

The "West" Is IMPLODING Even Faster After This. | Dr. Jan Oberg & Ian Proud

The signs are not just on the wall but written in the skies and the ocean's too. The entire "western" narrative, its repressive dominance, and its hubris are about to collapse and take many of its established institutions down with it. And the kakistocratic (aka imbecile) leadership, doesn't even realise it. If they did, they wouldn't be driving Europe into that giant iceberg. To discuss the very sorry state of the European tragedy, I'm joined again by two colleagues from the region, Dr. Jan Oberg, a peace researcher from Sweden and the former British Diplomat Ian Proud. Ian's Substack article: <https://thepeacemonger.substack.com/p/europe-prepares-itself-for-all-out> Jan's Susback: <https://thetransnational.substack.com>

#M3

What I think is now going to happen is what I predicted more than 40 years ago—not to boast about it, but that was pretty predictable for me—was when the East and West had gone down. And that was the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. It would be time for the Western West to go down. I mean, we are similar societies, one run on Adam Smith and one run on Karl Marx. You know, the whole West is now falling. That's a completely different thing from when the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact were falling. But, you know, dialectically speaking, out of the catastrophe can come something positive. And that's what I hope to see while I'm walking around here. But I can say, honestly, if I were 40 years younger, I would think of moving out of Europe.

#M2

Hello, everybody. This is Pascal from Neutrality Studies. And today I've got two great European colleagues with me, Dr. Jan Oberg, a peace researcher from Sweden, and the former British diplomat Ian Proud, who's currently located in the UK. Ian recently wrote an article on his Substack about how Europe is preparing itself for all-out war with Russia, and that deserves a lot of attention. Although the article itself, as I understand, is a bit of a parody, the threat is very real. Let's discuss Europe's latest drive toward more warmongering and militarization. So, Ian, Jan, welcome. Thank you so much.

#M1

Yeah, thanks very much, Pascal. Nice to be back and nice to meet Jan for the first time. Look, clearly, President Trump wants to broker some sort of peace deal, but it's obvious that European elites are absolutely resistant to any steps that would change their current posture towards Ukraine, which is frankly unchanged since 2014, so 9 years now, and actually whipped up by the European

Commission and to some extent by the incoming German government. They're looking at a huge rearmament, and nobody is talking about actual peace and engaging directly with Moscow to bring an end to this needless war. It's just, quite frankly, bizarre.

#M2

It is very bizarre, and now we are hearing that the European Union wants to use 800 billion euros for a fund, and Ursula von der Leyen is very proud, announcing that this is money that will be made available to member states to do more weapons procurements. Jan, what do you hear about this in Sweden, and what's the war mentality like there at the moment?

#M3

Oh, Denmark, you know, I was born in Denmark and I live in Sweden, are very pro this whole thing. There's nobody who would question it in the parliaments. And particularly, I would say, NATO still has, paradoxically, absurdly, a great influence, or the US still has a great influence on both countries, because Sweden joined NATO, as you know, recently, and Denmark is now discussing having American bases in Denmark. So, I mean, you're speaking to one of the very few people who is a dissident when it comes to militarism. It's across the board and across the parliaments, there is a yes to arming Ukraine, an already lost war. There's a no to negotiations. There is a yes to militarization.

And what you could add to what you said was, as far as I've understood, the European Union is thinking of borrowing that money as a union, not the single member states. So coming generations will have to pay for this. And secondly, the whole Western world is on its way down. The economic course of Europe is going down. And you tie the military expenditures to gross national product, which is the most stupid idea I've heard for years. And I've heard a few, because that means, actually, funnily enough, that if you have an economic crisis, you will pay less to the military, which is what they cannot do because they want to do the armament thing. So, you know, when militarism goes up, intellectualism and morals go down.

#M2

It's getting worse, isn't it? I mean, now Donald Trump has even announced tariffs on European countries and threatened them that if they want to walk away from U.S. weapons manufacturers, there will be further repercussions. Ian, at this point, aren't we reaching the point where Europeans should just wake up and understand that, look, this thing with the United States stopped working a long time ago?

#M1

Well, to be honest, the point where they should have woken up was probably about 10 years ago, actually. But yes, we're still at that point where everybody needs to wake up and smell the Starbucks. But actually, what's happening now is the situation, the picture is getting even more confusing. U.S. interests in Europe and with Ukraine are increasingly coming into conflict with each other. Trump's position on tariffs is actually making it harder for him to broker peace in Ukraine. His position on picking up U.S. defense contractors is making it harder for him to distance himself from NATO. So the whole kind of policy mix is just desperately confusing. And meanwhile, the European leaders are stuck on let's just continue doing what we've been doing for the last 11 years and hope for the best.

