

Lawrence Wilkerson: U.S. Strategic Defeat in Iran Will Reshape the World

Lawrence Wilkerson is a retired Colonel in the US Army and the former Chief of Staff to the US Secretary of State. Colonel Wilkerson discusses why the coming defeat of the US will reshape the great power rivalry. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X /Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@GDiesen1> Support the research: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We're joined today by Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to the U.S. Secretary of State. Thank you very much—it's great to see you, as always.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Pleasure to see you too, Glenn. And to see you're not in jail yet.

#Glenn

Yes, good news. Well, Trump, you know, it's no secret now—he wanted and expected a short war. However, he now seems to be locked into an all-or-nothing position: either he escalates and tries to knock out America's main rival in the Middle East, which is Iran, or he risks being expelled from the region—not him personally, but the U.S. military—if all its bases are destroyed and Gulf state nations start to see the military presence as a source of insecurity instead of security. So, where do you see Trump going from here? We're hearing talk about Marines coming into the region and boots on the ground. Is that a realistic option in your war planning? How would you assess this?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Ground troops are not realistic at all. But let me back up just a little bit. Haaretz had an interesting piece—the only newspaper I'll read, and sometimes I don't even like it because Netanyahu owns virtually all the rest of them. But Haaretz had a really interesting sub-headline yesterday. It said: to win, Iran needs only not to lose. To win, Bibi and Donald need a spectacular victory. That sums it up. They're not going to get it. So what's the business here? Whether you use Marines on Kharg Island—or Kark Island, as many Persians say it—the Forbidden Isle, think about the old Ulysses and the Odyssey. That's the kind of thing this is. It's such deep water around there.

You can load ten supertankers at one time—simultaneously, ten supertankers. So it's essential to Iran, to its oil industry, and in many respects it's essential to countries like India and others that get oil from there. That would be a disaster, but that's the only prospective landing place I can see that would be strategically important, and you might just be able to get a few Marines there. Anywhere else, you'd destroy them—they'd die. I mean, there's no question in my mind about it. And we war-gamed this. Someone asked me for the war game title and everything; I'm looking for it right now because it was a while back. But Lieutenant General Van Riper, who was my boss at the time, did it.

And he did the first iteration, and we lost so badly they demanded that he do it again. He did it again—and we lost again. And that was twenty years ago, before Iran had developed what it has developed now. What do I mean by that? Do you know they took out five of the multimillion-dollar radars—two of them were half a billion apiece—in other countries, which has left us blind, and we can't replace them? And guess why we can't replace them? Because we can't get the rare earth metals from China to do it, even if we could build them that fast. So this has been very, very fine-tuned by Iran, even more so than they were in that war game I was talking about—or the two iterations of it.

Ground forces would be tantamount to saying we're losing—and losing in Afghanistan-style, Iraq Second War-style, or worse. In other words, a trillion dollars in costs over a ten-year conflict, where we'd end up having to bring back conscription and everything that goes with full mobilization, just to put enough forces in Iran to make a difference and hold it afterward. Not going to do it. You're not going to do it. The American people aren't going to allow it. It's as simple as that. If Donald Trump wants to unwind his presidency significantly—prematurely, if you will—do it. Now, I don't say that lightly, because all those men and women would die.

#Glenn

Well, no—regarding those radars, it's gallium, I think, the rare mineral they need. And apparently China controls about 98% of it—if not the extraction, then at least the refining. So overall, the situation is that if the U.S. wants to go to war with China, it's going to have to ask China for permission for us to... And he just denied a visit.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Or he just canceled a visit. Picture this, Will, will you? The number one strategic interest we have in a foreign state is China. The last interest we have in a foreign state, other than what Bibi sells us, is Iran. And we're canceling a meeting with the man in charge of the first so we can be the advocate for war with the second. This is nonsense. It shows how warped our thinking is.

#Glenn

I think the plan was for Trump to meet with Xi Jinping in April and basically have the Iran war already finished—like a little trophy on his mantle, next to Venezuela, before they met. But of course, this is very different. Now he's got himself bogged down in a long war.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Venezuela isn't peaceful right now either. Trump just wreaks havoc wherever he goes.

