

Steve Jermy: Ukraine, Europe's Suicide & Global Energy Crisis

Royal Navy Commodore Steve Jermy commanded warships in the 5th Destroyer Squadron and Britain's Fleet Air Arm. He served in the Falklands War and in the Adriatic for the Bosnian and Kosovo campaigns. Then retired after an operational tour, in 2007, as Strategy Director in the British Embassy in Afghanistan. He is the author of the book: "Strategy for Action: Using Force Wisely in the 21st Century". Steve Jermy Substack: <https://stevejermy.substack.com/> Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennndiesen> 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. We are joined today by Royal Navy Commodore Steve Jermy, who commanded warships in the 5th Destroyer Squadron and Britain's Fleet Air Arm. He also held positions such as the Strategy Director at the British Embassy in Afghanistan. Also, I would highly recommend his Substack, and I've left a link in the description. So thank you again, Steve, for coming back on.

#Steve Jermy

Yes, it's a pleasure to be back on talking to you, Glenn. I always enjoy our conversations. We sort of seem to have a very useful complementarity in our different experiences.

#Glenn

I agree. Well, today I wanted to ask you a bit about the Ukraine war. It's taking on an interesting direction. Well, I would say it's spinning out of control. That is, NATO is escalating, it seems, in a big way. But if you listen to our political media establishment, we, that is NATO, we're apparently not even a participant in the war. So I feel like we're sleepwalking into a disaster here. But we also see the potential now for the Iran war and the Ukraine war actually merging. And the war itself now seems to focus increasingly on economic targets, primarily energy, but also shipping routes. And, yeah, I was just wondering, a bit of a wide question, but where do you see us heading here? Because the war keeps, again, it's been going on for four and a half years, but it continues to change its character.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, I think that I can begin, I think—and perhaps I'm wrong here, Glenn, we'll see—I can begin to see the final foothills of the war and the final ways in which it might end, which we can sort of explore. But I begin to wonder, actually, if we might see 2027 as the year in which the Russia-Ukraine war is brought to a close. And again, possibly for very similar reasons. But actually, on the current status, I think you're right. I'm worried about the way NATO is escalating, yet pretending that it's not part of the war. I mean, it clearly is part of the war, inasmuch as it's providing weapons.

The E3 in particular—that's Britain, France and Germany—are leading the charge in providing weapons which have long-range strike capability into Russia. And they're doing that in what I believe is a guess that Russia won't respond. And that's not a very good way to think about it. I think one of the problems is that the Europeans, and indeed the West in general, have failed to do what General von Clausewitz always said should be done, which is to understand properly the nature of the war. They believe the war somehow has become a negotiation because they've been driven by a political narrative. The objectives for the West have been ever-changing and different depending on who you talk to.

Whereas the objectives for the Russians are clear. The objectives for the Russians are all to do with an existential war. And in the existential war, they are most interested in Russian security. For the Europeans, they're changing a lot. For the Americans, they're changing a lot. We've seen "Extending Russia" from the RAND study, talking about the breaking up of Russia. We've heard Kaja Kallas talking about the breakup of Russia. But I can't help but feel the way in which the West are operating at the moment is seeing the war as a negotiation with arms. And as they escalate, then so eventually they will force the Russians back to the negotiating table.

And I think that's a mistake because I think the Russians, it seems to me, have decided that negotiations aren't worth it. They've tried them. The Europeans have done some particularly confusing things. Well, not confusing. It seems to be incompetent things, which is holding two conferences to actually close the war without having one of the belligerents there. I mean, how can that make any sense whatsoever? But I think the way I've been worried about the war, and I think I'll come back to the tactical situation in a bit, the way I've been worried about the war is the escalation by it, threatening to fire quite large weapons into Russia. And the question is whether or not the Russians will respond.

We also have the Europeans saying, "We want to be ready for war by 2030." And for that reason, I wrote an article in my Substack. I think you're aware of it. It's called "The Coming War with Russia." And in it, I actually gave a scenario about how that war might develop. And suffice to say, it doesn't develop very well for Europe at all. I make the assumption that the Russians do take out the production facilities for the weapons that the Europeans are developing, end up taking out those

production facilities in Europe. And then, from what I can see, the Americans are unlikely to join. Article 5 is fairly shallow, doesn't commit anybody to go to war on behalf of whoever it is that's being attacked.