#M2

Do you think this is still this ingrained Russophobia? Or at this point, what is it? I mean, Jan, if you have to explain this to, let's say, my colleagues in Asia, in Indonesia and Malaysia and all over ASEAN, how do you explain what the Europeans are doing now?

#M3

Well, let me give you two pieces of background very quickly. We have forgotten, and I have not, because more than 20 years ago, I wrote a criticism of the European Union's construction if it wanted to do peace, which it says in its preamble that it wants. There is no way the European Union was constructed to make peace, and that's a long argument why it is not. But do not forget that it's supposed to speak with one voice in foreign policy matters, at least. And they did that for the first and, if I remember correctly, actually only time. That was the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia out of Yugoslavia in 1992. Without giving you all the details of it, that made the war in Bosnia impossible. So you have a European Union which was bent on destroying Yugoslavia by not having a plan about the rest of Yugoslavia.

And then, you know, at that point, they did not have an idea about conflict analysis and seeing the consequences of what they did. And then, of course, they got the Nobel Peace Prize. Now, the other point is, when I was in Iraq, right before the US invasion, an ambassador who had been an ambassador to France said one thing: we have given up talking with the Americans, but we had hoped we could talk with the Europeans. But we had written several letters to the European Union and we never heard anything from them. So this idea that the European Union could become an alternative West, with a different benign policy vis-a-vis the world and all that, with a European identity, whatever that is, is something we have—it's not 10 years ago, it's 20, 30 years ago that that was gone. But the madness we see now has surprised even me.

And that's because diversity has disappeared. Criticism has disappeared. Rational analysis has disappeared, and a lot of analysis of the consequences of what we do today, just one month ahead, has disappeared. It's all emotionalism, it's all hatred against Russia, of course, and it's all a cover-up

story for the fact that this whole crisis was created by NATO's expansion, particularly the one into Ukraine. I'm not defending the Russian invasion. I distanced myself the day after. But what I'm saying is there is a huge cover-up now. And the conclusion of this is we now have two Cold Wars in Europe, one with the United States. Because any fool should have made a plan: What do we do if Trump is reelected? And secondly, they have it and will have it for decades ahead, in my view, with Russia. We are losers in Europe to an extreme extent now.

#M2

Ian, do you agree with that?

#M1

Yeah, I completely agree with that, actually. And it's great to have that historical context as well, which is often missing. So much thinking on what's happening today is rooted in the short term. Few people can think back further than a year in the past, let alone sort of Jan's reaching back 30 years and more to provide the kind of wider backdrop. I think it's super important. The emotionalism has absolutely kind of taken over, you know, by now. And there's an unwillingness to accept that actually, we can gamble and lose.

You know, we gambled that actually Russia would back down on the issue of NATO expansion. It didn't. It actually faced up, and that caused a war that Ukraine is now progressively losing, albeit slowly losing on the battlefield. And nobody is willing to invest political capital in actually putting their hands up and saying, well, actually, our strategy has failed. And that's what it comes down to. It's a fear of failing and admitting to the constituencies that they fed nonstop propaganda for the last 11 years that they have failed and have been failing for the past decade.

#M2

But the bizarre thing about this moment is that you now have the least capable to actually continue fighting a war who yell the loudest that we have to continue fighting a war. The UK and the EU member countries, not all of them, but most of them, are on board with this madness. And there's a lack of ability, clearly. I mean, Russia just demonstrated that it can destroy NATO inside Ukraine, right? Anything that you throw at them. And by now, through the New York Times article, we also know all of this has been very closely coordinated by the Americans, right?

And this was America and the US NATO actually killing Russians in Ukraine and killing Russians in Russia as well, right? With the Kursk invasion and operational planning. And despite all of this knowledge, which by now is out in the open, even in the West, the Europeans still insist on continuing the war. Jan, I can't understand this. Shouldn't there be a rational acknowledgment that, okay, we're just not able to do it? We need to wind it down as soon as possible.

#M3

Well, I would not pretend that I understand it, because in the 50 years I've been working with these things, I've never seen anything like this. So let's be honest about that. There's no rational understanding either. But I would touch upon things like this: it is quite likely, in a more macro-historic perspective, what you are likely to do when you see you're losing the grip. This is a patriarch in the Western world on its deathbed, the US and Europe. And you do crazy things, and you don't argue anymore. You shout and scream, "Obey what I'm saying," and stuff like that. And then you have things like groupthink, flock mentality. You have now a—and that's mind-boggling to me—you have a total taboo on the word peace. Peace research has gone in Europe, including Scandinavia, including SIPRI in Stockholm.

