

Lawrence Wilkerson: Iran War Escalates Toward Global Crisis

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson is a retired Colonel in the US Army and the former Chief of Staff to the US Secretary of State. Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennadiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@GDiesen1> Support the research: 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, everyone. I'm very pleased that Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson is joining us again, the former Chief of Staff to the U.S. Secretary of State. So, thank you for coming back on.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Good to be with you, Glenn, even if it is such dire times.

#Glenn

Well, it is quite dire. And I see not just this war on Russia, which is now moving into a dangerous phase, but the war against Iran as well. It appears really to be spiraling out of control quite fast. The destruction now, I mean, it looks like it's less intensity, but the destruction is going seemingly beyond the previous rounds in terms of what they're willing to hit. That is, I guess, neither side sees any purpose in diplomacy anymore. And also, the Iranians now seem to be more open to retaliate more against critical infrastructure. They don't seem to be looking to prevent the deaths of U.S. soldiers in order to prevent escalation. They seem also willing to go after U.S. tech and desalination plants. I was just wondering, how are you assessing the situation based on what the Iranians are willing to hit and also what the Americans are going after? How do you see the competing strategies here?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

In a very short summary, I see the Iranians being resolute, strategic, and determined, and I see Donald Trump being a wishy-washy, typical Donald Trump individual who's in a mess and can't figure out a way to get out, and has an array of characters around him, most prominently Pete Hegseth, who are anything but help. But let me back up a bit and reemphasize a couple of things

that I said moons ago, it seems now, but only a short time ago. This war has been going on some time, even though Donald Trump said it would be very quick and over in no time. And I just watched this press conference where he said, we're going to implement the blockade again and no one's getting through.

No one's getting through. No one's getting through. Are you listening to me? No one's getting through. How does that help things? If no one is going to get through to Strait of Hormuz now, how does that help things? I think this is indicative of a man who's lost his reason, if he ever had any to begin with. But Hegseth is sitting there right in front of him in the Oval Office, and he turns it over to Hegseth, and Hegseth just expounds on how we're destroying Iran. We're ruining everything in Iran. We are making them come to their knees, and they will have to negotiate. I think from every indication that I have, there is no more division in Iran.

It is wrong to say that there are hardliners, moderates, soft ones, whatever. There is no IRGC. There is no Iranian military. There is no Guardian Council. There is no Ayatollah. There is no Majlis. They are one. They are Persia, if you will. And they are 93 million strong, being killed every day by us in war crime after war crime after war crime, about which Hegseth said nothing. But they are resolute. And here's what I said earlier: with the help of a very sophisticated Chinese satellite, and probably backups from Russia, Iran has the capability to deliver some of the most sophisticated ballistic missiles in the world on targets throughout the region at their direction.

In other words, you have a first list of targets that they have hit now, you have a second list of targets that they have hit a number of, and then you have a third list which they're just starting on. I think they have a fourth and a fifth list, and I think those are the lists that will throw the world into global depression if they execute, which is why, smart people that they are—and I think there are some very smart people at the head of all this in Iran—they don't want to.

They don't want to hit these because, as they hit them, they will compromise the sympathy and empathy that exist in the world right now—not just with Russia and China, North Korea, and others who are, quote, on their side, unquote, but also with the global community, which we know from recent reporting is about two-thirds focused on China as being a positive entity in the world, and about a similar amount, quote, looking at America as being the greatest threat to the future of the globe, and certainly to them. This includes 90-plus percent of Pakistanis. It includes a considerable percentage, over 50 percent of those under 40 on the Korean Peninsula—an ally, mind you.

It includes two-thirds of the world that now thinks, in polling, that China is more advantageous to their interests and power than the United States of America, and even thinks, in fairly substantial majorities, that the United States of America is a danger to their future. All to say that if Iran does move to the second, third, and fourth echelon targets—and I put in this category some targets that they've already begun to demolish, like Fujairah, the UAE's only outlet for its oil that is, of course, outside the specific Strait of Hormuz and down on the coast of Oman—and Yanbu, and what's happening in the Red Sea, which we can talk about, but I think that is a whole new dimension to it

because the Red Sea is far more important, far more important than the Persian Gulf to worldwide commodity traffic of all kinds—foodstuffs, oil and gas, and you name it—it goes through the Suez Canal and through the Red Sea.