Attack on one is an attack on all. But having said that, attack on one doesn't mean, say, everybody responds. It means everybody does what they think is best. And I think if I was in Spain, for example, I'd think, "I don't want any part of this war." So, you know, Article 5 is all fine. But I think the issue really, though, is accepting that scenario. And I think I wanted to put the scenario out there because everybody's talking about being prepared for war, but nobody's talking about how the war would take place. And everyone's been talking about the timing for the war being 2030. And nobody seems to have thought, well, the Russians, if they hear us talking about preparing for war and being ready for war by 2030, are not going to sit complacently by until we're ready to go to war with them.

I mean, surely they will respond. So I think, though, that from what I can see, one of the critical factors in the war now is air defense. And indeed, I wrote another article in my Substack on the principles of air defense, because you've had Ted Postol on your Substack, Glenn. I'm a huge fan of his work. And essentially, for those of your viewers who haven't come across him, he's an MIT professor. I'm guessing he's a physicist or an engineer, but basically says that the Western air defense systems are ineffective. My background included being commanding officer of a destroyer, which was an air defense destroyer, so it's an area of expertise of mine.

And in the article, I actually explained what air defense is really like. It's a quick-moving battle, and it's one where, if the attacker is able to saturate the air defenses, then it's very difficult to respond. At the moment, we're in a situation where we can shoot down drones. We can shoot down cruise missiles, and not with 100 percent effectiveness for both of those, but we can shoot them down. We have limited effectiveness against conventional ballistic missiles. Ted Postol puts that effectiveness at about 3% for the Patriot batteries. Hypersonic missiles, we have no defense whatsoever.

So if you put all of those together in a saturation attack, then essentially we're defenseless. And furthermore, any Patriot batteries that we send to Ukraine are essentially wasted. I'm sure this is one of the reasons why Zelensky is actually talking to the United States about a ceasefire of some sort in the air. And I'm sure the Russians will say no. I mean, why should they? At the moment, they're winning. They're winning in the air. They're completely dominating the Ukrainian air defenses. They do have to worry, of course, about the attacks deep into Russia. And they're winning on the battlefield as well.

So it seems to me that we're getting closer to a more decisive phase of the war. And if we can get through the issue of firing weapons deep into Russia, and I suspect that we will, because I suspect after a bit the Europeans will start to say to themselves, the risks associated with this are too great. They're too great for us to sustain because of the damage that would be done to our European economies if we went to war with Russia, because it would be a loss. And I begin to think, actually,

that what will probably bring this war to a close, Glenn, is economics as a result of what's happening in the energy sector. And, Glenn, I can talk more about that if you like, Glenn.

#Glenn

Yeah, that'd be good. But I keep thinking the way diplomacy is used here, because you said that the negotiations and diplomacy overall have been quite deplorable. And you see this now in the talks with what kind of peace we might want with the Russians. They say we would like to have limitations on airstrikes because the Russians are dominating in the air. And now there's some talk: perhaps we should bring back the grain deal or have a ceasefire in the Black Sea. We didn't say that two weeks ago when the Ukrainians were hitting Russian ships. But as soon as now the Russians are putting a blockade on the Ukrainian ports, making it a de facto landlocked country, then we want some peace. It just seems like every time, peace... it's not the end in itself. It's always a means to an end, and the end is defeating Russia. And this has a lot of similarities to Iran.

I mean, if we look at Iran, the war in Iran, negotiations were used in such a deceptive manner, just a way to make the Iranians lower their guard before we strike them. But with Ukraine as well, you see the same dynamic: the sabotage of peace negotiations, be it Minsk, be it Istanbul, the four and a half years of boycotting diplomacy on the side of the Europeans, even though they know that it's the European security architecture which is the source of this conflict. And it's just, as you said, having these peace summits every now and then where we don't actually invite the other side, the Russians. I mean, we've been watching this for four and a half years. It's quite absurd, but it's become the norm. I can understand why people don't trust diplomacy anymore, because it's just seen as a tactic, as a way of fooling the adversary to shape the battlefield in a more favorable way. But anyway, I know you were going to say.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. It would be great to actually cycle back to diplomacy at the end. But although what I will say is that I think the Russians and the Iranians both no longer trust the West. So that's the consequence of the way that we've been operating over the past. And that means that actually, why should they want to get involved in diplomatic discussions if they know that whatever comes out of it won't be held to? We've seen it with the Iranians and the MOU, which was almost immediately, once it had been signed, the Americans walked away from the MOU. As you said, we saw it in the Minsk agreements, where we know that Merkel and Hollande have said publicly that the Minsk agreements were simply a means of allowing Russia— But France and Germany and Europe never intended to keep the Minsk agreements, rather as a way of giving breathing space to the Ukrainians.

