

Massive ESCALATION: Europe Uses Ukraine to Expand War | Prof. Glenn Diesen

NATO's proxy war in Ukraine is morphing into a direct EU-Russia war. And the war hawks in Brussels are further escalating by attacking civilians in the Donbas and Russia proper. The doves in the Kremlin, including Vladimir Putin, are running out of options to keep their own hawks under wraps. As things stand now, an all-out EU-Russia war is not only a possible, but by now a likely scenario. But to what end? I'm joined today by my colleague, Professor Glenn Diesen, to discuss what he has learned from his many interviews with top-notch IR scholars in Russia and the West, and where things are headed. Links: Glenn Diesen on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@GDiesen1> Glenn Diesen on Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:21 NATO escalation and Russian retaliation 00:15:06 Iran and the logic of deterrence 00:20:31 Europe and the self-fulfilling war trap 00:25:28 Sanctions dissent and mass formation 00:31:55 Propaganda censorship and open debate 00:36:52 Ukraine endgame and security order 00:40:40 US decline and proxy war strategy 00:48:44 Realism neutrality and the road ahead

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies, today with the one and only Professor Glenn Diesen. I'm sure I don't need to introduce him to you. He has the most wonderful podcast on YouTube under his name, Glenn Diesen. Glenn, welcome.

#Glenn Diesen

It's good to see you again, Pascal Lottaz.

#Pascal

It's great seeing you, too. It's great seeing your channel grow and grow and grow. You are doing stellar work. And actually, that's what I want to talk to you about. You've had a couple of guests on your show who are quite incredible, one of them, of course, being Professor Karaganov from Russia, one of the foreign policy hawks of Russia, but one of the very important ones. You regularly have John Mearsheimer on your podcast and Jeffrey Sachs. And it seems to me as though the alarm bells should be ringing in every single capital in Europe at the moment, but they don't. What are you making out of the very live IR updates that you're getting from everybody?

#Glenn Diesen

Well, my main concern now is that we're a bit like the frog boiling in the water here. Because in NATO, we often pursue this incrementalism. We gradually do things instead of taking these big steps, which creates large... I often use the example of missile defense, because in this one, I remember in the mid-2000s, they were mocking the Russians, going, listen, we're only going to put 10 interceptor missiles in Poland. There's no way this can threaten the Russians. It's ridiculous.

But, you know, at the same time, you heard in the think tanks, they were saying, well, we start with 10, put in a system, and then we gradually expand it. And then suddenly those 10 became several hundred, and this is kind of how the incrementalism works. And we did have—well, getting to the point—we do the same in the Ukraine war. We began sending ammunition. I remember the Javelins, which Trump said were sent, also seen as problematic. We had gradually some tanks, artillery systems, HIMARS. I always use the example of Joe Biden making the point that we can't send F-16s; that would mean World War III. If you repeat this today, you would be spreading Russian propaganda. You'd be told that, of course, we're just helping this.

You can't possibly escalate by helping, even though most European countries didn't send weapons to countries at war exactly because it would make us participants. This was common sense. This was the consensus. This was logic. These days, you're not even allowed to say it without being smeared. So by doing this incrementalism, small steps at a time, I don't think we realize how far we have gone. Because now, of course, we are deeply involved in attacking Russia. And I made this point last year with these long-range strikes where the weapons are supplied by us. The war planners, they direct the goals. We have our politicians standing there saying, well, our goal should be to do deep strikes in Russia, destroy its energy infrastructure. You have the intelligence being picked by our intelligence services.

They're doing the targeting. Our satellites are guiding the missiles. So we are deeply involved in every way. This is no longer even... You mentioned John Mearsheimer. I referred to it as a proxy war, and he said, Glenn, really, we've kind of moved beyond a proxy war. NATO is now attacking Russia directly. And of course, the last step now, which we see, is this new incrementalism, which is the Russians say, oh, well, the drones are now attacking the Baltic region of Russia, the Baltic coast, where a large part of Russian oil is exported. And it goes through the Baltic states, their territory. Given the distance, it's very likely that they're even launched from the Baltic states. And first they denied, no, this isn't happening. And then, of course, they say, oh, yes, it is happening, but we did not permit the Ukrainians to use this territory.

And also, it's kind of the Russians' fault, because the drones wouldn't be there if it wasn't for Russia's unprovoked attack. And then now we're moving to seeing the Swedish prime minister saying, listen, if the drones are crashing in NATO countries, we should at least help direct them in the right direction towards Russia. So, you know, it was the same with the long-range strikes. First, we're not going to give long-range weapons. Okay, we are going to give them, but we're going to

put restrictions on what they're allowed to use them for. Then gradually the restrictions are removed. So we are the boiling frog now, and we have attacked Russia, and the Russians have now reached the conclusion that this can't continue. It's time to strike back and retaliate.

#Pascal

Yeah. And I mean, the horrible thing is that Mr. Karaganov, I mean, in his interview with you, he said that he used to be the lone voice in the wilderness who said, like, we need to strike Europe. And by now, he seems to have quite a lot of support within the policymaking world of Russia, but also within the general population. And if I listen to what I hear from our colleague Stas Krapivnik, he says the same. Russians are just fed up with being constantly made targets. And then the Europeans are hiding behind, like, we are not part of the war, when they do all of these things and do them out in the open. And over the weekend—we are talking today on Monday, the 25th of May—over the weekend, actually, or on Friday, the Ukrainian side attacked a school, a college dorm in Lugansk, and killed 21 students there.

