

End of NATO and the EU - Whom the Gods Would Destroy, They First Make Mad

Ray McGovern discusses the pending collapse of NATO and the EU. 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: <https://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're joined today by Ray McGovern, who served as a CIA officer for 27 years. He chaired the National Intelligence Estimate and prepared the president's daily brief. Welcome back, my friend—always great to see you.

#Ray McGovern

Thank you, Glenn. Thanks for inviting me.

#Glenn

So, as you've also seen, of course, we're talking to a 27-year CIA veteran. You've probably seen the new U.S. National Security Strategy. It shows that the U.S. envisions a new role for itself in a changing world. What do you make of this, and what does it mean for our proxy war in Ukraine?

#Ray McGovern

Well, Glenn, you know, when I first saw the National Security Strategy about two Fridays ago, I said, "My God, let me take a look at it." And, of course, I only had a couple of minutes before I went on with Judge Napolitano. But I did look at the table of contents, and here it is.

#Ray McGovern

Okay, and I said, "My God—strategy, priorities, Western Hemisphere. Huh? Asia? Europe? Middle East? Where's Russia? Oh, it's part of Europe. Oh, okay. Africa last, as usual." Priorities, regions, Western Hemisphere—this is 180 degrees from what had been the case in the past. And when people ask me to compare that since World War II—well, I was only a little boy during World War II, but I was very much alive and engaged when Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense to Rumsfeld,

after that big win against those Iraqi crack troops in 1991 in Desert Storm—okay, that's when Wolfowitz wrote his strategic doctrine.

People know about this, but it's very interesting to note that at that time, General Wesley Clark, who had been commander of NATO forces, came to Wolfowitz and said, "Paul, way to go, Paul. This is terrific. What's the biggest lesson you've learned from this great victory in 1991?" And without batting an eyelash, Wolfowitz said, "Oh, the biggest lesson—and the most significant one we have to keep in mind—is that we can do these things, and the Russians can't stop us." Now, Wolfowitz was a bright guy, okay? His instincts weren't mine, but he said, "Look, now, Wes—General Wesley Clark—there will come a time when we won't be in this kind of preeminent position, where we can win all the time and people will challenge us."

So in the interim, our national strategic doctrine has to be that we're the hegemon. We have to make sure that if anyone comes up and tries to rival us in any way, we knock them down and keep our primacy. So that's what we'll do for the next while. Well, that was 1991. The U.S. invaded Iraq again—this time actually did overthrow Saddam Hussein. Did Russia stop us? No. When was that? Oh, that was 2003. Oh, what happened in Syria, though, in 2015? Well, the Russians pretty much stopped the U.S. momentarily, until the "head chopper" came in to be the new prime minister. But the big deal was in 2022, when the Russians stopped us. How did they stop us?

They stopped us from taking Ukraine into NATO. So the difference in strategy between 1992, when we had the Wolfowitz Doctrine, and now could not be more stark. And, you know, I'm not going to show it again, but when I saw the strategy, principles, and priorities for the Western Hemisphere, I said to myself, my God, what does this mean? And to me, it means that somebody sensible has gotten to Trump. Maybe it's Tulsi Gabbard. Maybe somebody else. And I said, look, you know, remember back in September when half the world—the leaders of half the world—convened in Beijing to celebrate victory over Japan? The 3rd of September. Do you remember? My God. I mean, that was most of the people in the world.

And if you feel a little isolated, well, that's because there's this tectonic shift from west to east in the center of power, and Russia is part of that. Okay, so not only should you drop this notion of challenging China at sea—for God's sake, with a navy that can't do it—but you ought to realize that China and Russia are joined at the hip. And you need to keep that in mind when you're looking at Ukraine and other things like that. So, Russia—well, Russia tells us that their core principle is not to have Ukraine in NATO. Oh, core principle. Well, what's our core principle? In the guidance, or in the National Strategy document, it says our core principle is to hasten the resolution of the Ukraine crisis in a way that will stop a war that could get out of hand in Europe.

And also, our core interest—again, using the Soviet as well as the Russian terminology—is to make sure that we have strategic stability with Russia and that we work out a modus vivendi. My God, where does that appear? Oh, under Europe, sort of as a castaway. That's the new doctrine. And for people to belittle that and say, well, it doesn't matter—well, I just say, you don't belittle it. When the

Russians come up with a new, say, nuclear doctrine, man, you go ape on the Hershey Highway, as we used to say in the Bronx. You go crazy dissecting it to see what it might mean. So we have to give these strategic documents the attention they deserve. Are they going to be adhered to? Is there stupid rhetoric there?

