

Scott Ritter: U.S. Revives Empire & Europe Is No Longer An Ally

Scott Ritter is a former Major, Intelligence Officer, US Marine, and UN Weapons Inspector. Ritter discusses the end of the U.S. efforts to reverse the decline and revive its empire, and Europe is no longer considered an ally. 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 are joined by Scott Ritter to discuss current events. Scott Ritter is a former UN weapons inspector, a U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer, and also an author. Thank you very much for coming back on. Thank you very much for having me. We see the Munich Security Conference, which used to be a very serious forum to discuss international security, but it appears to have been transformed into a bit of a circus of posturing and warmongering. There was a lot of curiosity and expectation around Marco Rubio's speech, especially after J.D. Vance's speech last year, which shocked the Europeans. I was wondering, what did you make of Rubio's speech in terms of the direction of the United States and the role of Europe in this new world?

#Scott Ritter

Well, my takeaway is that people were expecting a speech that brought clarity to the national security strategy document and the posturing the United States has been doing regarding Europe. There were some very strong statements in there about Europe threatening itself with existential or even cultural extinction, and comments suggesting the United States might not be behind Europe 100%—that Europe would have to make some adaptations to its behavior to align more closely with the American vision, things of that nature.

I think Rubio actually delivered on that, but not in the way people wanted. The reality is, Rubio is saying that Europe's role is to reinforce America's ability to project itself as a new colonial power in the Global South, meaning Europe will be in a subordinated role from here on out. That may not be the message Europe wanted to hear, but I'm pretty sure that's the message Rubio was trying to send.

#Glenn

Well, the Europeans don't seem happy that they're on the outside this time. I think some comments, if they were on the inside, would have been more reassuring. But nonetheless, they did give him a standing ovation—though I guess they would have anyway. How about this: what do you make of how he envisions America's relationship with other great powers, be it Russia or China? Because everyone remembers that interview he gave at the beginning of last year with Megyn Kelly, where he made the point that unipolarity was over—it was always temporary. People were curious, you know, what does that mean? Are we going to get the hegemony back, or are we going to accommodate a favorable balance of power among the multipolar system? Did you get any of that from his speech, or was it more focused—well, more intended just for the European audience?

#Scott Ritter

I think the Europeans were hoping for more clarity because there are mixed signals being sent by the United States. I mean, if we're going to be honest, the United States isn't seeking a multipolar world. They're just trying to redefine the terms of American hegemony—moving away from the old rules-based international order that prevailed since the end of the Second World War, toward one that's premised on, you know, when we say "make America great again," a lot of people, including Europeans, thought that was fine because it meant America was looking inward to repair itself. But "make America great again" is really an expression of "make America dominant globally again."

We will brook no competitors. Even with Russia—there's no policy of equality with Russia; it's a farce. If there were equality with Russia, then Anchorage would have been adopted, right? But what we do is drag the Russians along. What I see today in our policy toward Russia—because remember, Rubio is a voice, but you have to hear that voice in the echo chamber of the broader Trump administration's actions—is Scott Besson saying he will bring Russia to its knees. You have to understand that when Besson talks about the cause-and-effect relationship between American sanctions or American economic activity and bringing Russia to its knees, he's referring to the Iranian model.

That means bringing people into the streets. That's what the United States is seeking. And Rubio knows this because he's not just the Secretary of State—he's also the National Security Advisor. As National Security Advisor, he's sat in on meetings where the CIA talks about reinforcing the sanctions that target Russian energy by empowering Ukraine to strike Russian strategic energy sites. The empowerment of Ukraine goes beyond those energy targets; we now know it includes striking the Russian president's residence. These are the realities you have to keep in mind when talking about Rubio's posturing.

When we look, for instance, at Kirill Dmitriev and his engagement, maybe Russia believes that the United States is serious about genuine economic investment in Russia. I would ask Russia to go back and reflect on Joe Biden's visit in March 2011 and the statements he made. The conditionality

attached to American capital investment in Russia was all predicated on Russia making changes in governance that reduce genuine Russian sovereignty and increase points of leverage where America can exercise control over Russia domestically, economically, and politically.

And that's our goal and objective. Nothing's changed. So, you know, I think you can't just look at words in a vacuum. You can't just look at a single speech and say, "This is what the speech means." You have to look at the words and the totality of what's taking place around them to understand that the United States is just playing a big game where we're being honest with nobody—including Europe. For the Europeans to believe that they're allies of the United States is absurd in the extreme. I'd be more guided by Lindsey Graham's behavior toward the Danish prime minister than by Marco Rubio's words at the Munich conference.