The Ukrainians are saying it was a drone school for drone pilots, which would be like the dumbest place on earth to put a drone pilot school there. Two, Russia is, of course, saying like, no, this was just a teacher, a pedagogical school teaching future teachers that now died. And Europe is actually pretending that this is another one of these things that never happened and that the retaliation that came through Oreshnik strikes and other missile systems was absolutely unprovoked. I mean, Kaja Kallas today published this, another one of her insane tweets. And it's just like the whole logic of it: Russia hit a dead end on the battlefield, so it terrorizes Ukraine with deliberate strikes on city centers. These are abhorrent acts, terror meant to kill as many civilians as possible.

Moscow reportedly using or rationing intermediate-range ballistic missile systems designed to carry nuclear warheads is a political scare tactic and reckless nuclear brinkmanship. She says at the same time that these are devastating weapons and that they try to kill as many Ukrainians as possible, yet we know they killed four people in Kiev. It's like, how is it possible that these people put out such tweets and do not understand that what they're doing is just bringing the Russians closer and closer to actually doing something very drastic? Do you think this is on purpose? Are they baiting Russia again to basically enlarge the war the way it was enlarged in 2022? Or is it utter ignorance of, you know, the actual battlefield dynamic at the moment?

#Glenn Diesen

Well, this is the continuation of the unprovoked narrative where suddenly, oh, how could the Russians possibly do this? It came out of nowhere. And if, you know, like, you would come and introduce some common sense—well, actually, this didn't come out of nowhere. It was very much provoked. And they always have the same logic: well, that means you're then legitimizing and

supporting the Russian strikes. In other words, you are with the Russians, and now any personal attack on you is open. You're an apologist for Putin, and no one should ever listen to you. So we criminalized all dissent.

These leaders can say any nonsense they want, and there will be no dissent at all because their whole argument is everything is unprovoked. If you say it's unprovoked, that means you're backing the enemy, essentially. So this is the narrative we have stuck ourselves in, which is why the water keeps boiling, you know, for our little frog here. But you're right with the condemnation—it doesn't make any sense. I mean, why wouldn't they condemn the killing of all of these students in Lugansk? Why? They struck the school, and then afterwards they condemn the retaliation, you know. When you're only able to condemn one side, what are you doing then? Is this based on principles of human rights, or is this just cheerleading?

So whatever the enemy does is evil, and whatever our side does, well, it doesn't matter. Condemnations mean nothing at all when there are no principles. And as I said, they keep referring to the genocide of Ukrainians, efforts to kill as many as possible. How can you strike with 600 missiles and drones and then four people are killed, and the goal was to create as much death as possible? If you strike a massive city like Kiev and the goal is to kill as many as possible, and you have 600 missiles and drones at your disposal, then either the Russians are very ineffective or, as is obvious, this is all nonsense. It's just fueling hatred of the Russians and pushing war. That's all.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but to my mailing list on Substack. That's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's going to be in the description below. And now back to the video. The mind-boggling thing is just that this is coming at the same time. I mean, the Europeans are accusing Russia of genocidal intent at the same time as they are the greatest cheerleaders of Israel's genocide in Gaza, right?

Where you actually have tens or hundreds of thousands dead in a concentration camp that's being made smaller and smaller by the day. And it comes at the same time when these same European leaders also were, you know, full of praise for the U.S.-Israeli war of aggression against Iran and even backed them. And I think this is where this is coming from — they backed them at the United Nations when it was Iran that was condemned for striking back at the Gulf states. And the European leaders kept saying that Iran is unprovokedly attacking and enlarging the war in its neighborhood. And is it...

#Glenn Diesen

My theory is that they used to be able to do that.

#Pascal

This is how Europe did its foreign policy, or its jargon and its way of going about business, for the last 500 years. They're just agenda-setting. And that's what's not working anymore. I mean, or then again, I just can't look at the Cold War and think that people back then already did such irresponsible things. Do you think it changed in the last 20 years?

#Glenn Diesen

Yeah, I think that was one of the curses of the unipolar moment, that is, when all power was concentrated in the West. I belong to the realist school of political theory, and in my view, states do not constrain themselves. And this is the problem. If there's no constraint, well, what did key realists like Kenneth Waltz say after the Cold War? He said, well, the main problem now is how will the US constrain itself? We can do whatever we want now. We can start wars everywhere. We can expand military blocs. There's no constraint, and we don't constrain ourselves. That's what states don't do.

So now we're going to engage in a lot of horror, and over time the predictable thing is that the US would exhaust itself and increasingly balance. But when I say exhaust, it's not just the military potential that's being exhausted, it's also the reputation. Look at the US reputation in the 90s — I mean, it was excellent, and look where it is today. So of course the world is going to look at it differently. So we're pushing, trying to sell these fake genocides, like in Xinjiang — oh, the Chinese are doing genocide, which is not true. And of course, the Russians are trying to do genocide, which is not true. And we do the same with the Iranians — oh, they killed tens of thousands of their own citizens, but they can't provide any evidence, no list of names.

