

Chain Reaction Toward World War III Has Begun

Prof. Xueqin Jiang argues that both historical patterns and game theory can be used to accurately predict future events. Prof. Jiang is the host of the popular educational channel Predictive History: <https://www.youtube.com/@PredictiveHistory> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glenndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: <https://buyamecoffee.com/gdieseng> Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome. Today we're joined by Professor Zhang, who is well known for his geopolitical forecasts based on game theory—not by looking into a crystal ball, but by analyzing the structural forces and interests of various actors. He also makes some very specific predictions, such as the return of Trump and a possible U.S.–Iran war in Trump's second term. Anyway, thank you so much for coming back on. Thanks, Glenn. I guess one of your darker predictions is that we're now well on our way to World War III. I just wanted to ask why that is—what are you looking at? Are there possible triggers? Do you look at the chain reactions? Because, as we saw from the previous two world wars, one thing tends to lead to another, and once you're drawn in, there doesn't seem to be a reverse button at any point. So what is it that you're assessing?

#Jiang Xueqin

Okay, so my first piece of evidence is the American National Security Strategy, which was just published a week or two ago. It's very clear that, maybe four years ago, America saw the world as something that could be organized and coordinated by multilateral organizations. What was important then was for America to act as the enforcer, or the police officer, to make sure people abided by the rules-based international order. But in this document, Trump is very clear: that order has dissipated—it's gone. So now the only thing that matters is national self-interest. America needs to protect its own national self-interest.

And that primarily means protecting the Western Hemisphere—what they call the Monroe Doctrine. There's something called the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, which basically means Trump will want to enforce it. America believes that Russia and China have been encroaching too deeply

into South America, especially China, which has a lot of trade and investment agreements there that benefit the local people. But America has always believed that South America is its territory, and now it's moving to protect that territory. That's why we're seeing the escalation in Venezuela.

We're seeing 10% of America's naval assets in the Caribbean, and recently there's been an escalation. American forces have basically seized a Venezuelan oil tanker and diverted it to Houston, Texas. So, by enforcing the Monroe Doctrine, America will now come into conflict with the entirety of South America, because when America threatens Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, they all see their sovereignty being infringed upon. So that's one piece of evidence. The second piece of evidence is, of course, what's happening between Russia and Ukraine.

This war between Russia and Ukraine is essentially over. Russia is starving on the battlefield. Morale in Ukraine has collapsed. Around 100,000 Ukrainian soldiers have deserted, and millions have fled abroad. So Ukraine doesn't have the manpower, the resources, or the willpower to continue this fight. At the same time, the Europeans insist that the Ukrainians keep fighting. There's talk among European leaders of confiscating—basically stealing—those 210 billion euros in Russian assets and giving them directly to Ukraine. But they've given up on that idea because they understand it's suicidal.

And now they're about to give Ukraine 100 billion euros in loans—interest-free loans—to keep the war going. The reason is that Europe needs to enter this war at some point, and it's afraid that if there's a peace treaty, Russia will consolidate its gains and then use Ukrainian resources to challenge European supremacy. So that's the second major front. Then, of course, what we're seeing in the Middle East is a continuing escalation between Israel and Iran. There was a peace treaty signed between Israel and different parties—Hamas, Hezbollah—but it seems Israel has no respect for these treaties.

It seems that Israel is planning to attack Hezbollah in Lebanon within the next two weeks. The Hamas ceasefire won't hold, because Hamas will not agree to give up all its arms—if it does, it'll be wiped out by these Israeli proxies. So the Middle East will only flare up further. You know, there was that shooting in America of a nuclear physicist, and then the tragedy on Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, where sixteen people died. Israel is pinning the blame on Iran with absolutely no evidence. Mossad officers have flown to Australia to take part in the investigation, and we can suspect they'll find some way to blame Iran for what happened. So all around the world, we're seeing the potential for massive flare-ups in 2026.

#Glenn

Well, it seems like one of the major things that's changing, which you suggested as well, is the shift in the entire world order. Usually, a new world order only consolidates after a world war. That is, when you have a massive redistribution of power, there's often little ability for the international system to reform itself. Usually, we need a big war, and then a new status quo can be cemented

through agreements. But this is such a critical time, it seems, because the whole world order after the Cold War has been based on hegemony and dominance. And now, of course, that distribution of power is gone—it's a multipolar distribution of power. So it's very, or nearly, impossible to transition peacefully, because the old order, which was based on U.S. primacy, now needs to find a whole new system based on a balance of power.

