

Jack Matlock: How NATO Expansionism Broke European Security

Jack F. Matlock, Jr, was the U.S. Ambassador to the USSR, 1987–1991, and had a key role in negotiating an end to the Cold War. Ambassador Matlock discusses misunderstandings about the Cold War, the West's promise to Moscow that NATO would not expand, NATO expansionism undermining the pan-European security architecture, and how NATO became an offensive alliance and provoked the war in Ukraine. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.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 Jack Matlock, the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, who played a major role in negotiating an end to the Cold War with President Reagan in the late 1980s. Thank you very much for taking the time, sir.

#Jack Matlock

Glad to be with you. Thanks for having me.

#Glenn

I'm a big fan of your books, your work, and of course your contribution to diplomacy and history. It's quite impressive. Based on your work, I thought a good place to start would be, from your perspective, what are the main misunderstandings about the end of the Cold War?

#Jack Matlock

I think there have been several serious misunderstandings among most commentators. First of all, the idea that the Cold War ended with the breakup of the Soviet Union is incorrect. The Cold War was over, ideologically and practically, at least two years before the Soviet Union broke up. Second, the idea that there were winners and losers in the Cold War—that somehow the United States and the West won and Russia lost—is quite incorrect. We negotiated an end to the Cold War in the interests of both countries, and of everyone else for that matter. It was a negotiated end without victors. That end came about because Gorbachev actually abandoned the ideology that had caused the Cold War in the first place.

And that is the communist ideology, which was totally incompatible with our political system and ways of life in the West. The idea was that there would be a worldwide proletarian revolution, which would bring about a society that first was socialist but would become communist, and that the state would eventually wither away. Of course, what happened in the Soviet Union and the other communist countries was that the state took control of everything. And instead of what they called a socialist system, it was, for all practical purposes, a condition of state monopoly capitalism. But that was being abandoned.

Now, at the same time, of course, Gorbachev was trying to bring the Soviet Union into, you might say, the European system. I remember that when we were negotiating on issues like German unification, he would say—by the way, we assured him that if he allowed Germany to unite on the terms set by West Germany, there would be no expansion of NATO to the east. Even earlier, when President Bush and Gorbachev met in Malta and officially announced the end of the Cold War, one of the conditions was that the Soviet Union would not use force in Eastern Europe to preserve the system there, and the United States would not take advantage of that.

And that was announced in writing. As a matter of fact, that commitment to President Bush was reiterated in the letter to Gorbachev that I delivered when we got back from that meeting. So the idea that the Cold War was a defeat for the Soviet Union, or that the Soviet Union broke up because of the pressure of the Western alliance, is simply incorrect. The Soviet Union broke up because of internal pressures and probably would not have broken up if the Cold War had continued. So I think those basic misunderstandings fed many of what I consider the mistakes that were made subsequently.

#Glenn

This promise of a non-expanding NATO after German reunification often becomes a very hot topic in the media. Many politicians, academics, and journalists dispute it. They say such a promise wasn't made, or that it was a misunderstanding. But it was made on several occasions, wasn't it?

#Jack Matlock

Well, the promise was made. It wasn't incorporated into the treaties, but parts of it were. To go into a little more detail—in February 1989, when Secretary of State Baker came to Moscow, the hot topic then was the question of German unification, because the communist regime had been overthrown in East Germany. First of all, the United States said, "All right, we need to negotiate this in what we call the two-plus-four format." And I would say Europeans and others asked, "Well, what do you mean, keeping us out of it?" And we said, "Look, the core issues are between the United States and the Soviet Union."

We'll coordinate what we do with our allies, but we have to initially work this out directly with the Soviet Union. The idea was that we would try to get an agreement and then refer it to our allies—

the other four, who were the victors in World War II. You know, at the end of World War II, there were certain agreements between, on the one hand, France, Britain, and the United States, and the Soviet Union on the other. Some of these gave the Soviet Union rights in Germany and Eastern Europe. And in order to legalize the unification of Germany, we had to have, legally, the approval of the Soviet Union. So when Baker came to Moscow in February of that year, he proposed to Gorbachev—he said, “Think about this.”

In that sense, he was throwing out an idea—wouldn't it be better to have a united Germany as a member of NATO rather than cut loose from NATO? Then he began to explain, saying that after all, we still need to make sure Germany does not go nuclear, that Germany does not pursue the policies it did before, and that we need NATO for that. Gorbachev answered that, of course, any expansion of NATO would be unacceptable, but he understood the points Baker was making. He added that it had been the policy of the Soviet Union to try to exclude the United States from Europe militarily, but they now understood that some American military presence could have a stabilizing effect. So they were no longer trying to exclude the U.S. from Europe.

