

# Larry Johnson: Trump, Greenland & the End of NATO

Larry Johnson is a former intelligence analyst at the CIA who also worked at the US State Department's Office of Counterterrorism. Johnson discusses Trump's threats against Greenland, tariffs against European states that oppose the US annexation of Greenland, and the end of NATO. Read Larry Johnson's Sonar21: <https://sonar21.com/> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glenndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: [https://x.com/Glenn\\_Diesen](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](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 to the program. We're here with Larry Johnson, a former intelligence analyst at the CIA. You can follow his work on Sonar 21, which is open access and has no advertisements. I'll leave a link to it in the description. As always, thank you very much for taking the time.

## #Larry Johnson

Yeah, I try to keep it ad-free. Those are so annoying—very much so.

## #Glenn

I want to get on with this issue of Trump. He continues to make the case for peace. However, his version of peace doesn't depend on international law, predictability, or even stability. Instead, I think it's seen as peace being about having overwhelming strength—showing that he's unpredictable, so the world will fear the consequences if they don't fall in line. So this seems to be how there will be "peace through strength," if you will, and this is the cure to weakness. At times, if you listen to him and Hegseth, it sounds as if international law itself is something that restrains, for that reason, U.S. power. However, to accrue more strength—hence peace, in his mind—we now see that Trump is using both threats and pressure to annex Greenland. How are you assessing what's actually happening at the moment? And as you write, is it time to take away Trump's car keys?

## #Larry Johnson

Yeah, well, I don't know if Trump's making a case for peace, but he's certainly making a strong case to have him put in one of those white jackets with the long sleeves that tie around your back—a

straitjacket—and then hauled off to an asylum. His behavior is so bizarre. But what's frightening is that it's not limited to him. What I've found so alarming over the last three weeks, particularly that week from Sunday, December 28th, until Saturday, January 5th, I believe, was when he, on the 28th, launched the coup against the Iranian government, kicking off protests all over the economy.

He was meeting with Volodymyr Zelensky while the U.S. was helping Ukraine launch an attack to kill President Putin. And then he closed off the week by kidnapping Nicolás Maduro. And then, with all that under his belt—and having almost carried out a military attack on Iran last Tuesday—he's now doubled down by declaring openly that he does not recognize or respect anything about international law. That it's useless. It's whatever he thinks is right and what needs to be done. Now, it'd be one thing to say, well, that's just Donald Trump talking crazy talk. But it's been repeated by his deputy chief of staff, Stephen Miller. It's been endorsed by Marco Rubio, the Secretary of State, and the National Security Advisor.

And it's been endorsed and promoted by Scott Bessett, the Secretary of the Treasury. Now, I haven't seen or heard anything out of Pete Hegseth's mouth, but as his newly designated Secretary of War, I'm sure he's all in on this. So if you're Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping—or hell, you know, Starmer or Macron or Scholz—you look at the United States and say, there's something very, very different going on here. While it's true that most countries in the world, or the big powers in the world, have from time to time found ways to overlook or circumvent international law, they still sort of maintain some kind of verbal commitment to it and see it as preferable to have rather than not have. But now Trump is just, you know, openly saying it means nothing.

And, you know, he's matched his words with actions—having walked away from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Agreement during his last term as president. And it's not just Trump who's flouting international law. You know, George W. Bush canceled the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. And now, even though Russia is trying to say, "Hey, let's keep New START alive," Trump and his administration are showing absolutely zero interest in doing that. So you have this complete breakdown of the international system. And, you know, a year ago, I don't think any of us would have predicted that we'd be sitting here in the middle of January watching NATO come apart at the seams because the United States is claiming there's a Chinese or Russian threat to Greenland.

Okay, well, under the NATO framework, if there is such a threat, you activate Article 5 and get all of NATO to say, "Yeah, we're not going to let that happen. We're going to protect Greenland from Russia and China." But Trump is saying, "Oh, no, no, no, we don't need NATO to protect Greenland. We'll do it. We'll take it. We'll take you over. We'll do it." And even if Greenland and Denmark don't like it—too bad. We're going to take it from you by force. And Europe is stuck trying to figure out, you know, they want to oppose it, but they still want the United States—they still want to get the monthly check from the United States. And so I've likened it to, you know, on a personal level, when you have an abusive spouse: one spouse physically abuses, beats up the other, and the victim never reports it to the police, never gets a restraining order, never packs up and leaves.

They stay in this toxic relationship. So that's where we are—Europe is now in a toxic relationship. And the pettiness of Donald Trump, which was expressed in that recent letter to Norway, basically said, “Okay, you didn’t give me the Nobel Peace Prize, so I’m not inclined to support peace anymore. I’m going to do things that are in my interest.” Well, that’s an astonishing admission. And so this is—I frankly see this as the beginning of the end of NATO. It’s the end of the beginning. And now we’re going to see NATO come apart at the seams. Because how can you continue to be in a relationship with a person or a country that is this abusive to you? I don’t get it. And I’ll ask this to you: have the European leaders lost all self-respect?

