

Ray McGovern: The Death of NATO - Time for a New Strategy?

Ray McGovern was a CIA officer for 27 years, he chaired the National Intelligence Estimates and prepared the CIA's Presidential Daily Briefs. McGovern discusses how the US empire is collapsing and pulling down the entire US-led security architecture. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We're joined today by Ray McGovern, who served as a CIA analyst for 27 years. He chaired the National Intelligence Estimates and prepared the president's daily briefs. Thank you—it's been about a month. Good to see you again, Ray.

#Ray McGovern

Thank you, Glenn, for having me back after everything I said before.

#Glenn

Well, I thought a great place to start today would be, I guess, the common thread we see in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East. It's really not just the collapse of world order, but also the collapse of the security architecture. After the Second World War, the United States essentially built a security system led by itself, and after the Cold War, I think the ambition was to globalize that transatlantic partnership. But as many predicted back then, it could exhaust the United States economically and militarily—and, as we often see with empires, it can also wear down institutions and the moral compass. You know, listening to Trump's recent speeches, the moral issue seems to be becoming quite relevant. I was wondering, how do you see this? I mean, you were there, you played a key role through much of the Cold War. How do you make sense of how the world is, I guess, being turned on its head right now?

#Ray McGovern

Well, Glenn, one of the advantages of having this color hair and being so old is that I've seen a lot. When I think about how I was indoctrinated—well, I was born in 1939, just a week before Germany

invaded Poland. I remember a lot from when I was an early teen. One of the things I remember is thinking, wow, the Russians were going to take over the rest of Europe, right? No one told me that it took Eisenhower and Truman to tell Winston Churchill, "No, we're not going to attack the Soviet Union just now." Yeah, they suffered 27 million killed in the war.

Now, you think, "Now's the time to do them in," right? Well, no—we're tired of war. We're coming home. Nobody told me that's what Winston Churchill was like, except my Irish grandmother. "Winston Churchill is a bad man," she'd say. Okay, I didn't pay attention to that. I read all six volumes of—what are they called—*The Second World War*, or whatever they're called. So I didn't know that stuff. And when NATO was created, well, I was able to read then, and I read some early history, and I realized that NATO was created to contain this Soviet menace. No one told me that the Soviets felt menaced by us.

So, you know, you've written books on this, Glenn, but maybe some of your listeners would be interested in the chronology. So, I was told that in 1949 NATO had to be created to stop the Soviet advance into Western Europe. Okay. Nobody told me what Truman did with respect to the Balkans and Greece, and how he overthrew governments. Nobody told me that. What people did tell me was that NATO had to be established because of the Warsaw Pact. Now, I hate to admit this, Glenn, but it was decades later that I realized NATO came in 1949, and the Warsaw Pact came in 1955. I think that's about six years later. So it wasn't like I was told—I was taught—I was...

#Ray McGovern

Brainwashed, really, into thinking this Soviet threat was inexorable, and that we had to create NATO to contain the Warsaw Pact. Sort of like an anachronism in one of Shakespeare's plays, right? What came first, you know—the alarm clock? Anyhow, I'll work with that. So, I mean, this, I think, will be illustrative of how this fairly well-educated fellow, with a master's in Russian studies and all that stuff... it took him until he started working at the CIA and was brushing elbows with really intelligent people. In those days, we had terrific people. In my Soviet foreign policy branch, we had the best of the best, and we could tell it like it was—or like it is—for the first two-thirds of my career.

Suffice it to say that when NATO was set up, Lord Ismay—I think that was his name—he was a British court lord, the first Secretary General. And he said, "Look, the whole purpose here is to keep the Americans in Europe, keep the Russians out of Europe, and keep the Germans down." Okay? Made sense to me. I didn't really think about how the Russians would look at this, particularly since NATO came first. So that's 1949. Why did the Russians build the Warsaw Pact? Well, it was a reaction to NATO. But what happened in May of 1955? Oh, that's when West Germany became a member of NATO. Wow!

Oh, did that have any—well, yeah, it was right then that the Russians created the Warsaw Pact. So, you know, this whole business about who feels threatened by whom—Americans, and maybe even Norwegians—need to kind of get out of the mindset that people my age were brought up in, and

realize that everyone has sensitivities and threats that they see. There's no stability—no, what?—no balance unless one side takes into account the legitimate fears of the other side. And you don't have to go back too far in history to realize that the Russians have been scared as hell. Not so much of the French anymore—that was two centuries ago.

