

# Europe PANICS After Zelensky-Trump Blow-up | Prof. Glenn Diesen

While the Europeans are in full denial about losing their top-dog protector, the USA is busy cutting its losses in the Ukraine-proxy war. To discuss the recent blow-up between Zelensky and Trump as well as the greater strategic implications, I'm joined today again by Dr. Glenn Diesen from the University of Southeast Norway. Glenn's Channels: Substack: <https://glenndiesen.substack.com> Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/@UCZFCIDIHTe9HGxtIuVDpBz7g> Twitter: <https://x.com/glenndiesen?s=21>

## #M3

Look at the attrition rates. Look at the weakening of the Ukrainian army. Look at the strengthening of the Russians day by day. The war is over. It's either this horrible deal for the Ukrainians now or it's an even worse deal in the future. I don't want to pretend as if no security guarantees, no NATO, no nothing, no territories back—none of this is a good deal for Ukraine. It's a horrible deal. It's a humiliating peace. But it's the only option at the moment on the table. So I do think that Americans realize that they got defeated in Ukraine.

I mean, Trump himself was happy to send Javelins and escalate the conflict during his first administration. So I don't see any principled issue with not confronting great power. So I do think that this is a reasonable argument that the Americans simply, you know, the war machine ran into the ground. They lost this one. So what do you do? The Europeans, they don't want to do any course correction. They just want to push on even after it's been lost, even though it will lead to an even worse peace.

## #M2

Hello, everybody. This is Pascal from Neutrality Studies. And today, my guest is again my friend and colleague, Prof. Glenn Diesen, who's a professor at the University of Southeast Norway. We want to discuss today the tumultuous last week, when we've seen several state visits in the US, first from France, Mr. Macron, then from Mr. Starmer of the UK, and finally, the big shouting match between Mr. Zelensky and Mr. Trump on Friday and the things that have happened since. Glenn, welcome back to the channel. Thank you, it's good to be back with you. I really want to listen to your take on things and also in the context of your own videos that you did over the last couple of days and weeks, because you've had a lot of very important guests on your show. You're working also with the Duran. Are you able to make sense of all the diplomacy that we've just seen unfolding and collapsing in the last, let's say, seven to ten days?

## #M3

Well, I think "collapse of diplomacy" is the right word. And I was making a comment on this as well. But besides the politics behind it, I think it's very dangerous how diplomacy itself has been falling apart because we see that, you know, why would they have this quarrel in front of the cameras? And I made a point. It's important to note that you have two audiences. They're talking to each other, but they're also trying to pressure each other by reaching out to the public. So I would have assumed if the cameras weren't on them that they wouldn't have put on this show. And I agree with Vance. I think that Zelensky, you know, he wasn't behaving appropriately, but at the same time, the way they were approaching Zelensky as well.

Obviously, they wouldn't have done this if it weren't for the cameras. Now, you can argue that they're being defensive or offensive, but whatever it was, this is not usually done in front of cameras. But this is a new megaphone diplomacy. You just scream to the audience, see who can scream the loudest. And I think the role of narrative control is so important these days that it makes it very difficult to have diplomacy. And I know the Europeans are quite horrified, thinking, "Oh, my goodness, how can you do this in front of the camera? This is inappropriate." But how are the Europeans any better? They were fighting a proxy war against Russia, the world's largest nuclear power.

And again, for three years, nobody even wants to sit down with Russia. The arguments we often get are, well, we don't want to legitimize Putin. We don't want to, you know, and so everything is about how you're portraying it. Like we have to portray it to the public that it is isolated. We have to do this. So everything is about, yeah, sending a message. And you always have to make sure that the audience gets the message they want. And so it's very difficult to do diplomacy. Indeed, the Europeans refuse diplomacy, despite the fact that all these hundreds of thousands of people are dying. They don't want to do diplomacy.

And you see now with the Americans, they do want to do diplomacy, but both the Ukrainians and the Americans got engaged in a shouting match. I think it was predictable—not to this extent, I did not see this coming—but before they met, it was obvious that it wasn't simple to sign an agreement. The document they had published was so vague about the minerals, it obviously hadn't been settled. And the issue of security guarantees is front and center of what they were trying to link to this energy deal. So I think the idea that they came there not to sign an agreement but to do last-minute negotiation over what it actually means, and then do this in front of the camera, was a recipe for disaster. I don't know who managed this, but it was terrible to watch.

