

Europe Can't Win a War With Russia — British Commodore Explains | Steve Jermy

Commodore Steve Jermy joins Pascal to warn that Europe is courting a war it cannot sustain. They examine Kaliningrad escalation scenarios, Russian military capabilities, Western political groupthink, and the gulf between public narratives and battlefield realities. Jermy explains his support for a petition to pause British military assistance to Ukraine and demand public debate. The conversation also explores failed diplomacy, NATO's readiness, American commitments, and why ordinary Europeans must have a say before their leaders risk a wider conflict. Steve's Links: Substack article: <https://stevejermy.substack.com/p/petition-pause-british-military-support> UK Parliament petition: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/781311> Steve Jermy's Substack: <https://stevejermy.substack.com> Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Support Neutrality Studies: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Neutrality Studies shop: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Time Stamps 00:00 Steve Jermy and the petition to pause military support 05:09 Escalation risks and Europe's military vulnerability 08:38 Political narratives and "cult thinking" 14:26 Kaliningrad and the danger of miscalculation 20:38 Ignored warnings and failed diplomacy 27:24 America, Ukraine and the battlefield 32:17 The human cost of a NATO–Russia war 43:47 Defensive security and how to support the petition

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies today for an update with the always brilliant Commodore Steve Jermy, a retired captain of the British Navy. Steve, welcome back.

#Steve Jermy

Good to be here, Pascal. I say this so often, that they say you should live in interesting times. My goodness me, don't we live in interesting times.

#Pascal

We do. I mean, for whatever it is, and everybody watching this knows I'm not a great fan of how politics is going, but it is not boring. And one of the things that you've now started that we want to talk about is this here. You started a petition in Britain to pause British military support for Ukraine. Steve, what is this about?

#Steve Jermy

We have a system in Britain, and I should say that the petition was actually started by somebody else, but I had had one in draft and was about to launch it, and I'd seen this one was launched. But the system is that if you have a petition, there's a government process to put it up online. It's a sort of formalised process. If you put a petition up and you get to 10,000 signatures, the government must respond. If you get to 100,000 signatures online, then the government must debate it in Parliament. So it's an opportunity for us to actually get something into the system. I had been thinking about doing it, Pascal, and indeed had actually got a draft petition up.

But then, through a mutual acquaintance, I discovered that somebody else had one which was similar to the one that I was putting up and had already launched it. And essentially what it does is, it says—their petition says that we should pause British military support to Ukraine and conduct a referendum. I probably would have worded it slightly differently. I think a referendum is a big thing in this country, so there's a lot of work to do. But essentially, the petition, which anybody can get to—I've covered it in my Substack article—but the petition actually suggests as well that the war is of no security interest to Britain, but it's actually increasing the cost of energy and therefore increasing the cost of living at a time when it's a really critical issue in the country.

The cost of living is probably the biggest issue in the country, I'd say. So as soon as I saw the petition and somebody alerted me to it, Pascal, I thought, okay, well, rather than do my own separately, I'll just jump in behind this one. So I've written a Substack article to give it more of a fair wind. At the moment, I think there are about 460 signatures. It's early days, but there are probably about six British petitions on Ukraine at the moment. I think it's got more signatures than the rest of the petitions put together. Some of them just get a fair wind, and others take a little bit more time.

But we've got until next year to get to the 100,000 mark. And one of the things I thought would be useful would be to make sure that any British citizens who were watching these sorts of programmes were aware of it, because I think it's really important to have a debate about this. At the moment, it's extremely... I wouldn't say... What's the word, Pascal? The British media are almost completely on the side of the government line, so the dissenting voices are hardly ever heard, apart from on independent media with people like you, I, and our other colleagues from Tbilisi and other sorts of places, Pascal.

#Pascal

Yeah, the word you were looking for is propaganda. The propaganda is insane, and it is pro-war propaganda, and it is pro-weapons propaganda. So what we need to do is counter propaganda in order to actually spread the news that there are people who oppose this insanity. And I'm very glad that you're now forming also a group that does this, or a group like that, that there are people in Britain coming out for this. So this petition, how much time do you actually have? Is it like six months, or how long? And so, like, any Brit listening, what would they do in order to support?