Of the Germans. The last thing I'll say here on this little point is that when I joined the CIA—you know some Russian, you know a lot of Russian, you're fluent in it—*glavny vrag*, okay? *Vrag* means "enemy," *glavny* means "the most important," the chief enemy. *Glavny vrag.* That's what the Soviets considered America—the main enemy, okay? And of course, we retaliated; they were the main enemy. Now, guess what, Glenn? Not many people know this, but polls were taken extensively throughout Russia last year, and the U.S. has lost its place as Russia's *glavny vrag*. Who's the main enemy now? You guessed it—Germany. So things have become very, very complicated now.

We have Ukraine on the one hand. There are lots of people who don't understand why Ukraine. And again, that had to do with NATO, and we can prove that, for God's sake. And then we have this unprovoked war of aggression on Ukraine, which—my goodness—Easter is tomorrow. Maybe we can kind of pray that somehow we'll get out of this without a nuclear exchange. Sorry to carry on so long here, but when you think back on NATO and how I looked at it, and how I look at it now—and now it's disintegrating—I just thought I'd treat your audience to something that you already know, and that I'm just beginning to articulate, having been indoctrinated through my younger years.

#Glenn

Well, the security competition you described—it's written about in a good book by John Lewis Gaddis on the Cold War. He made this point as well: toward the end of World War II, the United States, of course, had the nuclear bomb. The British were very eager to invade the Soviet Union as soon as the Germans had been defeated. That was the idea—then we'll break out and stab the Russians in the back. And for this reason, the Russians, or the Soviets, built up a powerful force in Eastern Europe. The assumption being, you know, if you attack, then they can plow west. And then, of course, the Western countries looked at this as a threat.

So then they form allies, and then, of course, put Germany into the mix as well. And then the other side establishes the Warsaw Pact. So you have this security competition going back and forth, with these big bloc systems being built. And again, this was the whole point. You know, every scholar on international security knows that military blocs create security competition—security for one is insecurity for the other. So we always had this goal, at least from the Helsinki Accords in 1975, that we would begin to reduce the security competition, have something inclusive—security with each other instead of against each other. But when the Cold War came to an end, we had this opportunity.

When people then started to say, "Well, let's just expand NATO. You know, this worked in the Cold War—why abandon the bloc system?" I mean, it's quite wild, which is why so many leading American politicians and military men were opposed to it. They said this was a horrible idea. Why

would we go back to this when we had finally managed to overcome it? And that's why it's so frustrating to see now, for example, with the war in Ukraine, this idea that NATO's only purpose is to help the oppressed peoples of the world and strive for democracy. I mean, it's very cartoonish. It's hard for me to accept that people genuinely believe this—that that's why we toppled the government in Ukraine, because we wanted democracy.

That's why NATO expanded—it's attempting to expand, at least to pull Ukraine into its orbit. And when the Russians say, "Well, you know, this is an existential threat to us," we have the audacity to say, "No, no, no, we're just there to promote good governance." I mean, it's really wild that this is where we are. After getting out of the Cold War, avoiding nuclear annihilation, now we're essentially back at this—insisting that Ukraine has to be in a Cold War military bloc, that this is the only way we can have security. I mean, if we end up in a nuclear war, it's going to feel like a very dumb reason to end up in one.

#Ray McGovern

Yeah, if there are any historians left, the history they write won't be believed by anybody. Yeah. Let me go back to my duty with the CIA. I was in Munich in 1968. It's an open secret that I was working with Radio Free Europe. In those days, the intelligence community—the CIA—was running RFE. Now, RFE had some very talented folks, mostly East Europeans working in their various bureaus. But they'd made a big mistake back in 1956, when Hungary started their stillborn revolution, right? It was largely encouragement from the West to the Hungarians: "Fight them, fight those tanks, we'll give you a lot of support." Well, the support was rhetorical support. That was, as the Soviets saw it, their turf, and they were not going to allow a revolution there.