#Glenn

Well, there's also this talk now. Trump first said, you know, we need allies to help us open up the Strait of Hormuz. And then he said, well, actually, we don't need anyone—we're the United States of America, we can do it ourselves. Interestingly, he said that about thirty seconds apart, so he changed his mind pretty quickly. But nonetheless, it's an interesting question. You've participated in war planning—how likely is it, and what are the main challenges in opening up the Strait of Hormuz by military force? What would that entail? Would you have to invade Iranian territory, or is this simply escorts? Because escorts sound less permanent.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Escort was the principal method we used when I was doing war planning in the Pacific—I was very much involved in it. The situation is somewhat different today, but the basic principles are the same. What we tried to do under what we called Operation Earnest Will—we weren't quite so pedantic then—and then later with Operation Praying Mantis, which went back to the pedantry, was to re-flag Kuwaiti tankers so that, first, there would be some violation of international law if they were attacked, and second, so the Kuwaiti tankers, the insurers, the shippers—everyone—could feel safe, the world could feel safe, and so forth.

It went afoul immediately because the *Bridgeton*—I think that was the name of the MV, a very large motor vessel—hit a mine. The skipper was furious with us. He was in the channels, as I recall. The channel—really, the North Channel and the South Channel—for these big ships is not very wide, only a couple of miles each. And the one channel, I think it's the North Channel, is very close to the Iraqi shore, where it could be interdicted really easily. You could put the mines in the water from the shore; you don't even need a boat. And that's what happened—the *Bridgeton* hit one.

And then the next thing was, I think it was the *Samuel B. Roberts*, one of our destroyers—or maybe a destroyer escort—that hit a mine. She had to limp all the way back at four knots or so to Norfolk for repairs. And then, of course, Saddam Hussein put two Exocet missiles into another one. So it wasn't a good time. We did ultimately succeed in getting the tankers through the strait. But as

I said, that was a very different time and a different Iran, with different capabilities. We also had to sink one destroyer—an old World War II holdover, probably given to the Shah—and then we dropped a bomb down the stack of a second one.

And Ronald Reagan—actually the president himself, through General Vesey, the chairman—called us off because he felt that to sink another warship would be too much. All to say, it's not easy; it's difficult. And it was difficult even at that time, when we had overwhelming superiority in every realm of watercraft, if you will, and really in every realm of the military. And Iran didn't yet have this incredible inventory of ballistic missiles it has now, which I'm told they haven't even revealed the most sophisticated of—those that move at three, four, even five times Mach. That's so fast you can't bring them down with anything.

Think of Oreshnik and Putin unleashing the Oreshnik on Ukraine—maybe one or two times—because these would come in with fully armed warheads for whatever target. You know, whether they were going after *Lincoln* or going after *Ford* or whatever, they would sink her outright. So this is fraught with problems—significant problems—that have grown over the last 20 years as we've atrophied. Glenn, we do not have the military we had in the first Gulf War. That was the peak of the United States military. Maybe not in terms of technological sophistication, but I'd say even in that regard it's a wash—some things are better, some are worse. The F-35 is a case in point. We're looking right now at 30 hours of maintenance time for every hour the F-35A, B, and C models are flying.

We're looking at similar times—or actually longer times in many cases—because Lockheed hasn't given up its proprietary maintenance approach to that aircraft. We're also seeing F-35s flying that aren't fully mission capable, even though they're not FMC, because it's combat. The Marines are the toughest about that—they'll fly it if it can get off the ground. But that means our ability to use some of the most technologically sophisticated weapon systems we have, the ones that can link all kinds of things on the battlefield—which is what the F-35 is supposed to do and why it doesn't need those big, expensive radars once it's networked—isn't happening. So a lot of the strikes we're making aren't that accurate. They're not as pinpoint as we say they are.

All that said, we're bombing the Jesus out of civilians. We've learned from Bibi Netanyahu—what he's doing in Lebanon—we're doing, to a large extent, in Iran. Not just hospitals and little girls in school, but civilians from one end to the other of our bombing campaigns. This isn't doing anything but what the four-star Air Force general testified to Congress last week it does do: it's fusing them. It's making them tight, it's making them angry, it's making them resolute. And though their situation is, in many cases, dire in terms of getting the things they need to live daily, they're still going to fight us to the bitter death, I think. And we don't understand that. And Trump saying this is going to be over in a short time—someone is really giving him some bad advice if that's what's causing him to make these statements.

If it's just his usual "I pulled it out of my rear end and said it," then that's a different thing. But if the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Joint Staff in general, and the Unified Command commander—who I think is a flaming idiot, that's a sad thing to say, but I think he is—and others in the military are giving this sort of advice that all he's got to do is persevere, they should be taken out and court-martialed. This is not the case. This is, at best, a year-long conflict with no resolution at the end of that year, and all manner of perturbation of global economies. And I'm not just talking oil.