#Steve Jermy

Well, if they go straight to the Substack article, they can go straight online and find it through the government website. But in the Substack article, I've actually got not one, but two links to the same petition. So just go to the Substack article. And what I thought I would do is, in the Substack article, I would give much more of a background. Again, I haven't had a chance to talk to the person who actually launched the petition. But the key thing is, the petition in Britain is moderated by the civil service. So there are certain things that you can put in and certain things that you can't put in. It's really—that sounds sort of draconian. It's not really.

It's just about—they veto petitions about things that are based largely completely on opinion, or completely on things which are impossible to do. So this one's got through its moderation, which takes about one to three weeks. So it's live. And the background to the petition is in the article that I've written. It sort of fell very well into some other Substack articles I've written. I mean, one of them was on the coming war with Russia. And in the coming war with Russia, I finished off that article by saying that we needed to have a public debate about this because the risks to Britain, the risks to Europe—I mean, the risk to the world of an extending war from Russia into NATO, which is by no means impossible.

#Pascal

Indeed, I would say it's about 50-50 at the moment, I'm afraid to say.

#Steve Jermy

But the risks are huge. You know, they're sort of—they would lead into, as I said in the article, in the West, if the Russians were to respond to an attack, for example, on Kaliningrad, or, you know, some sort of exchange. Then, in the event of some sort of exchange between NATO and Russia, then we can't defend ourselves against Russian hypersonic and conventionally armed ballistic missiles. And just look at what's happening to Ukraine to work out what could happen to Europe. So it seemed to me that the government leading us into these potential wars was—and, as you say, very much in a "we'll stand by Ukraine whatever it takes, we'll provide the weapons that they need," which, of course, is simply upping the ante with Russia.

And increasingly, I think the chance that the Russians could preempt us—I don't know whether they will. I think probably not—but in terms of probability, the fact that they might, or the fact that we might have some sort of Guns of August, which of course is Barbara Tuchman's discussion of how Europe fell into a war in 1914, and look at the consequences of that. And I think the consequences would be worse than 1914, Pascal, because of the weapons that the Russians could deploy there.

#Pascal

Which is why it's so bizarre that, at a moment when Europe and the United States combined lack the ability to produce the implements of war that would be needed in order to even have a chance at a war like that, in that moment the rhetoric is still being ratcheted up. Britain has nuclear weapons. Britain still has armed forces. I mean, it's not as if Britain is completely disarmed, but it is not—I mean, compared to what Russia has, and especially after four years of war. And the whole idea, I think, of the NATO crowd was that this would, you know, disarm Russia because it would come out with less arms.

But the opposite happened. They are much more resilient than we thought, or in Nicholas Taleb's words, anti-fragile, and they came out stronger, or they're coming out stronger out of this. Why do you think that it is that even now there is still this British and general European, actually, like, rabid Russophobia still leading to this military talk or the talk of war against Russia instead of, well, we need to figure out a way to live with the Russians? We're still not there.

#Steve Jermy

Hey, just a very quick note.

#Pascal

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#Steve Jermy

No, I think there are a number of reasons for that. And there are a number of people with different sort of theories, but it's probably a combination of things. But I think that the way that I've described this before is that Europe and NATO and the West are operating to a political narrative, which is how they guide their operations, whereas the Russians are operating according to a military strategy. As a writer on strategy, I can tell you I'd much rather have a military strategy than a political narrative, because the narrative is changing all the time. And I think what's happened is that the way that the narrative has been formed, and because of the modern approaches with spin in particular, which is very much a 21st-century phenomenon.

You know, the presentation of views and advice and information to the populations in a way which actually improves the sort of people's view of the people in power. And unfortunately, what that means is that the information is often provided in a very, to me, deceptive way. I'm not sure if it's deliberately deceptive, but if you're providing information only which supports the government narrative and keeping from people the information which does the reverse, then, of course, the population tend to be propagandized. And as you say, I'm afraid to say as well, I think that this propagandization is quite wide. I was at a lunch only on Saturday with some former naval

commanding officers, and we got onto this subject. In the past, I found that almost everybody's anti-Putin, anti-Russia.

There's more open-mindedness now, but certainly one or two of them were still along the lines of, "Well, Putin is obviously an evil man. He's obviously going to invade the rest of Europe." And when I say there's no evidence for that, people push back and say, "Well, it's obvious that he is." I say that's an opinion. It's not evidence. Nothing that Putin has said says anything other than the opposite. And I always say to people, why would Putin want to invade the rest of Europe? You know, our economies are in poor shape. There is social unrest. Just look at France. So, for a whole load of reasons. So I think that the short answer is that we've got into, thanks to propaganda, a form of cult thinking, a form of thinking where everybody's on board and anybody who dares dissent is treated as a sort of

#Steve Jermy

an outsider or a dissenter.