## #M2

The way that Alexander Mercouris also explains it is that it was apparently the job, or he interprets it as having been the job, of Mr. Macron on Monday and then Starmer on Thursday to kind of extract these backstop concessions from Donald Trump, because that's apparently what the Europeans were

after: that the United States commits itself militarily to help the Europeans in case they got in trouble if they actually start sending troops into Ukraine. And this is what failed, and that Mr. Zelensky still wanted to go back to this point, something that the Americans simply weren't willing to accept. On the other hand, that deal, this mineral deal, or it was more than minerals, right?

It's in general like the wealth of the Ukrainian state that was about to be signed away. That seemed to me such a horrible idea for Ukraine to do in the first place. I mean, I'm kind of glad Ukraine didn't sign that because to me it would look as if you give things away in perpetuity, 50% of your nation's wealth in perpetuity in the future. Do you think that this was... Was this meant seriously? I mean, also Alexander Mercouris keeps saying that the mineral deal was originally the idea of Mr. Zelensky. That's true as well, but the Americans flipped it on its head and made it a repayment instead of a future promise of profits, instead of taking the bribe. How do you read what these different actors actually try to do with each other?

### #M3

Well, it is correct that initially it was Zelensky who approached the Americans with this proposal. Again, it's worth noting here this is an immensely horrible deal for the Ukrainians to hand over all of these resources, which they definitely need to actually recover the country afterwards. But Ukraine is in a very desperate position. And if they don't end this war, the Ukrainian army, we're watching its collapse. The Russians will take huge territories. They will take most of these resources. Indeed, the Russians already have most of these resources. So if they don't do anything, then it will end up much in Russia's control.

So the way Zelensky probably saw it, let's promise it to the Americans if they're willing, more or less, to fight for it. The way I saw it was the Ukrainians wanted this as a security guarantee, effectively buying American military assistance against Russia. But as Trump said, this is not what they want. They argue that if we merely help to extract these rare earth minerals, then that would be enough to deter the Russians because they wouldn't want to attack American interests and all of this. So it will be enough. And obviously, as Trump said, we hold all the cards there. And that's right.

They have all the leverage. And that's why they found this push by Zelensky to be inappropriate. But I don't think it was ever going to work because, as you said, the security guarantees are treated as something unproblematic. You give security guarantees, and now they don't have to worry that much. But, as I always make the point, in any peace deal, you want to remove the incentives for restarting the conflict. Great. The security guarantees can deter Russia, which is great. Then it's less likely that Russia will renew hostilities, but unlike the narrative we're being fed every day.

This is not simply Russia trying to conquer territories. There are more sides in this conflict. One of them is that NATO actually did start this war in 2014 by toppling the government and has sabotaged every meaningful peace agreement since in order to keep a long war, using Ukrainians to fight Russia. So it has to go both ways. And we know already that Zelensky is quite desperate to get the

Americans on his side. We know in the past he even lied, for example, about the Russian missiles hitting Poland in order to try to pull NATO into this war.

So what would happen if there's a security guarantee? It would give so much incentive to Zelensky to break that and restart conflicts if he knows that he can bring the Americans in on his side to reconquer the territories which they have lost. So I think, yes, Trump said that he's playing with World War III. This is not what you want to do. And so, yeah, the deal, I think, was never going to really work. But I think Zelensky's idea was, you know, you dismiss all talks about diplomacy, all talks about negotiations, and you buy into the idea that Russia is this terrorist state that will never stop attacking, will always just want to kill out of joy. And it has to be stopped. And this is why they need security guarantees. And this is how we're building it into this rare earth deal.

And I just want to say, finally, I very much agree with you. I think it's no coincidence that Macron and Starmer came in at the beginning. I think these are the two main countries in Europe which actually matter now as their military powers. They also have some ability to disrupt anything that America wants to do in terms of negotiating a peace. And, yeah, we saw both Macron and Starmer bring up the same thing. We need security guarantees from the United States because the Europeans can't send in what they call peacekeepers on the ground in Ukraine unless they have American backing, because Russia would destroy them all. They're not going to accept it. From Russia's perspective, they invaded Ukraine to prevent NATO incursion into Ukraine. So if you have European peacekeepers, it's still the same NATO countries.

