump has taken a very maximalist position. He seems to insist on the total surrender of Iran or collapsing the regime. But conventional military force can't really achieve that. So that kind of begs the question: what happens next? Would there be a ground invasion? Or how worried should we be about the talk we're currently hearing about the possible escalation towards nuclear strikes?

#Joe Kent

I think we should be very concerned. As for where the war is right now, it's hard to predict which way it's going to go. And I think therein lies the danger. We're in this unintended consequences realm where our side, the U.S. side led by President Trump, we seem to not know exactly what we want. We oscillate back and forth between, "We want total surrender, total capitulation. The Iranians have to, you know, give us back the Straits of Hormuz and give up their nuclear program and stop funding their proxies, ballistic missiles, et cetera," to the next day saying, like, "Okay, well, maybe we're open to talks and we want to just get the Straits of Hormuz opened up again."

We saw some of this in June when there was the MOU that was signed. The MOU basically would have allowed the Straits of Hormuz to open back up. It was a fairly decent deal for the Iranians. But then we showed right away that we weren't serious about it because we cut a side deal in Lebanon almost immediately. And we started having tankers go through the Straits of Hormuz out of

tolerance from the MOU. So we immediately kind of reneged on the diplomacy that President Trump himself even said we had to go down, this diplomatic path, because we are facing potential economic disaster here in America.

But then, just like we saw over the last 24, 48 hours, at any given time, we will take strikes again in Iran, and they'll strike us back. Now, I think some of the conventional wisdom, sort of the normalcy bias in America, is that, okay, every now and again, if we need to do some strikes to keep the Straits of Hormuz open and flowing to the level that they're at right now, we'll take some strikes. And we just anticipate that the Iranians will, worst-case scenario, do what they did last night and shoot some missiles back at our known locations. And we're fairly proficient at intercepting them. There's two problems with that.

We're assuming that the Iranians will always do exactly what they've done before. And we basically killed a lot of the moderates inside Iran. The IRGC is running the show right now. The IRGC, I think a lot of them are saying, hey, for our deterrence, to make sure America doesn't come back here once they've filled their coffers back up again, filled their stocks back up again with high-end missiles, we have to make them retreat from the region. Otherwise, they're going to keep coming back. Or we can continue to squeeze the Strait, support moves to harm them economically. But I think they know if they follow that path, that's going to put the president in an even bigger bind come midterms.

And if we lose in the midterms in that interim period, then we could escalate. And the Iranians know all this, which is why I think it's very foolish for us to assume that they will continue to incrementally retaliate, even though the Iranians have been very good so far about only incrementally retaliating. I think it would be foolish for us to believe that they're going to stay at that level. And so the president's kind of facing two major decisions. If he wants to lean on the military, he's limited on the status quo because we are running low. By all reports that I've seen, we're running low on our interceptors.

We're running low on a lot of the precision munitions that we're using. So being able to do what we're doing right now has a shelf life. So at some point, we would probably need to either take ground temporarily to use some of our less sophisticated missile systems and weapon systems to keep hitting Iran, or, you know, there's the ground option where we do take some ground inside of Iran. I don't know to what end we would do that. There doesn't seem to be a well-defined end state for that. And I don't know what the president's tolerance for casualties before the midterms would be. So I don't think that's as likely.

But the president wanting to do something like Operation Midnight Hammer on steroids, where we use a sophisticated weapon system, sophisticated nuclear capability to penetrate Pickaxe Mountain, to say, okay, now it's done. Now we've taken away any threat of the Iranian nuclear program, to give him kind of an exit with a final strong statement. I could see that being a potential. I do also worry, though, that the Israelis have already publicly said that they won't be constrained by anything

that the Americans say or do, that they'll do what's best for them. I could easily see, while we're trying to figure out a military solution, the Israelis come to us and say, "Hey, we're going to do something that you don't have the stomach to do."

Go ahead and look the other way. And we have proven incapable of being able to restrain the Israelis up to this point. So then, the Israelis using some kind of a nuclear weapon too. I don't think that that's as likely, but I do think it's more plausible than a lot of folks in America are assessing, just because this is existential for the Israelis. The Likud party right now, in the lead-up to the election, they're basically saying, "Hey, the other guys aren't strong enough. We're the strongest ones. We will do what is necessary." We've already seen how the Israelis fought in Gaza. They couldn't get away with dropping a nuclear weapon in Gaza because it would affect them, because they share a border.

Now, if Gaza was an isolated country away from the borders of Israel, I'm pretty sure they would have used a nuclear weapon. So I don't think we should rule out Israel coming in kind of as a wildcard option here. The Iranians, too, I think there's a school of thought within the IRGC that says, "Let's just escalate this thing. Let's target the American blockade. Let's try and get a mass casualty event. Let's force the Americans' hand so they're having to fight on our terms and not their terms." So I just think we're in an incredibly dangerous situation right now.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, I also got an impression that the Iranians would likely go on the offensive because by being too passive, well, it seems like they're ceding a lot of the escalation control to the United States. I mean, if I was Iranian, I would be concerned that if the opponent gets to decide every time when to start the fighting, when to stop the fighting, one becomes also too predictable. Then there would be no reason for the opponent not to strike. If it doesn't work, they can put an end to it tomorrow. And also when Marco Rubio made this comment that, well, we're planning to shift from military strikes to economic pressure.

Well, again, why allow the opponent to decide how this war should be fought? And again, they're kind of open about it, that is, the U.S. is running a bit low on its missiles. So let's shift to economic pressure instead. It just seems from the comments coming from Iran that it doesn't make much sense to allow the opponent to have this escalation control, especially when the Iranians are in a strengthened position. But what would such a nuclear attack by either the U.S. or Israel achieve? Would it be a knockout blow, or would it be intended to be such an overwhelming display of force that the Iranians would essentially capitulate?

#Joe Kent

I think if the U.S. did decide to use a smaller nuclear weapon—and I say Parchin Mountain because I think that's the most obvious target—the theory in the U.S. would be, we can say that we

penetrated Parchin Mountain. We accomplished our goal of assuring that Iran will never get a nuclear weapon. The president always says that. He puts that basically in all of his rhetoric about Iran. So if he can, if he can remove, you know, even from the—in terms of communications—if he can remove any potential for Iran to get a nuclear weapon by caving in Parchin Mountain with a very, very big boom caused by a limited nuclear strike, I think that would be basically his end game. Now, you know, what would that do to the Iranians? I think that's unfortunately almost an afterthought.