And we did a tabletop exercise at the formerly called Peace Institute in Washington a few years ago where we invited everyone. All you Europeans were there, including the EU formally, including European Command, the US Command in Europe, including NATO. We had MARAD there. We had AIG there. We had other insurers and shippers like that. We had virtually the entire interested community in the West there to talk about the subject matter being defined as: has the Red Sea surpassed the Persian Gulf in being the strategic competition, the strategic cockpit of competition in the region, in Southwest Asia? And the conclusion was overwhelming—yes, it had. Amongst all the military, all the civilians, who else was there that was very interested in this business?

Some of the Mercy, for example, was there—some of the humanitarian organizations for the globe. And they weighed in in the various working groups we had too. All to say that we decided, and I think we were right, that the Red Sea is a far more important region and a far more important commodity flow, if you will, through the Suez Canal up to the port of Eilat. It used to go there. It doesn't go there anymore because the Houthis have shut it down. I don't even think that port is operational anymore. But that's the real blow. One of the things we also looked at—we looked at the Strait of Malacca for this reason. We looked at the Strait of Hormuz. We looked at other places similar for this reason. And we looked at the Bab al-Mandab and the Red Sea.

And we said, how much does it cost? How much does it cost shippers and ultimately the merchants using them to go around the Horn, as opposed to going through the Red Sea? And unlike the Strait of Malacca, where we could find workarounds that were significant and put a lot of de-emphasis on the Strait of Malacca, at least in our minds—security minds—because we found lots of workarounds where you could still ply the South China Sea and get your product to market, if you will, you can't do that here without vastly increased costs. So, if the Houthis do what they said they're going to do, and what they have proved they can do—they did it before—and Pete Hegseth says that he was going to open the place up and get rid of the Houthis and everything else, he did no such thing. We ran with our tail between our legs from the Red Sea.

I suspect we'll do the same thing again. Then we're looking at another dimension to this crisis. And if Iran does move, as it has moved now apparently through the Houthis, the Saudi capability to put oil out of the Red Sea, and as it's moved apparently or will finally foreclose UAE and Fujairah, and if it moves to other targets like Ras Tanura, or it continues to expand its target list like it has in Jordan and in Kurdistan, which is around Sulaymaniyah, it's virtually destroyed every possibility that the Peshmerga, the Kurds in general, would come into the conflict in Iran. It would be another stupid move by the Kurds. But I'm told by some that we were pressing them hard to do that. They're not capable of doing that now. And I think Iran has exquisite intelligence on things like this.

In addition to that Chinese satellite, which is giving them real-time intelligence probably as sophisticated as anything we have, maybe even more so, because when they hit that hangar in Jordan with a ballistic missile only seconds after the F-35 had pulled inside and the hangar door had closed, and blew the whole thing up, including the airplane, that showed me that they've got some sophisticated help with regard to targeting, intelligence gathering, and such. If they go on with that kind of help to these next tiers of targets that are purely economic and damaging to the globe, not just to the region, then we're in deep trouble in terms of commodity exchange, in terms of flow of maritime assets, in terms of 60% of the world's commodities passing through the Red Sea.

60% was the percentage we were given. And it's everything from foodstuffs to oil and gas and the other things that we talk about all the time. You turn that around the Horn and you increase the cost so much that inflation and affordability globally will be damaged. It'll be impacted majorly. It'll give even more impetus to the railroads that China is building and using now, and going to take over from the maritime world—economic doings, if you will, economic power going with it—if it's allowed to use these railroads, which is another reason why we're doing what we're doing in Iran. I'm not sure Trump's aware of it, but it certainly is another reason. We're going to be in significant trouble, Glenn, and I don't mean by "we" the United States of America so much as I mean the globe.

And Donald Trump's attempts to explain to the American people that we don't have any problems. Why do we run out of diesel in another 30 days? Why can't we get some of the things we need in order to raise crops in this country? Why can't we get the various and sundry things we need from China, which they have foreclosed completely now because domestic consumption is all they need, and a few other partners other than the empire? Wait until they realize what's stopped in terms of production of defense equipment, because we can't get the pieces of it that we need, whether it's sophisticated electronics or rare earth metals or whatever. This is a ripe-for-disaster situation Trump has got us into.

And according to that press conference, his solution for it now is to double down on the current strategy—if you can find the current strategy other than dropping bombs, creating more war crimes, killing more children, more women, blowing up more hospitals, going closer to more nuclear plants, and such. And I don't see how he gets out of this. I really don't. He has foreclosed the options he might have had, with probably the last one that he just majorly forced closed on being the memorandum of understanding, whose paragraph five was an admission of defeat. But it was an admission of defeat that was sort of masked.