Are there contradictions? Of course there are—especially when Trump dictates it, as he probably did to his speechwriters, because it reads rather well: inconsistent, but fluid. So that's what I see here. And this week—this week is the crucible, as I see it. What do we have? We have Witkoff and Kushner going to talk in Berlin under the sponsorship of Chancellor Maatz. Zelensky—are they going to talk to the Europeans and the prime minister of Finland? I mean, there are all kinds of Europeans there, and they're going to say what? Well, the statement that just came out, as I understand it, reiterates all the European demands about what could happen—what resolution Ukraine could come to.

But, you know, they did that once before. They did that at the very end of November when Rubio met with the Europeans, and they handed down these so-called 28 talking points—because that's all they were, talking points, not a plan, okay? They watered them down from 28 to 20, and they included things they knew Russia could never accept. Well, I don't know what will happen this time, but Witkoff and Kushner have listened to Zelensky. He made some nice noises that are, in themselves, self-contradictory. He says, well, maybe we don't need to be members of NATO, but we need assurances and all that kind of thing. So what's going to happen this time?

Well, they got it down to 28 and then to 20. What happened when the Europeans persuaded Rubio to get it down to 20? Well, Witkoff and Kushner went off to Moscow two days later and completely ignored what the Europeans thought they had negotiated with the U.S. Bottom line: I don't know what the Europeans think they've achieved now. I don't know what Zelensky thinks he may have achieved now. But in my view, what Zelensky and Kushner are going to do—and not Rubio, mind you, not Rubio—is go to the Russians and say, "Okay, look, we talked to the Europeans. We had to do that because Rubio's folks and the real hardliners said, 'Well, you didn't talk to the Ukrainians?' Of course. So we talked to the Ukrainians. Now let's deal." And the backdrop, of course, is twofold.

Number one, Russia has won the war. Okay? It's going to be pretty easy for Russia to take those last outposts in Donetsk, right? And the big, big drop-off is that Putin—and people have to take these things seriously—Putin has always said that our overall priority is to prevent relations with the United States from falling into a state of complete disrepair. The way he puts it is, make sure we can have a decent relationship with the United States. That's our overall priority. Ukraine—secondary. The U.S. bombs the hell out of Iran? We don't like it, but secondary, okay? Now, that's the overarching attitude on Putin's part. What about Trump?

Trump makes it clear in the National Security Strategy that his core interest is to develop a good relationship with Russia and set the Ukraine issue aside. That's what he wants to do—core interests. He even uses the Russian term. So when the Russians say, "Yeah, part of that National Security

Strategy lines up with how we see the world," that's real. Am I being Pollyanna? I don't think so. I mean, I'll close with this: if the President of Russia and the President of the United States share an overriding, superseding desire to create a better relationship—well, from Putin's point of view, he still can. Is Putin sure that Trump still can? No, he's not.

And so you have to go through this charade—as the British say, we say “charade”—of listening to the Europeans and then, if precedent is followed, ignoring their demands, working it out with Russia, and marginalizing not only the Europeans but Zelensky himself. I think that's what's going to happen. But the last thing I'll mention here, Glenn, because it's related: on the 22nd of September this year, Putin personally made a very formal presentation, saying, “Look, we only have one strategic arms control agreement left with the United States. It's called New START. It imposes limits on strategic weaponry. It expires on February 5th, 2026. We think we need to abide by those same quantitative limits, and we're willing to do so as long as the U.S. follows suit.”

Now, on the 22nd of September, a week or two later, some journalist says, “President Trump, what do you think about that offer by Putin not to exceed the limits of New START for another year?” And he says, “Oh, it sounds like a good idea to me.” Since then, the Russians have been saying publicly—and I'm sure through other channels as well—“Sounds like a pretty good idea to you. Well, could we have something a little more official, Mr. Trump?” Now, this is not a trifling matter. They don't have anything more official. Count the weeks—February 5th, okay? There's no thought of renegotiating that treaty, but it's easy, easy as pie. As Lavrov has already said, all you have to do is say, “Okay, we'll observe those limits for one more year.”

The fact that Trump hasn't been able to give any answer on that other than, “Sounds like a good idea to me,” that's the litmus test in my view. It's more important than Ukraine, more important than Iran, more important than anything else. If the Russians see that Trump cannot or will not observe this very simple token of enhancing strategic security—because that's what it's all about—they'll have doubts about whether he can deliver on any promise. And they'll take all that into account. Sorry for the long soliloquy, but I've been thinking through this all morning and wondering what's going to happen now that they've met in Berlin and will meet again to decide whether to pick Putin's pocket.

