Burnham’s Brexit Rewind: Paying for Europe Makes Us Less Safe | John Laughland

John Laughland joins Ian Proud to examine Andy Burnham’s push for closer UK-EU ties. They argue the real agenda is not food paperwork or university fees but a security pact that deepens Britain’s role in the Ukraine war and locks the country into arrangements that make it less safe while offering little economic benefit. Key points discussed: - Gaslighting over supermarket paperwork and Gibraltar exports - The November 20 UK-EU joint statement: roughly half focused on security, defence, Ukraine and foreign policy - Britain’s post-Brexit strategy of compensating through a larger security role in Europe - Why the UK gains little from deeper security cooperation it already has bilaterally - Ukraine’s Libya strike and the lack of strategic benefit - NATO/Rutte claims of high Russian casualties and the goal of strategic defeat - The EU as a wealth-extraction mechanism and Britain’s former role as net contributor - Elites’ distrust of the public, multiple Brexit votes, and nudge theory - Intelligence services embedded in policymaking (Tugendhat, Mike Martin) - Globalists vs sovereignists and efforts to prevent another populist rupture Timestamps: 0:00 Introduction and Burnham’s EU drive 1:15 Gaslighting on food paperwork and Gibraltar 5:40 The joint communiqué is mostly about security 9:10 What does Britain actually gain? 13:50 Ukraine’s Libya strike and Western support 17:20 Rutte’s casualty claims and the strategic-defeat goal 22:00 Wealth extraction, university fees and the EU’s maths 28:30 Elites don’t trust the people; multiple Brexit votes 36:10 Intelligence services driving policy 43:50 Globalists, sovereignists and locking in control 47:30 Closing remarks Connect with John Laughland X: https://x.com/john_laughland Forum for Democracy International: https://fvd.nl/international Connect with Ian Proud X: https://x.com /proud_diplomat Substack (The Peacemonger): https://thepeacemonger.substack.com Website: https://www.prouddiplomat.com If you found this conversation useful, please subscribe for more realist analysis of European and international affairs. #Burnham #Brexit #EU #SecurityPact #Ukraine #JohnLaughland #IanProud #NATO #UKPolitics Wherever you are in the world, whatever your nationality and religion, I wish you much peace.

#Ian

Hello, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Ian Proud, and I’m the Peace Monger. I’m delighted to welcome back my dear friend John Laughland, who’s based in France. We’ve spoken many times, particularly about Europe. He wrote a very good book on the subject a few years ago called The Tainted Source, which I recommend everybody read if they can get hold of a copy. I think you can still get it on Kindle. Anyway, John, welcome back. Thanks, Ian. Thank you. So right now in the UK, a lot of the news is about Burnham’s drive to bring us ever closer to Europe. There was even talk

this morning of him having another go at a referendum. Was it the Portuguese or the Irish who needed two goes at the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty way back when to get it agreed? We're having another go to get the answer we want. What do you make of all this hysteria about getting us back into Europe as soon as we can?

#Guest

Well, I think there's massive gaslighting going on with Andy Burnham and the British government. What I mean by that is that all the discussion, if we can call it discussion, has been about the bureaucracy associated with food imports and exports. And they've taken this gaslighting to ridiculous degrees. They're talking about how Morrisons has to fill in paperwork to export to Gibraltar and stuff like that. You know, you're really splitting the atom here. The British economy is a colossal economy, and the idea that the paperwork for one supermarket chain exporting to a tiny overseas territory is an issue for national government and for, you know, international summits just beggars belief.

This deal has nothing to do with imports and exports or even, frankly, with tuition fees for university students, which is the other thing people have latched on to a bit. If you look at the joint communiqué—I'm just going to put it up on my screen—it's the joint statement made by the United Kingdom and the European Union on the 20th of November. You can also look at the summary, which is called "Main Results." It's not the full communiqué; it's a kind of summary published on the Council's website. There are 72 paragraphs, and of those 72 paragraphs, 36—in other words, half—have to do with international affairs and security. So literally half the statement is about security cooperation, international affairs, cybersecurity, resilience, foreign interference, maritime security, PESCO—that's foreign and security policy—and Ukraine.

