

Alexander Mercouris: A New Putin? From Diplomacy to War

Alexander Mercouris discusses changes in the Kremlin as NATO continues to escalate the war against Russia. The Duran: <https://www.youtube.com/@TheDuran> Alexander Mercouris: <https://www.youtube.com/@AlexMercouris> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. Today we have the great privilege of being joined by Alexander Mercouris, the very popular host of The Duran. It's good to see you again.

#Alexander Mercouris

It's delightful to see you again, Glenn Diesen, and I'm very happy to be on this program.

#Glenn

Well, I want to talk to you today about whether or not we're seeing a new Putin in this war. That is, Putin just gave a speech. He also gave an interview, and he has recognized now, seemingly, that the West is behind attacks on Russia. I think this was common knowledge, but with this admission, it also implies that there's pressure on him to do something. He's also no longer talking that much about diplomacy as he did last year. Instead, there's more talk about war and victory.

There's talk now, again, in the interview he just gave, he talked about liberating Donbass and Novorossiia, which, you know, historical Novorossiia would then include Odessa. Again, he wasn't specific, but he also wants this long buffer zone in punishment for what Ukraine did in Kursk. This means not just a buffer along Kharkov, Sumy, possibly Chernigov, but indeed the Russian army is getting fairly close to both Kharkov and Sumy. So there might be the temptation of actually seizing Ukraine's second-largest city. So I was just wondering... what is happening? Again, is this a new Putin?

#Alexander Mercouris

It is a new Putin. Now, I have been talking about this for some time. I think that there was a key moment for the Russians, which happened actually in December when there was a drone attack on Putin's residence in Valdai. Now, I think a lot of people in Russia, maybe Putin himself, believe that this was an assassination attempt, and an extraordinary statement that Zelensky made just before the attack perhaps reinforced that belief. So I think that what then happened was that Putin went through a lengthy period, which lasted several weeks, of basically not talking very much about Ukraine. And that always made me think that there was some kind of internal debate going on in Russia within the leadership about what to do.

And then, of course, what happened is that the West escalated. It escalated with these drone attacks, which clearly they are heavily involved in—these drone attacks against Russia, more missile attacks too against Russian facilities, and a general narrative that the initiative in the war has passed to the Ukrainian side. And I think that probably contributed to this debate that was already happening in Russia. And that debate has now clearly ended. And Putin has come out the other end. And he is a Putin who is no longer talking diplomacy. He's no longer talking about negotiations. He's focused exclusively on victory. And at the same time, he's keen on stabilizing the internal situation within Russia itself. So this is a much harder Putin than the one we saw last year.

#Glenn

But part of the reason, I think, why he's chosen to change his posture a bit is obviously the rhetoric from the Europeans. It does appear that the European leaders are preparing for war. I would say Trump seems to be making a pivot back towards Ukraine, but he seems less eager for a direct war as opposed to the European leaders. How are you assessing that side of the equation—the Europeans and Trump's renewed interest in Ukraine?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, I recently was in Russia. I attended a conference in Skopje, and I met with some people in Moscow. The overwhelming consensus that I encountered was that people—not just people in government or connected to the government, but people you speak to who work in factories—and for the first time, I met people who work in factories. They see this war very much in Russia–West terms. And I think that the rhetoric coming out of Europe, about Europe being, in effect, on the brink of a war with Russia, has communicated itself to Russia too, and to Putin himself. A couple of days ago, he actually said that the Europeans—in fact, I think he actually spoke about the West.

It clearly means more that the Europeans are preparing for war with Russia, and Russia must prepare for war against Europe, the West. He was careful to say that Russia is not looking for a war, it is not being aggressive, but that it will defend itself and that it has adequate means to defend itself. And of course, all of this is happening in conjunction with the drone attacks on Russia. All of that has been, I think, more than enough to convince most people in Russia that when people in

Europe talk about war with Russia, Russia really does need to prepare for it, because in a sense, they're attacking it already.

