

Jack Matlock: NATO's Broken Promises - The Road to War in Europe

Jack F. Matlock, Jr, was the U.S. Ambassador to the USSR, 1987–1991, and had a key role in negotiating an end to the Cold War. Ambassador Matlock also served at the US embassy in Moscow during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Ambassador Matlock discusses the failure to establish a mutually acceptable European security architecture after the Cold War, and why NATO expansionism resulted in a war in Ukraine. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glenndiesen.substack.com/> X /Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Ambassador Jack Matlock, who had a frontline seat to many of the crises between the United States and Russia. Ambassador Matlock was stationed at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. He was Reagan's senior advisor on Soviet and European affairs. He was then the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union and participated in negotiating an end to the Cold War. Two years later, Ambassador Matlock was still there as the Soviet Union collapsed and also became one of the key voices who, during the 1990s, discussed what kind of a pan-European security architecture should replace the bloc politics of the Cold War. So, well, let me first thank you for coming back on the program, Ambassador.

#Jack Matlock

Well, good to be with you, as always.

#Glenn

So what I really wanted to ask about today was this failure to establish a mutually acceptable security architecture in Europe after the Cold War. Because while we had some agreements and principles for pan-European security based on indivisible security, it all fell apart. It then took us back to this Cold War logic, and then now we have war. So I thought a good place to start would be, in your assessment, why did we fail in establishing a mutually acceptable security architecture after the Cold War?

#Jack Matlock

Well, the crucial time, of course, was in the 1990s. You know, by 1992, we had created our goal of a Europe whole and free. And earlier, during the Cold War, we had developed NATO initially as a defensive alliance with the idea we needed to stand together and defend Western Europe if the Soviet Union should invade. However, when the Cold War was over, the task should have been creating a security structure in Europe that protected all of the countries. You know, after the First World War, the Allied powers made a tremendous mistake in blaming it on Germany, when really everyone was to blame, and having harsh reparations and so on.

And this led directly to the situation that brought us the Second World War. At the end of the Second World War, the Western powers did one thing right, and that was to insist that France and Germany bury the hatchet and start cooperating. But at the end of the Cold War, even though the leader of the Soviet Union had hoped this ended, it was not a policy of the American administration to try to break up the Soviet Union. We had hoped that Gorbachev would actually negotiate a voluntary federation among 12 of the Soviet republics, excluding the three Baltic countries, which we always considered legally independent countries.

But what happened during the '90s is, instead of bringing Russia into the new security structure, even though the Russian leadership had taken the lead in breaking up the Soviet Union, that was not the result of Western pressure. Quite the contrary. The Soviet Union broke up because of internal pressures and under the leadership of the elected leader of Russia, Boris Yeltsin. But we began to talk as if the end of the Cold War was a victory and that Russia was, in effect, defeated, where actually you could say that Russia had been one of the factors—the leadership of Russia—that helped us end the Cold War and, in fact, led the breakup of the Soviet Union. Instead, we started expanding what had been a defensive alliance, and then we turned it into an offensive alliance.

And that happened when the fighting broke out in the Balkans. And at first, we tended to use the UN to help NATO, to help protect some of the people there during the war in Bosnia. That didn't work, but later, when the people in Kosovo, the Albanian-speaking people, began to rebel against Serbia, the U.S. actually sided with the rebels and, in effect, used NATO to make war against Serbia. Now, Serbia had not attacked or threatened any NATO member. That could only have been considered an offensive use of the thing. And, of course, this made a very bad impression on Russia because Serbia had been a traditional Russian ally. And to see NATO actually going to war—they didn't invade it at first, but simply bombed until, in effect, they capitulated.

Then NATO, in this case, with Russian cooperation, occupied Kosovo. Then, just based upon a vote of the Kosovo legislature, which declared independence, that independence was recognized. Now, when that was done by the NATO powers, they violated one of the important agreements that we had negotiated and hoped in the Cold War. That was the Helsinki Final Agreement, and what it had said was there should be no changes of borders without mutual consent. Now, for the first time after

the end of the Cold War, we used NATO in an offensive way against a country that had not attacked any member, and then we recognized the independence, of course, without a referendum or anything else.