But then he added, of course, you don't really need 300,000 troops stationed in Europe to achieve that. Later, in other conversations when the question of NATO expansion came up, Gorbachev would say, “Well, if you do that, you're going to have to take us too.” I would say this was in the background for both sides, in effect calling for the same outcome. Gorbachev, beginning with a speech at the UN in 1988, spoke of a “common European home,” which should be without barriers and so on. On the other hand, our president and also, I think, Prime Minister Thatcher spoke of a “Europe whole and free.” And, you know, by the end of 1991, the world had a Europe whole and free.

So, later in the '90s, when a new administration began to consider expanding NATO, I testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, saying that it would eventually be a catastrophe if we started expanding NATO and continued it. I was joined in a statement by, I think, more than 30 of the senior people who had negotiated the end of the Cold War. The reason we said that was that NATO had been conceived as a defensive alliance, meant to make sure the Soviet Union could not successfully invade Western Europe. There was a great fear that this was their intent. And indeed, if you looked at the Soviet Union and its then–East European allies, they had military forces that, in quantity, were superior to those in the West.

I might say that later, when all the documents became available, it was clear that the Soviet Union never intended to invade the West. Their policy was that if the West started a war, they would respond and try to push to the English Channel. But that was planned by them as a response to what they would have considered aggression from the West. What I'm trying to say now is that the idea of bringing more countries into NATO would turn it from a defensive alliance into an offensive one, especially if those forces were used outside Europe. One of the arguments people made for expansion in the 1990s was “out of area or out of business.” In other words, we had to use the NATO alliance militarily outside Europe, or else there was no point to it.

They also bring in people who weren't even involved, saying, "Oh, there was never any agreement regarding expansion." Now, what I say is that whether or not there was an agreement—and certainly we were given assurances that we wouldn't expand NATO—it was still a huge mistake to start expanding it. Another point I'd make is that it wasn't so much Article 5 of the NATO treaty that worried the Russians. I know the Russian ambassador to Washington, whom I had dealt with many times when he was a deputy foreign minister of the Soviet Union, Yuli Vorontsov, told me in the mid-'90s, "Look, we don't worry about your Article 5. We're obviously not going to attack these countries or any others. What we worry about is bases."

If you then put your bases there, that's going to be very worrisome to us. In fact, in the Two Plus Four Agreement, though there was no mention of NATO expansion, there was a provision that the territory of the former East Germany would not be used to base any foreign troops or nuclear weapons. In other words, that was what was accepted in the treaty as NATO expansion. Let me back up a bit. The fact was that after Baker returned to Washington, he was told by the lawyers that if Germany unites, there's no way you can exclude part of it from the NATO alliance. So a lot of these issues got mixed up. But the expansion really—well, next, NATO in the '90s was used in an offensive way against Serbia. All but a declared war was waged against Serbia, which had not attacked any NATO member.

And in fact, we were extending NATO protection to others as Yugoslavia began to break up. That was one of the first things that created, I would say, extreme tensions between the United States and Russia. Another point I should make is that when people talk about Russia always being aggressive and so on, it was actually the elected president of the Russian Federation who played the key role in bringing the Soviet Union down. He was also a firm supporter of Baltic independence, which was declared legally before the Soviet Union broke up. So, in effect, the breakup of the Soviet Union was not something the West was pressing for.

As a matter of fact, although the first Bush administration was firm in supporting the restoration of independence for the three Baltic countries, we actually, for a number of rational reasons, wanted the rest of the Soviet Union to preserve a voluntary federation—the sort that Gorbachev, in time, came to support. So the idea that we brought the Soviet Union down is exactly the opposite. We were doing our best to support Gorbachev in negotiating a new union treaty, to the point that when President Bush, after visiting Moscow, went to Kiev, he spoke to the Ukrainian parliament and recommended that they join Gorbachev's federation, saying they should avoid suicidal nationalism.