## **#Glenn**

Well, short answer, I would say yes. This is the problem, I think, over time—that the Europeans made themselves so dependent on the United States. I often make the comparison with the name “civil war,” because it’s the same thing: once you have two parties fighting, they always become excessively dependent on an external party, to the extent that they lose control over their own policies. And it’s often the same in alliance systems as well—the more intense the conflict becomes, the more dependent they become on the protector. So this is why, when the Cold War came to an end, the Europeans saw an opportunity to become more independent.

That's when they started talking about strategic autonomy, European sovereignty, and all these issues. But this is the problem we see now: all these things have failed, especially because of the war in Ukraine. The Europeans made themselves so dependent on the U.S. for security. And of course, economically, as the world became more multipolar, the Europeans wanted to revive their collective hegemony. So they started cutting themselves off—from Russia, China, and anyone else the U.S. asked them to—in the hope that we would somehow restore the unipolar moment. But in reality, it just made us more dependent at a time when the U.S. had to adjust to multipolarity going elsewhere.

So, no, I think the Europeans made themselves so dependent on the U.S. that the U.S. can do whatever it wants now. In your analogy—the beaten spouse—I think Europeans have nowhere to go. It’s just, go back and get some more beating, I think. Regarding this letter, though, it’s quite extraordinary. I mean, he wrote a letter to the Norwegian prime minister, saying that he no longer feels an obligation to think purely of peace, and then he links it directly to the threat of annexing Greenland. It’s basically, “Give me the Nobel Peace Prize or I’ll invade some territory.” I mean, it’s quite extraordinary—and pretty funny as well. If the Danes are losing some territory, that’s a rather funny way to lose it.

It actually has another funny element to it, which is that Trump says Russia and China want to take Greenland—that their warships are in the area, all of this stuff. They’re not. This is nonsense. However, Denmark’s own intelligence agencies have been making reports about this, saying the Russians might come for Greenland. And the reason is they wanted to further, you know, inflate the Russia threat so America would commit more to Europe. But they might have overplayed their hand,

because now Trump can turn it back on them, saying, "Well, you're not capable of defending against Russia, so we'll take it then, because it's too important for world peace for Denmark to handle." So the Danes might have undermined themselves with their own war propaganda.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, I'm going to take full advantage of the fact that I've got a professor of history here—I'm holding you hostage. So, as I look at the evolution of Europe and this acceptance of international law, the first move of it was with the Magna Carta, where the nobles came to King John and basically said, "Hey, you don't get to do whatever you want just because it feels right or you think you're the moral superior. We're going to lay out some limitations on what you can do." And the rest of Europe sort of came along after that. Would you mark the Treaty of Westphalia as the beginning point where most of Europe said, "Okay, yeah, we're going to rally around this concept of international law"? Or can you pin it down to any particular moment?

## **#Glenn**

No, I think—well, I think the Magna Carta and all that—it's better to tie that directly to Britain. I think the Peace of Westphalia is more about establishing a modern world order, because instead of having a hegemonic system, it defined—or created—a world order based on a balance of power as the source of peace. What we saw over those thirty years, from 1618 to 1648, was that no single European power was able to assert dominance. Every time it looked like one might win, there was a kind of natural balancing against it. So after all that killing, it became clear there wouldn't be one dominant power. And that's why Europe accepted that there would have to be an international anarchy—which doesn't mean complete chaos, but rather that no single power would centralize control.

And essentially, all states will then compete for security, and peace derives from maintaining a balance of power. This is very different from the former system. Yeah. But within this framework, you need rules, because this is where modern diplomacy begins to emerge. This is when you have to set up some rules for what we can do. I mean, this is all based on international law. You give up some foreign policy flexibility, so you can't just do whatever you want. But in return, you get reciprocity, you get predictability. And yes, the U.S. can't just seize Greenland if it wants, but then it knows other countries can't do the same. So it's more stable—which is why it's crazy now to see the president of the United States denounce international law as if it's some woke ploy to weaken the United States. It's very strange.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, because this entire concept of international law was supposed to prevent the very big—the most powerful—from being able to just abuse and bully the smallest. It was meant to provide some sort of leveling, so that different nations, regardless of size, could be recognized as sovereign and

treated as equals, at least in theory. But what I've heard from the Trump administration and Trump supporters—there's a comedian in the United States named Dave Smith, who's a libertarian—and he was debating a fellow named Dinesh D'Souza, who's, you know, one of the neocon supporters. And D'Souza is a very smart guy.