I mean, this changes everything—absolutely everything. The rules of the game change, as you suggested. I mean, why did the U.S.—now China and Russia can't be in their own backyard, but the U.S., of course, can still be in the backyard of Russia and China? So there are no acceptable rules. The institutions will change—the security ones too. Well, I mean, should they still be based only on deterrence and dominance? If there are now many centers of power, it doesn't really make sense how diplomacy is conducted. I just feel like these are very difficult topics, but no one seems willing to accept the reality or even discuss it. I mean, here in Europe, the overall sentiment or narrative is that all was well and peaceful, that freedom and democracy were just spreading.

And then, you know, evil showed up—and it usually has to be personified by Putin or Xi Jinping. It has to be confronted, must be destroyed, and then somehow peace can return. I mean, this is a very childish way of saying they want hegemony back. And I guess I say "childish" because there's no strategy for what they want to achieve or how they can achieve it, or the means required. It's just this emotional outburst and slogans about what is unjust. As if our hegemony was so virtuous that everyone was benefiting from it. But you see, this is the problem—the inability of our political leaders to address the critical moment we're in and why we need to find a new status quo. Is it the inability to let go of hegemony? Is it just that the rules are changing? I mean, how can we explain this?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah, I completely agree with your assessment. So before this idea of a liberal, rules-based natural order, it was basically these Western nations bullying, exploiting, and colonizing the rest of the world. For 20 years, NATO was expanding into the Russian sphere of influence. And for 20 years, Putin had been warning NATO: you have to stop, otherwise we'll have to react, we have to protect our sovereignty. But NATO refused to listen. NATO was extremely arrogant, and that forced his hand. Then China, for the longest time, was basically the factory of the world. China agreed to produce really cheap products for the world, which increased people's standard of living and made Western consumers really happy.

But then came the 2009 financial crisis, basically because of speculation, bad policymaking, and greed—the Western economy collapsed. What happened next was that Western central banks demanded China invest in infrastructure. So for the next ten years, China was digging itself into a hole with all this infrastructure spending. Eventually, China decided it didn't have enough resources

to keep going. Now the American economy has collapsed because American consumers have maxed out their credit cards. They've been exploited for decades and can no longer afford to spend any more money. So now what America demands is that Chinese consumers start spending.

Chinese consumers start maxing out their credit cards, and America demands that China liberalize its financial markets. But China says, "We will not surrender our sovereignty." So China has been bullied by America. Under the first Trump administration, they started to levy all these tariffs on China, and it's continued under the Biden administration. America has insisted on all these bullying tactics—for example, denying China access to technology, to markets, and so on. A few years ago, the Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was arrested while transiting in Vancouver and was held under detention for a number of years until she was finally released. For the longest time, America and its allies were able to bully the world. But over time, Russia and China have stood up, and Europe and America don't like that. And that's the world we live in today.

#Glenn

Well, I feel like we've watched this movie before, to some extent. Before World War I, with the rise of Germany, we saw that it effectively outgrew the British-dominated system—so again, a shift of power. The British hegemon was declining, and Germany as a regional power was increasing. In 1871, for example, Britain produced twice as much steel as Germany, which was a good indicator of economic power. Twenty-two years later, by 1893, German steel production had already surpassed Britain's. And by the time World War I broke out in 1914, German steel production had doubled that of Britain. That's a very short period of time for the whole relationship to be turned on its head. Now, you know, power shifts up and down, but this is quite critical because the whole European security architecture then was still British-dominated.

So you have Germany producing twice as much steel, yet all its major waterways outside, you know, internal Germany, are patrolled and controlled by the British. It doesn't really make much sense. But it seems, you know, after World War II, we saw the same thing—the Germans outgrew the regional security architecture. And I was wondering, do you see these historical patterns? Because we have a similar thing now. I mean, the Chinese economy has been the biggest in the world in terms of purchasing power parity since 2014. Meanwhile, in Russia, after the Cold War, we decided to develop a European security architecture where they wouldn't have a seat at the table, because we thought they were weak—they'd only get weaker, and we'd manage their decline. That would be the new European situation.