#Glenn

Well, I like the context you presented there, because this national security strategy really is a massive shift. I mean, I remember the U.S. Defense Planning Guidance of '92—only a few weeks after the Soviet Union collapsed, it was leaked. And again, it painted a very different picture of the world. I remember in that security strategy they even warned that we can't allow any power to rise that could challenge our authority. Even Germany, even Japan—even allies—should not be allowed. And it used the language of Halford Mackinder: that we have to control the Eurasian heartland, and no power should emerge on the Eurasian heartland capable of confronting or challenging our supremacy. So it was very much a unipolar strategy, and you saw some of this being reinforced in

2002, with the new security strategy then saying very openly that U.S. security would depend on preventing any rivals from emerging.

So again, global primacy. But what many people warned would happen is exactly what happened. After a while, running a global empire is expensive. First, you exhaust your resources, and then you incentivize collective balancing by the rising powers. Now we have \$38 trillion in debt and BRICS balancing the U.S. So, you know, it's played out pretty much as many predicted. That's why I wasn't that surprised by this security strategy. If the U.S. has to focus on some regions, then of course the Western Hemisphere—its own backyard—and East Asia, where China and the main economic powers are, make sense. And of course, if you pivot there, you have to pivot away from somewhere, and that somewhere would have to be Europe. But it's not just Trump.

I mean, you can go back to Obama in 2016. He said, you know, we have to pivot to Asia. If you pivot there, those new troops and that new money don't come out of nowhere—it has to be drawn from somewhere. And I think that was always going to be Europe, and also about the role of Russia and the U.S. All of this shifts, because if you want a unipolar world, you want to squeeze the Russians out of Europe. You want to have a collective hegemon—that's NATO expansion. You'd redivide the continent and make the Europeans dependent. It weakens Russia, and it makes sense from that perspective. But in a multipolar world, all NATO expansion does is push Russia toward China, and it keeps the U.S. in Europe when it wants to pivot away from there. So, you know, there have to be some strategic changes, I think. Yeah.

#Ray McGovern

You know, Glenn, you've had John Mearsheimer on. He's one of the people who told me I was part of his realism school of international relations. I'd practiced realism for 27 years as an analyst of the Soviet Union and Russia, but I was delighted to hear that it was his realist school. As a matter of fact, I asked him, "Are there others? Are there other schools?"

#Ray McGovern

Well, apparently there are ideological or value schools.

#Ray McGovern

I don't understand it. We look at the facts, right? And the facts are, as Mearsheimer said 11 years ago in a major article in **Foreign Affairs**—the most prestigious foreign policy journal, as you well know, Glenn—he said, "Look, the deterioration of the situation in Ukraine is the fault of the West. And if the West continues to try to get Ukraine into NATO, it will result in the destruction of Ukraine." That's a direct quote. Now, many years later—about five years ago—I had a chance to ask

John before a very large group: "Now, John, the Russians invaded Ukraine. People were saying this is unprovoked. You seem to think that, well, you kind of predicted that's exactly what they would do. So how do you feel about that?"

Well, John very succinctly said, "Look, in my view, it's demonstrable that Putin did everything in his power to avoid having to invade Ukraine. Minsk I, Minsk II, not to mention the Istanbul Accord that was concluded just six weeks after the invasion. So, unprovoked? No, I think he had no other choice," says John Mearsheimer. And so do I. I mean, it doesn't matter what McGovern thinks, but I look at the empirical evidence. I'm a realist school of IR person. And, you know, I don't have all those fancy degrees, I'm not a professor, but I did spend 27 years—and decades since—parsing what the Russians say, what the Europeans say, what the Ukrainians say, and just looking at the damn map, for God's sake. You mentioned Obama.

Well, I'll just say one more time that Obama said back in 2015—ten years ago—"Look, the worst thing we could do would be to give the Ukrainians the idea that they could prevail against a much stronger Russia right on Ukraine's doorstep." So he prevented offensive weaponry from going to Ukraine. Trump allowed these Javelin missiles, I think, or some of those missiles. And now, of course, Biden has turned on the spigot. These people are living in a dream world if they think they could prevail, or even give Russia a strategic defeat by helping Ukraine win, because that was a fool's errand from the beginning. A military leader should have told their political bosses, "Look, this is crazy. We can never do that. The Russians can always counter whatever we do."

And so, you know, when you talk about entry into—this past week we've had lots of press, okay? The press has been saying, "You know, the Russians say this had to do with NATO, you know, NATO expansion." That's what the Russians say. Well, I mean, that's what the Secretary General of NATO said. I mean, talk about a faux pas grande—Jens Stoltenberg, okay? Appearing before the EU Parliament to give them the real story. I know you know this, Glenn, but maybe it's a good reminder for those who are watching, okay? Here's Stoltenberg, 7 September 2023—look it up, you have to see this to believe it. Quote: "President Putin declared in the autumn of 2021 and actually sent a draft treaty that they wanted NATO to sign, to promise no more NATO enlargement. That was his precondition for not invading Ukraine. Of course, we did not sign that."

