The West's Civilizational Collapse

Prof. Xueqin Jiang argues that both historical patterns and game theory can be used to accurately predict future events. Prof. Jiang is the host of the popular educational channel Predictive History: https://www.youtube.com/@PredictiveHistory 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 Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL

#Glenn

Welcome back to the program. We're here today with Professor Zhang, who is very renowned not just for his academic achievements, but also for his very popular channels—and I'll make sure to leave links. Now, you develop models for predicting geopolitical developments, and they're quite fascinating because you're able to include a lot of variables to account for the complexity. So, yeah, I thought a good place to start would be a topic many people are now looking at. I mean, if you go on any social media platform, everyone is comparing what's happening in the West to the fall of the Roman Empire. But it does beg the question, given that you're able to draw on all these different variables, what do you see as making civilizations rise, decline, and eventually collapse?

#Jiang Xueqin

Right. So, in my analysis of world history, I see that when civilizations rise, there are three factors at play. The first is energy—this sort of hunger people have to rise up and make their place in the world. That's number one: energy. Second is openness. How willing are you to learn from others? How willing are you to reflect on your mistakes and improve on them? How open are you? That's number two. The third is cohesion. Do you identify as a people, able to work together and coordinate in order to achieve larger goals?

If you look at all great empires, they all started off as borderland tribes that, through energy, openness, and cohesion, were able to dominate their part of the world. This includes the Athenians, the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Americans, and the British. And today, I would argue that the new empire emerging on the world stage is the Pax Judaica—Israel. Among the Israelis, we see energy, openness, and cohesion.

#Glenn

And how do you assess, within this framework, what's happening with the political West—that is, the United States and Europe? Because whatever variable one looks at—whether it's politics, the economy, or social cohesion—there seems to be a lot of gloom, and perhaps for good reason. So, what direction do you see the Western world taking now?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah. So, according to this framework, the Western world—especially the Anglo-American empire—is in rapid decline. You look at energy, like how willing people are to work hard. I mean, the reality is that you have these young people in the West who want to be social media influencers, and they expect to make $600,000 a year doing that. And that's completely outrageous. Trump talks a lot about bringing back manufacturing to America, but who's going to work these blue-collar jobs? Who' s going to want to go and work in factories for 40 or 50 years? The answer is: not that many young people. The reality is that young people nowadays… they prefer to just watch Netflix.

They prefer to just play video games. They prefer to hang out on social media. They really don't want to invest their time and energy in creating a great society. So, in terms of energy, the West is definitely in decline. As for openness, you see a lot of crackdowns on free speech, especially at universities. You have DEI, and now you have a crackdown on speech that promotes Palestinian rights or criticizes what's happening in Palestine, basically. During the COVID lockdowns, there was also a tremendous clampdown on free speech. So, in terms of openness, we see a massive decline in the Western world—and that, I think, is very problematic. And the third factor is cohesion, right?

So everyone would agree that the biggest problem in America is political polarization, where the left and the right hate each other. Nowadays, polls show that if you're a Democrat, you might actually refuse to marry a Republican—regardless of attraction or salary. It's like, "If you're on the other political side, I just won't engage with you." So, in terms of cohesion, America is split pretty evenly between left and right. And this is happening throughout the Western world, especially with increased immigration. Unfortunately, all the signs—all the historical signs—are pointing toward rapid decline over the next five to ten years.

#Glenn

It's an interesting development—the rise of political identities in the United States, and to a large, growing extent, also in Europe. The whole idea of the nation-state appeals to some of the instincts in human nature—that is, we divide ourselves into in-groups versus out-groups, and the in-group becomes quite distinctive. Much like we want to reproduce the family, we have an instinct to reproduce the nation. But when the out-group becomes people within your own nation—and this is how they speak of each other—you said "hate," right? I think you said "hate."

Well, they truly see the political opposition not simply as people with different views or different paths for the future, but as a threat to the ideals and the nation itself. And again, it's both sides using this rhetoric. So it's quite frightening, in terms of the ability to stay together in one country, if this is the sentiment people have toward the political opposition. Yeah. But to what extent are we doomed, though? I mean, those of us living in the Western world—because there's a big difference, I guess, between going through periods of rise and decline, and actually tipping into collapse. When does that happen?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah, so that's a great point—social cohesion is a huge problem in the Western world, especially in America. So the question then is, why is this happening? Why is there so much social and political polarization? For that, let's look at three theories, okay? The first is Peter Turchin, who proposed the idea of elite overproduction. He looked at the Roman civil wars, the French Revolution—he looked at all these times of political turmoil—and he identified elite overproduction as the main factor leading to civil war. His reasoning is that the world isn't divided between rich and poor; it's divided between those who have a lot and those who have some but want more—between the upper nobility and the lower nobility.