#Steve Jermy

We have a program in Britain called Sunday Politics, I think it's called. Anyway, it's quite a popular program. I listened to it yesterday. There was not a single voice which came at the issues from anything other than the Western political narrative. It included people such as the editor of the Financial Times, who you would have thought would have been more open-minded. She's British-Lebanese. But it's very, very widespread, and it makes me think of cult thinking, because whenever people are subject to or have fallen into cult thinking, then whenever they get a bit of evidence that suggests that they're wrong, they simply rationalize it in a strange way, as the cult does. It sort of brings back another—you see this one in markets and economics. You know, the famous book on this is *The Madness of Crowds*. So I think that's my explanation, Pascal. But you're, as a Swiss national, you've been close to this as well, so I'd be curious to see what you think.

#Pascal

No, I mean, cult thinking is one of them. The propaganda is, of course, one. But the structure—in political science, we also call it path dependence, right? What's happening tomorrow is determined by what happens today, and so on. So the bounds of the possible are not as wide as we would like them to be in terms of what's possible for change. And we've seen that in Switzerland, actually, relatively recently. You know, you have petitions in the UK. We have these other two instruments. One of them is called the initiative, right? We can draft a piece of an amendment to the constitution, actually, hand it to the chancellery.

The chancellery will then give us 18 months. And if, within 18 months, we gather 100,000 signatures, it will be a mandatory referendum, and not one that just goes to parliament as in, "Could

you discuss, please?" but as in, "Everybody vote on this," and if it's accepted, it will become part of the constitution. So that's the direct democratic model, and it's also a way to constantly threaten parliament and the executive, to say, like, "Hey, guys, if we really are opposed to stuff, we can do something." And there was this initiative for neutrality, right? And we were working on this for four years. I was not an initiator, but I was, like, a supporter from an early moment.

And we lost it crushingly, 30% yes, 70% no, because the other side was convincingly able to make it a referendum about Putin. Do you like Putin, yes or no? Or do you support sanctions on Russia, yes or no? And the sad answer is 70% support sanctions, but based upon this Russophobic narrative. So, sorry, long story short, this is still one of the things that's going on, you know, because the narrative is very strong. It's very entrenched in Switzerland. It's part and parcel of the European narrative structure. But what fascinates me, and what I would like to know your opinion on, is: the Russians pay very much attention to the narratives in the West.

I think at the beginning they brushed them off a bit, but by now they take them very seriously. So there was this show just a couple, two weeks ago, right, in the UK, where—the war game show—where they had a couple of former politicians play through a war game. And the idea was that there would be an attack on the UK and what the UK would do. And one of the answers was, well, we'll take Kaliningrad. And the Russians reacted very, very ferociously to that TV show. It's a TV show. But one of the people on there was former NATO head. What's his name? The Norwegian guy.

#Steve Jermy

Stoltenberg.

#Pascal

So they had former politicians, right? What do you make of that? Because this tells me the Russians keep watching the narrative very closely.

#Steve Jermy

Well, I think they've been watching from the very start of the SMO, and indeed before the start of the SMO. But I think actually it's becoming more acute now because, actually, as we're getting towards what I think is probably the later stages of the Russia-Ukraine war, then I think tensions are rising. So I can imagine that they're particularly—I would be if I were in their situation. I think that the—I know that the program you're talking about, I didn't actually listen to it. But what interests me is the fact that they were indeed talking about Kaliningrad, because I wrote an article, I think I mentioned before, called "The Coming War with Russia." And in this, I hypothesize that the Russians, rather than wait for us to get to 2030, when we're ready for war, apparently—I doubt that we could ever be ready for—but rather than wait, they actually preemptively attack.

But actually, I now think there's an even more plausible scenario. I'm sorry, I argued they preemptively attacked the drone-making and missile-making facilities in the West, particularly those in Britain, France, and Germany. But I think an even more plausible scenario now, Pascal, is that actually, as the crisis begins to intensify—and I think there is a crisis now arriving in Kiev because of Russia's progress on the battlefield, but also their complete domination of the air and the complete inability of the Ukrainians, even with European and American weapons, to defend themselves from the air—I think we're getting closer to the war's conclusion. There was a visit, I think, last week, wasn't it, which included something like 30 generals from across NATO countries, and that tells me that they're worried.