#Ray McGovern

So he went to war to prevent more NATO from getting close to his borders.

#Ray McGovern

Now, I think I'll tell you what else he said.

#Ray McGovern

He laughed and said he tried to prevent NATO enlargement, and instead he got Finland and we got Sweden—so we got NATO enlargement anyway.

#Ray McGovern

By that time, Glenn, half a million young Ukrainian boys and men had perished on the battlefield. And he's laughing at this? Sweden and Finland? I mean, in other words, if there's any doubt that NATO enlargement—that Ukraine going into NATO—was the *casus belli* here, along with the abnegation of the Minsk Accords and the Istanbul Accord, and the shelling that increased by a factor of ten in Ukraine right before the invasion, well, you know, you could say it was unprovoked, but that's because you're not being quite honest. You don't know what really happened because the Western media has concealed it from you.

#Glenn

Yes. Interesting, this Obama quote. I mean, he did say, "Do not give Ukraine the illusion that they could beat Russia." He also warned that we shouldn't provoke a conflict with the Russians because they would have escalation control. They have the proximity. And as we know, in this kind of war—especially a high-intensity war—logistics is everything. So, you know, it wouldn't be a good idea. Russia would always be able to match what NATO and the United States could bring. You're right.

#Ray McGovern

Let me interrupt for a second, because I'm just thinking before it leaves my mind. Things do go in and out of my mind these days. He talked about core interests, and he talked with Goldberg from *The Atlantic* a couple of months before he went out into the western sunset. He said, "Look, we have to be really careful not to overextend our strategy here. We have core interests. The Russians have core interests. Now, with respect to Ukraine, we don't have any core interests." Well, hello—yes, that's true, Mr. President. But the Russians do. Okay, well, that was ten years ago. Now we're coming back to the situation where finally Trump, of all people, is saying, "Oh my God, yes, the Russians have core interests. They have a preponderance of strength."

I've looked at the map now. They've shown me more maps. And does it look like the Ukrainians have a prayer to prevail? So let's tuck our core interests into—well, how are we going to do this? We can't really say that China isn't a threat anymore, or that Russia isn't. Oh, well, let's say the Western Hemisphere, where we can still do what we want, okay? Is the Western Hemisphere a strategic threat? Give me a break. And yet we'll put letter A under the priorities. Now, Glenn, part of that, I think, is Trump finally looking at the tectonic shift in power from west to east, made concrete by that gathering in Beijing with the parade and all, where all those world leaders were—except Trump and some of the Europeans.

And the visual demonstration that, look, you know, BRICS and everything else—they've got it going really well for them—and we're not going to be able to prevail in the old ways. Let me check out the Navy. Now, Elbridge Colby says we've got to go to war with China, or even John Mearsheimer says it's almost inevitable we'll have a war with China. The only thing I disagree with is China, okay? So everybody's like, no, how are we going to do that? Well, we're going to build these ships. How expensive are these ships? And when will they be built? Oh, it'll take about ten years. And the Chinese will stop building? No, no, they won't. So all the war games show that in any conflict with China, we would probably lose within the first couple of days.

Why? Why? Lines of supply, logistics—and the same thing applies to Ukraine. You know, I think of General Milley or Secretary Austin. They studied the same things I did as an Army officer, okay? A platoon leader, a company commander, as I was. So what do you do? Well, before you go into any kind of conflict, you do an estimate of the situation. It sounds crazy, yeah? Well, it's not crazy. You find out where the enemy is, how many they are, what weapons they have, what the weather's going to be, what the terrain is like, and finally—perhaps most important—logs. Now, not the lox that you have with bagels in New York.

These are L-O-C-S—lines of communication and supply. If you haven't got them taken care of, you haven't got anything. And you might want to punish Russia, or weaken Russia, or give Russia a strategic defeat. But in the end, you're going to look feckless, because Russia has all the cards. The good news is, in my view, Trump realizes that now. Trump has to deal with opposition not only among the coalition of the—whatever you call them—three blind mice, plus Zelensky, but he also has to deal with people back home, like General Kellogg, maybe the Secretary of War, Hegseth, maybe Rubio himself. And the good news is that Rubio is kept out of these things, okay? And the good news is also that Putin will talk to Witkoff for five hours—the sixth time he's talked to Witkoff, okay?