The problem is that as society grows wealthier, there are more elites, but only a limited number of positions of power. So these elites compete with each other for those limited positions. You could argue that's exactly what's happening in the United States right now, where you have Republican-aligned oligarchs—represented by big tech figures like Peter Thiel and Elon Musk—versus the financial elite, which is represented by the Democratic Party. You can almost see the second Trump administration as a kind of civil war between these different oligarchs in America. So that's the first theory. The second theory we have is from Thomas Piketty, who wrote this great book called *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. I'm sure you've read it, and I'm sure your viewers have too.

But he proposed the idea that, over time, capitalism naturally leads to a rentier economy, where if you just engage in speculation, you make more money than if you actually engage in productive labor. So if you put your money in the stock market, you might see about a 5% return. If you open a restaurant or start a factory, you might see around a 2% return. So everyone ends up putting their money into speculative capital, and that leads to the over-financialization of society. Eventually, that leads to financial collapse because no one's producing any real wealth. And the third theorist is Oswald Spengler, who argued that all civilizations are organic and have life cycles—meaning that, you know, you're born, you rise up, you mature, and then you die. It's just a natural life cycle.

There's nothing you can do about it. So if you look at these three theories and apply their framework to America, the country is really in a lot of trouble—and not just America, but the Western world. Because how do you deal with elite overproduction? Well, the only way you can deal with it is through revolution or civil war—through cataclysmic social destruction where most of the elite is

eliminated so that society resets. So Peter Turchin tells us we're screwed. Then you look at Thomas Piketty, and you have the monopolization and consolidation of capital in America, where now only a few companies account for about a third of stock market wealth, right? So you have the "Magnificent Seven," and they make up roughly a third of the value of the Standard & Poor's stock market index.

That's very problematic because, as monopolies, they don't have to create value. All they have to do is maintain their position. And that's why we see this, you know, um, this artificial intelligence bubble happening in the United States, which is very perilous and precarious for the American economy—because you're putting all this money into these data centers producing a product, AI, that has no actual social benefit and could threaten to destroy millions of jobs. And then also, Spengler tells us that societies die just like people do. And maybe, for the sake of humanity, that's a very good thing. So if you look at these three theories, it's very hard to figure out a way out of the social decline that the Western world is facing right now.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, Thomas Piketty—in his book *Capital*—made the point that the United States had a better setup for developing democracy. Because unlike Europe, where there was a lot of old wealth, the U.S. didn't have that same concentration of economic power. Of course, if you fast-forward to the present era, that's obviously no longer the case. That was also an argument made by Alexis de Tocqueville, by the way. But now, of course, it's a very different world. We have this concentration of wealth, which has its consequences. To what extent do you see the problems of today as an extension of the global financial crisis?

Because if you remember back in 2008 and 2009, there were a lot of concerns that the U.S.-led economic model had exhausted itself. The U.S. had borrowed too much, spent too much, and some of the energy was gone—too much cheap money, essentially. But the solution became to borrow more and spend more, and essentially inflate some asset bubbles. Most people recognized then that this was merely kicking the can down the road. Is this where we are now—the cheap money being kicked down the road? Because I remember in 2009, I think it was about $9 trillion in debt. Now they're up to $38 trillion. It's going to be much harder now, and they can't use the same instruments. How do you see this issue of cheap money?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah, so, you know, I think you bring up a good point about the 2008–2009 Great Financial Crisis, which really marked a turning point in American history—and you could argue, in Western history as well. The 2008 financial crisis was the culmination of very troubling trends that had been developing since the Reagan neoliberal era. The first trend was the move from manufacturing to the financialization of the economy. Before Reagan, most of the economy was geared toward

manufacturing—producing real wealth for export around the world. But with the rise of Reaganomics, you had a shift toward financialization, where America started to absorb all this easy money from around the world and turn it into risky financial instruments like derivatives and CDOs.

So, CDOs caused the 2008 Great Financial Crisis—that's the first trend. The second trend is the deregulation of the financial industry, the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, which had kept retail banking and investment banking separate. This led to massive consolidation in the financial industry, and these banks became "too big to fail." The third big trend is basically the elite capture of Washington, D.C. You may recall that in the '90s, before Bill Clinton, the Democratic Party was the party of the working class. They opposed NAFTA, they opposed most-favored-nation status for China—that was the Democratic Party in the '80s. And looking back, I don't think anyone can really remember what the Democratic Party looked like in the '80s.

But now the Democratic Party is really the party of the professional management class, especially the finance sector. So you have the elite capture of Washington, D.C. And 2008 was a turning point because, remember, Obama ran with the slogan of "hope and change." What he promised was basically to reverse all these trends that were creating this parasitic elite in America. But of course, when he got into office, he appointed Larry Summers—and, you know, Larry Summers and his team were the same people who created the Great Financial Crisis in the first place—to resolve the issue. And what they did was allow for a lot of easing. They basically bailed out all their friends on Wall Street and screwed over the American people.