It would be a stepping stone. They would never leave, and it would be a stepping stone to de facto NATO membership. So they're not going to accept this. They don't want them there. And I think the Americans know very well that they won't accept it. So why would the Americans—they can't accept this giving security guarantees. So this was the main conflict, I think. And this is when also Zelensky and Vance went at each other when Zelensky kept rejecting the whole idea of having any diplomacy, that it wasn't possible, and shut down what Vance was trying to push forward. So they wanted Zelensky to agree, yes, okay, we'll make a peace, the war is over, we lost, here's the demands, get on board with Team America, and he didn't. And that's when things went very quickly south.

## #M2

Do you also think that we, for the first time, now have a clash of narratives really on the top level? Because the narrative we've been hearing from the US and from Europe, with maybe the exception of Hungary, and then maybe with the exception of Slovakia after Mr. Vito became president there, was that this is an unprovoked aggression. And the only way it can end is a just war. And a just war needs to be Mr. Zelensky's peace formula. That has been, for three years, the narrative that we've heard. And Mr. Trump and Mr. Vance obviously do not agree, do not buy that. They are actually much closer to what we've been discussing, the way that they understand the conflict.

Although they are still, I mean, I'm yet waiting for some clear statements. I mean, for instance, something that Mr. Vance could have thrown at Mr. Zelensky is like, why did you not take the deal you had in April, right, in 2022? Why did you not take the Istanbul one? I mean, that would have been something he could have thrown at him, but he didn't. So some things are yet to be seen in how they view the origins of the conflict. But when it comes to what they want to achieve, it seems that their position and their analysis of the situation is much closer to ours than that of the past three years.

## #M3

No, I agree. And I think narratives have become a huge part of politics, especially now in great power politics. The narratives that have been pushed so hard by NATO over the past years always sound altruistic and principled. But as we see, the narratives always translate into a long war without exception. So you mentioned the idea that the war was unprovoked. I mean, this is just objectively false. It's one of the most provoked wars of the last few decades. And again, people on the American side recognize it. We've talked many times about the CIA director, of course, of the U.S., also pointing out years ago that this would start a war if we tried to do this. But why unprovoked? Well, unprovoked is because if it was a war that is provoked, then we recognize that the Russians actually have some legitimate security concerns which have been ignored.

We don't have to respect or acknowledge the legitimacy of how they responded in terms of the invasion. But if it was provoked, then there are at least two sides to the story. And then it's important to sit down and negotiate. For the sake of peace, we can find a middle way. However, if you say that it's unprovoked, what does that entail? Well, it's just Russia acted in a vacuum. It's militarily opportunistic. It wanted to conquer territories. Now suddenly diplomacy and war look very different. If you do diplomacy now, it's dangerous. It's emboldening him to take more territories in the future. You know, dictators around the world are watching this. And so diplomacy is appeasement. The only way you can have peace now is to defeat Russia on the battlefield.

So the unprovoked narrative was very key because NATO, after sabotaging the peace negotiations in Istanbul at the beginning of 2022, shut down all diplomacy. They said, we're not going to talk to Russia anymore. This will be settled on the battlefield. You know, weapons are the path to peace. If Russia's in the room at the OSCE meeting, the Europeans will stand up and leave the room. So now diplomacy is something immoral, which is also why the Hitler analogy is so overwhelmingly popular. Why do they always talk about Hitler? Why do we perpetually live in the 1930s? Well, because it's the same with Hitler. When you're facing evil, there can be no diplomacy, there can be no compromise, and peace happens by simply defeating the adversary.

