

Ray McGovern: The Road War - Arms Control Collapsing

Ray McGovern was a CIA officer for 27 years, he chaired the National Intelligence Estimates and prepared the CIA's Presidential Daily Briefs. McGovern discusses why arms race and war are expected as arms control collapse. 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. We're joined today by our dear friend Ray McGovern, who spent 27 years as a CIA officer, chaired the National Intelligence Estimates, and prepared the President's Daily Brief. Thank you for coming on. It seems that every few weeks now the world looks like a completely different place, but I was hoping you could shed some light on this, because your experience in the intelligence community is quite extensive. As we now move toward possibly several large wars—maybe with Russia, Iran, even China—I was wondering if you see any continuity in this regard, in terms of U.S. strategy and the wider approach to the world, to Eurasia, or are we seeing something completely new at this point in history?

#Ray McGovern

Really good question, Glenn, as usual. Let me just interject that if you want continuity or discontinuity, you came to the right place. When you're 86 years old and you started focusing on the Soviet Union in 1959, and then professionally in 1963—well, I've been around. One of the things in my bio I probably should polish up is the fact that I not only prepared the President's Daily Brief, together with a team, for Nixon and President Gerald Ford, but I also briefed it one-on-one early in the morning, physically, downtown in Washington, D.C., during the first four years of the Reagan administration, namely 1981 to 1985. That was the acme of my career. There was nothing quite as good as that.

One-on-one, I could brief Reagan's most senior officials—and I'm talking the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the assortment of national security advisors, some of whom ended up in jail, and the Vice President, George H. W. Bush. Man, that was heady duty. We worked as a team every other day, so three days a week I'd have that privilege. I never abused it, but when someone like Shultz asked for my personal opinion, I was delighted to give it to him, because I knew something about the Soviet Union. I knew something about Gorbachev. I knew

the best, most honest analysts within the CIA. And when I could tell Secretary Shultz, "Look, we believe that Gorbachev is not just a clever commie like you're hearing from our bosses," I meant it.

We believed he was the real deal. We thought we could work with him. Now, Shultz took that to the president, who usually slept in during those briefings. Weinberger fought it tooth and nail, but the vice president supported Shultz. And that's why we had real progress toward détente and arms control during those years. I mean, let's face it—from the "evil empire," Gorbachev became somebody that Reagan could, and did, deal with. Going back even farther, into what feels like the Middle Ages—when I was not yet 30, I was appointed chief of the Soviet Foreign Policy Branch at the CIA. In early 1970, as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks were beginning, that's where I was.

They were held in either Vienna or Helsinki—they alternated. I had the privilege of appointing one person from my branch to be with the delegation, to brief them and, in turn, receive interesting information about what was going on. Another member of my branch worked with the collection authorities and the strategic arms people who knew about weaponry, and yet another person in my branch reported to Director Helms at that time and the muckety-mucks in Washington on the state of the relationship. Suffice it to say, I had terrific help. But we did support Kissinger and Nixon because we saw that they were on the right course.

The Russians were really scared. What were they afraid of? They were afraid—look, Nixon goes to Beijing in January of 1972. What was that all about? Well, the Russians were suspicious that it was all about the Chinese stealing a march in building a cordial relationship with the U.S. The Russians had to do something, right? So what did they have to do? They had to make sure the Chinese didn't get ahead of them on this. The SALT talks—the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks—were in the middle of the negotiation process. What happened? Again, it was a privilege, as chief of the Soviet Foreign Policy Branch, to see the Russians cave on a piddling matter.

No, on the quadripartite agreement on Berlin, for God's sake. This is early '72. And we could tell Kissinger and Nixon, "Look, it's working." The Russians were not only interested in strategic arms limitations on their merits—they didn't want to be spent out of existence—but they were afraid the Chinese were going to get a more progressive, a more decent relationship with us than they could. So I had the privilege of being in Moscow in May 1972 for the signing of the key, the pivotal agreement on strategic arms—the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, okay? May 1972. For those who are not as old as I am, or even as old as you are, that was a very simple agreement.

Both sides were building not only offensive weaponry that could knock out the rest of the world three times over, but also defensive shields. Reagan later had this notion about a way to prevent any ballistic missiles from coming in—call it Star Wars, right? Now, at that time, it all seemed feasible. Not to us—I'm no expert—but we had experts you wouldn't believe. We had experts you could believe, and they said, "This will never work. It'll never work." So we got an ABM treaty with the Russians, and it reduced the emplacement of anti-ballistic missiles to two sites—one in the capitals and one somewhere else, okay? Why only two? Because then neither side could even be

tempted to make a preemptive strike without realizing they'd suffer incredible consequences in retaliation, okay? It was a sort of balance of terror—but it was a balance, right? Two sites.