And we know as well that the Americans have withdrawn from not one, but all of the nuclear agreements, which were so cleverly and carefully crafted, and withdrawn from them unilaterally. So the question is, why should and why would anybody expect the Russians and the Iranians to trust

the Europeans and the Americans? I mean, I can see exactly their situation. I think what we're starting to see, though, is that a confluence of energy issues is starting to shift. And if it hasn't shifted it now, I think it will start to shift the way people think about it. That's the way that energy plays into economics today. As you know, I spent the last 15 years in the offshore energy sector, so I've become an energy nerd, and I'm better for it.

I'm afraid to say that when I was in my first career in the Navy, we used to talk about sea blindness, which is that people didn't really understand the sea and what went on. I now talk about energy blindness, and so many people don't understand energy properly and how critical it is to modern industrial societies. Indeed, it is crucial to modern industrial societies. Some of the things that we've been doing in the Russia-Ukraine war are making the situation worse, and they are foreseeably making the situation worse. The first was to impose sanctions on Russian oil. Now, the consequence of that has been to start to increase energy prices as far back as 2022, with no meaningful impact on the Russian economy.

Nobody apart from the West is actually following the sanctions because it's not in their national interest to do so. Why would you want to cut yourself off from Russia's high-quality hydrocarbons? I mean, that's an open question, which I think the European Union should be asking itself. Why would you want to cut yourself off from 40% of your gas from Russia and 40% of your critical refined product, which is diesel, from Russia? And we will bear the consequences of that in the months ahead. The second thing that we've been doing more recently, of course, is to provide the weapons for Ukraine to fire deep into Russia and have an effect on the Russian oil and hydrocarbon systems. And, of course, one of the consequences of that is that Russia has reduced its exports.

And, of course, oil and gas, they're fungible export commodities. And so, if the exports are reduced, then so too the price goes up. And, of course, the third part of this jigsaw is the Strait of Hormuz closure and taking out of somewhere between, you know, around about 13 million barrels per day of oil, without even talking about gas. Natural gas is bound to have a catastrophic effect on the world economy. I think what's surprised me on that particular issue is how long it's taken. But I think we understand that better now. And the key factors in the delay between, on the one hand, the Strait of Hormuz being closed, on the other hand, seeing the impacts, are due to a number of factors. The first is the lag in the global energy system. So a vessel going from the Strait of Hormuz to the United States is about two months; it's about a month to get to the UK or Europe. So again, you've got that initial lag.

The second is the amount of inventory that's in the system, which is over and above the systemic lag. But those inventories, we think, are close to being drawn down. The third are the strategic petroleum reserves. Again, those have been heavily drawn down. I think the Americans are now at about 20%, is the figure I have in my mind, that sort of figure. And the fourth, which none of us really expected or completely understood initially, was how the Chinese withdrew significantly their imports of hydrocarbons. Again, I think the figure I have in my mind is about 5 million barrels per day. And that, of course, actually softened the blow, together with the ability of the Saudi Arabians

and others to actually export, or increase their exports, through the Red Sea and through the pipelines to the Red Sea.

But sooner or later, these effects will hit us. And it feels to me that that will be sooner now rather than later, because I don't see where any more new oil and gas comes from. It's very interesting as well that when we look at the prices of oil and gas, let's just take WTI or Brent, West Texas Intermediate or Brent, we're now seeing those rise. And, of course, people have pointed to the fact that they had been relatively low. Open question about whether there's some insider dealing there to try and keep those prices low. I think there is an open question. It wouldn't surprise me if there was. But, of course, those prices are actually futures prices, not what people are actually paying to actually buy a barrel of oil.

And I was fascinated. This is known as the cracks, but I should say that I was fascinated to talk to a Singaporean colleague last month, and he said they were buying Singaporean oil in Singapore for two hundred dollars a barrel. And I was surprised by that. It's a big figure. Now, if we get to those sorts of figures, then the price of everything will go up. The regions that will be most affected will be Europe and Asia, East Asia. East Asia is a big importer. The two countries which are most protected are Japan and China, as they both have big strategic petroleum reserves, but lots of the other countries are very vulnerable.

And the other one that's most vulnerable is Europe. You know, apart from your country and, to a lesser extent, mine, Europe is a major importer of hydrocarbons. It's about 12 and a half million barrels per day of oil. And where do those come from? I've already seen something talking about real concerns about natural gas in the winter, which is what I would expect. And I'm expecting to see oil prices start to trend up from about now onwards. And America isn't immune either. America is an importer of about six million barrels per day of crude oil. And that's a systemic issue because it's the right type of crude, as opposed to the lighter crudes that they produce.