And that's what we're looking at. So I think all of these things we're saying sound wonderful, you know, after this war, Ukraine will get its NATO membership. It sounds like we're very empathetic to Ukraine, but we're not. What we're telling the Russians is whatever territory you don't conquer,

NATO will get that territory after the war. So the historical city of Odessa, strategically on the Black Sea coast, can be used to confront Russia. If you don't take it, we will take it. This is what we're telling the Russians. It's impossible to stop the war. What exactly can Russia do now? We told the Russians, either you capitulate and NATO moves into Ukraine, or you'll fight this to the end, which entails killing hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers.

It's terrible. And so when people are shocked when they see, oh, my goodness, the Americans, they voted with Russia at the UN, which was, again, historical. But what did they actually say? Well, they didn't want to blame everything on Russia. They said, you know, there were many sides in this conflict. Let's not put all the blame on the Russians. Why? Well, you can listen to our media suggest that he's bought by the Kremlin as a secret agent, or if you say that one side is completely guilty, the other side is completely innocent, it's very difficult to find a compromise now. Anything you give to the opponent is now illegitimate. It's simply rewarding aggression.

So I think people get caught up in these narratives. And it's good that someone's punching some holes in them because they're fake, a lot of them. But as we see in narratives, they often become immune to facts. We can present any facts, and what do they say? Well, that's what the Russians are saying. So why are you repeating Russian narratives, not ours? You have picked the wrong side. And they always go after the person. I've seen this a million times. Whenever people come up and present some facts that go against the narrative, they always attack the person. Everyone's carrying water for Putin or something. Everyone is betraying the Ukrainians. And we have the slogans as well. It says, stand with Ukraine.

We stand with Ukraine. What exactly does that mean? It means that we're going to continue the war, even though the majority of Ukrainians want negotiations, even willing to surrender territory to get peace. It means we're not going to have diplomacy, continuing this until even more people are dead and even more territory is lost. What is this standing with Ukraine? And when we stand with Ukraine, it also means we can't undermine the legitimacy of Zelensky. So when people are kidnapped across the country, men are grabbed off the streets, sent to the front lines to die—all these husbands and sons, which women are protesting against—we shouldn't report on it because it undermines it.

When the churches are attacked, the Orthodox Church, we shouldn't say anything because, well, it undermines Zelensky. When they purge the political opposition, the opposition media, we shouldn't say anything. So we're willing to do horrible things to the Ukrainians in the name of standing with Ukraine. So it's all narratives. It's all slogans. It's garbage. It's not reality. So I like the fact that Vance brought this up, this conscription or recruitment. But of course, some things were quite unseemly, like criticizing for not wearing a suit. I mean, for me, this is a bit over the top. There's no point in humiliating a man either. So there was some bullying there, I would admit, though.

**#M2**

Yeah, I would see it that way too, because on the one hand, I am not at all a fan of Mr. Zelensky. But if you think about his position, being in the White House, in the Oval Office with cameras running and actually having to defend the Ukrainian position—I mean, whatever you think of the Ukrainian position—he's the man paid to do that, right? So I do understand a certain part of this, although he clearly should have kept his cool. But what I also wonder about is, because this is happening all so publicly, and as you said, diplomacy usually works differently. So what are we witnessing? Is this maybe a smokescreen for something else? Because the word in these circles is that it is possible that the Americans and the Russians are actually negotiating on a different track as well, that nobody is being informed about.

There's one theory out there that there's actually some old-school embassy-to-government negotiations going on through secured channels between the Americans and the Russians in order to get closer to a bilateral understanding of what should happen. And we know from the Russians that for them it includes at least a common approach toward a security structure, not just Ukraine, but much, much more, right? Europe and global security structure as well. Do you believe that there is another track of diplomacy going on besides this smoke and mirrors that we might be seeing that's meant for public consumption? And that might also be meant to keep the Europeans busy because now they are so busy with themselves that I just wonder if there's any other agenda here.

### #M3

No, I think, well, I almost take it now for granted. Again, Trump himself said that this deal has to be done fast or it might not be done at all. And again, what he does with Starmer and Macron, he talks to them, he tries to make them leave with a smile on their face, but they're not being given anything. So, you know, when Hegseth said there will be no NATO expansion, Ukraine is not going to get all its territories back, and there will be no U.S. security guarantees, they say this because they understand the Russian position. They understand also this is what is required for peace. And furthermore, they have been quite clear, at least the Trump administration, saying that the war has been lost.