So, another Treaty of Versailles, essentially. But now we've ended up in a situation where the Russians have reversed it, and now they have the largest state, the largest economy, territory, population, and military—yet they're supposed to be the only country in Europe that doesn't have a seat at the table. So all these red flags should be going up, I feel, that this system isn't going to produce stability but war. And yet again, we can't even discuss this. I mean, if you listen to the European politicians and their stenographers in the media, it's just, well, you know, we have

freedom and democracy, and Russia wants empire. And that's it—it's just a good old-fashioned good versus evil. I mean, it's quite extraordinary. But do you see a historical continuity on some other levels?

#Jiang Xueqin

Look, I mean, for the past hundred years, Great Britain has been the chief instigator of wars throughout the world. You know, you go back to World War I, and one of the great injustices of that war was that Germany was forced to accept all the guilt for causing it, when, in fact, you could argue that Britain had more to do with the cause of World War I than Germany did, okay? And the reason why is that Britain subscribes to an idea called the Mackinder Heartland thesis. The idea is that Britain is a small country with very little manpower, but it controls the seas.

So, in order to maintain its hegemony, it needs to create as much chaos and conflict within the Eurasian continent as possible. Because if a major power arises in the Eurasian continent—whether it be France, the Ottoman Empire, Germany, or Russia—then it could unite the continent by railway, which would negate sea trade, and Britain would collapse economically, militarily, and demographically. So, for the past 200 years, Britain has been spreading as much chaos as possible throughout the Eurasian continent. You can go back to the Napoleonic Wars, when Britain sponsored and financed seven major wars against France. Napoleon had basically conquered the continent by the Battle of Austerlitz.

Austria and Russia were suddenly defeated, but Britain was still working behind the scenes, financing wars, because it couldn't afford for France to consolidate Europe and create a continental system—which is what Napoleon wanted. And then you fast-forward to Germany in a similar situation. Britain cannot allow any power to emerge in Eurasia, and today America subscribes to the same concept. As you say, there's a parallel between what happened before World War I between Britain and Germany, and now between China and America, where China is a manufacturing superpower and needs all these resources from South America. South America has something called the Lithium Triangle—Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia—and that's about 50% of the world's lithium, which is crucial for EVs, for AI, for the future, basically.

And so China has been investing heavily in South America—building roads, building infrastructure. There's this megaport it's building in Peru to facilitate trade. South America has been very receptive and welcoming of Chinese investment. But America cannot allow China to continue to rise, and that's why it's going to use its sea power to disrupt global trade. Right, so we've seen American troops boarding a Venezuelan oil tanker. But there was also a Chinese ship headed to Iran that was boarded as well. This is blatant piracy. For the past 50 years, America has said it would defend global trade, and now, in order to defend its empire and weaken China and Russia, it's resorting to global piracy, basically.

#Glenn

What's interesting about the end of World War I is that every historian—well, more or less every historian—recognizes that the Treaty of Versailles, put in place at the end of the war, set us on a path to a Second World War because it didn't create a sustainable place for Germany in the new Europe. However, if you say that Germany was provoked to start World War II, then you're a Nazi sympathizer. So it's very strange, because it's more or less the same thing. But I think it speaks to the mentality that if you recognize something—if you acknowledge it—then you legitimize it. It just feels like we're a little bit back there at the moment, because the Russian invasion couldn't possibly be more provoked.

This was provoked in every way. And you can easily prove it, but you're not allowed to say so, because then you're legitimizing the invasion. And of course, you have to be canceled immediately. But I thought the Eurasian heartland comment was interesting. As you said, it derives to some extent from the Napoleonic system, when they wanted to consolidate Europe, cut off the British as a maritime power, and then that would destroy them. So this made the British convinced that you just have to keep the European powers divided. Of course, about 120 years ago, this came into a more cohesive theory in terms of Mackinder. But in the 19th century, the British were fighting Russia as a potential hegemon of Eurasia.