You know, most people don't understand this, but Obama was the first Black president. Yet home ownership among African Americans declined more rapidly during his presidency than under any other in American history. More Black families lost their homes under Obama than under any other president. So Obama ended up screwing over the working class—especially the minority working class that had been most hopeful for his administration. 2008 and 2009 marked a turning point, and basically, the Democratic Party has now been co-opted by the financial elite. This is something that still continues today. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem as though the Democratic Party can reverse this trend.

#Glenn

Yeah, this wealth transfer from the middle class to the rich was quite extraordinary. One would then expect there to be a revolt against the elites as a result. And when we speak of populism—which is now very much demonized as a word—it's really the people pointing out that the elites have become too detached from the public. But that seems like a very natural criticism, or a reaction, to this kind of wealth transfer. I like that you go back to ancient Greece, because a key concern for people like Plato or Aristotle was that democracy could devolve into tyranny. The longer any people were free, or had liberty, the more they would begin to challenge all external authorities. The son would challenge the father, the student would challenge the teacher.

And it seems a lot of our current liberalism feeds into this—the idea that you reject all authorities. But it also eliminates all hierarchies. Yet we have good, benign hierarchies: the father and the son, the teacher and the student, where one wants to bring the other ideally above oneself. I mean, most fathers want their sons to do better than them—that's a good hierarchy. But it seems that in society we're losing these benign ones. Not all of them—that's maybe an exaggeration—but the benign hierarchies are in decline, while the more vicious or extractive, rentier, exploitative hierarchies are on the rise. How do you see this development? Is this the end or the death of democracy and the rise of tyranny? Or how can we predict how this will play out?

#Jiang Xueqin

Right, so let's look at ancient Rome, okay? After the three Punic Wars, Rome was the undisputed master of the Mediterranean. But it had this war machine that kept going, starting wars overseas. Why? Because the entire Roman economy was based on waging war. What would happen was that the nobility would start these wars to capture slaves to run their estates. When they started these wars, they conscripted peasants, and because those peasants could no longer work their land, they had to take out loans with their land as collateral. And of course, because of bad luck—because they got killed in the war—the family would lose the land.

And so what happened was that the nobility consolidated all this land, and the peasantry became a renter class. They were forced to go into the city of Rome to look for work, and this became a very unstable element in Roman society because now you had the rise of populism. The first major reformers were the Gracchi brothers, Tiberius Gracchus. His reform platform was the most innocuous, the most reasonable platform ever in human history. All he said was, "Hey guys, our peasant class can't work their land anymore because there's no land left for them."

But we, the Roman state, have all this public land that's not being used. So let's just give some of this land to the peasants who want to work hard and grow food for their families. That's the most reasonable strategy in the world, right? The problem was that the nobility treated public land as private land. Even though they were only using it, they still thought it was their own property. So they took offense at Tiberius Gracchus' proposal. And what they did was, on the streets of Rome, they beat him to death. Not only him—they also beat his brother to death.

These are known as the Gracchi brothers. So, I mean, I understand populism sounds bad, but if you look at history—look at how the ancient Greeks treated their peasant class, look at how the ancient Romans treated theirs—the elite becomes arrogant, complacent, and completely resistant to reform. In fact, if you propose any reform, they'll kill you. And this opens the door for adventurers, demagogues who can harness the anger of the people and turn them against the elite. And of course, in Rome, that led to the rise of Julius Caesar.

Now, what allowed for the rise of Julius Caesar was something really, really simple: he treated people with decency. You know, he went off to Gaul to start these wars, and rather than take all the

spoils for himself, he actually gave them to his soldiers. That created tremendous loyalty among them—so much so that his army was able to defeat the entire Roman Republic and establish Julius Caesar as the dictator of Rome. Of course, this would eventually lead to his assassination, but then it led to the rise of Octavius Caesar and the establishment of the Roman Empire. So if history teaches us anything, it's this.

The people don't want to rise up. The people don't want to rally behind a demagogue. But the elite often don't give people a choice, because the elite are parasitic, arrogant, and completely indifferent to the plight of the people. And this is something we're seeing throughout the Western world today, where the elite live in their own bubble. They don't understand the suffering of ordinary people. Look, the reality is that in America today, most people can't afford an emergency that costs $500. If they get sick and have to go to the hospital and have to shell out $500, they can't do it.

