

U.S. National Security Strategy Embraces Kissinger-Style Strategy

Dr. Gilbert Doctorow discusses the influence of Kissinger's thinking on the new US National Security Strategy (NSS 2025). Gilbert Doctorow's new book "War Diaries. Volume 1: The Russia-Ukraine War, 2022-2023" is now available on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/War-Diaries-Russia-Ukraine-2022-2023/dp/B0F9VK1WM2> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.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. We are joined today by Gilbert Doctorow, historian, international affairs analyst, and author of **War Diaries: The Russia-Ukraine War**. Thank you for coming on. This is an interesting document that has just been released by the United States—the new U.S. National Security Strategy. It's quite a departure from previous decades and the broader strategy of the U.S., its conception of what the world order should be. What do you make of this new security strategy?

#Gilbert Doctorow

Well, first of all, it's not new—let's make that clear. I haven't seen anyone go back to look at what Mr. Trump's first NSS was in December 2017. If they did, they'd find that document had two different authors, so to speak, and went in two different directions. What we're looking at today had one set of authors and goes in one direction. What's the difference? The difference is that in 2017, Mr. Trump was not his own man, and he issued an NSS that was composed partly in the traditional manner.

It was partly composed by experts within the National Security Council, which was then headed by Lieutenant General McMaster. And there was a certain lady, Nadia Schadlow, who was said to have written the components of the NSS that looked traditional. Then the other part of it—the dominant part—was written by people around Donald Trump, if not by Trump himself through his speechwriters. And that was entirely different. That was exactly what we're reading now. Because there were two authors in 2017, the NSS came to 68 pages. Since there's one set of authors today, it comes to 33 pages.

All of the excess weight has been thrown out—the contradiction between traditional, values-based American foreign policy, that is, the idealistic policy, and the national interest-driven foreign policy

we call realpolitik. Then, as now, the document was careful to avoid any identification with an ideology. This is pointed out very specifically to people who actually look at texts—which, unfortunately, most commentators don't do. And when you look at the text, you find terms here that are extremely important. You notice, at the very beginning, Trump says that foreign policy should be pragmatic, not pragmatist; realistic, but not realist.

Well, let's put that into simple English. What he's saying is that he doesn't want to replace one ideology with another—but he is, of course. The basic principle of the NSS, which has no internal contradiction in its latest edition, is unrealism. And where does that come from? Again, nobody's talking about it, and I don't know why. How can you do serious commentary without looking at where ideas come from? They come from Henry Kissinger. In 2016 and 2017, during the presidential election, Kissinger was called in several times to give advice to Donald Trump. I don't know at the moment what kind of contacts they had before the campaign.

I believe there were some. After all, they were both based in New York. But in 2017, after he assumed the presidency, Trump invited Kissinger in several more times. This ended, I think, after the first quarter of 2017, when Trump's whole foreign policy was derailed. It was derailed following the forced resignation of General Flynn, who had been Trump's national security advisor during the election campaign and was then officially appointed to that post after he took office. That was a terrible appointment because Flynn was a highly compromised individual, and Trump should have understood that. His ethical values were zero.

And I know that, having attended the 10th anniversary of RT in December 2016—where Flynn was the guest of honor and received a \$150,000 speaker's fee from RT—well, anyway, I won't go into that. The point is that after the first quarter of 2017, Trump no longer had control of his foreign policy. He had appointed neocons all around him in order to get their confirmation from the Senate without a fight. The most problematic person was his secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, who, once in office, never missed an opportunity to stab Trump in the back without his own personal involvement. In any case, Trump's foreign policy was wrecked in the first quarter.

Nonetheless, he did not give up, and the principles he wanted to bring to bear on American foreign policy were set out in that NSS of December 2017. They were, as I say, pragmatism. And he said there that the interest would be consequences—what is the outcome, not what is the good principle. And that is the overriding driving force in what we see in the NSS issued less than a week ago. It is the principles of Henry Kissinger, as they were moderated by his buffeting against the prevailing values-driven foreign policy that rode roughshod over everybody and everything after 1991. Kissinger, in 1994, had written his roadmap for what the future should be.