And in the 20th century, American security strategies also referred to the heartland theory, because they saw themselves as the maritime power versus the Russian land power. Today, though, Eurasia is not hegemonic. In the past, the goal was primarily to split the Russians from the Germans, always to push them out toward Asia. That's why we fought the Crimean War against the Russians in the mid-19th century. But now, when you push Russia into Asia, it doesn't push it into economic backwaters.

It pushes it straight into the arms of the largest industrial and technological power in the world, which is China—at least one of the two. So it's a very different setting. How do you assess this new Eurasia? I mean, one shouldn't overestimate their ability to harmonize their interests and work cohesively. But there is a commonality. The Russians, the Chinese, the Indians, the Iranians—many of them have competing interests, but none of them wants to be dominated by a maritime power anymore. So how do you see this happening? Does it impact, or is it impacting, this path to World War III?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah, I mean, exactly. The Mackinder–Halford thesis is something embraced by both the American Empire and the British Empire. What's happening now is that, because of American aggression—because this system, this financial system where the U.S. dollar is the world's reserve currency gives America an exorbitant privilege, meaning it can print money and not suffer the consequences while

the rest of the world absorbs the debt—it's driving the BRICS countries and Iran into each other's arms. So the great nightmare for the Anglo-American Empire is an alliance between Russia, Iran, and China.

And, of course, India will also join this alliance eventually, because it benefits India. This creates the Eurasian continental trade system, right? And Iran is the key, because Iran is the pivot—it's the center of the world. Alliances run through Iran. The Europeans have something called EMAC, the European–India–Middle East Corridor. Russia has the North–South Corridor. China, of course, has the Belt and Road Initiative. So Iran is the key, and that's why America is intent on regime change in Iran. The U.S. cannot afford for this alliance to take shape, to manifest itself, because then it would lose trade access across the Eurasian continent.

China, Russia, and Iran could just trade among themselves and then provide energy, food, and manufactured goods to the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Then America would be stuck with \$32 trillion in debt, and the American policy scheme would collapse. So this is a life-and-death struggle for America. What it needs to do is go into Iran and make sure this alliance cannot take shape. It doesn't have to win the war, but it needs to create as much chaos as possible. That's why I think in 2026 we'll see an escalation in rhetoric and conflict between America and Iran, with Israel, of course, as the pit dog for the American empire.

#Glenn

It's funny how the complexity of geopolitics has to be sold to the public. It's sold in the most absurd ways—like, "We want to have more women's rights in Iran." Apparently, that's what drives the great-power rivalry. But to what extent... sorry.

#Jiang Xueqin

No, I mean, like, you look at this Pawnee Beach tragedy where 16 people were killed, and we know that the person who committed the crime was an Islamic State sympathizer. And already they're pinning the blame on Iran. Why is Mossad involved in this significant police investigation? I mean, it seems as though they're looking for every possible pretext to create public anger at Iran.

#Glenn

Yeah. Well, a key problem, if you look at the previous two world wars—and if you're looking ahead to, hopefully not, a third one—is that there's always been this assumption the wars could be limited. But by definition, they had this chain reaction where one thing led to another. I remember at university, when I was teaching causality, I used World War I as an example. Nobody wanted to go down that path, but much of it seemed to be based on the premise that they could limit the wars. In other words, it's this illusion of escalation control. You know, we see some indications of that in Europe today.

That is, the Europeans say, "Oh, we can send some troops to Ukraine." The idea is that we can just tip the scales a bit in Ukraine's favor, rebalance it, and then stabilize the front lines so we can keep the war going. But it seems like a delusion—the belief that they'll be able to control this, that somehow the Russian response to Europeans entering the battlefield can be contained, and the war kept just between Ukraine and Russia. You know, Europe shouldn't be a part of this war. "We're just sending troops and weapons and, you know, doing the targeting." But how do you see this in a wider historical context, and in what we're seeing in the world today?

#Jiang Xueqin

I know that's a very big question. Look, yeah, I mean, it's a common pattern in history where wars start out as limited wars, with one party trying to achieve certain strategic objectives. And it always escalates into a full-scale war beyond anyone's control. There's this idea of mission creep. Think about Vietnam—at first, America was just sending in some advisors or trainers to bolster the South Vietnamese regime. And eventually, it escalated to the point where the entire American military was involved in a full-scale war in Vietnam. So I think one major flashpoint we should look at is Venezuela, right?