#Glenn

Whenever I see the restraint, though, from Moscow, I'm not sure how much of this would be a concern about ending up in a world war, possibly a nuclear war with NATO countries, and how much more is buying time for preparations. Because if you think that the Europeans are very openly stating, setting dates for when the war with Russia will start, if I was advising Moscow, I would tell them to ramp up the Oreshnik arsenal and prepare a lot of ammunition to make sure that this war will not be fought on the enemy's terms and essentially hit out heavy, come out heavy, and then offer quickly for the Europeans to back off with some kind of peace. But again, I'm not sure which it is. It could be both, of course.

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, it could very well be both. But I think basically you are correct. I think that increasingly the Russians are now seeing that they are dealing with the West that has lost its fear of war with them and is talking about war all the time. I live in Britain, and the amount of rhetoric there is about war here is absolutely extraordinary. And the lack of popular opposition to the idea of war with Russia is also, frankly, dismaying. I mean, once upon a time, there would have been a lot of opposition, but there is very little, actually. And I think the Russians have drawn their own conclusions that war may very well be coming and that it is time to prepare for it.

And, of course, we have other people in Russia, people like Professor Karaganov, whom, of course, you know and have interviewed several times, who have been talking about the need to restore in the West that sense of fear of war, which currently no longer exists. Now, I think that, say, a year ago, he was still an outlier. I think that he was basically talking mostly for himself. I get the sense that more and more people in Russia are now listening to him. And when I talk about people in Russia, I mean people either in the leadership — you know, the Kremlin, the Security Council, the General Staff — or people who have access and are advising people in the government and, you know, in the Kremlin and all of these things. So we have had a very significant darkening of the mood, and really no further interest in diplomacy at all.

In this interview that Putin gave, the one that you just mentioned, he spoke about the various diplomatic initiatives that he's just received from the West, and he completely dismissed them. He said these are of no value, they're just tricks, they're not really intended to move us forward to a proper negotiated resolution. And he also said for the first time that there was no actual deal or agreement reached with the Americans in Anchorage. And of course, the significance of that is that if there was no deal reached in Anchorage, then that means that whatever the Russians agreed to in

Anchorage in order to get that agreement no longer applies. They're no longer bound by it. They can walk away from whatever concessions they made because, ultimately, the Anchorage process failed. So, a very, very strong darkening of the mood. And I think it's reflected right across Russian society.

#Glenn

Well, usually, I guess the discussion would be, though, how to restore the deterrent and also how to win the war, because Russia can go two ways. That is, it can either knock out Ukraine, and then the Europeans will be without their proxy. But of course, the Europeans could still go to war with Russia once they've been exhausted a bit. Alternatively, Russia goes after the puppet master — that is, after the NATO countries. But it makes kind of sense to focus on Ukraine. But on the other hand, is it possible, though? I mean, it looks as if defeating Ukraine wouldn't end the permanent war. I'm saying this because it's hard to imagine NATO giving up on this powerful proxy they're building.

Keep in mind that there have been a lot of possibilities for peace. Initially, the European countries agreed to this unity government back in 2014 when Yanukovich was destabilized. They ignored it and toppled him instead. Then we had Minsk. The Europeans and Americans had a chance to make peace. They didn't want to make peace. They continued to develop Ukraine as a proxy. In '21, we had people like Kurt Volker, who was the former U.S. ambassador to NATO, making the point, you know, we don't need a peace deal with the Russians. Let's just, you know—what was his phrase? “A conflict is success,” something along those lines.

Yeah, so essentially arguing that, you know, peace is not in our interest. And of course, in 2022, when the Russians invaded, they immediately contacted the Ukrainians to set up the Istanbul talks. And again... in retrospect, why would NATO accept for the Istanbul Agreement to go through? They spent all these years building a powerful Ukrainian proxy army of hundreds of thousands of men. Why wouldn't you use this to weaken a strategic rival? Peace doesn't really make sense. If there's peace, then this army is of no use anymore. Why not... why not bleed the Russians a bit, as the Turks said, as Naftali Bennett said, as the former head of the German army said?