And they need that to actually be able to produce. I mean, they're a net exporter of refined products, but a net importer of crude oil and other products. So, for all those reasons, what I'm expecting to see in the next months, possibly starting as soon as next month, is oil and gas prices trending up. And that's bound to have an effect on the economies. The effects in the economies don't show immediately because most of the economic indicators are lagged indicators. But they will show, and they'll probably show in about three months after that. But, you know, if you take—let's take diesel, which is the fuel that I always revert to. If you take diesel out of a country's energy infrastructure, you're asking for big trouble.

Diesel drives all our tractors. It drives all our farming machinery. I was brought up on farms, and then I went to sea. And the other thing, of course, diesel drives is all of our fishing vessels, almost without exception. So, of course, your food systems are immediately under threat. It provides the core of logistics, the road logistics. It provides fuel for quite a few train systems. It provides fuel for all of the logistics, all of the construction industry, almost all using JCBs and those sorts of things. So

too the mining industry, so much of our military capability. Kerosene is a middle distillate, not unlike diesel, and that essentially is aviation fuel. And of course, if you can tell me how to drive a tank without any diesel, well, I'm open to that.

But I can tell you we won't be doing it using solar panels or batteries. So diesel is the critical fuel. And if you start to take that out of modern industrial economy, you're asking for trouble. And if you've got no alternative sources of that diesel, then you're definitely asking for trouble. So I would say Europe is very vulnerable. If this is right, we then start to see the consequences showing up in the economics, in particular in Europe, but also in the United States. And that's a thing which I think could have a major impact on foreign policy of both regions towards both these wars. It's not in our interest to actually let our economies crash because we've actually cut ourselves off from critical hydrocarbons, which we still need.

And so I can imagine that actually, as people start to see their economies go into recession and it looks like it's only going to get worse, then they will look askance at the idea of spending more money in Ukraine to support a failed war, or to provide any support from the United States to continue a war which is actually doing their own economy and the rest of the world economy damage through the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. So I suspect that it's going to be economics which brings both wars to a close. And, of course, the problem is that even if we can get to diplomatic answers to both wars, then the lag in the system is such that things will get worse even after both wars are closed forever before they get better, because of the damage done to the economic system and the fact that the world energy system, particularly the oil system, will take months to recover.

I'd be surprised if what I think is going to happen happens, if we can get back to anywhere near a similar type of position to before the wars in anything less than a year, and it wouldn't surprise me if we don't see it until the end of 2027. The lag is considerable, and I know at least one commentator, Art Berman, who is an American geophysicist who I follow, who just thinks that some of the damage will be permanent. So I think this is what will bring both wars to a close, probably next year. But when it does bring wars to a close, we're not going to be left in a situation which any of us would like.

#Glenn

Well, Europe seems especially vulnerable, as you said, because all the three rules of energy security is diversified, diversified, diversified. This is the main thing. The Europeans haven't really done this. And you hear this in the language when they celebrate new sanctions on Russia, how they cut themselves off from a supplier. Usually, you want more suppliers to have, again, diversification. But instead, it's narrowing it down, cutting themselves off from Russia. This is measured in terms of being good for energy security, which is quite absurd.

But my thought is that we're not necessarily at the end of the escalation in terms of how bad things can get, because it began with Nord Stream being destroyed. The Europeans kind of looked the other way, pretended it was Russia for a while. Then, of course, they had the sanctions on Russia, which isolated the Europeans more. Then, of course, the Europeans also backing attacks now on Russia's energy infrastructure, which causes further problems to global markets. Then we have the Iran war hitting Iran, of course, but then the Gulf states also have their energy facilities targeted. We see limited access now in the Black Sea.

Then, of course, the Strait of Hormuz. Now Yemen is, to some extent, partially shutting down the Red Sea. And I was thinking, as I saw that dramatic footage coming out of the explosion in Essex in the UK—I'm not saying Russia did this—but it did make me think, though, that if I was sitting in the Kremlin, this is the kind of target I would go after, because there's a growing consensus in Moscow that it's quite dangerous not to retaliate, given that the collapse of the Russian deterrent is considered to be a key, if not the main, threat now to international security. That is, other countries should fear the great powers.