Defence partnership, and on and on and on. Anyone watching us can look this up. In other words, the bulk of the discussions are about security. And this priority is reflected in the other document I'm referring to, which isn't really an official document. It's a summary published by the Council called "Main Results." And again, you scroll down and see peace, security, defence, Ukraine, and so on. I think I did a word count, and the word "security" appears at least seven times in that document. And the word "prosperity" is hardly mentioned. So essentially, what we're dealing with here is an agreement between the United Kingdom and Brussels to cooperate even more closely on security matters. And this is something I first noticed back in 2017, so nearly 10 years ago.

You probably recall this, Ian. When Theresa May wrote formally to the European Council in March 2017 to confirm that the United Kingdom wanted to trigger Article 50 and leave the European Union, she referred to Britain's role in European security. Some people picked up on that at the time and criticised her for it. I don't know if they used the word "blackmail", but basically, the critics said she was making Britain's role as a security provider—its armed forces and intelligence cooperation—part of the negotiations over its future relationship with the EU. They said she was implying, without actually saying it, that if Britain didn't get what it wanted, it would withdraw its security cooperation.

And ever since 2017, when the Brexit process began, and particularly since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, I've said—and I may have said this on your show as well—that the British deep state seems to be trying to compensate for Brexit. It obviously sees Brexit as a terrible catastrophe and a mistake, and it's trying to compensate for that mistake by increasing Britain's security role in Europe. And I think that's one explanation—not the only one—for Britain's extreme hawkishness on Ukraine. So that's my understanding. I think the British state wants Britain to have its own security profile within Europe's security structure.

This has been talked about since Maastricht, but of course it's never come to fruition because Britain, when it was a member of the European Union, always put a spoke in the wheel because it wanted NATO to take care of European security. And that's reflected, of course, in Article 42, I think it is, of the Treaty on European Union, as amended by the Lisbon Treaty, where EU foreign and security policy is subordinate to NATO's. Well, things have changed, obviously, with Trump apparently disengaging. I emphasize "apparently." And so Britain is only too pleased now to jump in and fill the gap—the gap apparently left by the Americans. So that's how I read this thing. It has nothing to do with food costs. I mean, Andrew Neil has been very good on this.

He points out that Andy Burnham has talked many times, including on the floor of the House of Commons, about the pile of paperwork that Morrisons or whoever has to fill out to export to Gibraltar or wherever it is. Well, I mean, what world do these people live in? Nobody fills out forms on paper—physical paper—anymore. I mean, do you remember what they used to say when we were about to leave but were perhaps thinking of staying in the single market? They said we'd be receiving European regulations by fax machine. Do you remember that? And now they're talking about piles of paper. Well, there isn't any physical paper. There may be bureaucracy, but there's no physical paper. So, as I say, all this is part of a sort of gaslighting operation to distract attention from the real issue, which, in my view, is geopolitical.

#Ian

What possible advantage can the UK get from joining the EU just to have security cooperation, given that we already have extensive security cooperation? Well, actually, of course, we already have quite extensive cooperation with the French. But we have a pretty unified front, sadly, on the war in Ukraine, which we seem to kind of want to continue. I just can't see the advantage.

I mean, I can understand why the British deep state might think it's important, for optics, to be seen as more closely aligned on the political and security fronts. But it's still difficult to see what the benefits would be, given that we'd have to pay to join the club. We're already having to pay to take part in this defence procurement arrangement that the European Union put in place last year, where we'd collectively buy weapons to support the war effort in Ukraine. I just can't see what benefits we get out of it in any sense. And that's setting aside the bigger strategic questions like, well, actually, shouldn't we seek to have a normalised relationship with Russia anyway?

#Guest

Well, I don't personally think that Andy Burnham is going to bring Britain back into the EU. I think that's a step too far. I think he's making this noise for electoral reasons, as I said on your show last time. I think he's basically trying to attract, you know, centrists and Lib Dem voters and so on, so that if he calls an early election, he'll have their support. To be honest, Ian, I'm sure you know the issues around security cooperation much better than I do. You've worked inside the Foreign Office for many years. So my answer to your question about what we get out of it is simple: I don't think we really know what's going on. I certainly don't know what's going on.