And had he gone through with that and carried out what was intended to be carried out there, then I think we could have extricated ourselves with a little less damage, particularly physical damage, than we're going to be able to do so now. I'm not even sure we're going to be able to do so now. I think we're, you know, John Mearsheimer on with Chris Hedges the other day talked about Vietnam.

And John talked about Vietnam fairly intelligently, I think, which is John's wont. But he left out a number of things. And one of the things he left out that, you know, I taught this case study for 16 years.

One of the things he left out was that LBJ was trapped by his own excellent potentialities with regard to the domestic political situation. When he told George Ball, I think it was, and Walt Rostow was in the room, and McNamara too, I think, the Defense Secretary, when he said in his Texas jargon way, "Ho ain't going to be moved by no bombs," he was talking about dropping the equivalent plus of all the iron dumb bombs we dropped on Germany in World War II, but on North Vietnam. So he knew positively, as John said, he knew positively there was no way we could win that war by bombing the North. No way we could win that war probably at all. He knew that.

But he also knew positively that if he, as a president who had assumed the presidency through the assassination of John Kennedy, if he, as that president, were to be perceived as cutting and running from Vietnam—which is what his opponents would have perceived him as—and cast out aspersions onto the American people, if he were perceived as that, he'd never get his Great Society through the Congress. And that was his first and foremost goal, to get that through the Congress. And he did. He was a powerful politician. I would say he made a much better president, having come from the Senate and the power position he maintained there, than Joe Biden ever did. Joe Biden just didn't have the leadership qualities that LBJ did, no matter what we think about LBJ. He had leadership qualities. He had character. And he drove that into the Congress, which he knew quite well.

And he drove it into one of the most successful political programs ever put forward by a president. But he did that because the domestic situation demanded that he do that and not be perceived as cutting and running from Vietnam, and he knew that, and it agonized him so badly. You know, Glenn, when I saw him say he wasn't going to run again—I watched it on television, of course—I was more moved emotionally and otherwise, and I was no big fan of LBJ, but I did recognize his quality as president. I was more moved by that declaration because it told me that this leader, this man of character, despite what I might have thought of him in some ways, this man was retreating from the fight. He was leaving the fight when he said he wasn't going to run again. That was a more significant moment for me in my life, in terms of the presidency of the United States, than Dick Nixon resigning because he knew the articles of impeachment would make him the first president removed by that process from office.

So he preferred to resign, by Dick. And Dick was a Republican, and I was a Republican. But LBJ's resignation really moved me. And the reason he left—and I elaborate on this—is because the domestic political situation for Donald Trump is bad. Extremely bad. It's bad for his entire administration. It's bad for the individuals who are going to be, in some ways, probably held accountable for their dereliction of duty during this time period, if we have a reasonable transition and there is some kind of calmness about it afterwards and we don't have a civil war—another prospect altogether alarming. But this is going to be one of the most excoriated, reviled administrations in the history of the United States, if not the most.

And it is going down right now so rapidly in the polls that I don't see any way they're going to resurrect themselves, even the party, the Republican Party. And this business of selling out your soul to Israel through 219 and 224 in the Senate and in the Congress as a whole through the National Defense Authorization Act. What we're doing there, Glenn, is we are taking the treachery of Jonathan Pollard, the treason of Jonathan Pollard. If you go back and read that chapter in Sy Hersh's book about Jonathan Pollard and what he did to America, you understand that what we're doing now is legalizing that treason in both intelligence exchange with Israel and all that means, because that's what Pollard was doing.

And Israel was selling some of that intelligence to—yeah, guess who? The Soviet Union. And we'll do the same thing now, and even worse, probably, especially if they are in any kind of condition to survive after this is over with. But we are making that treachery, that treason that Jonathan Pollard perpetrated—we're making it legal in those two sections of the NDAA that it looks like we're going to pass. So this is a terrible situation for the empire, a terrible situation for the republic we supposedly are in particular, but also a terrible situation for Donald Trump.

And John was right in the assertion that this is getting worse and worse, and one wonders what the reaction is going to be when Donald realizes, if he can, if he is capable of realizing, just how badly he is going to be defeated and run out of town, if you will, as the Republican Party as we approach the midterms. Now, will it be civil war? Will it be something that I'm not even contemplating right now, or contemplating with some great fear? I don't know. It could be. I think we are at a point now where we were, as I've said several times before, in 1859 and 1860, with the difference being the divisions are the same. The inability to talk with one another is the same. The deep, deep hatred is the same.