When he was asked about this by a Russian interviewer, what was that like? And Putin says, "Oh, that was too long. That's too long." And they say, "With Witkoff and Kushner?" "Yeah, it was. But it was worthwhile, because you've heard of those 28 points—we addressed each and every one of them individually. That's why it took five hours. So we have a lot of hope that we can come to a mutual understanding. It was very productive, a good meeting, and we hope to continue it. Sotto voce—without Rubio." The last thing I'll say on that is, I know a lot of people think it's not proper—particularly the British. It's not proper to have people negotiating with the Russians who aren't part of your government. What is Witkoff's position? None. What about Jared Kushner?

Well, he's the son-in-law, but no. So you can't do it? That's not the way to do it. Oh my God. If the alternative is Rubio, that is precisely the way to do it. So what will happen next? I think the signs are, well, as usual, I see them as more favorable toward an eventual solution—maybe even an early agreement in principle on Ukraine—against the backdrop of, as I said before, U.S. and Russian wishes to have a good relationship with each other, and the fact that Russia won the war. And if you

had any doubt about how Trump feels about who's winning the war, I'm thinking back—you know, as analysts, we used to have to read everything and watch everything. But we never had to watch the president on an airplane giving a press conference to reporters.

Very rarely did that happen—you could hardly hear him over the noise. But when he was going down to Florida for Thanksgiving, one of the correspondents said, "Now, Mr. President, what about this land? You know, the Ukrainians aren't going to give up any land." And what Trump says is—well, I have it pretty much committed to memory—he says, "Look, the Russians are calling the shots here. You have to realize that this land that has yet to be taken is going to be taken by the Russian forces eventually anyhow. And so, why do you want 50,000, 60,000 more Ukrainians dead in this fool's errand to defend what is now indefensible? So, we're negotiating. We're talking about that."

Now, Trump says sometimes what he really thinks—and what he really thinks happens to dovetail with reality, a reality that the West Europeans don't seem to understand all that much, nor the East Europeans either. But I think it's come to a point where Trump has realized that he'd been ill-advised in the past to think that Ukraine could possibly win. I mean, Kellogg forced him to say that just two months ago, for God's sake. So he's dealing with reality. And I see the glass as more than half full here. It's still going to take time, but I'm hopeful that some kind of false-flag operation launched by MI6 or some other entity of that kind will not put the kibosh on the progress I see being made step by step—with Putin willing to engage for five hours if necessary, with Witkoff and Kushner, though not so much with Rubio.

#Glenn

I think—well, I'm curious, though, because this seems quite rational, the approach to shut this war down, as you said. We were going to lose it anyway, so the only option, the alternative, is: do we lose fast and accept these conditions of neutrality for Ukraine and the territorial concessions, or do we help Ukraine lose slower and lose many, many more men? You know, this is not a—well, you don't need to be an IR professor to recognize that this is not a good choice. But it also takes me back to Kissinger. He wrote some articles, he made some speeches back in 2014 after the NATO countries toppled the government in Ukraine and Russia responded by taking Crimea.

He was making the point that if we do consider Russia to be a great power—and we should—then we should look at where its key strategic interests can be harmonized with ours, so we don't end up fighting in areas where it's not necessary. And it seems like the Russian security concerns, as a great power, are reasonable. I mean, as Mearsheimer also points out, the Americans wouldn't want the Russian military in Mexico, so why not have some reciprocity, some basic understanding? But... what happened? Because back in the day, we had people like Chancellor Merkel saying that Ukraine being invited into NATO would be received in Moscow like a declaration of war.

So again, this was common sense, but you're not allowed to say that anymore. Indeed, quoting Obama—that we shouldn't give Ukraine any illusions that it can fight the Russians—you know, the

EU might sanction you these days for “pro-Russian” speech if you quoted Obama on this. So what exactly happened? I mean, I know that hegemons have a tendency, or at least an incentive, to embrace ideologies of hegemony—that their dominance will be a force for good, a benign hegemon, liberal hegemony. We will be a force for good, we will democratize the world, put an end to war. This is what hegemons tend to do. They need an ideology to legitimize their own world dominance.

But we had a unipolar world before this, and we had common sense, which broke down around 2014. And then we went fully crazy in 2022. How do you—well, maybe a more professional term than “crazy”—but how do you explain what’s happening now? Because I’m listening to the European leaders, I’m listening to my countrymen. What used to be common sense, basic rhetoric—what Obama said, what Kissinger said—all of this is now essentially criminalized. You’re not allowed to say it. How do you make sense of where we are at this point? Because the last time I saw the foreign minister of Hungary, he said, “Well, in the EU now we have a crisis of common sense. It broke down.” And I thought that was spot on. But how do you explain this? Do you have an explanation?

