

Europe Is Betting Everything On The Ukraine War

Alastair Crooke is a former British diplomat and the Founder of "Conflicts Forum" based in Beirut. He was formerly an advisor on Middle East issues to Javier Solana, the EU Foreign Policy Chief. Crooke argues that Europe has bet everything on the proxy war against Russia. Europe has sacrificed its legitimacy, economy, security and relations with Russia, China and the US. Europe has already entered a pre-revolutionary moment. Follow the Substack of Alastair Crooke: <https://conflictsforum.substack.com/> 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 show. We are joined today by Alastair Crooke, former British and EU diplomat. I'd advise everyone to follow his Substack, *Conflicts Forum*, and I'll make sure to leave a link in the description. Thank you very much for taking the time.

#Alastair Crooke

My pleasure. Thank you very much for inviting me to your program.

#Glenn

So we see now that the US and Europe find themselves increasingly divided. This is, of course, very evident with the war in Ukraine. The US is pushing Zelensky to accept concessions for a peace agreement, while the Europeans seem to be encouraging him to resist. You used to be a negotiator and worked for the EU leadership as well. How do you make sense of this? Because if Ukraine is now unraveling, and a collapse without a peace settlement would be a disaster, how do you understand that position? I'm always asked why there's such fierce resistance to accepting any conditions or concessions.

#Alastair Crooke

Well, I think, I mean, the first thing I would say is that if Europe is solidly against Trump's position, undoubtedly there are certain factions in Washington giving that a green light. In my experience, these things don't happen out of the blue — you don't suddenly have the entire European Union

taking a stand on Trump's proposals for Ukraine, nor do you have the Europeans, almost to a person, calling for war with Russia. Now, those are two separate issues, perhaps, and we can deal with them separately.

But I think if you ask what happened—well, I mean, you can go far back to the 19th century and so on, in Europe's relationship with Russia. But more recently, I think we really have to look at the Biden administration period. And that coincided with a time when the European Union had what they called a "democracy gap." It wasn't democratic—it still isn't—but it was pretty obvious then that there was a democracy gap. But there was also an identity gap, because, I mean, you know, a technocracy doesn't give ordinary Europeans an identity. It's just, you know, a system that regulates. It's not something you'd go and sort of sacrifice for—the bureaucracy in Brussels.

And then Biden started talking—if you recall, we had that image from the Liberty Hall speech, where everything was bathed in dark red colors. It was really quite sinister in its appearance, and deliberately made to look that way, because he then delivered a very Manichean speech, saying the world was facing two evils. Autocracy was the main evil, but it was also Russia. He framed it in very clear Manichean language—dark and light, good and evil. And then he repeated that in Warsaw in even more dramatic terms, talking about how this was a moment when you had to choose between good and evil, between darkness and light. And, of course, America always stood for the light.

It was the city on the hill, a beacon to the world. And Russia was this dark force that had to be resisted. There was a speech very shortly after by von der Leyen, and she almost parroted that speech—she said very much the same thing. You know, this is light and dark, totally in Manichean terms. And I think what was happening in Europe was a number of things. First of all, suddenly this provided Europe with its missing components. Here was something that could give them values. There wasn't really a European value. I mean, if you ask an ordinary European, as I was when I was part of the European Union, "What does Europe stand for?"

You'd have got—well, it was only twelve states then—but you'd have got many different answers about it. And here was something you could gather Europe around, if you like: a sort of good-and-evil value of fighting against autocracy, against tyranny, and in favor of light, progress, and vision. I think that was then seized on as a kind of identity for Europe. Just as Ukraine—which is a complementary part of this—has become the pole around which they've tried to forge European unity, to bring it together in this war. And at that time, the Europeans were really fawning on Washington for this language and this type of thinking. And NATO was being pulled into it.

At the same time, you had the German foreign minister, Baerbock, actually giving speeches in New York, saying that Germany had given up the idea of "change through trade." It wanted weapons, it wanted military muscle, it wanted to be part of your project. In other words, she proposed—well, she said that at one time in the past, Obama had suggested Germany and Washington could form a

kind of joint military structure together. And she said, of course, it didn't happen. But her aim was that Germany would not be so much part of a European structure, but rather fully connected into the Biden war machine at that time.