#Glenn

So the era of alliance, then—well, you said "absurdity." That's definitely gone now, you think?

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, you know, the NATO alliance was supposed to be a marriage, a union. You know, "I love you, you love me, we're going to live together in bliss." But it turned out that, to the Europeans, you're just a bunch of cheap whores. We use you and throw you away. You know, "How much money do you want? Go disappear." That's it. We're done with you. You're no longer convenient for us—we found somebody else. Disappear. But we'll keep you in our Rolodex so that if we ever feel an itch, we can call you up and get it scratched. Europe needs to understand that's their role. That's all you've ever been to us. For a while, you were a high-priced hooker—we put you in a nice hotel. But we never really let you move into the house, did we? No. And we didn't really have that family we were promising you, did we? No. And now you expect to be treated as a loyal spouse? You were never a loyal spouse. You're just a cheap trick.

#Glenn

All the change in the distribution of power, though—this seems to be something the Europeans don't accept, that their interests have at least divided, become very divergent. Instead, there's always talk about "common values." I'm not sure how that fits into the analogy.

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, again, what we're seeing right now is that Europe wanted to be viewed as one, you know, a singularity. But it turns out the United States was having multiple affairs with multiple partners, all under the guise of Europe. So now we see all the abused girlfriends getting together. It'

s like one of those movies where a man has seven girlfriends, and they all meet and start talking about, you know, "What he promised me, what he promised me, what he promised me." This is unjust. This is unfair. And that's Europe today. Guys, it isn't the world you think it is. It never was.

And you played the game. That's the other thing I don't get about Europe—I don't understand the hypocrisy. At least the Canadian prime minister had the courage to say that the rules-based international order was a farce, and they knew it was a farce. They just played along as long as they were benefiting from it. And if there's that much clarity in Canada, there has to be that much clarity in the rest of Europe. You had to know all along this was farcical. You had to know. I mean, how could you not? If you're Germany, and your partner—America, your loving partner—is spying on your phone... oh, ask Angela Merkel what it was like to have her phone listened to.

What does that tell you? When you're the Dutch and the NSA comes to you to get access to French telecommunications—wait a minute, aren't you part of the European community, the European family? But daddy's coming to ask you to spy on your sister? What kind of family is that? You know, Europe, you've been playing the game all along. You know what the United States is. France knows what the CIA has been doing in Paris. Italy knows what the CIA has been doing in Rome. And yet you remain silent to the abuse. So the analogy doesn't fall apart—it just gets reinforced. And what we have right now is abused wife syndrome, collectively, in Europe.

And that's what Munich was. It can't be this way. We've got it—we're going to make demands. We're going to do... you've got nothing. Nothing. And we don't care. We send Marco Rubio; he'll throw a couple of words at you that mean nothing. You'll give him a standing ovation, and the next day you'll realize they were just empty words. And now you're posturing, pretending that you mean something, that you have credibility in anything. As you said, it was a joke. I mean, it's a farce. It's theater of the absurd. The Munich Security Conference used to be something, and now it's nothing.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, from the spying on Angela Merkel's phone—every time there's a bit of a scandal and they realize the alliance isn't necessarily this equal marriage, if you will—the first impulse is always to just look the other way, pretend it never happened, because otherwise you create too many waves and disruptions. So, let's just look the other way and pretend this is any regular alliance situation. But to shift over to the war in Ukraine, though, Trump has been eager to pull himself out of the conflict, at least rhetorically.

And the argument is that the U.S. is no longer part of the war. Indeed, if you look at the weapons or money that's been given away, that's been reduced significantly. But to what extent is the United States still involved in this proxy war with Russia? Because, for example, the drones we see over the Black Sea—it seems every time there's an American drone, you know there's going to be a Ukrainian drone attack on Russian forces soon after. So what is the level of involvement?

#Scott Ritter

Well, we know that the United States is heavily involved in providing targeting intelligence to Ukraine. I mean, we saw that play out in December when there was something supposed to happen that didn't happen. Ninety-one drones were supposed to hit near the Russian president, and that was meant to be an act of intimidation by Donald Trump—to send a signal to Vladimir Putin that your days are numbered if you don't want to play ball with us. That failed. And the Russians are onto this. They got the chip and returned it to the United States intact, saying, "What's on that chip? We're aware of what's on it. We know what it shows." So, you know, the game's up on that.