I'm talking fertilizer and foodstuffs—urea in particular. This is just a real briar patch that Trump has willingly thrown himself into, along with his buddy Bibi. And I haven't even talked about the prospect—which I think is becoming quite apparent from the language I'm hearing, and from others I'm discussing this with—of Israel using not one nuclear weapon, but several. Because one would not... We've done the analysis. It depends on where you drop it, of course, but anywhere in Iran, virtually, it's not going to do much. Oh yeah, it's going to vaporize and weld together some rock.

And it's going to, you know, make a big mushroom cloud. The radioactivity will be a problem if it's an airburst. If it's a groundburst, it'll be a problem too, but not quite as long-lasting or far-reaching. Think Chernobyl, if you will. But you could drop ten. And, you know, I don't want to say it's like dropping a straight pin in the Pacific Ocean, but it is—it's like dropping a straight pin in the Pacific Ocean, in a country that big, as big as Western Europe. We used to talk about this: the Fulda Gap, where we were going to concentrate 10, 20, 30, even 100 nuclear weapons on the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany.

You know, the Germans didn't like it because it did a lot of damage to Germany. But in essence, the explosive value of that is contained within a certain parameter. And wow, have you got a huge parameter in Iran. So you're looking at him having to shoot 10, 12, maybe 20 nukes just to make a difference. And he's got them—he's got them on submarines, and he's got them elsewhere. He's got a lot of free-fall bombs. I'm told somewhere between 200 and 300. So I don't want to be the grim reaper here, but I'm telling you, this has all kinds of potential ramifications that nobody in this administration is thinking about.

#Glenn

Well, when I hear Israel making statements like "Iran will never stop before Israel is exterminated," that kind of language—it's the sort of thing you'd expect before the nuclear option is taken. So yeah, I'm a bit concerned about that rhetoric. But in terms of Israel reaching for its nuclear weapons—you know, the Samson option—what would be the restraints on Israel, though? What would happen within the United States if Israel started engaging in nuclear war?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

First of all, in '73, the only really vivid example I have—and I have it from my own experience, as well as from that BBC reporter who went in to talk to Golda Meir—actually, he didn't get an appointment with her. He usually did; she liked him. He brought her two dozen red roses, really wooed her, and she liked him. But she said she was too hard-pressed to give him an in-person interview at her home, though she would give him one over the phone. And when he asked her the question, "Would you use a nuclear weapon?" she said, without batting an eye—he said he could tell even over the telephone—"Yes."

Now, you could say she said that for public consumption because she knew the Soviets—and we—were listening. And she knew the Soviets and we were going to deal with Egypt if necessary, should it become critical, and she wouldn't have to drop the bomb. I think that's probably a fair assessment of why she said it. But it appeared in a London newspaper the next day, quoted as her saying that. Now, no one pays any attention to it today. No one probably even knows anything about it except esoteric professors like you and me. So, would it happen today—without the Russians and the U.S., without that tension between the two, and therefore without the caution and prudence that tension brought—would it go ahead and happen?

Yes. I don't even think he would tell Trump. I think he would just do it. He has a chain of command and people close to him in the military who would keep the secret until the mushroom clouds floated up. So it's not like '73. It's not like those two superpowers still have an interest in keeping the nuclear genie in the bottle and bringing massive pressure from both Moscow and Washington on, at that time, Tel Aviv. That doesn't exist anymore. Bibi's on his own, and he knows it.

#Glenn

You said the war could last up to a year, and I agree with you. I think this talk from Trump about the war soon coming to an end—honestly, I just assumed he was trying to talk down oil prices. But unless there's a nuclear war, it could certainly drag on for a whole year. But does the U.S. have the supplies, though? What do we know about the weapons? Again, Trump made a statement that the U.S. has an unlimited amount of ammunition, but we kind of know that's not the case. So how long do you think the United States could go on like this? And also, how much more pain could be absorbed? Because I saw just last night that the base—well, the U.S. embassy in Baghdad—was attacked quite fiercely, and then in the morning hours you saw the Iraqi resistance flying a drone over the embassy, and no one was able to take it down.

It just flew around and basically monitored the area. It looks like if the bases were weakened to an extreme degree and the U.S. ran out of weapons, the global economy would go into a tailspin. This isn't like the usual forever wars that are kind of contained and isolated from the rest of the world. This one's going to pull in the great powers and bring down the world economy. The U.S. bases in the region will undermine the regional alliance system. If it goes on for a year, it's not going to be a stable year for nations like Iraq. It's going to spill all over the place.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

You pretty much said it all. The only advantage accruing to the empire—the United States—of an extended war, even beyond a year, is that all the things Donald Trump has been lying about having would at least be in low-rate initial production, if not full production, because it's going to take that long. So he's lying through his teeth when he says, "I've had all the people at Mar-a-Lago—RTX, Lockheed, Boeing, Drummond—and they all agree." Of course they agree, you grifting idiot. They know they're going to make money out the yin-yang. But if you think they're going to gear up to make all this sophisticated equipment in a short period of time, try thinking of Tomahawks, for example—maybe a year or two.