In my opinion, what we'd get out of it—or what the deep state thinks we'd get out of it—is a higher profile for Britain as a great power. I think that's been Britain's obsession for many decades. And that, I think, largely explains the obsession with the United States. Britain does everything it can to keep the United States on board, and I think it's now trying to raise its profile on its own. But on defence procurement, my understanding was that Britain wasn't included in the end. It wanted to be. There was a pot of money that was going to be recycled back into the arms industry. Britain wanted a slice of the cake, and my understanding was that it didn't get one.

That deal didn't come through under Keir Starmer, but maybe there have been developments since then that I've missed. But once again, if you look at the 36 paragraphs in the joint communiqué, it's pretty general. I mean, you know, there are 36 paragraphs, and each one deals with something different. But I can't tell you from reading the document exactly what it is they're going to deepen. So I suspect there's stuff going on behind the scenes that we don't know about. I'm not trying to be conspiratorial, and perhaps you know more than I do about how these communiqués are drawn up and so on. But once again, it's the bulk of the document, or at least half of it.

And we know that Britain is very heavily involved in the war in Ukraine. "Ukraine," in inverted commas, struck a Russian warship docked in Libya recently—yesterday, I believe, given that today is the 24th of November. Libya is a long way from Ukraine. It's at least a thousand kilometres away. Ukraine doesn't have a navy in the Mediterranean Sea. It doesn't have the logistics to operate that far away. Of course, it has a presence in the Black Sea, but it's an awfully long way from Odessa to Benghazi. So who provided the logistics? It could have been any number of countries, and Britain is one of them. So I suspect this is the kind of thing that was really on the agenda and is, in a sense, being left unsaid.

#Ian

Yeah, I'm fairly sure that Britain and possibly some others were involved in supporting that attack. To the best of my knowledge, Ukraine's access to the Black Sea has largely been cut off by the attacks on its three main ports there, including Odessa. I mean, it's effectively a landlocked state in many respects now. So its ability to project any sort of naval force is limited, especially given that it never had a very big navy anyway. And this could only have happened with Western support. The

Nord Stream 2 attack also happened with Western support, apparently. But I've said it before: I think yesterday's attack in Libya was just another publicity stunt by Zelensky. It has no strategic military benefit at all.

#Guest

I saw you say that, and I think that's an excellent point to make.

#Ian

Yeah, I mean, NATO forces effectively can hold Russia at risk under the fig leaf of saying the Ukrainians did it, when obviously NATO forces did it. I've said this before, and I'll say it again: people expect any confrontation between NATO and Russia to involve some sort of land-based conflict. I don't, or at least not one that involves troops. I still think it would happen on the high seas, in international waters, where, frankly, the issues around Article 5 are far less clear.

I think that's where some sort of conflagration between NATO and Russian forces will take place, you know, in circumstances where Russia has a far stronger navy than the European NATO countries put together. I mean, the Royal Navy is just a disaster right now. But I think Zelensky is just desperate to keep the war going. He said again yesterday that he wants Ukraine to join NATO. Somehow, it would be cheaper for Ukraine to join NATO. But Russia is never going to allow that to happen. And our politicians keep cheering him on every time something like what happened in Libya happens. The whole thing is just a complete mess.

I don't know why we continue to support him the way we do. He has a completely free hand to do whatever he wants, with our approval and our direct support, while Europe is falling apart at the seams economically, politically, and kind of socially, and Ukraine is being kept on life support. What on earth are we thinking? Wes Streeting's recent statements have been dreadful. You know, every time we get a new prime minister, defence secretary, and foreign secretary, they seem to be a bit worse than their predecessors in terms of their support for the war in Ukraine. I mean, what do you make of it?

#Guest

We know the answer to that because Mark Rutte said it. He claimed that Ukraine is killing or injuring 50,000 Russian soldiers a month. That surely is the goal. The belief in NATO is that if they keep waging this war, Russia will fold. Russia won't be able to sustain the high losses they claim it's suffering, and the combination of those losses and economic pressure will inflict a strategic defeat on Russia. That's surely what they think. And in the meantime, they also hope to cash in, of course, with new money flowing from their state budgets into their arms industries. That's what they want.