And then two years later, they said, "Why do we need two sites? I mean, the whole thing is just for show. Let's just reduce it to one site." Now, I'll just close this out—I didn't mean to go into it—but I think it's interesting in terms of how this arms control thing evolved. The big question was, could we verify it if the Russians cheated? Okay. Kissinger came to us and said, "Ray, are the Russians going to violate this treaty?" I said, "I can't tell you yes or no on that." "Okay, when will we know? When will we know if they violate it?" "Well, I couldn't tell you that either, but I'll tell you tomorrow." So I went back to the people who were running the satellites and all these sophisticated collection mechanisms. "How long?" "About a week." Went back to Kissinger: "About a week." "Good. That's enough. *Doverai, no proverai*—trust, but verify." Now, footnote here: did the Russians cheat? Yeah, they cheated.

#Ray McGovern

Did we find out about it? Yeah, we did. Within a week? Yes. What did they do? They built this god-awful radar.

#Ray McGovern

It could only be an ABM radar—way the hell out in Siberia, in a place called Krasnoyarsk, if memory serves. How they thought we'd miss that, I don't know. But we got the photos. We showed them to Reagan, and he said, "Okay, show them to the Russians." So we did. And the Russians said, "No, no, it's not an ABM radar." Then Gorbachev came in and said, "All right, that's an ABM radar. We'll tear it down." That was the first thing they tore down because of Reagan's insistence. Actually, it wasn't until Bush that they finally tore it down.

So what I'm saying here is that there was common sense and some political acumen in negotiating these kinds of agreements, despite all the impediments—despite the raised eyebrows in the Senate and House, like, "How can you deal with the ChiComs, the Chinese communists? How can you expect Gorbachev or even Brezhnev and Kosygin—they're commies, they're not going to—" So they had that to deal with. But they also had all kinds of other things, like bureaucracies, right? And even the delegations themselves—and we knew this because we were there, we were inside the delegations—even the delegations were at loggerheads.

Oh, you can't imagine—you had generals saying that in the State Department. So anyhow, Kissinger did this by himself. He did it because Nixon said, "You're not going to do it." Now, Kissinger was, you know, he wasn't Secretary of State yet. He was just Nixon's guy for national security. So he did it—he flew into Moscow without telling anyone, including Ambassador Beam. I was there; I heard this

story, okay? Then he flew out to Helsinki and called Beam and said, "Oh, Ambassador, I meant to tell you I've been talking to Kosygin and Brezhnev on Wednesday and Thursday, just so you know." Now, the State Department was enraged—"My God, who the hell is he to do that kind of thing?"

Right, right. Well, Kissinger was smart enough to realize that he could do it by himself, and he was smart in most kinds of things. And the epitome—I'll mention this—I don't think I've told you this before, but I was in the embassy there in May, June, July, August of '72. And when I walked into the men's room in the political section, up above the urinals was a great big banner that said, "Kissinger was here." Like the old "Kilroy was here." "Kissinger was here." The embassy and the State Department were in high dudgeon. What did Ambassador Beam do? Jake Beam, old-timer, you know, at the end of his career—he said, "All right, everybody into the bubble. We're into the bubble there."

I'm not revealing any secrets now, okay? Beam says, "Look, Kissinger is doing this on behalf of the President of the United States—for whom we serve. Okay? Whom we serve." Now, look, all this business about, "Well, they never tell us anything. They never tell us anything." That reminds me of the naval attaché in Berlin when I was there in 1936. The stormtroopers and the Nazis were marching up and down, rounding up Jews and everything else, and the naval attaché used to say, "Nobody tells me anything about what's going on." So forget about it. You're told what you need to be told. No more. No more bitching about what Kissinger is doing without telling us.

It's our job just to do what we—anyhow, that's a long story. We were interested in arms control by sensible people. The Russians were interested for two reasons: to cap the arms race and to keep the Chinese from getting ahead of them in improving relations with us. And then that kind of varied. Reagan, when he came around—right? When he came around from this "evil empire" stuff he called the Russians—1983 was key. But then a couple of years later, at Reykjavik, Gorbachev says to Reagan, once they have a decent relationship, "Look, we can kill each other several times over. You've put Pershing missiles in Western Europe."

We have these SS-20s. That gives us about 10 minutes—9 minutes—instead of the 35 minutes we have with the intercontinental ballistic missiles or the Sea-Launched ones. Look, do we really need these intermediate nuclear weapons? So Reagan asks us, "Do we need that for deterrence?" No. For the people making tons of money building these things? They did. Well, what happened was Reagan said, "Okay, that's a good idea." I was surprised as hell, because a whole class of intermediate and shorter-range ballistic missiles was destroyed in place under this treaty called the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. My good friend Scott Ritter was the first on the ground to demilitarize them.