Try thinking about THAAD—maybe even longer than that. For a lot of these systems, it's at least a year, maybe two, maybe three before you're online with full-rate production. So yeah, in that sense, it would help us. But by that time, Glenn, we're going to be dead—politically. Trump will be removed from office. I'll make that promise to the American people, to the Europeans you're advertising to and I'm talking to. Trump will be done, impeached, out on his ear, whatever, because this war is not supported by the American people. You want to get them fully aroused about it? Start a draft. Start conscription. You'd have to do that—you'd have to fully mobilize.

If we try to put the Selective Service system we have right now—broken as it is—into effect, we just did a study on this. It would cost probably \$100 million over a six-month period just to get it up and running again, even if you worked double or triple shifts, eight hours every 24 in each shift like we did before in World War II. You'd never be able to get the system working within nine to ten months and then have your first draftees come in. In that nine to ten months, half of those 18- to 24-year-olds are going to disappear—and I wouldn't blame them a bit. Canada, Mexico—if you want a little increase in your population with some young people, you're going to get it.

This is just nonsense, Glenn. There's no way this country could gear up in a period of time that would allow Trump to withstand impeachment successfully and then be poised to go to war that, by that time, probably other countries would be involved in too. I'm thinking really hard about Turkey—Baghdad, for example, maybe even that pusillanimous little kingdom known as Jordan, maybe even Egypt, maybe others in the area once they see what Netanyahu is really intending to do, and will do, to Lebanon. This is fraught with potential for something much bigger than just us being in it. It could be the entire world before we're through.

And that's not a good prospect, although it is a very—and I'm going to put on my historian hat here—very predictable thing, given this inexorable shift of power taking place in the world. The empire is disputing and throwing every element it can into the mix, however incoherently, inexpertly, and stupidly, because we have such bad leadership right now. All of that could cause a global conflict. Easy to see it happening. Look at Zelensky right now, talking about going to help in the fight against Iran. And that's not an insignificant statement when you consider the productive

capacity he's built for drones, the skill with which he's making them, and the talent he has around him for using those drones in this new kind of asymmetric warfare.

Transmit that to whomever, but he's talking about transmitting it to the U.S. and its allies in the Gulf, such as they are. By the way, you know, there was an individual who said—I think it was Churchill; he said everything, didn't he, at one time or another?—the only thing worse than having allies is not having them. Look at how fast Trump is shedding our allies. I mean, our meaningful allies. He's shedding them. He's already shed them. *Prima facie*, he's shed those in the Gulf. They don't want anything to do with us. And as soon as we're beaten, they're going to get rid of us—if Iran hasn't done it beforehand. Look at Europe. Look at what Europe is saying. Spain sort of started it in a very ethical and moral way, in my view.

But it's coming on for *realpolitik* reasons now—and payback-to-Trump reasons, too. We're not going to be with you. We're not with you. So what are you going to the Gulf with, Donald? You're going to the Gulf with the United States Navy and maybe that vassal state Israel—or not Israel, but Britain; I put them in the same category now—whose navy is so formidable I could beat it with my sandbox navy. So this is really, really stupid. I can't say it any better than that. I don't know why we're doing it, except that Trump is trapped by Netanyahu and his and Miriam's money. And he is absolutely focused on getting the American people's attention off the Epstein files. That's the only thing I can figure.

#Glenn

Well, if you would, I guess, get back in—not necessarily with the war planning, but the diplomacy—what are the possibilities for the United States? Because this is my main concern: when great powers face great risks and see their options becoming more and more limited, one often sees desperation. And you don't want to see that when you're dealing with nuclear powers like the United States and Israel. Of course, Israel is more of a loose cannon. But what are the options for the United States? What could it actually do at this point?