But, you know, the United States can't just keep posturing as if we're disengaging. The fact is, we're heavily involved in the targeting. That chip that was turned over to the United States shows that. Through the data contained on it, the targeting packages have a unique signature attributable to American Department of Defense intelligence activities stationed in Europe. They take intelligence data and turn it into target packets for Tomahawk missiles and other NATO missiles—Scalp, Storm Shadow, and now their derivatives—which are turned over to the Ukrainians. The long-range strike drones built in Germany, by Germany, use this intelligence provided by the United States, filtered through Palantir.

You know, the Russians know this, so there's no pretense anymore. I don't think they're under any illusion that the United States is a legitimate partner for peace. You can hear the frustration in Vladimir Putin's voice when he talks about what happened in Anchorage. I mean, when we heard at the time that Russia had made concessions, I was one of the people who said, "I don't believe it," because constitutionally, the concessions they were talking about—freezing the front lines in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia—aren't possible.

It's just constitutionally questionable whether a Russian president would do that. Now, the Russians haven't said exactly what the concessions were, but Sergei Lavrov has said, "We made concessions—very difficult concessions—to the United States." Those are his words. Very difficult concessions to the United States, in the hope that the United States was serious about peace, that the United States had said, "These are the conditions necessary for peace." And Russia said, "Here, we will meet these conditions." And then what did the United States do?

They didn't go to Europe and stand strong on Europe. They went and got strong-armed by Europe, and immediately started negotiating away the concessions. And that told the Russians the United States isn't serious about peace. When you tell the Russians, "These are the conditions," and Russia meets those conditions, and then you say, "Well, no, now we're going to water down these conditions and add more and dilute them," that means you're not serious. And the Russians have always said, "We go back to Alaska, we go back to Alaska, we go back to Alaska." And now they realize Alaska was a lie—everything about Alaska was a lie. So, you know, that's where we're at right now, where the relations between Russia and the United States—there's no more false hope.

I think Russia understands the game that's being played. The United States is the one being squeezed here, not Russia. I mean, again, people don't—it's not the United States dragging Russia along anymore. Russia is doing what Russia is going to do, when Russia is going to do it, how Russia wants to do it. And there's nobody getting Russia to deviate from that path. They've made their demands known. But, you know, every time the United States tries to pressure Ukraine to come to the position—the anchorage position—Ukraine balks. They're not willing to accept giving up Donbass, but they labor under the hope that the United States is going to put the pressure back on Russia.

I think that's done too. I mean, Scott, you know, there'll be additional sanctions, but there's a limit to what the West can do. I just think we're in for a war that will be won using the military-technical means of Russia over Ukraine—a war that will lead to the collapse of Ukraine. And Europe's panicked by that, which is why you see the Munich Security Conferences. Europe seeks to reposition itself in a more affirmative way, because right now the Ukrainians are desperate for any sign that people will be there for them, you know, because they're seeing the practical abandonment by the United States.

You know, the intelligence that was provided—so Ukraine will continue to carry out drone strikes, but the fact of the matter is, every drone strike delivered by Ukraine brings back hell. And it's an exchange that Russia is winning decisively. The destruction of Ukraine's energy infrastructure is nearly total right now, and there's no equivalent damage being done by Ukraine, even with American backing. So I think what Europe's trying to do is sustain the British plan of keeping Ukraine in the fight by posturing as if they're prepared to go it alone with Ukraine, even if the United States walks away.

#Glenn

But within the Russian camp, there seem to be some growing frictions or splits. It does appear that the envoy, Kirill Dmitriev, believes—though I might be wrong—that enhancing the economic partnership with the United States could somehow translate into a more durable peace. That seems to differ from what others in Moscow think. Do you see the same thing, or do you think there are still some clinging to the hope that a deal can be made with the U.S.? Well...

#Scott Ritter

This is just my take, and I'm someone who's wanted to interview Kirill Dmitriev for a long time to ask him these very questions. Maybe what I'm about to say will forever close the door to that opportunity. But Kirill Dmitriev does not speak for the Russian government. He is not the Russian government. He was always an outsider brought in by Vladimir Putin to engage in an experiment, and he's taken that experiment as far as it can go. But again, as I've pointed out, Russians need to

take a look at Joe Biden's—well, the Russians know what's happening. The Russians I speak to, who are on the other end of the spectrum from Kirill Dmitriev, talk about hybrid warfare, the danger of fifth columns, and what they call mental war.