But we said at the time that this was a speech meant for all the non-Soviet republics, not just Ukraine. And when he spoke of "suicidal nationalism," he was thinking of what was going on in Georgia at that time. But it was clear that we did not want the Soviet Union to break up then—that is, the United States didn't. Of course, events got ahead of things, and by November it was clear that it was probably going to break up. So, obviously, the United States immediately, after December 25, when Yeltsin took over in Russia and, with the cooperation of others, ended the Soviet Union,

proposed to recognize the successor states. One of the things that worried us throughout was the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

So one of the conditions for recognizing the independence of Ukraine and others was that they relinquish their nuclear weapons. I know this became an issue later. Most of these, by the way, were already scheduled to be eliminated under arms control treaties we had with the Soviet Union. And as a condition for recognizing their independence, they had to agree to abide by those agreements. In other words, the weapons that were in Ukraine, first of all, were never under Ukraine's control—politically or practically. The codes and so on were in Moscow, passed on from Gorbachev to Yeltsin. And second, it's not at all clear that if Ukraine had kept them, they could have maintained them and so on.

But in any event, the return of those weapons to Russia, which at first was resisted by the Ukrainian parliament, was insisted upon by the United States because we feared—not that they would be used against us necessarily, but that this technology would seep out to elements that might use it. And I might add, that is still much more of a threat for the future than any government actually using them. One of the big issues we had in the 1990s was a cooperative effort to make sure that the nuclear materials and nuclear weapons in Russia were, first of all, reduced, as we had agreed earlier, and second, that the materials were secured. That was one of our more successful efforts in the '90s. So I wanted to explain that background because so many people say now, "Oh, you know, if Ukraine had just kept those weapons, Russia would not have attacked them." That was never a practical or political possibility.

#Glenn

Yeah, I hear that argument all the time too. But I think people often forget that in the 1990s, a lot of great statesmen—George Kennan, yourself, and others—were warning against pushing for NATO expansion instead of pursuing a new pan-European security architecture. So I was wondering, why did we fail to establish a "common European home," as Gorbachev would have said, or at least a common European security framework? Because we did have some agreements, like the Charter of Paris for a New Europe in 1990, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe set up in 1994, all based on those principles that came out of the Helsinki Accords about how to build a common Europe. Why did we fail?

#Jack Matlock

I think there may have been a variety of reasons, but in fact, we—particularly in the United States, but also in other Western countries—were responding to domestic politics. In the case of the United States, we have very large numbers of voters in states like Pennsylvania and Illinois from Eastern Europe, and they were determined to get these countries into NATO because they traditionally looked at Russia as a threat. That was one thing that changed politically. I know when I testified against NATO expansion during the deliberations, some people came up to me and said, "Look, be

practical. The president needs those electoral votes. There are two swing states—Pennsylvania and Illinois—and all those East Europeans are demanding we go into NATO.” So I would say, in the case of the United States, it was largely, though not entirely, a matter of internal politics.

But second, you had the growing influence of what we call the neoconservatives—the neocons—those whom both Reagan and Bush had sidelined. At that time, most were Republicans, but I would say Reagan was able to sort of sideline and ignore their advice. They opposed most of our arms control negotiations. They wanted to keep using force and to bring down the system. They were thinking in terms of regime change, which, by the way, was something that neither President Reagan nor the first President Bush considered. I mean, they didn’t think they were trying to bring down the Soviet Union. Reagan’s view was that communism was a crazy idea, but if that’s what the Soviets wanted, that was their business. What we objected to was their forcing it on other people. So there wasn’t this idea that we had a mission to change their political system.

What I'm trying to say is that suddenly you had a philosophy being expressed that the United States had won the Cold War, and that now it was the sole superpower—and therefore it could determine the future of other countries. There had been two superpowers that ran the world, and now there was only one. So we were in what they called a unipolar world. Now, there are several things wrong with that. First of all, yes, the United States had much more power, both militarily and economically, than any other country. But military power is power to destroy, not power to build.

The economic system is one that could be, I’d say, responsibly managed for the benefit of everyone—or, by the more powerful states, turned into a weapon. Now, to my sorrow, I said that beginning in the ‘90s, the United States started to do both: to sanction other countries for things that really had nothing to do with the United States, but rather with what we considered their internal behavior. And second, of course, by expanding NATO and then, in the 21st century, beginning to put bases there—basically violating, I would say, the whole spirit of what we should have been building. But you ask why we didn’t.

Obviously, we should have been building a European security structure—in fact, a world security structure—that included everybody. What strikes me is that after the Second World War, we were wise to insist that France and Germany, who had been antagonists for so long, bury the hatchet and start cooperating. We were great inspirers, pushing for what later became the common market. But after the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union, instead of bringing Russia and the East European countries into a unified security structure, we began to treat Russia as a pariah in many ways.