So, long story short, I was sent out there in the spring of 1968. My main mission was, since I had been a Soviet foreign policy analyst, to make sure that the directors of RFE and Radio Liberty knew we wouldn't be able to send troops into Czechoslovakia, okay? The Prague Spring—my goodness, Dubček—everybody was so enthusiastic back home in Washington. But I and many of my Soviet specialist friends said, no, no, the Russians are never going to allow this. So, look, don't encourage the Czechs to throw tennis balls at Soviet tanks. I was able to do that. It was terrible—we heard the last Prague Radio go off air—but at least we weren't responsible for thousands of deaths by encouraging the Czechs to resist. And, as you know, the Czech Republic is finally free.

Now, what's my point here? My point is that anyone who knew a little bit about post-war Europe knew the Russians were not going to allow not only Hungary but also Czechoslovakia to slip out of their orbit. Was that terrible? Of course it was terrible. But security is indivisible. If you feel threatened, you're going to do things. So we started calling that the Brezhnev Doctrine, okay? Now, it's not a big leap to take the Brezhnev Doctrine and apply it to Ukraine. What were the U.S. and NATO trying to do in Ukraine? Well, obviously, get them into NATO. And what did the Russians do? They reacted. Now, there is not one scintilla of evidence that it ever entered Putin's mind that he would be annexing Crimea or that he would be feeling a really desperate threat.

Until February 2014, when Western intelligence services overthrew the duly elected government of Yanukovich in Kyiv. It had been building for a while—people kind of knew it was coming. But in the end, you had Frank-Walter Steinmeier, now president of Germany and then foreign minister; the French foreign minister; the Polish foreign minister; and an observer from Russia saying, “Look, this is on the 13th of February 2014. It’s okay, we’ll hasten the elections. Yanukovich can stay. We’ll have a kind of peaceful resolution to this thing. Don’t worry about it, okay?” So what happened? Obama called Putin. Where was he? Oh, he was in Sochi for the Winter Olympics. And Obama said, “No sweat.”

Look, we’ve got this deal. It’s guaranteed by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the foreign minister of Germany, and his counterpart in France, and so forth. Don’t worry about it. For God’s sake, don’t stir up any trouble. Relax. So what does Putin do? He relaxes. Biden, at the same time, calls his counterpart in Russia. So, you know, talk about betrayal—talk about betrayal. What happens the next day? The people on the Maidan are incited to shoot the cops, shoot the demonstrators, shoot them all from these perches in the tall buildings. And Yanukovich had to flee for his life. Now, that’s the background there. If you want a point where Putin started to say, “Oh my God, what are we up against here?”—that was it.

Not only the deceit, but the whole business about seizing Ukraine—or a major NATO base—our only ice-free naval port. So what did he do? He convened his advisors and said, “What are we going to do?” That was the next day, okay? That was the 15th. They said, “Well, the first thing we have to do is make sure our main naval port doesn’t become a main NATO naval port, right, Vladimir Vladimirovich?” “Yeah, that’s right.” “So what do we do?” “Well, we have to seize Crimea.” “Seize? That doesn’t sound right. I’m trained in the law. We have time. How did Crimea become part of Ukraine? Wasn’t it part of Ukraine?”

Well, yeah, but you probably remember, Mr. Putin, that Khrushchev, way back when he first took power in 1954, got most of his support from Ukraine. He was born almost in Ukraine, just on the other side. So he said, “Hey, let’s give Crimea to Ukraine.” And everybody said, “Well, not a good idea.” But it didn’t really matter—they were all part of the Soviet Union, right? So he took out a piece of paper, Mr. Putin—remember what he did? He took out a piece of paper, a *ukaz*, a decree in Russian, and said, “Okay, from now on, Crimea is part of Ukraine.” That’s the way they did it in 1954. Putin says, “I don’t like that. I think we should maybe—yeah, we need to have a plebiscite, a referendum.”

They arranged that, and a month later—I don’t think these numbers were exaggerated—well over 90% of the people in Crimea, many of them of Russian stock, approved the annexation of Crimea. So all of a sudden, annexing Crimea becomes the real, real problem—a mortal sin with the Russians. Will they stop at all? And then, of course, there was this seven-year charade where the West, Angela Merkel, and—what was it—Hollande from France—owned up to this, that they played Putin. “Look, we’re going to have the Minsk Accords, we’re going to have everything.” And meanwhile, they built

up the Ukrainian army to NATO standards with NATO weaponry. Took seven years. And Merkel later smirks. So, the Ukrainian army wasn't worth a damn before, but then it was fine.