Proveri to monitor the implementation—two years in this god-awful place called Votkinsk, for God's sake—where they chopped up those SS-18s, okay? So that was possible, and it happened, okay? What happened later? Oh, Trump comes in, and he's got this guy, John Bolton, kind of advising him. And Bolton says, "We don't need that ABM Treaty." And then, you know, they get out of the ABM

Treaty that had been the cornerstone of strategic stability for 30 years. And then, when Trump comes in the first time, the same kinds of people say, "Look, you're doing the INF Treaty." So in 2019, on his way out of office, Trump says, "We'll get out of the INF Treaty." So, finishing up here—and I'm sorry to carry on so long—but I know this stuff, and not many other people do. Here it is.

There's only one treaty left. It's called New START. Is it good? It's really good. It limits the offensive missile count to 1,550, if memory serves, on each side. Okay? Now, when does it expire? It expires on February 5th. Do the math—that's about three weeks away. What did Putin do to try to make sure there were some constraints left after the treaty expires? It was already extended once; it can't be extended again under the treaty provisions. The New START Treaty is dead, but here's what Putin said, very formally, at a National Security Council meeting on TV. He said, "Look, date September 22nd—that's a while ago, huh? September 22nd. We think it's really necessary to have these kinds of constraints. We offer to abide by those constraints for yet another year, even though the treaty expires, if the U.S. will act likewise."

It's that 22nd of September. Now, what has Trump said about that? Oh, two weeks later, a journalist asked him, "What about that New START treaty offer?" He said, "Oh, yeah, that sounds like a good idea to me, you know." More recently, he said, "Well, if it expires, it expires." As of yesterday, the presidential spokesman in the Kremlin, Dmitry Peskov, said, "Please, please, will you give us something official on that? Give us something official. It's really easy. You don't have to negotiate anything. It's a yes or a no. You can even do it silently, if you will. But please, give us an answer on that. The time is running out, okay?" So, what's the implication of this? And I'll close with this. Putin doesn't really know whether Trump is his own man. He does know that Trump is extremely irascible, unpredictable, mercurial, and dangerous.

More recently, one cannot avoid the conclusion that he might not be fully compos mentis. I believe that Vladimir Putin, having spent the last 25 years rebuilding Russia, doesn't want it all to be destroyed. So he's treating Trump with kid gloves. Yeah, he should have had the Nobel Prize. But this is the litmus test. Even if Putin thinks that Trump would really like to—thinks it's a good idea for the treaty to be renewed, at least the limits that were on there—well, if he can't do that, if he can't deliver, he's not his own man. And there's one other situation much akin to that, which we can go into further—that is, the attack on the state residence near Valdai—but I've perhaps used enough of our video time now to have the decency to stop. Thanks for letting me go on, Glenn.

#Glenn

No, no, I'm glad you brought up arms control, because it's really at the heart of how you enhance actual security. States are usually trapped in a security dilemma, or a security competition. So the U. S. builds new missiles to feel safe, the Russians feel less safe, they build more missiles, and then you get into this arms race where both sides end up with security problems. This whole idea that more

weapons mean more security—history has shown that’s not the case, because of the security competition. But arms control, when both sides effectively reduce, that’s how you enhance common security. It just seems like it’s going out of fashion at the moment. You mentioned that.

#Ray McGovern

Well, let me just pick up on that, Glenn, and say that there is no security issue—there is no security without mutual security, okay? That’s the whole name of the game here. The Russians did what they did in Ukraine because mutual security was being endangered by NATO moving into Ukraine and upsetting the balance, at least in Europe, okay? So, you know, when you come down to it, this concept was concretized in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe documents. As you know, no country is allowed to increase its own security at the expense of others. Now, I go back to John Kennedy, okay? It was John Kennedy that I listened to in his inaugural address.

I was a senior in college, and he said, “Look, if you have something special, think about what you might do for your country, rather than what your country can do for you.” That sounded great. I learned that there was this new CIA, and that it would report directly to the president. Truman wanted intelligence to be treated properly—that’s why he set up the CIA. So I was really happy to join. Now, two months after I started official duty with the CIA, John Kennedy made a masterful speech at American University. It was so masterful that Khrushchev had it printed in **Pravda** and **Izvestia** in toto.

You never saw that, except for a Soviet leader’s speech. He had it all printed. Why? Khrushchev and Kennedy had been at each other’s throats because Khrushchev decided he wanted to upset the strategic balance by sending offensive, medium-range ballistic missiles to Cuba. My God, did we detect it? Yes—but we didn’t have the mechanisms we have now. We had U-2 aircraft, and they could only fly, or take photos, when there were no clouds. So they got them in there pretty much without our knowing it. We told John Kennedy, “Look, these are in place in Cuba now.” He said, “Are they armed? Do they have nuclear weapons?” And we said, “We don’t know.”