I think the president would use that again, like Operation Midnight Hammer on steroids. I would just caution him to say, like, Midnight Hammer was successful militarily in accomplishing what he wanted to accomplish. But big picture, it didn't end the issue of us having to go in and conduct military operations in Iran because it didn't actually take away the Israelis' desire to push us into a war. So I think we would still get pushed back into the war by the same factors, even if he did do this. But that would further radicalize the Iranians even more. And then I think that would normalize the use of a first-strike nuclear capability. And I think in very short order, then we would see Putin use one inside Ukraine, because basically we would be sending a message to the world that, hey, we're the dominant superpower.

And when this country, Iran, you know, they annoyed us and we conducted some military operations and they didn't immediately capitulate, we escalated and we used a limited-strike nuclear weapon. I think that would basically greenlight—there's a green light for it to happen inside of Ukraine as well. But that's the thing, is I don't think that we're doing a lot of critical thinking on what it would mean if we did use a limited-strike nuclear weapon. And if we let the Israelis do it, I'm concerned that the Israelis wouldn't hit Parchin Mountain. I'm concerned that they would hit an actual population center. And then we could say all day long, that wasn't us. That was the Israelis. We condemned the Israeli action. We could kind of scold them like we do sometimes about Gaza or about Lebanon.

But the rest of the world and the Iranians, they would basically say, "Well, that was America. You guys fund Israel. You've never meaningfully taken away any support from Israel." So we would basically be left with all of the political ramifications and fallout from that. And then I think the same sequence of events would happen. I think Putin would then say, like, "Okay, okay, it was just Israel. I don't believe that. I'm going to go ahead and pursue my interests now that the cork is off the bottle," so to speak. So I just fear that we are thinking very tactically. The president clearly wants out of this war, and he's got limited military options right now. And so that's why I do think—I don't know for a fact. I have no insider information.

I don't know anything classified. That's why I wasn't surprised when I heard the reports that they were considering some form of a nuclear strike in the Pentagon. People were like, "Oh my gosh, that sounds like it's crazy. They would never discuss that." When you just look at how big the problem set is in Iran, we can't do a ground invasion even if we had the political will. The country is just simply too big. So if you want a total surrender, if you want some kind of, like, really big, clear-cut military victory, you kind of arrive at the use of a nuclear weapon really, really quickly. So I think it is

very feasible. So if the president is just constantly going to Secretary Hegseth and the Pentagon saying, "Well, give me military options."

How do we get out of this? Why aren't the straits open? You know, why can't I get what I want with the military force I'm applying right now? I can easily see where the Pentagon comes back and says, "Well, boss, like, if you want us to escalate and you don't want to put boots on the ground, you've got, like, a handful of options, and they all involve some form of a nuclear weapon." And then in that confusion and probably some of that friction, that is where the Israelis, who have been very good at assessing the right moment to come to President Trump, where I fear they would come to Trump and say, "Hey, you can't do it, but we can. Just look the other way."

#Glenn

So one of the contradictions now with Trump, that is, he doesn't seem to have a clear path to victory yet. He keeps declaring victory all over and over again. But it is interesting how victory is defined, because he often, when he refers to Iran being defeated, he refers to the destruction that has been made there against its military, its navy, air force, its infrastructure, killing its leaders. But he doesn't really communicate well how this translates into actual political objectives in terms of how a war should be considered to have been won. So what are possible avenues to claim a victory here? Because it doesn't look like the Strait of Hormuz will go back to the old status quo under any circumstances.

#Joe Kent

Yeah. I mean, yesterday he posted just how, you know, how we've just destroyed Iran and the country is basically dead. And so I think the obvious conclusion is like, okay, well, then what are we still doing there? You know, like, if that's the messaging that you're going to use, and President Trump is very effective at, you know, making political ideas that he has into realities here in America through just his communication style and the loyalty that his base has to him. So I don't, for the life of me, understand why he's not just saying over and over again that we don't even need to be in the Straits anymore. We don't even need to be in the Middle East anymore because we won, because I think that would actually resonate here in America. Now, there's a lot we'd have to do quietly and diplomatically behind the scenes, but that's all, I think, very, very doable.

But for whatever reason, he's leaving us there, which leaves us in this valley of unintended consequences, or straits of unintended consequences, like we have right now, where almost anything could happen that could escalate that he can't control. So I think because we really, we failed from the very onset of this operation to define what our goals are. We started out with like, well, we're not going to do regime change. And then we went and we took out the Supreme Leader, and we said we demand a total surrender from Iran. So we were speaking in the language of regime change. And then once that didn't happen and the war dragged on, we moved back away from like, no, it's not regime change. We just want the Straits of Hormuz open back up again. Well, if that's

the case, then you can tell the status quo that we have right now, it's not going to really go anywhere.

It's going to stay at the level that it's at. Best-case scenario, we're exporting somewhere between 50% and 55% of the oil out of the Straits that had previously flowed through before the war began. So what we're doing right now is not working. So I, for the life of me, don't understand why he's not just leaving. And I think his reticence to leaving is due to the pressure that he knows that he would face back here domestically from the very powerful Israeli lobby. And I think that's clear because you can look at the MOU. The MOU could have gotten us out of this.

It would have involved us having to really control the messaging back here in America because it wasn't the best deal at all, really, for the U.S. However, I think the president could have endured that, and I think he could have used his ability to control the narrative. However, we just couldn't stand the pressure because right away, within a week, we had Marco Rubio over, cutting a deal that allowed the Israelis to stay in Lebanon, which was, I think, like the second point in the MOU. So unfortunately, he does seem to know that if he were to pull all of our forces out and basically do everything he could to end the military conflict, that he would face backlash from the same people that got him into this war.

That's the only logical conclusion that I can come to, because other than that, it seems like the president really, really does want to just say, like, "I want him over. I don't even want to talk about it anymore." You can tell. I mean, the president did this with the Epstein files. Like, "Why are you still talking about Epstein?" Like, when he doesn't want to talk about something, he becomes very annoyed with it, and we're seeing that with Iran. But for him not to just pick up and just go to Hegseth and be like, "Get all of our guys out of there. I don't want to hear about this crap anymore," and let's handle everything quietly, because I think if we were to handle things quietly and diplomatically, yeah, the Iranians are still going to exert some degree of control over the Strait of Hormuz. However, if we went to them and said, "Let's work out an arrangement where you guys get some assets unfrozen, you get some sanctions relief, and you start bringing down the tolls that you're going to charge in the Strait of Hormuz, and we just need to get the energy flowing again," I think we can work something out here pretty quickly.