He, Brzezinski, Sam Huntington, and Fukuyama were the principal figures—whose books laid out what the roadmap for a post-Cold War world should look like. Kissinger's contribution was **Diplomacy** (1994), which expressed his heartfelt belief in the principles of balance of power, a restrained foreign policy, abandoning hegemonism, and avoiding wars of choice. All of that was set

out with reference to history—a history of diplomacy going back to the 17th and 18th centuries, where those principles were first worked out, and further back to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which established the key issue in any school of realism. Now, as I said, he was buffeted. He was rejected.

The principles he set forth were denounced, for example by Hillary Clinton, as outdated. The Democrats, following Joseph Nye's idea of "smart power," saw that as the proper guide for American foreign policy and didn't want to hear a word about balance of power or interest-driven policy. Although interest-driven thinking had always been a core factor in American foreign policy, it was covered by a very heavy layer of values-driven ideology. Kissinger adjusted his statements. He paid obeisance to the prevailing prejudices of the U.S. foreign policy community. And in his 2015 book **World Order**, he gave a role to values—that is to say, realism and national interest should be pursued, but always with an eye on national values.

It is that Kissinger-style, somewhat contrite but still knowing what he wanted—which is national interest—that Mr. Trump picked up and carried, even after being beaten up in the "Russia, Russia, Russia" campaigns against him during that year. He put it into his NSS in December 2017. So I'm saying there's nothing new here, and I'm shocked that so many commentators ignore this fact. The overarching point of realism is that it doesn't end in war. Realism means you make compromises, and compromise means you use diplomacy. A values-driven foreign policy is based on universal values, which by definition cannot and should not be compromised. And if you're not looking for compromises, then you have no role or place for diplomacy in your foreign policy. And that's where we've been for the last twenty years.

This is not just an arbitrary fact that Biden didn't use diplomacy. No, it's rooted in the basic thinking behind the principles of idealist foreign policy—it's just another name for it. It goes by several labels: idealist foreign policy, Wilsonian foreign policy. They all mean the same thing. It's values-based versus interests-based. So I read this NSS with great attention, and there are some remarkable things hidden in it if you bother to look. Just to give an example—I don't want to get us derailed from the big issues—but you see that Trump mentions his three pages devoted to Europe. And, of course, a lot of attention has gone to that: "Oh, only three pages for Europe, only three pages for each other major region of the world." So it's rather foolish to say that this is somehow discriminatory against Europe.

But in the pages about Europe—which are very negative, of course—it's true, you find in the middle of it he says, you know, the Germans have deindustrialized, and their companies are going to China, going there to take advantage of cheap Russian gas. Now, let's read between the lines. What he's saying, also in his statements in the same section, is that Europe should find some stable relationship with Russia, and that would be good for its economy. Well, let's follow the dotted lines. What he's saying, without attracting the attention of Lindsey Graham and all the others who would bash him for it, is that the Europeans should go back to importing Russian pipeline gas. So there are things in this that deserve to be brought out, but nobody's doing it.

#Glenn

I think it's interesting you bring up Kissinger, because in the first Trump administration, when he wanted to get along with Russia, there was this one sentence that always came back to haunt him. It was seen as inherently suspicious that he wanted to get along with Russia. And again, the conspiracy theory pushed with Russiagate claimed he was paid by the Russians. I feel many people overlooked the fact that he had all these meetings with Kissinger, who made the point that this is not how great-power diplomacy should work. He argued that, essentially, we have to bring the Russians closer to at least our side of the ledger; otherwise, we'll push them too far toward the Chinese.