Nothing can be reversed anymore. This can only escalate towards a nuclear war. It's pushing Russia further to China. There's nothing to be gained anymore. They genuinely want this war to end now. So... But how can they do this? Again, the Russians agree with this. The Americans agree. The Chinese. Most of the world can get on board with this, except for the Europeans and Zelensky. And they say Zelensky because if there's a different leader like Arestovych or something, they could get a deal. Because the majority of Ukrainians want this. It's Zelensky. So what is the instrument they can use against Zelensky? If he doesn't fall in line, what would you do if you were in the United States?

You're doing this, working behind the scenes with the Russians, trying to come up with a bilateral deal because, to be honest, it's only the Americans and the Russians who matter. The Americans dominate over NATO. This is a NATO-Russia proxy war, and Russia has effectively won the war. This is the realism: it's the Americans and the Russians who will determine the outcome now. So they're

trying to come together to a position, but they have to get the Americans, the Europeans, and Zelensky on board. So what would you do? Well, they have a huge card over Zelensky. If he doesn't want to fall in line, they can question his legitimacy, and they've done this already.

Trump apparently forgot that he called Zelensky a dictator. I don't buy that for a second. He forgot it. But, you know, and this is what Vance said as well: look what you've done to your own country. They're questioning his entire legitimacy. And also now Zelensky, when he goes back to Ukraine, sees himself as the leader whom the Americans now despise. They don't like him. They question his legitimacy. So now suddenly he can very quickly be removed. Indeed, if you're in the Ukrainian military, do you think he's the best person to bring peace to your country when your main supporter over the past three years, the United States, obviously can't stand him?

No. So, I think this is the little concealed threat they have, that is, we will remove you. And it's the same with the, well, it's not the same, but with the French and the British. You know, look how he offered, you know, we can do a big trade deal with Britain. You know, they're giving them some carrots, but they won't move. America won't move on the Ukrainian issue. So, I think they're trying to pacify the Europeans, threatening to remove Zelensky. And the Americans want to end this war now, and they will push it through. And you can, of course, see this debacle in the Oval Office through this lens.

## #M2

It's just so incredibly difficult to know these days what means anything at all anymore. Because on the one hand, Ukraine did sign all of these security agreements with various European states, right? And there was, for the longest time, this stance of Ukraine and the Europeans that, oh, you cannot have presidential elections in Ukraine. It's impossible as long as the war is going on and martial law is there. It's impossible. And now, after what happened on Friday, a lot of European media are now discussing, oh, maybe Mr. Zelensky needs to be exchanged, right? Maybe there needs to be somebody else. So it seems that now the idea is in the room that, oh, maybe he can be changed after all. And maybe you don't even need a direct election for that. This is so bizarre coming from those people. So what do they actually believe in these narrative constructs that they create? Because they break their own rules that they make themselves constantly as they move forward.

## #M3

Well, keep in mind that also the NATO Secretary General, after Pete Hegseth came out and said there will be no NATO expansion, this has to be the foundation of any deal, the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg came out and he said, well, we never actually promised NATO membership as part of a peace deal. But for Christ's sake, they've been saying, you know, the bridge to NATO membership is strong. It's well lit. This is where we're moving. It's non-negotiable. All this nonsense. And now, of course, reality kicks in and the narrative shifts. But this is also the power of Trump. I mean, for most people, all they see is a very loudmouthed, arrogant, a bit of bullish behavior.

But yeah, this is a huge weakness in many ways in politics too. But it's also part of the power of Trump. He comes in, he creates a huge mess, he makes these bombastic statements, and he shakes it up. And by doing this, it creates this huge space for maneuver where previously nothing could be done. So he breaks narratives and he forces others to break them as well. It's quite interesting to watch. I don't think it's good. It's not good for a politician because you want to be predictable. But at the same time, look what we've done in the West. We've locked ourselves into these crazy narratives that, you know, we can't talk to our opponents. Weapons are the path to peace.