And this, I think, has developed in the European Union over time. And, you know, Manichaeism does have a sort of strain of messianism. I think the European leaders have become quite messianic in this pursuit of the light, of fighting autocracy and evil. And now they seem ready—they talk about going to war against Russia. You have all these bizarre statements coming out from the German defense minister and others, saying, well, you know, there will be war with Russia by 2028. No, it may even be next year.

And then we've just had the Secretary General of the United Nations saying we have to prepare for a war on a scale like our grandparents encountered—in other words, the First or Second World War. Well, this is bizarre. I mean, you know, it makes no sense. And I think it's also highly dangerous. But this is what's happening, I think. And so we've had this, and this is why there were such screams of anxiety when that national strategic statement was produced by the United States, which suggested that NATO had an end date to it, and also took a very sharp swipe at Europe—its lack of values, its lack of democracy, and its lack of legitimacy.

And this was really a shock, and I think something that they, even though they knew there were tensions with the Trump administration, didn't believe they would be criticized quite in this way. So what we see happening, essentially, is that the NSS—the Strategic Statement—effectively undercut that whole narrative of a Manichaean war of dark and light, because it said, no, our American priority is to restore stability with Russia, to restore a stable relationship with Russia, and a stable relationship in Europe with Russia—just the opposite of what they had tried to suggest and propose.

And then it went further in the NSS, because this was the only issue that really held the European Union together—Ukraine. And there, the NSS also said that we are working toward a solution on Ukraine. So it cut everything away and left the European elites—not the people of Europe, but the elites—completely bereft of the identity they'd wanted to cling to, of the legitimacy of the whole project. Everything was being cut away in this NSS. And so they returned to it and pursued it with a sort of demonic zeal, trying to go to extraordinary, even illegal, lengths to try and stop the Russians. They're no longer frozen now.

Russian sovereign plans that are held in Europe are now tied up with America over this. So I think this is really why they've become so demonic about it. But it defies analysis—I don't think you can try to understand it in terms of secular rationalism. It's not that. We're moving into something that really has no... I mean, there are deep feelings—quite sad feelings in Europe—of disaster or revenge for what has happened to parts of Europe as a consequence of former wars with Russia. And that can't be denied either. But beyond that, we've seen this taking shape as the only glue that holds the whole project together.

#Glenn

I've always made the point that I think the EU is a bit more vulnerable to this Manichaeism as well, because it's a convenient way of maintaining unity among 27 member states. If everything is framed as good versus evil, dark versus light, then it's easier to herd everyone in the same direction. I mean, once you introduce different shades of grey, it's easier for things to start fragmenting along competing interests.

#Alastair Crooke

But... if it goes—if the Ukraine project collapses—then what is it that holds the European Union together, the 27 states? Because, you know, the idea was that it would also be highlighted by Mazzucato and the move toward eliminating all forms of carbon from the system. That was supposed to provide what was necessary—a different way of circulating money through the system, flooding money through it, which would help the banks and everything. They were desperately looking for some sort of structure, and they still are, that would provide the money and also the means for the European Union to keep on spending as it does.

So now they've sort of decided that the way to restore their economy is through defense spending—vast amounts of it. They believe that will improve the economy and stimulate growth in Europe. Well, of course, it doesn't. I mean, defense spending is notable, yes—you know, the shares of some defense companies will rise because profits will be made. But what happens? You produce tanks, and unless there's a war, they just sit in a warehouse. They don't add to the overall economic welfare of the community at all. It's the same with other parts of it. So, you know, the real economy isn't really impacted.

I mean, there may be a slight increase in employment, but there isn't a great deal of desire among most Europeans to go and work in an armaments factory. They're culturally not really adjusted to that, and they're not looking for war. So I'm not sure this is a project that will stimulate real economic growth—at least not in the sense that reaches the heart of what men and women in Europe are looking for: well-paid jobs, money that can cover medical care, schools, housing—all those things that are getting further and further out of reach.

Just building weapons isn't really going to produce that kind of increase in ordinary people's well-being—quite the reverse. What it's going to do is draw capital away from, if you like, small businesses—those manufacturing things in Italy or Germany. Capital has already been flowing more and more into financial assets, but this will pull it further away from smaller, lower-level companies, because governments will direct that money into the big armaments structures.