The grocery prices are skyrocketing. Um, they're heavily in debt. I mean, if you're an average American, life is really hard for you, and you really don't see any, um, possible exit. Look, 2016—okay, we would live in a different world if, in 2016, Bernie Sanders were the Democratic nominee. And honestly, if the Democrats had a fair Democratic primary like the Republicans did, Bernie Sanders would have been the nominee in 2016 and 2020, and he would have won the presidency. But they insisted on rigging the primary, and this allowed for the rise of Trump. So Trump would not have been possible—Trump would not be feasible—without the fact that the Democrats are a very corrupt, very arrogant, and very out-of-touch party.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, I also tend to look at populism as a reaction to an elite that becomes more and more decoupled. But you make a good point, though, that the populists don't always have good answers. I mean, they have their finger on the pulse of the public, they respond to that frustration, but... but I wanted to ask about Trump for that reason, because in Europe especially, there's no journalist or politician who can understand why Americans would have voted for him. To be honest, I probably would have voted for him if I were American, just to throw a wrench into the system, because it wasn't sustainable.

It was going from bad to worse. That doesn't mean I think his solutions are very good. I think his tariffs are a mess—they don't work well. The idea of always trying to solve everything with quick fixes, through strength, and now more and more war, I think that's not a great approach. But not understanding his appeal—that's quite dangerous. So how do you see him going forward? If you were to make a prediction about Trump, do you see him dissolving democracy, or is he actually able to hold the elites accountable? What do you think his path looks like?

#Jiang Xueqin

Look, in 2016 the entire world was shocked, bewildered, confused, perplexed—disturbed by the fact that he was able to beat Hillary Clinton, who was a career politician. She was Secretary of State, also the First Lady. She had tremendous political experience with, you know, a team of thousands of career politicians solidly behind her. So she would have been a very effective candidate and president if she had won. But the Americans didn't want that, because, as you say, they were sick of the system as it was. Hillary Clinton would have just been another corrupt politician who looked after her friends and screwed over the American middle class. And so, you know, they did these interviews with average Americans, and they were asked, like, why did you vote for Trump even though he was not a reliable, not an experienced politician?

And their response was, "Because I wanted to assert my authority, because I wanted to assert my agency, because I wanted my voice to matter. I'm sick of being pissed on by the elite. That's the reason why." You know, this Washington elite—in Washington, D.C., in San Francisco, in New York City—they don't even know I exist. And now, by electing Trump, they know I exist and that my voice matters. That's why they voted for him. Then in 2020, people didn't want the division that Trump caused, so they elected Biden. And their lives got worse and worse.

So they're in a situation where, you know, if they vote for who they're supposed to vote for, that person just ignores their plight. That person will do nothing to improve their livelihood. Trump, on the other hand, is someone who could throw a wrench in the system, as you point out—someone who can disrupt the status quo. And he's doing that right now with Project 2025, right? But people certainly don't want things to stay as they are. So they're voting for change, even though it may lead to chaos, in the hope that their lives might get a bit better.

#Glenn

Let's burn down the current house, hoping that something else will take its place. But I want to shift to more specifics, because here in Europe we're fighting now—well, I would have called it a proxy war against Russia, but it's becoming increasingly direct. I thought it was interesting that you mentioned Spengler earlier in the civilizational discourse, because he used to refer to the Russians as more barbaric and primitive. But when he did so, he meant it in the sense you described—that they were more youthful. He actually saw it as beneficial to reach out to the Russians to help regain some of Europe's vitality and youth.

But there's no such sentiment today. Of course, one could say there was a bit of a demeaning reference to them, but nonetheless, within that framework of civilizations taking on the lifespan of a human being, the Russians were seen as the youthful part. But today, in the Ukraine war, where do you see this going? Because I'm very perplexed by the information coming out—it seems so divorced from reality. For example, in the 1990s, throughout that whole decade, we had discussions about the dangers of expanding NATO without bringing in Russia. Now it's all memory-holed, as if it never happened. So where do you see this war actually going?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah, so I think for the past year, the war has basically been over. If you just look at the front lines—if you look at how the Russians are fighting this war as opposed to how the Ukrainians are fighting it—the Russian soldiers are demonstrating energy, openness, and cohesion. What I mean by that is they're constantly learning from their mistakes and adapting to the circumstances. The Russians have really mastered joint warfare for reconnaissance purposes.

At first, they were using these large battalion units against the Ukrainians, and they realized they could be easily targeted and attacked by drones. So now it's like two or three reconnaissance infantry on motorcycles, and that's destroying Ukrainian defenses because the front lines are huge, and the Ukrainians aren't able to respond to such energy and initiative among the Russian soldiers. If you talk to these Russian soldiers—if you interview them on the front lines—they'll tell you this is a crusade. This is a crusade to save Russian civilization, a crusade to save the motherland, a crusade to destroy the Antichrist, which they believe is the corruption of Russian civilization. So they're extremely energetic, extremely open, extremely cohesive. And then you go talk to the Ukrainian soldiers.