Because Trump is very clear. Trump is saying, you know, "I'm not going to declare war. This is just an operation to destroy drug cartels, because Maduro—he's a drug kingpin—and we're trying to save as many American lives as possible." So that's just rhetoric for public consumption. We all know that Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves, and Trump is trying to make Venezuela into an economic vassal. You'd think this war would only involve Venezuela and America, but it has the potential to escalate very quickly, because Cuba and Nicaragua would be next on the hit list after Venezuela.

Also, if you're Brazil, you'd think the real target is you. Before the trade war between China and America, the U.S. was supplying China with soybeans. China imports about a third of its food, and it used to get most of its soybeans from American farmers. But because of the trade war, China started importing soybeans from Brazil. Since then, the economic relationship between Brazil and China has improved dramatically. Right now, China is Brazil's biggest trading partner—and that's true for almost every nation in South America. So if you're a South American country, you're outraged that Trump is trying to carry out regime change in Venezuela.

You don't like the Yankees. You've had this long history where the CIA plots coups in your nation, killing millions of people. You also want to maintain good trade relations with China, because China actually puts real investment into your country. They build roads, they build solid infrastructure, they contribute to the livelihood of ordinary citizens. And America wants to take that away. So this war could escalate to a point where, OK, maybe there are American ground troops in Venezuela, but Brazil and other nations covertly send troops to reinforce the Venezuelan regime, because they know that if Venezuela falls, they all fall together. It's a lake of gasoline right now.

#Glenn

Well, yeah, I think obviously the U.S. attempting to restore its dominance in Latin America fits within this shift of power as well, because if it's a multipolar world, the main priority then should be that it's a rival great power—you want to control your own backyard. And of course, a lot of these countries have a very bad history with the U.S. dominating them. So you can see how this could spiral out of control, and why countries like China and Russia would want to at least defend their interests and relationships there. Because, as you mentioned, there's also the possible war against Iran, to knock out this central piece in the new Eurasian constellation.

Did you see a similar path there, in terms of that war spreading and getting out of control? Because when everyone wants to sell these wars, it's always presented as nice and limited—"we just want to get rid of a narco cartel, everybody wins, it's a positive-sum game." In the Middle East, it's, you know, "we just want to deliver some freedoms and prevent them from getting nuclear weapons." Who would oppose that, right? But by nature, if you want to sell a war, it has to sound benign. So you end up deluding yourself, to some extent, about where it's going to spiral out of control. But do you see other great powers and regional powers being pulled into a war with Iran?

#Jiang Xueqin

Well, I mean, the reality is that China gets most of its oil from the Middle East. So if there's a war, the Strait of Hormuz would be closed down, and that would create economic chaos throughout the world—especially in Southeast Asia, which depends on that region. South Korea, Japan, and China all rely on most of their oil coming from the Middle East. And Ukraine is not that far away. So, I mean, it's possible we have a kind of domino effect where—I'm just hypothesizing, okay?—I'm just showing how all these things are interrelated. So America is bogged down in Venezuela, and Israel attacks Iran.

Iran, to defend its interests, shuts down the Strait of Hormuz. Then America sends ground troops to reopen it. Russia helps Iran by pushing toward Odessa, which forces the Europeans to defend the city. Basically, the European nations have to go into full adult male conscription to defend Odessa—they don't have enough manpower as it is. Maybe Japan and China start exchanging heated rhetoric. So the world is interconnected, and it can become a situation where one flare-up in one part of the world escalates to other parts of the world.

#Glenn

But in terms of the main two economic players, one often looks at the whole idea of the Thucydides Trap—that is, to assess the likelihood of conflict between the U.S. and China. I think the pathway to World War III between NATO and Russia is already well underway. But given that the main shift in the international system is the U.S. hegemon having disappeared—the U.S. no longer has a comfortable seat on the throne anymore—it's not the Russians; they're not that powerful. Indeed, as

the new security strategy suggests, the Russians shouldn't be considered a threat to the U.S. The main—well, I have to use the word “threat,” but at least the main challenge to U.S. primacy—is obviously China.