And I can also imagine Kissinger being a bit cautious about the whole principle of hegemonic peace, or the liberal hegemon, given that it inherently becomes very ideological. And also, there's not much room left for diplomacy. If your strategy is based solely on global dominance, then what role is there for diplomacy to manage security competition with your rivals? There isn't really much to begin with. You shouldn't be too surprised by the way the Europeans were referenced. By the way, I very much agree. I think Trump obviously picked up on the fact that, no matter what the German authorities decide to do, it's interesting that German companies are following the Russian energy.

So if Germany doesn't want it, they send the same Russian gas to China. Then, of course, the German companies will go where that Russian gas is. But the way Europe is described, this seems like a significant decoupling, doesn't it? In terms of how they look at NATO—the end of NATO expansionism, which has been the core institutional framework for the transatlantic partnership—and the very pessimistic view about the future of European civilization. Essentially, it's not worth betting on. And also, many European leaders reacted to Trump's efforts to "save Europe," that is, to cultivate resistance—I think that's what the document said.

#Gilbert Doctorow

Well, I'm very happy to get into that because I think it's of prime importance. But before that, I'd like to take a step back. Let's not be misunderstood about Kissinger. Kissinger had cultivated a great many enemies. The awful things he did during the Vietnam War—bringing the war to other Southeast Asian nations, the devastating destruction that took place under his superintendency—made him face denunciations as a war criminal, which he never lived down. There are those who said that Kissinger, in the second half of his life, was trying to make up for the crimes he committed in the first half of his life. That isn't exactly true, and it comes back to what we were talking about a moment ago—what kind of sage advice Kissinger could have given the specter of the Russians.

Kissinger was not someone who liked Russia. Strange to say, he loved China—Chinese food, I don't know, Chinese women, I don't know what it was—but Kissinger read a lot about China. He wrote a book about China. He didn't write any books about Russia. He had no particular liking for Russia,

although he should have learned something about it because, after all, they were the dominant figures under Alexander I during the period in which he wrote his dissertation—that is, the Congress of Vienna, the order that established the Holy Alliance. But he never really liked Russia. And, importantly, let's not talk about little things; let's talk about big things.

In 1994, Kissinger was arm in arm with Brzezinski in his testimony to Congress, urging against bringing Russia into NATO. The two of them were singing from the same chorus sheet. He was anti-Russian, and he wasn't even in favor of the watered-down association with Russia that Clinton eventually approved—those regular meetings between Russia and NATO. He was against that. So he's had various positions, many of them very unconstructive about Russia, even in the 1990s. But then, in the early 21st century, after 2008, when Bush came close to war with Russia by considering or attempting intervention in the Russia–Georgia war, by sending warships into the Black Sea...

Kissinger was one of the leading personalities in a group of wise men who sought to give advice to the Bush administration on restoring, uh, civilized communications and relations with Russia. So he's gone this way and that, but the ideas he brought forward—this is, in fact, the interest-based foreign policy that, of course, was durable from the beginning of his career, and the balance of power, which, of course, was what came out of the 1812 wars and was revived as a dominant principle in European diplomacy—those stayed with him to the end of his life. Now, coming... I'd just like to—I know it isn't entirely appropriate, but I'll do it anyway.

I'd like to—since you kindly mentioned my book **War Diaries**—bring up this Belgian perspective on international affairs, because that's where what I just said about the NSS of 2017 is coming from. This is a book that's only beginning to get a little bit of buy-in. I just sold the first copy as an e-book in Japan, which, you know, after seven years, I finally got around to. Unfortunately, people mistake “Belgian perspective” as meaning it's about little Belgium—who cares about little Belgium? Although, judging by what we're going to talk about in a minute, they should care about little Belgium, since Belgium may do more to end the war in Ukraine than anything Orban has done or that Trump is trying to do.