#Joe Kent

President Trump is pragmatically right now dealing with the former al-Qaeda leader who's in charge of Syria. You know, like, we've proven that we can cut deals with bad people. There's no reason why he can't cut a similar deal with Iran. So his inability to do that leads me to believe that it's really just due to the pressure that the Israeli lobby is exerting on him.

#Glenn

Yeah, I was going to ask about that, because the U.S., as you said, it seemed to have strayed a bit away from a lot of its core interests, as you said, now being aligned with all the jihadists in Syria. The Gulf region, which is quite important for the political economy of the U.S., is on fire. We see Iran now pushed closer into cooperation with Russia and China. Again, it would probably be a benefit for the U.S. to have some more sunlight between them. And what are the U.S. interests here, though? And how do you interpret the decision of Washington? Is this an effort to, I guess, restore regional primacy? Or is it Israel that's driving this? Or how can you explain some of these decisions being made? Because if we take a few steps back, none of this really makes a lot of sense considering the direction the U.S. was speaking about taking not that long ago.

#Joe Kent

I'm confused by it as well. I mean, President Trump rose to power in his first campaign by just basically saying that most of the things we had done in the Middle East were a mistake. In his second administration, he tried unsuccessfully, but he still at least tried to get us out of the Middle East because he was just like, hey, this is bad for America. This is bad for any politician that jumps into the Middle East. They end up getting stuck in the exact situation that we're in right now. So I don't know why he is fighting so hard against the things that he articulated so perfectly, both as a candidate and then in his first administration. So right now, we seem to be—number one, obviously, the Israeli lobby does exert a lot of control over us.

We just talked about that, how they were basically able to get us to sabotage the MOU, the country that got us out of the conflict. I've talked quite a bit about how they got us into this war as well. But I think another problem that President Trump has is that he doesn't want to be seen as retreating any ground. And so now we're stuck in this, I think it's like almost just this imperial hubris that we have, where we still want to maintain our dominance throughout the world, even if our dominance doesn't serve the American people. Like, for us to have to leave the Middle East, it's like, you know, a stain on our honor, and it would be a stain on President Trump's honor, when it's like, really, if you just look at it pragmatically, it's time for us to leave the Middle East.

We should really only be pursuing our interests in that region. And if other players are going to come in and they're going to cut deals with each other, fine, so be it. I mean, our interests are very, very narrow within the Middle East. I mean, we really need to make sure that the flow of energy, oil, and everything can freely come out of the Middle East, Straits of Hormuz, Bab al-Mandab. And then we need to make sure that terrorist organizations that are actually seeking to harm us here in America, that we have partners in the region that can give us a heads up when that's going to happen and then potentially allow us or have those targets prosecuted themselves. Beyond that, who is the dominant force in the Middle East? I don't really think it matters.

I'd be more worried right now about maintaining the status of the petrodollar and making sure the energy can flow. But he's not doing that. He really doesn't want to admit that our bases in the

region have been severely diminished, when really what he should be saying is like, hey, these bases were built by George Bush the father, and then they were maintained by Bush the son for these stupid wars that I ran against in the first place. Like, yeah, President Trump, I'm going to be the guy who closes down these Middle Eastern bases because they cost us way more than they were worth in the long run. But he's not doing that. And we're seeing this, I think, throughout the entire world. We're still trying to maintain our dominance as the world's sole superpower.

And again, our status as the world's sole superpower, it doesn't really benefit the American people. I'd be worried about the economics of it. I think we really do have to worry in the long run about our status as the world's reserve currency holder because our economy right now runs on the fact that we can print money. I don't think that's a good thing. I think we need to fix that here internally. But right now, we really are banking on the world continuing to use the dollar, when every action that we have been taking basically since Russia invaded Ukraine—we threw Russia off the SWIFT system—and then now this war that's eroded the status of the petrodollar, it's worked out in the advantage of China.

But then all of the other non-aligned nations, the emergence of BRICS, et cetera. So our inability to see long-term and to think strategically, it's really being blinded by, like, our just desire to cling on to this empire. So I think assuming that we can break that, I don't know what it is, like just this inability for us to say that history has kind of moved on from this brief moment where America was the sole superpower. Like, until we can break free from that, we're going to continue to expend massive amounts of blood and treasure in these essentially gambler's fallacies where we put in more and more and more and lose more and more and more. So it's very frustrating to see. And for President Trump, a businessman and someone who has articulated all of these things for years, for him not to see that, it's very confusing and very frustrating.

#Glenn

Yeah, the interesting part is that the person who came up with this concept or terminology, the unipolar moment, was Krauthammer back in 1990. And he was making the point that, well, this is the distribution of power now. In the future, you're going to have a rise of rivals, and then we'll transition into a multipolar system. But I don't think he calculated how difficult it is going to be for our political class, who has grown up into that system, to willingly give it up. So I think there's a lot of pain they're taking.

It just seems a very critical time for the United States, if it has to, I guess, strengthen the republic, if it further weakens it by holding up, well, essentially an empire which is already falling apart. You would think, well, that's essentially what Trump ran on, if I'm interpreting it correctly. That is, to save the republic by scaling back the empire. But is this, again, is this mainly Israel, or again, is it the Epstein files? I can't really make sense of this huge shift because this was not the rhetoric he initially, you know, he ran on, as you said.

#Joe Kent

I mean, that right there is the question of our era. And I don't know if we'll get—I hope we get an answer at some point—but I feel like people will be studying this question for quite some time. Because again, like you said, Trump articulated all of these things, like whether it was the Middle East or whether it was us propping up the empire. I mean, he just explained it in very common-sense, working-man terminology, where he was basically like, "We're paying for all this security throughout the entire world, and yet we can't even secure our own border. Like, we're paying for infrastructure in other countries, yet our infrastructure here is crumbling."

And that shot him into the White House. I mean, twice, on two separate occasions. I would argue even on three separate occasions. So for him to just change on a dime, like, I don't know what it is. The Epstein file thing, I have a hard time believing, because I think if there was actual dirt on President Trump in the Epstein files, I just think it would have come out during 2016. I think the Hillary Clinton machine would have just fired that out there, and we wouldn't have heard from Trump again. So maybe, I think there are things in there that he probably, because of other powerful individuals, he doesn't want out there because he wants to maintain that powerful network.