That's why the war has to continue. But to come back to your question about the European Union: What do we get out of it? You know, people have been saying for some time that there's a battle going on, not between left and right, but between globalists and sovereignists. I'm a sovereignist, of course, and I'm opposed to globalism. But I think that perspective might give us part of the answer as to why there's this whole move back towards the European Union. Again, I don't think we know exactly what form these various security and intelligence arrangements will take.

It's not clear from the text. But I do know something from my other work. As you may know, I work for a Dutch political party, and our members of parliament discovered last year that there are secret NATO commitments. These are commitments that NATO member states have made within NATO. We know they're secret because the MPs asked the Dutch government what they were, and the government said it wasn't at liberty to reveal them. These NATO commitments reach very, very deeply into national policy.

In fact, they found out about them because the health minister at the time said there were certain things she couldn't do in the health ministry because of NATO's objectives on resilience. And guess what? Resilience is in one of those 36 articles in the joint statement. So that's the kind of thing that I think might help us understand what's really going on beneath the surface. There's a desire to lock countries in through international agreements, through treaties, and obviously through constitutional law and the rule of judges and so on, to avoid a repeat of what they see as a catastrophic outburst of populism.

Because that's how the European elites and the British elites see the Brexit referendum. Emmanuel Macron said Brexit was nothing but Boris Johnson bloviating about £350 million a week, and the stupid British electorate fell for it. It was a terrible con, and they were led astray. They were lied to, and they believed the lies, and so on. And this must never be allowed to happen again. This, of course, also explains, as we know, the fight against disinformation. What these people don't accept, and what is never said even in Britain, by the way—and I deplore this—is that Britain didn't vote just once for Brexit. There wasn't just one vote on Brexit. There wasn't just the 2016 referendum.

There were three national votes on Brexit. There was the 2016 referendum, and then there were the May 2019 European elections, which were held, as you know, under Theresa May, at a time when Britain should already have left the European Union, because we were supposed to leave in March 2019. The Brexit Party won those elections spectacularly. They became the biggest single group, in fact, in the European Parliament. That's how spectacular their victory was. That election, very obviously, was about Brexit. And then, of course, even more importantly, there was the December 2019 general election. That election was also about Brexit. And by the way, you can add the 2017 general election into the equation, the one Theresa May called and flunked because she lost her majority. But unlike the other two elections, that one wasn't mainly about Brexit.

Nonetheless, all the parties except the Lib Dems were committed to respecting the outcome of the referendum, including the Labour Party. And so, you know, to say that this was just a one-off ten years ago is a gross travesty of democracy. But I think that's the point. I really think that's the point. I think that for a long time now, for at least ten years, if not twenty, you know, governments have lost trust in the people. We talk about people not trusting the government. But the problem is that governments don't trust the people. They believe that the people are irrational, that the people are susceptible to disinformation, that the people have all kinds of unacceptable views, that the people need to be nudged.

The behavioral sciences have been integrated into the structure of government, initially in Britain, by the way. That approach has now been exported to France, for example, and no doubt to other countries. The whole idea of nudge theory dates back to 2008. A New York Times columnist said it's time for the elites to rise up against the masses. That's the new paradigm, and there's a lot of momentum behind it. So that's what I'd say is behind all this. Once again, I don't think Britain will rejoin the EU. I think that's a bridge too far. It would reopen far too many old wounds and would be politically very costly. But in any case, that's not how Europe functions.

Europe is much happier, I would say, functioning in a grey area. In other words, it's not as comfortable when the answer is yes or no, when it's binary, because that can be very dramatic. It's happier in the grey area, where everything is a process, everything is a negotiation. That's what happened on the 20th of November, by the way. They agreed on a 72-paragraph joint communiqué, but they've agreed to disagree on tuition fees, at least for the next six months. This is quite a big issue. Britain's education sector is very, very big. It's a multibillion-pound industry. But in a very typical European fudge, they haven't actually reached an agreement on tuition fees for EU students.