Russia didn't have any legitimate security concerns. It was unprovoked. They want to restore the Soviet Union. I mean, even a 10-year-old should be shaking their head. This is just so stupid now. It doesn't make any sense at all. So when he comes, he's able to just plow through all of this. And, you know, he can say facts which aren't real. He can make up things, like Zelensky having 4% approval. That's not correct. I mean, Zelensky couldn't win an election anymore if it was a free election. But 4% is not real. It can't be real, I think. So, no, he's making up things as he goes along, but he gets away with everything. It's a weakness, but it also works as an advantage at times.

## #M2

It's kind of a sledgehammer approach, and he has, like, de facto managed to completely create a new space for negotiation. No doubt about that. But the one thing that frustrates me so much with the Europeans is that, again, they don't stick to their own logic. They don't stick to their own world that they create. I mean, again, the idea has been, oh, Ukraine has the right to join NATO. And even if the U.S. says no, we still stick with Ukraine having the right to join NATO. No, that's not how NATO works. This is not how it works. You are the one who told us that NATO needs consensus, and the U.S. Not only do you disregard that, but also Hungary is a member and said no for a long time. You are telling us outright that Hungary has nothing.

I mean, Hungary will follow along. But now you're also telling us that you will string the United States along when this is not how it's supposed to work, right? What kind of stupidity is that, then, while also still risking inviting war onto all of Europe? The whole idea, the whole thing that the British and the French now want is the guarantees that if we go, if we send people in, then the Americans will come and bail us out. But that would still mean fighting in Europe. I mean, you are risking the national security of France and Britain. For what? For Ukraine having the right to join NATO. Why would you risk that if NATO is there to protect you from risk?

## #M3

But this is also one of the silly narratives which they make up. And again, it sounds moral and virtuous: Russia shouldn't have any say in what Ukraine does. It has its own foreign policy. It can join NATO if it wants to. And it sounds very reasonable. Again, Ukraine is an independent country. It should be allowed to choose its own foreign policy. If it's not allowed, it suggests that Russia still has

some imperial control over Ukraine. So it sounds so sensible, but there's nothing sensible about this at all. That is, never before in history has anyone suggested that somehow the recipe for peace and stability is simply for a military bloc to expand up to another great power and ignore its security interests.

I mean, Mexico has all the rights in the world in terms of politics, political rights, economic rights, but it doesn't have the right to host Russian and Chinese military bases. If it tries to do it, it will be pummeled like Ukraine is. And it's just not a statement of support; it's just a reality. So what we have done in Europe after the Cold War was we said, well, what represents Europe? Well, NATO represents Europe. Everyone should be a part of NATO except for Russia, which now ends up in a situation—and Russia shouldn't have any veto rights over NATO. So now we're in a situation where the largest state in Europe is the only one who shouldn't have a say in Europe.

And it's absurd. But if you strip away the institutional veto power Russia has, or the voice it has in saying, no, you can't build up this military infrastructure and missiles on our borders, you can't do this. If we strip them of their institutional voice, then they are left with the military. And that's what we're seeing now. So it's just very strange. Everyone knew this was going to happen. I mean, Merkel once said that trying to get Ukraine into NATO would be interpreted as a declaration of war by Moscow. And then later on, we say, oh, no, no, it was unprovoked. I mean, you can't have it both ways.

But we continue to go into these very strange narratives. This is the problem, and I think this is also uniquely an issue for Europe. I wrote an article a few months ago about how Europe's new political class began rejecting reality. It's on my Substack. I made this point that for the Europeans, how do you get all these countries to have a consensus and to have a common position? It's very strange. You don't have the same national interests, especially in a multipolar world where interests diverge more. So what do you do? Well, you have to frame everything as right versus wrong. You saw this already in the '90s. Should we expand the European Union? Well, everyone had to agree.

EU is about democracy, freedom. It's a peace project. So if you're against it, then you hate democracy and peace, pretty much. And it became impossible for people to oppose it. But there were real challenges with it, which were never addressed because we delegitimized democratic dissent, the opposition, because it's very simple. It's good or bad. And we do the same, of course, with foreign policy. So what happens when there's actually dissent? People saying, well, this doesn't make sense. You can't just expand a hostile military bloc up to the Russian borders and expect, you know, that they will simply capitulate. You know, this will trigger war. Well, what do we do?