So Putin has been played, and all I'm saying here is that Ukraine fits the pattern of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in '68, which I was there for, pretty much. And it's a different regime now. Most people don't remember that around 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed, right? Oh, wow—collapsed. So, did they still want to take over the rest of the world? No. How about the rest of Europe? No, I don't think so. So the rest of the story is clear. But when the president of the United States—namely Joe Biden—gets up in his last inaugural address and looks around and says, "If anyone in this room thinks that Putin will stop in Ukraine—ha ha ha—good, how naive. He'll go to Poland, he'll go to the Baltic states, he won't stop in Ukraine."

And the American people don't know that Putin stopped in Ukraine—stopped in Ukraine in April 2022—as soon as the Ukrainians worked out a deal saying, "OK, we forswear any participation in NATO membership. We'll have a ceasefire. We'll deal with Crimea later." That happened, OK? And what happened? Boris Johnson, as you know, came in and said, "Oh no, no, don't do that. Don't do that, Ukrainians, because we're going to support you for as long as it takes. And we're the superpower here. So, look, you fight to the last Ukrainian." That's what it's come down to. Russia has won that one. NATO is really in dire straits. As I said on your program a couple of months ago, I don't think there'll be another NATO summit.

I think one is scheduled for Tirana, in Albania, about half a year from now. I think NATO is pretty much on its last legs. And this latest talk by Trump about how it probably should get out of NATO—well, what is an Article 5 guarantee worth today? If the Estonians get into a dust-up, mostly at their own initiative, with the Russians, do you think they can count on Trump to come to their aid under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty? No way he'll do that. As you know, the EU under Kaja Kallas is willing to have an even stronger guarantee than Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, to make sure EU countries will come to the aid of anyone who's attacked. You know, lastly, the Europeans really fit the description of the Vatican. Sounds strange, huh?

#Glenn

Yes.

#Ray McGovern

You know, I was around when Stalin was alive, right? Stalin said—somebody said, "Oh, the Pope's not going to like me." And Stalin said, "So how many divisions does the Vatican have?" How many divisions do the British have? Or the French? Or the Germans? Now, they don't have any, and so, luckily... They've figured out that the Russians are going to attack, but not for a couple of years—until Europe builds up. And, of course, the thing we haven't mentioned is the military-industrial complex. You can't look at any of this unless you realize that a lot of people—a small minority, but

still a lot—are profiteering on each and every bullet and missile that’s produced to wage these wars. And that’s a major factor indeed, as you know, and as I hope most of your audience knows.

#Glenn

We used the word “indivisible” before. That’s an important word in international security—the idea that everyone’s security is tied together. Kissinger once made the point that if one state has 100% security, that means 100% insecurity for someone else. That’s what “indivisible” means. You have to develop security with the idea that it’s all interlinked. And indeed, the term “indivisible security” was actually used in the Helsinki Accords of ’75. It was used again in 1990 in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, after the Cold War was declared over. And it was used in ’94 when they developed the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

This was supposed to be the key word. But then, when we noticed in the ’90s that the Russians were weak and getting weaker, we went with, you know, hegemonic peace under an expansionist NATO. We replaced this idea of indivisible security and came up with, you know, “force for good.” That is, yes, NATO will just march forward. It doesn’t have to harmonize security with the other great powers. When we expand our power, when we intervene militarily, it’s a force for good. No one is threatened. And if you see this logic moving forward, it almost makes a little bit of sense.

When you start trying to pull Ukraine into the NATO orbit—something everyone knew would trigger a war with Russia—some people could still believe that, well, you know, no one can fear us. We’re just a group of democracies trying to promote good governance. There are people who believe that. That being said, we do have indications that there’s been some lying as well. I’m thinking of one of my countrymen, Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO Secretary General. He kept insisting over and over that the Ukraine war had nothing to do with NATO expansion—until 2023, in September, I think it was—when he suddenly came out saying, well, actually, Putin did put this condition to us.