They do the same in Ukraine. The Russians took thousands of kids. But if you ask, well, can you provide the names? Then, oh, well, now you're denying it or you're saying what Russia is saying. So it's just no one's believing it. And at the same time, as all these lies are coming, we've seen that our leaders have been doing the forever wars now for decades. As you said, we backed the genocide quite enthusiastically in Gaza. Also, when they attacked Iran, you have people like Chancellor Scholz saying, oh, the Syrians are doing our dirty work for us. The second attack, Scholz also positioned himself as the main backer of the United States' attacks.

We fueled a civil war in Syria, killing hundreds of thousands only to install an ISIS leader, which we now do everything we can, with the help of the media, to rehabilitate. Oh, look, he's wearing a suit. He's one of us now. He's civilized. And also the backing of fascist groups in Kiev. There is no... Where are the principles? Where are the values? I don't think people are—they're not buying it anymore. And yeah, so this whole—as you suggested, this new narrative now of Kalas and the rest is, why are the Russians now striking harder? Because I think they will go after the Baltic states. I think they will increase the brutality in Ukraine, which will be horrific for Ukrainians.

And they're doing this because NATO has escalated over and over again over the past four years. And you can objectively say this if you see the weapons they sent, the targeting, all of this, the direct involvement — all of this has escalated more and more. And the Russians always had this dilemma: do we retaliate and risk World War III, or don't we and embolden NATO? Now they have been too emboldened. And as you said, the Karaganov argument has won. It's time to hit back. So what does NATO say? Oh, I guess we have to restrain ourselves. No, they're saying the opposite: oh, the Russians are being defeated, they're desperate, now they're just lashing out. It's exactly the wrong lesson.

#Pascal

It's exactly the opposite lesson from what you should learn. But on this part, you know, and I will ask you a few more questions about your guest in a moment, but one of the most surprising things to me this year so far is what happened with Iran. And in my reading, what Iran did is it successfully reestablished deterrence, and it successfully actually taught the U.S. that if you strike me, then I will always, at any point, retain the ability to strike you back and to not only hurt you but hurt Israel in equal amounts. So stop striking. And after 40 days, that strategy seems to have worked, although we are not out of the woods. But the kinetic part of the war stopped. So Iran, also being able to absorb all of these shocks and being willing to sacrifice its leaders, kind of managed to deal with this war of aggression in a way that I haven't seen before. Do you think that this holds any kind of lessons for how Russia can approach its war with NATO?

#Glenn Diesen

Yeah, no, I think this is also one of the big lessons. Well, first, I always make the point, the reason why the present time is so dangerous is because the Europeans are escalating in such a reckless way. The Americans, at the same time, are pulling back, handing over the war to the Europeans, so the Europeans can't rely on their support. So they're escalating, they're losing their backing, and also, at the same time, Russia has to restore its deterrence. I mean, anyone with half a brain can see that this is going to result in disaster unless we do something. And of course, then, as you suggest, the Iran war comes on top, which has entirely new lessons for Russia, because Iran did not, you know, try to look the other way and hope that, you know, they would avoid the escalation.

No, they saw all these attacks happening, and they showed the ability to go up that escalation ladder with the United States. And it's exactly because they went up the escalation ladder that America has become more cautious. I mean, why aren't the Americans burning down all of the energy facilities across Iran? Well, there's one reason: if they do this, then the Iranians will retaliate, and they will burn down all the energy infrastructure, the desalination plants across the Gulf states, and essentially make these countries unlivable, turning them back into deserts. So it's because they're willing to escalate that the Americans aren't going all the way.

So now they're sitting in Russia going, what have we been doing for the past four years? Because we restrained ourselves, and we can read the Western newspapers. They're saying that our restraint was weakness. We're too afraid of NATO. NATO can launch missiles at our capital, and we don't dare to do anything in return. And also, they look towards the Baltic states now. As the Baltic states are involved in attacks on Russia, they're saying, what did Iran do? Well, when the Americans attacked, the Iranians looked where the attacks were coming from. They're coming from the Gulf states.

So they attacked the UAE, they attacked Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan. Anyone who participated in the attack is now a participant in the war, and they are legitimate targets. The Russians didn't do this toward the Baltic states, so the lesson now is, well, perhaps we should have gone down the Iranian route. It's easy to see the logic there. And it would be as if, you know, when America went in to, you know, kidnap Maduro, if the Russians and Chinese would then send missiles to Venezuela, start raining missiles on Washington, would Washington say, oh no, this is merely a Venezuelan attack, you know? No. Or if you would turn it the other way, if Canada would host Iranian missiles to launch at American cities, and then Canada would say, oh no, no, we're just, you know, a neutral country.

We just, you know, happen to have our airspace used by the Iranians. No, this would never happen. You know, this is a ridiculous argument. Of course the Gulf states participate in this. Not only did they allow it, but we also now heard that they lobbied very hard for the US, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia, to attack Iran. So they are participants, and if Iran wants to have any deterrent, they have to strike against those who attack them. And this is the lesson now in Russia, which is... it should be common sense. But if you say it, then they say, oh, then you're supporting it, you're legitimizing it, you're encouraging attacks on Europe. Now, you know, they have to come after you as a person. This is the new Europe. This is why, again, the frog is boiling here. There is no point where common sense can come in.