I mean, book well-learned from a university standpoint. But he was making the argument that basically we could do whatever we want to Venezuela because they're smaller and weaker. Well, yeah, that's like an adult saying, "Hey, I can sexually exploit these children, or I can physically abuse them in other ways, because they're smaller and can't fight back. What are you going to do about it?" Well, that's why we actually have laws and rules governing what adults can and cannot do to children. You know, it's the same principle. And they're now extending that logic into international relations—like, you know, Denmark, small, tiny.

We can take it in a day. You know, they can't fight back. And so I look at that and I say, how does that differ from what Adolf Hitler did when he took control of Czechoslovakia? I guess that was 1938 or '39. It's the same kind of thing. Now, I know that Alex Cranor has written extensively about this recently. I haven't had a chance to read his full series, but he brings some other insights—that it's not quite like the story we're told. But still, it comes back to this: either you've got some rules governing how countries behave toward one another, or you don't.

And once you break away from that, it turns into a battle over who's the strongest and who's the most ruthless. Unfortunately, it looks like the United States is stepping into that. You know, there's nobody around Trump to say, "Hey, Mr. President, you can't do that. Or if you do that, you're going to destroy NATO." Now, personally, I have no problem with destroying NATO—I think it's an anachronism. But I don't know if Trump deliberately set out to do that. Still, that's likely to be the outcome when all is said and done: he will have undermined NATO's legitimacy and made it difficult to continue.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, no, I think NATO's dying as well. And I have to tip my hat to Colonel Douglas Macgregor, who basically called it in the first week of Russia invading Ukraine—that the consequence of this wouldn't be NATO getting stronger, but dying stronger. But in regard to international law, I think to some extent, at least as a political realist, I'm inclined to think that even law tends to reflect the distribution of power. After World War II, we had a balance of power between the two main powers, the Soviet Union and the United States. And when there's that kind of balance—where they can constrain each other—I think international law often reflects it.

So the UN Charter, which came out of World War II, was meant to put mutual constraints on both sides. And that's essentially what the UN Charter is—it assumes some sovereign equality, the same rules for both sides. So one would ask, what happens to international law when there's a hegemonic system? That is, when the Soviet Union collapsed and now there's only one center of power. Why

would the U.S. accept constraints on itself when there's no one externally to constrain it? This is what Stephen Walt was saying in the '90s. This would be the main challenge for the U.S.—there's a 500-pound gorilla, and no one's there to constrain it, so it just runs wild.

This would exhaust itself and make a lot of enemies. That was the main concern, because states don't constrain themselves. So what would international law look like? Well, there were all these new principles being introduced in the '90s—humanitarian intervention, which means we can use force with no constraint on us, but others cannot. Then there's democracy promotion. You have this changing of borders with Kosovo, saying, "Well, it's not legal, but it's legitimate because we said so." You have the global war on terror, which is, again, sovereignty for us but not for you. That's kind of the principle.

But this is kind of natural if there's a hegemonic system—the hegemon wouldn't constrain itself. But I think the problem now is that we're going into a multipolar system, and we have to start accepting mutual constraint again. I think Trump would like to restore hegemony, but there's no framework to do it. So, yeah, it's just "might makes right" and extracting, well, something from your allies—get what you want, basically. I think that's the direction it's going. It's not going to be just Trump; I think both the U.S. and the Europeans have to adjust to what international law means in a multipolar world.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, follow the money. The U.S. had been able, until last year, to basically set the rules and set the table because the world was dependent on the dollar. Dollar hegemony ruled the day. But the transition away from the dollar really started in earnest in February and March of 2022, after the sanctions on Russia and kicking Russia out of SWIFT. When you think back on it, the West actually did Russia a favor, because SWIFT is the equivalent, in the modern financial world, of a buggy whip. You know, it's like saying, if you're going to drive a car, you've got to have a buggy whip.

Now, the buggy whip doesn't do anything to make the car go, but you've got to have it. And that's kind of how modern banks are stuck using this ancient technology—email—to send messages and transfer funds. A lot of times those messages get lost in spam, and it takes two or three days to sort out. Anyway, the rise of BRICS led to the creation of alternative payment methods, where you no longer had to buy Russian oil with U.S. dollars. The Chinese would pay in yuan, and Russia would accept the yuan. But then both countries started buying more gold. Russia, in particular, is a major gold producer, and China is a major producer of silver. They began controlling these metals.

We've seen, you know, in the last two months, an explosion—particularly in silver. Yesterday, around 2:30 on Sunday afternoon, silver was selling at \$89, and by last night it was up to \$93. I haven't had a chance to see what it's doing today, but I'd imagine it's going higher. And as this is happening, countries, instead of buying more U.S. Treasury bills—which is how the rest of the world helps finance the U.S. deficit—are buying less. It's not clear who's doing the buying now, whether it's

actually the Fed, the Federal Reserve, picking it up on its own or what. But the point of all this is that U.S. control of the global economy is slipping away.