You know, there would be no war if we didn’t expand NATO. And we, of course, rejected that. I mean, we said no. These are the people organizing our security, and somehow we’re surprised that Europe is now on fire. Well, not just Europe—the wider world, I guess. But the... you mentioned Kaja Kallas arguing that, well, if NATO’s going to—well, she implied if NATO’s going to die, we should have another security arrangement without the Americans, which is a strange argument to make, because NATO essentially is the United States plus a few vassals. But how would this work, though? Because—

#Ray McGovern

Well, maybe they can get all the troops from the Vatican to support them in place of the U.S. I mean, it’s ridiculous on its face. But, of course, if you look at what else Kaja Kallas has said, you know, it’s not unusual for her to say unbelievable things. It reminds me of *Alice in Wonderland*, when Alice was talking to the Queen of Hearts. She said, you know, these are things that are

impossible to believe. And the Queen of Hearts said, no, they're not—you just need practice, my dear. Well, on any given day, I believe six impossible things before breakfast.

So, now, you know, I have to tell you that as a Sovietologist—and especially a guy with a sore throat—I read everything, mostly in Russian, if I have the time. And Maria Zakharova, the spokesperson for Lavrov's foreign ministry, did not spare herself going after Kaja Kallas during an almost four-hour press briefing on April 2nd, I think it was. And she said, well, this is the kind of people, you know, that you have. A person asked her a question—it's really worth recounting, I think—and it may have been a planted question. It was the last one. The question was this: today is a special day, it's April Fool's Day, so I have a question for you, Maria.

Since the level of literacy is so poor at the top of the EU ranks, maybe we should allocate seats in our universities to bring people up to speed on matters of history or geography, and so forth. And Zakharova, whether this was staged or not, said, "This is nothing to laugh about." I'm remembering that from my Russian teacher, okay? She didn't quite get that "laugh" needs an object. When we acted up, she'd say, "Who are you laughing? Why are you laughing? This is nothing to laugh, okay?" Well, that's what Zakharova said: "This is not a laughing matter." Her words in Russian, okay? She said, "Look, Kallas—you want to put her in a university?"

My God, no, it's grade school she needs. Grade school. She admitted that when she heard recently—it was actually last year, during the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II—she said, "Ma, you know, Russia and China were involved in World War II? That's news to me." So we put her in the sixth grade, and so far she earns a two—a one, two. She gets a mark of two, which is flunking, okay? Five is the highest; two, you flunk. And then she goes after Annalena Baerbock, the erstwhile German foreign minister and now president of the General Assembly of the UN, who solemnly said, "We want the Russians to make a 360-degree turn in their relationship with the rest of the world."

So Zakharova says, "Okay, we'll give her a two as well, and we'll put her in fifth-grade geometry." Oh, Liz Truss—yeah, Liz Truss comes in. Zakharova says, "Now, Liz Truss, when she was asked about two integral parts of Russia, you know, oblasts in Russia—somebody asked her, 'Will you ever recognize those parts as part of Russia?'—she said, 'Never, never, never.'" And then the British ambassador nudged her and said, "Oh, they've been part of Russia since the 1200s." So anyhow, all I'm saying is, who are these people the Russians have to deal with? They're illiterate. They bubble to the top through a system of negotiations, coalitions, and so forth.

And not one of them is worth a darn, and all of them are expecting elections within the next year. Now, the Russians have a level of patience that most people don't understand. They're willing to wait until the German, the French, and the British people begin to realize—and others in Europe, I dare say—begin to realize they've been had, that the Russian threat is no longer this big, manufactured threat. And that's the saving grace here, okay? Because if it comes to the point where

NATO, the various states, say to themselves, "Oh my God, we can't depend on the United States to save us anymore," that's not bad news. That's good news. Why? Because Biden was lying through his teeth when he said the Russians won't stop in Ukraine.

There isn't a scintilla of evidence that Putin, in the last 25 years, ever had it in his head to expand Russia's borders—unlike NATO, which wanted to expand its border to include Ukraine. And thereon hangs a very sorrowful story, with a million Ukrainians already killed, maybe 500,000 Russians—all of which need not have happened, because the Russians did stop. It's demonstrable. One of the Ukrainian negotiators, David Arakhamia—Zelensky's best friend—was the lead negotiator. He came back a couple of years ago and told the **Kyiv Pravda**, "Look, this is what happened," and he explained exactly what Boris Johnson did, and when he did it. And the agreement that had been initialed but not signed...