That's a separate issue that I hope we get to. And on the question of Trump—lest anybody think that I'm a bought-in backer of Trump, come hell or high water—read chapter one of this book, where I explain why we should impeach Trump. That was written in September 2017, after his disastrous debut at the General Assembly of the United Nations, when he called for the utter destruction of North Korea, a country of 22 million people. I decided it was time for him to go. So I follow what's in front of my eyes—not what I'd like to see, but what I actually see.

And today I see Trump as very constructive, and the ideas he puts forward in that manner are very important. But coming to what you just asked as a lead-in question—what about relations with Europe? I'd like to come to a point you've raised very rightly in some of your discussions. I don't recall with whom; I don't think it was with me, but you definitely raised it in the past several months. That is, to gesticulate—why can't Europe reverse itself? Why can't it change policy? And as I

say, I believe that Mr. Trump and his advisers understand this. They're talking about intervening, interfering in European affairs because Europe cannot change itself short of having a revolution in the streets.

And that is of great importance. I don't recall exactly what you were arguing for, or explaining why it cannot reverse itself. But I have a couple of ideas I want to throw out here. It can't reverse itself, firstly because the 27 European member states have no sovereignty. In the same book, *This Belgian Perspective*, I mention in passing remarks that came out in a book published around that time by Mark Eyskens—E-Y-S-K-E-N-S, for those who don't follow Belgian pronunciation. He was a prime minister of Belgium, and he wrote memoirs. Towards the end of his life, I happened to pick up one of them.

And he was saying that, you know, European member states have lost their sovereignty, and today their governments count for no more than a municipal government. Now, he said this in 2017, and it's certainly true today—the 27 prime ministers are nobodies, not just in principle but in fact. They are, as Putin has said, accidental people. That's the number one reason. So, all power is in the hands of the European Commission, which sounds democratic. After all, the European Commission is voted into office by the European Parliament, and the European Parliament is elected by the people. So it's indirect representation.

But ultimately, you could say it's democratic because, in this indirect representation, the voice of the people finds expression in who comes to power in the Commission. Not true. It is, in fact, a leverage instrument for Germany. Germany runs Europe. During the time of Angela Merkel—I've pointed this out before—all of the high officials of the EU were German-appointed. That's part number one. Now, how does that happen? Because the Commission is voted in by the European Parliament, which is dominated by the European People's Party, which in turn is dominated by the Christian Democratic Party in Germany.

So Germany is using enormous leverage here. They're what—85 million? I forget what the population is. And the population of Europe is, what, 350 or 400 million, or more. So they're getting about five times the leverage from their population to control the whole of Europe, by essentially deciding who the Commission president is, and she decides who her fellow commissioners are. Because that's all done in backroom negotiations over which party gets which ministry. That's the way Europe is ruled. And that's the second point. And after that, I'll stop this soliloquy. The second point is that the whole European electoral system is wrong.

With very few exceptions—France is one of them—European countries are run by coalition governments. And one of the reasons for that is the preferential treatment given to minorities. I don't mean racial or ethnic minorities; I mean political or issue minorities—one-issue parties—over the will of the majority of the population. This is proportional representation, which is wonderfully progressive, except that it ends in the dictatorship we see now in the European institutions, and in the complete disinterest of the general public in voting. Why? Because your vote counts for nothing.

Whoever you vote for, the actual composition of the government is decided behind closed doors, among the fractional winners of seats in parliament. And because of that, the same people stay in power for decades, just in different ministerial posts. The Minister of Justice for five years under von der Leyen was a Belgian from the MR party, a liberal French-speaking party based in Brussels—Didier Reynders, who is now facing a long prison term when his court case finally takes place for money laundering. Well, the charge is money laundering. They don't even bother to look into where the money he was laundering came from—which, of course, was bribes.