And the U.S. is faced now with, you know, when this war started in Ukraine, I think the U.S. national debt was around \$36 trillion. It's now just hit \$39 trillion—\$3 trillion in three or four years. That's growing very, very fast, and there's no sign it's going to slow down, especially when we heard Trump announce he's going to increase defense spending to \$1.5 trillion, up \$500 billion from what it was. So you've got this phenomenon now with Russia and China. Where they are economically, they're no longer dependent on the United States. They've managed to separate themselves from dependence on the U.S. dollar. Russia, by virtue of having the most natural resources of any country in the world, is in a position to actually, you know, take those resources out of the ground, get them into production, and sell them.

And China is now leading the world in industrial production and controlling supply chains around the globe. This has put the United States at a real disadvantage. What we're witnessing now is that as you remake the international financial order, you're also remaking the international political order. Up to this point, the United States was able, as they showed on December 28th, to crash the Iranian economy by collapsing its currency. I don't know exactly how they did it, but I'd note that George Soros once tried to do something like that to the UK. So if one person like George Soros can do it, you have to recognize that a country the size of the United States can absolutely do it—absolutely do it to a country the size of Iran.

So this is where the next battle is actually being fought—it's in the economic markets. Gold is at an all-time high, silver is at an all-time high, and there's no evidence that other countries are lining up to say otherwise. In fact, we saw Canada—Canada used to be one of the top three trading partners with the United States—and now, because of the conflict, it's solidifying its ties with China and distancing itself from the United States. That is, you know, despite Trump's claims that, oh, they've got all these tariffs and they're working to control these other countries, the PR he puts out doesn't match up with the reality that's undergirding all this.

## **#Glenn**

Well, there seems to be a very standard format at this point. That is, I think Iran was going down the Syrian path. First, you use economic weapons against them to create economic havoc and political instability, then help to instigate world protests and a revolt. And then two things can happen: either you succeed in managing or hijacking civil society by pushing for a coup, or the government pushes back and you claim to protect the people against their own government. And then, of course, the country gets destroyed and ripped apart while we talk about democracy and human rights. So, it's kind of like we've seen this movie before. Yeah.

But I wanted to ask more specifically about Greenland—because, well, why? Why take Greenland? I understand why they took out Syria, I understand why they want to take out Iran, but why take

ownership of Greenland? The Danes, with Greenland, and the U.S. are already allies in NATO. The Danes would mind more American bases there. Again, the Europeans have a massive case of Stockholm syndrome. After 80 years of being vassals, there's no political imagination for anything other than being ruled by Washington. So, given that the Europeans are willing to do anything Washington says, why go to that extent and snatch actual territory when the Europeans would be happy to do whatever America tells them to?

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, I'd like to give one simple reason—but I don't think there is one. It's really baffling. One of the justifications is, "Oh, well, the United States needs those rare earth minerals that China's withholding." But you still have to dig them out of the ground in Iceland or in Greenland, and then you've got to process them—and that's the problem. You know, about 40 miles north of me, I'm in Bradenton, Florida, there's a mining company called Mosaic. Mosaic's got an ample supply; they've done all these gypsum mines, and they've got all this material. It contains all the rare earth minerals. The problem is, the U.S. doesn't have a processing plant.

And the processing plants are very dirty, and they're not environmentally friendly. So getting one of those approved for use is a whole other problem. The rare earth mineral argument doesn't make sense. Then there's the idea of wanting access to the Arctic. The United States has a total of two icebreakers, but only one is functioning—so basically just one working icebreaker. That's not going to get you very far in terms of moving in and out of the Arctic with any regularity. In contrast, the Russians have at least eight, and I think maybe five or six of them are nuclear-powered, if not all.

So, I mean, they've got world-class icebreakers for transiting that area in the winter when it freezes over. And again, we didn't have a single case where the United States made a request of Greenland and said, "Hey, could we expand our base?" and Greenland said, "Hell no," or Denmark said no. We don't have that. Or where they said, "We'd like to bring in more personnel." Never rejected. So this is, you know, I think this is more of Donald Trump's personal vanity project. They're using the excuse of national security, but he'd probably name it Trumpland. It's no longer Greenland—it's going to be Trumpland. And I wouldn't be shocked to see that as one more way of catering to his vanity.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, I was wondering if you foresee a split in the political West, and he wants to get ahead of the curve, you know? Because if the world is becoming multipolar, then the US won't be able to focus that much on Europe, so it'll have less to offer. Meanwhile, the Europeans, if they want to remain independent and somewhat relevant, would have to diversify their ties and start connecting with other great powers. So you can kind of see that in a multipolar world, the political West isn't going to hold up anyway. You could make a strategic argument, I guess, that it's better to grab what you need to keep now, as the alliance system starts to break up.