#Pascal

But the sick thing is that it seems to me that that's what they want. It's like they're also telling the European population the Russians will attack the Baltic states because Vladimir Putin is the new Hitler and he will run over the entirety of Europe. And now they're creating a situation in which Russia has the only option left, which is to actually attack them. So, you know, you create a self-fulfilling prophecy here, where then the attacks that will come on European land, on NATO territory, will come as an affirmation of what they said before, which then only will galvanize the populations behind war with Russia. So the logic that we are in makes war, and a very horrible war, all but inevitable, it seems to me. Or do you still see a way out?

#Glenn Diesen

No, I'm not sure how I see a way out anymore. I mean, we've gone so far into this now that it's very hard to reverse. But the logic, as you said, is becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is when NATO,

since the Orange Revolution in 2004, was pushing for pulling Ukraine into the NATO orbit. Their argument was always, well, the Ukrainians need to be defended from Russia. However, the Russians weren't making any threats, any claims to Ukraine. As NATO recognized back then, only 20% of Ukrainians actually wanted to be part of NATO. Most favored cooperation with Russia. So we wanted to help them so much, even if they didn't want it and there were no threats against them. But then, of course, once we toppled the government in Kiev and then began to empower the far-right extremists and pump in weapons, build up a proxy army, attack Donbass, then, of course, now you have a Russian threat.

And so you create this self-fulfilling prophecy. And I said the same with the Baltic states. The idea that the Russians would, you know, once they're finished with Ukraine, they're going to go and attack the Baltic states next. I said, it's nonsense. They're not going to attack the Baltic states. That makes no sense at all. They were responding to what they saw as an existential security threat coming from Ukraine. But it's not nonsense anymore. After we're doing long-range strikes into Russia using NATO territory, then the Baltic states and probably Finland to attack Russia, now I assume an attack will come on the Baltic states. It's more likely than not. So, as you said, it creates these self-fulfilling prophecies. I remember even James Baker used this argument in an article he wrote in 2000 in response to NATO expansion.

He said, well, while we're expanding NATO, there's no Russian threat. We said there might be one in the future. He was saying the obvious thing: if we expand NATO, Russia will see this as a threat. They will take countermeasures, and then we'll have our self-fulfilling prophecy. This was the argument of Kennan and many others. So this is what we do. And the problem is, because it's what we do, we're stuck in a narrative. You say, what can we do to get out of this? Nothing, because we committed ourselves to the narrative that we're only defending ourselves. This is a Russian imperialist, expansionist motivation. Nothing is happening because of what we have done. So how can we pull back when we can't even recognize that we've done anything wrong? Sorry.

#Pascal

It's like an alcoholic needing another sip from the bottle in the morning just to get up. It's like you need the very thing that is wrecking you and ruining you in order to somehow stay afloat. Because if the Europeans actually changed their tune, they would have to admit that they got it backwards, right? And that's the last thing any one of them would do.

#Glenn Diesen

Yeah, well, this is the new radicalism I see. Because anyone studying international security and international relations knows that the point of departure in assessing conflicts is what's referred to as international anarchy. All these states compete for security and power. So, for example, China develops new missiles to be safe. That will create insecurity for the Americans. They will develop more missiles, and that will create insecurity for the Russians. This is the security competition.

However, I saw the Finnish foreign minister speak, was it two, three days ago? And she was making the point that, well, NATO is not a threat to Russia, but Russia is a threat not just to us, but to world peace.

But if this is how you view the world, it's good guys and bad guys. Our missiles are good, their missiles are bad. You can't reduce the security competition. What has always been recognized as creating peace is putting ourselves in the shoes of the other side, seeking compromise. You can't do that because, as they say, the idea that the world's largest military bloc is established against Russia, seeking now to bring together all of Europe except the largest country in Europe, which is Russia—obviously, this creates zero-sum logic. It revives the mentality of the Cold War. And yet... NATO's not a threat to Russia. That's it.

Just a blanket statement. There's nothing to discuss here. Move on. And, you know, we will continue to expand. We will do our illegal interventionism everywhere. We will interfere in Russia's domestic affairs. We'll surround the country with military infrastructure. Missiles will arm crazy anti-Russian fascist groups. We'll do anything it takes. But if the Russians say that this somehow undermines their security, it's madness. And if you, as an EU citizen, would say it, then you would be smeared. You would be canceled. You could even be sanctioned. I mean, this is where we are. How can you then reverse course when this is what we do?

#Pascal

I mean, you're being smeared. Luckily, you haven't been sanctioned yet. But two of my compatriots have been sanctioned, Jacques Baud and Nathalie Jamp, for basically opposing European and especially French colonialism. And our colleague Jacques Baud for basically working on the historical precedents of the entire Ukraine war, right? Working it up and out. But this is, it's very, it's such a scary moment. Yeah.

#Glenn Diesen

Well, this is it. Usually, you know, the strength we often had in the West, you know, we have open societies. We do, you know, you're able to criticize the government and their policies. And in order to do so, we can do course correction. If you're pursuing a foolish policy that doesn't maximize their security, you can have some opposition to it. But there's no opposition. I mean, look where we are. We're heading down with destroying Ukraine. We're heading down a possibility of a nuclear war with Russia. And then you have people like Jacques Baud who's probably making the argument that this is a very dangerous path.