That's the only Epstein thought that I really have. But I do think there has been a system of coercion put around President Trump. I mean, he really wanted to win the 2024 election to prove that he was the rightful president. And in order to do that, he took a lot of money from Miriam Adelson, from the pro-Israel lobby, that gave them a high degree of access to him, and they got to pick a lot of the key advisors that are around him. They got access that basically allowed those advisors, official and unofficial, to override the intelligence community to the point where the president wasn't even listening to his own intelligence community.

And now they've got us into this war. And so I think a lot of it, too, is the Israelis played on President Trump's psychology very, very well. He doesn't want to be seen as being defeated. And because those same advisers, official and unofficial, have access to the president, every time he goes to try and get us out of this, they come back to him and they say, like, no, this is going to be a blemish on your record. This is going to be embarrassing for America. And they get him just to stay in a little bit longer. And then more escalation happens. And, you know, we just remain stuck in this quagmire.

And so now I think he's almost a prisoner of his own pride, where he doesn't want to say that he got bad advice. He doesn't want to say that he made mistakes. So he's kind of locked into that. But also, I do think there is something else. And I talk about this quite a bit. I mean, I think the assassination attempts, the multiple breaches of his security, Charlie Kirk, who was against the Iran war, being publicly assassinated—I think all of those things, like, I can't point at one strand that connects all of them to say, like, here's the conspiracy. But I do think all of these things factor into President Trump.

Trump has this ability, and he's shown this, especially during 2016 when he rose to power kind of out of nowhere as an underdog. He's very good at taking large sets of data and picking through that data and seeing, you know, what are the critical points? Where's his leverage? Where are his vulnerabilities? So I don't think anyone needed to come to President Trump and explain to him, "Hey, you can be reached. Your family can be reached. You have breaches in your security. And look, we just, you know, whacked one of your allies." Nobody needed to actually spell it out for him. But I do think he has been able to say, like, "Okay, I understand."

I get the message. And whether that message was intended to be delivered or not, I think it actually has resonated with him. This is the same analysis I would have if I was assessing a foreign leader. If I was looking at a foreign leader back in the intelligence community and trying to figure out why he had changed so much or why he was making the decisions he was making, we would most certainly factor in multiple assassination attempts, breaches of his security, the assassination of a high-profile political ally. We would definitely factor all that in to try and determine why that leader is thinking the way he's thinking.

So again, I don't have a clear-cut answer, and I fear that we're going to be debating this for quite some time. But I think we should keep calling it out because the actions that we're taking right now, especially in terms of American foreign policy, are against everything that President Trump has ever campaigned on. And it's really against how he comported himself in his first administration. He had a lot of pressure in the first administration to go to war with Iran, and he resisted it. And so what exists now that didn't exist then is just a critical question.

#Glenn

Well, on the Charlie Kirk issue, though, because this whole discussion seems to be tied in very closely with the war against Iran, and from what I understand, you had contacts with him. And I was wondering, what did Charlie Kirk tell you, though, about Iran, Israel, and the possibility of the United States going to war?

#Joe Kent

Yes. I mean, Charlie and I weren't, like, great friends or anything. There's lots of other folks in the White House who are much closer to Charlie than me. I knew him from when I was running for Congress. He came out to Washington State. He was very supportive and gracious of me when I was running, and he told me a big reason why was because of my experience in the military and the intelligence community, and then the way that I viewed our foreign policy. He said that he had had a similar evolution where he thought in traditional conservative senses, but then he had, in the last five, six years, really come to be skeptical of the way that the U.S. had used power, in particular the war on terror, continued interventions.

And so he was very much aligned with the Trump 2016 policy. And so he and I, you know, spoke over the years a little bit here and there about that. But then during the transition after Trump won in '24, I ran into him again down at the West Palm Beach transition office when I was helping Tulsi Gabbard put together her team for who would go into ODNI. Charlie and I spoke, and he was like, "Look, we need people that are going to aggressively go after the intelligence community to give the American people disclosure, to give transparency, to stop weaponizing the intelligence community against the American people." We were very aligned with that.

Obviously, Tulsi was very aligned with that as well. But then he was also worried that we were going to have a lot of pressure from the neocons, from the Israeli lobby, to push us into a war with Iran. He wanted some strong checks on that. And so I didn't speak with him a lot after that. But then I saw him in June, right before the 12-day war had kicked off. And this is a time when we were heavily debating, you know, would we be able to restrain the Israelis? Could we restrain the Israelis? How do we make sure that President Trump's negotiations, that at the time I thought he was prioritizing, how those didn't get derailed? And so I literally saw him.

If you're familiar with the White House campus, there's the Eisenhower Executive Building, which is where most people who work in the White House work. And ODNI and I, we had an office over there. And then the West Wing. So I just walked over from the Eisenhower Executive Building to the West Wing for a meeting. And in the hallway in the West Wing—actually, the White House is, like, actually very, very small. So, like, the stairways and all that are not like a typical office building, kind of like the stairs in your house. And so I ran into Charlie in the stairway and just, you know, I said hi to him. And he was, you know, I think heading to the Oval Office, and he said, "Hey, Joe, stop us from getting into a war with Iran."

And the West Wing is very small, and he said it very loud too. So, I mean, it was pretty clear what he was there to do. And that was the last time I saw Charlie. And I think, from everything that we now know publicly from other people sharing conversations they had, that Charlie was there, you know, really, really petitioning the president not to get us into this conflict with Iran. And there's plenty of video of him speaking about this. I mean, he laid out this exact scenario that's kind of taken place and why he was against the war. So, I mean, Charlie was a strong political ally of the president, but he also had the ability because he had done so much community organizing.

He had done so much to actually get out the vote, not just have a platform and have a podcast, which he already had, but he was also a grassroots organizer. He was mobilizing young people to get out there and to actually vote. And so he was a driver in a lot of the success President Trump had in 2024. So he did have the ability to basically walk in and get face time with President Trump, which not a lot of people had. So, I mean, Charlie was very much against this. And, you know, I think we have to continue to ask why he was killed, when he was killed, and how it ties into the bigger picture of where our country was at the time.

#Glenn

Well, towards that end, answering this question: so what are the circumstances, though, around Charlie Kirk's assassination that you feel deserve more investigation, or some investigation at least?