Because, you know, Trump can declare victory and go home, but the Iranians—they're talking about a permanent political settlement. That means getting the troops out of the region. They want reparations, which could be achieved by taxing countries using the Strait of Hormuz, or even by demanding that countries sell their oil in Chinese yuan if they want to pass through. I mean, there are a lot of things they can do to achieve their war objectives. So what is it that the U.S. can do now?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

The impediment to all the things you just said—and that's not the only impediment, of course—the Iranians are a principal impediment too. Araqchi has been very explicit about that: "How can we ever trust you again?" Even one of the Iranians—I don't remember if it was Larijani or who—he supposedly killed. Now, this is Bibi's favorite tactic: go in and kill individuals, as if that's going to

change anything. But they've said, "If you replace your president, we'll talk." I don't blame them. I don't blame them. Would you want to go talk to this guy again? Would Putin want to talk to this guy again? Other than to get him to lift sanctions—which apparently happened a little bit, at least, the other day. I can just imagine that phone call: "Vladimir, you've got to help me. You've got to help me manage global oil prices." Yeah, right.

OK, what are you going to give me? "Well, I'll leave some sanctions on you." "OK, I'll help you." Now he's going to go out and probably not help him at all. But that's Trump—he's getting Trump's own strategic approach to negotiating turned back on him. He's put these people in the catbird seat when it comes to negotiating. But to your point, I think the impediment to anything that might happen diplomatically—however strained that term is with him—is Netanyahu. Because Trump has got to give Israel a direct order to cease and desist to make anything work diplomatically. They won't. Netanyahu will go to his own and his state's death before he quits. That's a reality, I think. So Trump is trapped by that. He's trapped by the fact that that's Bibi's posture, and he's not going to change. How does Trump change? Bibi refuses to quit. And I'm not just talking about there.

I'm talking about Lebanon too. He's hell-bent on Lebanon. He's getting two more states to join the court case at the ICJ, the ICC—two more states joined. And they said one of the reasons they joined was the treatment of Lebanon right now. Certainly, the other reasons are the same ones South Africa cited when it made the application in the first place. But I'd dare say you're probably going to have fifty states signed up to that case before Israel is done—especially if this war keeps going the way it is right now. If Israel is even a state by that time. So that's the impediment. Bibi is the impediment to having meaningful negotiations. Not that the Iranians would trust Trump, but you might be able to do something, especially using the good offices of Oman, which are always so good. But not with Bibi. Bibi will not negotiate.

#Glenn

Again, I keep going back to how this could have been done, because if you go through a lot of the literature—especially around 2012–13, when there was a lot of discussion, at least in academic circles, about invading Iran—you see that the conclusion was almost always the same: this would just pull us in, it would spread, it would be uncontrollable, it would become the ultimate long war. A disaster. But how is it that, again, with all the problems—most of them should have been predictable and predicted—I heard Trump make the statement that no one, none of the experts, could have predicted that Iran would attack all these U.S. bases across the region?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

That's a bald-faced lie.

#Glenn

No, it should have been the most predictable thing. I mean, if they'd listened to you and...

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I don't know that General Cain walked in. You know, not five Americans know this, Glenn. Maybe five know it. I only know it because I was there when the act was created and when Powell implemented it. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is now the equal of the Secretary of Defense when it comes to advising the National Security Council, his own boss—the Secretary of Defense—and, importantly, the president. Powell did this twice when implementing this new procedure. Twice he had a dissenting chief on the Joint Chiefs. He went straight to the president, presented that dissent, and the president in both cases decided for the chairman. So he had to go back and tell the chief—and the Secretary of Defense, who sided with the chief one time—“You lost.”

That's the power of the chairman now—he can talk to the president on his own. Most of the smart ones, including Powell, would go up and tell the secretary, “I'm going to see the president because I don't agree with you, Mr. Secretary.” They don't even have to do that, really, but that's just good behavior. You've got to live with the secretary anyway—he's your boss otherwise. That's a new provision. Cain could go at any moment, and I'm told he did. I don't know how forcefully he did it, but I'm told he did. And one of the people who got fired because of that was a three-star Navy admiral—one of the most important members of the Joint Staff, the director of the Joint Staff. He's the J3, if you will.

He's the operational guy on the Joint Staff. They fired him. Hegseth said he sent him back to the fleet because he dissented or something. I don't know what he dissented on—Hegseth didn't explain it. So that, and Cain having said what he said, I think at least pushed back a little bit. Trump ignored it—completely ignored it. So the man he pulled out of obscurity and retirement, moved from being a three-star to a four-star, and put in the chairman's seat—locked into Trump, you would think—dissented to a certain extent, and Trump paid no attention to it. No attention whatsoever. That tells you that no dissent from the military, regardless of how it was couched, would probably be accepted by Trump.