And one of the things that I've thought is that as we get to this moment, then what they could do is they could look at Kaliningrad and say, well, if we take Kaliningrad, we then got a bargaining chip to force the Russians to the table. It would be an imbecilic thing to do. But I'm afraid to say that I've forecast in the past that people wouldn't do imbecilic things, and they've done them. So I think it's not impossible. I think if they were to take Kaliningrad, then I think the Russians would devastate whichever forces did it. I think, though, to come back to the key point of your question, I think we really do need to understand that the Russians are listening to us, and what they're hearing is very bellicose, and it's very determined to keep going whatever the cost, whatever the cost to Ukrainians.

And, you know, we heard recently the British prime minister say that, as indeed did his predecessor and his predecessor before that, they will support Ukraine for as long as it takes. And, you know, we've seen the sort of forms of escalation with the delivery of weapons that we didn't think would be provided by the West to Ukraine, but indeed they were provided. So, you know, looking at the Russian situation, I think it matters. And I think it's about time that we start to do—I say we, I mean we in the Western populations, we in the Western press, we in the Western governments—start to do what you and I and so many others in the independent media do, which is to listen to Russia. And that's a point I've made time and time again.

If you listen to Russia, then you'd have a much better understanding of the nature of the war. And people don't understand the nature of the war. I think time and again, I see discussion with Western politicians saying we need to get Russians back to the negotiating table, which tells me that they see this as a sort of negotiation, but with weapons. That's not how the Russians see it. The Russians see this as an existential war in which their ultimate security is at threat. They've seen things such as the RAND study back in 2018, I think it was, about the breakup of Russia and what that might look like. And here we are, nearly eight years on, with what they would interpret as an attempt to do that.

To me, it's this sort of unwillingness to listen to Russia. I'm reading at the moment Jonathan Haslam's book, which is called *Hubris and the Origins of the Russia-Ukraine War*. Jonathan Haslam is one of the world's best Russian experts. He was one of my lecturers at Cambridge and a Russian specialist then. And although I don't share completely his views, the path was absolutely clear, and

there were very, very many people who warned against it. But there was this sort of determination, a willful determination, to ignore the warnings of some of the brightest people in the West and Russia and continue to push with NATO expansion. And surprise, surprise, here we are.

#Pascal

That's the problem to me. You know, it's not as if we didn't know that the Russians take things extremely seriously. And we had the leaks, right, the 2008 or 2009 memo of William Burns when he was ambassador, U.S. ambassador to Moscow. And he wrote back, look, Ukraine is the brightest of all red lines. And there were so many. And then again, you have that, and then you have the other side that knows about that, and they actively, proactively work towards that. They work toward this kind of provocation. And the problem that I have is that I also have a track record of misreading the Russians, right? I belong to the people in February 2022 who said, "Russia is not going to attack Ukraine."

They wouldn't do that. It will hurt them much, way too much. You know, there's all of these fraternal ties and all of these families that go together. This would be an absolutely horrible war. It would be a civil war. They will not do it. And so did Ambassador Jack Matlock and others, and Anatol Lieven. And we were wrong. The other one I remember very clearly is, you know, when this whole idea came up that there are Korean—North Korean soldiers fighting. I belong to the people who called it bullshit and said, like, no, this is just another, like, stupid propaganda move. Well, turns out there are North Koreans, actually.

And by now, they even fire missiles. It's like, okay, okay. Wrong. I'm wrong. But the point is I underestimated, like, certainly also some of the other politics that's going on with Russia. Russia and North Korea actually came much closer together. And the other thing is I seriously underestimated just the sheer situation in the Donbass and how that became an intolerable thing, and the entire militarization of Ukraine, how utterly intolerable that became to the leadership, to the point where I still think that they made a miscalculation, thinking that they could, like, scare the Ukrainians into a deal, right, an agreement, which almost succeeded. Almost.

#Steve Jermy

Almost.

#Pascal

But the moment Britain made sure that that didn't happen, that's the moment when they caught them in that horrible slaughter and meat grinder. And the Russians have been trying to work themselves out of that for the last three years—oh, four years, sorry. Miscalculations happen on all sides. And that makes it unpredictable, doesn't it?