You can't just attack the world's largest nuclear power and have no concerns at all. At some point, without deterrence, there's only war. Essentially, inaction is becoming more problematic, or more dangerous, than action. If Russia no longer can sit by and do nothing while NATO attacks, you would assume that at some point they would go up some kind of an escalation ladder. I'm not sure if it would be similar sabotage, or if it would just... Because I also saw the strike hitting the honorary consulate of Latvia in Slavyansk, and I thought, well, that's...

#Glenn

It's a predictable first step, I guess, if you want to go up the escalation ladder, because it's not sovereign territory of a NATO country. But then you strike this, and then you go a little bit up the ladder, much like NATO did against Russia. But I guess my question is, if we reach the point where either covertly or overtly the Russians hit some of Europe's energy infrastructure, what might it look like? Because, well, it's less resilient than it is in Russia. That is, the Europeans seem much more vulnerable. Yeah, a few targets. You know, I'm thinking my own country in Norway. It's a very small country. It provides a lot of gas for the British and the Germans. Again, this is not advocacy, just so journalists will not come after me. But I'm just saying we are in a very vulnerable position, which is kind of strange that we're willing to provoke to such a huge extent, given that we are vulnerable.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, I agree. I think one of the problems, Glenn, is that the whole of the Western strategy—in fact, that glamorizes a word which the West doesn't have a strategy, I think, other than double down and hope. And one of the hopes is that the Russians don't respond. Indeed, I think I said earlier, I think that in the scenario that I've developed, the coming war on Russia, I said that the moment the West

is guessing that Russia won't respond. I mean, it's appalling, really, when you consider the consequences. I think that if I were in Putin's situation, in the Russian situation, if I were going to respond, I think I would do so—I'd be inclined to do so overtly rather than covertly, because overtly would actually send the message. And the Russians have said that they have not taken off the table the responses against the Europeans in European territory.

And that is an explicit warning. And I've seen very, very little discussion about that. But it's an explicit warning to Europeans, and it's one that we ought to be really listening to. Now, the way that I would do it, if I decided that I was going to respond—and it's not the way I built the scenario in the Substack—the scenario was actually, I assumed that the Russians responded, and then we went to Article 5. But I think if I were Putin, the first thing I would do is I would ring up President Trump and say, "We have now had enough. We are going to respond by attacking these areas of Europe and destroying these facilities unless there is an unequivocal agreement by the Europeans to cease these attacks and to stop providing these weapons to Ukraine."

I would then ring up Starmer, Macron, and Merz and say, "We are going to undertake attacks against your production facilities for these weapons. We will use conventional ballistic missiles and hypersonic missiles—you have no defense against those—and unless we have an unequivocal agreement from you not to continue these attacks..." Now, I would be very interested to see what happens there. But that's the way I would do it, because it gives the Europeans a chance to stand down rather than just to take the attack. But the point about these attacks—and I did also an article on air defense—is because we don't have any defense against these weapons. We have a bit of defense against ballistic missiles, but not against salvos of ballistic missiles.

And we have no defense against hypersonic missiles. I remember, it was 2002, just after 9/11, Glenn, I was in the policy planning department of the MOD, Ministry of Defence in Britain. And we were looking at the consequences of an attack like 9/11 and where the vulnerabilities were. And one of the places was the energy infrastructure. I mean, for example, we worked out that if you had a big explosion in a natural gas plant, receiving station, or production plant, then the consequences were sub-nuclear. They have huge impacts in terms of the explosives released. And again, this is something about which we can do nothing.

And not only is it the consequences of the attack. So let's take somewhere like Rotterdam or Milford Haven, great big refineries. But it's also the consequence of the energy system, because the problem with energy infrastructure, speaking from a long, hard-bitten experience, is it takes a long time to actually build energy infrastructure. So you can't just switch it on like that. And surprise, surprise, one of the things you need for rebuilding energy infrastructure is commodities and diesel to do the rebuild. So you're talking about levels of damage which actually would then ripple down your future economics into the next decade.

So this is, I think, what I would do. Now, what would be interesting, of course, is what the response from the Europeans would be. If I were the prime minister in this country, I would stand down

because I could not. I knew that I would be taking on a risk that I could not mitigate properly. And, I mean, the only thing you could say is that the only thing that Britain would do, or indeed France, is to respond with nuclear weapons. But that essentially is an act of national suicide, inasmuch as you're using your own nuclear weapons against Russia, which is the world's largest nuclear-armed state. And that's a big calculation for Putin, whether to do that.