So, will the Russians stop? They already stopped. I'll just say that one more time. So the good news for the Europeans is, "Oh, wow, no threat from Russia?" But the bad news is... Rheinmetall, which was dead in the water in the mid-'90s when they were supposed to be building the common European battle tank, right? Well, their stock has shot up over the last decade, and now it's going to go down again if and when the Europeans finally come to their senses. The Russians don't covet Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia—anywhere. They just want to be left with indivisible security, which is a kind of highfalutin way of saying the golden rule, okay? Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

#Glenn

Well, not to come to the defense of Kaja Kallas, but she did say on camera that she was planning to get really smart because she was going to read some books about history. Planning to, I would... What it is, I think—part of the problem, though—it appeared that after the Russians invaded Ukraine, we had all this so-called intelligence arguing that, well, now the Russians want to essentially conquer, you know, restore the Soviet Union or Russian Empire, all of this nonsense. And a lot of the logic across Europe was, well, when we look toward the Baltic states and some of the worst lunatics, some of the most radical anti-Russian fanatics we have in Europe, we essentially said, "Oh, well, they had it all right all along."

They warned us that Russia would one day try to conquer all of Europe. They were right. So essentially, we handed over the car keys to these people—to the Baerbocks, the Kaja Kallases, the von der Leyens, and the Merzes. And we ended up with some very unprofessional people. Also, in Germany, some of the worst Germans have now taken over, and I would put the BlackRock Merz in that category. But I guess, you know, yeah, we thought we could afford to be irresponsible in this way—that is, to put crazy leaders in charge, saying wild things. And I'd put the Scandinavian countries in the same category.

If you look at the way Denmark is talking—"we need respect, no Russian red lines, we have to hit them deep within"—I mean, this is a country of five million people. They're openly advocating striking Russian cities. The world's largest nuclear power—that's just crazy. But my point is, as long as the Americans were standing behind us, even small Scandinavian or Baltic countries could stand up against Russia, threaten it, and essentially say openly, "We're the ones attacking you. It's our weapons, our intelligence." But now that the Americans are pulling back, this becomes suicidal.

I mean, there has to be some reason entering the mix again—where they essentially say, "Oh, maybe we take the crazies out of the mix and start putting the sane people back in." It just... well, it kind of begs the question, and that's your area as well, the area of intelligence from your time in the CIA. You know, it seems like it has two purposes. On one hand, you should inform your political leadership, but there's also a second role, which is to sell wars. And I think that's what went wrong in Ukraine, and you could argue the same about what influenced Trump in Iran. The people who are supposed to inform—they have an agenda. They're looking to sell a war.

#Ray McGovern

Yeah. Glenn, as you know, I've described the CIA as two separate and distinct intelligence agencies—one for lying to the public and everyone else, overthrowing governments, and sometimes torturing people. And then the assessment, the analysis division where I worked, which was totally separate from the operatives. For most of my career, we could tell the truth, as Truman intended when he set us up way back in 1947. He said, "I don't want treated intelligence"—his words were, "Tell me like it is." And we were able to do that, at least on the Soviet Union, until Bill Casey and Bobby Gates came in and pretty much corrupted the whole analyst structure. So what I'm saying here is that there is some good advice—witness the fact that, as we've said before, back in 2007 a war against Iran was prevented by good intelligence analysis.

I'll just outline that again. After the debacle in Iraq—where, after five years, a bipartisan Senate study concluded in June 2008 that the evidence used to justify the war was unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even nonexistent, period. Okay, think about what "nonexistent" entails. So anyway, somebody sensible in Washington said, "Look, they're going to do the same damn thing on Iran—the neocons. They've got Bush, they've got Cheney, and they're going to do it. They're going to do it in their last year going out, 2008. What do we do?" Well, the first thing we do is find somebody honest who would run an honest intelligence estimate on Iran's nuclear program.

#Glenn

They couldn't find anybody.

#Ray McGovern

No manager of intelligence with a good record—they'd all been corrupted by what they'd done. But they found Tom Fingar from the State Department. He came in, and, long story short, in November 2007 issued a unanimous statement from all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies at the time: Iran stopped—quote—“Iran stopped working on a nuclear weapon at the end of 2003 and has not resumed work on a nuclear weapon.” Every year since 2008, 2009, up until last year, that was reiterated verbatim by the intelligence community, again unanimously, with high confidence. So, what happened this year?