I would say now that that set a direct precedent later for what President Putin in Russia did when he absorbed Crimea as the result of a peaceful referendum, which was overwhelmingly in favor of it. So we considered that illegal, whereas we had sponsored, I would say, a less defensible change of borders earlier. So one of the things that we... Now, when we look at the situation, is that when people say the war in Ukraine is the first war in Europe after the end of the Cold War, that's not true. It wasn't as big, but the war against Serbia was the first war, and it was initiated by NATO. So these are things that we tend to forget.

#Glenn

Well, I was thinking that the Helsinki Accords, as well as the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, they had two contradictory positions in them. That is, on one hand, it was stated that countries should be allowed to choose their own foreign policy arrangements, but it also said there should be indivisible security. So it seems when we talk about NATO expansion, we often hear from NATO, they make the argument that states should be allowed to choose whatever alliance they want to be in. But at the same time, NATO also committed itself to not pursue zero-sum approaches to security anymore. That is, it should not enhance its security at the expense of Russia and also not to redive the continent. So how do you see those two variables being in conflict?

#Jack Matlock

Well, as I said, I think, again, that when we started expanding NATO, I would point out that initially, though Russia considered that a potentially hostile act, Russia did not directly oppose it, but made the condition that so long as there would be no Western, I would say, no foreign bases. And there was actually a legal precedent for this. When the agreement on German unification was made, it was specified that the territory of the former German Democratic Republic, although it would be part of Germany in NATO, there would be no foreign troops stationed there and no nuclear weapons. But by the end of the '90s, we started to put military bases, first, I think it was in Estonia, and then later we began to talk about putting anti-ballistic missiles in Poland and Romania. Now, that was firmly opposed by President Putin at that time. And I... The problem was that although these were anti-ballistic missiles, the excuse was we needed to protect Western Europe from Iran.

#Jack Matlock

Well, at that time, Iran didn't have missiles that would...

#Jack Matlock

could attack Europe and had no reason to. And what we didn't say, but the Russians, of course, understood, is that these same missiles could be used offensively by a change of software. They had been designed to be used either offensively or defensively on U.S. destroyers in the Navy, and then this was adapted for land use. So it was not unreasonable to feel that this was an offensive move. And I think when people deny today that the root of the problem of the war in Ukraine was not the expansion of NATO, they're simply ignoring history and ignoring the facts. It could only have been considered an offensive act on the part of the West against Russia, and though it was accepted, it was always the case that former parts of the Soviet Union, other than the three Baltic states, were considered in a sort of a different emotional and political category.

Well, it was one thing for the Baltic states to be in NATO. President Putin did not directly oppose that. He said publicly that he thought it was unnecessary, but so long as there were no bases, it was acceptable. In other words, there was no thought of attacking the Baltic states. He did not want missiles that could be used offensively next to his border. And I would say that that should have been understood because certainly the United States would not tolerate offensive missiles anywhere near its borders. In fact, anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, as we demonstrated during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

#Glenn

But in the '90s, though, you did have people like the U.S. Secretary of Defense, William Perry, under Clinton, who even considered quitting his position in protest over NATO expansion, so recognizing the dangers this had. And, of course, he was joined by many others criticizing this, senior officials like George Kennan or yourself. But according to William Perry, whenever he asked other people in the Clinton administration why they still went along with this, the answer was that they didn't dispute that this would be seen as a threat by Russia. Rather, the argument was that Russia was weak, so it didn't really matter. Did you get the same impression that it was essentially Russia's weakness that made them more prepared to take this, I guess, drastic step of expanding NATO?

#Jack Matlock

Well, I think that there was simply a denial on the part of, I think, our allies, our political leaders at that time, denial of the situation, because you had an administration that I think was trying to revise international law. And they spoke of trying to create a liberal world order. Well, what they have done by, I would say, trying to dominate the world both militarily and economically, by using military force and economic sanctions over issues that are under the jurisdiction of a sovereign state. So this whole philosophy, I think, was an offensive one. And although it was sold as something new, now when we talk about trying to expand democracy and we call ourselves democracies and others are not, I think that we confuse things.