And it's the complete opposite, right? Now they're dragging these 50-year-old men off the streets of Ukraine to fight this war that's completely pointless, hopeless, and lost. The desertion rates among Ukrainian soldiers are sky-high, right? You're talking about hundreds of thousands of soldiers who are deserting. So this war is completely lost. And the reason why Ukrainians have not admitted defeat is that it would be political suicide for the regime in Kyiv to admit defeat, right? Because if Zelensky, after promising for the past four years that Russia is just a house of cards that's going to decline and collapse because of sanctions the very next day—well, you've been saying this for the past four years—you've won the social media war. I mean, if you just watch social media, the Ukrainians have been amazing, right?

You can't tell your people the war is lost—you'll get assassinated. And regardless of what happens, if you admit defeat, there will be a revolution in Ukraine. So the Ukrainians are stuck where they are; they have to see this thing through to the bitter end. Now, the Europeans are sponsoring the Ukrainians with the expectation that they'll win this war. And look, this isn't really said clearly in the media, but NATO has been in this war from the very beginning. Yes, it's Ukrainian manpower, Ukrainian soldiers on the front lines, but it's NATO weaponry, NATO targeting, NATO surveillance, NATO special forces, NATO command and control, and NATO financing. It's been everything from NATO. So NATO is sort of stuck in this war as well.

It's a kind of fallacy. It's like you go to a casino and you've lost a million dollars—you can't just leave, because how do you tell your wife you lost a million dollars, right? So you're stuck where you are. Ukraine's stuck. NATO's stuck. And this war is going to be resolved only by a military solution. I know there's a 20-point deal on the table right now, but there's no way Ukraine can say yes to it.

There's no way NATO can say yes to it. So I think what's going to happen is the Russians are going to march all the way to Odessa. And once they take Odessa, the war is over, because Russia will have achieved all its strategic objectives. By that point, NATO will have imploded.

#Glenn

I like the way you used openness as a point of departure, because often in the West we subscribe to the idea that we're open because we're the liberal democracy, while Russia is authoritarian, so it's closed. But it seems one of our main problems in Europe is exactly that—we've become closed in the sense of refusing to see reality as it is. I agree that usually in a war, between invading and defending forces, the defenders have the advantage in terms of morale because they're protecting their homeland. They have greater motivation compared to anyone who's just being militarily opportunistic. But this has kind of been the assumption in the West—that the Ukrainians would fight and the Russians would simply flee once they realized the moral corruption of their government, which was just trying to snatch some new territories.

But all of this leaves NATO out of the equation. And if we leave NATO out because we can't admit we're involved, suddenly that undermines our ability to interpret the Russians' motivations. As you say, they genuinely see this as a war for their own existence—and I'd add, for very good reason. But again, if we all have to conform to this narrative that it's just opportunism, that they're simply hungry for more territory, that it's somehow in the Russian DNA, then all our analysis will be wrong. I'm wondering if you see openness as part of the weakness we have, because it's not just one issue. I think a big crisis we face in the West is a crisis of strategy itself.

That is, we can't even interpret threats anymore. Threats entail assessing intentions and capabilities. But when you're obligated to hate your opponent, how can you possibly interpret their intentions and capabilities in an objective way? I mean, in Europe, you can't even discuss the security concerns of your opponents. Right? I mean, come to this continent and try to explain what you think are the security concerns of China, Iran, or Russia—you'd be crucified. You'd have your career destroyed. They'd come after you. It's incredible. How are you going to have sensible policies if you can't actually talk about your opponents in a way that humanizes them?

#Jiang Xueqin

Look, I went to school at Yale, and this was in the late '90s. Yale College—and America at that point—was a very open, dynamic society where you were welcome to criticize everyone and everything. And I said to myself, you know what? If a society is so open, there's no way it could ever decline. Fast forward to 2016, right? You had Brexit, you had the election of Donald Trump. And at this point, if you're part of the elite, it's a good time to reflect and appreciate that the world isn't what you think it is—and to recognize that there are some serious problems in society that need to be addressed, especially wealth inequality, corruption, and debt among the poor.

And so now's a good time to reset your society. Instead, the elite chose to turtle up, create their own bubble, and just ignore all criticism. This got worse during COVID, and they became extremely insular. The elite became even more insular after the Russians invaded Ukraine, because that invasion was a paradigm shift for the Western elite. They couldn't imagine that anyone could possibly challenge the empire, right? I mean, the Russians were supposed to be this gas station with nuclear weapons—poor, backward, barbaric people surviving on Western generosity. And their elite was extremely corrupt. So how could they possibly dare to challenge us?

So the Russian invasion was a major shock to the elite—I mean, it really popped their bubble. But then they were like, you know what, we'll just double down. We'll keep believing our silly ideas, even though they make no sense, and we'll believe that Ukraine will win this war. So we've reached a point where, unfortunately, the biggest problem in the Western world is the arrogance, the insularity, and the closed-mindedness of the elite. And the elite now have absolutely no strategic foresight. Not only do they refuse to consider the strategic perspectives of Russia, Iran, and China, as you say, but they also refuse to admit that they could be at fault for what happened, right?