But the whole risk involved with this is so profound that it's appalling that there isn't a conversation about these risks in the European public. If you've done any risk management, I've done a bit of it. I can't say I particularly enjoy it because I don't think it generally works. But the critical factors in understanding your risk is, what's the probability of the risk coming forward? And the second thing is, what's the impact? Now, even if the probability of the Russians responding to us is about 10%, the impacts are profound. And so, to me, that's a risk you really need to think long and hard about, to make sure that you've really thought through. Because I think if we were to think through those risks, it would make for a very sober analysis.

I think as well, if you're going to take on those risks, and at the moment we are taking on those risks without talking to the European people about it. If you're going to take on those risks, you ought to have a discussion with your populations to explain to them the risks that you're exposing them to, so that they can have a conversation, a political conversation, about whether that's what they want. I see no sign of that at the moment, but those are the sorts of conversations which we should be having publicly throughout Europe. Europe would be the victims of this. And if you want to look and have a sense of what Europe might look like in the event of such a war, then just look across to Ukraine.

Ukraine has had its energy systems surgically destroyed. I think that Ukrainian GDP is down by about 30%. I should think it's probably more than that when we actually really get to the bottom of it. At the moment, Ukraine's a failed state. It can only survive on European largesse. So, as far as I can see, if you want to have a look, have a look at Ukraine and ask yourself the question: is that a risk that we're prepared to accept for Europe? And I don't think we should accept it for Europe. And I think that we should be really having this conversation and thinking about a plan B. And the obvious plan B is to find a way back to diplomacy.

#Glenn

Yeah, the energy war in Ukraine, though, is quite devastating. Not only have the Russians gone after all the major energy facilities and now the ports, but they've even gone all the way down to the actual gas stations. I think Ukraine has about 7,000 gas stations across the country, which is a lot. But the Russians are focusing on those in the east, especially in the Dnipropetrovsk region. I mean, this is something like, I don't think it's really popped up on the radar really yet in the West because it hasn't reached that point where it becomes critical, but they're essentially knocking out all the gas stations one after the other. It's going to become a whole new element, I think, in addition to the manpower crisis, the lack of air defenses. This is going to, I think, be a key thing.

But we're not, you know. Give it another month or two. I think it's going to be a big issue because it shuts down much of the logistics. Yeah. I just keep thinking, though, that future historians must really look back upon this time over the past 30 years with horror and amazement. Because, you know, after the Cold War, the Russian overarching grand strategy was to integrate with the West, to be yet another European country. They walked away from empire. They said, "We don't need this." They essentially threw all their eggs in the Western basket. This was the only objective. And even through all the history, this is probably the best possible time for the Western Europeans and the Americans to find a common cause and a common security architecture with the Russians.

Get them on our side of the ledger. And the response was, we didn't take yes for an answer. We essentially rejected it and came to the conclusion that let's instead build a Europe around NATO and the EU, where essentially continuing bloc politics, but everyone should be a part of this in Europe except for the largest country in Europe, Russia. And, you know, what amazes me is, if it was simply been a miscalculation, we didn't see it coming, would be one thing. But in the 1990s, our political leaders, our military leaders, intelligence chiefs, they discussed that this would probably be—this would alienate the Russians. This would be a catastrophe. In 2008, when they offered future membership to Ukraine, everyone knew that this was certainly a red line.

This was going to be very problematic, which is why there was such pushback. But, you know, from ambassadors to CIA chiefs, they said, yeah, this would likely provoke a war. And we did it. It's just astounding. I mean, how we got here. I know that politicians can be pressured. They seek to compromise. But we know how we got here. And the fact that there's no willingness to take that step back and rethink what we have done, instead continue down this path. And, as you said, there's not even any debates. We know where this is going. We're increasing our attacks on Russia. Russia will now have to respond in some way. So our leaders are taking us to war with the world's largest nuclear power, which only a few years earlier had a main goal of integrating with us. And there's no discussion, no debate, nothing.

Any dissent is smeared as, you know, Putinism or whatever childish phrases they have. I mean, it's really mind-boggling that this is even possible. And, you know, we were supposed to be the liberal democracies, the open societies, who were able to, you know, challenge ideas and correct course if we're on a dangerous path. This is a very dangerous path, and there's absolutely nothing. I was just wondering, how do you see the objectives here, though? Because you mentioned it's not clear if we actually have a strategy. But, you know, if all this was for having, you know, hegemonic peace through NATO expansion, well, now NATO survival could be challenged. It could be at stake. I mean, and still there's no discussion. So what do you see being the main objectives now, now that we've dug this big hole for ourselves and we're not going to stop digging, it seems?