Now, this is also why the new nationalism emerging in the U.S. suggests that everything was fine—we were going from strength to strength, everything was good—and then people ask, “Who took it away from us?” The answer becomes: China. That’s where the ugly nationalism comes from. But how do you see this playing out? Because a key concern in the United States now is that it can’t compete economically with China anymore. Well, it still has the superior army, or the military. So, do you see too many incentives to transition or escalate from an economic war to a military conflict? Or do you see the possibility of this being—if not the trigger—a big part of a coming World War III?

#Jiang Xueqin

Look, the national security strategy is very clear about China. The long-term goal is to economically strangle China because it depends on trade for its resources, right? So the idea of the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine is to cut off China’s trade with South America, right? Now you have all these American warships patrolling South American waters, and China won’t be able to extract the copper and lithium it needs for its AI and EV industries. It will no longer be able to import food and oil from South America. That’s part one. But even in Africa, Trump and America will challenge China. For the past few decades, China has been investing very heavily in Africa—building infrastructure and creating good relations with African nations.

China has a solid relationship with many African nations. But in this National Security Strategy document, it says very clearly that America will now work with its European and Japanese allies to help, um, build up Africa—because Africa is the future. If you look at demographics, Africa is the youngest continent, and it’s the fastest-growing continent. So, um, the National Security Strategy says very clearly that before, America was too focused on ideology—on spreading liberalism and democracy. And now it’s purely self-interest, purely economics. So basically doing what China does. But America says, well, we have better products, and we’ll use the full resources of our allies.

So basically, to counter China, first of all, what America will do is strangle China economically by cutting off trade. That’s number one. Number two, it’s going to treat the resources of its allies—mainly Japan and South Korea—as its own. It’s going to see Japan’s wealth as a tool for America to use against China. And the third thing America’s going to do is promote divide and rule, where it may back off militarily in Southeast Asia but encourage Japan to create greater conflict with China. And we’re already seeing that—over the past few weeks, China and Japan have had a bitter exchange of rhetoric. We can expect a greater escalation of that in the next few months.

#Glenn

That's a very unfortunate message to send to China. That is, if China wants to continue trading with the world, then it had better build a very powerful military to actually defend its trade partnerships from the U.S. Well, again, this is another, I guess, comparison with the First and Second World Wars. You have these rising industrial powers competing, and then, of course, almost unavoidably, the military as an instrument joins in the mix.

But your point there is interesting, because if the U.S. just wanted to deter and maintain stability, then its own army would be on the front line. That is, it has the most credibility. I mean, if you want deterrence, you need clear credibility, capability, and communication. But if you want to go into a hot war, you don't want to be on the front line—you want a proxy. You want to send in the Kurds to fight the Iraqis, you want to use the Ukrainians to weaken the Russians, and I guess you want to throw in the Japanese to fight the Chinese. But is that what you're seeing? Do you see this happening in other places as well?

#Jiang Xueqin

This is what the British did—divide and rule. This is what empires have been doing for centuries. So yeah, I mean, Japan and South Korea will now be the cannon fodder in this great struggle between China and America. And we're already seeing that. Unfortunately, because there are tens of thousands of American troops in Japan and South Korea, and because the leadership class—the elite—were co-opted by America a long, long time ago, they're basically all side assets at this point. So Japan and South Korea will just do what they're told by the Americans.

#Glenn

I wanted to ask you about the domestic component as well in this—as one heads toward World War III. As we've seen in the past, when a hegemon declines, or any great power declines, it also manifests in domestic problems. A state is not just one unified entity of power; it has that domestic component. So once you have the decline, you also see economic inequalities, shifts in demographics, social fragmentation, political polarization, and a loss of legitimacy for a government that's not performing. And often we see that war becomes kind of the solution to hold this construct together.

Do you see the same thing, or how do you explain—or factor in—this dynamic in your assessment? What happens with the states themselves? Because if you look at Europe and the U.S. today, it's not the same U.S. and Europe as 20 years ago. The quality of leadership, the way they talk about the world, the priorities they set—I mean, I don't hear any European leaders today talk about peace. They don't talk about diplomacy or the need to avoid war. Everything is about, you know, preparing to sacrifice our sons and daughters to fight the new great Satan. I mean, this is our political leadership. This doesn't happen out of nowhere; it seems to be part of the decline. Do you factor this in?