#Joe Kent

Well, I mean, we've been told that there's this one individual who killed Charlie, and whether or not he's the guy who actually pulled the trigger and killed Charlie, that's going to play out in court. He's going to get his day in court. All of that is being heavily analyzed. There's not much more I can add to that individually. However, the lone gunman narrative—that just this one kid did this operation—I have a hard time believing. And I say that because there were people posting online ahead of his assassination that said he was going to be killed that day. There was an individual on the ground who immediately after Charlie was killed took credit and said, like, "I'm the guy who shot Charlie Kirk. Arrest me."

His name is George Zinn. Later on, when he's interrogated, people ask him, like, why did you do that? And he said he did it as a diversion so that the actual killer could escape. So unless he made this decision in a split second, it does seem that there were some other factors here at play. I was also looking from the national counterterrorism perspective. We're part of the intelligence community, not law enforcement. So I'm not allowed to look into American citizens unless I believe they have ties to some form of foreign government. So I was looking at all the foreign ties that potentially could exist around Charlie's assassination. And we had a lot of leads that we still had to run down when we were shut down.

We were told, hey, case is basically closed. We got the guy. We're going to hand over everything to Utah. This is now a Utah state matter. No more work for us to do. I pushed back and I protested, and I said, look, no, we have a lot of work that we still need to do. We have a lot of leads that we still need to run down to make sure that there's nothing else there. And I never got to run those leads down. And I don't believe that those leads were actually run down. Now, I'm not saying that those leads all pointed at—there was smoking-gun evidence to this country or that country. I just know that there was more work that needed to be done. And that was the conflict that I had with the FBI.

#Glenn

But do you see a possibility of, you know, again, not speculating too much, but some of this evidence pointing towards Israel? Because, well, you essentially say he has the ear of the president almost when he wants. He's very much against the Iran war. Israel has been pushing for this for decades. I mean, again, not leaning too much into the speculation, but is that a possibility, though?

#Joe Kent

Well, I think it's a possibility. I mean, the things that Charlie was saying publicly about our relationship with Israel, those have to be taken into account. But then, same thing too. I mean, Charlie was also very critical of Islam in America. So would I look at terrorist groups? Absolutely. Charlie was also very much against Antifa and the transgender ideology. And a lot of those individuals end up being school shooters. So I would look at all of these. That's the thing, is we still had a lot of work to do. And so, again, I can't point at one country, one entity, and say it was that one. That's the one that we needed to look at. But look, Charlie was an international figure. I mean, and he was a guy that did not shy away from any controversy. And there's hours of Charlie talking about every single controversial topic, you know, on the internet that people can access to this day.

So to think that we could wrap up this investigation and just say, "Oh, no, no, it was just one guy," despite the fact there's people publicly posting online that he was going to be killed that day, that we can wrap up this investigation really quickly within a month, month and a half, and hand it over to the Utah state authorities—that was where I had a major issue. But again, if you look at when Charlie Kirk was assassinated on the timeline, there's a lot of work that still needs to be done, a lot of questions that still need to be answered. So again, I can't point at one country and say I had more evidence—it wouldn't be proper for me to do this—I had more evidence for this country or that country, this individual, that individual. All I can say with certainty is that we had more work to do to ensure that we did our due diligence.

#Glenn

Well, I guess that's the main scandal, prematurely shutting down the investigation. But I want to pivot a bit, because earlier you mentioned twice that there could also be a nuclear war in Europe, that the Russians might use this. And again, this has been one of my concerns as well. Well, there could be many pathways to a nuclear war now in Europe, but my main concern would be that as NATO becomes increasingly more directly involved in attacks on Russia, the Russians would at some point feel that they would be compelled to uphold its deterrence by striking back, likely one of the Baltic states. And then NATO would, well, I would think, very likely go after Kaliningrad.

And the Russians can't really defend this enclave with conventional weapons. So there might be too big of a temptation to reach towards the conventional—sorry, towards a tactical nuclear weapon. And again, not likely, but once the fighting has started, it's going to be very hard to control that escalation ladder before someone rushes up it. And I was just wondering, how do you see this, the likelihood of such a war? But also, what are the West's miscalculations, do you think, about what Russia would tolerate? Because every time I see the media's assumption that, well, they had red lines, we stepped all over them, they did nothing. So, you know, let's just continue to escalate. This is kind of the logic, but how long does this, you know, work?

#Joe Kent

The problem that we have in America is, it's just normalcy bias. Everyone that's alive right now in America, as long as we've been alive, America has been the sole superpower. And we've basically been able to go over, create a bunch of messes, make a bunch of mistakes overseas, and it really hasn't affected us here in America, save a couple of events. And so I think we believe that we can continue to push the Russians and not fully appreciate that this fight is existential for the Russians.

And it's like almost taboo in America to put yourself in your adversary's shoes. You get criticized. Are you sympathizing with the Iranians if you're saying what you would do? Like, oh, do you love Putin if you're saying, like, you know, if I was a Russian, I would do this or I would feel this way? So we've really locked ourselves intellectually into a box where we're incapable of thinking beyond America being the sole superpower and perceiving how things are for our adversaries or for our enemies. I think what we should realize now is that this war is existential for Russians. Russia is a far bigger country. We've said for a really long time, like, yeah, the Ukrainians are winning by not losing, and look how many people the Russian forces are losing. At the end of the day, if it's a war of attrition, you don't need to have a PhD in strategy...

#Joe Kent

To understand that Russia's a much bigger country. We gave Kamala Harris some gruff for saying Russia's big and Ukraine's small. And I think she was saying that so that we should stand up for the small guy. She was making this very almost Marvel Comics-ish argument that America should always support the underdog. However, there was a lot of just honesty in that initial part of her statement where she said, "Russia's a big country, Ukraine's a small country." So, like, Russia is going to be able to endure a war of attrition much longer than Ukraine is.

However, we got into this conflict because the West has been pushing NATO expansion onto Russia's borders for so long. And so for Russia just to say, like, no, we're done, we're going to get to the negotiating table because we happen to like this U.S. president, that's just simply not going to happen. The Russians are going to have to push us off of their borders immediately. And right now, I think Putin is under a lot of domestic pressure. This is another thing we fail to recognize in the West, that Putin's kind of like a centrist politician in Russia. And he's got people to his right flank that are saying, like, why is this war still going on?