That was done in a number of ways, and that spirit, I think, was expressed by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, our first woman Secretary of State, when, in justifying the war against Serbia, she said, “America stands strong and can see the future.” You know, this, I think, was absolutely incredible hubris. And I would note, by the way, for those who say we need more women in high politics—yes, we should choose our leaders, whether male or female, on the basis of their merits.

But all three of our women secretaries of state have been warmongers, let's face it. So one's sex or gender doesn't necessarily determine one's political opinions or abilities in certain respects.

#Glenn

It often challenges the assumption that women would be more peaceful leaders than men. I think we're all pretty flawed in that regard. But I also see that the idea of a hegemonic peace—peace through dominance or strength—was very appealing, and that contributed to dismantling the work that had been done toward a pan-European security architecture. Beyond that, I guess creating a Europe without the Russians, which inevitably became a Europe against the Russians, organized around the EU and NATO—do you see any other mistakes that were made in how we could have managed this relationship with Russia? Because it's interesting: when you read the memoirs of, for example, former CIA Director Robert Gates—well, you mentioned many—they all recognize that relations were mismanaged and that we're now paying some of the consequences of that mismanagement. What do you consider to be the main mistakes made afterward?

#Jack Matlock

Well, as we continued to expand NATO, we not only brought in new members, but in the first decade of this century we also began putting military bases there. The most sensitive of those, as far as Russia was concerned, was the establishment of anti-ballistic missiles in Romania and Poland. Now, these missiles, it turns out—although most people didn't understand it at the time—could be used either offensively or defensively, depending on the software. So it's easy to understand that Putin, the Russian president, would find this threatening. And he made that very clear in a speech in Munich in 2007, where he talked about how he viewed NATO's expansion and, in particular, the plans to place bases there—bases that could practically be used to attack Russia.

And yet we went ahead with this, despite that. Later, particularly during the Obama administration, we purposely tried to bring about, I would say, a Western-oriented government in Ukraine. And this is something that anyone who knows history should have known was totally unacceptable to any government in Moscow—just as any expansion of an outside power into the Western Hemisphere was considered virtually a *casus belli* by the United States. Yet we continued to do that, and I think this is one of the big issues that weighed on Vladimir Putin's mind. He warned against it publicly, but later we went ahead, and at one point our representatives were bragging that they had spent billions trying to, in effect, determine the government of Ukraine.

And so later, when a coup d'état occurred there, I think Russia—and certainly President Putin—had every reason to feel that this had been fueled by the United States and its Western European allies, because they had representatives openly trying to promote specific candidates in Ukraine, who in fact came to control the country in 2014. So this is a very complicated situation. Not only did the U.

S. and its Western European allies try to shape the internal politics of Ukraine so that it would, in effect, be hostile to Russia—something the United States would have reacted to very forcefully if it had happened to us.

I can bear witness to that because I was in Moscow in 1961 during what we call the Cuban Missile Crisis. And let's recall what that was all about. The United States had attempted to invade Cuba unsuccessfully, and Cuba had asked the Soviet Union to supply nuclear weapons. Now, under traditional international law, that was not a violation—particularly since the United States had nuclear weapons positioned in Turkey and also in Italy that could reach the Soviet Union. This was before either of us had intercontinental missiles; these were very short-range.

Of course, President Kennedy considered this totally unacceptable and ordered a—“quarantine,” he called it—of Cuba. And we came very close to a nuclear exchange. I was sitting in Moscow then, translating some of Khrushchev's comments. But finally, Khrushchev backed down and agreed to take those weapons out. In effect, Kennedy declared victory, although he had agreed that we would remove the missiles in Turkey—but that could not be publicized. In other words, he forced Khrushchev to make it look as if he had backed down, when in fact there was a deal. Having seen that, having been through that, it was very clear to me that trying to influence the internal politics of Ukraine against the wishes of Russia was not a good idea, to put it mildly.

In fact, when, at the insistence of the United States, NATO declared that someday Ukraine and Georgia would become members—this was in 2008—it was clear to me that this was going to create very great difficulties. At that time, polls showed that two-thirds of Ukrainians did not want to be in NATO. The country was increasingly divided, and the politics were being driven by those in western Ukraine, the areas that traditionally had never been part of Russia but had been in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and later in Poland. I might add that the current borders of Ukraine, which the current government is trying to recover, were borders created by Hitler and Stalin. So, in effect, the Ukrainians and the West Europeans who are supporting this are, ironically, trying to enforce something created by Hitler and Stalin.