#Glenn

But if this is one of the main drivers—that the European elites feel that if they lose the war in Ukraine, they'll fall as well—does that mean all this new war rhetoric, the talk that we have to be prepared, that our children should die in war, all this very dark language, isn't just rhetoric meant to send signals to the Russians? Do you think they would actually be willing to go to war? Because even if the intention is there, the capabilities... I mean.

#Alastair Crooke

They don't. They can't. They couldn't go to war. I mean, there isn't the money. The armories are empty. France and Britain really don't have the means. Europe cannot produce, if you like, the materiel. For a war with Russia, you're talking about an army of a million or so—maybe a million and a half. I mean, this is not feasible. There's no money, there are no people, and there's nothing in the armories of Europe. It's just not practical. There are two other things that affect it, please—one is that young Europeans, in my view, are just not culturally thinking about going to war or wanting to go to war.

They're more interested in what's going on in soccer or, you know, the latest fashion—what to wear now. They're just not culturally adjusted to war. They're not. They are, to be brutally frank, too soft to go to war in many ways. And by that I mean psychologically, not necessarily physically. You know, when you look at how many people have mental health problems in Europe—in Britain, it's one in five people out of work, often due to depression or some kind of anxiety. So the last reason, which I think is important, comes from an old Chinese saying: a wise man went to the emperor and said, "What are the things you need to wage war, Emperor?"

And the emperor said, "Well, food, weapons, and trust." And the wise man asked, "If you could only have one, which would you choose?" And he said, "Trust." Well, there's no trust in Europe. Would you send your children off to fight for Macron, Merz, or Starmer? I don't think so. There's just no trust. Look at their standing in the polls—really catastrophic. I don't think there's going to be much chance. But where it's dangerous is because—and I was in Moscow about a week ago, for a week or so—they understand what I've just said. And I think they understand it in a very rational way.

And they understand, you know, that Europe could probably put, at the absolute maximum, 100,000 to 150,000 men on the ground to fight—nowhere near enough to take on a big army like Russia's. They understand that, but they keep coming back to the question you posed: why do we hear "war, war, war"? And I think they understand, therefore, that what we're talking about is not really war as, you know, Luther said in our grandparents' day, with millions of peasants. What we're talking about is, if you like, provocation—an attack that's designed to do something else.

An attack—we saw the attack on the tankers in the Black Sea. We've heard all the complaints about, you know, drones that are supposedly Russian drones disturbing airports, which have all turned out to be nonsense. And then, you know, the threats about an aircraft flying through that very narrow

channel in the Baltics and Estonia, out of the Gulf, which they claim to be part of their economic area. So it's very easy to start a crisis—like the attacks on the tankers. So, what does this mean? What we're really talking about is the Second World War.

And we're talking about the efforts by Churchill and by Roosevelt, who was the favorite at the time. Pearl Harbor was the opportunity to bring America into the war against Germany. I think the Europeans are hoping they'll have an incident—a shocking event, the shock of a Pearl Harbor—that somehow will overwhelm Trump's objections and compel America. Not Europe, though Europe would be with it, but America essentially, because it's not possible to take on Russia with the European element alone. And I think the problem that faces Russia is one I discussed some time ago when I was in Iran.

And it was really outlined to me by Abdollahian, who was the foreign minister killed in that helicopter crash. If you recall, the leadership of Iran—he was saying that Iran had a very fine line to tread between deterrence and diplomacy. You have to get it right, because if you lean too much toward deterrence, you could provoke an aggressive response. But equally, if you lean too much toward diplomacy, that would be seen as weakness and could result in a military response to exploit that weakness. So he said, it's very fine. And I think, you know, this is the debate that Russia has to have. Do you immediately go up and threaten nuclear weapons?

Or do you find some kind of intermediate stage, where you can move up the escalatory ladder step by step without going all the way? You could go straight to the point and say, "Well, you know, if this goes on—if you keep attacking the tankers in the Black Sea—we're going to use nuclear weapons," or something like that. But I don't think Russia wants to do that, and I don't think Iran wants to end up in the same kind of conflict. It's a difficult balance. We saw Putin doing that, I think, very clearly. He said, "If this continues, our first response will be to attack the ports of Ukraine in the Black Sea, and we will destroy those." The second stage, he said, would be to cut off Ukraine—to make it landlocked, to cut it off completely.