#Jiang Xueqin

Yeah, absolutely. You're absolutely right. Spengler had a checklist for how you know a society is in decline. And when he says "decline," he means deathbed, because in his worldview, societies are organic—they're organisms. They're born, they mature, they die, and when they die, they scatter. So what's happening in the West isn't just decline, and then maybe a few decades from now they'll reemerge. No, it's like the deathbed. So let's go over the checklist. Number one is over-urbanization, where everyone from the countryside flocks to the city. And you have these megacities right now in the Western world. That's a problem because these cities are parasitic—they're places where people engage in luxury, decadence, and corruption.

They actually don't produce anything of value. So that's problem number one. Problem number two is that people refuse to have children, refuse to have families. Young people don't see a future for themselves, and they certainly don't see a future for their children. So they refuse to have children—that's problem number two. You have demographic collapse. Problem number three, of course, is massive inequality, where you have 1%, even less than 1%—actually, maybe 0.1%—who control all the resources. In America right now, you have a few billionaires who are able to buy up all the assets. You look at someone like Larry Ellison, who's able to buy TikTok; his son's able to buy Viacom, and now they're bidding for CNN. So you have one family that's able to control all the media resources in America.

So there's massive inequality. Number four is that when you fight wars, you get missionaries or barbarians to fight them for you. Right. So I'm not sure when the last time America fought a war and actually used its own troops—maybe 2003 against Iraq. But then you get Libya and Syria, where it was using proxies to fight those wars. And it's the same thing happening in Ukraine, where America is using Ukrainians to fight, but Americans themselves are not really involved. Number five is just general decadence, where, you know, you have things like OnlyFans—maybe 10 or 20 percent of young white American women are on OnlyFans. And I mean, that's a sign of civilizational death, if anything. Right.

I mean, you have these young girls trying to sell their bodies online, and it's all legal and even promoted. So there are all these signs of civilizational decline and collapse throughout the Western world. You also have massive immigration because no one wants to work. It's not because—well, you know, listen—you have this massive immigration because Americans are used to cheap labor, and most Americans don't want to be slaves. So they have to bring in these immigrants, and that's causing the collapse of social cohesion. We keep hearing, over and over, about all these ailments facing the Western world. And, you know, we're not going to solve it, because these young people are not going to fight a pointless war overseas. Right?

So, Germany has announced that they're considering conscription, and young people have said, "We'd rather be ruled by Putin." If you give them a choice—fight a war or have Putin be our emperor—

they'd prefer to have Putin as their emperor. They're happy with Putin as their emperor. He's probably better than Merkel, okay? So, I'm not sure how you can get these young people to fight this war. And the entire point of Western civilization now is that you don't have to work, and you can enjoy a good life. That's been the message for the past few decades. You know, this toxic promotion of individual decadence and just glorifying individuality. So, I mean, the idea that you need all these young people to go die off in Ukraine, or in Iran, or Venezuela—it's kind of silly.

#Glenn

Well, it does seem that part of the strength of Western civilization in the past was its youthfulness—being vibrant and open. Any civilization can make mistakes, but it's that openness to air out your mistakes, to address them, to fix them, to try new things. All of this seems to have shut down, and I think part of it is being exacerbated by propaganda, which keeps intensifying. You could even call it a kind of psyop, because if you want to identify a good psyop, it's when people start to fear what they can say—not based on what's true or not, but on what they know they're not allowed to say. People begin to police each other. You get this atmosphere of fear because you're not quite sure which views are acceptable or how you might be punished.

If the statements you made in the past can be used against you—social exclusion, attacks on your reputation, ridicule—if there's fear for your professional or personal life, I mean, this is life in the West now. You can't—whether you discuss immigration, gender, foreign policy—you have to be very careful what you say in public. Officially, of course, we're liberal democracies; you're allowed to say what you want. But the main strength—the renewal, the rebirth—comes from addressing your mistakes and recovering from them. I don't really see that anymore at all. I lived in Europe until the end of the '90s, then left for twenty years and came back. The place is not recognizable anymore. It's a very different place now. I'm not sure if you see the same thing... I guess it's aging. At least the West seems to have exited its youth.