But I think you have to assume so, because they don’t make a lot of sense without nuclear weapons. But we don’t know. Well, we didn’t know then—they were armed. And yeah, long story short, what Khrushchev had done was force Kennedy into a painful choice between abject surrender and using nuclear weapons. And in his speech—eight months later, in John Kennedy’s speech at American University—he said, “Look, this is the one thing we learned: we should never give another nuclear power a painful choice between humiliating retreat”—that was his phrase—“and using nuclear weapons.” Okay, now, fast forward to what’s happened in Ukraine and all that.

For the first time since that speech in 1963, there was a real chance that one side or the other might use nuclear weapons, because one of the superpowers with nuclear capability was being challenged. What Kennedy said—interestingly enough, and I’ve read that speech many times, but I gave a presentation on it just last week, so I looked at it again—he talks about a new start. “Let’s have a

new start." He wasn't talking about the New START Treaty, but interestingly, the language overlaps, right? "What we'll have is a new start." And as an earnest of our good intentions, said Kennedy on June 10, 1963, "I'm going to send my negotiators to Moscow."

The British are going to do the same. We're going to negotiate a test ban treaty, and we're going to do that as quickly as we can. Meanwhile, we're not going to test any nuclear weapons in the atmosphere. Now, everyone said, "Oh my God, you know, he's never going to get it. Look at the Senate—these guys are commies, come on." Well, Kennedy wasn't a great politician, but he sent his people out across the country, made speeches everywhere, and within two months—less than two months—Russia had ratified the Limited Test Ban Treaty. So it can be done. People just have to be educated. And that's the lesson, perhaps, out of all this.

Americans are not educated; they're indoctrinated to believe that Putin and the Russians are incarnate evil, that they can't be trusted. And that's the real damage from this Russiagate hoax and from all the other things the mainstream media has propagated. People are indoctrinated. And so the situation is more labile—as the Russians would say, as the Germans would say—it's more tentative, more dangerous, I would suggest, than before. So, litmus test: will the U.S., will Trump, be able to respond, "Okay, yeah, let's keep those limits on for another year"? Or will he not be able to do that? Maybe he doesn't want to. If I'm Trump—I mean, if I'm Putin—it doesn't matter.

He might love me to death, but if he can't deliver on this key issue—if he can't simply say yes to prolonging these limitations—my God, we have to guide ourselves accordingly. We don't want the kind of arms race that would be in store. But we've faced this before, and we developed a whole array of missiles like the R-36, the Poseidon missile, and the Burevestnik. We threatened to develop these weapons back in 2016. In 2018, I—Putin—at a State of the Union address, for God's sake, did a show-and-tell: six of these weapons systems—"Okay, we're developing this, they're going to work this way"—and guess what?

Five of those six now work. So the Russians will adapt. They're not going to build an ABM golden dome or whatever, because that will never work. It will always be defeated—which is what we told Reagan way back when he started thinking about Star Wars. Unfortunately, the guys who had worked for Northrop Grumman and Raytheon, and those folks in the White House, persuaded President Reagan, "You know, if you agree with Gorbachev to eliminate nuclear weapons, you won't be able to protect the United States with your Star Wars." That's how bad it was, Glenn. I was there. I saw it happening.

#Glenn

I spoke with Ambassador Jack Matlock on this podcast, and he was making this point as well—that when he and Reagan wanted to start negotiating with the Russians, eventually working toward ending the Cold War, the main obstacle at first was getting the green light from the war hawks in Washington. The assumption was always that this would be seen as a display of weakness, and that

you couldn't trust the Russians. So all the stories we put out there to explain how bad the Russians were—eventually we started, well, the story lesson essentially was that they began to buy into their own propaganda. But as you said, the historical record shows something very different.

#Ray McGovern

Let me interject on Jack Matlock, who happens to be a really good friend of mine, whom I admire greatly. He entered into the Russian studies field for precisely the same reasons I did—just captivated by Russian history, language, and so forth. He was at Duke, I was at Fordham. He's ten years older than I am. But he and I really worked very hard. He was chief of the Soviet desk at the State Department, and as I said, I was chief of the Soviet foreign policy branch at the CIA. We worked hand in glove to make sure that sensible people—sensible people like Kissinger and others—realized what the stakes were and how their own policy worked. Playing China off against Russia could and would, and in the event, did work. Now, I'll just comment that this was very unusual for me. Usually, we were telling the administration, "Ah, that's crazy," or, you know, being the proverbial skunk at the picnic for this or that initiative.

#Ray McGovern

But this time, we could legitimately say...

#Ray McGovern

Whoa, yeah, it's working. I even have a commendation from Kissinger for that. And it was Jack who was instrumental in getting me over there for the signing of the treaty. I'm indebted to Jack, not only for that, but for so many other things. You picked a good person to interview.