Which is why he'd also like to get the semiconductor factories in Taiwan and move them over to the U.S., if you think the alliance system isn't going to last. But I do think there's a heavy element of narcissism there as well—also his personal resentment toward the EU. He calls them, you know, worse than China. Yeah. Which also suggests that having to ask the Europeans for permission to have U.S. troops in Greenland, or if they wanted any missile defense or were spying on Russia, they'd need that permission. I think a lot of this could be about his personality as well.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, yeah. No, I don't think we can underestimate that at all as one of the primary motivations for this. It's all, you know, "Look how obsessed he's been with 'I've stopped eight wars,'" which he hasn't, and "I need the Nobel Peace Prize." You know, the letter you referenced earlier—to the Deputy Foreign Minister of Norway. Was it the Deputy Foreign Minister of Norway? No, the Prime Minister. Oh, the Prime Minister. And, you know, the glee he showed when Machado gives him the Nobel, you know, the medal. Oh, and it's like, really? I mean, I played on sports teams, and getting a medal or a trophy to me is no big deal. I don't go to sleep at night saying, "Oh my God, I've got to get this trophy or this award."

He apparently does, which again—that's not normal. That is not normal behavior. And part of what I see happening is that we've got so many world leaders—and I'll frankly include Vladimir Putin in this as well—who are enabling this guy. I think the Russian position ought to be clear right now. And Putin essentially said this last week when he addressed the 32 ambassadors. Without calling out the United States by name, he said you really can't have a system where you disregard international law and just make a law unto yourself. But part of that is, we say to Witkoff and Kushner, "Hey, we're going to deal strictly with international law."

We need a commitment from you that the United States is going to follow that. And if not, we don't have anything to talk about. Start isolating the United States through a concerted effort between China, India, and Russia, and work with other countries to stop using U.S. dollars. That's the only thing. The money—you know, you don't want to get into a physical war, a shooting war—but by God, you can cripple the United States financially, where it's going to have to pull back and rethink its approach. I mean, I am genuinely alarmed by what Trump is saying, and he's being enabled by an entire crew of sycophants. And if this is not arrested and stopped, it is going to lead to a world war—a global war. I don't see how that's avoidable.

## **#Glenn**

It's just sad to watch him, I guess, take pleasure in getting someone else's medal. And, of course, the great irony there is that someone else wins it. The only reason she won it, I think, was because the Norwegians wanted to placate Trump by essentially giving him legitimacy to invade Venezuela—by giving it to a dissident who openly called for invading her own country. Right. It has a precedent,

though. I mean, in 1920, there was a Norwegian, Knut Hamsun, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature. And he actually took his Nobel medal and gave it to Josef Goebbels in 1943—the Nazi propaganda minister—because he thought that, well, the Nazi propaganda minister was just the greatest guy ever. So it has happened before.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, I mean, who it happened to tells you everything you need to know about this—that basically, Trump is on par with a Nazi propagandist. We can make that case.

## **#Glenn**

It's not good optics. But I wanted to ask you about the defense of Greenland, because the Europeans want to show that they're not completely irrelevant. As you said, they appear to be this abused spouse. They want to show they can stand up to Donald Trump. So they said they would defend Greenland. They sent a handful of troops—I mean, literally a handful. The British sent one guy, the Norwegians sent two, and the Germans sent some more. But then, the day after the Germans arrived, Trump said, "Well, if you try to resist the annexation of Greenland, we'll tariff you all." So he put a 10% tariff the day after the Germans left. So I'm not sure. I don't know—how do you interpret this? What was the purpose of all these efforts to defend? I mean, is there any point to it, or is this just virtue signaling? How are you assessing it?

## **#Larry Johnson**

I'm assessing it as a 21st-century update of the Monty Python movie \*The Knights of the Holy Grail\*. Okay? It's satirical, it's laughable, it's absurd—and yet the problem is, it's real. You know, because in the Monty Python movie, when the knights would start clashing, they'd yell, "Run away! Run away!" That's the Germans. I mean, we just saw the Germans do that. They landed and said, "Okay, we lasted 36 hours. Back on the plane, guys. Let's run away." Europe, under optimal conditions—if they wanted to get into a military conflict with the United States—they're a speed bump. They're not going to slow up the U.S. Now, if you're investing, this would've been a good time to invest in popcorn.