I mean, this was kind of the consensus. But I'm saying that even if Ukraine loses all of Donbass, all of Novorossiia, even Kiev, why would the Europeans want to end this? Why not keep the Western Ukrainian resistance alive? Because as long as they hold part of Ukraine and control the population, they can continue raining missiles into Russia, trying to knock it out, weaken it. I'm just saying that it doesn't seem like Russia and Ukraine necessarily get to decide when this war is over. I mean, NATO largely started this war in 2014, and it looks as if they could decide how this ends. So how can Russia avoid a permanent war?

#Alexander Mercouris

I think you have summed up the situation very well. And I think you've also touched on the continuing internal debate that is taking place in Moscow. Now, I think that the debate is no longer,

can we negotiate a resolution to this crisis? It is whether we're going to achieve deterrence with the West through victory in Ukraine. In other words, whether merely achieving victory in Ukraine by itself will be sufficient to restore deterrence in relations with the West. I think that is still Putin's position, or alternatively, a more hardline position, which is starting to emerge, which is that, in fact, in order to restore deterrence, you have to go further. You have to go beyond victory in Ukraine.

You have to start doing other things, which will, going back to Professor Karaganov's words, finally restore fear in the West, because only through that means can you restore deterrence. And I think that debate is going on. And I think there is something else which takes us directly to the point that you've just been making, which is that it's probably going to change the ideas the Russians have about what victory in Ukraine means. They're very, very close now to achieving their initial objectives, at least their initial territorial objectives. I don't think anybody who retains any connection with reality any longer doubts that they're going to capture Donbass very soon. I mean, it's probably going to take a few months, but we are closing in on that.

Probably the same is going to eventually prove to be true about the other four regions — Zaporozhye, Kherson, and wherever. The Ukrainian military is looking increasingly exhausted, the Russian advance looking increasingly irresistible. But the question then becomes, what do you do when those objectives are achieved? Do you try and return to negotiations, try to see whether there's some kind of deal that can be done at that point, try to get the West and Ukraine to accept these realities and to agree to Ukrainian neutral status? I think there are increasing doubts in Moscow that that is possible, in which case the Russians, very much, I think, against their initial wishes, might decide that they have no real option but to push further west.

And I think that is something that in the West we have not understood. I think there's an assumption that because the Russians have taken so long to get to this point, they're not going to have any appetite to go beyond it, and they're not going to have the means to go beyond it. I think they may not have the appetite, but I think they may feel that they have the obligation to go beyond it. And I think that by the time Donbass, Zaporozhye, Kherson, and all the rest are captured, the Ukrainian military itself, the Ukrainian economy, will be so shattered that I don't think the rest of the war is going to take as long as some people assume. But in effect, by taking this extreme line, I mean, what we are very close to doing is sealing the fate of Ukraine, dooming it, dooming its future as an independent state.

#Glenn

Yeah, I keep seeing that argument as well. How can Russia possibly take Odessa? Look how long it took them to get Donbass. But as you said, this is a war of attrition. You look at the decline in manpower, the weaponry, the equipment, the economy, the social stability, political stability. I mean, all of this... yeah, the fortifications — you can measure it along many lines, but all of them indicate that it's heading towards an end. When that end comes, it's not as if Ukrainians can hold that line as they did in the former four years.

So, yeah, I think this is some of that sweet talk people tell themselves in the West to hold on to this “Ukraine is winning” narrative, which is apparently back in fashion. But I did see the President of Finland, Orpo, come out and say that, you know, our conditions are still that Ukraine should be part of NATO, which is a very European way of pretending to be for Ukraine but really saying there will be no peace — which is what you're saying if you demand NATO. You did say, though, that the war escalation will take other forms. We've also seen what you talked about — the rise of more dirty war as well. The Russians are now playing a greater role. How is this developing?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, I have to say, dirty war is something that I find very, very—it makes me very, very uncomfortable. But for the first time that I can remember in this conflict, the Russians have admitted carrying out the assassination of, in some place and in some way that they don't tell us about, a Ukrainian military intelligence official. So if the Russians have done this once, there's no reason why they won't do it again. And if we get into this situation of tit-for-tat killings of intelligence officials, there's every reason to fear that it will start to expand beyond intelligence officials, that it will start to extend to people within the political system as well. Now, the Ukrainians have never shown any hesitation or inhibitions here.