#Glenn

I met him in person as well. We were on the same panel in Tbilisi, in Georgia, last year. Full of energy for his age—an excellent, brilliant guy. But the point I want to make is that when arms control falls apart, it has real consequences for us, and they're never really discussed. So, you mentioned the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972. When the U.S. withdrew unilaterally back in 2002, the Russians warned that they feared this would give nuclear weapons an offensive purpose by being able to intercept their secondary strike capabilities.

In 2011, you even had President Medvedev saying that if the U.S. strategic missile defense ever reached the potency to threaten Russia, then Russia would launch a first strike—on the missile defense system, not a nuclear strike, but on the missile defense architecture. Of course, that's not something they want; it could trigger a world war. So instead, they developed these hypersonic

missiles. And since they can carry nuclear warheads, that shortens the response time dramatically. Nobody really gains from this, but it's what happens. You can say the same about the INF Treaty, which was also abandoned.

Even the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, the CFE Treaty, was never modified, because all the countries that used to be in the Warsaw Pact moved over to NATO, but they never changed the numbers. And the Open Skies Treaty was abandoned. With every one of these, there are consequences. And as you said, next month with New START. But I also like how you put the idea of indivisible security—the security architecture—into this, the eye of arms control, because it follows the same logic. When we came up with the Charter of Paris for a New Europe in 1990 and the OSCE in 1994, the key idea was indivisible security.

As you said, one side should not enhance its security at the expense of the other. But then we essentially threw that away. I wouldn't necessarily conceptualize it as arms control, but as a security agreement—by saying, well, let's expand NATO instead. But that's exactly the opposite: one side enhancing its security at the expense of others. So now you see the Russians, over the years, developing all these Poseidon-type doomsday weapons, essentially ones that could create nuclear tsunamis washing over the U.S. coastline. These are horrible weapons. But whenever they're discussed, it's almost presented as confirmation of how evil the Russians supposedly are, and why we should fear or hate them.

But it's never put in the context that this is a reaction to something. It's very frustrating. And even now, the Trump administration treats international law and treaties as something that prevents the U. S. from asserting its greatness—as a source of decline, of weakness. I mean, it's quite disheartening to see a security architecture that requires all this diplomacy just fall apart and be replaced by sheer stupidity, because somehow we believe that recognizing what we've done causes a reaction on the other side is, you know, legitimizing or supporting what Russia has done. So we all have to pretend as if it happens in a vacuum. It's... how can we possibly get back to arms control?

How can we have a stable security architecture? Or, essentially, how can we end the Ukraine war? Because the Russians say this is a direct response to what we've done. So, address the root causes—but it's pretty much treasonous to discuss root causes in Europe now. At least that's what I've discovered: if you try to say, well, we threatened the security concerns of the Russians, and now they'll take whatever actions they see necessary to restore their security—well, now you're "supporting invasions," you're supporting this and that. You can't say the basic facts, the basic reality, which you need in order to actually enhance mutual security. It's... I don't know, it's extremely frustrating to watch what's going on.

#Ray McGovern

Well, it is, if you know what's going on. But my main point is, most Americans don't know what's going on. Mutual security—well, in layman's terms, it's the golden rule: don't do to others what you

wouldn't want them to do to you. And on the nuclear plane, that goes in spades, as Kennedy said. You know, the worst thing you can do is face another nuclear power with a choice between humiliating retreat and using nuclear weapons. Now, what's the saving grace? Well, I'll say it, and I hope people won't be shocked. The saving grace is a fellow named Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. What do I mean? He's a statesman of a kind I've never seen before in Russian or Soviet history. He's cautious.

He's hell-bent on building up his own country, and he's not going to take the slightest risk of getting involved in a fight that would destroy the country he's been so instrumental in building. That's why he's doing everything he can to make sure the Russians are ready—but that they won't have to respond to whatever provocation might come from the terribly unpredictable Trump or his minions. Are they ready? Sure as hell they're ready. Back in 2018, as I already said, they showed how ready they were when Putin, in that State of the Union address, demonstrated all those new weapons. One of them goes around the South Pole; the other one, you know... I mean, we all looked at this and said, "Oh, yeah, right."

They're going to do all that. Well, now they have. OK, so mutual security is the key. I think this business about the "unprovoked invasion of Ukraine" is something Americans have just been so indoctrinated about. I've said "brainwashed" in the past, but then somebody reminded me about some film—so, you know, don't say "brainwashed" anymore, just say "indoctrinated." OK, so everybody's indoctrinated to believe the worst of the Russians. Putin knows this. And Putin knows that even though Trump knows how he was sabotaged by the deep state during his first term, as Putin looks on now—well, Trump has been president for almost a year—how many of those traitors have been brought to justice?