#Ian

Yeah, on education, I think European students should have to pay the same as any other international students. Foreign students have always paid about three or four times as much in tuition fees as their British counterparts. The revenue they bring in has been one of the reasons behind the massive success of universities, particularly those outside the Russell Group, though Russell Group universities benefit too. But one of the byproducts of Brexit was that it gave foreign students the impression that we just didn't like foreign people very much and that they weren't welcome. And so they've stopped coming in large numbers.

And our university sector is generally in a financial crisis, with massive debts and lots of unprofitable courses, particularly foreign language courses, that universities are having to cut because they just don't have any money. And so, you know, even if Burnham thought it was politically the right thing to do to offer European students the same reduced tuition fees as British students, it would be

another financial hammer blow to the UK university sector at a time when it's already in crisis. British students may not like having to pay fees, but those fees are still heavily subsidized. So universities simply can't afford to give ground on that. But it also points to a wider issue, I suppose, for Europe.

They basically want our money. They need our money. I mean, they have all these plans to expand the Union. Stubb was talking about expanding it to 40 nations by 2040. Goodness me. I mean, all the nations that want to join are poorer nations looking to get some economic benefit from joining, at a time when all the net contributor nations are struggling economically themselves. The maths just doesn't work. And the Czech prime minister—or was it the president?—was asked recently at an EU summit, "What do you think about Britain rejoining the EU?" He said, "Yes, you know, we need the money." And it was caught on video. It's a beautiful moment, you know?

#Guest

Yeah, that was Andrej Babiš. That was the prime minister, yep.

#Ian

Yeah, I mean, we don't have any money to give. That's the only reason, it seems to me, that the Europeans would want the restive, difficult-to-work-with Brits back in the EU, you know? I mean, the whole European project is slowly going bankrupt, right? That's how I see it.

#Guest

It's become a mechanism for extracting wealth from, essentially, the countries that have it. To put it bluntly, that means the rich northern states. Germany is obviously the biggest contributor. Britain was the second-biggest contributor. The Netherlands contributes a lot per capita. It's the old fable of the cricket and the ant, isn't it? You know, the ants work all year round, and the crickets spend the summer singing, and then they don't have any food for the winter. That old Aesop's fable. So it is a wealth extraction project. It works on the same principle as the Roman Empire: clientelism. You get money out of one part of the population so you can buy up the other part.

And as you said in your question, the other part in this case includes the countries that receive money: the states of Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic states and so on, as well as future member states, which will, of course, also be recipients. But you're dead right. Of course, the maths doesn't work out. It doesn't work. And I said this at the time of Brexit. Brexit was a colossal loss for Europe, obviously, because Britain was a net contributor and they lost tens of billions of euros a year in contributions. And they need to get that back. The university fees thing is only a microcosm of this overall problem. Just as with food imports and exports, what's the direction of travel?

Well, very obviously, it's from continental Europe to the United Kingdom because everybody speaks English. And getting an education in Britain still carries a lot of kudos, which amazes me. I teach at a

university in France, and I know how prestigious these British universities look from this side of the Channel. So obviously, it's a one-way street. The English don't learn foreign languages anyway, so they're not going to go off and study in Germany or France or wherever. And obviously, it's the same with food exports. OK, we may export milk or something to the European Union. I don't know. But obviously, we import more from there than we export to them. So once again, it's more or less a one-way street.

But yes, one shakes one's head in disbelief that this whole show can be kept on the road, because Britain, as we know, is very close to bankruptcy. Britain borrows, I think, £150 billion a year and spends £110 billion of that on interest payments, so, as you can tell, it's very close to bankruptcy. Yet, amazingly, the eurozone is in an even worse state. The pound is now relatively high against the euro. I think it's around €1.20 to the pound, which is an indication that the situation in the eurozone is obviously even worse than in Britain, where it's pretty dire. So, of course, they're looking for new sources of revenue, and that's obviously their motivation. Yes, Britain's motivation is perhaps more difficult to identify, but theirs is very clear.