People for people within this own country. But it's a different issue altogether. And the most comforting thought for me is a discomfoting thought for the empire and ultimately for me too. One of the reasons I don't think we would is because Americans, frankly, don't have the gall. They don't have the courage. They don't have the wherewithal. They're too fat. They're too confident. They're too busy sitting at the table eating their French fries and hamburgers. They're like Donald Trump. They are too indolent to get into a real fracas. I hope that's the truth anyway. ISIS is not, though. And ISIS is doing all manner of things right now that are very disturbing, not the least of which is taking Rubio's list of communists in the country, like Amy Goodman and Ben Cohen, our sponsor and financier at the Eisenhower Media Network, and pronouncing them communists.

You can't make this up. The things that we're doing right now are, in addition to killing Iranians through war crime after war crime after war crime—women, children, doesn't matter. We'll kill anything in Iran. We'll drop bombs on anything in Iran, apparently. And is that ever going to come back to haunt us? Probably. Ultimately, it is going to come back to haunt us. The latest decision by the mayor of New York to conclude that New York has no capacity to arrest Bibi Netanyahu—what he really means is it has no will to arrest Bibi Netanyahu—is an indication of how difficult it is to hold

anyone accountable anywhere in this business of breaking every law, both domestic and international, that is possible to be broken, because that's what this regime has done.

That's what Donald Trump has set as a precedent for any previous or any subsequent president to look back on, to hold someone accountable for. And if Obama's any indication there, it won't be done, because Obama didn't hold anybody accountable for public torture, for national approval, for presidential approval of human torture. So where are we, Glenn? Other than in a real, huge, domestic, global, by our own hand—Ukraine and Iran being the two primary examples—mess. We are poorly led, and we're in the middle of an unbelievable mess.

#Glenn

Well, I share many, if not all, of your concerns. I mean, the political meltdown in the United States—I think this can create a lot of unforeseen consequences. It could also not just be a political meltdown, but also a possible economic crisis being unleashed, much worse than 2008, be it by debt, unsustainable debt, or even a currency crisis. I'm also very worried about the global economy being pushed off a cliff, obviously. Even the food crisis—once the food crisis hits, it's going to spur a lot of new conflicts and problems, which would be difficult to foresee.

But also the collapse of diplomacy. I mean, you can see all the crises will begin to get worse, and yet there's nothing there. Leaders can't even talk to each other anymore. They all behave like 12-year-old girls in a schoolyard, trying to freeze each other out. It's quite disappointing, and of course, the war against Russia now—I think this has reached a critical phase. That is, Russia now sees retaliation as being imperative in order to restore deterrence.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

It's a war with NATO. It knows it's a war with NATO.

#Glenn

Oh, definitely.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Yeah. It is so clear to Putin and others in Russia, I'm sure, that what's the next step if you're at war with NATO? Yeah.

#Glenn

I think they're stacking up armored vehicles, Oreshnik missiles. I think they know that at some point they have to not just punish Kiev, but put a blockade on Odessa. At some point, they're going to have to go after a NATO country to restore its deterrent. But before you do this, because it can

escalate out of control, I think they're preparing themselves for the possibility of it spiraling out of control. So there are a lot of things I'm worried about. But when it comes to the Iran war, though, I'm curious—what is it that brings you the most concern? Because we've seen, again, the widening of targeting. For example, the surprise attack in Syria, where they went after the U.S. troops there, which was quite interesting. Or, as you said before, the attacks on the Kurds in Homs.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

We're completely denying that, Glenn. We're completely denying that. We're saying that there were no U.S. military personnel in Syria, period.

#Glenn

Yeah, or official statements. I mean, in Europe, the political media establishment are in full consensus that NATO is not involved in the war on Russia. So, you know, I don't know who listens to them anymore. But again, you have the widening of targeting by Iran now. You know, a lot of things can happen very quickly as well in terms of changing. That is Kuwait. If, you know, going after desalination plants and energy infrastructure, something could crack there. They could be absorbed by Iraq. Bahrain is extreme. Bahrain is...