Well, that's pro-Russian, we say, because that's illegitimate. In other words, you know, when Hungary comes along, they say, let's start to negotiate, try to create a space for diplomacy between Ukraine and Russia. Well, you're a Putinist. You know, Benfizo says the same. Well, you're a Putinist too. You have in Romania, Gheorghescu, who wins, also on a peace platform. Well, he's far-right and also a bit of a Putinist. So now, you know, we can annul the elections. We can see him be

detained by the police. Trump as well. He wants to end this war. He makes a clear case why, you know, it can't be won anymore. We don't have weapons. The Ukrainians don't have more manpower.

If we're going to continue this, we have to escalate, which could lead to World War III. But what do we say? Oh, he might be bought by the Kremlin. You know, remember Russiagate? You know, not the actual Russiagate, but the narrative. And we only use these stories to deprive any opposition of legitimacy. By the way, that goes for academics and journalists as well. Try to make a case for peace now in Europe and see what will happen to you. See the words they will attach to you. We'll never discuss the merit of the argument. They will only go after the person. There's only one right position. That's why standing with Ukraine means keep fighting to the last Ukrainian. It's absurd, but we paint ourselves into these corners, and this is where we are.

## #M2

Last question, maybe. There is another very intelligent argument that was made by Brian Berletic that overall what the United States is doing at the moment is still in character. That actually there has been a long history of the US basically reversing course whenever it hits a wall with the Russians, but it never does so in order to truly change its policy, but to buy time to fight the Russians on another day. And he recalls the big reset under Obama in 2009, 2010, where Hillary Clinton, together with Mr. Lavrov, literally pressed a reset button, and they were all smiles.

And then the escalation still continued. So his interpretation is that Mr. Trump is just continuing this policy. And you could extend those arguments into the Cold War and say you've always had moments of détente, but détente was then again followed by militarization, as, for example, under Reagan, in order to put pressure on Russia. Do you also think that is the case? Or do you see the current shift in policy under the Trump administration in a different light?

## #M3

Well, a bit of both. Actually, I talked to Brian Berletic about the same thing. And the real question is, are the Americans approaching the Russians now proposing a permanent peace or a temporary ceasefire? That is in the Cold War between the two of them. And I think it's a good argument that, well, again, what else is Trump going to do? We keep portraying this as simply him handing over to Russia exactly what they want without getting anything back. But we lost the war. Look at the attrition rates. Look at the weakening of the Ukrainian army. Look at the strengthening of the Russian day by day. The war is over. It's either this horrible deal for the Ukrainians now or it's an even worse deal in the future. I don't want to pretend as if no security guarantees, no NATO, no nothing, no territories back. None of this is a good deal for Ukraine.

It's a horrible deal. It's a humiliating peace, but it's the only option on the table at the moment. So I do think that the Americans realized they were defeated in Ukraine. I mean, Trump himself was happy to send Javelins and escalate the conflict during his first administration. So I don't see any

principled issue with not confronting a great power. I do think this is a reasonable argument that the Americans simply, you know, the war machine ran into the ground. They lost this one. So what do you do? The Europeans don't want to make any course correction. They just want to push on even after it's been lost, even though it will lead to an even worse peace. So the Americans, I think, are more pragmatic. And that's what you can see. They might be regrouping and going after the Russians on a different day. Indeed, they're quite open about what they want.

General Kellogg, I think, is interesting because he used to push very hard. You know, look, we're using the Ukrainians to kill Russians, and we're knocking out this great power rival from the ranks of great powers, and now we can focus on China. He said, this is the acme of professionalism. Yeah, and actually, I put out a video where he said this, and he sent me a message on Twitter going, well, this is from Sun Tzu almost, so he's very happy about it. But anyways, he moves on, and now, of course, he's part of the Trump team, and now he's saying, well, it's important to dislodge the Russians from the Iranians, from the Chinese, from the North Koreans. So let's, you know, we pushed them together, they defeated us, now we have to reach out to the Russians, try to split them from the Chinese.