Because, first of all, the United States is not a pure democracy. That word does not occur in our Constitution, in our Declaration of Independence, or in our Pledge of Allegiance. We pledge

allegiance to the flag of the United States and to the republic for which it stands. What our founders created was a republic, and it has never completely met the demands of what you would say a country run by the people as a whole. And actually, as political science has studied things today, it is pretty clear that operationally, in the United States, we are a republic which is essentially controlled by an oligarchy. And the idea that somehow you could spread democracy to other countries by bringing pressure on them was simply, I think, simply totally illogical.

Everybody, I think, reacts negatively if an outsider tries to get involved in what they consider domestic matters. And yet, we, in effect, began to sanction countries for things that happened internally. And sometimes those things were also happening in the United States. And this particularly was directed at Russia. And so I think that that is mistaken, and also the idea that any time there was a rebellion, that this was going to lead to democracy, as we saw during what they call the Arab Spring. Actually, when you have sort of a revolution internally, it usually brings on an authoritarian regime in many cases. It's not something that's automatically going to bring democracy.

So it seemed to me that, in effect, the attempt of the United States, not only in Europe, to begin to use offensively. Of course, we also saw in the Middle East a failure to deal with the Palestinian problem and the conflict there, and the developing conflict with Iran, where simply diplomacy was totally excluded. So we ended up over time with American military bases, I think, in about 80 different countries. And supposedly these were to support democracy or support other things, but that was not the way to do it. At the same time, we were also declaring economic sanctions on countries for things that happened internally. Now, as I say, if sovereignty means anything, it means that a country is sovereign in how it treats its own people, for example.

And one can deplore suppression of the people, but if the country is sovereign, it is not the business of an outside country to try to use force or, I would say, economic sanctions to change things. It usually does more harm than good. And I think it's clear that the whole process of sanctions that the United States and now NATO countries are carrying out, not only against Russia and Iran, but increasingly other countries, and even threatening secondary sanctions—now, these, I think, now we're getting pushback—and I think that they are totally counterproductive and are also totally contrary to traditional concepts of international law.

#Glenn

On the topic of Ukraine, much of the narrative we have across the political West is that NATO has to support Ukraine's ambitions to join NATO. So it's framed as a freedom issue, a sovereignty issue, and also a democracy issue. However, if we look at all the polls between 1991 and 2014, they always showed that only a small minority of Ukrainians, often around 20%, wanted NATO membership. And also, as the former CIA director William Burns noted in this memo from 2008, was if we try to pull Ukraine into our orbit immediately, it would likely trigger a civil war, and the Russians would reluctantly intervene because this is something they couldn't accept.

So I guess my question is, if we knew that the Ukrainians did not want to be a part of NATO and we knew that it would likely trigger a war, why did we push so hard for it? Because it wasn't accidental. We tried this from 2004 all the way up to 2014. That was a whole decade against essentially the will of the majority and knowing what it would cause. So how do you explain this obsession with Ukraine specifically?

#Jack Matlock

Well, it's a complex issue. And as you have pointed out, what has been ignored in NATO policy is that the problem in Ukraine is essentially a matter of civil war, and one that was really created by the intervention of outside powers. And when I say essentially a civil war, this is an area most of which had been part of Russia for a couple of centuries, part of which had never been part of Tsarist Russia, but was added as a result of a pact by Hitler and Stalin. Now, it is ironic that a war is being conducted to defend the heritage of Hitler and Stalin on the part of the West.

And given the Second World War and what happened there, the fact that, for example, Germany is supplying offensive weapons, not only the United States, but Germany, to, you would say, the anti-Russian factions in Ukraine, which are not democratically elected. The current government is the result of a coup d'état. And if it had been a coup d'état by, say, pro-communists, it never would have been recognized by the United States or other NATO countries. But it was one, and also that obviously was instigated by the United States and the EU. And this was done almost openly, with officials announcing that, well, you had to bring Ukraine into a Western alliance so that Russia would no longer be a great power.