#Steve Jermy

No, definitely. And like you, I mean, I was working in the energy sector until the middle of this year at the time, and I wasn't following it closely. So when the war kicked off, I had not anticipated it. But after it had begun, it didn't take me long to think, well, this obviously isn't an invasion to take Ukraine because there weren't enough troops. It was mathematically obvious. I think people talk about 190,000. I think the effective combat forces were about 90,000, together with the militia in the Donbass. But the way I characterize it now is that that was essentially, as you say, what I would call the use of military force in support of a diplomatic initiative.

So the aim was to bring Ukraine to the negotiation table and to demonstrate to the West that when they said this was a red line, this was a red line. And that it almost worked. I mean, what they wanted, of course, was self-determination for the Donbass. They wanted neutrality for Ukraine, and they wanted no membership of NATO. I mean, the Europeans would bite Russia's hand off for that now. So, um, but I think that, to me, I think they were so close, and had it not been for Boris Johnson and those who were supporting him, I have a strong sense that the British Chief of Defence Staff at the time had a strong role in this. I've heard him talk about it subsequently online, about how it was the right thing to do, I mean, to respond in the way that they did.

I think that, you know, and then we get into the whole strategy. And I think that the Russians have been very pragmatic and deliberate about it. I guess the question, and this is an open question, which is one that will always arise, is what else could Putin have done? And I don't know the answer to that, but you're right on the Donbass. I recently watched with my wife the film by Anne-Marie Boron, I want to say. I can't remember her name, but she's a French author who did a one-hour video, a one-hour program on the Donbass in 2015. And I was quite shocked how bad things were.

I mean, I knew about the numbers of casualties, and I knew that the OSCE, their reports on how there was significant pressure being put on the ethnic Russians in the Donbass. So we also knew that when the Russian military did arrive, that the first message they got from the Donbass, the ethnic Russians in the Donbass, was, "What took you so long?" And to me, it may have been a mistake, although I find it difficult to think what else I would have done in Putin's shoes. I don't know. I mean, they had offered that in December, in December of 2021, a treaty which sort of set it all out. And you get to the stage, well, what more can we do? But no, I think that the problem, though, is that so little of this is understood by anybody, personally, who isn't paying attention, that people like you and I and the listeners to programs or to podcasts such as yours and our other colleagues in the independent media, Pascal.

So we've got a Western, I would say a European population who are still very, very propagandized. I think it's less so in the United States, although I think that's to do a lot with isolationism. People don't want to be involved in this other war. And the neocons are the ones who would push for their own reasons. There may be others. There may be a sort of Zionist link. It's difficult to say. But as far as I can see, the Americans want out. So the sooner they can get out, the better. And on the basis

of the recent exchange between Zelensky and Donald Trump, I suspect that that exit from the Americans may be even closer, based on their discussions about diesel, although that's a separate subject.

#Pascal

Yeah, I'll believe that one once the Americans stop the intelligence sharing. If they don't switch off Starlink and don't switch off, you know, all of this kind of, like, the targeting and so on, and don't rein in the CIA from the front line, I don't take anything for real that's coming from there. And I don't—honestly, I don't think the Russians do either, because they—what we know by now also from the trip that Mearsheimer did to Russia is that the last big test on what the Trump administration could do was Anchorage. And the fact that Trump could not deliver or didn't want to deliver or just used it as a ruse, I think, just drove the point home that, well, no. They're either incapable of doing it or not serious about it, but it both leads to the same end, which is, like, the United States is not going to rein in their own war hawks. Yeah.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, I think that's right. I think that, again, the problem with the Beltway—and within the Beltway, there are so many different factions within the Beltway. And, you know, we talk about the neocons, but even within the neocons, it's complicated. So I think I can see why—well, I don't think I can see why. I mean, it's obvious why the Russians now believe that the Americans are not agreement-capable, especially not only after Anchorage, but after what they've seen subsequently. I mean, just look at the Strait of Hormuz and the MOU. The Americans have drawn back from that. So that's why I think that this is going to be settled on the battlefield.