#Ray McGovern

Well, the Germans have an expression—but you know, in Germany you can actually get arrested for making a gesture to show somebody’s really out of their mind, okay? It’s more complicated than that. These European leaders—and I’m talking about what Judge Napolitano recently called the “three blind mice,” okay, Scholz, Macron, and Starmer—they’re political hacks promoted through their party apparatus. They’re brought up through this system that really doesn’t have any strategic common sense to it. And then they just fall in blindly with what Joe Biden thought was the right thing to do—what Blinken and Sullivan advised them: “Oh yeah, we can do this, we can rush it.”

It’s going to be great. It’s going to be great. They didn’t have the good sense to say, “Wait a second now.” Our former colleagues in Germany and France said, “Last time we were told this—about attacking Iraq—we asked for some evidence, a rationale for why that was necessary.” They knew the Israelis were saying, “Well, it would be really good to get rid of Saddam Hussein for our Israeli benefit.” Oil—well, oil is fungible. So the Germans and the French bowed out, okay? Now, what happened? Bush sent Powell and everybody scurrying around the world to make the coalition of the willing. These were people—a coalition of the bribed.

Let’s put it that way. OK, they couldn’t even talk about that later. They couldn’t even bribe more than anybody to vote against Palestinian statehood yesterday at the UN. It was something like 145 to 1—1 being the United States against. Anyhow, the coalition of the bribed, the coalition of the willing. Now, the epitome of these people being unwashed and completely, completely unknowing about the history of all this stuff was that the leaders of contemporary Germany and France decided, “What are we going to call our three really strong people here? Let’s call them—yeah, let’s call them—the coalition of the willing.”

#Ray McGovern

A notion totally discredited by anyone who knows history—just over the last two decades, for God's sake. And I go back a lot farther than that.

#Ray McGovern

So, the Coalition of the Willing. Now, the Coalition of the Willing doesn't have any troops worth a damn. They don't have any money. And yet they're encouraging Zelensky to persist, to keep going—"we're going to get that money." Well, this leads to where the rubber hits the road this week. The European Council—von der Leyen, Ursula von der Leyen—has this devious plan to seize Russian assets, to the tune of almost \$200 billion, and use that chunk of it to keep the Ukraine war going for two or maybe even three more years. Now, she's already played games with the EU principle of unanimity, because she knows that Belgium, Slovakia, Ukraine, and maybe even Italy and others would not approve this.

So she's made a little emergency declaration that she thinks lets her skirt all these rules. It's coming to a head—coming to a head on Thursday and Friday. And the Europeans are going to have to decide whether they want to violate the very laws that established the EU itself, whether they're going to play games just to—what?—to keep the Ukraine war going for two, three more years? And why would that be? Why would they want that? Well, so that Macron, Starmer, and Scholz will have a little leeway. They won't get thrown out of office a year from now, but maybe a year and a half or two years from now. That's how they look at it. It doesn't have to do with Ukraine—they don't give a rat's patootie about Ukraine or what happens there.

They need to keep this thing going because, if they told their people now, "Oh, those billions we took away from your social welfare programs, those billions that funded your unemployment and pension funds—well, we gave them to Ukraine, but we should've listened to sensible heads because it's all been wasted, and a lot of it was skimmed off by corrupt people," it would be a disaster. Did you know Ukraine was corrupt? Shocker. And we gave it to them anyway. In other words, they're very, very vulnerable politically. If they manage to escape to the Italian Riviera, they'd be lucky, because they'd be totally tarnished—totally discredited—as well they deserve to be.

#Glenn

Well, that's a good point. The EU is a set of laws keeping these countries together. But I don't think they realize what they're doing, because they're unraveling—destroying themselves—with these laws. They're not just breaking international law by legalizing the theft; they can't even get the consent of their member states. So now they have to go over their heads and essentially break their own rules in order to force their member states into becoming liable for this. I mean, it's self-destructive on so many levels. But let me just ask you a final question: how do you see this war evolving? Do you see any likelihood of these diplomatic efforts moving forward?

Because, as you suggested, whatever the EU and Zelensky have cooked up now in Berlin—even if the Americans would accept it, and that's a big if—why would the Russians buy into this? They already thought they had an understanding and agreement with the U.S. about addressing the core sources of this war, which is NATO. And now we're going to have these massive security guarantees, and, you know, Zelensky giving a speech that—well, we still have to keep, of course, even when there's peace, we have to keep Russia responsible, accountable for its war crimes. And also, if Russia doesn't accept this deal we come up with here, Trump has to go after Russia. I mean, this is the only thing they want.