This goes back, I think, to one of the theories of international relations that I was taught in college in studying it, and the so-called theory that who controls the World Island, that is, Eurasia, controls the world. Well, nobody has ever controlled the entire World Island, and the major powers in the World Island have never controlled the rest of the world. You know, Britain came maybe close to it in a widespread thing, but they did it with sea power. And, of course, so, I mean, this entire theory really doesn't hold water, and that's true of a lot of the things which one looks at. But I think what we have to recognize is that, first of all, the internal developments within Ukraine.

Russia, first, as I said, Russia under Boris Yeltsin had led the breakup of the Soviet Union and had broken up with, I would say, giving Ukraine power over areas that were largely Russian-speaking and had traditionally been part of Russia. Of course, when Ukraine was in the Soviet Union, it was under Moscow's control, the Communist Party control. And then at first, the Ukrainian Constitution was pledged neutrality. Later, that was taken out of the Constitution. And furthermore, they began to discriminate against their Russian-speaking citizens, which predominated in the East. Whereas in the West, you had Lviv and the provinces around it, which traditionally had not been part of Russia. They had been in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and then in Poland against their will.

And then, as I said, it was the agreement of Hitler and Stalin that brought them all into the Soviet Union. And later then, it was during Khrushchev's administration that the administration of Crimea was brought to Ukraine. But all of Ukraine was being controlled by Moscow, and even then, they excluded the naval base in Sevastopol, which was not under control of Kiev, but Moscow. So I would say these things are highly complex. The emotions are very high locally. I know both languages to the degree that when I was a diplomatic representative in the Soviet Union, whenever I had speeches in Ukrainian territory, I read them in Ukrainian and so on. So I do have a certain understanding of some of the issues here.

And so that the initial rebellion in eastern Ukraine was a genuine local one. It was supported unofficially by Russians, yes, just as the United States has typically supported minorities in quite a few countries when we think they have a right thing. I mean, we gave arms and supplies to the Kurds, for example, and we were militarily intervening in Syria at one point, at a time when we actually recognized the government there. So that the idea that this is sort of a unique aggression by Russia is, I think, simply wrong. So the thing is that these were highly emotional issues. And all the time, I think President Putin had pointed out that expanding NATO, and particularly bases into Ukraine, or Belarus for that matter, or Georgia, was simply unacceptable.

And now, I really don't know why the administration at that time—it was the second Bush administration—insisted in 2008 that NATO pledge that eventually Ukraine and Georgia would be members. It was at a time when France and Germany, for example, were opposed, and yet somehow they went along with that. And at that time, polls showed that two-thirds of the Ukrainians did not want to be in NATO. Why do you want to protect a country when two-thirds of the people don't want you to be doing it? It was simply beyond my understanding. And I think this had to be considered a totally hostile act on the part of any Russian leadership. It wasn't just a matter of President Putin's reactions.

#Glenn

Well, as you said, in 2008, when this future membership was promised to Ukraine, even though very few Ukrainians wanted this, Germany and France, they had warned very strongly against it. This will be destabilizing. Angela Merkel, she even said at one point that if we offered a Membership Action Plan to Ukraine to join NATO, Moscow would interpret it as a declaration of war. So it's, again, the whole unprovoked invasion argument seems to fall away. But anyway, they did it. Nonetheless, they ended up supporting this declaration that they would become members.

But you were there, though. Well, given that you were in Germany during the negotiations that led to German reunification, are you surprised today to see where Germany is today? We hear from their chancellor the goal is to build the largest army in Europe today, and seemingly very comfortable in taking the role as being the leading state in pushing for war now with Russia, yet again, I could add. Does it surprise you, based on the talks during the negotiations for unification, where we are today?