Up to now, the Russians have, I suspect, in part always hoped that ultimately they will achieve a negotiated end to the conflict, and they need to keep the people they're going to negotiate with in the end alive. But of course, if that calculus changes, then we could start to see that also shift. And of course, the Russians have far more resources and formal capabilities in this area than the Ukrainians do, and nobody should be in any doubt about that. And of course, if we start to see a dirty war like that — a war of assassinations and extrajudicial killings — begin, then there's no reason to think it will be limited to Ukraine. It could start to spread to Europe, where there will be a lot of these people probably, and a lot of this will start to play out in all sorts of other places as well.

And this is going to be very, very uncomfortable for us indeed. I can remember how Europe became the location of a dirty war in the 1970s between the Palestinians and the Israelis, with bomb attacks and assassinations and killings and all of that going on. And it was very uncomfortable for the European governments that had to see all of this play out on their own territory. I mean, there was a massive disruption, as I'm sure you remember, of the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972, just for example. But the players who would be playing this game are going to be measurably more powerful. We're talking not about Israelis and Palestinians; we're talking about Russians and a superpower, or at least a sort of great power on the one side. And ultimately, if the Americans get involved too, well, you can imagine how deeply unpleasant and dangerous that can easily become.

#Glenn

Of course, there are different technologies in play as well. With drones, I mean, I keep wondering as well, when you see all this drone warfare, how this is going to change terrorism, for example. Drone terrorism is going to be—it's going to change—I mean, it's going to be so easy to do any attacks from now on. It's kind of frightening. Well, look, the killing of the intelligence leader in Ukraine, also Rostem Fakriev, yeah, I was noticing that you haven't seen this much from the Russian side. Yeah. But on the development of the war, though, I mean, you and I are both Europeans.

We know that it's obligatory in Europe to pretend that Ukraine is winning. This is what we have to chant now to show our loyalty to our countries. If you recognize realities on the ground that, in fact, they're not winning, then that's considered to be a pro-Russian talking point. And, you know, one is smeared for it as well. The casualty rates, even, you know, can be measured to some extent by the exchange of dead soldiers. We tend to see that exchanges are about, you know, for every thousand Ukrainians, there's about 50 Russians. So something's not right there.

And also, one could argue that, yes, it's the people who are advancing on the battlefield who are picking up the bodies. But again, we're told that the Ukrainians are retaking their territory. So it's very hard. I mean, I try to ask people this question: how does this make sense? But there's some cognitive dissonance, and usually people get angry and reassure me that that's a Russian talking point, even though no one's disputing the numbers or these facts. So it's very difficult to have any sensible talks or conversations anymore in Europe. But I guess my question is then, how do you see the front lines moving in this war of attrition?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, first of all, can I just say your point, your frustration that you point out these logical inconsistencies, these factual contradictions to people, and all that you get is sullen anger. And sometimes more than just sullen anger becomes open anger. You're absolutely right. People simply do not want to address these realities. And if we're talking about the situation on the front lines, well, anybody who observes what is happening objectively can see it for themselves. The Russians are now at the gates of Kramatorsk, Slavyansk, all of these places, the last defense line left in Donbass. Beyond that, apparently, it's mainly open steppe until you get to one or two, just a few big towns, and then the Dnieper itself.

In the Zaporozhye region, where there's been a lot of movement on the front lines, nonetheless the movement is clearly in favor of the Russians. And in northeastern Ukraine, in Sumy and Kharkiv—well, indeed, as you also pointed out, these two cities, Sumy and Kharkiv, are now also threatened too. This narrative that Ukraine is winning, that the Russians are losing, that the Ukrainians are getting the initiative, that the drones are somehow the miracle weapon that's going to restore the initiative to the Ukrainians—but all we need to do is go on doing the same thing again and again and again.