We need to maybe change course. And for people who are not familiar with him, he's a retired colonel in the Swiss Army. He was working in Swiss intelligence. He worked with NATO. And he's just the most prolific author there is. But the thing is, he made the mistake of essentially having the wrong conclusion. He argued that, well, NATO also contributed to this issue. And when he says that,

it's not because he's on the payroll of the Kremlin. It's because if you want to make a compromise and end the war, you also have to recognize where you have contributed. But how did the EU respond to this?

What did they do to a colonel in Swiss intelligence? They sanctioned him. They cut off his money, his bank. He's not allowed to leave Brussels. He's a prisoner there. And how did this happen? Was he found guilty of anything? No, there was no day in court. There was nothing. Just one day you wake up, your name is on the list of someone who has done the wrong thing. And now you're under these horrific sanctions, and people aren't even allowed to give him money because then they would be in breach of sanctions. This is the new Europe. This is what dishonesty and continuous warfare does to you.

#Pascal

You and I, we both interviewed Matthias Desmet, right? Probably the most important thinker and professor of psychology who's been working on mass formations for the best part of his career. He made the argument that, you know, this is it. I mean, Europe is in a mass formation, and the mass formation is basically an ideology that is then, like, festering and starts, you know, also kicking out any kind of non-conformist parts of society, and it gets worse and worse. What do you make of that argument? There are a couple of other psychologists who say, no, mass psychology is not really a thing. You're kind of imagining, you're seeing things where there aren't any. You're seeing patterns where there's just coincidence. But it seems to me that that's a very strong argument, that we are actually in some sort of mass psychological phenomenon, that the entirety of the continent at the moment is working itself further and further in.

#Glenn Diesen

Well, it's a very strange argument to argue that this is not a real thing because, you know, when you look at psychology or sociology, a key focus has always been the duality of man. You know, yes, we are rational individuals, but we're also group animals. We organize in groups for meaning and security, and this is how human beings organize. And based on this, you have key psychologists like Sigmund Freud who came up with the concept of group psychology. And, you know, they've done tons of experiments. That is, if you have a group of 10 people, they ask the people, what did you just see? And, you know, it's easy to remember that the individual knows what he saw, but if the nine other people say something else, then that one individual will fall in line. This is human nature. We adapt to the group to some extent.

So you always have the balance between the rational individual and the irrational, instinctive group psychology that Sigmund Freud pointed to. I often make the point that the nephew of Sigmund Freud, Edward Bernays, essentially took these ideas and made theories about how to manipulate people — in other words, how to appeal to the irrational aspect of people by manipulating group psychology. This is the foundational literature on political propaganda. If you go through the books

of Bernays, what political propaganda entails, and then you listen to the way our politicians speak, what our media is writing — this demand for mass conformity around all ideas that, you know, one side is good, one is evil — it's ridiculous. There's nothing rational there anymore. We abandoned rationality a long, long time ago. So I very much agree with what Desmet has written and what he's saying.

#Pascal

Me too. It's just, I wonder how we can use these insights now in order to... We cannot do this again. We cannot have a third or a fourth war with Russia in 200 years. If it is indeed the case that the European populations and the European countries, and within NATO, and the entire dynamic that has developed, is leading to a mass formation and to a mass psychosis, then how can we help Russia and China and whoever else might be interested in helping us avoid millions of deaths, to kind of treat that patient? I mean, it's just so hard to accept that warfare with Russia, and again a couple of million deaths on the continent, is the only thing that will get us over it. Is there any epiphany that you had in the recent past of what needs to be done?

#Glenn Diesen

Well, that was kind of my motivation, you know, because I work just, you know, as a professor at the university. But that was my motivation for starting a podcast, because I saw the—I see the mass conformity. There's no dissent in the media. I often point to this country, what has happened here. Because once the Russians invaded Ukraine, our prime minister said, oh, there's no way we're going to send weapons. No way to send weapons to countries at war. And now, of course, he flipped, but also every single member of parliament is for sending weapons. Not a single one is arguing for actually having diplomacy at all.

So this is the new thing: weapons are the path to peace, and diplomacy is appeasement. And not just every politician—all the media outlets, and anyone who tries to say, "Well, why shouldn't we talk to the other side?"—well, then you are an agent of the Kremlin, essentially. You're repeating Kremlin talking points. Only ad hominem attacks, nothing of substance. This is the new normal. So this is kind of my thought: so what can you do? I think the main answer, if you look at the literature on propaganda, especially written in the 1930s up to the 1950s, a lot of good stuff came out.

They always made the point that if propaganda and this mass psychosis is about group psychology—that is, rationality is suppressed in favor of these tricks of manipulating the group mentality—they said that the main objective then should be to have open debates. You know, you should have Churchill debating Stalin. Get it out in the open, have open discussions. And they always warned that the opposite is calling for censorship, because censorship is a form of propaganda. If you say, oh, the other side is doing propaganda, we have to censor them—this is propaganda. You don't fight propaganda with censorship.