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Is there any Kuwait left? I'm serious. I don't see that there's much of Kuwait left, or Bahrain, or for that matter, other Gulf states that are now in deep trouble. And I see Iranian-backed Iraqi militias contemplating coming south from Basra and taking advantage of it, because the Gulf states are almost devoid of people who could oppose. They've left. They're gone.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, that's what I'm thinking. All the Gulf states are very vulnerable, but Kuwait could be absorbed into Iraq. Bahrain would be very vulnerable to regime change, to shed the Sunni dictatorship there. You have a place like Jordan, which could erupt into civil war or regime change as well. As you said, the American political and media establishment are focusing now on the Iranian missiles suddenly getting much faster and more accurate. And as you said, the Russians and Chinese are probably involved. I just assumed they would be.

Of course, the U.S. has been focused on fighting this Ukrainian proxy war against Russia now for 12 years. The Chinese know that its economy is a key target of the war in Iran. So I guess, well, why wouldn't they? The Red Sea is shutting down. How about a land invasion? This is a possibility, or... are we sleepwalking into a nuclear war? I hear the U.S. now will allow the Saudis to have more enrichment. I don't know. There are a lot of things all happening at once. I'm just wondering, what is it that worries you the most here?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I think what you just mentioned about MBS and Trump, and what they announced with regard to a nuclear program for Saudi Arabia, is on both of their parts a desperate attempt — on Trump's part, to maintain U.S. relevance in Southwest Asia, which is rapidly dissipating and disappearing, and on MBS's part, to maintain some kind of relationship with the empire, because it's not quite sure yet that it's dead with respect to that region. And it could go haywire in an instant. And I'm sure that both sides are counting on one aspect of that going haywire to their benefit — that is to say, Saudi Arabia will build a nuclear weapon.

And so we had taken something that was reasonably under control with the JCPOA — the signature diplomatic achievement of the Obama administration. The agreement that Iran was subject to under the JCPOA was, in my view, 95% to 96%, and in international relations that's hugely successful — capable of working for 25 years, longer if it were renewed in that period. That had solved the situation on an interim basis, if you will. But it didn't solve MBS and Saudi Arabia's desire to be among the cognoscenti, as it were, to have a nuclear program that could be converted at any moment. Having Pakistan on a leash for weapons or whatever was not good enough. If Iran did build a nuclear weapon, they needed a nuclear weapon.

So where are we now? We have unleashed, in a region of the world where we were actually talking in 2002 and 2003 — with more than just dreamy looks in our eyes — a Middle East free of nuclear weapons, a nuclear weapons-free zone beginning in the Middle East. And, of course, we were going to have to deal with Israel. But we were looking at that. We were looking at the prospects of doing that. You'd have to get Israel to join the NPT, and eventually you'd have to get them to go down to zero, to get rid of their nuclear weapons, which we found, at the State Department, we were thinking would be a healthy thing to do. Well, look where we are now.

From those pie-in-the-sky thoughts, but nonetheless possibilities, now we're proliferating and going to proliferate nuclear weapons all across the region, I think. I think Iran already has one. I think Iran is waiting for the right moment to do it. Imagine using just one nuclear weapon and centering it on a point of aim between Tel Aviv and Haifa. Israel's off the map virtually, just like that. Well, you could center 30 nuclear weapons on Iran from Israel, for example, and unless they were thermonuclear, you probably wouldn't do too much damage other than blowing up granite and rocks and desert and such. So the balance here in this nuclear standoff, if it occurs, is vastly different on Iran's side, particularly when you consider that China and Russia are behind them.

And the United States being behind the other side, as it were, MBS in this case, is not too good an insurance policy. So you've got to think that MBS is really going to play this one for all it's worth, ultimately, to get what he needs out of the U.S. nuclear complex, but to take it and do what he wants to do with it, and not necessarily what we want him to do with it, subsequent to Trump. Now,

Trump may be all happy, Peggy said, may be all happy about Saudi Arabia going right into a civilian nuclear program that turns into a military nuclear program overnight, virtually, and we might be willing to help them do that. Where are we then?

How have we helped the world by this spread of nuclear weapons, the spread of states that own nuclear weapons? But that's where we're headed. That's maybe one of the better places we might be headed compared to where we're headed with this war in general. But you're right. We don't know what we're doing. We simply don't. We're grasping at straws. We're grasping at possibilities to keep ourselves in a region where we're thoroughly being ousted. We're being kicked out. And we're being kicked out by somebody that we were supposed to go to war with and defeat. You can't fathom, really. I watch Mark Warner, who's my senator here in Virginia, and I will tell you that there are other Democrats just like this, if not the major ones.