Think about that—and think about how that resonates with Russians. The issues there are very deep, and I think increasingly tragic. Both countries, I think, have followed policies that were not in the interest of their people. It's difficult to see how this is going to be resolved, given where things stand now. But I must say that when we look at the causes, the attempts of the United States and its Western European allies to control an area absolutely vital to Russia's security were, I think, an important causative factor. We've reached a point now where it's very difficult to see how this can be resolved without negatively affecting all of us.

#Glenn

Well, in terms of ending the Cold War, we see that diplomacy was very important, and we were, I would say, blessed with having some good statesmen at that point in time. But how do you make

sense of the current political leadership across the West—both the U.S. and Europe—compared to the diplomacy that helped bring an end to the Cold War? Because when I look at people today—be it Merz in Germany, the rhetoric there, or Macron in France, Starmer in the UK—all three of them, by the way, are now talking about war with Russia. Or Trump in the United States, who is hardly a benign leader himself. How do you make sense of this, that we don't seem to have diplomacy anymore? I often ask, why do none of our political leaders, or even journalists, want to discuss the security concerns and interests of our opponents—not just the Russians, but all opponents? It's very confusing. Sorry, that was a very long question. How do you make sense of the current political leadership?

#Jack Matlock

I can't make sense of it. I can only say that I think the previous norms of diplomacy have simply been abandoned. And we talk about democracy—you know, democracy can mean several things. One thing, it can be a process, that the citizens or resident citizens of a given country should determine its government and so on. That's a process. Or you can begin to put labels on countries—oh, some are democratic and some are not. I think the labeling can be quite false. The United States is not, in the final sense, a total democracy. We are a republic, and a republic which, by any current analysis, is run by an oligarchy—an oligarchy which is divided, and yet one in which the majority of the people do not decide our policies.

And I think that has happened to some degree in other countries as well. But the idea that there's a clear division between democracies and non-democracies—and that it's the duty of the United States to, quote, "spread democracy," even if it means changing governments—I think that was very similar to the idea the Soviet Union had until Gorbachev: that it was the vanguard of the proletariat and had to support what they called proletarian revolutions throughout the world, because socialism, in their definition, and communism were the future of the world. In effect, we, with just a few changes, tried to do the same thing. Now, we used very high-flown language.

We said that human rights are very important and that we need to enforce them. The problem with that is, first of all, it's a misnomer. What we really should be talking about is civil rights. I think human beings do not enter the world with rights. In fact, they're totally dependent on other people—just as every other mammal is. So the idea that, and I know this is enshrined in a lot of rhetoric, should be questioned. The fact is that every great civilization defines its values differently—and its rights—and one needs to understand that. An attempt, on those grounds, to interfere in other countries is going to create great difficulties.

So I think the idea, first expressed by one of our scholars, Fukuyama, that the end of the Cold War meant that what they call the West—and democracy—was the future of the world, and that it was the duty of the so-called democratic countries to spread it to others, was a fundamentally mistaken

idea. Not that human rights, as we call them, aren't valuable things, but to assume that anyone who doesn't agree with you on that is somehow at fault gets it all wrong, because civilizations have risen and fallen throughout the last few millennia of human history.

But to think that there is one formula that fits everybody, I believe, is simply and fundamentally incorrect. The idea that the United States and the West survived the Cold War in better economic shape than others—who were, in effect, trying to adopt our system as we tried to persuade them—well, once they did, we found that the West was actually sanctioning Russia economically and so on, instead of keeping them engaged. I would say the one world economic system that was created after the end of the Cold War has been undermined. So I think this feeling of righteousness, which we shouldn't have had, has weakened our ability for clear thinking. Right now, I cannot understand how any German government could tolerate the destruction of the Nord Stream pipeline.

I mean, after all, Germany now is not going to be competitive in many ways because of the high cost of energy and what I would call a misapplication of policy toward Ukraine. And the idea among Western Europeans that Ukraine is a democratic society simply struggling is mistaken. Ukraine is one of the least democratic countries in the world, and it has a government that came to power through an action supported by a minority. And it is one of the most corrupt. Now, it's not that Ukrainians are bad—they're wonderful people. I happen to be someone who knows both Russian and Ukrainian; I got my PhD in Slavic languages. And it's tragic, the way Western Europe and the United States have been pushing for something that is not in Ukraine's interest.