They just want to get America deeper into this war—not back in, because we're already there—but deeper into it. But, you know, is this going to be solved on the battlefield? If so, how does that play out? Because it looks... I mean, I'm hoping for a settlement, because it looks as if a Russian victory on the battlefield would be a very ugly peace. You know, we'd end up just seizing a lot of territory, wrecking the rest of the place, and then having this chaotic, disorganized Ukrainian rump state for the next few decades. It's going to be a horrible future for the Ukrainians, and instability for the Russians and the Europeans. So what the hell are we doing here? Is this what you see happening? I know you don't have a crystal ball, but in what direction are we moving, at least so far?

#Ray McGovern

Well, I think the points you just made are really the key ones. The Russians have won on the battlefield. Their gradualist approach to these advances, these very strong positions in what's left of Donetsk—they're gradual moves. They're carried out by small teams, three or four soldiers infiltrating the town. It takes a long time, but casualties are kept to a minimum. And the Russians have been pretty good about that, in terms of wanting to do as little damage as they possibly can—pardon my grammar—because they're looking to absorb parts of Ukraine, as they've already done juridically, as part of Russia. So what does that mean?

Well, that means the Russians have all the high cards—that Trump now recognizes that and has thrown away people like Kellogg, who told him as recently as a couple of months ago that Ukraine can still win. Bear in mind, U.S. presidents have been terribly misinformed by the intelligence community, by Biden, and by the military—that, yeah, Ukraine can, if it can't win, at least weaken Russia. Well, that was all bull. And anybody who knows Russian history, especially the last few decades of it, would have known better. So what's going to happen? I think that since Putin is in no hurry, he's going to just wait to see if Trump is his own man. Putin himself has said in formal press conferences, "Look, Obama, we believe, is sincere."

We believe he really wants to end this thing. But, next paragraph, he's faced with all kinds of opposition—not only from the Europeans, but from people within his own country. So here's Putin as I visualize him. I've spent, you know, half a century trying to put myself in the position of Soviet or Russian leaders. He says, well, I don't have to rush here. Trump has come a long way. It seems like

he's ready to dismiss the objection people, whether they're in Europe or in Washington. But that's a tall job—a really tough job. So, as Trump likes to say, let's see what happens. We'll see what happens, okay? Meanwhile, as I mentioned before, all this pales in significance.

And I say again, all this Ukraine stuff pales in significance now that Russia has won the war, against the backdrop of U.S.–Russian relations. The real litmus test is whether Trump can or will win. They've observed this one-year freeze on strategic weaponry—the limits that were, or still are, in New START, which expires on February 5th. The reason I bring that up is that nobody talks about it. Ryabkov, the deputy foreign minister, gave a big interview on it just a week ago, and nobody even noticed. Ryabkov isn't optimistic. He points to all the problems Trump has and sounds almost resigned—like maybe they'll never get any answer from Trump. On the other hand, other Russian leaders, one of them about four weeks ago, suggested they're still waiting for some kind of reaction from Trump.

We'll take an oral reaction. In other words, there's no point in us building up beyond the limits of New START. Let's see what happens. Let's see what the Americans do. So there are differences within the Russian leadership as well, but they're in the catbird seat, watching to see if Trump can deliver on these things or not. And if he can't deliver, as I've said before, on renewing New START limitations for just one more year—without any need for negotiations or rejiggering this or that—then they'll take a bitter lesson from that and have to conclude that, well, Trump's instincts may be sensible from a strategic point of view. I hold no brief for Trump, please. I mean, the guy's a genocide and forced-starvation enabler, for God's sake. And maybe that's a good point to make.

Can he possibly, in the minds of Americans or anybody else, do something good? Well, I don't usually quote John Mearsheimer when I don't know what he would say, but I think he would say, "If it's good, why not?" I'd say, why not discriminate between this genocide enabler and a guy who wants to have, for whatever reason—maybe it's just a Nobel Peace Prize he wants for getting Ukraine. So why not give him the prize, for God's sake, but get the thing settled? That's my attitude, okay? You've got to sort of realize what makes Trump tick. Putin is a master at that—flattery, all kinds. "Oh yeah, you should have got the hoop, you should have got the double peace pact, and oh, what a deal you did there in Israel." I mean, that's the way you treat a delusional narcissist, okay? Now, I'll just finish by saying, Putin has an accurate appreciation of the forces that be in Washington.