They absolutely refuse to accept that NATO expansion provoked the Russians into this war, and they have no plan for moving forward. You ask them, like, you know, "Well, if Ukraine loses this war, what are you going to do?" And they're like, "They're not going to lose this war." Okay, well, what happens if America forces you to send troops to Ukraine? They have no idea what to do. So you have this Western elite that's put their heads in the sand—collectively, they've buried their heads and are just praying the sky doesn't fall on them. But the sky is going to fall on them.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, well, again, this is one of—I've never seen anything like this. People talked about propaganda during the invasion of Iraq; I remember that well. And this just pales in comparison. I mean, this media coverage of Russians sending "meat waves" and all that—it's easy to disprove, but that's my point. If you had an open society where you could disprove it, that would be one thing, but… Even if you look through the whole history of the conflict, from the coup, it's very easy to find evidence that it was a coup, that there was a toppling, and that within the first 24 hours of the coup, the U.S. and others began to seize control over the intelligence agencies, government, and economy of Ukraine to use it as a tool against the Russians.

But even when you have the facts, which can't be disputed, I've noticed we've gone to a different level now. Now they say, "Well, then you're supporting the Russian narratives." So it's no longer about whether it's true or not—it's that the story seems to give legitimacy to the Russians and delegitimizes us. So merely presenting it, even if it's correct, becomes about the narrative. That's the problem. You're supposed to be in the trenches with us, and if you're not, you just say "ABC." That's all you have to do.

Even the sanctions—this is something that also perplexed me, because since 2014 that's been my main research focus: Russia diversifying its economy, looking east, making itself more bulletproof to sanctions. So I said right away, as soon as the sanctions came, they could never succeed—Russia was prepared for this. But then you're told you're undermining trust in the sanctions. It's all a socially constructed phenomenon: if we believe the sanctions work, people will support them, and then eventually Russia will be exhausted. So reality isn't part of the discussion anymore; it's just a battle of narratives, it seems.

#Jiang Xueqin

Look, look, I mean, the reality is that the Western elite has absolutely no plan moving forward. They have absolutely no imagination. They're not able to reflect or innovate. OK, so, you know, they impose sanctions on Russia in 2020 because they imposed sanctions on Russia in 2014. And, you know, Trump comes into office, and at this point everyone knows sanctions aren't going to work. In fact, the Russian economy is doing quite well. So, you know, Russia has so many workarounds against these Western sanctions. And Trump basically said to Putin, "If you don't cooperate with me, I'm going to impose sanctions on you." So we've reached a point where the entire Western world lives in its own bubble, far removed from reality.

Another issue that's going to tear Western Europe apart is immigration. You know, I mean, yeah, this war in Ukraine is not going well. But look, this immigration issue—it's going to tear Western society apart. You look at what's happening in France, in the UK. I mean, you have these race riots going on, and you have to ask yourself how much longer society can stay together now that there's so much immigration, so much conflict within these nation-states. So unfortunately, looking forward, I think what's going to happen is that the Western world, especially NATO, is going to commit more in Ukraine, and this is going to cause civil wars within these societies. And they're unable to see what's bleedingly obvious to everyone else.

#Glenn

Well, if we shift toward another part of the world—because these are indeed turbulent times, largely due to the exhaustion of the West but also the rise of new centers of power—China, of course, is one that exudes a lot of energy right now. Anyone who goes there can almost feel it in the air. But these are, for that reason, turbulent times. I mean, one would think that a clash between these two giants, China and the U.S., could come in different forms. Indeed, it's already an economic war. But if it's not going well for the American side, will they turn to a military option? How do you see the U.S.–China rivalry playing out?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah, so I have a very different take on the U.S.–China rivalry than other analysts, okay? I believe that Russia and Iran are both revisionist powers in that they've been isolated—they've been ostracized by the global economy controlled by the United States and its allies. But China is very much a status quo power, in that it has benefited tremendously over the past 40 years from globalization, especially trade with the United States. You could also argue that the U.S. and Chinese economies are codependent, meaning China takes its excess cheap labor and exports to the United States.

In return, the United States gives China U.S. dollars. So what's happening is that China is essentially supporting or propping up the U.S. dollar, which everyone knows is a Ponzi scheme. And the United States, in return, is transferring technology to China, helping it become wealthier, and opening its vast consumer market to Chinese goods—thereby giving millions of Chinese people employment opportunities. So I think China and the United States will eventually achieve a rapprochement.