Because I'm sure the demand for it has gone up in Russia. They're just sitting there with buckets of popcorn, eating and watching. Instead of watching a great movie, they're watching this entire fiasco unfold—Europe trying to figure out, are we for or against the unilateral takeover of land? So we're willing to support the U.S. and the war against Ukraine because Russia is violating international law by seizing territory in Ukraine. But we're going to look the other way when the United States takes a NATO country and strips it of its property, of its sovereign right. And we're not going to do anything. And some are saying, oh, well, we've got to do something. So this is all just kabuki theater.

The only thing that's going to make a difference is if the Europeans finally unite and say, "Wait a second, this can't be allowed." And they start closing down U.S. military bases, start denying U.S. access to places like Wiesbaden. I don't see England doing that at all. Germany is the one country where they could actually turn the tables. And what would be—let's come up with the most extreme scenario—in which Merkel says, "Wait a second, we've taken enough abuse in this relationship. We're getting out. We're going back to Russia. We're going to buy Russian oil. We're going to buy Russian gas." My understanding is part of the Nord Stream pipeline is still functional, so they could still deliver gas to Germany.

So if Germany immediately starts paying for cheaper natural gas and cheaper oil, then they're in a position where they could stop their economic slide, which is already underway. That might get the U.S.'s attention at that point. But knowing Trump, he's going to be so angered by the effrontery of the Germans that he'll double down. At that point, you'll see NATO come apart at the seams. There's no longer this much-touted unity that really hasn't existed. And along with that, I think you're going to see an acceleration of the Russian offensive against the Ukrainians. General Winter is really doing a number on them, as they've knocked out all the power plants, and an increasing number of Ukrainians are having to abandon cities like Kyiv, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kharkiv.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, well, I think it would make some sense for the Europeans. Fighting America directly doesn't make any sense, but I think communicating that it would come at a high cost—that would be the main tool to move forward, of course. But it's a big gamble, because the Europeans don't want the Americans to leave. They want them to stay. It's Trump who's trying to pull it back, so... Their threat is essentially what Trump wants, which almost makes me think this is a ploy to reduce the relevance of NATO, because Trump can't do it on his own. You need Congress; it's difficult to pull off. But if the Europeans do it for him, then it would work.

I'm not saying this is the effort, but overall it seems that his erratic behavior often is, like I said, escalation control—that is, escalation. He's able to escalate dramatically, and then people try to find a compromise because he doesn't mind war, I think. He's more worried about forever wars—the costly wars that pull America in and don't allow it to leave. He seems to have an aversion to high costs, but he wants the low-hanging fruit. We saw this with Panama: he gave some threats, and then the Panamanians made some concessions. With Yemen, when he was going to just knock them out, it didn't work, so he called it quits.

Okay, we're done with this. In Venezuela as well—just go in, kidnap the president, kill a lot of people, and then we're finished. You know, kiss and make up, try to work with what remains of the government. Iran as well—just try to knock out its nuclear plants, do a decapitation strike, and then... it didn't work. Okay, well, then we end it right away. So it seems this is the way to go. If the Europeans put some troops in Greenland, at least as a tripwire, that would forever damage relations

with the Americans. Or, you know, threaten to actually carry through on, I guess, market access denial to US companies in Europe—those kinds of things. I think that would work.

But the problem is, Europe can't live without the United States. So, right—it would be very hollow. And again, any threat, I don't think, would be followed through. But I mean, I was also wondering what you made of the comment by the Italian Prime Minister, Meloni, because she said that after Trump put tariffs on the Europeans who sent troops and started pushing back against annexation, there had obviously been a misunderstanding—a communication problem. The Europeans had just sent those troops to Greenland to defend it from Russia and China, because Trump had said that was the problem, that they had to annex Greenland because Denmark couldn't defend it.

So they were just sending them to help China—to do a Trump, you know? This is where we're at. They're apologizing for setting up a deterrent to defend their own soil, and they're apologizing to Trump for it. This is where we are, though. But what do you make of this? Of course, I could be mistaken—maybe this is the real intent—but it doesn't make any sense. I mean, I don't think anyone can imagine Russian or Chinese warships coming into Greenland and trying to annex it. It doesn't really make any sense at all.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, no, this is called putting lipstick on a pig—trying to make the pig look pretty or, you know, dress it up so it looks like some starlet, like Marilyn Monroe from the old days. It is what it is; I have to go with what I see. And this notion that Trump is involved in some sort of sophisticated, three-dimensional chess game—yet his comments are so abrasive, so insulting, or so threatening, I mean, they fall into one of those three categories—that he's not doing things in a way that helps people save face. He's not willing to, if you will, take the high road and allow people to have an exit strategy. No, his approach is all just bare-knuckle force, almost forcing some of these leaders to debase themselves or to accept insult after insult. And, you know, you might be able to get away with that once.