This is nonsense. But this is the new logic. This is, you know, no one is contesting it. But it's the same with the idea of what propaganda means. Because after the Germans used their propaganda in the First World War, propaganda got a dirty name. So we didn't even call it propaganda anymore. We began to call it public relations. And the main point was always, well, authoritarian states do propaganda, not democracies. But that's completely wrong. I mean, Bernays, Walter Lippmann, all the original scholars who developed the theories on political propaganda made the point that democracies are more dependent. The more liberal democratic you are, the more you're reliant on propaganda because... you know, for example, in Britain, when they expanded the voting rights, you had to complement this because, well, now you have all these people who might not, you know, do what you want.

So now there's more need. If you transfer sovereignty from the government to the people, then someone has to manage the opinions of the people. So the idea that democracies, or with democracies, we don't do propaganda—it doesn't make any sense. And literally, they often do it much, much better as well. There's another study on propaganda throughout the Cold War. You know, source credibility is quite important. That is, a message is more convincing if it comes from a source that you think is benign, altruistic, and, you know... But if you're state media, you're not very convincing at all. Everyone knows who you are, and they know your motivations then, if you have other motivations.

The reason why the West did better political propaganda throughout the Cold War is because we could launder it through NGOs, through private businesses. We do the same today. This is why Western governments spend billions on NGOs, because they're essentially acting as propaganda arms of the government, but they have the source credibility of being about human rights, even though they work hand in hand with intelligence services, even though they get all their money from the government. This is propaganda. But people, you know, I tried to also criticize think tanks, which are funded by, you know, CIA cutouts like the National Endowment for Democracy, and had letters written to my university that I'm attacking civil society because NGOs are civil society now. I mean, this is where we are. It's beyond insane. Yeah.

#Pascal

Yeah. And you, as a university professor, are not supposed to criticize anyone who's in favor of more warfare. I mean, it's just such an insane moment. And I keep wondering if there's nothing that can be done to take away this playing field of NATO, which is Ukraine. If Ukraine was not at war with Russia, then all of these excuses to fire into Russia would be gone. Do you think that this is going through their minds—how to end the Ukraine war in a way that then there is no more state of... there's no state of war officially?

I mean, also from the Russian side, it's a special military operation. So for very sick reasons, like we have on both sides kind of an interest in pretending that this is not what it actually is. But if this war was ended and Russia is getting closer and closer to actually fully occupying the entirety of the

Donbass, which, in my understanding, is more or less the war goal, and then create a buffer and a security zone. But do you see any hope in the way that things are developing on the battlefield that maybe this launching pad for Europe's aggression into Russia can be taken off the playing field?

#Glenn Diesen

Well, that's what could put an end to this war. Because, well, I always make the point that the war in Ukraine reflects a much larger phenomenon. That is, after the Cold War, you know, we actually had agreements with Russia to develop an inclusive economy, a common European security architecture, so we would overcome the bloc politics of the Cold War. This is what we agreed on with the Charter of Paris for a New Europe in 1990. This is why we established the OSCE in 1994, which is actually an inclusive security architecture. But when we decided to expand NATO, this was because we decided instead to go for a hegemonic peace, one which would push Russia out. And that's what we've been doing. And this is kind of the commonality in the conflict with the Russians, also the economic war against China, also the war against Iran.

The distribution of power has shifted. It's not only one center of power, and the entire security architecture has to change. And the expansion of NATO was the main manifestation of this unipolar moment—that is, the collective hegemony of Europe. Now, this has been balanced and pushed back. So the problem of getting a peace agreement in Ukraine is that the war isn't only about Ukraine; it's about the European security architecture. That is, we have to have a foundational security. It can't just be to have security against Russia, max deterrence, undermine its stability. It has to be one that takes into account the security concerns of all. I mean, this was considered to be one of the achievements after World War II—that is, you got the French and the Germans into the same European Coal and Steel Community.

So you would seek security with each other instead of against each other. This is what we should have done after the Cold War, but we had instead a hegemonic peace. The hegemon is gone, and now you have to adjust to new realities. And there's some recognition of this. General Keith Kellogg, Russophobe if there ever was one, also stated in an interview once that, okay, but if we get a peace agreement in Ukraine, it also has to include, like, what do we do with Moldova and Georgia? Because we can't just fight there as well. And this was kind of the problem. When we began to expand NATO, gradually going to the east, what happened, you know, Poland was not that difficult because every Pole there wanted to be a part of NATO. There were no sympathies to Russia.

But when you came to these countries with deeply divided societies, be it Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, what will happen? Well, they're split in the middle. So you're going to then trigger civil war and conflict. And then, of course, the great powers will come in and use them as puppets against each other. So this is, you know, what happened in Ukraine can play out in other parts of Europe as well, which is why we need a wider agreement. But of course, if the Ukraine war comes to an end, then

there might be a big opening to change the security architecture further. And, you know, something good could come from this. But at this point, it looks more likely that we're going to end up in a massive war.

#Pascal

What do you make of Brian Berletic's argument that, you know, it's overall still within the system design that the United States is now working on the, what is it called, like the division of labor — that Europe is now basically going to be responsible for a full-fledged war against Russia, while the U. S. is going to try to use the Gulf states and Israel? I mean, he's one of the few people who thinks that the United States is using Israel to fight a war with Iran, and then it itself is going to gear up now pretty soon, I think, under that construct, for a full-fledged war with China. How realistic do you think that is? Maybe not only as a concept, but also with the new distribution of power, seeing, for instance, that both in Russia and in Iran, it seems that the Western war coalition ran against two walls, not just one.