#Ray McGovern

Oh, well, one of them was indicted. Oh, yeah—then Trump.

#Ray McGovern

Appointed an attorney who knew about chasing ambulances—and she was very pretty, by the way. Then she screwed up, so Comey so far has walked. How about John Brennan? Guilty as sin for this whole Russia thing, the Russiagate thing. Well, somebody said that the legislature, the Congress, has nominated him to be subject to a grand jury, an indictment, you know—but I haven't heard anything else about that. So what I'm trying to say is, I'm pushing and looking at this. I mean, this guy can't even move against the people who the public record now shows tried to sabotage him—sabotage him at everything. People say, well, Putin—when Trump says something like he did just this week, "Okay, who's sabotaging progress on Ukraine?"—Trump says, "Zelenskyy."

#Ray McGovern

And the New York Times says, "Oh, it's what Putin says." It also happens to be true—but it doesn't matter, okay?

#Ray McGovern

So this whole business about blackening the Russians—it's going to take a lot of work. And Putin, I think, has to recognize that Trump doesn't have the kind of people who are adroit enough to work with the media, to the degree they could, to dispel this myth and say, "Look, it's the golden rule that applied in Ukraine." Yeah, the Russians invaded Ukraine—but look why they invaded Ukraine. I wonder why. Was it unprovoked? Well, no. Actually, the Secretary General of NATO admitted before the EU Parliament two years ago that, well, what he said was, the Russians told us they would invade Ukraine if we tried to get Ukraine into NATO. That's what they said. And we said no.

#Ray McGovern

And so they invaded Ukraine, but we got NATO enlargement—because, not Norway, but Finland and Sweden joined. So we got two new members. Meanwhile, half a million Ukrainian youth have been killed on the battlefield.

#Ray McGovern

What kind of leadership is that in NATO? Luckily, I expect we'll get into this later. NATO is falling apart, more and more. Since the Danes are now also sending five or six soldiers to Greenland, I think even Norway is contributing, together with its Scandinavian neighbors, to show how strong they are by sending a battalion—or maybe a platoon or a company—to Greenland. NATO is falling apart. Now, did Putin plan all this? No, he didn't plan all this. But he has to deal with it. And I see him sort of gloating with his compatriots, saying, "Look, let's not rub it in. It's going just fine. NATO is falling apart." If Trump tries to take Greenland by force, well, what's going to happen then?

I mean, it's unthinkable, these things that are happening. To whom do they redound as a benefit? To Russia. So we're just sitting back and saying, okay, we're winning in Ukraine. We'd like to have the bigger deal that takes into account our interests—our core interests. But if we don't get that, okay, we're still winning, and we'll have to deal with that in a different way. So here we have Witkoff and Jared Kushner going back to Moscow, as far as the reports say, in another week or so. Why? Well, because Trump apparently wants Putin to think that he'd really like to have a deal on Ukraine. And my belief is that he would.

And even in these provocations, Glenn, can you imagine? Let's take the attack by 91 drones on what the Russians call the state residence near Valdai. Again, you've been at the Valdai conferences. The 28th, 29th of December—my God, what's going on there? Were they really targeting the presidential residence there? Yes. How do I know that? Well, the Russians, as you know, have retrieved some of the components, the control devices, and they show exactly where the targeting was. And the

Russians have given one of these parts, in a very ostentatious ceremony, to the U.S. Defense Army attaché in Moscow. When was that? Oh, it was a week ago.

Has Trump or Rubio or anybody responded? I don't know. Maybe they chose to respond through secret channels, but I hope they have responded. If I'm Putin and they haven't, then again I say, Trump is not his own man. In my view, that technology shows where the target was—and it was this residence. Otherwise, the Russians wouldn't have given it to them. So who has it in the United States? Oh, I mentioned they gave it to the—oh, the CIA is always reliable. And, you know, sure, they knew all about weapons of mass destruction, and they'll take uranium. Oh, their record is great. I jest, of course. But is this what happened?

In other words, did the White House give it to the CIA and then kind of put a lid on it and say, "Now, see if you can fix this up so we can say that Putin lied"? Well, I don't rule that out, okay? Or maybe Trump will say, "All right, you guys told me it wasn't targeted, but this shows it." So, in other words, there's another litmus test. I'm pushing—I'm waiting for a response, not only on New START. I'm waiting for a specific response as to whether these drones were targeted to kill me, or to kill, or to demolish the control center here. And now the parts are there, and you've had time to review them. "My associates," says Putin, "are really... I mean, yeah, I'm dispensable."