#Jiang Xueqin

Well, I mean, I was in Canada for two months this summer, and I was shocked by how rapidly Canada has declined over the years. It doesn't seem as though people want to do any work. As you say, they're low energy, and they sort of, you know—it's "quiet quitting," right? The term is "quiet quitting." On the problem of fear and intimidation—listen, America just announced a policy where, if you want to visit the United States, you have to list five years of your social media. And I mean, everyone knows what this is about, right? Because everyone knows this is directed at people who criticize Israel. Why else would they do this? No one cares if you're called as America.

No, if in the past year or two you've spoken up against the genocide in Palestine, your name and your whole profile are now stored in a database. You may not know this, but it certainly is. And if you go to America, they'll have your biometric data, right? Now they can just cross-reference everything. That's how scary things are. Before, you thought you were acting anonymously online,

but once you visit America, you give them your social media handle, and they have your biometrics. Now they can build a profile on you and track you for the rest of your life. It's that scary today.

#Glenn

Let me just ask one last question, because I appreciate your warning signs about where we're probably heading. I mean, I always make the point that in Europe, a greater war with Russia now is more likely than not. So how do you identify the core—the source—of these problems? Is it arrogance, hubris, stupidity? I mean, what would be the solution here, if there is one, to the path or the domino effect we're currently in the middle of?

#Jiang Xueqin

So I study history, and it's a pretty strong pattern: empires rise because they're young, energetic, cohesive, and open. Then they peak as an empire, become arrogant, insular, and close-minded, are defeated by hubris, and then they decline—and the empire dies. It's a pretty common pattern. We don't have an example of an empire that declined and then re-emerged. Some people say Rome re-emerged as the Byzantine Empire, but that's not true. The Byzantine Empire and the Roman Empire are two different entities altogether.

So what's happening in America, what's happening in the Western world, is just part of the natural process of being human. The problem, though, of course, is that an empire refuses to admit its mortality. An empire refuses to die. You've got all these billionaires in America spending all their money trying to live forever—and that's just the hubris of those in power. Unfortunately, this is what the Greeks taught us: hubris is the greatest evil in the world. It leads us into insanity, and that's why we're living in the world we live in today.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, that goes back to Eliot's poem **The Hollow Men**—you know, "the way the world ends is not with a bang but a whimper." But is that the best we can hope for, then? That it doesn't go out with a bang, that we go out the Soviet way—a slow, sad collapse—and hope that something new emerges in its place, or...

#Jiang Xueqin

Look, I mean, America—look, America and its national security strategy—it's very clear and blatant that America will defend its empire to its dying breath. And America is not retreating from the world. It's going to fight everywhere in the world, but it's going to use allies as proxies. It's going to use its allies as cannon fodder, use all the resources of its allies. It's going to divide and rule. Before, America was willing to be hypocritical. It was willing to use this rules-based international order as a façade to project power. But now that façade has dissipated because people recognize the hypocrisy

of the entire system. So America's just like, okay, now we'll just use force. We'll just be pirates. We'll just be the mafia.

And so, at the same time, the reality is that America is the world's greatest empire. We've never had an empire that's been able to control the entire world and have the technological, economic, and military sophistication that America has. So this death will not be pretty. And, you know, if we die with a whimper, that would be a very good death. But I don't think it'll be a whimper—I think it'll be a big bang. I think this conflict may rage around the world for the next ten, twenty years. And this is the reality we're heading toward. So the idea that maybe Trump and Putin will get together and sign a peace treaty and we'll go back to 2020—no, that's gone. We're in a brave new world, and we're never going back. This is the undiscovered country, and it's something we all have to brace for.

#Glenn

I think that's another weakness I see in Europe—the assumption that we'll go all the way on this one, try to break the Russians, and if for some reason it doesn't work, we can just go back to the way things were. Again, this goes into the whole escalation-control delusion. I don't think these people know exactly what they've started, but... sadly, I think they'll find out. But as always, I hope you're wrong, though I suspect you're very correct in your assessment. I hope I'm wrong too.

#Jiang Xueqin

Okay. I think I'd love to come back a year from now and, you know, see Putin and Trump sign a peace treaty, the world at peace again. I'd be like, "I'm so sorry, I was wrong, and I'll never appear on the internet again because I'd rather spend time with my kids." I'd like that. Anyway, thanks a lot for your time. Okay, thank you.