They view Kirill Dmitriev as a facilitator of Western hostile intent toward Russia, by creating a potential that will never be realized, right? But Vladimir Putin, being the pragmatic leader that he is, can't shut the door on an opportunity without giving it a chance to succeed. So I think he brought in Kirill Dmitriev and gave him a lot of latitude. There were a lot of meetings—the Miami meetings, for example—where he met with Steve Witkoff and later Jared Kushner. But if you don't understand that Witkoff and Kushner are just a false front, that they're not empowered to deliver anything, nor are they capable of delivering anything, then it's a process that goes nowhere—except to pull Russia away from the direction necessary for it to win this war.

And so, when people talk about friction, it's hard to even define what that means, because Kirill Dmitriev was never empowered. I mean, to say there was friction between Dmitriev and Lavrov implies some kind of equality between them. There's no equality between the foreign minister and this economic whiz kid Putin brought in. Putin didn't give him the status of, you know, a foreign ministry equivalent. He brought him in as someone who was supposed to engage effectively with Steve Witkoff, to build on that relationship and see where it could go. But it went nowhere. And now it's obvious that the path of economic opportunity Kirill Dmitriev is offering is really a disguised weapon by the United States.

And so the split you're seeing is just a recognition on the part of official Russian power structures that this isn't serious. But what is Dmitriev's power base? What does he fall back on? Nothing. He doesn't have a ministry that can back him up. He has a president who has listened to him, but, you know, again, he's a single voice. There is no Ministry of Kirill Dmitriev. There's Kirill Dmitriev. That's it. And now he's going up against the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the FSB, the SVR—he's going up against everybody, the real Russian officialdom. You can't speak of a split within Russia. That's not a split. That's just Russian reality recognizing, you know, the pie-in-the-sky dreams of a man whose mission has failed.

#Glenn

On these negotiations, though, we saw that the NATO Secretary General, Mark Rutte, was criticizing President Putin for sending Medinsky to the talks. He referred to him in a derogatory way as a historian. Again, it's a bit of a strange insult, since Mark Rutte's only university degree is in history. But still, this lack of civility—you never really saw this during the Cold War. So what do you make of the negotiations? Is it just a show at this point, or is there any hope of getting anything that looks like peace? You already pointed out that Anchorage seems to be dead, but is there any other pathway now?

#Scott Ritter

Well, first of all, I mean, with all due respect to Mark Rutte, Medinsky is a very serious person. You know, it's not my job to get into the internal domestic politics of Russia, but I follow people who do. I listen to people who discuss these things. Medinsky is seen by many as a potential successor to Vladimir Putin. He's taken very seriously inside Russia, and he's taken very seriously by the Russian president. He's trusted by the Russian president. He's not a simple historian; he's someone who, you know, one day could be bearing the weight of executive leadership. And, you know...

Rutte is a failed Secretary General of NATO after being a failed Prime Minister of the Netherlands, so there's no comparison between the two. Medinsky's involvement, though, shows that we're beyond the experimental phase—it's now time to talk brass tacks. It's also a sign to the United States that it's put-up-or-shut-up time, that Ukraine must... Medinsky is a man who has specific marching orders, a specific game plan that he can sign on to, one that has been transmitted to the United States. So it's not that he has to be creative in coming up with a diplomatic solution.

It means the Russians have defined what a diplomatic solution will look like if it's acceptable to Russia. Medinsky is there to execute this. Um, and it's time for Ukraine to, you know, pony up. But the Ukrainians are still, uh, in the stage where they believe they have leverage for negotiation. And, um, I think that's the importance of Medinsky—that we're beyond the experimental phase. We're beyond the, you know, "there's maneuver room here" phase. I think it says this is the Russian position. It's carved in stone. It will not alter. And you see Trump—I mean, Trump's saying, you know, Zelensky better take the deal. What deal? Well, apparently there's a deal on the table that Russia is willing to accept.

It may be linked to the Alaska deal. And notice the nervousness in Europe about being left out of this trilateral agreement. I think the British tried to crash the party or something. But, you know, Europe is not comfortable with this because they just had the Munich Security Conference where they put everything on the line to say, "We're here for Ukraine." And now you've got the president telling Ukraine, "You need to make this deal with Russia, or else..." And I think the Russians have made it clear that, you know, they're done negotiating. There's nothing left to negotiate. The deal you have is the deal you have—and that's it.

#Glenn

Most likely this will be resolved on the battlefield. I mean, every time I speak to Mearsheimer, he seems perplexed. I still think there might be a deal, but it's definitely going to be resolved on the battlefield.