#Steve Jermy

I think the main objectives amongst the political establishment—I used to call them the elite, but I realized that elite sort of implies elite performance, and we've done none of that. It's the reverse. So the political establishment, I think their objective, I think, is to bring Russia to the negotiating table and achieve a peace agreement. But of course, they're doing so from a position of weakness. And again, I think they don't really understand how the military cards are weighted in Russia's favor. I'm not saying that Russia hasn't got problems to deal with in terms of our attacks into Russia using Western weapon systems provided to the Ukrainians, but that won't affect the battlefield.

And the only thing that it's doing is having no effect whatsoever on the likely event and likely outcome of the war, but actually raising, as you say, the probability or the possibility of an attack into Europe. I think there are a number of factors going on here. I think that there is the hubris which comes out of the end of the Cold War, the end of history, and that the Western neoliberal system is the dominant system and must be the best system. So there's that. I think there is a neocon agenda in the States and something similar in some places in Europe. I think Britain seems to suffer from that, as far as I can see. I think there is also the issue of the blocs, of the NATO bloc and the European bloc. They often, these institutions, take on a life of their own.

And once they've got power, they don't like to give it up. And I think we're seeing that in both of those institutions. And the one that I know more about, although I know a reasonable amount about both, is NATO. And I think what Europeans seem to fail to be able to do is understand that although it may have been successful throughout the Cold War, after the Cold War, NATO has been a failing institution. And there's an open question to say whether it was successful in Kosovo. I was actually in the Kosovo operation at sea in the Adriatic. What I didn't realize at the time, but I now understand very well, was that the international legal justification for our operations in Kosovo was extremely dubious, and more dubious, I would say, than Russia's attack into the Donbass. Then you have Afghanistan, there 20 years.

NATO was there from 2006, so over 15 years—a 20-year failure in Afghanistan. And again, I often say to people, if you think that NATO couldn't defeat the Taliban, why do you think that it could defeat a peer opponent, you know, with significant industrial and military capability? And again, I see no evidence that it can defeat it. But unfortunately, you get this institutional lag. And so, you know, those who want to keep pushing the expansion, they think this is to do with civilizing countries from the east, and countries in the east, in turn, wanted to get away. They want more balance because they haven't enjoyed the time in the USSR, so they think NATO is the solution. One of the problems with NATO, though, it rests on an assumption which I think is now plainly false. It rests on an assumption: the NATO guarantee of the United States' military omnipotence. And I think we know that is no longer true.

I'm not saying that the United States isn't a very powerful military force. It's an extremely powerful military force, but its forces are very much weighted towards air and sea, and less so land. It doesn't have a large army compared to the size of the nation. It's sort of about 450,000. It might be

470,000. Add the Marines, and it's about— I think the Marines are about 160,000 overall. But actually, if you look at the size of the Russian army, that's 1.5 million, and that's without reserves, I think. Look at the army in China, 3 million.

And you look at some of these military parades, it's impossible not to be impressed by the military organization of both nations. And you look around Europe, not only have we got forces which are suffering as a result of years of underinvestment, we've also got forces where there is, I think, a lack of people with the sort of right mindset to actually be taken into the armed forces and win wars and go and fight for their countries. There's much less appetite for that, I think. So I think that institutional lag is part of it. I think as well, there is a philosophical problem, which is that NATO has been built around the idea of deterrence.

We must deter Russia from attacking us. But I often say that this actually has played out in not deterrence but confrontation. So we have moved closer and closer to Russia confrontationally and are now surprised that Russia has responded. One of the other obvious failures in NATO thinking is that NATO wasn't ready when the Russians attacked. If we knew that Russia might attack as a consequence of our expansion, then why weren't we ready? So again, another reason to show that NATO is a failing and, I would say, a failed establishment.

And I think a NATO guarantee is worth much less than people think. If you ask me, if there were to be in the Baltic states a country which decided that it was going to suppress its Russian ethnic minority, and did so and had a response from Russia as a result of that suppression—and there is evidence that this is happening—if that were to happen, would I want to spill British blood to support that state? Would you want to spill Norwegian blood? I wouldn't if I were the Prime Minister of either country. So I think there is that sort of confrontational approach which hasn't worked.

I think by far the best thing that we could do, given that the United States isn't omnipotent and that NATO ought not to be a cornerstone of our defence because it has failed, would be to think about alternatives. The one that springs to mind—people look down on it, I don't—is the OSCE. And I think the clue to the OSCE is in the word cooperation. It includes Russia as a member. And although it doesn't have the military capability that NATO has, albeit the military capability that NATO has is very, very overstated, it does have the right people in the mix because you've got the Russians and the Europeans and others as well in the mix. So that's where I would be looking.