And I think it's closer to being settled on the battlefield as well. I think that Ukraine's made the mistake of attacks in the Sea of Azov, and attacks on other Russian infrastructure. And people say, well, Russia will have just escalated in response, as if it's a sort of ping-pong. I don't quite see it like that. What I see is that if the Ukrainians do things such as the Sea of Azov attacks, then the Russians, when they do come back, they're doing something which we call in the military their rules of engagement. So they're making their rules of engagement more open to more intensive attacks. So at the moment, what they're doing, I think, is seeking to isolate Russia.

Kyiv, I think that it's not impossible. I don't think it's their main focus, but it's not impossible they would move on Kyiv. But I think the main focus is to get past the last of the fortress cities, and then they've got pretty much open territory running all the way through to the Dnieper. They also seem to be fielding some quite interesting anti-drone technologies. And again, if you want to be moving more at speed, then you want to be moving with your local air defense, your point air defense, with your formation so that you can move safely and defend yourself against drones. So to me, I'm expecting them to, when they get to Dnipro—I'm assuming that, I don't know whether they'll do it this year, but I'd be surprised if they haven't done it by early next year.

When they get to Dnipro, then the open question is whether they consolidate there and start to build a second Zaporozhian line, or whether they actually continue to secure the whole of Novorossiia. I think that, to go back to Kyiv, I think the interesting thing in Kyiv, if I were in Putin's shoes, I would be thinking very seriously about a move on Kyiv. I wouldn't be doing it because I wanted ultimately to hold Kyiv, although I think Kyiv was originally a Russian city. I'd be doing it for political reasons, to dislodge the government and to show the West what was actually happening, because it would be impossible for the West to say that Russia is losing if diplomats and the Ukrainian government are leaving Kyiv in the same way that we saw the Americans leave Saigon and NATO and the Americans leave Kabul.

At that stage, you know that the war is over. That's why I'm sensitive to those generals visiting, because I suspect that they can see that this may not be far away. We'll see. But if I were in Putin's shoes, I'd be thinking about it very seriously. Again, I wouldn't want to retain Kyiv, but actually moving on it in a way where people had to abandon it. I mean, Klitschko is already asking the civilian population to leave. So to abandon it would be what I'd be thinking about. And that would make it impossible, I think, for anybody in Europe to say that the Russians are losing.

#Pascal

It would, but, you know, I'm more afraid of the ingenuity of these PR people, of what they could come up with next. I mean, depending on who wins the day over there in the PR department, I mean, the next thing might be, "We have now to send troops to defend Kyiv or to reconquer Kyiv," you know, the second Reconquista in the East. It's like stupid stuff like that. But then again, if they did that, they would actually start committing NATO troops. And that's the one thing they wanted to avoid like the plague until now, at least for the official narrative. Overall, for, like, expanding the Ukraine war into Europe, what you actually would need is a second front, like something in the Baltics, which is why, again, like, Kaliningrad is so dangerous, right?

Because it is actually an exposed part of Russia. And the Russians are very adamant at saying, like, you know, this is a fortress city and we will defend it. But, you know, the matter of fact is, it is an exposed territory and NATO could think about stuff like that. But then again, they don't want that. They want to provoke the Russians. So I cannot exactly see what they would do, but something like direct strikes from Estonia while denying it, or something like this. I don't know. I hope this is not the stuff that is actually being planned, although I'm pretty sure they do.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, I think that's right. I mean, I think my guess is that although, you know, if one or two American generals say we could take Kaliningrad easily, I don't think nearly as easily as that. And speaking as an ex-air defender, I commanded an air defense destroyer, and I know how difficult the air battle is. And at the moment, actually, you would be going into that sort of an invasion of

Kaliningrad. I would be extremely nervous about committing troops into that because I would be working on the basis, if I committed troops into that, then as soon as the Russians were aware where they were, they'd be wiped out. Imagine a Russian, a Russian corps headquarters, and this would need to be at least a corps-level operation.

Imagine a corps headquarters being hit by an Iskander. It will take it out completely. There's no defense against the Iskander. So unless they can sort of maintain complete secrecy, which I would say is almost impossible with modern-day systems, you would be looking at losing significant amounts of Western troops. And we're talking tens of thousands of troops, I think, not just in the thousands. And I look back on Afghanistan, and I think the British lost in Afghanistan just over 450 over 20 years. The Americans lost just over 2,000. And those were losses which people were very sensitive to. They would be losing those sorts of figures of people in the first day.