He's got plenty of people to tell him otherwise, including Laura Loomer and others who really know military operations—like his chief of staff, who just got—I'm going to sound like a hardcore idiot saying this—but she just got breast cancer at her most propitious moment to bring sympathy to the White House. I'd love to see that X-ray. I'd love to know— You can't—how could I ever say anything like that? Because these people are liars, because they're cheats, because they make Bibi Netanyahu look decent when it comes to propaganda and the lies coming out of their mouths. They'd do anything to hold on to power, anything to grift more money. Did you see that report about how much money their family has potentially gotten so far?

Over \$200 billion, with Jared Kushner being the leading figure in it. He's become such a leading figure that I'm told Trump has actually chastised him for making it so visible—what he's doing while

supposedly a special envoy for President Trump. They're amassing a fortune for themselves, and we're just watching it. But you can't get to Trump. You can't get to him with the right kind of advice, I don't think. I fault the military for not being more in his face—more constantly and more courageously. But, you know, I mean, look at this guy who just resigned from the National Counterterrorism Center. I think he was the director of it, whatever. Look at that guy's rep—he was a son of a bitch, a pure MAGA guy.

He was like, "Let's throw them all to the wolves and get them out of the country," and all that kind of stuff. And now, all of a sudden, he's written this nice little letter and resigned. He says in the letter it's principally because of the Iran war. It's a stupid war. And in the penultimate paragraph, he talks about his wife dying. It's a poignant letter. But we forget—just as we did with Charlie Kirk—we forget what kind of rep that guy had before he was "assassinated," before he saw the light about Israel. When he was "assassinated," he was venomous. He had a poisonous mouth, talking about things. And that's so true of many of these MAGA spokespersons who've now turned over, you know, because this is a stupid war, or because other things have happened—like this incredible affection we have for the state of Israel.

And the latest development, too, is that it's finally penetrating their minds that some of these people are in it—including the Secretary of Defense himself—for God, for Jesus. He's having a meeting today, on St. Patrick's Day, in the White House or the Pentagon. It's not compulsory, but the Secretary of Defense invites you to this Christian prayer service. You can't make this stuff up. This is horrible. Okay—your version of Christ. We're going after Armageddon, we're going after end times. We've intercepted—well, not intercepted, they've been sent to us, voluntarily sent to us—these messages. I got one this morning, a really articulate message from a contractor in the Middle East who's really irritated by the fact that he has to go to these meetings where they talk about this campaign being for God and Jesus.

#Glenn

It doesn't look good when you're arguing that the purpose of the war is to remove a theocracy, and these are the arguments you get.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Replace it with Armageddon.

#Glenn

Yes. I would hope that if the argument is that the other side are religious nutcases, then you'd expect some rational arguments to counter it, but... no, I don't know. The Iranians—their arguments, their defense, their behavior—it all seems rational. I haven't seen this irrational act we keep being told about, that they're these irrational mullahs just wanting to destroy the world.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

It seems extremely rational to me. From a military perspective, what they're doing is the essence of rationality—the targets they're selecting, the precision with which they're hitting them, the apologies they offer to a fellow Gulf member when they strike something that isn't quite what they thought it was going to be, or whatever. But it's not easy to do this sort of thing. It's difficult, and yet they're doing it, and they're making an effort to do it. Unlike Israel, which just kills anything that comes into sight. Oh, if you're a leader, please come over—we want to assassinate you.

#Glenn

I saw an interview with the Iranian president as well—an American interview—where the news anchor was asking, "Why would you attack our bases?" And he sits there, a bit perplexed, like, "What are you talking about? You attacked us. We have to defend ourselves." They kind of wanted him to apologize or something for... I don't know, it was very bizarre to watch. And you start to wonder, where is the self-reflection here? Where's the rationality? Same as now, these reports that perhaps the Russians—well, I'm assuming so, perhaps—shared intelligence with the Iranians for American targets. It's like, how dare they? I mean, after four years of contributing to the killing of tens of thousands of Russians, offering their weapons, their intelligence, their logistics, their ammunition, their war planning—everything—and now we hear a rumor about them sharing intelligence, and this is somehow unacceptable. It's just quite strange. I understand.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Just maybe three weeks ago, one of my otherwise sympathetic, empathetic colleagues was saying, "How can you say that you could connect Ukraine and the Levant?" And I said, "Just wait. Just wait. Zelensky will take the opportunity." A lot of this business of spread is just about that—these people, whom we've cultivated more or less, in Europe in particular, decide they're going to take advantage of this or that opening. And they take advantage of it, and before they know it, they've got a real problem on their hands.