Lindsey Graham, Republican, is duplicated in the Democratic Party in terms of their hatred for Iran and their hatred for the enemies of Israel, if you will, in general. And Bill Clinton was responsible, of course, for the legislation that actually set up what we are now. People have forgotten all this, but what we're now pursuing in its fullest way with kinetic forces and such—we're not doing clandestine operations anymore. We're taking Iran on to its face. And this is all about the hatred, the hatred that the U.S. Congress has for Iran. And it's not just Republicans. I watched Mark Warner and the vehemence in his voice when he was talking about Iran, even though he was trying to aim his barbs at Donald Trump and his Republican colleagues.

Still, it was there. And, you know, as long as that's there, we have this problem in this country that we have the same problem with Russia now, where we hate people just because they are who they are. And we want to take them out just because they are who they are. There's no strategic purpose to it. There's no real economic purpose to it. It's just we want to take them out because we hate their guts, whether it's Moscow or it's Tehran. This is not the way to do world relations. This is not international relations according to people who have written about it and practiced them for years, certainly in the 20th and 21st centuries. We're adumbrating, we're adulterating, we're killing, we're murdering everything in the world that's good.

Everything that's positive. And we're doing it in the name of what? Hatred for Iranians and hatred for Russians. Those are not objectives that any sane person in the world, operating at the level of power that America operates, would ever entertain. To act on the fact we hate those damn Persians. We hate those damn people who dared—dared to throw our Shah out and take over their government. We hate them. And oh, we hate those Russians. We hate those Russians because we've been cheating them. We've been trying to get rid of them ever since we started the business in Ukraine, ever since we started the Partnership for Peace and expanding NATO. We've been in your face, Moscow, in your face—we'll show you how they should have treated you at the end of the Cold War.

H.W. Bush was smart. He didn't want to do that. Bill Clinton came in. Every president since, we have tried to do that. Obama tried to attenuate it a little bit. But you can't, because we hate Russians. We loathe Russians, and we loathe Persians and Iranians in general. I think we loathe Muslims too. Look at what's going on in Gaza and tell me why we support that. All to say, we're in trouble. We're in deep trouble. The world's in trouble because we're in trouble. And all these machinations in this war in Southwest Asia are just making that trouble more profound and making escape from it more impossible.

#Glenn

Yeah, I find it a little depressing the way security is referred to now. But as you said, when you have key large powers that are rivals, there's no talk anymore about how to manage security competition or harmonize interests, manage security. How we compete is all about destroying rivals. That is, how do we destroy Russia? How do we destroy Iran? And you see this in the rhetoric from both politicians and the media. That is, success is measured only in destruction and death. And if it were only the political media establishment, it would be something. But I get the feeling society is changing as well. I hear people talk. I see the comments in newspapers. And they are all... well, the average person is starting to sound like a psychopath.

The ones, oh, look at what we destroyed. Look at what we burned. Haha, these soldiers got killed. The way people talk as well—society is getting uglier too. So there's something wrong about how one approaches strategic adversaries. The idea that you would respect your opponent, try to put yourself in their shoes—all of this, I mean, this is long gone. Now it's, as you said, the hatred. It's quite off-putting, but... my question to you, though, is about how sustainable you think the U.S. alliances are, because a lot of its allies now look more like vassals. I mean, there's always been some vassalage, but at least in the past, they could prosper under U.S. leadership.

But now, once all these allies, if you will, are thrown into conflict with America's adversaries, the first impulse, I think, is a higher dependence on the U.S. So they're willing to subordinate themselves more politically, militarily, economically. However, at some point, they begin to ignore their basic national interests. And if you look at the Gulf states now, the subordination to the U.S. is leading to their destruction. Yes, first, with this war on Iran, they will see the need to tie themselves closer to the U.S., but if they can't defeat Iran, participating in this war will only deepen the pain. It's a bit like the European position in Europe.

I mean, how long... I mean, first now, because they fear Russia, they will subordinate themselves further to the U.S. and will give up everything—independence, autonomy, and even self-respect. But at some point, if they want to restore their security, their prosperity, they're going to have to look after their own interests. And that means creating some distance from the United States. I was just wondering, do you see any indication of any of the Gulf states possibly flipping, trying to, I guess, yeah, break away from the alliance structure? Because, you know, this structure has been cemented

over the decades, so it's just hard to see it happening. On the other hand, if they don't, you know, this could be their undoing.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

You're absolutely right. I think this situation we're in right now, globally, but particularly as it is illustrated in Europe with Ukraine and illustrated in Southwest Asia with Iran, is an indication that the globe has become—the people on the face of the earth have become—mesmerized almost by the status quo, and so afraid to leave that status quo, even though they see it tattered and falling apart all around them, and changing dramatically in their disinterest rather than their interest. They can't get away from it. I think if Mark Twain were around, he would say, as he did one time, the greatest deficit in the world is imagination.