#Glenn Diesen

Yeah, no, again, this has been one of my disappointments about the Trump administration, because when he came in, he very much spoke in the language of, well, essentially what he was—the audience he was attracting were the people in America who said, listen, the hegemonic peace is over. We can't, you know, sacrifice the republic to prolong the empire. We have to, you know, do the opposite, and we have to adjust to new realities. And Marco Rubio said, if you remember, right after the Trump administration came to power, he made this interview with Megyn Kelly, and he was arguing that, you know, unipolarity is a very unusual abnormality.

It's, you know, this is gone now. We have a multipolar system. We have to get used to this. The way, at the time, I interpreted it was, okay, what do you do if you adjust to a multipolar distribution of power? Well, America can't be everywhere, so probably we'll have to pivot to focus on the Western Hemisphere, focus more on East Asia, where its peer rival China is. In other words, you have to start to pivot out of Europe and the Middle East. So it's reasonable to expect that they will draw down the forces there. But then you began to see some changes, and more and more, instead of ending, for example, the Ukraine war, you get the impression that they're just outsourcing it.

And this is Elbridge Colby. He made a speech, which I thought was interesting. Well, it showed exactly how the thinking was, which was, listen, the Europeans have to arm themselves. More weapons, you have to be able to give more to the Ukrainians to confront the Russians. So essentially, they're handing over the war against Russia to the Europeans, a bit like they did now in the Middle East. They're looking for who can fight the Iranians. Do we have any Kurdish groups or any groups in Pakistan that can be used? How about some Iraqis? We can use the Gulf states. How about the Israelis? And of course, if you're going to fight China, you don't fight them with Americans.

You would try to use Japan, South Korea, Taiwan. This is why you have frontline states. I mean, if you're a stable, confident hegemon, such as the US was in the 90s, then being a frontline state can be quite lucrative. They will look after your security, your stability. Again, the Americans were the only game in town. When you're a declining hegemon, what do you do? Well, then it's time to cash in on these frontline states. That is, they should go and fight and die. They should all essentially be Kurds. They should all be Ukrainians, to fight to the last man, to weaken your adversaries. And that's, I think, a reasonable argument that you can see this is what's being done.

#Pascal

In a very bizarre way, the US empire is going through a similar process as some of the large apps on its IT platform, a process that a lot of people call enshittification, where everything that you once used to get for free is now going to be up for a lot of payment and much more pain until the system squeezes itself out and squeezes itself dry. So it's that kind of stage of imperial decline, isn't it?

#Glenn Diesen

Yes, but I think if the U.S. was going to do this, they're essentially too late. And I say this because the U.S. can try to strangle other rising powers, you know, with economic or military force, but they seem to be failing at both. That is, in the economic area, they can do many things. They can cut off countries from key technologies and industries. And you saw them doing this, for example, with the Chinese. They had this great idea: let's cut them off from semiconductors, and then China will begin to unravel. But instead, it was too late. The Chinese can suddenly, you know, very quickly make their own semiconductors. They can have their own technological sovereignty. They can decouple from the U.S. and still thrive. Well, you can also do other things.

You can cut off countries from physical transportation corridors. And they do this—well, every now and then they hijack Iranian tankers, even before the war. They can put blockades on Cuba, on Venezuela. They can now also try to put in a gradual blockade with the Europeans on the front line in the Baltic Sea, essentially putting sanctions on Russian ships and then labeling them shadow fleets. So now apparently it sounds legal that they are being seized and hijacked on the open sea. So you can also do this, but then you see the Chinese, the Russians—they're all building up quite a formidable army to push back against this. Also, the Chinese and the Russians have been building these Eurasian transportation corridors, which is why they're becoming less dependent on U.S.-controlled naval corridors.

And of course, last, you have the financial leg. That is, they can cut countries off—banks, currencies, all of this. And this is why they thought that the Russian economy would collapse soon, by the end of the week when they did this in 2022. But instead, it only fuels the new parallel international financial system. That is, the Chinese, Russians—they're building new development banks, new payment systems, alternatives to SWIFT. They're beginning to trade more and more in their own currencies. They're dropping the U.S. bonds. So all of this is becoming counterproductive. So it's not

working. And if the economic war fails, then you lean into the actual war. But even there, we saw the... which is why it was so critical what the Iranians did.

They defeated the Americans. There's nothing the Americans can do now. And in Ukraine, the Russians will come out on top. They will win. And this will likely break up NATO as well. So... so there's only escalation. They have two options: either accept transitioning into a multipolar system where you recognize that your opponents also have security concerns—in other words, security can't be based on the overwhelming dominance of the U.S. that everyone has to fall in line—instead, you have to recognize and mitigate the security concerns of your opponents as well. Either you do this, or you try to restore dominance through a massive war. And yeah, I think we're leaning towards the latter, unfortunately. Yeah.

#Pascal

Yeah, we are. I mean, the one litmus test to me, whether they're finally changing, is when they're going to start changing their tune toward this idea of neutral spaces. A neutral Ukraine would have saved the entire thing, even in 2022. So too can neutral spaces still now. But even up until now, there's nothing like that. There's no bridge building. Maybe just the very last point, though—we started off with realism and this mother of all problems, that during the unipolar moment there was nothing to constrain power. Now there is, right? It's just like, effectively, there are these walls.