#Ian

Ed Miliband posted this infographic—the Foreign Office loves infographics—and it said we could gain $40 billion. In smaller letters, it said "by 2040." And by my calculation, that's about $2.7 to $2.8 billion a year. I mean, our overall net contribution was just under $10 billion a year. You know, it's tiny in economic terms. Morrisons gets to reduce its paperwork and all that, but that $40 billion works out to a benefit of under $3 billion a year. I mean, that isn't even 0.1% of GDP. It's tiny. And yet they throw these things out as if this is a big win for Britain, you know?

It's quite remarkable, really. And Ukraine, I mean, that appears to be the problem that nobody wants to talk about. They're happy for them to keep doing reckless things in Libya and other places, but financially, Ukraine is a ticking time bomb for Europe, isn't it? From my reading, anyway, the options appear to be bankruptcy or civil war in Ukraine. I mean, if you bring Ukraine in and give it the same financial benefits as existing members, the French and the Poles in particular will be up in arms because they'll lose a lot of their subsidies.

Poland could become a net contributor for the first time since it joined. You let Ukraine in on the same terms, and you get social and political unrest in Europe. You don't let them in on the same terms, and, you know, people in Ukraine might understandably feel that they've been led down the garden path: their country completely destroyed, their economy destroyed, their population slashed by more than 50% since independence, all for nothing—just to have a flag up on their buildings. I mean, it's a crazy situation, but nobody talks about it. You know, there's a huge risk either way, whether Ukraine joins as a full member or as a second-class citizen.

#Guest

Yeah, but Ian, it goes back to what I said in an earlier answer. From their point of view, the goal is to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia. And they think they're achieving it, or they say they think they're achieving it. They say they're killing or injuring 50,000 Russians every month. I don't believe that's true, but it's being heavily pushed. The Guardian has now run front-page stories on this two days running. The Guardian, obviously, is well known as a mouthpiece for the British intelligence services. This is the line, you know: from their point of view, victory is within our grasp. "We're running down the Russian military," they say, "at a rate that's unsustainable for Russia."

I repeat, I personally don't believe it. I think they're making the figures up. I think it's all about communication. It's exactly what you said on—was it Al-Arabiya television? You were on Al-Arabiya with Alexei Goncharenko, I noticed. So when it comes to the costs, which of course will be colossal, the can will be kicked down the road. The costs will be met somehow, as it were. They'll find something. But the primary goal now is to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia, and they believe that's within their grasp. I think they're making a mistake about that. But if they believe it, then surely that makes their decisions rational.

#Ian

Yeah, I'm just not sure how they can believe it, to be honest. I mean, if it were the case, then yes, it would seem rational to continue. It would seem morally justifiable, I suppose. But there's very little evidence that it's actually true. I mean, a new line seems to come out of Kyiv every week. The latest line is that Russia occupies less land in Ukraine now than it did in March 2022, and things like that. The reality on the ground is that the front line is barely moving at all. I mean, it's largely a frozen conflict. The war has moved into the skies, with strategic bombardment and that sort of thing. Yes, there's fighting on the front line, but it's not really like the Somme or Ypres or anything like that.

It's fairly small-scale. The Russians don't seem to be pushing for a major breakthrough, at least in the short term. They're not amassing forces in any significant way. You know, the whole thing has largely stabilized. It's just a slow, low-intensity slugfest that relies more on artillery and missiles than on troops and frontal assaults and that sort of thing. So this idea that Russia's losing 50,000 men under those circumstances seems to me to be an obvious lie. And in any case, if that's true, how many are the Ukrainians losing? And, you know, they face far greater structural challenges when it comes to mobilizing and bringing new forces to the front line.

I just don't think the front line is where the action's happening. I don't think casualties are the big story. Yes, there are casualties on both sides. People are dying every day. Of that, I'm absolutely sure. But, I mean, this just seems like wishful thinking. And whenever you look at the graph, the number of monthly casualties seems to go up. I jokingly tweeted last week that very soon Russia will be suffering 100,000 casualties a month because, you know, the graph has to keep going up, doesn't it? But surely more and more people must be able to see that this is just a lie and that the real battle is happening in Europe itself. You know, there are riots in France and Germany because people feel that their elitist, globalist leaders are just ignoring their needs.