And we're already seeing that, because President Xi and President Trump did meet in South Korea, and the meeting went very well. Well, reportedly it wasn't a great meeting, but Trump said it went really well. And we should expect more meetings in the coming year. I think what will happen is a rapprochement between China and the United States, because they benefit more from working together than from fighting each other. These two economies are basically interdependent and intertwined, right? Because, you know, America's been talking for the past ten years about onshoring its manufacturing—and it hasn't worked out, because the American economy cannot sustain the cost of onshoring. All these billion-dollar projects that have been emphasized and highlighted haven't turned out very well. So China is basically irreplaceable in terms of providing cheap manufacturing to the United States. I think the friendship between the United States and China will improve over time.

#Glenn

Well, it does seem that a lot of the hostility toward China from the U.S. is based on the idea that they can't live side by side with a powerful China. In other words, it looks as if it's something that undermines the U.S. hegemon rather than the U.S. itself. I don't know—I get the impression that the U.S. can't really restore its former hegemony. The 1990s aren't coming back. And I think if there were more rational discussions in the U.S.—and actually, there are more and more voices suggesting this—a settlement could be found with China. Because if the U.S. would accept China, it wouldn't have to prevent its rise. The U.S. could actually benefit from being, you know, one among equals in a multipolar system. It could reduce its foreign exposure and stop bleeding so many resources.

It can get its economic house in order, stabilize society and the economy. But, of course, states don't always act rationally when they're in decline—that's usually where my pessimism comes from. From a rational perspective, though, one would think that the U.S., given the counter-story of hegemony, could stabilize under a multipolar system, that there would be some room for that. But my last

question is again about the two Eurasian giants. The big thing that no one seemed to predict was that China and Russia would find common ground. Indeed, their economies are quite mutually complementary. Unlike between Europe and Russia, there's no Ukraine in between that can be used as a proxy to decouple Europe. Should we be surprised if this partnership is sustained over time?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah, I'm not that optimistic about the Russia–China relationship, because I think there are some geopolitical questions that still need to be resolved. One flashpoint that comes to mind is Kazakhstan. Ever since the 1980s, China has been investing heavily there, because Kazakhstan is such a pivotal point for the Belt and Road Initiative. Everything basically has to pass through Kazakhstan to reach the Middle East and Europe. So China has been spending a lot of resources trying to co-opt the Kazakhstani elite. It's invested heavily in the country.

And what's happened over the past few years is that Kazakhstan has developed a much more pro-Russian attitude. There's basically been a change of guard in Kazakhstan, and the government is now leaning more toward Russia. My point is, I understand that people see Iran, Russia, and China forming this Eurasian bloc that could negate American naval power. And if that were to happen, the Eurasian continent might prosper. But we have to remember that geography and history are pretty persistent, and Russia, China, and Iran have long histories of conflict—long histories of geographical and geopolitical tension.

So I don't know how easily these conflicts can be resolved. I know that China is very heavily invested in the Belt and Road Initiative, but Russia has its north–south corridor, and Iran has its own trade route programs. So the question then is, okay, if these three nations were to come together and work together, who would be the top dog? Whose currency would be the universal currency? And can all these territorial disputes that have persisted for the past few centuries be resolved through negotiations? I think there are some serious geopolitical issues that need to be addressed before these nations can work peacefully together.

#Glenn

Yeah, because what one often hears from China and Russia is that they're not allies—they're more than allies. An ally would essentially be country A and B cooperating against country C. In other words, the argument is that they're not dependent on collectively balancing the U.S. But this is what I was wondering: the United States—everyone recognizes that the U.S. attempt to impose its primacy has brought these countries together. If the U.S. were to end its aspirations to restore hegemony, they would no longer need this collective balancing. Do you think a lot of the problems or challenges between the Chinese, Russians, and Iranians would start to surface more if the U.S. were taken out of the equation?

#Jiang Xueqin

Okay, so if I were a Chinese geopolitical strategist—I'm not, okay?—but if I were, if I were with the government, what I'd say is that, objectively speaking, it's probably better for China that the U.S. remains in Southeast Asia than if it were to leave. The reason is, let's imagine the U.S. leaves, okay? Well, how would Japan respond? How would India respond? How would Russia respond? How would South Korea respond? How would North Korea respond? So there are these different geopolitical actors in my region, and I'd really have trouble anticipating how they'd behave.

Japan has been historically very aggressive because they're a naval power without much land or resources. People don't always appreciate this, but the great naval power in Southeast Asia is not the United States—it's not even China—it's actually Japan. If we took out air power, the Japanese Navy would be the dominant naval force in Southeast Asia. And the reason is, they have to be. Remember, Japan is an isolated island with very few resources, so they need to be able to exert naval hegemony throughout Southeast Asia. During World War II, they had something called the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

So, Japan is very much an aggressive maritime power. Then you look at South Korea, which has always had these historical animosities against Japan and against China for being colonized by those two great powers. Look at Vietnam, look at India. So if I'm a geopolitical analyst, I'm like, you know what, I'm happy with the United States being where it is, because at least it maintains the status quo. And I'm happy with the status quo because I don't have to deal with Japan, South Korea, Russia, and India. So I'm saying this as a geopolitical analyst working in China. I don't— I mean, I'm just saying I prefer things to be much more predictable, much more stable, much more continuous. And that means having the United States stay where it is.