And we've had this quite fascinating article the other week from Robert Kagan, pope of the neocons, who actually said, like, well, this is it. We lost the Iran war, decisively. And this is quite surprising for somebody like him. Then again, he doesn't call for de-escalation. Rather, he says, if anything can save it, it's more escalation. But still, do you think that we are getting to the point where maybe the physical constraints finally start becoming clear? Because even the production capacities of the U.S. and Europe just don't suffice anymore to wage all of that warfare left and right. Yes, you can still implement a genocide in a concentration camp in Palestine, but these other wars are completely different games.

#Glenn Diesen

Well, in the realist theory, though, I think the expected trajectory of the political West was because states are not necessarily power maximizers—they're security maximizers. And the difference is, when you're balanced, then you would stop trying to expand. And so what I would expect after the Cold War would be for the political West to just begin to expand in every direction—that is, expand NATO, go to war against, yeah, well, so many wars by now—until they're balanced, be it by China, Russia, Iran. And once you're balanced, then you stop expanding, and then you essentially seek a new status quo. And that's kind of what the rational state would do.

The problem is that I don't think we're all that rational anymore, because we've had essentially more than three decades of a political class raised on the idea that we essentially transcended history.

This is the end of Fukuyama's "End of History," because our hegemony allows us to pursue a liberal peace. We elevate the role of liberal democracy, human rights. And so they essentially saw their dominance as making the world better, crossing that bridge from the flawed world of the past to this new brave world of tomorrow, of perpetual peace. So this is kind of what I think is the source of the irrationality.

Realists there would assume that the state is rational, and they would assume that once you're balanced, you would stop and then you would accept a new status quo. That is, you don't have to like it, but there's nothing you can do. For example, in the Middle East, the Iranians are there. If you don't recognize their security, don't take their security into account—in other words, stop the crippling sanctions and the perpetual military threat—they will shut down the Strait of Hormuz, and they will acquire it on their own. If you don't respect Russian security, they will push back. If you don't respect the Chinese, they will push back.

So in other words, it's in our interest now to take that into account. We've been balanced. This is what would be a rational decision. But this is where my concern is, that I'm a more neoclassical realist. That is, I look at the decision-makers as an intervening variable, essentially between the international distribution of power and foreign policy. So if they have bloc loyalties, dependencies, infighting, institutional commitments, or ideology that makes them not act rationally, then you're in very, very deep trouble. And I saw an article, an old one from Henry Kissinger this morning, actually, from March of 2014, just to make this point about rationality.

He wrote then—I have it here—yeah, this is March 2014. That is the month after the coup and as the Russians were going to seize Crimea. And he writes, far too often the Ukrainian issue is posed as a showdown, whether Ukraine joins the East or the West. But if Ukraine is to survive and thrive, it must not be either side's outpost against the other. It should function as a bridge between them. The West is largely Catholic. The East is largely Russian Orthodox. The West speaks Ukrainian. The East mostly speaks Russian. Any attempt by one wing of Ukraine to dominate the other, as has been the pattern, would lead eventually to civil war or breakup. To treat Ukraine as part of an East-West confrontation would scuttle for decades any prospect to bring Russia and the West, especially Russia and Europe, into a cooperative international system.

So again, this was rational thinking. And when he made this argument in 2014, it was, yeah, well, that makes sense. We should avoid making it a frontline state. Again, this is a problem of bloc politics. How do we avoid this? Try to say this today. If you're a politician, a journalist, an academic, that you shouldn't make Ukraine a frontline state—oh, well, then you're taking the side of the aggressor. You're blaming the victim. It's a Kremlin talking point. There's no room for any sensible discussion anymore. It's only good versus evil. Make sure you sit in the trenches with us; otherwise, you're part of the evil and you're the enemy. So I think the irrationality now in the West is a huge problem for us to avoid massive war.

#Pascal

Yeah, realism only works in a rational world. However, we will need to continue talking about this and analyzing it because I still have to hope that in the end something shows up that will allow us to avoid the worst. And I would just like to point everybody to your channel, Glenn. I suppose you know, because I think the overlap of our viewership is quite high. But if you haven't seen Glenn before, I mean, go to his channel, Glenn Diesen, over half a million subscribers. Fantastic channel. Wonderful guests, like really the most important ones as well, including, of course, Mr. Karaganov, who we already talked about, including Glenn Diesen, Mr. Moran—sorry, including Larry Johnson, Jeffrey Sachs, Morandi, Scott Ritter—you know, really the who's who of modern international relations is on Glenn's channel. Glenn, any other place where people should go to find you?

#Glenn Diesen

I'm also on Substack and Twitter. Actually, I have a lot of other ones as well, like Spotify and Rumble. Also on YouTube, I have, as you know, translated language channels for those who don't understand English well. But yeah, mostly it will be YouTube and Substack.

#Pascal

If you're watching this in another language than English, Glenn, too, has Glenn Diesen in Español, in French, in Russian, and so on. So you can subscribe to him in your language so that we can talk more about sane international politics. And with this said, Glenn Diesen, thank you so much for your time today.

#Glenn Diesen

Thank you, Pascal.