And this time it's going to turn out right because there's been a 0.5% uptick in the inflation rate, or because growth has been slightly less strong in the Russian economy than it has been. These narratives that we hear, these illusions that we hear all the time, I mean, they are simply wishful thinking, rationalizations put out there by people who simply want to continue the war. And what they are doing is that they are merely ensuring that the defeat, when it comes, will be more complete and more disastrous for us than it might otherwise be. And of course, going back to your point about Ukraine, more disastrous first and foremost for Ukraine, which is the nation we are supposed to be defending.

#Glenn

No, it's quite incredible, which is why this concept of pro-Ukraine or standing with Ukraine or supporting Ukraine—they never really unpack it. They just come up with this concept. Everyone has empathy for what Ukraine has gone through. But somehow, if you monopolize on the content of what this concept should entail—that is, you know, if you want to be pro-Ukrainian, for example, you have to look the other way when there's this brutal recruitment of men, because this can undermine support for the war. You also have to support the boycott of diplomacy, ignore that most Ukrainians actually want immediate negotiations. That's also pro-Ukrainian, because otherwise, yeah, you undermine support for the war. So it's very strange narratives they've built up.

But while there's a lot of fake news and narrative developments about Ukraine winning, it has to be said that NATO and Ukraine are causing some real pain for Russia, especially in Crimea. There's a fuel crisis, there are attacks on infrastructure. This is becoming a huge problem. Of course, whenever the European leaders and media celebrate these attacks, they don't seem to appreciate that this is making it very difficult for Russia to restrain itself, essentially forcing its hand to do something extreme. I mean, how are you seeing this component of the war? Because I was making the point, how much success do you want against a nuclear superpower? The largest nuclear power in the world is fearing for its existence by this perpetual goal of humiliating Putin. I mean, no one really discusses the logic of this, whether or not this is something that either Ukraine or NATO would benefit from.

#Alexander Mercouris

I think, again, you're making absolutely the correct point. Firstly, this is a problem. I mean, Crimea in particular is a very big problem for the Russians, but it is a problem that they will overcome. I say that based on what has consistently happened in the war up till now. We've created problems for the Russians in all sorts of areas—in the situation within their domestic economy, on the battlefields with the Ukrainian offensives of 2022, 2023, with all sorts of other things that we've done at various times. And the one iron lesson that we get from this war is that the Russians have the resources and the ingenuity, always, and the will, always, to come up with solutions. So this is a problem for them in Crimea, but they will overcome it in some way.

The question is not whether we are inflicting pain on the Russians. Obviously, we are. Is it enough to get the Russians to give up on the war and to give up on their objectives? Or is it going to do something completely different, which is make the Russians angrier and more determined to see the war through and to achieve an outcome in that war which might be less beneficial or good for us? I would say emphatically the second. I mean, we can hurt the Russians, but we can't knock them out. Again, that's another iron lesson that we've learned from the war. So what we are doing by these attacks is that, yes, we're making life more difficult for them, but ultimately we're going to make life worse for us and a lot worse for the Ukrainians.

Now, there is a further point which you did make, and it is an important one, which is that, of course, constantly poking a nuclear power is never a good idea. Once upon a time during the Cold War, this was fully understood. We both lived through the Cold War. I remember it vividly. I never remember a single situation where these kinds of attacks were carried out by one of the two superpowers against the other. Now we do this all the time, and we've got into this situation where we think we can hit the Russian superpower continuously and never provoke a response. And what, again, I think we are overlooking is that it is taking all of President Putin's determination and authority to maintain that sense of discipline and restraint on the Russian side. And that is not something that we can afford to assume will remain the case forever.

#Glenn

I'm firmly convinced that if it hadn't been for Putin, if there had been some other leader representing Russia, it would most likely be much, much more hawkish, and Europe would be a much more dangerous place today. So it confuses me a bit why there's such an eagerness to try to humiliate Putin, to push him aside whenever there's an argument that Putin is losing support. Still, he enjoys support that no other European leaders enjoy. But nonetheless, what exactly do they think is going to replace Putin? The idea that, well, his slow war is going to be somehow replaced with capitulation? Or is this slow war going to be replaced with a massive retaliation, also against European countries betting on the United States not coming to their aid?