And the third stage, which we would be reluctant to do, would be to retaliate against those Western states we believe are behind these attacks on our shipments. So they're moving up a very carefully constructed ladder. Now, what this brings into play, of course, is the doctrine of Trump's NSS. Because for me, when you read it, it signifies a shift in the way of thinking about war—a shift away from what you might call the big, symbolic military project, the nuclear aircraft carrier project, and toward a conflict designed to prevent the alternative symbol and architecture of an alternative system from coming into being. In other words, to determine what comes next.

Who is going to determine what system comes next? Is it going to be a Chinese-type system, a Russian-type system, or is it going to be the free trade system of Adam Smith and America? It was very interesting—in the NSS there was actually a reference to this. There was a swipe taken not just at Europe, but also at free trade, saying this is what had undermined America and made it dependent on debt—the free trade system. And there was a sort of glancing reference to the

American system, the one that was really different in the 19th century. In fact, Trump commented on it, because it was about tariffs, about protecting industries, about using a system to, if you like, protect yourself and grow your industry.

And that is impossible to deploy in America. I mean, Trump can say it was a good system and that it, if you like, validates tariffs. But actually going back to it would take 20 years. I mean, this is what Russia did from 2007. The Munich Conference marked a change toward, you know, it wasn't an American system, even though for 150 years it had currency in America. It was the system of Friedrich List and Sergei Witte—a very different one, not of an open economy but of a closed economy with a small trading section. And this, I think, is going to be the struggle now, because China has really demonstrated that the alternative architecture works.

I was in China for a week earlier this month, and it's really striking what they've managed to do. It's not, I think, properly understood—not only in terms of industry, but in a broader sense. What they did was, first of all, they saw what was happening to Russia. They saw when the sanctions and tariffs were imposed, when the ruble was attacked by dropping the price of oil—at one point it even went negative. They saw all of that, and, like Putin, decided that self-sufficiency was the only answer: we have to be completely self-sufficient and move away from dependency on the United States. And they've done that.

And really, they're dependent only on a few things—like aircraft, certain ships, and a few other items. But largely, they're not dependent. In fact, they've reversed it, because now it's America that's more dependent on Chinese supply lines than China is on American components. So they've made themselves self-sufficient. But really, the important story—and the one that I don't think is well understood—is the AI. They haven't gone down the American route of big data centers. I mean, they told me—and they were very experienced—they said, "Look, you know, the American AI was based on military needs: targeting, identifying hostile targets, and then attacking them."

Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza—we all know how AI is being used in this way: to determine who in Gaza might have some connection with Hamas, based on communications and movement analysis. All of this requires huge data centers, massive amounts of data. And the Chinese say, "Well, what are the Americans going to do when they've got all that data? I mean, it's not necessarily good data—we see that some of it's wrong. But what are you going to do with it when you have it?" "We've done something different," the Chinese would say. "We've actually diffused AI into simple applications for industry. It's really, in a sense, a form of automation and robotics."

And this has transformed things. I talked to one very large industrialist who has many factories, and he was telling me, you cannot imagine how a simple application of AI at the practical industrial level—not the big data center, not the big compute side—has changed everything. He said, for example, I've had many factories. If I take one as an example, it employed 2,000 people last year; it'

s employing 200 this year. This is the scale of the technical shift that's taking place. Of course, one implication of that is Chinese unemployment. But as growth was about 6% in China in the last quarter, he was confident that most people will get jobs.

But, I mean, the real shocker was when he said, you know, what this has done for China is that we actually have price deflation, because our industries are now so much more efficient and competitive. We're moving along a path of price deflation, while the West is in an inflation cycle. And the meaning was obvious: how does the West sell to China when China has made such a huge change in its competitiveness? I don't see how that's going to be possible. So they're in a very strong position now, and I think they feel quite confident in that position. So when you look at that, they look again at the West and its huge investment in AI, and they say, you know, we believe there was a big gathering and discussion about AI just before.