Well, the head of national intelligence decided she wouldn't say anything about it this year in the annual threat assessment. And then, when she was questioned before Congress, she said, “Well, you know, it's not for me to say what an immediate threat is. Only the president can.” And, you know, blah, blah, blah. So what I'm saying here is that it's really sad that, after my being able to brag about my analysis division from 2007 until last year, I can't even do that anymore. If you have any doubt about whether the 2007 estimate stopped a war or played a huge role in stopping it—just don't buy it.

Go to the library and look at **Decision Points**, George W. Bush's memoir. He says—on page two hundred something; he must have written it himself—he says, “That eye-popping estimate deprived me of the military option.” Quote: “How could I authorize a strike on the nuclear facilities of a country that the intelligence community says has no active nuclear weapons program?” Period. Bummer. I mean, if further proof were needed, he did write that page. And it's true. He was going to authorize that, as Cheney and he rode off on their horses back to Wyoming or Texas or something, and let the next administration deal with it. That's how close we were.

Why do I say all that? There's no estimate now. There's not even a mention of the fact that there's no evidence Iran is working on a nuclear weapon—and hasn't been since 2003—even though the analysts believe that. The head analyst, Tulsi Gabbard, was unwilling to say that in this year's threat assessment. Nor was she able to say there was anything close to evidence of an immediate threat that would require the U.S. to attack Iran. Lastly, as most of your people know, Iran is no threat to the United States of America—could not be for decades, the truly responsible analysts say. It was judged to be a threat to Israel.

And I think I feel conscience-bound to explain why we attacked Iran. I mean, with Iraq, I used to talk about an acronym—OIL: O for oil, I for Israel, and L for logistics, the permanent military bases we coveted in Iraq. This time it's real easy—IIL: I for Israel. Now, you don't have to believe me. Here are three little things. Netanyahu gloated and bragged, saying, “I've been waiting forty years for this. I couldn't persuade any of the U.S. presidents to attack Iran. Now I did it, okay?” Secondly—and I want to read this because it's not something I want to mispronounce, okay?

Our Secretary of State, Rubio, who also serves as the National Security Advisor—which means he's the funnel through which all intelligence and related material go up to the president—is in a very powerful, two-headed position: Secretary of State and National Security Advisor. So, two days after

the attack on Iran, he's asked by the press—you can see it, it's on video—and he says this, quote: "We knew that there was going to be an Israeli action." Action? Yeah. "There was going to be an Israeli action. We knew that that would precipitate an attack against American forces."

#Glenn

Hmm.

#Ray McGovern

And we knew that if we didn't preemptively go after them before they launched those attacks on American forces, we would suffer higher casualties. Period. End quote. So, who went first? Who mousetrapped whom? Or who—I'm sure they coordinated this thing—"Well, the Israelis have gone, now we have to go." I mean, hello, is it not clear why? And the last, if further proof were needed, was the resignation of one of Tulsi Gabbard's deputies. Joe Kent is his name—a gutsy guy who was a rabid Trump supporter until he saw it. An Army veteran with eleven combat tours in Iraq, until he realized that this was just a big deception.

This is what he said in his letter to the president, okay? Quote: "After much reflection, I have decided to resign. I cannot, in good conscience, support the ongoing war in Iran. Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear we started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby." Period. End quote. Whoa! What's Joe doing now? Well, he's got lawyers, I'm sure, trying to defend him from an FBI investigation. He's being maligned publicly—you know, they're saying his grandmother wears combat boots to church on Sunday. But he told the truth. He's a model for others within government. Take those generals that have just been fired.

Are they just going to sit back and retire, or join the board at General Dynamics? Or are they going to speak out? Are they going to say, "Look, we quit because our deranged government Chief of Staff, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his superior have ordered the 82nd Airborne and Marine detachments to do what is a fool's errand, and thousands of guys are going to be killed. We don't want to be responsible for that. We quit." Yeah, right—they were fired. I think they quit for cause. I just wish they'd speak up, for God's sake. They quit; they might as well let the rest of us know why—why they quit. Sorry, I get a little exercised about these things.