And no one has any imagination—not the Japanese, not the Koreans, not the Europeans. No one has any imagination. How do we craft a new world and make it, in essence, a world that's manageable? Manageable not just by the great powers, but manageable by the intermediate powers just beneath them, and manageable in the long run for the bulk of the global population, which, if the UN is right, will be around 10 billion by mid-century and then start demographically to fall off a bit. I don't know what the answer to that is. Do you have to have a cataclysmic war? Do you have to have a nuclear war in order to convince people that the time is ripe to have some imagination, to begin to think about things differently?

Let me just give you one case in point, I think, here. There are 93 million, maybe 92 million now—we've probably killed or wounded at least a million—people in Iran on the other side of the Persian Gulf, positioned very strategically as they are now with regard to the two, I think, dominant powers militarily in terms of actually being engaged militarily right now, Russia and, potentially militarily, China. I would equate China's military capability right now, at this moment, as equal to or even surpassing that of the empire. Given the travail we're in right now with supplies, munitions, and a host of other things, and the commitments we have, we are probably inferior to China.

So if you look at that and you think, we've got to live with this, we've got to make a *modus vivendi* where we can live with this. And hopefully we can live with it in a way that doesn't produce a nuclear holocaust, but instead produces at least the advantage of success, economic and otherwise, for the majority of them. Your comment about the food program and what's happening in the Global South right now is pertinent to the max. When we did the Center for Naval Analysis, we did a series of simulations on climate change, on the climate crisis in general. We did it at the behest of the Navy and the Center for Naval Analysis.

And we did it at the behest of other people around the center who wanted to take a look at this globally. So we set up a two-year series of games. I think I've talked about this before. And one of the things we discovered, we think fairly powerfully, was that around 2065 or so, in some worse or worst-case scenarios—worse as in not quite as bad as the last one—we would be confronted with

masses of people coming out of the Global South into the North, and they would be looking for water and food, essentially. Half of them would be male. Half of that half would be under 30. And half of that half would be carrying a Kalashnikov and at least 20 rounds of ammunition, and willing to fight for the food and the water.

And what happened in the Global North, if you will, in the sort of peer powers all the way from Tokyo through the United States and Canada over to Europe and to China, what happened was we began to put our militaries on our southern borders and shoot people and kill them. I think we're going to look at that kind of migration maybe a little bit sooner than even these analyses showed, because what you said is true. We are going to starve the Global South.

I mean, we just are going to because of the conditions that we're creating right now in the Strait of Hormuz and elsewhere, with product that needs to get on the high seas, needs to move in order for crops to be grown, in order for the World Food Program to have food that's surplus to other needs and to help with the South and to do other things that would be humanitarian in their aspect and would be life-saving. We're not going to be able to do that. So what are these people going to do except pick up and move? And which way are they going to go? They're not going to go south into the Indian Ocean or into the water, period. They're going to go north. They're going to go north, and they're going to go as fast as they can.

They think they had problems in the Mediterranean with people coming across from North Africa. Wait till you see what happens now. Wait till you see what happens in the Caribbean and out of South America and other places. They're going to be badly hit and are even now being badly hit by everything from glaciers closing in on their two- or three-hundred-year-old communities in Chile, for example, and dying in the process, to food shortages. And it isn't going to get better. It's going to get much worse as the climate crisis intensifies. These heat figures we're seeing across the world right now are just one indication of that. People are dying across the globe from heat, and they're going to die in much greater proportions because we're not dealing with it.

We're dealing with it only on the surface and only spasmodically. All to say that... you're right. This is a very tense time. This transition from not just the fall of the Soviet Union and the movement of the globe into a more multinodal world, and into a world that needs most of all to cooperate and collaborate in order to survive some of these challenges, to return to a treaty regime for nuclear weapons, for example, and include all the states that own nuclear weapons, potentially and really. We're not doing that. We're not doing any of that. Instead, we're waging these senseless, stupid, insane wars that are just deepening and making more profound our peril. And we shall pay dearly for this.

#Glenn

I agree. And I think this is the problem — as we see the world having shifted from unipolarity to multipolarity, in the multipolar world there's a lot of opportunities to create very different realities,

which could be much more favorable. At least I'm thinking of the Europeans — the rise of Asia, for example, has a lot of potential for Europe, for prosperity, diversification. I mean, this could be an exciting time. But the only thought in their minds is, how do we recreate an era that is already gone — the unipolarity of the 90s? And...