And so, without going into all the details of that, I'll say one thing: when the agreement was made in Minsk in 2015, Russia at that time—though it had taken Crimea, where the majority of people clearly preferred to be in Russia—President Putin refused any attempt to bring the Donbass into Russia. He said that Ukraine must return to what it originally had, that is, to recognize the Russian language as having political validity and to grant amnesty. But France and Germany, which were parties to that agreement, continued to supply Ukraine militarily, supporting forces that were attacking the eastern territory.

So one can say that one of the reasons Russia opposes a ceasefire now is that they had one before. And not only Ukraine, but also Britain and France, which were parties to it, violated it because they were supplying military weapons. Later, of course, the former German chancellor said they signed that just to give Ukraine a chance to build up its military to take it back. So, you know, I think it's tragic. And I think President Putin made a horrible mistake when he invaded Ukraine. I'm not someone who justifies that. But I have to recognize that my own country and NATO illegally attacked Serbia, even though Serbia hadn't attacked any NATO country. And then the United States, with some but not all of the NATO allies, attacked Iraq on fabricated grounds that it had nuclear weapons. When it didn't, we completely occupied the country.

Hundreds of thousands of people were probably killed, and that stimulated a revival of extreme Islamic groups. So, I mean... don't we understand that the United States and some of its NATO

allies—and then later we had the case of Libya—and yes, Qaddafi was a tyrant in many respects, no question about that, and there was a UN Security Council determination that we should protect the opponents of Qaddafi in Benghazi. But that was expanded into a war that ended in the assassination of Qaddafi, just as the war in Iraq had ended in the assassination of Saddam Hussein. Now, these were certainly bad guys in many ways, but was it the responsibility of outsiders to deal with them—particularly to deal with them in a way that brought about internal conditions that were worse for everybody there?

So there was a certain hubris and a feeling that, oh, we can do things that others can't—maybe physically, maybe politically. There was also the idea that by using force, you could topple a government and get something better. It doesn't happen. And one of the great dangers now, when people talk about needing regime change in Russia, is that if President Putin is removed by force, you're probably going to get something even worse, because there are forces there already arguing that Russia has to use its nuclear weapons to defend itself. And when the Western Europeans start sending weapons to Ukraine that are used to attack Russia, I think...

Already, former President Medvedev has said that, you know, they will consider any of the factors that make these weapons legitimate targets. You know, I'm not saying this is a good policy or not; I'm just saying I think you have to look at the realities. And why Germany would be involved again in arming rebels in any area that was once part of the Soviet Union, I think, is almost inconceivable, and I can't understand why the current government is doing it. But I can see that that's part of a broader context right now—I think both in economic and political ways. China is profiting greatly from all of this because, to most of the world, they seem to be the only great power right now that is asking for peace and tending to support it.

And I think it's really a catastrophe that we in the West, through our own hubris and, I think, misunderstanding of the situation, are, in effect, conceding leadership in many of these areas to China. Certainly, they're doing a better job of developing alternative energies, and they're increasingly doing a better job of engineering and producing things like electric cars and so on. So, how we continue to think of wars and the use of the military to change things—it seems to me that's not very rational. In saying so, I'm not endorsing the Chinese government or the things they do internally. I think that's something the Chinese themselves can change if it needs changing.

But the hubris that somehow we in the West possess superiority over others, which seems to lie behind some of this, I think is deplorable. And I hope it will change. Let me also say that we haven't mentioned the Near East, which right now is dominating many things. All I can say is that I think the recent exchanges between Pope Francis and the President of the United States show that, for once, we have a Pope who is calling it like it is. There were charges during the Second World War that Pope Pius did not condemn what was going on. I'm not a Catholic, but right now I do think that our American Pope, the first, is telling the world something it needs to hear.

#Glenn

I very much agree. And that's one of the great tragedies as well—that no one is speaking about peace anymore. Everyone is currently engaged in this war with Russia, and people are already talking about a possible war with Iran or even China. Meanwhile, European leaders have sat by for four years while hundreds of thousands of people have been dying in Ukraine, and they haven't even picked up the phone to discuss the security architecture or some way to mitigate the security competition with the Russians. It's quite appalling—grotesque, really. But yeah, hopefully we'll be turning a corner. Anyway, Ambassador, thank you so much for taking the time. I think I've already taken a bit too much of it, so I really appreciate it.

#Jack Matlock

Thank you for having me and for listening.