We've got to end it and end it now, especially when the Americans are bogged down in the Middle East, which we are, and we are running through a lot of our critical military equipment in the Middle East. So I think he is under a lot of pressure right now to wrap this war up and to not give the Ukrainians an inch. And plus, you've got the Ukrainians, with all of our support, our technology, our targeting guidance, are hitting Russian energy infrastructure. We're killing Russian civilians. We're targeting Russian civilians. And so for Putin to just sit there and say, like, okay, I'm going to keep playing by the rules of proxy warfare where I don't strike back at the people that are actually

funding the Ukrainians—for us to think that, that's absolutely foolish, because if the shoe were on the other foot, we would not be playing by those exact same rules. We would be going after the sources of the funding and the targeting guidance ourselves.

And so for us to think that the Russians aren't going to do that, I just think it's absolutely absurd. And so as this war continues to grind on, Russia is making incremental progress. They're slowly winning the war. But I do think if we were to do something like a first strike with a nuclear weapon, us or the Israelis in the Middle East, I think Putin would say, "Okay, well, that's the new norm. I'm going to abide by the new norms, and I'm also going to end this conflict really quickly with something a little bit bigger." But also, I just think Putin's under a lot of pressure right now because of the strikes on Russian civilians and Russian infrastructure, that he is going to have to start at least maybe just doing sabotage operations or more covert operations against some of the NATO allies.

And then NATO is going to feel the need to escalate from there too. And again, with us being at the center of NATO as the sole superpower, this puts us in the center of this conflict as well. So I think that the Russian front is almost forgotten here in America, but I think it's becoming just incredibly dangerous. And again, like, for what gain? Like, who controls the Donbas does not matter to anyone in America. It's arguable, you know, if it really matters to anybody in Western Europe either. But yet here we are risking a nuclear conflict with Russia over this war that, you know, has just become almost like this weird fetish within Washington, D.C.

#Glenn

The inability, though, to recognize that the Russians consider this to be an existential threat, I think that's very dangerous because the whole strategy of doing these deep strikes into Russia and hitting civilian targets so the people will put pressure on the Kremlin to put an end to the war, they never flesh out what putting an end to the war means. Because if we did recognize this as an existential threat, then the only way to put an end to the war would be to escalate in a very big way. But how do you think we ended up in this situation? Because in the past, if you wanted to manage the security competition with other states, the first thing you would do is to put yourself in the shoes of the opponent.

But as you said, if any politician or journalist or academic or anyone would want to say, well, you know, if I was Iranian, if I was Russian, if I was Chinese, as soon as one tries to explain the world from their standpoint, you know, you would become an Ayatollah apologist, a panda hugger, or a Putinist. You know, it's very strange. We didn't used to be like this, at least during the Cold War. We could argue, well, the Soviets would consider this a threat, so let's not do it. How do we deter without provoking? We can't even admit that we may provoke. It's very strange to have—well, difficult as well—to have any strategic thinking if you're not allowed to put yourself in the shoes of the opponent. But no politicians or media appear to do that anymore. I was just wondering if you had any thoughts around this, because this preoccupies me a lot. I can't understand how this became controversial.

#Joe Kent

It would be interesting to study. I think this has been a—maybe not deliberate—but it's been a very clever tactic that I think a lot of the war hawks here in America, at least, they have been able to permeate the media with, just shaming people into just not even engaging in these discussions. I mean, you'll even hear high-profile Americans who I know behind closed doors are smart enough to say, "Hey, what are the Iranians thinking? Why do they think that?" But they get out in public and they say things like, "Well, the Iranians are just crazy. I can't believe these crazy Iranians shut down the Straits of Hormuz." It's like our own war game said they were going to shut that. Like, look at the map. My 11-year-old could tell you that they would shut down the Strait of Hormuz just based on geography.

#Joe Kent

But the war hawk crowd here in America has done such a great job that the second you say that, you know, like you said, you know, you're an Ayatollah apologist. Like, what, you believe what the Islamic Republic of Iran is saying. And then, same thing. You saw this heavily during the Russia-Ukraine war, because supporting Ukrainians almost became a religion here in America, mostly with Democrats, but also with a lot of mainstream Republicans. It became like this bit of national pride that we had to defend Ukraine against Russia. And if you said, well, hey, wait a sec, what's the actual history here? Why did Putin just wake up and decide one day to invade Ukraine? Well, you were apologizing for Putin.

If you went and you looked at the actual reasons, and then if you even said something crazy like, I don't know, if Canada or Mexico continued to expand on our border and said they were going to join this massive alliance with some of our rivals, like Russia and China, I'm pretty sure we would invade large portions of Russia and Canada—Russia and Mexico and Canada. But again, they did such an effective job in the media at shaming anyone who came out and said this and then labeling them as, you know, either being sympathetic to a foreign country or, you know, maybe even, you know, being some form of a bigot because you're supporting Russia. So, yeah, I think this would be an interesting media study, but I've seen it basically since 2022. Anytime you say, like, I'm going to look at things through the adversary's eyes, you're automatically a traitor and potentially much, much worse.

#Glenn

Well, in this country, when Russia invaded Ukraine, our former defense minister said, "This is not the time to understand. It's the time to condemn," because we cannot walk and chew gum at the same time, apparently. But anyways, I did want to ask, because when Trump was elected, there was

genuine optimism in Russia. That is, the idea that they could not just put an end to the proxy war in Ukraine, but indeed this century of war with the United States, which, again, had its roots in a very different geopolitical situation, which doesn't exist today.

And indeed, there seemed to be some common interest, that is, neither the Americans nor the Russians would want for the Russians to develop excessive dependence on the Chinese, that both of them would like to see the Russians diversify. So it seemed to be a common interest, but it never happened, though. And there was no peace after the Alaska meeting. Also, the United States under Trump is, as you said, now also a direct participant in the war. So how, again, it's a bit like the Iranian mystery. I was wondering, how did this shift, but also how deep is the involvement now, the way you see it, of the U.S. against Russia? Yeah.

#Joe Kent

I think a big problem that President Trump had with Russia-Ukraine, number one, is that Russia was already kind of grinding out a victory in Ukraine. So I don't know if Putin really had much of a desire to sit down and kind of hear our side. However, I think Trump had an opportunity, but the failure of the administration to get Putin, I think, to the negotiating table was because President Trump never got full control over the intelligence community. The intelligence community has basically made the war in Ukraine their cash cow. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the global war on terror that had occupied so much money and so much talent, they ended.