Look at the EU and this business of Russian Arctic LNG. They passed that rule—law, whatever—back in about '22, that would go into effect after five years. They wouldn't buy any more of this really superior Arctic LNG that they'd move on their own ships. So they can move it down to Bremerhaven or Le Havre or wherever, on their own bottoms. It's a really sweet deal: Putin gets cash up front, and they get everything on their ships and the LNG they need. Do you really think in January of '27 they're going to stop doing that? But that's what the law says—they've got to stop doing that. They just bought the biggest load they've ever bought. They bought every cubic foot of Arctic LNG for Europe.

Don't blame them. I mean, their economies are going to be ruined if they don't have this energy. So these are the complicated kinds of things they're doing to each other, and they don't really

understand how all these things are connected. And they're going to understand, big time, how they're connected when West Texas Intermediate and Brent crude are up around \$200. And I've seen it there—I've seen the equivalency when we had the Arab oil embargo, and I couldn't even drive to Washington from Fort Monroe, Virginia. The lines at the filling stations were too long, and if you got in the back of the line, you knew that by the time you got to the pump, it would be empty. We're looking at prospects for that again.

#Glenn

Well, this is the last question. How do you see this war developing from here? I know there are too many unknown variables—too many things that can happen or go wrong. But what's realistic for Iran to achieve, and for the American and Israeli side on that front? I mean, there's no going back, at least not to the way things were before the war. So where do you think this is heading? Whether it lasts a month or a year, how does it end?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I could see—not very clearly and not very realistically, and I'm not expecting it—but I could see Trump suddenly having an epiphany, like he had, for example, with regard to Ukraine, apparently at least during the campaign. I mean, I was listening to him consistently, and he kept saying he was going to stop that war and do it forthwith. I think he really was genuinely committed to that. And then he hit reality. But if he had a moment like that and he persevered and just said, "We've won. I'm out of here. That's it," and turned to Bibi and said, "Over to you."

Bibi would have to quit, or he'd have to go full Monty. And if he went full Monty, he'd be alone—completely and utterly alone, I think even divorced from the American president at that point. So it might be bad for Iran in that moment, but it would be good for them, and good for the region, I think, in the long term, as long as we could contain the aftermath. So if Trump were to suddenly decide, "I don't have any future as a grifter, as president, or as anything, unless I get out of this mess I've got myself in," and the tendency for him there is to declare victory and leave—that could happen.

#Glenn

Yeah. Well, hopefully the Iranians let him, and—

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Yeah, I don't think they would keep it up. I really don't. They might keep pounding Israel, maybe, but I don't think they'd keep up the global part of it.

#Glenn

No, no, it's... well, it's hard to say at the moment. But of course, I don't think—if this war goes on for months and months—it's going to be very devastating.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Every month it gets harder to get out. Yeah.

#Glenn

Because I keep making this point: the Iranians can't afford to have the U.S. and Israel come back again in a few months. But I think after this—if it keeps going for a few weeks or two, three months—I think this will be a... I don't think anyone's going to come back for them in the future. This is it. Unless some miracle weapons are created to open up the Strait of Hormuz. Otherwise, no, I think the deterrent doesn't require victory. It's not about denial, but about raising the cost. I think that would suffice here. Again, maybe I'm...

#Lawrence Wilkerson

It's interesting what you just said—it keyed me to this. I hadn't thought about it except inadvertently, or at an angle. I've got all my maps out on the living room floor here—a huge array of maps, especially of that region. I used to go into my seminars and tell my students, when they presented our case studies—and they got the message after about two or three seminars—don't ever come in here to brief me, or the rest of the seminar, on a case study without a map, or maps, plural, because you can't do it without a map. Geography is important. All to say, what you just mentioned reminded me that there are some things that are almost immutable—like the geography of straits, choke points, and terrain in general.

You can't really do away with them as long as we're still doing business the way we are in the world, which is a huge component of this conflict, Glenn. We don't want that route—that's China's southern Belt and Road Initiative route—and it's very much on land, not on the water at all. It doesn't require any water. We don't want that. And we don't want the others that go across the heart of Russia and Central Asia, because that takes us out of our domain. We are a maritime nation. We lose our domain if most of the world's commerce travels over land. It's also cheaper to go over land. So these realities of geography are coming back to haunt us.