Quite a big jump to get there. But actually, one thing I can see is that if we were to start to think seriously about disbanding NATO, then the number of benefits in terms of European peace and security ought surely to be clear. I mean, if NATO is disbanded, there's no reason for Ukraine to want to join it. If NATO is disbanded, then we can actually start to think in cooperative terms in our relationship with Russia and size our militaries accordingly. Not size them for offensive operations against Russia, but size them for longer-term security. I mean, in my country, I'd be interested in the security of my seas, my access to commodities.

The security of my airspace and, you know, good cooperative relationships with a lot of other countries. So, a long answer to a short question, but I think that's the way I'd be thinking about it. It seems to me that there are open questions about the EU as well. But providing it doesn't militarize, and that would be a major mistake, then I think the EU is less important. I happen to think that both institutions will fail between now and the end of this decade, both for different structural reasons. I won't bore you with my thoughts on the EU, but I think both will fail. And I think we will probably be better off as a result of both failures.

#Glenn

I think the reason why NATO worked better during the Cold War is because it was—well, again, not just because it was a defensive alliance, but it was a status quo power. And that's when deterrence worked. That is, if you take action A or B, then we're going to respond clearly. So you clearly communicate as a status quo power; one puts deterrence against the revisionism of the opponent. What happened after the Cold War was NATO became revisionist in terms of NATO expanding and NATO pursuing these aggressive wars. I mean, you can justify it in any way you want about expansion and military attacks, but you can't then anymore claim that NATO is a status quo power. It is changing the security architecture. Again, it's attempting to facilitate collective hegemony. And, uh, you mentioned Kosovo, and, uh, yeah, I was also in the army in '99. Uh, didn't have any active role in this war.

I was, uh, not at all. Uh, but, uh, I was merely, you know, what do you call it? Uh, compulsory military service—conscripted, yeah, conscripted. But what I found fascinating about this war was that it was argued later on that, yes, it wasn't legal, the attack on the Serbs, but it was legitimate, and essentially decoupling legitimacy from legality. And then, of course, the question is, well, what makes it legitimate if it's not legal? And the answer was, well, liberal democratic values. If it's to promote democracy and defend human rights, then it's legitimate, even though international law doesn't support it. From this, though, I think a lot of things were born: the West having prerogative to do many things. We can interfere in domestic affairs of other countries.

Only us, because we call it democracy promotion. We can attack other countries. We call it humanitarian interventionism. We can regime change. We can sever territories from other countries. It suddenly opens up, yeah, a hegemonic system, which is not acceptable to anyone else. And I think we unraveled a lot of international law now. And as this whole hegemonic order is over, we have to ask ourselves: what is supposed to be the role of NATO now? Because, yes, during the Cold War, it could—it was deterring, keeping the bloc politics stable. In the post-Cold War era, it could try to facilitate collective hegemony, whatever one might think of it. But now that we exited the hegemonic era, it's not a good time for NATO anymore to explain how it's going to have a constructive role anymore. Anyways, do you have any final thoughts?

#Steve Jermy

No, I couldn't agree with you more on your point about the proselytization of Western values, which we have assumed are the best values. And I think these days, it seems to me that the rest of the world are looking at us and thinking, what on earth is going wrong in Europe and in the United States? And they've got a point. Who are we to say how people should run their countries? Who are we to say which countries should be broken up and which not? People talk about regime change, but they mean government overthrow. And I think your point about law and legitimacy is incredibly well made, because actually, if you're not prepared to accede to international law, who makes the decisions on legitimacy and why? And what qualifies them to make the decisions on legitimacy?

I mean, I think we've done so much damage in approaching things the way that we have that it's about time that we in the West started to stop thinking about the rest of the world and thinking about the damage that we've done, and why we've been acting like that, and working out ways how we might want to change. We're going to be changing anyway because of the economic consequences, which are in large part due to the way that we've operated. But let's hopefully do that in a much more informed way, in a way where we can actually get back to international law, imperfect though it is, because it's a lot better than us thinking that it is our role in the world and our right in the world to interfere as much as we like. I don't know. I think history will judge the West badly since the end of the Cold War. And I think that it's about time we start to think about it and think in different ways where we can improve our thinking in the future, Glenn.

#Glenn

Well, with those wise words, we'll wrap this up. So thank you so much, Steve. I appreciate you taking the time.

#Steve Jermy

Yeah, pleasure. Keep up the good work, Glenn.

#Steve Jermy

It really matters.