And he was five years Minister of Justice—the Minister of Justice of the EU. Before that, for about 10 or 15 years under various coalition governments, he was the Minister of Finance. So there's a guy who really knows how money laundering is done from the inside. Anyway, my point is that these appointments are made through concession sharing among parties that have marginal shares of the deputies, of the seats in Parliament, because of proportional representation. The opposite system to that—the opposing system—is what we have in the United States and also in the UK, which is first past the post. You can have only 25% electoral support, as Margaret Thatcher did, and still form a government that is your party's alone.

That's good—it's bad—but it doesn't get you into the pickle that Europe is in today, where the same people are occupying positions in coalition governments that have only one interest: to hold on to power. The discrepancy in their official party policies means nothing. Whether they're competent or not to be finance minister, justice minister, or minister of transport doesn't count for anything. Somebody has to get that seat, and you assign it to one of your coalition parties. So, for that very reason, Europe cannot by itself dig itself out of the awful mess that we have and that is decried in Mr. Trump's NSS.

#Glenn

Well, my thought on the European Union is this: the main challenge, as I see it, is how you get 27 member states to essentially embrace the same foreign policy, the same economic policy. It's very difficult to get any of that done. How do you make 27 countries not necessarily act in their own national interest—which is increasingly divergent—but instead follow some common policy? At some level, there has to be some stripping of sovereignty, even when it's not necessary. It's this federalist obsession they have in the EU world, that the form has to dictate the function: "We'll just centralize power in Brussels, and somehow that will result in a successful United States of Europe." But no.

I think it also makes the Europeans much more ideological and vulnerable to these narratives where something is always black or white, because you always have to set these rhetorical traps and, well, essentially argue that in any question you have, there's only one right answer and the other one is just immoral and wrong. And this is how you essentially create consensus—whether it's for expanding the EU, developing a common currency, foreign policy, whatever it is. It always has to be black or white, good and evil. Otherwise, you can't really shame countries into consensus. I mean,

look at Orbán—he thinks diplomacy with Russia is a good idea. He’s made into a villain now, Putin’s best friend in Europe, seeking to undermine the continent. I mean, this is what they do whenever there’s dissent.

But they kind of have to do this, I think, because that’s what happens when you have 27 countries that somehow have to end up with a common policy. It seemed manageable to some extent, but the failure to digitalize, and also cutting ourselves off from Russian energy resources and the Russian market altogether, made it so much worse in this conflict. Because if the EU is not able to deliver economic benefits—something geoeconomic, something material—to its member states, what’s going to hold it together then? And I think this is why we’ve become so dependent on this so-called geopolitical EU, the “common enemy” idea, where our unity is sustained by fear of Russia. That seems to be the model we have now, and it’s not a good economic project.

Yeah, I tend to be very critical because of this. I see the EU as having this huge vulnerability to ideology—why it’s so inherently Russophobic and ignores essential economic and national interests. It’s also unable to reverse anything because we always reach this consensus where, again, one side is right and the other is wrong. So how can you change course? It’s very difficult. So, no, I’m very pessimistic. But, of course, the U.S. cultivating resistance has some problems to it as well. Still, I did want to get your take on the other aspects of this—the way Europe is portrayed—because it also has all these other elements of civilizational decline.

The Europeans are becoming authoritarian—sidelining political opposition, the media, and, of course, facing demographic decline and mass immigration. I found it interesting that, of all times, this is when they decided to fine Elon Musk, who then essentially becomes Exhibit A in the whole national security strategy. Look at what they’re doing. I mean, there’s some horrible amateurish development here. I don’t understand how—this seems like the worst possible time they could do this. But I guess the last point is also about NATO. What does this mean? Because if the EU is, I guess, destined to weaken, then NATO is the last leg of the European security system. But NATO as well—the security strategy was quite explicit that there will be no more obsession with NATO expansion.