And then immediately, all of those different capabilities were looking for a new place to justify their existence, to ply their trade. And so once the war in Ukraine kicked off, that's where the intelligence community and the Department of War really focused a lot of their efforts. A lot of careers were made in Ukraine. A lot of funding went into Ukraine. And so we created this behemoth in Ukraine that's been pretty effective at defending from the Russian onslaught. We saw a lot of advances in drone technology, et cetera. I mean, a lot of that is because the Ukrainians, you know, to their credit, they felt like, you know, they're fighting for their survival. They're fighting for their homeland.

I respect that. But a lot of the capabilities were given to them by us. And we really fostered these capabilities. And so I think Putin saw Trump come in, and Trump used the rhetoric of, hey, I want to end the war. I want to reset our relationship with Russia. And I think Putin probably believed the president. But you've heard Putin say this before, where he's like, you know, U.S. presidents change out every four years. It's the men in the dark suits that actually run America. Putin saw that the men in the dark suits basically didn't change at all, that we continued to plod along and support the proxy war, even though the president was saying things, even though the president had a great summit with him.

I just think Putin was like, okay, that's nice. But basically everything I've always thought about America, it also applies to Trump too. So, from Putin's perspective, I think he was like, I got to worry about winning this war in Ukraine, and I'll worry about maybe resetting our relationship later. But

because he didn't see—and I think a lot of times too, we underestimate Russia's ability to understand what we're doing. We think that, like, if we say something is super duper secret and no one ever knows, regardless of how many times it shows up in the New York Times, we still tend to think that, like, oh no, they don't know that we're supporting the Ukrainians. They know.

And so because we've become so intertwined with the Ukrainians, when operations happen that target Russian civilians, that target the Russian nuclear triad, that target, uh, um, you know, Russian energy, for us to say, well, that wasn't us, that was just the Ukrainians, the Russians don't believe us for one minute, even if in some cases maybe it is true, um, because we didn't get control of our intelligence apparatus here and micromanage it and say, hey, when the president says he wants to get both sides to the negotiating table, we need to dial back the support that we're giving to the Ukrainians to get the Ukrainian side to the negotiating table. Because that failed to happen, I don't think Putin, I don't think the Russians ever took us seriously.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, it was in February of 2024 when the New York Times had that big article where they made the point that the CIA and MI6 moved into Ukraine essentially the day after the toppling of Yanukovych. And still, one gets the impression, listening to the discourse, that perhaps the Russians didn't know. But, you know, this is kind of cited as one of the reasons why they did the invasion. But what do you see being the main—who's making the decisions now for Ukraine? Is it run by intelligence agencies of the West?

Because they don't have a lot of sovereignty, I would say, because they made themselves so dependent on the West. And indeed, this is often what you see in proxy wars. That is, you have two sides fighting, they become dependent on external backers, and then after a while, you see, yeah, not necessarily sovereignty, but the control and decision-making shifts towards those who are backing the war. And, you know, the original parties of the conflict lose more and more of their, you know, their own control over the war. So, yeah, how much do the Ukrainians control, and, you know, who's making the decisions now?

#Joe Kent

It's interesting. I think, to say Ukrainians, we use it loosely. I think there's the Zelensky government and the people that he's put into his government. I think now these guys are so dependent on the war continuing. They're so dependent on Western and American assistance that they themselves have become separated from the Ukrainian people. Basically, the Ukrainian people now are just getting told that you are to provide us with bodies to send into the meat grinder. And there's going to be no elections. You're not going to have a say in it. And the Zelensky class that runs the government, that basically is completely dependent on us—and us using them and having them use their people as a proxy against Russia for their entire existence—that's who's in charge. And we've seen this play out before in other proxy wars that we've had.

We saw it in Afghanistan. We saw it to a certain extent in Iraq when the Iraqi military crumbled in the face of ISIS. We saw it in Vietnam. So it shouldn't be too hard for the Ukrainian people or for the Zelensky government to forecast what's coming down the road for them, which perhaps is why you're seeing just so much corruption and so much money leaving Ukraine. But unfortunately, you still have the same people in, you know, I'd say American and British intelligence who, for decades, they've viewed Russia as this existential threat, and now Ukraine is the place for them to ply all these trades. But then also, I mean, Ukraine is a somewhat conventional war, and so the defense contractors and the incentive systems here in the West, when that war kicked off, especially with the war on terror ending—but the war on terror, it was counterterrorism.

It was counterinsurgency. We weren't selling massive missile systems. There's also a massive incentive just here to keep this all going along. So when you get leaders that come in and maybe say, "We want to end the conflict," if those leaders aren't willing to get down in the weeds and micromanage how they're going to end this conflict by shutting down the intelligence industrial complex, the military industrial complex support to Ukraine, it's just going to keep plodding on. I mean, the government is really good at fighting wars, filling defense contracts, and providing intelligence support basically on autopilot. And it does take someone with knowledge of exactly how all this works to go in there and literally have to micromanage winding these things down.

Trump should have learned this in his first administration when he tried to get us out of Syria, when he tried to get us out of Afghanistan, and he was blocked. Despite the president giving clear orders, he was still blocked. So it's unfortunate that he didn't apply those lessons to the war in Ukraine and been more proactive about shutting down all those systems in an effort to get us to peace. But these things will continue to plod along, really, until the bottom collapses. And so when the bottom falls out and the Zelensky government goes the way of the Afghan government one day, I don't think we should be too surprised.

#Glenn

A lot of the issues we discussed today, they seem to be very interlinked, though. That is the war against Iran, which is spread across the Middle East, the war against Russia, which involves all of NATO now, the conflicts between the U.S. and China, being the economic war or even the possibility of war with Taiwan, or, as you said, the financial problems, the \$40 trillion in debt, the struggle over the dollar and the global financial system, or even the normalizing of talks of using nuclear weapons, even if it's tactical nuclear weapons. How do you see—I mean, they seem to be interconnected and all of them escalating. What is a good framework here? I mean, are we drifting into a world war, or how do you see this?

#Joe Kent

I think we're in the early phases of World War III. I mean, everybody always says you're being alarmist when you say World War III. But I mean, I would say we're definitely in the early phases of it, just the way you just laid out the chessboard. I mean, you've got a war of NATO, a war of Russia. We've got a war in the Middle East that involves every country in the Middle East. We've had pretty hot trade wars with China. So, I mean, the list goes on. We're basically in the early phases of World War III now. The two fronts between the two hot wars, the war in the Middle East and the war between Russia and Ukraine, I mean, again, Americans, we're not so great at geography.