But you can't keep getting away with it, because at some point people will punch back—they'll seek revenge. They'll find a way to stab you in the back or sandbag you. And so Trump is weak. What Trump is doing, in my view, is dramatically weakening the ability of the United States to continue exercising this hegemonic influence in the world. Instead, again, he's using tariffs as a political club. You know, historically, tariffs have been used successfully when they're applied for an economic purpose—when one country is severely disadvantaged by the economic capacity of another country, or by what it produces and trades, etc. So you can use tariffs to defend your own domestic production. But when you turn tariffs into a political tool—one of punishment and coercion—that only works if you have monopoly control over a product or over the currency. And that's no longer the case.

And so what's happening—and we saw it again, I referenced it with Canada—is that Canada starts saying they've been taking this abuse. And I said, okay, screw it, we're going to build up our relationship with China. It's not going to be an overnight transformation, but a year from now you're going to have more Chinese vehicles being imported into Canada, being sold to Canadians, and fewer U.S. vehicles, which is going to hurt the U.S. automobile industry. And China's already got an enormous advantage over the United States in that regard. And likewise with India, the threats against India have backfired.

India's not working to change its policies to accommodate the United States. It's looking for new trading partners and saying, "Okay, we'll have to live without them." So when Trump labored under this false belief that the United States was so powerful—that we were an essential business, economic, and military power that nobody could live without us—all of a sudden he's discovering that a lot of these countries are saying, "Yeah, no, we can live without you." And in fact, the more we distance ourselves from you, the fewer problems we have. Which is why, you know, again, I liken it to that abusive spouse relationship.

Because, you know, it is dysfunctional. And it's almost like an addictive personality disorder. It's not until somebody gets to a point where they say, "I've got to break free," and they find that they can break free, go on, and find a new life. You know, so we're in that kind of transitional moment in history. Looking back on this period—from February 2022, and I think through December 2026—we'll be seeing as consequential a move and change in the international arena as what took place from, say, May 1945 through December 1948. That kind of dramatic change.

## **#Glenn**

Well, I can't make up my mind, though, whether Trump is actually unstable or just pretending to be. But I don't think it matters, because, as you said, either way, you can't trust him anymore. And, well, in the case that he's pretending, I wonder if he's following Richard Nixon's "madman" approach—that is, if you act irrational and extreme, you can escalate and control the escalation ladder. You can put massive pressure on others, but then you can also bring it down, because nobody wants that kind of confrontation with a madman. So, being unpredictable, going up the escalation ladder, and essentially forcing others to back down and compromise because they fear the disastrous outcome of someone who seems unstable.

There's some benefit to appearing unstable, but it's political theater. That's why many countries will do almost anything Trump says, just to avoid a direct conflict—because you can't predict how he'll behave, unlike his predecessors. So, to some extent, it works. I mean, the Europeans are doing whatever they can now to avoid any conflict with Trump. They just hope he'll do what he wants and direct his unpredictable fury toward the Russians. The Russians seem to be playing along with this

charade of Trump's diplomacy too. Then he turns his fury the other way, toward the Europeans and Zelensky. So you end up with this pattern: one day everything's Zelensky's fault, the next day he's disappointed in Putin.

I don't even remember where he is at the moment, but I don't think it matters. He just jumps back and forth. My point is, whether it's real instability or not, nobody will trust you in the end. So the Russians, I think, have already made up their minds. It doesn't matter what paper they sign—there'll be a new deal the next day. So I think it's a flawed strategy. It didn't work that well under Nixon either. But let me just ask one last question, because you started talking about the economics of the whole thing. With him just slapping tariffs on the Europeans, they're now saying they might retaliate with \$93 billion in tariffs on the United States. They might not follow through, but either way, just the U.S. tariffs alone—could this spark a financial crisis? Do you see that as likely?

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, actually, I do. I came across a YouTube video last night called *\*Metals and Markets\**. The analyst—I think it's an AI-generated analyst, so not a real person—has a very smooth, professional, coherent delivery, which tells you it's a written script. My reading of it now is that it was probably written by the Chinese. What they're saying is that because of Trump's tariffs, it's likely created a real imbalance in the market, particularly with respect to silver. What gave me some confidence that this wasn't just artificial intelligence propaganda is that the video was supposedly recorded yesterday, Sunday afternoon, at 2:38 p.m.

Eastern Time. And the price of silver on the spot market was around \$89. The guy was saying it could go down a little bit, but within eight hours that number was up to \$93—it moved up \$4. I haven't looked at it today yet, but if it's still going up, then you've got a problem with silver. The demand is out of whack, and China has already put a limit on silver exports—they've restricted that. So I think you're seeing fewer countries buying U.S. Treasuries. In the past, the United States was able to finance its wars and its government by selling U.S. debt to foreign countries.