#Gilbert Doctorow

Well, I’m glad you mentioned Elon Musk personally, because he’s now facing this fine of a hundred million—whatever it is—they want to charge him for allegedly spreading fake news or inaccurate information. He came out saying the EU should be disbanded, and I agree with him. That goes right to the issues you were raising about the geopolitical mission of Europe. This is what’s destroying Europe. Europe was doing just fine before 1992, and certainly before it pushed through, over opposition, the revised constitution in this millennium. It was fine as the European Economic Community, when the goal was shared prosperity and removing internal barriers—trade and non-trade barriers—that inhibited the building of a market of 400 million people, one of the largest in the world, attractive for investment and a leading force globally in a soft-power way.

Instead, it decided to move toward a hard-power presence in the world—being a geopolitical power—which, as we see now, has had disastrous results. It shouldn't be, for all the reasons we know: it has no common army, and it shouldn't have one, because in effect that would be a German-dominated army. And you have to ask, what, after all, were the consequences of World War II? They would have been erased, and Germany would be back where Adolf Hitler would be very happy. So Europe is headed entirely in the wrong direction in seeking to be a geopolitical power, which is what Ursula von der Leyen has made her principal mission in office. Now, I'm losing, just for a minute, the question you were raising—could you repeat it for me, please?

#Glenn

Yeah, the role of NATO—if NATO is also reduced—well, its significance changes, because the whole point after the Cold War was that we needed to preserve it. Well, we lost the function that NATO was supposed to have. But to preserve the form, a NATO-centric Europe, we had to revive it, find a new function for it. And we essentially ended up with NATO expansion and out-of-area missions. Now, if expansion is taken off the table and the U.S. no longer has that much interest in Europe or NATO, what does this mean for Europe? Because it looks as if this new security strategy will impact the continent to a great extent.

#Gilbert Doctorow

Well, I think all of these things are going to be resolved very quickly. You're pessimistic at this moment. We both have mood swings—from pessimism to optimism. I'm peculiarly optimistic right now because I expect the moment of truth is arriving. And what do I mean by that? Well, you mentioned Orbán in passing, and Orbán is a great hero among the whole community that opposes the hegemonic American-Western governance of the world. And it's coming to a crisis. The crisis will be on December 18th or 19th. They had a meeting in London yesterday. Mr. Zelensky came out after having been coached and encouraged nicely by the three leading personalities in the coalition of the willing—what remains of it—Starmer, Merz, and Macron.

And he's encouraged to say that he rejects territorial concessions to Russia and so forth, which means we want to fight on forever. He refuses to acknowledge that he's lost the war, which is the fundamental principle driving Trump's recommendations today—the reality that they've lost the war. In this circumstance, who's going to pay for Mr. Zelensky's war, in equipment and in financial aid to keep his government afloat? The latest reckoning is that by February the country will be bankrupt. And if it's bankrupt and unable to raise funds or loans of any sort, then that's the end of the war. Now, what stands between us and that December 18th and 19th?

And which country is responsible for presenting this do-or-die, black-or-white choice? The European Union continues to run its merry way, or the European Union is blown up. Who is behind this confrontation? The Prime Minister of Belgium, not Mr. Orbán. You've mentioned Orbán. Orbán is beloved, as I said, by everyone who opposes American hegemony for standing up to the European

Union and saying things as they are—traveling twice to Moscow without by-your-leave from Mr. Merz or anybody else in the European Union. But every time the sanctions renewal has come up, Mr. Orbán has voted yes. So where is his bravery? Why didn't he say no? And the whole thing would have collapsed. He didn't do it. He didn't dare do it.

So I'd have to point to somebody else who's daring to do it—and that's the most unexpected person: the Prime Minister of Belgium. Little Belgium, twelve million people. Well, Hungary is even smaller. But the point isn't the size of the country, it's the size of the person. And this person is a stubborn Fleming. As I've written recently, Madame von der Leyen—Frau von der Leyen, or the Führer-in-Chief von der Leyen—doesn't get it, even though she was born in Belgium, of course in the French-speaking part, in Brussels' Ixelles. But obviously she hasn't spent much time looking at the Flemish, because, boy, they are stubborn people when they want to be. The Italians have a word for this—it's when the Flemish get their dander up.