Nobody's indispensable, but they're really saying, "Hey, Vladimir Vladimirovich, come on, for God's sake, they're trying to kill you now? Are you still going to deal with these people?" Well, most people would have thought the answer would be no. And yet, we have Lavrov, the foreign minister, on the same day these drones were shot down—ninety-one of them—toward Valdai. The same day, he said, "Now, this does not prevent us. This will not prevent us from having bilateral discussions with the United States. It's the Ukrainians who do this kind of thing. We will take it up with the Ukrainians. We're still willing to talk to the United States." And that's been reiterated by Lavrov again about five days ago. So how do you figure all this out? Maybe this is simplistic, okay? But here's the syllogism.

Putin doesn't want a nuclear war. He's not going to take any chances that Trump will be provoked, or that somebody else will be provoked, into a nuclear war. Therefore, we have to be really careful about this. And if we can work out a deal on Ukraine, let's do that. If we can avoid hostilities over Venezuela, for God's sake—or Iran—we'll do that too. We can't do much about Venezuela, but we can help the Iranians. And that's the interesting thing about it. "Skylink down," okay? What did that mean? That meant all the best-laid plans of mice and men—and I'm talking about mice, MI6; men, CIA—to have an insurrection in Iran were dashed by technology which... I can't prove it, but I think it probably came from the Russians, because we know they have that technology.

"Skylink down," all the assets sort of broken off. So there's a lot going on. But when I said the saving grace is Putin, I genuinely believe he's not going to be provoked unless he has to be. When his own people—when Russians—are being killed in Ukraine, and he realizes that this is just the start, the beginning of more encroachment by NATO, then he moves. And, you know, if anybody

says, "Oh, it had nothing to do with NATO," I can't agree. You have the head of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg—I think you probably know him, Glenn Diesen, I think he's one of your countrymen—saying, "We were told by the Russians that they would have to invade Ukraine if we kept expanding NATO. And we said no. And so he invaded Ukraine." Those are his words. Look it up.

#Glenn

The foolish thing, though, is that they kept saying over and over again that the invasion had nothing to do with NATO expansion. But then he gave a different talk at the EU—this one about Finland and Sweden joining NATO. Because he had to do his victory lap, the whole thesis was, you know, NATO told us, Russia told us, no more NATO expansion. And yet what they got was even more NATO. And this was kind of the thing, you know, like, haha, Robert put his face in it. But then, of course, he contradicts himself, because he goes on to outline all the talks the Russians had—the warnings that if NATO tried to expand further, they'd use military force. So it's quite extraordinary that there's still so much narrative control around this.

#Ray McGovern

Yeah. People don't know this. That's the point. You know, I can, in every interview, mention and quote Jens Stoltenberg, but it just seems like, you know, you get the Rachel Maddows of this world who have a much bigger audience than the rest of us. And, you know, maybe we ought to say just a word about trust and something that comes up with respect to warning time. You mentioned it. We mentioned it in terms of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which would have reduced warning time to about 10 minutes. In other words, 10 minutes for Pershing missiles to hit Moscow, or Moscow's ICBMs and SS-20s—10 minutes. So they got rid of all that, okay? And then all of a sudden you have the U.S. building radar sites, right? Anti-ballistic missile sites in Poland and in Romania.

Whose idea was that? It was Robert Gates's idea—the Secretary of Defense—who, by the way, was one of those people I had working for me back in early '76. He didn't get a very good efficiency report because he was so blatantly ambitious that he became a disruptive influence in the branch. Anyway, it was his idea. And then, when the Czechs said, "Well, we don't want to be involved in this," the Poles in the room said, "Oh, we'll put them on ships." "Oh yeah, we'll put them on ships. We'll put them on ships." And then somebody said, "Won't the Russians object to that?" Gates's famous answer to that—which is in his diary, and I've had to read all this stuff—it's here. He says, "Making the Russians happy has never been at the top of my to-do list." Just a little vignette.

I met Gorbachev before he died, about ten years ago, at a ceremony in the Kremlin. I went in with one bodyguard, went up to him, and said, "I'm Ray McGovern. I worked for the CIA." The name Robert Gates came up, and he said, "Oh, you know Robert Gates?" I said, "Yes, say hello to him—privet, which means give my regards." And that was the end of the conversation. So Gates was at the flank. Anyway, getting back to the INF, okay? You have these things in Romania and in Poland.

Now, what's the big deal there? Are they ABM sites? We don't know. Do the Russians know? No, they don't. Why? Well, because they're these god-awful things with caps on them. They stand up straight, they've got caps, and you can't see what's inside. Oh, what about the dimensions? Oh, those are dimensions.

Oh yeah, they have some ABM things, but they're also the same dimensions—for cruise missiles, the same dimensions for all kinds of other missiles. So the short answer is, the Russians can't know what's in those canisters, okay? Now, again, Poland, Romania. And I'll just mention one more time—I think I've said this before—but this was the supreme dishonesty, it seems to me, the lack of trust. When negotiations were going to start before the Russians invaded Ukraine, Biden and Putin had agreed they would begin in Geneva on the 9th and 10th of January 2023. They had talked about that and agreed to it in mid-December 2022. Okay.