But when you look at just how close the fronts are, they're actually relatively—the two wars actually are close, regardless of how far apart we think, like some cold Russian plain compared to the Middle East. Like, they're actually very close. And then also, if you look at the alliances, I mean, the Iranians and the Russians have been working together extensively for quite some time, but especially since the war in Ukraine began. We saw Zelensky, the Ukrainian government, take a strike at an Iranian ship in the Caspian Sea. So we're already in these early phases. So again, I think we're in a sweet spot right now where a lot of this could be put back in the bottle. It would take some really deliberate diplomacy. It would take cooler heads on every side that I do think exist right now. But I fear that that window closes every day because it's not too hard to imagine a scenario where an unintended event just leads to everything spiraling out of control. And this is, you know, this is how other world wars started before. This is how a lot of wars started, is that you have tensions, you have the best of intent, you know, this thing kind of plodding along and maybe not spilling out into a hot war, but maybe the next thing you know, an incident happens, an incident occurs, and that's when unintended consequences take over.

#Joe Kent

Again, I think right now we're in a place where it could be put back in the bottle. But every day that goes by, every minute that passes, I just fear we're losing that opportunity.

#Glenn

Yeah, the unintended consequences or stumbling into war. I think we're walking currently into that possibility because, well, if you look at the Ukraine war, at the moment, it looks like Ukraine is a bit on the brink. It's beginning to falter. And I think two things could happen. One, the Russians would get a bit too overconfident. They might want to restore their deterrence by beginning to shoot down some NATO drones over the Black Sea. They might be behind some of the sabotage missions against the weapons factories in Europe. They might do a little strike on Latvia.

They could get overconfident. At the same time, if Ukraine is cracking, I would assume that many of the NATO countries, especially the Europeans, would be willing to do something very foolish in order to try to desperately rescue the situation. So it looks as if we could stumble into something here. But you could say the same with Iran, of course. But just a last question: if Trump calls you back and he

has to put you back in the game and at least help me fix this situation, how would you walk this back? Because you said the window is closing. So what can be done here?

#Joe Kent

With the Iran war, I think two major things the president could do, and they would be hard, but he could do them. Number one, I would get all of our forces out of the bases that are in the region, take away Iran's ability to get a lucky missile that kills some of our soldiers, that forces us back into the conflict. These bases are just ridiculous. They are nothing but a strategic liability, not an asset. Get us out of there. I would even remove the blockade. I'd get our ships out of striking distance because all it takes is one ballistic missile to get lucky on one of those ships, and we have a mass casualty event.

And then from there, engage in quiet diplomacy. Tell the Iranians, hey, open up the straits and we can talk shop about, you know, sanctions relief. We can talk about unfreezing assets. You guys can do some degree of tolling, but it's got to be reasonable. I think the Iranians have proven to this point that they actually would be very reasonable actors in this. But as a key part of that, we also have to meaningfully restrain the Israelis. And this is the hard part. And this is where I think you would need a whole new set of diplomats to go in there and just say, like, look, we're taking away your military funding.

If you guys do anything that's going to jeopardize what we're trying to do right now, which is end this conflict, it is going to drastically change the relationship that we have with you. Beyond just taking away some of your military support, we will even look at potential sanctions, et cetera, because if we don't put the Israelis in a box, we know we have enough data now to prove that these guys will take actions that will drag us back into the conflict. So restraining Israel is a huge part of that. Hopefully we can at some point have a decent relationship with the Israeli government. Like, I'm not, like, anti-Israel.

Like, I think that there's a world that exists where we can have a normal relationship with them. But that relationship is so far off-kilter right now. And then Russia, Ukraine, I think if we were to show Putin that we were going to actually stop funding, supporting, providing targeting guidance to the Ukrainians—and this couldn't be a half measure—we would actually have to aggressively micromanage Ukraine, just dismantling the support that we're giving them right now, pulling that out, telling this Zelensky government, if you guys want any kind of hope of reconstruction or any assistance from us, you need to get to the negotiating table right now and get to the negotiating table with the Russians.

I don't know if the Russians would, you know, accept anything that looks like the Istanbul agreement that we, the West, had them walk away from. But I think that's a good starting point. I believe that if Putin saw that we actually were ripping out a lot of support that we were giving to the Ukrainians, and we just said, "Look, we're doing this. We do want to reset. We do want to reset

negotiations and our relationships with you," I think that Putin would actually reciprocate. Now, he's not going to give up any ground that he's taken inside Ukraine. But again, that really doesn't matter to us here in America. And I don't think it matters in terms of taking down the temperature and kind of ending World War III. I think if we did those key things right there, that would buy us more time.

I think we would continue to need to reset a lot of our relationships. I'd also put Russia back on the SWIFT system. I would want to encourage as many countries right now as we possibly could to use the dollar before we shoot ourselves in the foot. I would want to make the dollar as appealing as possible to the entire world, to include the Iranians. Why wouldn't we want to get cut in on the transactions that the Iranians are going to make when their oil reenters the market? I think those are some of the key things that we could do, but we'd have to stay very, very diligent about really just pursuing our interests, pursuing peace, and making sure that we don't teeter towards war.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, sorry. Actually, let me do one last question. That is, you mentioned the Istanbul Agreement. How did that fall apart, though? Because they looked like they were both ready to sign this agreement.

#Joe Kent

As far as I know, and I only know what I've read in the press, is that Boris Johnson showed up basically as an emissary not just of the UK, but I'm assuming as an emissary of NATO, and told the Ukrainians, like, "You guys aren't going to sign this." That's my understanding. And at the time, the Russians were actually willing to make some pretty big concessions. I don't think the Russians would make those same concessions. I think the Russians are going to want every inch of territory they've taken now. I think that they're probably not going to give up on the Donbass.

But I mean, again, like, this is where knowing the history—like, that region had already voted to become part of Russia, you know? Again, so it's like, what are we even arguing about here? So, yeah, I think using the Istanbul Accords as a framework, as a starting point. But again, to get Putin to that table, we have to show him that we're not playing proxy war games anymore in Ukraine. And the Ukrainians have to know, like, this is your last chance, because either way, you guys either go to the negotiating table with us there helping you out, or you just live with us pulling out support and the chips fall where they may.

#Glenn

Thank you very much for taking the time and sharing your insights. Much appreciated.

#Joe Kent

Yeah, certainly. Enjoyed it.