#Scott Ritter

Well, unless Ukrainians take this deal—find me a Ukrainian leader who's willing to take it. Even Budanov, who's being touted as a potential presidential candidate—you know, there are things that would have to be done from a security guarantee standpoint that Russia simply won't allow. Ukraine

is still laboring under the pretense of some sort of American involvement on the ground, and the Russians aren't going to allow that. So, you know, Zelensky—what I'm saying is, Zelensky will never agree to this. He can't. So who is the political leader who would replace Zelensky and agree to it? Right now, there isn't one. There isn't anyone out there on the Ukrainian side. So, void of a politician willing to bear that cross, there isn't going to be a peace deal.

#Glenn

Well, we have another war possibly coming up. I'm not sure if I should be relieved that it hasn't happened yet, because it seems like they're just moving into position. Iran said they would strike back hard at any attack, and the U.S. appears to be building up more military force. Again, it could still be for political pressure, but of course, it could also be preparation for a big war. What do you make of this? The U.S. is building up a lot of assets. On one hand, it can inflict serious pain on the Iranians; on the other hand, it's placing a lot of targets in the region as well. How do you think a war like this would play out? I mean, there have been war games in the past, but those things aren't always accurate. Well...

#Scott Ritter

I think we have to start with some basic points. The United States' policy is not to seek a negotiated settlement with Iran over its nuclear program. The U.S. policy is to seek the overthrow of the Islamic Republic's regime. That's the stated policy objective of the United States. So, diplomacy—why diplomacy? Are we actually engaged in diplomacy? What took place in Geneva? What happened in Geneva was that Iran, despite its posturing about striking back, built in a two-week period of immunity while they considered their next steps. If you go back to January of this year, at the height of the unrest in the streets of Iran, the President of the United States was saying, "Stand strong."

Help is on the way. And everybody was expecting an attack—you remember, clearing the airspace and all that. But what happened was the American military turned to the president and said, "Boss, we can't do this. We don't have sufficient resources in place to get the impact you want. The consequence will be that Iran will destroy Israel." And that's why the Israelis made the phone call and said, "Stop." The other consequence was that Saudi Arabian oil fields could be devastated, so the Saudis made the phone call and said, "Stop." And so the president stopped. The other thing he was told was that we don't have the ability to defend ourselves—so if Iran decided to take out American bases in the region, we'd be exposed.

And so that attack didn't take place. But then the United States did what it always does—it said, "We're ready to engage with the Iranians on negotiations." Why? Because we needed to do two things. One, we needed to reset the internal dynamics we were trying to achieve inside Iran. We had played a card, and we needed to pull that card back. We needed to reset the deck. I call this the Starlink

factor. I'm going to try to publish a paper on it, but I have to find the time to finish it. You know, we talk about Starlink issues and the importance of Starlink—but what are we really talking about? Go back to 2005, 2006. There's a name that might be familiar to you: Jared Cohen.

Jared Cohen was a guy who traveled around the Middle East and wrote a book. I can't remember the title right now, but basically it promoted the idea that all Middle Eastern youth are like the West and want to be like the West. And all we have to do to win them over, away from the Islamic—well, you know, the evil of Islamism—is to expose them to the West. So we need to create digital interconnectivity. He was then hired by the State Department to promote what was called "digital democracy." Digital democracy was about, for instance, traveling to Syria and trying to get the Syrian government to open up the Internet to Google. Later on, he went to work for Google doing something similar.

But, you know, he's the guy—if you remember, during the 2009 Green Revolution—he's the one who called Twitter and asked Jack Dorsey not to shut it down for maintenance, because the United States government needed Twitter to stay open for connectivity with the Iranian opposition groups. That's digital democracy: using Internet connectivity as a vehicle not just to influence people inside a closed area, but to allow them to project their reality online. We saw this in Syria. You know, the whole human rights coordination committees were the people who followed the demonstrations, waiting for something to happen—a clash—and then they filmed it and broadcast it out: "The Syrian government is slaughtering Syrian civilians in the streets." No, no.

Your video shows a limited interaction with no context, but they broadcast it out and it gets picked up. They use similar connectivity to promote the idea of the Syrian government using chemical weapons, and so on. This is digital democracy—it's a tool of subversion. With Iran, the government went around and took control of its internet, so we had to find a way around Iran's ability to hit the kill switch, and Starlink was that way. We saw the importance of Starlink when the State Department acknowledged that they surged 7,000 additional Starlink terminals into Iran after the January incident to restore internet connectivity for certain groups. But what we now know is that over 100,000 Starlink terminals have been sent into Iran—over 100,000. The Iranians have rounded up hundreds, if not a few thousand.