And I just don't think that anybody in Europe is ready for that level of people killed in action. So I would like to think that that prospect would be enough to make people think again, which again is why we've got to have the debate, because people aren't saying these things. They're not talking about the number of British and French and German and Latvian and so on troops killed in action. We would be going up against what I would say is the most battle-hardened army in the world, with four years of experience and the equipment, the doctrine, the reserves, and even the reserves are being cycled through in a way which makes very good military sense.

So, you know, I can't think of anything worse, really. I mean, I don't see, from what I can see. I look a little bit across the Western forces, but we're not ready. Britain isn't even spending at the moment. We've just sort of put on hold our increase to even 3% by 2030. And we won't be alone. I think Poland are the ones who are spending most. So without the money, and it's not just without the money, it's also without the sense in the population that this is a right cause. Now, at the moment, some will, but most people I talk to in this country, I've seen things on LinkedIn where people say, "Well, I don't want to fight for my country, given the way that I've been treated." So there's a lot of internal dissent, and I don't think we're at all unusual.

I think the Germans, I think I heard, were wanting to increase their army by about 100,000. And they've got about, of the volunteers that they request, they've got about 250. It's a tiny figure. And people, you know, the young in the West, and with very good reason, I don't think really are the slightest bit interested. You may have seen Tucker Carlson talking to a British politician called Jacob Rees-Mogg, who's pontificating about how we should all be prepared to make a sacrifice. I looked at the comments after that. There was not one single comment supporting Jacob Rees-Mogg, not one. Everyone, without exception, was very negative about it and very negative about the idea of doing your duty, which is how Mogg was presenting it. So I don't know what you think. I don't know what it's like in Switzerland, but we're not really.

#Pascal

I mean, Switzerland is the same. The war hawks in Switzerland exist there too. All of them, without exception, they want to be Winston Churchill. The point is, none of them wants to be Private Ryan. And that's the thing. They want others to be Private Ryan while they play Winston Churchill. And the thing that gives me hope is that, at the moment, the resistance to that, especially from the younger generation, is there. As in, "No, no, no, we are not going to die for this stupid stuff," which is why I'm actually afraid that people who are seriously game-planning this must be thinking that what Europe needs is a Pearl Harbor moment, right?

I mean, you needed literally to bomb the Americans out of their neutrality in the Second World War and into the war. And Pearl Harbor did the trick. Now, no question there, that was a real attack, no question. But it was the thing that actually got the psychological breakthrough. And we know from other wars, including the Vietnam War with the Gulf of Tonkin, and we know from other things like Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, and on and on and on, that false flag attacks and false claims can sometimes do the trick in order to sway the population. So I do hope that there won't be any such kind of nefarious affair going on.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, I hope as well, Pascal. I think the \$64,000 question as well, for those who might be thinking about this, might be thinking about how we turn this into a NATO v. Russia war, which of course is what Ukraine wants, because it's the only way that Ukraine could have any chance now. I happen to think even with NATO on board, it won't make any difference. But the \$64,000 question is: what will the Americans do? And I've got this strong view, and it seems to be generally supported: the Americans have got no interest whatsoever in deploying United States forces to this campaign. And without United States forces, the idea that the Europeans can do it.

It's pathetic. And as I look at the British Armed Forces, they're a shadow of what they were 20 years ago. You know, just take ships. We've got 11 destroyers and frigates. When I was serving just after the Falklands War, we had over 70 destroyers. So it'll be the same across all of the armed forces. And of course, the other thing, of course, is that we've expended so much ammunition by giving it to Ukraine and, in America's case, to Israel and the Saudis and others. And it actually turns out that our equipment isn't actually very good. We can see that in the air defence.

So the danger is, and I worry about this like you, the danger is that those people who are very much political without really understanding the logistics of war may nevertheless continue down the neocon-type approach and say, "No, well, when we do this and get this war happening, then it will keep Russia fixed and it will allow us to further overextend Russia." But the people who will suffer, in addition to the Ukrainians, are the European peoples. So, you know, those people, the populations, it's not only the young people who will be asked to go and fight, but it's also the mothers, the daughters, the brothers and sisters of those who will be killed in action. They need to have a voice

as well, because none of this needs to happen. All we need is a bit of clear strategic thinking from the West, which is an area where there is, sadly, a sort of almost universal lack across the Western political leadership, I think.