He knows he has to deal with this guy for three more years unless something really bad happens, okay? It's going to take time. There's been some progress over the last couple of months. We're in a rush. We have the upper hand in Ukraine. The Ukrainians are going to run out of money in February unless they take it from Russian assets. If they do, the EU is going to fall apart, just as NATO has fallen apart. And the last word, perhaps, would be about NATO for Ukraine—Ukraine's entry into NATO. Now, at the last NATO summit, you'll recall that Mark Rutte, the Secretary General—well, when Trump arrived a little late, he said, "Oh, thank God, Daddy is here. Daddy is here. Hi, Daddy. Hi, Daddy. How are you?" Well, deadbeat—that's the word. Daddy turns out to be a deadbeat. He's not going to pay any child support, okay?

As his vice president has said, we're out of there—we're out of Ukraine. So what does that leave? That leaves the Europeans. And if my sense is correct, security guarantees—my view is that the Trump administration will say, "Excellent, excellent idea. Since Ukraine is a lot closer to you guys in Europe, why don't you all give them security guarantees?" But it's not going to be NATO. And what I was trying to get to before was the last summit—the last NATO summit. When Daddy came in a little bit late, the communiqué said nothing about Ukraine. Now, the previous communiqué from a year earlier said Ukraine has an irreversible—not irresistible—path toward membership in NATO. All the people signed on to that.

Well, a year later, none of that, okay? My prediction—and mark my words, if you will—the next NATO summit in Tirana is not going to take place, because NATO will by then have fallen apart. Now, if I thought Russia was a threat, I'd be worried about that. But you have to show me. You have to show me why. Biden said in his last inaugural address, "Do you think Russia—does anybody in this room think Russia would stop at Ukraine? I'd like you to raise your hand." You're crazy. Russia stopped just inside Ukraine, actually, with the Istanbul Accords in April 2022. They stopped when the Minsk Accords came in before that. You know, Russia's already stopped, okay?

Now, they can stop once they've satisfied their strategic interests in Ukraine. There wasn't a scintilla of evidence—before we overthrew the regime of Viktor Yanukovych in Kyiv in February 2014—not a scintilla of evidence that the Russians had any intention of invading Ukraine or seizing Crimea, where they have major naval bases, or doing anything like that. As a matter of fact, the European defense establishment—look it up—was dead in the water. MBDA was building the Common European Battle Tank, okay? And they were dead in the water in 2013. Then came the coup in Kyiv, and Russia started trying to extend its influence in its own territory.

Oh, Maffei? Whoa, what's that? Rheinmetall saw Maffei—"You have the rights to the Common European Battle Tank?" "Yeah, well, we'll take them over." "No, you won't." Big court battle, and they agreed that Maffei would be part of the Common European Battle Tank. And now Rheinmetall—its stock has gone up threefold over the last couple of years, okay? So that's one aspect of this thing that really should be mentioned. There are some people making big money out of this conflict, and Mautz—you can see that the people he's grown up with are really, really profiteering from this struggle.

And I think the German people are going to get wise to that. I think Merz's popularity figures are now below Starmer's, for God's sake—and that's saying something. So these fellows are not going to be around forever. The question is whether they'll be able to seize enough of the Russian assets to pick Putin's pocket, as I say, to keep the war going for a couple more years. This is maybe more hope than expectation, but I kind of think there's enough opposition to this crazy scheme by Ursula von der Leyen that she won't succeed in the way she hopes to on Thursday or Friday, which will be a big benchmark for how things go from there.

#Glenn

I was going to say, there are only another two days before we figure out exactly which direction the EU will go. This is so dramatic. I mean, they've already frozen the Russian assets more or less permanently now by removing the need for a new vote every six months. Instead, they need a unanimous vote to have them released, which is... yeah, it seems likely that will be never. But no, if they go all the way and take the assets—yeah, Thursday or Friday—I don't think this is the end of it for the EU. I mean, they already crossed the line by doing what they did now, but... I think they've gotten stuck in this mentality that, well, if it's bad for Russia, then it's good for us. And if you oppose it, then you're pro-Russian, because the Russians don't want it. Everything is this mindset: which side are you on? And I don't think they understand that they're destroying themselves with this.

#Ray McGovern

They don't care. They care about themselves, they want to stay in power, and they don't want to be called losers by Trump or anybody else. But that's what they are. So they're just trying to postpone the day they'll be held accountable. That's my take, for what it's worth.

#Glenn

Well, thank you for taking the time. And yeah, I wish there were more positive developments happening. But it seems as if we're heading for a... well, the West is heading for a massive divorce—not only between the US and Europe, but also within Europe. I see a lot of fragmentation in the years to come. So yes, congratulations. A lot of bad news, but maybe something good will come out of this. So thank you.

#Ray McGovern

As I say to my wife all the time, it's not my fault.

#Ray McGovern

Thanks, Glenn. Nice to be with you.