#Glenn

I think that's an excellent point. One should be careful what one wishes for. If the U.S. were to leave East Asia, there's a good chance Japan would cross the threshold of developing, for example, nuclear weapons if it had to maintain its own deterrent. And indeed, one only has to look at Europe. The Trump administration has questioned its interest and priority in maintaining its presence there. And the response—well, look at Germany, which used to be a peaceful country that had learned from World War II. Now it's becoming one of the most militaristic.

They want to join in on nuclear sharing. They want to have the biggest army in Europe. I mean, they'd like to be at the front of confronting Russia. This isn't even recognizable as the Germany of just four or five years ago. So I do think if the U.S. were to pull out of East Asia, the consequences might not be in China's favor either. I think that's a very valid point to make. Before we go, though, do you have any final thoughts?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah, so one thing I'm looking very closely at—and I think your viewers might be interested in as well—is the rise of Pax Judaica. What I'm watching is how a lot of nations believe that Pax Judaica may be in their best interest, and therefore they're promoting its rise. The United States promoting the rise of Pax Judaica, that's understandable. But if I'm in Russia, Israel would be a very good trading partner because, you know, eventually Russia is going to win this war in Ukraine. It's going to control the Donbass and therefore be able to control about a third of the world's carbohydrates. Where's my market? My market is in Africa. My market is in the Middle East.

And so Israel would be the perfect entry point into these markets. Right. So if I'm Russia, I think that perhaps Pax Judaica works to my benefit. If I'm China, Pax Judaica works to my benefit as well, because Pax Judaica means that Israel would take control over Syria, Iraq, Egypt, possibly Libya. And as such, Israel would need a lot of infrastructure spending. It would need a lot of infrastructure projects. It would also need to spend a lot of money on data centers, on artificial intelligence, and create this massive surveillance state to watch over the greater Israel project of Pax Judaica. So I think the big surprise over the next five to ten years is the rise of Pax Judaica. And that's something I'm watching very closely right now.

#Glenn

But wouldn't the counterargument be that Israel has begun to exhaust itself by overextending its military? The economy has also been harmed by many young people leaving. It's fueling a major political crisis now. And, you know, it seems that at the heart of it there's a deeper problem—the entire ethos of what Israel should represent is being questioned, if not undermined. Of course, you can also add that the neighbors, the leadership across the Arab states, and even Turkey now face more challenges in explaining why they're not taking a more hostile approach to Israel. Given that the U.S. is in relative decline as its main protector, one usually hears the opposite argument—that Israel is essentially finished.

#Jiang Xueqin

Right. How would you respond to that? I think the nation of Israel and Pax Judaica are not the same thing. The nation of Israel is very much a Zionist project, whereas Pax Judaica would be a project of transnational capital or finance. So let's just say I have a billion dollars and need to invest it somewhere. I don't want to invest in the United States because it's $38 trillion in debt, it's divided, and it seems to be on the very brink of civil war. So it's kind of silly for me to put a billion dollars in the United States. Where do I put this money? Well, the only place where I can put it and see it grow over time is Israel. And the reason why is the entire Middle East—you look at Libya, you look at Iraq, Syria—it's destroyed, but that… that offers opportunity for growth, right?

So if I'm capital, I'm only interested in growth and return on investment. And I think every wealthy person thinks like that. If I have a billion dollars in the bank, I have to put my money somewhere—I'

d put it in Israel. And not only that, I'd work very hard to ensure that Israel wins out. And as you say, maybe that's something the Israelis themselves don't want, but often history is decided by those with power rather than by the people themselves. Well, that's a very interesting perspective. I hadn't looked at it from that angle. So, before you go, where can people find you and follow your work? Yeah, I have a YouTube channel, *Predictive History*, where I upload my lectures on history.

So I'm basically just trying to analyze what happened before and figure out what it means for the present. I've done a lot of analysis of Middle Eastern history, and I believe that Pax Judaica is the future. I think that issue will become a dominant power in the Middle East. If you want to understand my reasoning and my analysis, definitely check out my YouTube channel, *Predictive History*, where I go into the history of the Middle East. I also have a Substack, also called *Predictive History*, where you can subscribe. Most of our courses are free, so if you're interested in my geopolitical analysis, I'd highly recommend it. Thank you.

#Glenn

Yeah, we should have devoted more time to the Middle East, but maybe next time. Thank you so much.

#Jiang Xueqin

Okay.

#Glenn

Bye.