I just find it to be foolish, but it is a question about Europe. How do you make sense of the leaders these days? Because if you go back a few years, if you had told me a decade ago that we were going to be launching missiles directly into Russia from our territory, our weapons, that we were going to have our war planners openly bragging about our participation, our contractors, intelligence officers, and politicians bragging about how we're going to bring the war to Russia—well, you've got people like the president of Finland telling everyone that the only way to win the war is to kill more Russians.

I mean, this is so far beyond anything. Forget about the Cold War. Even a decade ago, any of this would have been unthinkable. Five years ago, this was unthinkable. Now you have the Germans wanting to take the lead in the campaign against Russia. They want to be the largest military power in Europe. I mean, this happened fairly quickly. And they only talk about war. Again, that has to be

made the point. Europeans are still not talking to Russia. I mean, how do you explain what is happening in Europe? Because, you know, I don't recognize my own society anymore. This has become a very ugly place, I would say.

#Alexander Mercouris

I'd say exactly the same about Britain. It's become very, very difficult to talk about these things. And one of the reasons why we have this constant pattern of escalation is because the internal debates that ought to be taking place never are, because all debate is closed down. If anybody comes forward and says, well, look, is this really a good idea to be conducting missile strikes into the territory of the world's most powerful nuclear power?

Well, again, what you find is that the moment you say that, you're told that that's a Putin talking point, you're accused of defeatism, or worse still, of being actually on the Russian side. The momentum, the advantage, the rhetorical advantage is always with those who advocate escalation. The political advantage is always with those who advocate escalation. And this is a very, very dangerous situation. And it's one that we have created amongst ourselves, because never mind that we can't talk to the Russians, we can't talk intelligently any longer amongst ourselves. And that's the real problem.

#Glenn

No, that's one of the biggest shocks for me. I always assumed that if we came into a conflict like this, at least we were going to have a rational discussion and we were going to make rational choices. But I think this, again, I think there's a bit of a flaw as well about how the post-Cold War era was going to end. That is the era of collective hegemony or liberal hegemony. I remember Charles Krauthammer wrote this article in 1990, I think, about the unipolar moment, and the argument was, well, we'll dominate the world as long as the distribution of power permits it. Once the distribution of power shifts, we have a multipolar world, then we'll embrace it. I don't think people recognized we would have this whole 30-year-long rise of a new political class completely immersed in this ideology that our dominance is the only source of peace, and we'd rather have war than accept a new distribution of power. So the rationality is something that took me a bit by surprise, how quickly this went away.

#Alexander Mercouris

I think you're absolutely correct about this. By the way, you've charted a lot of this in your various books that you've written, just to say, and which would be very useful reading for many people. I remember reading one of your books in which you showed the extraordinary arrogance with which Western officials, European as well as American, dealt with their Russian opposite numbers, consistently refusing to accept that the Russians had any legitimate security concerns at all and applying what you described as salami tactics against the Russians all the time. So, yes, we have got

ourselves, we've worked ourselves into that situation, and it's very difficult to see how, short of a major crisis and a real defeat in some form, we're ever going to be shaken out of it.

The one thing I would say is that despite the fact that opposition to war in Europe is not very well organized and not very articulate, it is there nonetheless. Germany is finding it all but impossible to find people willing to join the army to fight Russia at the moment. I read that something like 200,000 young people were contacted, invited to enlist, and only 500 said they would. You get that. In Britain, I hear the same story—that, in fact, recruitment rates for the army are actually down rather than up. So there is no huge enthusiasm among the European populations for this great initiative, you know, duel and war with the Russians. But of course, the political leadership, they've closed down dialogue and debate with each other. And you were talking previously about trying to explain to people the factual inconsistencies and illogicalities that they're coming up with.