Let's say Iran got 20,000. That means there are 80,000 terminals still out there. We know the Israelis, the Mossad, have provided special packets that convert Starlink from its traditional single bandwidth to frequency hopping, mimicking military-style communications. So it's impossible to track or jam, and so on. Why? Because we're infecting the minds of as many Iranians as possible with anti-regime logic—hybrid warfare, mental warfare—causing clashes among them and creating the potential for them to project imagery outward that influences the world. For instance, you remember the hysteria: "They're gunning down hundreds of thousands of Iranians." Well, it was 3,000, and most of them were killed by the bad guys. But, you know, it doesn't matter—they create this perception. We have to reset that.

And it's not that we have to get things; we just have to reset the conditions so that when we call upon these 80,000 to rise up and burn the cities of Iran, we're able to back them up twofold. One, with a military campaign to suppress the regime's ability to respond, and two, to empower those players that didn't get mobilized. Where was the Baloch Liberation Army during the January Revolution? Nowhere. Where was PJAK? Nowhere. Where's the Mujahideen al-Khalq? Nowhere. All these armed factions exist, but they never went to the streets. Why? Because they were supposed to go to the streets once we started bombing.

Then they would rise up and make the military move to bring down the regime once we'd suppressed it. But we had to reset. We didn't have sufficient power to achieve that objective. Now, to bring that power into play, we're moving them—as you said—we're moving a lot of targets into Afghanistan, a region that makes them vulnerable. So what we needed to do was create a window of invulnerability. That's what the diplomacy was about. We engaged in diplomacy, we met with the Iranians in Geneva, we reached a good deal. I mean, hey, this is good progress. The United States is talking about a framework. Well, J.D. Vance closed the door on that. He said there's no framework.

The president's drawn a red line, and the Iranians aren't going to meet that red line—which means what it means. At least he was honest. But the Iranians are under the impression that they have two weeks to go, create something, and then return to diplomacy. When they come back—if they're ever allowed to come back—what they'll find is that the United States has already forward-deployed a ballistic missile defense shield that we believe will be effective, sufficient to degrade Iran's ballistic missile response while projecting military power capable of suppressing Iran's strike capability and its defense forces.

You know, back in 1990, I was brought into an ad hoc planning cell working for the Commandant of the Marine Corps to come up with amphibious warfare options against Iraq. We were working with the JCS, and we were plugged in, monitoring the flow of military equipment. One of the questions we were asking ourselves in October was— from a planning perspective— is this pie-in-the-sky planning we're doing, or is this real-world planning? Because there's a difference between briefing somebody on hypotheticals and actually having to be constrained by the discipline of reality, you know, since other assets are being competed for, etc.

And we were told that the point came in October. There's something called the TPFDD—you can look it up. It stands for "Time-Phased Force and Deployment Data." It's a long acronym, but basically it's how we phase the deployment of troops and logistics into a zone to prepare for war. And when you're doing a war on the scope and scale that we were planning against Iraq, there came a point in the TPFDD where, once you commit resources forward, it's over—the decision has been made. And that decision was made in mid-October: we were going to go to war in January, and it was never going to change, no matter what diplomacy happened, because too many resources had already been put forward.

I'm of the opinion that if these aircraft actually settle in and we begin to get the fuel and munitions brought in, coupled with the air defense systems, then we'll have reached the equivalent of that TPFDD moment of commitment. And sometime in the next week, there will be no going back, regardless of whatever happens. Iran could come in and declare whatever they wanted to declare—we're going to war with Iran. The political decision has been made, as long as those green lights go off. And right now, the military is getting itself positioned with carrier battle groups, with Tomahawk delivery systems, with this new strike capability that will initiate a conflict with Iran.

That's designed to retard—it can't completely eliminate, but it can slow their ballistic missile retaliation capability. And we're going to do it with an air campaign designed not to give Iran any window of opportunity for mass launches. They might be able to sneak a launcher out and fire one or two missiles, but they won't be able to do mass launches because we'll be on them with missiles, with the air plan that we're putting in place. So, um, I think war is inevitable. I think the decision's already—well, the political decision has definitely been made. We just need the military to green-light the last aspects of it.