#Guest

Yeah, but Ian, when you last very kindly had me on your show, I think I asked you a question right at the end of the broadcast. I said, "Is anyone in the Foreign Office or the Quai d'Orsay or the German Foreign Ministry having these conversations?" And you said no. You said you were pretty sure nobody was having these conversations. Tom Tugendhat, the shadow foreign secretary, wheeled out this old nonsense only last week about Russia being a gas station run by the mafia. I mean, this is just so far from the truth about the Russian state, the Russian economy, the way Russia works, and the way it's worked over the last few decades and even in the last few years.

But Tugendhat, if I remember correctly, used to have access to Foreign Office briefings or whatever. If you're right that nobody in the Foreign Office is having these conversations, not even among officials, let alone with ministers, then that's surely what they believe. They clearly do believe their own propaganda. You and I don't believe it, but they do. And that's the extremely dangerous situation we've got ourselves into. If I could just bring the conversation back for a moment: I'm not trying to move away from Ukraine. On the contrary, it's extremely important. It's the most important issue we're facing.

If we come back to Morrisons and Gibraltar and the stack of paper, all this nonsense—I think I sent you a link to this. There was some minister I'd never heard of, probably a junior minister, who goes into a supermarket, takes things off the shelf, puts them in his basket and says, "All this will be cheaper after our deal with the EU." This was just before the summit. And as it happens, he picks things like milk and eggs, which are produced in Britain anyway, so it's got nothing to do with the EU. Britain doesn't import eggs or milk from Europe. It's such basic stupidity. I mean, it's just so stupid.

It's a bit like the prime minister making TikTok videos about Mars bars or about people with noisy headphones on trains. This comes back to what I was saying about nudge. They clearly think their voters are stupid. They clearly think that people are mainly interested in the price of Mars bars and in, you know, people with noisy headphones on trains. That's what they think we're like, or what they think the majority of people are like. And I would simply return the compliment and say, "You have to be very stupid if that's what you think." Because, yes, I know politics is a lot about emotion, and people don't necessarily follow issues in any depth or whatever.

But even if people aren't particularly well educated, I'm skeptical that they're fooled, you know, by such nonsense, by these Andy Burnham TikTok videos. On the contrary, I would say that approach—you know, taking milk and eggs off the shelf and putting them in your supermarket basket, or the thing about the stack of paper—is objectively stupid. And yet these are government ministers, and even the prime minister. So I don't see why they wouldn't believe it. If their officials believe it, why shouldn't they? And that's the track we're on.

#Ian

Well, from having been on the inside, I think one of the reasons is that we stop looking at the evidence. Our outrage always trumps our need to actually look at real data, hard data and evidence. And, you know, there's a massive bias against anything that challenges our settled view. And in the deep state, as it is, you know, that view is deeply entrenched. The trenches are dug deep when it comes to how people think about why the war started and how it's progressing. There's a very simplistic view that because Europe's combined GDP is greater than Russia's, we should eventually prevail in a traditional war.

I think that's deeply flawed because of the reasons we discussed around debt levels and that sort of thing. Russia's debt is 20% of its GDP, whereas across Europe, with the exception of Germany, our debt levels are generally hovering around 100% of GDP or higher. And our organs of state have been infiltrated by the intelligence agencies. I mean, I've said publicly before that the Russia unit was co-led from 2015 by a member of the UK intelligence community. That basically meant it was led by them, not really co-led, right?

You know, we've put the spies in charge of policymaking, which I think has been a dreadful mistake. A dreadful mistake, you know, because diplomats, for all their faults, do like to take a balanced view of things, go through the evidence, and present actual options. The deep state depends on having an enemy for its funding, whereas diplomats depend on bringing people together for theirs. And I think that's a huge difference. Look at Tom Tugendhat. He's actually a serving reservist in British military intelligence.

#Guest

Yeah, okay.

#Ian

Mike Martin, who's the head of the cross-party parliamentary rearmament committee—and this committee exists now—is a Lib Dem and a serving reservist in British military intelligence. And if that's what happens to our politicians, if they become reservists in the Intelligence Corps, then we're all screwed, basically. I spoke to somebody from the Intelligence Corps a couple of years ago when I went to give a talk about Russia to a bunch of them. This lieutenant colonel was a true believer. He thought we just needed to boil the frog, and the Russians hadn't realized that the water was getting hotter.