One of the reasons those survive, people are able to talk about the Russians being enormously powerful and threatening, even as they're supposed to be losing the war in Ukraine, both at the same time. It's precisely because we don't have debates in the West, in Europe at least, anymore. In the United States, it's a little different. I think the Americans do have some greater sense that this isn't really rational anymore. And I do get the sense that in spite of the fact that Trump has probably, to some extent, pivoted somewhat back to Ukraine recently, if you read the American media, you do get the feeling that some of the passion has gone out of this war as far as the Americans are concerned. They've seen that it was attempted, that it has failed. They're now thinking about other things.

#Glenn

Let me ask the last question there. Because it's often assumed by many that the war could come to an end once the European leaders who have been championing this war begin to be voted out. And indeed, that's one problem we have now in Europe. Well, not a problem—it could be a solution. That is the severe unpopularity, the unpopular governments we have across the continent. I always make the point, at least the British, the French, and the Germans, they have a big opposition. In Scandinavia, everyone's more or less just marching in line to the tune of the government. But in those big three European countries of the UK, France, and Germany, the leaders are extremely unpopular, and there's a huge opposition growing. But again, it's all premised on the idea that it, I guess, it matters who sits on the throne. Because, well, from your case, sitting in Britain, Starmer has now resigned. But does it matter, I guess, who replaces him by now? Yeah.

#Alexander Mercouris

No, I mean, at the moment, there's no sign at all that we're going to see any change in policy from the new prime minister, who's almost certainly going to be Andy Burnham. I mean, people talk about the fact that we've had this constant rotation of prime ministers. They talk about the fact that we've had six prime ministers in the last 10 years. They hardly ever say that four of those prime

ministers have been forced to leave since 2022. In other words, the rotation has actually accelerated because of the conflict in Ukraine and the enormous economic costs that Britain is experiencing as a result of this conflict. Nobody talks about that. And the result is that we just have one prime minister replacing another prime minister, carrying on exactly the same policy with respect to the situation with Russia.

And the result is that the economic situation continues to deteriorate. The prime minister becomes unpopular. But all that happens is that the political system coughs up someone else who does exactly the same. And the rotation just continues and gets worse. And I'm afraid this is the trouble right across Europe. Yes, there is opposition. There are parties in Germany, in Italy, in France, which consistently show that they want to change course. But the problem they always run into is that not only is the political establishment very, very wedded to its existing policy, but because it regards anybody who challenges that policy as being pro-Russian and ultimately treasonous, their inhibitions about doing things to stop those who advocate alternatives seem to fall away. So we've had elections cancelled in Romania.

Extraordinary things happened in elections in Moldova and in Armenia. We've had very strange things happen in Austria, too. Sooner or later, they're going to start happening in the big European states also. I know this is something that people find very difficult to accept. But the iron lesson is, if you export these kinds of practices, eventually they start to get imported back. And we're going to see them in Europe too, in the big countries in Europe too. I personally am less confident that we're going to see a big change from these opposition parties, certainly in the relatively short term. And we are in the midst of a crisis that is playing out in the relatively short term. In five years, in 10 years, it may be different. But what we need is a change now.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, I often look towards the American example of how Trump, you know, ran on the ticket against the establishment. No more wars. You know, I'm going to put an end to the war in Ukraine. And here it is. I mean, it doesn't seem like it matters who's sitting in the White House. Much of the policies remain. Can I just finish?

#Alexander Mercouris

Very last point. Again, I have to be very careful what I say now, because I'm talking about something that I was told in confidence by somebody who has worked at the very, very highest level of the British government. But one of these four prime ministers—I'm not going to say which one, it's not actually that difficult to guess—who lost his position over the course of the four years since 2022, came into government, apparently became prime minister, saying that this policy with Russia is unsustainable and needs to be changed. And apparently, very quickly, this person discovered that if they really did try to change the policy, they would not be prime minister for very long.

#Glenn

In Italy, they call it, they refer to Meloni as, you know, before and after the election, how everyone has to fall in line, essentially.

#Alexander Mercouris

Exactly. Yeah.

#Glenn

Anyway, thank you so much. It's always a great pleasure.

#Alexander Mercouris

Thank you. Thank you, Glenn Diesen.