Well, as I said just before, the gist of it was really a sense that, you know, the wealth of God was totally off. They'll never have the revenue from these big data centers—we can see that, obviously. They're not going to get the revenue to justify this expenditure. And what you're doing in the West with this is actually starving small factories and small businesses of investment, because all the debt is now being owed and all the money is being channeled toward, you know, the magnificent step-up—the big AI giants of the United States. But you don't have buttons. And the point he was making—the industrialist said, "Look at me. I mean, I've put, if you like, a sort of diffused, working-level AI—and I have revenue."

I'm selling more. I'm selling across Asia and to Europe, so I have real revenue that I can identify from AI. You don't have revenue. And the other striking thing is that they've created a whole financial ecosystem around it—that's the difference. Everything is run by apps, and Western apps don't work, by and large. But, you know, you have something like WeChat—it has more than a billion Chinese using it. And Alipay too, because sometimes they overlap. So they have a financial sphere. And of course, AI has been brought in through Alibaba—the Amazon of China—so it's all part of this process. They're going to get revenue in both ways.

And they're going to get revenue because they've gone down the route of a different form of AI—open source—so other states can use it. It's much more adaptable and simpler because it's not based on huge megaloads and giant hangars full of computers, as in the Western system. So this is the main, if you like, great achievement: self-sufficiency. They've got a highly competitive position. They have the leverage, and we've lost it. I mean, put it bluntly—they have the leverage in all these sorts of ways. And they'll have more leverage because, at the end of the day, they boom.

I'm not an expert in AI, but I very strongly believe their approach to AI is going to be the one that dominates across Asia and the BRICS. The Western model, with its heavy burden of data and sensors, will just consume too much investment and eventually crash and burn. We'll see. But that's why they're so confident. So how does this relate today? Well, I think Venezuela shows you how it relates right now. Because Maduro, this past summer, made an offer to Trump that was

unprecedented. I mean, he said, "You can— I will open up our gold mining, oil, and other resources to American companies, partners to fish in the economy. I'll do all of that."

You can invest in the oil industry, you can invest in everything. And it was really a complete sacrifice of, if you like, Venezuela's resources and sovereignty. "You can have everything, you can be part of everything," he said to American companies. Some American companies were still there—one in particular never left Venezuela. But this was the offer. And what did they get from Trump? He said this publicly, but I can't explain it—hard no. No. Well, why would he do that? Why would Trump say no when he could get everything he supposedly wanted—the resources of Venezuela to back up the over-leveraged financial system of America, to take all these resources and have American companies swimming back in and taking them?

Why would he say no? The answer, I think, is actually written in the NSS, where they state that we're moving into an era of zones of influence—areas of influence, if you like. And in the United States, it's clear that Latin America, and the Americas as a whole, are going to be America's sphere of interest. It's pretty much going to take them in; it's going to be part of the United States' interests. The rest—Europe, Asia, and the Middle East—is to be franchised out to allies in various places, with a fee for the franchise operation going to America, along with the money required for them to be there.

What this is about is that in the NSS it says there will be only one, if you like, company in the areas where they have leverage and control. The paragraph says, "We will push out any infrastructure that belongs to another power." And of course, in November, what happened was that Venezuela signed a deal at the Shanghai Expo with China—a zero-tariff deal. Also, a private Chinese company, not a state company but a private one, agreed to make a 20-year investment in the Venezuelan economy, covering many of the fields. A huge investment—people on the ground, people providing it. It would really be a massive investment by China.

And that was signed at the Shanghai Expo. What does this mean, then? What we're really seeing is that Trump is saying, look, you know, these Chinese, these people—it's not about oil. Oil is fungible. And he said no to the deal with Maduro. He said no, I'm not going to do it. Instead, he said, you know, assemble a pure killer of ships. What he's saying is, we are not going to have this infrastructure—the infrastructure. It's specific in the NSS: we will not allow the infrastructure of others in our sphere of interest. We're not going to have Chinese loans. We're not going to have, if you like, Chinese tech. We're not going to accept Chinese corridors. We're not going to accept Chinese-built ports and other infrastructure.