And these foreign countries would buy it up because they thought, "Oh, the United States is a safe place. They'll always pay their debts." Now you're seeing it move in the opposite direction. You're seeing Russia, China, India—particularly those three—buying more precious metals for their own reserves, as are a number of other nations. All of this is sending signals that there's a looming financial crisis on the horizon. And, you know, I love to use movie analogies because I think they reveal some truth. Asking whether Donald Trump is crazy is like asking whether the character Mel Gibson played in *\*Lethal Weapon\** was crazy.

And, you know, you saw him at various points where he would act crazy. And then, when nobody was around, he was getting ready to put a gun in his mouth to kill himself. So he was not the kind of guy you'd call a stable person. And I think that's what we're seeing with Trump. Look, we've got evidence going back to his first term in Washington in 2017. He has repeatedly demonstrated that

he is a complete failure when it comes to selecting people to include in his government—or almost a complete failure. He has a knack for choosing the wrong people, or for choosing people who actually work to undermine him, or people who are not competent.

And we saw that when, you know, he put Gina Haspel in charge of the CIA and Christopher Wray in charge of the FBI. You know, we've seen it now, talking about putting Pete Hegseth in and changing it to the Department of War. Again, I put myself in the position—if I'm an analyst for Russian intelligence or Chinese intelligence—and I have to go in and make an assessment to President Putin or President Xi about what kind of person Donald Trump is: can you trust him? Is he willing to make a deal and stick to it? Is his ultimate objective just burnishing his image, putting his name on everything so he looks like a winner? Or is he actually a creature dependent on the deep state that's intent on destroying Russia and/or China? And, you know, my own opinion—I'd have to go with the latter. I think Trump has become a convenient tool.

He's not setting the agenda. He's not running the chessboard. But he's certainly enabling this effort to weaken China and weaken Russia, because there are those driving the bus who still believe they both represent the key threat we have to stop—not figuring out how we can work with Russia and China to make all countries wealthy. How can we work with Russia and China so that we don't have to have a \$1.5 trillion defense budget? How do we work with Russia and China to promote and build infrastructure in countries around the world? There's not that attitude in the West. It's more like, "We win, you lose." It's a zero-sum game. And as long as that mentality continues to preside and reign over whoever's in office, the United States is in a trap that I don't think we're going to get out of.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, well, I think that's another adjustment to the problem of hegemony—to multipolarity. In a hegemonic system, you don't have to take into account the security of others; you just have to make sure you're so powerful it doesn't matter if they feel threatened or not. They just have to adjust to new realities. Right. In a multipolar world, you do have to—and again, this goes back to the Peace of Westphalia—if you want security for yourself, you need to make sure you don't threaten the security of others as well. I think this is going to be a hard adjustment to make. In the meantime, I think this main shift is happening, as you suggested, in the economic sphere as well. The fact that silver is also exploding at the moment—I think it's because it's being used more in manufacturing by the Chinese.

So there's more demand than supply. But keep in mind that just back in September, silver hit about \$40. Now it's at \$95. So this is the history of silver, essentially. In the past few months, it's taken off, and it's not coming down. With all these different wars around the world, I think within the next few months it'll be coupled with a massive financial crisis, and that's going to add a big, uncertain

variable into the whole mess, making it very difficult to control. So thank you, as always, and visit Sonar21. Yeah, I'll say, on that cheery note... Well, it's been a rough year so far—almost three weeks of it.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, we're 19 days in, and everybody's already screaming, "Stop the ride, I want to get off."

## **#Glenn**

It is strange. It doesn't—like you said, if someone had told you a few years ago that this is where we'd be, it would've sounded a bit like science fiction.

## **#Larry Johnson**

I'll make a prediction: before the year is out, I think you'll see more European countries reviving their relationships with Russia, and there will be a freeze in relations with the United States.

## **#Glenn**

Well, I think if they want more independence, they have to reduce their dependence on the U.S. That means trading economically with others, getting Russian energy. But the dividing lines in Europe were recreated after the Cold War to cement the U.S. position in Europe, and now that's just making us even more dependent. So while the Europeans are trying to keep the war going, they should do the exact opposite—end it quickly so there's less dependence.

But it is interesting to see how the Europeans were suddenly shocked, because just in the past year of the Trump presidency, we had these attacks on Russia's nuclear deterrent. We had the slaughter in Gaza, the attack on Iran, the bombing of Nigeria, the kidnapping of the president of Venezuela, and threats against Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, and Nicaragua. And suddenly everyone is in shock because he might take Greenland. I mean, we helped build and feed this monster. And yeah, this is Frankenstein's monster—it's not under our control. Exactly right. And yet again, on a happy note, thank you, Larry. I look forward to seeing you again.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Hey, my friend, always appreciate it—and I appreciate all the work you're doing. Thank you.