This is not just arbitrary. The personality of Mr. De Wever—he's doing what he should do, what the people who put him in office would do, which is defend the prosperity of the country he governs. And if this loan—so-called loan, which is actually a confiscation of Russian state assets in Euroclear—goes ahead, then Belgium will be exposed to a liability equivalent to one-third of its annual GDP. And Mr. De Wever, who has been a nice guy in previous rounds of sanction-building against Russia, even ultimately sacrificed the diamond industry of Antwerp, which is his power base, and ruined the diamond industry in Belgium by agreeing to the EU-wide sanction on the import of Russian diamonds.

He agreed to that, but he's not agreeing to this, because this isn't just a question of a few thousand diamond experts, wholesalers, and retailers. It's a question of the whole country going under if this proposal from von der Leyen goes wrong. She and Merz visited last Friday with De Wever. They had dinner there—I'm sure they all walked away with indigestion—because the meeting ended in nothing. It ended with the statement that they would continue talking until the 18th of March. Now, why is this important? Mr. De Wever is very likely to say no on the 18th of March.

And what will happen next—what will likely happen on the 18th and 19th—will shake the European Union to its roots and may, may, it doesn't say it will, but may bring down von der Leyen and these rotten European institutions. Why? Von der Leyen is desperate. Her whole political capital is invested in the survival of Ukraine and the continuing, ever-going war in Ukraine until Europe thinks it's ready for a conventional war with Russia, which is two, three, four years down the road. If Ukraine goes under now—if it goes bankrupt and has to capitulate to Russia—her political career is over, and everybody around her is finished. All of these, the group of the willing... well, their careers are compromised, if not over.

So what is she going to do, since this is the last possibility to save Ukraine? Because talk isn't going to do it. Pats on the back to the events people won't do it. They need money and arms—and arms are bought with money. And 200 billion dollars in frozen Russian assets are so, so tempting. She will declare—this has already been foreshadowed—she will declare that the vote is taken by qualified

majority, not by unanimity. Mr. Merz has already said publicly that he will stand ready to guarantee 45 billion euros of the loaned money to Ukraine with German funds. A few other countries will probably also chip in. And so von der Leyen will say that she has a qualified majority in the EU, and therefore it passes, and she will now approach Euroclear to shake loose the money.

That act will trigger legal action against her within the EU, because not all lawyers there agree with her on the constitutionality of that move. And it will face fierce opposition not just from de Weber, but also from the CEO of Euroclear. In the last couple of days, she—this is Orban speaking—made some very clear statements that Euroclear opposes it because it compromises their declared position of neutrality by involving them in a politically motivated act. Euroclear doesn't mean much to most people, so let me explain. Euroclear holds about 42 trillion dollars in global assets. It's a repository for the whole world. It's owned not just by Belgian entities, but also by the National Wealth Fund of Singapore, by New Zealand, and by a lot of smaller shareholders who haven't yet stated their position on this.

But she has stated her position, and she's going to court against the EU decision. There isn't going to be any money. No bank in its right mind would extend one cent to Ukraine on the basis of collateral held by an entity that's challenging the removal of those assets. It's dead in the water. Well, we'll see what kind of earthquake happens here in Belgium on the 18th and 19th. I think it could shake the European institutions to their roots. And if anything ends the war, it will be what happens here on the 18th and 19th of December—not the Russian conquest of Bakhmut, and not the mediation efforts of Mr. Donald Trump. It will come down to one Mr. Bart De Wever, a provincial Belgian politician known as a pocketbook nationalist—meaning he's interested in the welfare of his constituency, not in their ethnos as such. So that's where we are today.