We're going to pull that out and take it away. It will be only American infrastructure. This is the new, if you like, architecture—the new model. Our model is going to be the American model, not the Chinese one. This is the war of architecture. They want to keep it to the American architecture and not permit, if you like, this alternative model to get a grip in Latin America. And they're going to enforce this elsewhere. So what are all those ships doing? Well, I don't know whether they're going

to act against Venezuela or not. I slightly doubt it. I think they're there to stop and break the infrastructure of China, Russia, and Iran that's already quite deeply embedded in Venezuela.

The other sort of infrastructure, if you like—the soft infrastructure—building ports, giving credit, not requiring political changes or making mistakes, they go to that. And, you know, this is a tactic because the states that adopt this type of architecture are not required, if you like, to borrow American foreign policy details. They're not required to pursue the dollar. And in the Chinese one, they're not. There's an alternative financial system. And that's why it was so clear to me when I was in China. Look, that system I described to you—WeChat and Alipay and everything—they could roll it out across the whole of Central Asia just like that. I mean, it's there. It's already scaled up to a billion people using it in China. You could scale it across Central Asia, I think, without much problem. But they're doing it very gently and carefully. So this is, I think, the next phase of the conflict.

Not so much the mega, you know, symbols—aircraft carriers and all the paraphernalia of the old war—but how do you stop, and how do you ensure, what is the next economic model for the world? Is it going to be the, if you like, Bretton Woods model, with all this coercion—the IMF, World Bank, use of the dollar, the dollar hedge fund? Or do you go to a Chinese one, with its different systems of payments, different systems of operating, different understandings of how an economy is actually to be managed—to produce the wealth of the people, not to be a servant where the markets, if you like, dominate the economy, but where the markets are the servant of the government, not the dominant part? We'll have to see.

But I think this is going to be the struggle in this period. And what happens with Venezuela could be very serious, because I don't think China is just going to say, "Oh, okay, fine," and walk away. This is going to be very symbolic for the future—very symbolic for BRICS, very symbolic for how other countries will look at it and say, "Well, this is important." So that's where I think we're heading: toward this sort of, if you like, different type of war. Because Trump is trying to—he said it first in his speech in Riyadh, and it's written in the NSS—he's trying to move toward transactional, business-based geopolitics. Geopolitics based on business. I mean, what does that mean?

Well, I think in terms of Ukraine, we see very clearly that Witkoff and Kushner, and now BlackRock, are involved—trying to devise a system where everybody, you know, gets a piece of the cake, gets the financial share, the reconstruction of Ukraine, whoever finally pays for it. It will be divided up so that the various stakeholders all get a piece of the action in one way or another. I mean, it's very much—well, we can all guess—the origin of this is exactly how real estate is managed in New York. You've got a piece of land, and maybe someone who's going to prevent you from building a big tower there. You've got another piece of land, and you want to pay off that stakeholder, and the other stakeholder will be the contractor, the local authorities, and so on.

So you build a sort of structure where everyone gets a bit of something, and then it can be done. But the problem is that, you know, I don't think Ukraine is like that. I mean, yes, there are financial interests. We know that money—it's a boondoggle, like Afghanistan was—with taxpayer money

going to Ukraine or whatever, and some of it somehow circulating back in terms of campaign donations and other forms. And it's the same in Europe as well. Yes, there is that part. But there's something more. Russia wants a watertight security architecture for Europe—not a deal, not a financial deal. They want that.

Europe wants to make sure that Russia is defeated—humiliatingly defeated—and that it will not be a future actor in Europe again. It needs to be weakened so that it cannot re-emerge. And, of course, Russia wants to see NATO severely defeated so that it won't simply come back and start rebuilding in Ukraine. So you have the Trump-style business approach taking place, and then you have, if you like, the realpolitik part of it—which is, you know, what are the actual needs of Russia, and why are you determined to block any progress with this plan to have, so to speak, a financialized benefit for everyone out of these large sums of money?

Recall that America has already said it would like some of the frozen Russian assets—about a hundred billion from that—and that it will use it for reconstruction in Ukraine. And of course, they'll take a percentage of the profits, or BlackRock will, or whoever. The fact that BlackRock is now engaging in negotiations shows you have negotiations run just by businessmen. There's no one there actually writing a legally binding, properly prepared, properly drafted peace proposal. It's a deal, not a proper legal treaty. That's what Russia wants. And at the moment, it hasn't been achieved.