#Guest

And this is what they think.

#Ian

So that's kind of my view, I'm afraid. And I don't know how to change it.

#Guest

Well, you've told me, and no doubt some of our viewers, something I didn't know. Maybe they knew it, but I didn't know that Tom Tugendhat and these other people were reservists. Are they in the Intelligence Corps itself? Is that what you mean by military intelligence?

#Ian

It's even on his Wikipedia page. You can look it up.

#Guest

I haven't done my homework on him. But that's very interesting to learn, and it's emblematic of the way our states operate. It's not just Britain, though it's definitely Britain. This is something people have noticed and worked on. The intelligence and security services are now structurally embedded in the decision-making process. They're the ones who make policy. That's what you've just said, and it' s what I've said on other podcasts, without having these particular facts to hand. There's a very bright student in Germany, Nell Bonilla, who works on this, on what she calls the "bunker state" policy, in which everything is viewed in terms of security, for exactly the reason you've just given me.

I suppose the only thing I'd add—and I expect you know all this stuff better than I do—is that we should never forget what these services actually do. You referred to them as spies. OK, they are spies, yes. They work covertly and so on, but the principal operational goal of these intelligence services is not to collect intelligence. It's to influence events. That's what they do. When I had my own MI6 interview a very long time ago now, which I failed, I was only asked one question—or at least I only remember one question—and that was, "Are you good at influencing people?"

Not "Are you good at listening to people?" or "Are you good at finding things out? Are you good at collecting information?" and so on, but "Are you good at influencing people?" And if we go back to 1947, when the CIA was set up, you can look this up in the Office of the Historian section of the official website of the American National Archives. The CIA was set up to conduct psychological operations, and George Kennan was involved. That's why it was set up. I suspect that if we looked back through the secret documents of the intelligence services in Britain, we'd find the same thing. That's what they do: they influence people. They conduct covert operations not to get information out, but to put information in, if you like, to influence the way decisions are made.

#Ian

Yeah. Well, the purpose of intelligence material itself is to influence the decisions policymakers make, right? I mean, there's that sort of covert purpose as well, you know. It's intended to be read by ministers and senior officials so they can shape policy. But anyway, that's a separate point. It's embedded in the media and in academia as well. I mean, there are obviously many examples, but there's the ex-military guy who's on Ukrainecast, you know, the podcast—Hamish de Bretton-Gordon at The Telegraph. A good academic friend of mine was talking about a KCL assistant professor who's particularly vocal on social media. He said, "Well, strictly speaking, she's not only working for KCL." And I could pretty easily infer what he meant by that.

But there we are. That's enough. I need to move on to something else, though I'd like to discuss this more. But yeah, look up Mike Martin. Look up Tom Tugendhat's Wikipedia page. It's on there. I mean, it's in plain sight, but people can't see it. I mean, the shadow foreign secretary, the Lib Dem chair of a parliamentary select committee on the environment. But there we go. We live in cynical, desperate times, John, and I see no easy way out except for, you know, a revolution and for people to actually start turfing these people out of office. But the state will fight tooth and nail to stop that from happening. So until then, we need to keep talking about these things. For now, John Laughland, thank you so much for joining us today. Thanks, everybody, for watching.

#Guest

That's exactly what it's doing. No, you just said revolution is the only way out. We've got to get rid of these people and so on. And I was simply agreeing with you. That's exactly what I meant when I said there's a battle between globalists and sovereignists, which is no doubt a large part of the explanation for the EU-UK agreement. The point is precisely to set up a system of control that can prevent any future eruption of public protest, as they see it. That's how they understand the Brexit referendum. That's precisely what we're dealing with.

#Ian

Yeah. All right, John, thanks so much, as always. Great to talk to you again. Thanks, everybody, for watching. Wherever you are in the world, whatever your nationality or religion, I wish you much peace. And John, let's talk again before too long.

#Guest

Very good.