#Glenn

No, I thought Joe Kent's input was very important—it shed some light. Again, it's very hard to go after his record or suggest he had other motivations than what he did. I actually had him on my podcast a few days ago. You know, he wants the best for his country, as he said. That's quite clear from his record. But it also reveals a much deeper divide within the United States now on the Israel

question, because there didn't used to be any dissent there at all. It used to seem that the idea was the U.S. and Israel had to be joined at the hip, that their interests were identical. Now you see the split.

So again, this is also an important alliance for the United States. It just feels like across the globe now—be it the alliances with the Europeans, the Gulf states, East Asia—they're all rethinking things. I mean, they're discussing now in South Korea how much they should trust remaining in this alliance set up during the Cold War. And of course, Israel as well. That relationship will probably also have to be reviewed. So, no, it's good that there are adjustments. I prefer incremental, slow reforms. This is very, very disruptive to the international system, though. But of course, you couldn't continue the way we were either. Do you have any final thoughts before we wrap up?

#Ray McGovern

Yeah, I think the Israeli factor, as I've explained, is critical. The fact that Israel has lost a lot of support, especially among younger generations, is also critical. However, our Congress is bought by the Israel lobby, and that's something that has to be overcome. I just wanted to broaden this out a little bit more. When we talk about Putin's decision to invade Ukraine, people need to remember that he was in Beijing on February 4th, 2022.

#Ray McGovern

And this was the prearranged opening of the Winter Olympics in Beijing. Now, why do I mention this? Because I believe China played a major role in giving Putin the support he felt he needed to do what he did—that is, invade another country. Let's not dress it up—it was an invasion. Did he have any other options? That's the question. And the answer that John Mearsheimer and I agree on is no. He tried all the other options. He tried the Minsk process to the nth degree so he wouldn't have to invade. But there were reasons, and the shelling of all those Russians in the Donbass was one of the main ones. Russians care about their expatriates, okay? So what am I saying?

I believe the key factor here—and I'm not alone in thinking this, though not many people have pointed it out—was when Putin went to Xi and said, "Look, Comrade Xi, I know this goes against your whole position on Westphalia, the sanctity of borders, and not invading other countries, but I think I have to do this. I have to invade Ukraine to stop NATO's encroachment." And so, in my mind's eye, what did Xi say? He said, "You mean after the Winter Olympics are finished, right?" Putin probably said, "Yeah, of course, of course." Now, that's reality, right? The Chinese changed their whole foreign policy outlook—from Westphalia to the idea that when a country's core interests are threatened, it can respond. That was the new Chinese rhetoric for the next couple of months.

Big, big difference. You have to watch these things, okay? So what Putin does—he comes home. The Winter Olympics finish on the 20th of February. Donetsk and Lugansk form their countries, recognized by the Duma the next day. They ask for protection the following day. Putin invokes the U.

N. Charter the day after that. So what am I saying? I'm saying this is not just a little snippet; it means that the Russia–China alliance is rock solid—to the point where Beijing will make allowances for violating Westphalia, okay? And to the extent that the Russians can be counted on to bail out the Chinese in extremis. What does this mean? It means a hell of a lot when you come to not only Ukraine, but even more so Iran.

And I just hope that the saving grace is that Putin has the good sense to call—I'm sorry, Trump has the good sense to call on Putin and say, "Look, can you help me out on this? This is getting out of hand." Because that's what he did four weeks ago, right? If he does that again, I think there's some help coming from not only the Russians and the Chinese, but the Pakistanis. Even the Saudis seem to be interested in what the Pakistanis are trying to do. There's a lot at stake for the Gulf states. Oman has already made its little bilateral arrangements with Iran. So I see some hope, but it's kind of an Easter hope. We'll have to see what happens not only tomorrow, but the day after. And thanks very much, Glenn, for having me on. I felt like I had a kind of history lesson—of where I've been as well as where NATO has been these last seven decades.

#Glenn

I appreciate it. Well, often we see new world orders or big international institutions only come into place after major wars. So I'm hoping we'll see some great diplomats and responsible people from the intelligence community who can facilitate something. Thank you, as always. It's good to see you again, my friend.

#Ray McGovern

Thank you, Glenn.