#Glenn

Well, geopolitics, though, is the study of how geography influences politics. What you're referring to was the fear expressed at the beginning of the 20th century by Halford Mackinder, the British geographer, as they observed the Russians building these intercontinental railways. Their concern was that, in the past, railways would just feed ocean-going traffic—they'd go out to the coastline and then onto ships. But suddenly, with the transcontinental railroads, they could replace maritime

power. So, while the British had been focused on “as long as we’re the dominant maritime power, that’s how we’ll stay dominant,” the Russians suddenly threatened to turn this on its head by giving a competitive advantage to land powers. This influenced, in a big way, both British and American policy ever since, in terms of preventing these Eurasian powers from coming together. And that’s what I’m thinking about with Iran now.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

If you've read Peter Frankopan's **The New Silk Roads: A New History of the World**, you understand how empires were actually stopped in their tracks, virtually, because of the economic power created in a rival or competing empire by changing the trade route to overland rather than by sea. You had a maritime power—like the Portuguese—making lots of money and charging the rates that sea travel demanded, sometimes even more than that. And then, all of a sudden, you get this internal empire, as it were, and the Persians played a big role in this too, probably creating the most powerful empire the world had ever seen. Not Rome, East or West, but the Persians. They used the land routes and put the seafarers out of business. That’s what China’s doing now—it’s the same pattern in reverse.

#Glenn

That's the Greater Eurasian Partnership envisioned—connecting the Eurasian land powers by land. That’s China’s Belt and Road Initiative. You have the Russian, Iranian, and Indian International North–South Transportation Corridor. You have, of course, Russia wanting to be an East–West bridge and a North–South bridge. This is, you know, BRICS facilitating as well. It’s geopolitics being essentially reimaged—Halford Mackinder’s worst nightmare, essentially. However, I’d put it this way: I’d be optimistic.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

There's another dimension to it, too. I think they—the powers that be, the Rothschilds of the present world—they don't want this to be exclusive of the Western Hemisphere, particularly Europe. They could do without the 340 million in the U.S. They’d like to have Brazil and Canada, but they could do without them. And this bothers me, really bothers me. We don’t get this. They could create—not autarky, but they could create—a meaningful economy without us. Yeah, they could, because that’s where most of the world is. That’s where 70% of the world is. Throw Europe into it, it’s more like 75% of the world. Throw Brazil and Canada into it, and you’ve kicked it up to 76% or 77%. And to hell with the rest of it. We’ve got what we want. They don’t want to do that.

They being principally, I think, the Chinese architects. But they don’t ultimately lead us—right now they do. And that’s why Xi Jinping is very circumspect about what he’s doing. I think he must have thought very long and hard about that latest pronouncement, where he’s now going to replace Bretton Woods. He’s going to replace SWIFT. He’s going to replace all of that. And he’s going to dare the world with the renminbi as the replacement for the dollar. That’s a real step for them,

because I know their central party school warned against it. It's an empire destroyer—it's a great power destroyer—when you have that kind of financial power. It cheats you, it robs you of your good sense, it makes you live on others' hard work. You know, they buy your debt, in other words, and let you go ahead with your profit-based ways. And Xi didn't want that, but he's bit the bullet now.

#Glenn

Yeah. Well, I thought it's not a bad development. I think the reason there's an instinct against the Eurasian land powers creating this non-maritime connectivity is because, in the 19th century, it was the Russian Empire, and it could have become a hegemon in Eurasia. That was a threat to the British. In the 20th century, it was the Soviet Empire—they could have formed a Soviet hegemony in Eurasia. But now, in the 21st century, there is no hegemon. China can't dominate on its own. Russia can't. Iran can't. India can't. Because, you know, it's not one center of power. There will naturally be some soft balancing between them. So the U.S. wouldn't face a Eurasian empire that would come after it. Indeed, I would say if the U.S. pulls back, they would contain themselves—balance each other a little bit. But...

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I don't think they want to do what I just described. If they have to, they will. They'll ostracize us. Imagine that—benign neighbors to our north and south. The advantages we've had for two hundred-some-odd years, both as a nascent country, a colony of Britain, and then a national entity—all those advantages wiped out in a second, because everyone around us is antagonistic to our existence, economically and philosophically antagonistic to our very existence.

#Glenn

On that note, Trump could be seen as a man of peace, though, because of the way the U.S., Russia, and China have come together and overcome historical suspicions toward each other. And how Russia and Iran, after centuries of antagonism, are now closer together—I mean,

#Lawrence Wilkerson

It took us to do it. It took us—we changed a thousand years of history.

#Glenn

It's trust-building now. Not what was intended, but maybe something good can come out of all these horror stories we're seeing these days.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

We need better leadership. We need better leadership—and we need it fast.

#Glenn

Very much agree. In Europe as well. Anyway, I know you have places to be, so we'll leave it there. Thank you very much for coming on.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Thanks for having me. Take care.