We got that right? No. Anyhow, what happened was, on the 30th of December, Putin talked with Biden. And Putin said, "Look, before these negotiations start in January, could you just give us assurance that you're not going to do what you've done in Poland and Romania? You're not going to do it in Ukraine. We looked at the map of Ukraine—that would give us maybe five minutes' warning. So please, could you, Mr. Bush—uh, Mr. Biden—please give us a reassurance?" Okay. Well, he did. Why? Because Tony Blinken and Jake Sullivan were out Christmas shopping, or it was Christmas time. Biden was home alone, okay? So he gave that assurance.

And Ushakov—you know about him, right?—he was waxing eloquent on New Year's Eve. He said, "Oh, wow, the Americans are finally showing some respect for our core interests. This is the agreement." And that was the readout. Well, as you know, they reneged on that. Lavrov hunted down Blinken in Geneva on the 21st of January and said, "What about that, Tony? What about that, Tony?" And Tony said, "Forget about it. We weren't with the president. Neither was Sullivan. Forget about it. We're not going to dig." Well, that was the 21st of January. On the 12th of February 2022—right before the invasion—what was the last talk between Biden and Putin?

And the readout again, by Ushakov, said that the U.S. side refused to talk about the commitment not to put offensive strike missiles in Ukraine, and the U.S. refused to discuss keeping Ukraine out of NATO. On the 12th of February, less than two weeks later, you had the invasion of Ukraine. It wasn't the only reason, but this was about trust, okay? There was no trust between the senile Biden regime and Putin. When Trump came in—my God—you know, he said he was interested in all these things. He decided to circumvent the bureaucracy, not let Marco Rubio near the Russians, but appoint Witkoff and Jared Kushner. So there was some hope in that.

But I'm trying to rejigger my mind now and say, if I'm Putin and I see that Trump is either unwilling or unable to say yes to prolonging the limitations on the New START treaty for just one year, and if he's not willing to own up to the fact that Western technology—almost certainly developed by the Department of Defense in the United States—was responsible for trying to kill me, and Trump is not willing to acknowledge that, well, then I think Putin has got to say, "Well, you know, we'll still try to

figure out something on Ukraine, but we can't trust this guy, because even if he wants to deal with us, he's not his own man." And that's really, really big.

#Glenn

Well, that's the thing. I've heard as well that either they'll see Trump as being deceitful, or that he's not in control of his own foreign policy. Either way, there's nothing to be trusted anymore. Could be both. Yeah, it could be both. Well, I hope today that Trump got his Nobel Peace Prize medal that Machado gave him. So I hope he's happy now with his...

#Ray McGovern

You know, Glenn, on the Nobel Peace Prize, I've said—and I'll keep saying—the obvious, which is that Trump is not only delusional, but he's a narcissist such as we seldom see in this world. Now, would he be motivated, in dealing with Ukraine, by some sort of wish to get the Nobel Peace Prize this time around? I mean, call me crazy, but I think the answer to that is yes, okay? He didn't get it last time, and he's got Putin and others saying, "Oh yeah, we think he could have gotten it, he should have gotten it." Well, is Trump motivated in part by wanting to appear to be a peace president? And let's face it, if he were able to work out a decent relationship on Ukraine, he would be a candidate.

Now, my friends say, "All right, yeah, so he invades Venezuela, X, Y, and Z. Come on, Ray." I don't know if he's a narcissist, or if he can really distinguish between these other things. I think part of his motivation in trying to settle this—what, eighth, ninth, tenth war? Give me a break—is partly to be a peace president and to get his name not only on the medal that was given to somebody else, but to get his name on a new medal this year. Now, do I think that's the controlling factor? No. But I don't think it can be overlooked, because the man's narcissistic—well, our narcissistic will do as an adjective—because that's the origin of many bad things.

#Glenn

Well, thank you for letting me pick your brain for an hour. And yeah, it's difficult to keep track of everything that's going on these days. It's all happening too fast. I can't believe all the things that happen in just a week—or actually a weekend. At least in the first two weeks of January, it's been a bit of a wild ride. I have a feeling Trump isn't really slowing down, but I'm somewhat hoping there could be some good news coming in, especially now that the Europeans seem to be accepting that they're losing. I even saw Mertz make the point that, well, Russia is part of Europe—we have to engage them. I don't think this is necessarily going to result in a peace agreement. Although Zelensky said that Trump's peace agreement could be signed in Davos next week, I seriously doubt that. But at least something's changing in the narrative. So perhaps, if it's possible to even recognize the value of arms control, maybe there's hope. But yeah, thanks again, Ray.

#Ray McGovern

Thank you, Glenn. Thanks very much.