#Glenn

It's an interesting thing, though—there's this fast economic development trend. Countries are afraid to fall behind, so you often see a lot of malinvestment taking place. But I very much agree. I think the inability to compete with China—the U.S. response—appears to be to carve out these exclusive economic regions where they don't have to compete with China, like they'd also like to do with Venezuela. But the Europeans, though, they don't really have many of these options. They don't have the technological sovereignty of the Americans. They don't have the ability to set up this kind of exclusive zone. So, given that you spoke before about trust—the lack of trust—what do you think the possible political consequences could be in Europe now? Because there's a bit of an irony here.

That is, if we were to make peace with the Russians, it would mean addressing the underlying causes—that is, the European security architecture. If we could end these dividing lines in Europe, the bloc politics, Europe could actually prosper if we spent more of our efforts on cooperating with Russia. But instead—well, Chas Freeman made the point that we might be facing a pre-revolutionary moment in Europe, because there's been so much marginalization of the opposition and the media, and now, with these growing economic problems you mentioned, our leaders are more or less saying we have to prepare for war with Russia. And all these lies over the past few years are being exposed. So, just as a last question—do you see the possibility of massive political upheaval due to, yeah, I guess a crisis in political legitimacy? Or is that too strong?

#Alastair Crooke

Oh, I think if anything, it's understated—absolutely. I mean, the European leadership has put Europe in a catastrophic situation. You know the details, and people watching this do too, I'm sure. The business model of Europe has collapsed. The standard of living of Europeans is collapsing. There's huge tension in other areas, like immigration. And all the political bridges out have been deliberately destroyed by the European Union and their insistence on a cordon sanitaire. They're just centrist parties, often minorities. And, you know, the NSS was quite right about that—it's neither democratic nor particularly legitimate.

And the whole process has been so badly handled that Europe faces a catastrophic situation. It's on bad terms with China, on bad terms with Russia, and on bad terms with America—at least with this administration. I know they may be hoping there'll be a new president soon, but hope isn't a strategy. Meanwhile, they've given up their own energy in exchange for highly expensive liquefied natural gas from America. It's a disaster. And I think the answer to your question—what do you do?—is very obvious. If you protest in Europe, you'll be suppressed, and violently suppressed.

You saw what happened in Paris at the protest. All of it is clearly a concerted, deliberate plan to not allow protests. Protests are a reactive banner—quite strong banners. I think the French had something like 80,000 at one point—anti-riot police fighting the protesters. I mean, this is war. That doesn't sound like policing. And the same thing—it's just not reported that there are protests and strikes in places like Italy. Hardly covered in the press. Whole areas of Italy shut down. Not too violent, but some violence. And if protests don't work, if forming an alternative opposition party doesn't work, look what's happened to them.

They've all been, you know, branded as far-right or facing bans. All their leaders are being targeted—under lawfare or accused of some form of corruption. I mean, whether we take it in Romania, Moldova, or France, it's the same thing. You start a party that's not in the court, or within the court of "sanitariness," and the leaders who are being attacked will be called corrupt or outside the law. So if protests don't work, if voting doesn't work, if you only have Tweedledum and Tweedledee to vote for, what's the point of that? As things get worse, and people get poorer, and life becomes very, horribly hard for them—yes, they will turn to insurrection.

#Glenn

Well, thanks so much for taking the time. It's not a fun time in Europe anymore. I really wanted to ask you about this because every time I speak to anyone, the main question is always, "Well, what are the Europeans doing?" Because there's always some understanding for the Americans—they can understand the Russians, they can understand the Ukrainians—but the Europeans are always a bit of an enigma. Which is a good indication that maybe it's European leaders acting in their own national interest. And, you know, because they're desperate.

#Alastair Crooke

I mean, they're going to lose everything by having made these bad decisions. They're going to lose the one thing—the glue that held the European Union together. They're going to lose their credibility. They're going to have lost their business model. They're facing a financial crisis and collapsing standards of living for their electorates. It's a very unenviable situation. No wonder they're doubling down in their desperation, hoping against hope that something will turn up, that Trump will change his view and come and save them from what they must surely expect. It's going to be a very uncomfortable period.

#Speaker 03

Well, thanks again. Thank you.