#Glenn

It's kind of wild, though, that Euroclear—which is itself more or less saying this is illegal—still wants to go forward with it under the pretense that they can sell it under some legal scheme. Let me just ask one last question: how do you see the Russians reacting to this proposal? Well—sorry, not the proposal—how they're reacting to the U.S. national security strategy, because this is something they haven't seen since after the Cold War. And I think for many Russians, they've been wondering, you know, is he pulling our leg when he says he wants to improve relations with Russia and change the course of America, or is he just another suit who comes along saying the same things but ends up pursuing the status quo?

#Gilbert Doctorow

I disagree. They've seen it before. They saw it in 2017, but they didn't want to see it. I looked at what the Russians said about the NSS and Donald Trump in 2017. They didn't like it. I mean, they made very few comments—very few comments about it—but they said, no, this doesn't work. What we see here is negotiation from a position of strength. It was there; that was in the document. Of

course, it was coming from the National Security Council side, not necessarily from the Trump side. It was there. And the Russians said, gee, that leads to confrontation, so we don't like it. Just keep in mind, the Russians had great respect for Henry Kissinger, and negotiation from a position of strength was one of the building blocks of Henry Kissinger's foreign policy.

So it's curious that they continue to pay him all due respect, while at the same time hammering away at what a lousy idea that is. Now, what are they saying? They're pretending they've never seen anything like this before—which, as I said, is untrue, because the basic principles of Trump were already there in 2017. What they're doing now is cherry-picking; they're taking what they like. And they have reasons to like it, because, after all—well, then again—the 2017 document didn't actually name Russia as an adversary. It spoke about rivals and competitors. That's exactly what's going on in the 2025 NSS: there are no enemies, no authoritarian personalities named. It's mentioned only in passing, without attaching it to anybody.

There are no evildoers, no axis of evil. So in this respect, what they should really like is that Mr. Trump is saying everything a realist would say: no intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. That's the core principle of the Peace of Westphalia and a core issue in the realist school of foreign affairs. It's there—it's in this NSS from a week ago. What the Russians are doing is cherry-picking. They're just very happy that they're not mentioned anywhere as an enemy, and that Mr. Trump is speaking in favor of their integration—or reintegration—into the Western business community and normal relations with both the States and Europe. That they like very much.

#Glenn

It's interesting. Well, I find the concept of multipolarity interesting there. But the one thing that really stands out is this issue of ideology, because this is why it's important for the Europeans but hated by the Russians. When Europeans hear "values," they see it as the foundation of a permanent U.S.–Europe partnership. That's something meant to transcend national interest, which matters even more now that we're in a multipolar world where national interests are becoming more divergent. Values are supposed to be the cement that keeps America in Europe.

But for the Russians, when they hear "values," all they hear is the absence of pragmatism, the absence of diplomacy. Because whenever there are values, it's always good values versus bad—it's always black and white, good and evil. There's no room for mutual understanding, no room for diplomacy, no room for compromise. It all turns into this extremely confrontational foreign policy where we seek peace through, well, defeating Russia—which is what we've been doing over the past four years. So it's interesting that once "values" comes up, this is really where the Europeans and the Russians are profoundly split. Do you have any final thoughts before we wrap up?

#Gilbert Doctorow

Well, I think that if Donald Trump had said in person to Vladimir Putin any of the ideas set out in this NSS when they met in Alaska, that would explain why Putin didn't listen to the naysayers around him who doubted American sincerity and thought America had given up on diplomacy. He went ahead, against the odds and in a situation that didn't look very favorable, and waited for an agreement with the United States to end the war. That would explain a lot.

#Glenn

Well, thanks a lot for sharing your thoughts on this security strategy. It is truly a historic document, though. I mean, it's not being celebrated much here in Europe, of course, but it does seem like the U.S. is adjusting to the world as it is, even though it obviously has some profound problems with it as well. I guess the whole revival of the Monroe Doctrine could have some very unfortunate consequences. But we'll leave that for next time. So, thanks again.

#Gilbert Doctorow

Thank you for having me.