It's a regime change operation, which means it's more than just tradition. You talk about war gaming—traditional war games didn't have this regime change component plugged in. This is a war game not about the physical occupation of Iran by American boots on the ground. It's a war game about empowering domestic opposition to remove people. You know, Nima Rostami, who's an Iranian who was just in Iran, thinks they have a snowball's chance in hell. I tend to agree with him, except I'll just point out that most populations are passive.

And if you get a situation where the Iranian government is eliminated—and now you have to fall back on redundancy capability that hasn't yet manifested itself—where security forces are stymied, suppressed, destroyed, humiliated, and you wake up one morning thinking you're going to a demonstration in downtown Tehran to express your support for the Iranian government, only to look out in the streets and see white pickup trucks with PJAK militants, Baluch militants, and Mujahideen-e-Khalq roaming around, taking over street corners—you're going to stay in your house. And that, I think, is the goal and objective. Look at ISIS—the way ISIS rolled through Mosul and Iraq. When the Iraqi army collapsed, ISIS rapidly took control of population centers, not because they outnumbered the population, but because they intimidated the population.

And I think the strategic objective of the United States is to create conditions where these various militant factions can take over Iranian cities, remove the Iranian government, and declare the Islamic Republic dead. Then the United States would move in with Jared Kushner's handpicked new government of Iran to take over. Whether they'll succeed or not, I don't know. But I wouldn't call it a far-fetched fantasy. How many people thought Venezuela would buckle the way it did when Maduro was captured? How many anticipated the extent to which the CIA would be able to

penetrate Venezuelan political, military, and economic elites and seize control of Venezuela? The idea that the CIA has been asleep at the wheel in Iran is absurd. Um, you know, we have 80,000 Starlink terminals that suggest otherwise.

#Glenn

Yeah, I was thinking that perhaps Trump thought he'd been boxed in, made a mistake, and they might seek some minor deal as a way of pulling back. But, um, yeah—no, it seems likely that the diplomacy, as you said, is just a hoax to prepare for war. But we've crossed—or almost crossed—that limit where war is... That's what I think.

#Scott Ritter

Again, I don't know the exact details of it, because, you know, we can move squadrons around relatively cheaply. But when we start relocating sustainment factors—maintenance, long-term fuel—that's different. If we're going to go to war against Iran, we're talking about a war that could last several weeks. We need the munitions, we need the fuel. We're going to be firing a lot of Tomahawks, so we need replenishment-at-sea capacity. You know, America has the ability to fight a global, sustainable conflict.

But we've never, in recent years, mobilized that capability to its full extent because it's very expensive. If I were, you know, more comfortable saying, "Absolutely, we've crossed the Rubicon here," it would be because I had all the details. But we don't, because it's classified. Still, you know, when it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck—maybe you've got to call it a duck. And everything we're doing right now points to pulling the trigger on a regime-change operation in Iran sooner rather than later.

#Glenn

My question is always, though, if the Iranians see that it's coming—if they see a regime-change operation as an existential threat, something that could break up Iran—I always wonder whether they'll wait for an attack to come or... yeah.

#Scott Ritter

But they're—I mean, this is the problem with the Iranians. They're honorable people, and so they've bought into a—this is the Geneva trap. I mean, I hope I'm wrong. I hope history proves me wrong. And two weeks later, you can call me and say, "Scott, you said this, that, and the other thing," and I'll say, "Well, Glenn, I was wrong. I didn't understand this." I'd love that to happen. I would love nothing more than to be proven wrong and humiliated on the world stage, if that meant there was

no war. But, you know, the thing is, the Iranians—just logically—why this two-week extension? What's happening in this two weeks of diplomatic pause? The United States isn't... see, the Iranians should really say, "Hey, the fact is, we feel threatened by what you're doing."

At some point, Article 51 might have to be invoked, citing the Caroline affair—the Supreme Court decision, I think from the 1830s or 1840s, about the British intercepting a U.S. ship, the *Caroline*, which was sending munitions to Canadian rebels. We said, "You have no right to attack us," and the British claimed preemptive self-defense. The Supreme Court agreed with them, and it became a cornerstone of international law. So the Iranians could simply say, "We can't just let you build up military force to this level. If you reach a certain point, we have to preempt." And you've set that point below the threshold necessary for an American victory.

And you say, "Cease and desist the movement of forces, or we have to assume bad intent. And understand that when we preempt you, we're also going to take out Saudi Arabia—we're going all out. It's not going to be a little thing. We're just assuming your worst intent; we're going all in." They should also get the Chinese to come in and say, "An American attack against Iran would cause us to rethink our entire approach to Taiwan." And that puts the Americans in a conundrum, because we can't fight two wars at once. Things need to be done. The United States right now is being allowed to do everything necessary to make this a possibility.