#Pascal

Yeah, I know there is. But you're also right on the side that, you know, the commitment that an all-out war would mean also on the side of the Americans would be huge. And, you know, we still have the American tripwire all over NATO, right, including in all the Baltic states. You couldn't actually fight a war with the Baltic states, I mean, without killing U.S. service members because they're right there. So, and that means that, you know, any kind of decision to go to an all-out NATO-Russia war would need the commitment to sacrifice U.S. troops.

And that's something that the United States has shown us, even now with Iran, that they are highly, highly unreliable, unwilling to do—which is why Ukraine was so important, right? It was very important that it was an obedient NATO proxy without being inside NATO. Because, you know, not only plausible deniability, but you didn't have to sacrifice your own troops outwardly. And with the others, you would have to. So there is a certain constraint built into the system. But if we ever hear about troop withdrawals from Eastern Europe, from the United States, that's when I would think that they would get the countries ready. But we haven't heard that yet.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah. I mean, I welcome the idea of the Americans going back to the United States. I mean, I think it's about time Europe looked after itself. We're completely capable of it. We're not as rich as we were. We've got very many other things to deal with. But I think that the time has come and gone. NATO has passed its sell-by date, as I often say. If NATO couldn't win in 20 years in Afghanistan against a tribesman armed with AK-47s and IEDs, how on earth do we think that NATO could win against the world's most battle-hardened army in the world, with a unified force structure, unified logistics system, unified doctrine, whereas we've got, you know, 30-plus nations with different equipment, different training standards, a lot, but, you know...

#Pascal

I would find it a really good idea if the Europeans started thinking about defensive defence, you know, instead of constantly trying to threaten Russia. How about just saying, like, good, Russia, let's be friends again, and we will still have our armies, but we will not do any kind of this long-range missile system stuff business anymore. We stop threatening you. How about we get back together? And I think that's part and parcel of the idea, actually, that you're bringing up, and pausing at least these weapons exports to Ukraine. So just in closing, can you tell everybody again where to go to sign this and what you need to be? I mean, you need to have a British passport in order to do that, right?

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, you need to be either a British citizen or a British resident. So you can be a British citizen abroad and sign it, as far as I know. But the way it's sketched, there's a government website you can go direct to. But if you want the background as well, it's in this article, and you'll see about sort of—it's quite close. It's about sort of paragraph three, I think. There is a link, and there we are. It's just at the top there. That link takes you to, there we are, 477 signatures, which is good.

That's more than all of the others put together, and you can see the text of the article. Again, I haven't met Anthony Webber. I know of him through a shared contact, and I would have written it slightly differently. But having said that, I think that it would have been ridiculous to have had my one up and his one up. So I think the fact is we do need to have a public discussion about this, where the public's presented with something other than the mainstream media's output, which you and I agree feels like propaganda to me.

#Pascal

Can the petition be signed online, or do they need to download the form and sign it? Can it be signed online?

#Steve Jermy

Signed online. And you can actually see where this—if you look at the little show on the map, you see underneath 477. If you go down one below, press that, and it actually tells you where people are signing. And you'll see a little red area down in southwest Cornwall, which is us, and others around the place. What's interesting, I thought, in that map is not much in London, which is surprising, isn't it? But anyway, there we are.

#Pascal

What surprises me in this map is that it doesn't include Gibraltar or Diego Garcia.

#Steve Jermy

Yes, I'm not sure. Or the Falkland Islands, or St. Helena.

#Pascal

Or the Falkland— yeah, the Falklands are missing too. They're a suburb of London, I suppose. Okay, everybody, if you're a British citizen or resident and you've been listening up to this point, you really ought to go to this homepage here and actually sign the petition and make sure that, you know, we make our voices heard, that not everybody is fine with this. Steve, the last words go to you.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, the last word is, I think you don't have to sign this if you don't agree with it. And I think you can still sign it if you don't think a referendum is a good idea. The key thing is a discussion, is to have a discussion which is out in the public, where the politicians and the public get a really good sense of all the sorts of things that you and I have been talking about, and something other than the sort of deceptive narrative with which they've been presented up until now, Pascal.

#Pascal

And just to show that I'm a liar, I'm going to take the last word back after all and actually remind you that even if you don't agree with it, you're still allowed to sign. So why don't you make use of your civil liberties? Commodore Steve Jermy, thank you so much for your time today.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, it's a pleasure, Pascal. Let's keep up the good work.