#Jack Matlock

I cannot understand the current German policy, because it is clearly, overall, not in Germany's interest. By boycotting Russian gas and oil, they are hastening the lack of competitiveness of their entire industry. And, look, you already see Volkswagen may be having to cut, I think, something like 45,000 people and question whether it's really going to survive against Chinese competition. And you could go step after step. The Germans are now paying, I think, something like 10 times more for their heating gas than Russians do. And, you know, the attempt to strangle Russia economically has simply not worked. And it just seems to me that I simply do not understand how the German government could operate, I would say, in such a mistaken way.

Now, as far as the whole idea goes of the U.S. pushing its NATO allies for bigger defense spending, actually, if they were not intervening in the war in Ukraine and that was settled, even with substantial changes of territory—and there's going to have to be substantial changes of territory if there's to be peace in the future—but why that is being emphasized, I think, is not in the interest of the German people. And as I said, it is having a tremendous effect on their economy. And why are they building anything? Russia is not threatening them, except to the degree that they are supplying Ukraine with weapons that are used to attack Russia. And obviously, Russia has said, when you do that, we have a right to attack those bases or the transportation systems that take them to it.

Now, they haven't done that yet, but it is something that I think is... Now, you can say, why all this push for the Europeans to spend more? You know, this is the influence of our military-industrial complex, which was one of the big forces that, in the '90s—the 1990s—was pushing for NATO expansion. They simply want to sell American arms. And unfortunately, our military-industrial complex is so embedded now in our economy that the Department of Defense has contractors in virtually every state. And so it comes down to a great difficulty if you start trying to cut the defense budget. And I think that when I look back in the '90s, and you were wondering, well, why did the U. S. push for an expansion of NATO? You would find that some of the funds that were...

#Jack Matlock

Funded by the military-industrial complex were pushing for it. They were afraid that peace was going to break out, and they really needed to build up something like peer competitors, meaning Russia and then China, as possible enemies to justify the growing defense budgets. And so I think the way that the Europeans are falling for this now and are talking as if they have to defend themselves from Russia, but are taking actions that Russia can only consider as hostile and offensive to them, I think that is wrong— incredibly dangerous. And I would also point out that one thing that we started doing in the second Bush administration, along with all of this, was walking out of all of the arms reduction and arms control treaties that we had with the Soviet Union and then Russia.

It was not Russia that walked out of them. It was the United States, step by step. So we do not have the sort of safeguards that we had tried to build as we ended the Cold War. But the threat is not just these days, just nuclear weapons. I think that where mankind is facing, I think, very serious threats is, after all, particularly as artificial intelligence is developed, it's going to be more and more easy for even just a few people to develop pathogens that can spread. And also, the increasing hostility in space and the attempts of the U.S. to dominate space, of course, is going to be challenged. And we have the ongoing war in...

#Jack Matlock

The Middle East, where Israel is committing genocide and being supplied by the U.S. and supported by a number of the European governments. And at the same time, our own democracy, I think, is being seriously challenged, particularly things like freedom of speech. And when you find some European countries making it illegal to support the Palestinians, I mean, I think these are all troubling things and are interconnected with a number of other issues.

#Glenn

Well, I did want to ask, though, what steps we can take to, I guess, resolve the proxy war in Ukraine. Because at the moment, looking at the front lines, the Ukrainian economy, the political stability, social stability, it appears that Ukraine is heading toward collapse. Not immediately, but over the next six months, this seems quite possible. And there's no way, I think, to reverse this by now. And the only question is when. But within Europe especially, NATO still has to be—we're still compelled to refer to it as a defensive alliance. Our political leaders do not want to talk to Russia. So, how do you see this possibly being resolved? I mean, if you were advising Washington and Moscow today, what would you say is the essential step toward ending this confrontation? What is required for peace, I guess?

#Jack Matlock

Well, of course, one has to ask: what is going to be left of Ukraine? It will have to pledge neutrality and not to be part of NATO. That is the, I would say, sine qua non. That's the only thing that Russia will accept. And, you know, back in my day, we had good precedent for that. Actually, we ended the occupation of Austria with an Austrian pledge to stay independent of alliances. And so I would say what astounds me is the refusal of the Europeans to engage in diplomacy. And you don't solve problems by walking out, and you certainly don't solve them by the sort of sanctions and what is the near theft of Russian assets. After all, it was the Russian leadership that led them out of the communist system and into a trade system with the West.