What needs to happen is people need to put all the obstacles in the way. Including Iran—they got to where they are right now because they have ballistic missile capabilities that strike fear into Israel and the United States. What they're allowing the United States to do is build up a capability that at least creates the perception that we can mute the Iranian ballistic missile advantage. We can nullify it. We can limit it. And that empowers us to act further. Why Iran is allowing this to happen, I don't understand. Because that's exactly—I'm just telling you—that's exactly what's happening right now. Past performance predicts future outcomes. We behaved, and, you know, if we used perfidy once, we'll use it again.

We hid behind nuclear negotiations once to set up Iran for a surprise attack—we'll do it again. It's what we do. You know, so... yeah, either Iran changes its posture or it'll be led down the path of its own demise. And China likewise has to understand. I mean, Russia too. Russia is tied down in Ukraine, so I give Russia a bit of a pass right now. They're already engaged in their own existential struggle against the collective West. But China—you know, Donald Trump has said he wants to dismantle BRICS. And if he gets away with destroying a BRICS member, what do you think is going to happen next? How many nations are going to be lining up to join BRICS in the future? None.

Brazil—it's easy pickings. They're in the Western Hemisphere; they're gone. South Africa—nobody's coming to the defense of South Africa. So we just removed the B and the S, and all you have left is "Rick" in the middle. And Rick is dead. So China needs to understand this. It's time for China to put on its big-boy pants. And maybe that's what Xi Jinping's been doing in terms of purging the military committees, etc. But I'm not encouraging a Chinese conflict with Taiwan. I'm not encouraging war

whatsoever. But to sit by passively and do nothing empowers the United States to do these things. And if you let the United States get another cheap victory—because, my God, if we do go in, if the military planners are right, if the CIA is right—you know, the CIA's not stupid.

Sometimes they're incompetent, but they're not stupid. They have to have a reason to believe they can bring down the Iranian government. There has to be something going on inside Iran that gives the CIA confidence to make this call—something we're not aware of, some kind of penetration of the Iranians. And we know they've penetrated deeply. The Israelis have penetrated deeply into the Iranian government, the Iranian security services, and so on. So they have to have a level of confidence that if this kind of pressure is brought to bear on Iran, this is the expected outcome. Otherwise, they wouldn't take this risk, because it's a huge gamble. You can't be gambling on this scale.

This is why, when people say, "Do you think America could succeed?"—I don't want them to succeed. I'd like to believe that Iran is resilient, strong, and determined as they are. But I'm looking at the behavior of the actors on this side. This isn't a bluff. They're moving forward with confidence, and they're being told things that appear to be grounded in certain realities that we, the public, aren't aware of—about the fragility of Iranian governance, the fragility of Iran's ability to withstand the pressures that are going to be placed on it. We know their economy is very susceptible to manipulation. We saw Glenn Diesen trigger the disruption of December and January. He can trigger it again at will.

So I think the only way to stop this is to act decisively, which is something Iran has not done. That's the other thing. We keep saying Iran has the potential to turn Tel Aviv upside down—then why didn't they? Why, in June, didn't they turn Tel Aviv upside down? Because Iran always behaves with restraint. They're always looking for an outcome that leads away from decisive conflict. The United States is preparing for decisive conflict. So the moment of Iranian restraint has passed. They need to put the United States on notice that if it continues to mobilize forces to this degree, Iran will assume ill intent and act accordingly. And there's no chance of diplomacy.

And China needs to say the same thing: an American action against Iran will cause us to re-examine the totality of our approach toward Taiwan. Because—let me just put the Chinese on notice—if we take Iran, we're going to walk away from the One China policy, and we're going to double down on defending Taiwan. Not because we love Taiwan, but because the easiest way to checkmate China in the Pacific is to make Taiwan part of the playing field. Now we're not talking about the Chinese, you know, in the South China Sea—we're talking about checking them right at their border with Taiwan. This is the thinking in Washington, D.C. right now. That's where we're at.

#Glenn

Well, it's a lot at stake, which suggests the Russians and the Chinese could assist in a big way—though, of course, not in a shooting war with the United States, but in other ways. Anyway, thank

you so much for taking the time, as always, and letting me pick your brain. Thanks again, and I hope you come back soon—if we're still here, yeah.

#Scott Ritter

All right, good. Thanks.