#Lawrence Wilkerson

MAGA. MAGA for the world. MAGA for the world. Make the world great again. And what you're doing is destroying it.

#Glenn

Yeah, I agree. But when he spoke of political imagination, I was thinking about... this is what George Kennan was talking about in the 1990s, because he was saying, why are we doing this? You know, the Cold War is over. We can almost create any world we want. Why is our political imagination limited to expanding the military blocs of the Cold War — like who should be on the inside, who should be on the outside? Why are we discussing this? Don't we have political imagination to envision something different?

And I think that also goes into what you said about whether or not we need another big war to change, because I think that's an unfortunate condition in human nature — that we are married very much to the status quo, possibly a lack of political imagination. Often, big wars historically — this is when we create new international institutions, the UN, these kinds of things — you know, when the old status quo has been eliminated by war. Also, people have a healthy aversion to war. It seems every generation needs to experience a massive war before they begin to pursue some common sense.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I agree 100% that that phenomenon seems to permeate history. But I would just point out what I keep pointing out over and over again: the technological difference is we can destroy ourselves. And if we want to do that, if that's the cleansing we need to cleanse the planet of the human race, we have the instruments to do it.

#Glenn

Yeah, I don't think we can afford, as I said, with the new technologies now, I don't think we can afford another world war, which we appear to have already possibly entered. I just wanted to ask the last question, possibly too personal in nature, but you devoted decades of your life to service in the U.S. military. And I was just wondering, how are you assessing what is happening now? To the

U.S. military — not to single out, you know, the U.S. — I think the Europeans are also changing. I mean, in terms of how the military is seen, what the objectives are, how security is considered, I mean, the overall military culture. How are you looking at this now?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

That's a good question, Glenn. And it's one that is very trenchant and poignant for me because as I end my life, as well as my military experience and career, I was thinking the other day, my friends and I who are still alive probably spent a half century in the security establishment or connected with it. And to a person, what they say to me now, those who still remain, is, "I can't believe I lived to see this. I cannot believe I lived to see this." And what I find they're talking about most often — but it expands quickly in conversation — but initially what they're talking about is their beloved military. I mean, that's not too trite a phrase.

Howell used to talk about the beloved military all the time, his beloved army and so forth. We devoted our lives to the security instrument of the United States of America. And now we see it, by people like Pete Hegseth and people like Donald Trump, being utterly contaminated, being turned into an instrument for the persecution of the American people, ultimately. Being turned into an adjunct, a military adjunct to ICE, which looks very much like a military entity itself. And we don't understand how this happened. Was it our fault because we neglected, at the end, to leave safety devices in place to ensure that the ethical code that we lived by was a continuation and not a sudden, abrupt halt?

I don't know. I don't know who to blame at all. But I do know that we do not have the leadership in the American armed forces today that we need. What we have is sycophants. What we have is people who are interested in going along to get along. What we have is flag officers, for example, who covet that slot they're going to get with Lockheed Martin or RTX or someone else to make hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars in retirement. What we have is a corrupt, unethical system. And it's fully understandable when it goes out on the high seas without any due process and kills all these people it has killed, and with almost no objection from inside the military — fully understandable.

#Glenn

And it hurts our hearts to contemplate it. Well, I wish we could have ended on a more positive note, but again, I feel similar ways. I'm utterly appalled by what I'm seeing in Europe. For so many years, the European leaders, especially after World War II and after the Cold War, defined Europe as essentially having learned from history. It was going to be all about liberal democratic values and peace. And now, you know, the leaders no longer believe in diplomacy. They only talk about fighting Russians, killing, destruction, becoming more authoritarian, essentially also losing faith in the future.

So no, I think a lot of those values which were supposed to define Europe turned out to be just a house of cards. It's depressing to watch. But yeah, well, we'll see where this is all headed. But I don't have a—I'm not optimistic.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Nor am I. It's really sad to come to the end of your time on this planet and have devoted a half century of your time to the government of what you thought was a truly decent nation — all things considered, a lot of warts, a lot of foibles, a lot of crimes to its name, but nonetheless fundamentally decent — to find out that it is just as corruptible as any nation in the past, and perhaps even more so because of its power. Well, again, on that sad note, thank you very much for your time, and yeah, let's hope for better days. Thank you for your time.