It was our policy, and also that of our Western allies, to promote investment in Russia and bring them into the Western world economic system, and to break down the Iron Curtain. And under the

Soviet Union, it was the Soviet Union that was cutting off the rest of the world. Now, the reaction of trying to cut them off, I think, is totally unfair. What you are hurting is the Russian people as a whole. And I'm told by Westerners still living in Moscow that actually even people who had been opponents of Putin earlier are now supporting him because they see the conflict in Ukraine not as a war in Ukraine, but a war with the West and an attempt by the West. And the particularly most sensitive one for them, of course, is Germany and its arms being sent.

So, again, I think that the current German government is simply ignoring history, is ignoring the sort of emotions that are going to be aroused by this. And I think, in the long run, it is definitely not in their interest. And it does seem to me that I think it is almost tragic that you see the rise of these extreme right-wing parties in Germany. I just think it has been tragic for the United States to see the rise of what has happened to us internally. But the fact is that Germany in particular, but also Britain and now France, are, I think, carrying out policies that are very dangerous for their people.

#Glenn

Well, as you said, in the past, it was the Soviet Union which locked itself away from the West. It put up the walls, essentially. It had a very powerful ideology. I feel it's shifted a bit. The Russians have become very pragmatic, and the ideology seems to inhibit us in the West, though. But based on your background in negotiating with Moscow during the Cold War, do you see any lessons that are still important today? Also, if we look at how ideology affected Moscow back then, how does it affect us now?

#Jack Matlock

Well, we have not been using diplomacy anymore, and I think it is tragic. We ended the Cold War and we united Europe, in the sense that it was no longer divided, using diplomacy. And that meant that we started not just diplomatically accusing the other side of various infractions, but saying, look, we've got a problem here. The arms race is getting out of control. It's to our interest to reduce arms, and particularly nuclear weapons. Number two, that we are sponsoring conflict in third areas. And I think in one of the speeches I drafted for President Reagan, we said, "We don't blame the Soviet Union for these conflicts. We know they are local."

What has happened is they are favoring one side, and we're favoring the other. We've got to stop this. We should get together and try to bring about peace and then cooperate. And then there was the question of human rights. And before, we had presidents that would simply make broad statements about human rights, but not do much concretely about it. Whereas we started saying, look, we stopped saying, "You've got to clean up your act." In effect, we said, "We must cooperate to bring about better respect for human rights." And then they had the Iron Curtain, and we said, instead of saying, "Bring down that Iron Curtain," we said, "Let's cooperate to improve the communication and cooperation between us."

And we started proposing certain... I had... For example, we had gotten in the way of simply issuing policy almost as a challenge. You know, you do it publicly, and then they would answer publicly. And what I encouraged President Reagan to do was start using private channels. And just before they met the first time, we made a list of things that we thought we should be cooperating on, but we didn't announce it. We told them privately, "We're thinking of these things. Let us know what you think about it, and maybe you want to add some." And they did. So we began with human rights, and we stopped talking so much overtly about it, but doing it privately.

And I recall that when Secretary of State Shultz brought this up with Edward Shevardnadze, the Soviet foreign minister, he did it in a private session with just a few of us there. And Shevardnadze said, "Well, okay, we'll look at those things, but can we bring up issues regarding the status of women and blacks in your country?" And George Shultz said, "Well, of course. I think we're making progress there, but we've got a ways to go, and we can use all the help we can get." So our attitude was, we are cooperating to achieve a common end in the interest of both of us.

And we defined every issue in that way. Now, since then, we have gotten nothing but public things, personal accusations. I would say another thing: as much as he criticized the communist system, President Reagan never personally insulted the Soviet leader, and neither did George Bush, our first Bush president. In fact, we began to use some of the most delicate issues to keep them private. When we got evidence that the Soviets had major chemical warfare facilities, and both British and American intelligence got the evidence, the British ambassador and I were instructed to go to the foreign ministry and to Gorbachev's assistant and simply demand that they close it and not make this a public issue. And this is something of a long story, but it worked. And we eventually got these things done.