Who knows, maybe we can get the Russians on board to defeat the Chinese in the future. And if the Chinese are defeated again, then they can go after the Russians again. So I do think, yes, there's a part of this which is simply to change course and do a temporary ceasefire before we have another go at the Russians. On the other hand, Ukraine was really our last opportunity to defeat Russia, to break them. I mean, this is a huge country we... well, the Americans were able to get control over after 2014. They took control over a lot of the parts of the Ukrainian government and intelligence services. They've been running it as a colony, according to the former general prosecutor, Viktor Shokin.

And I don't think we're going to have this opportunity again. You're not going to be able to use Georgia or Moldova as a proxy. We might try to, again, topple the government in Belarus, create some more problems. But Ukraine was really the big instrument, the big sledgehammer we could use against Russia. And if this is lost, yeah, we might have a problem. So I do think that, on one hand, it could be a temporary ceasefire. On the other hand, I think they do recognize the world has shifted dramatically. That is, the distribution of power. It's not bipolar during the Cold War. It's not unipolar after the Cold War.

We now have China becoming, or having already become, the largest and most powerful economy. The Americans can't properly compete anymore. So if this is the largest power, you have to rethink the entire relationship in Europe. It made sense to have Russia as the boogeyman if this is the main opponent in a Eurocentric world, but it might be that the Americans are simply adjusting to a new international distribution of power. So again, I could be wrong, but I don't know. I'm not sure if it's simply the same as back in 2011 with, you know, another reset. Was it 2011? Oh, 2009, 2010, yeah, sorry, yeah. Oh, I thought, yeah.

## #M2

So, in a sense, your interpretation is that the Americans are just much better students of Machiavelli. They just know that you don't keep betting on a losing horse. Sunk costs are sunk costs. You recover what you can, but you don't do it out of a feeling of, like, "Oh, let's have eternal peace with the Russians and all sing Kumbaya." It's just a cold calculation.

## #M3

No, I think they're being very pragmatic. And of course, many people would see this as being immoral. I don't think necessarily it is. I think in the realist tradition, politicians have become too obsessed with good versus bad. They end up in these moral crusades. Again, if you're pushing for something which you can't achieve, like bringing Ukraine into NATO, this is why people like Professor Mearsheimer pointed out since back in 2014, if you're trying to do this, you're only going to ensure their destruction. So the people are saying, no, but to have a moral case, why do we have to pull them into NATO? Otherwise, we're giving Russia authority.

Okay, well, it's not going to be achievable. The Russians will destroy the country if you try to do this, and he has proven to be right. But still, the people who come with the moral claims, they still push back on it. But we had morality on our side. We might not have been right, and if you're not right, it's not moral anymore because now your policies lead to horrible destruction. And I think this is also a point by Walter Lippmann. He made the argument that when you frame propaganda, when you frame everything as being good versus evil, it's wonderful if you want to mobilize the public for war.

Because if you can fight the war to end all wars, make the world safe for democracies, all of this stuff... defeat another Hitler, then people are all on board for another war. But if it was time to make peace, it's very dangerous. And that's why the Europeans have got themselves stuck. They kept telling themselves Russia wants to restore the Soviet Union, they're Hitler, all this nonsense. And now, how can you have diplomacy with Hitler? How can you stand by and let them create, you know, they're going to attack Poland and all this ridiculous stuff? So they locked themselves in, so they can't make peace anymore.

## #M2

The path to hell is paved with good intentions, and the path to Ukraine is paved with—no, not plastered. What's the word I'm looking for? Paved. Paved. Is that Napoleon?

## #M3

I can't remember.

## #M2

The path to hell is paved with good intentions, and the path to Ukraine is paved with sweet promises of just peace and eternal bliss in NATO. Glenn, thank you very much for the update. I think this was very valuable. People should go and read you on your Substack and on your YouTube channel, correct?

### **#M3**

Yes, yes. I'm mainly on Substack and YouTube these days. I also have Twitter. But, yeah, Substack is a great platform, actually. Not to do too much promoting for them here, but you can do your articles. You can put the videos. So it's, yeah, Glenn Diesen at Substack.

### **#M2**

Long form, too, which Glenn regularly does. Subscribe to him on Substack. He always pushes out very, very good information. Prof. Glenn Diesen, thank you for your time today.

### **#M3**

Thanks, Pascal.