In many cases, we're not publicizing them. And now we've gotten to the point that there's been a public demonization of the Russian leader. And certainly, I don't think it's good, a lot of the things that he has done, but I do think that many of them are a reaction. And we also don't understand another thing I would point out, and that is that the '90s for Russia were a period of near anarchy, when just a few people got control of the economy and people suffered very greatly. Outside, we were saying they were democratizing. Well, no, they weren't. And it was President Putin that pulled them out of this. He took a bankrupt country, and in a few years he had paid off the debts. And now he's being paid back by the surpluses that they had developed. They're being frozen, and you're talking about stealing them.

And, I mean, why can't people understand that this is not the way to act if you want to have a future world with cooperation on the things that are facing humanity today? We see the ravages of deteriorating climate everywhere, with these forest fires and inundations and things that are causing great migrations of people and the stresses that these account for. And yet we're fighting among each other and exacerbating all of these problems, even as technologies develop more and more

ways to kill and destroy. And, I mean, we're not on a course that is going to improve people's lives. And why can't we understand that those with power need to start dealing peacefully with each other and stop trying to spread a particular system using force and economic pressure.

Obviously, I think these things are failing. You know, we had people proclaiming that, well, that a bipolar world became unipolar with the U.S. after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in effect able to rule the world. Well, I think this was never true. The so-called bipolar world may have been bipolar in the sense of the two great nuclear powers, but that's military power. It's not power that can build; it's power that can destroy. And the idea, well, the U.S. and the Soviet Union did not rule the world as the so-called bipolar world. And the United States, you know, never had the power to change others, particularly using force. So that I think that what we call the liberal world order, unfortunately, has turned out to be, I would say, increasingly suicidal world disorder.

#Glenn

Well, I think diplomacy has definitely changed fundamentally. I think that's a key problem with defining it as liberal hegemony, that is, when it was defined as solely value-based. I mean, it sounds like a good idea to introduce more values, but essentially, it removed the premise that we can talk to our opponents as equals. That is, these days, it's all insults of other leaders. And everything, I think, is a public issue in the effort of swaying public opinion and trying to convince our public that Russia is pure evil, we are pure good. Everything is democracy versus authoritarianism. Let me just squeeze in one last question. A key problem we have here in Europe is that our political leaders refuse not just to talk to Russia, but they refuse to accept that this war has anything to do with NATO, that NATO expansion is not the purpose. Indeed, if you argue that NATO even promised Moscow that it wouldn't expand, this is rejected. I was wondering if you had any comments on this.

#Jack Matlock

Well, I think Germany, of all countries, should understand that NATO expansion is the basic issue, for all the reasons I've mentioned before. And they achieved their unity by, again, guaranteeing in the treaty that there would be no foreign bases and no nuclear weapons in the territory of the former German Democratic Republic. Now, if that applied to East Germany, shouldn't it apply to Eastern Europe as a whole? And particularly when these agreements were made, when there was still a Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union broke up, Russia had less than half the population and a lot of internal problems. And to think that it could be a threat to Germany—again, I think I cannot understand how a rational person with any knowledge of history and, you might even say, of human nature, could think otherwise.

I think it is a political argument made by people who, I'm afraid, were too young, really, to see and understand what went on earlier. And so this surprises me. I can recall that when we were trying to get a treaty against intermediate-range missiles in Europe, and we thought we had to deploy some in Germany as bargaining chips to get the treaty to save them. There were widespread

demonstrations in Germany, "Nie wieder, nie wieder," against this deployment. And actually, we did deploy them, and then we got the treaty that removed them entirely. And today, we have Germany that is actually supplying weapons to be used against a truncated Russia. And I simply cannot understand how rational people who know, I would say, who recognize the history of these things, could behave in that fashion. But that's obviously something that Germans are going to have to deal with.

#Glenn

Well, Ambassador, I've already taken more than an hour of your time, so I want to thank you very much for devoting all this time to share your insights.

#Jack Matlock

It's always nice to talk to you.