They're not doing peace research, which is to investigate how to reduce violence of various types. Peace has disappeared in the media. I can't remember having heard a journalist ask the prime minister, "Do you think this will help bring about peace?" And it has disappeared from politics. Now, why that happens, I don't know. But maybe again, macro history would tell you that that's what you do when you gamble on one thing you're good at. And for the U.S., the only thing they're good at—well, they lost all the wars—but the only thing they're good at and invest terrific amounts of money in, and now Europe too, is militarism. We're still second to none in that. We're not second to none in economics, culture, legitimacy, technical innovation, et cetera. That's China, you know. But we are losing, and then we overblow the power dimension on which we are strongest.

So any problem coming up is looking like, you know, when the tapestry is coming down, you have a hammer, you hammer on it, and the end will be that the wall comes down, and the European Union will fall apart, and NATO will fall apart, and the United States will isolate itself and fall apart. So maybe it's not that strange, but I would have thought like you, if we think of former European leaders like Willy Brandt, Bruno Kreisky, or whoever, we would have said there must be some intellectuals who say, "Hey, what the hell are we doing? And if we continue this, you know, the next one, two, or five years, it'll go madly wrong." There's no discussion about these things. There's no innovation; there's only more armament. And that is what I must say, I frankly do not, I would not profess to say that I understand that.

#M2

Ian, would British leaders of the past have acted like this now? I mean, is this a pattern that is clear in history, or is this something new even for Britain?

#M1

Well, I think it's new for Britain. I mean, partly that's down to the fact that the churn in British political leadership has rapidly accelerated over the past decade. We change leaders a bit like Italy in the 1980s, where they were forever changing governments. Whereas back in the '80s, when

Margaret Thatcher was in power, she recognized the core strategic interests for the UK in working with the US on deterrence with the Soviet Union, but also engagement with the Soviet Union to de-conflict and reduce tensions. That strategic perspective and statesmanship no longer exist today.

You know, today there's been a big debate in the press about which member of this coalition of the so-called willing is the person who gets to talk to Vladimir Putin. Apparently, that's going to be Macron. But, I mean, Starmer has said he has no plans to talk to Putin. So, I mean, that just gives you an indicator that British political leaders are invested in the status quo, see no forward route through negotiation and dialogue, and ultimately cling to the idea that only a total Ukrainian victory, which is a complete fantasy, will solve this mess.

#M2

But at the same time, again, they don't have the capabilities, right? And you can see that there's actually an implicit understanding of that, because especially Keir Starmer said, we want to send boots on the ground, but only with a backstop by the US, which is basically saying US boots on the ground, right? So there is this double-speak of, we can do everything if the United States... This doesn't work, does it? Especially in a moment when you realize that the US is definitely now not just on paper, but officially not there anymore to back you up.

#M1

Yeah, I mean, I think that's basically down to a fundamental lack of intellectual clarity in terms of what we want to achieve with this, you know, what we can deploy to make that happen, and who we are working with to move that kind of process forward. There's a lack of intellectual clarity, firstly, but secondly, it just shows the difficulty of working within a kind of multilateral framework, which is essentially what the European Union is. Individual countries are no longer relevant, and actually too much power has been invested into non-democratic supranational structures like the EU and NATO, which have absolutely no accountability and actually want to force through their preferred way, even if that means silencing dissenting voices in Central Europe as part of that process, which is very much what we see today. So it's two things: lack of intellectual clarity and loss of sovereignty, and placing too much faith in supranational, undemocratically accountable bureaucracies.

#M2

And this is the other process that's going on in front of our eyes. The people who scream the loudest, democracy, democracy overall, are the ones who applaud the loudest when Romania disallows one of the prime candidates to run for presidency purely because some judges say he's not fit for that office based on his beliefs. We now have Marine Le Pen, who's not able to run based on misallocating funds, using European Union funds to pay workers for her office that she wasn't supposed to. I mean, bizarre, bizarre things that are used to cancel opposition politicians. In Poland,

we see how the Tusk government is trying to get rid of political enemies. Jan, I mean, where do you see this going?

#M3

Well, you've seen for the last three-plus years, Ukraine is a struggle for democracy and European freedom and all. I mean, it's quite amazing. I don't know, but I think that it's probably, you know, we have so much dirty laundry in Western history, whether it's all the wars that, by the way, have been lost both morally and in terms of international law and militarily. And we have things like, you know, Nord Stream, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the destruction of Syria, which was a regime change affair for four years, and now the genocide of Palestinians. Now, this is so dirty. All these things are so dirty. And they're coming out of hubris and thinking we can do whatever we want because we are the strongest.

And you can't anymore. You could maybe 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago. So you have to cover up. The Western world is now a place where everything is swept under the carpet. You look at the front pages of Western newspapers today. There's very little about what is going on now in Gaza. The most nasty thing since 1945 is fully supported by the US and Europe. I mean, Madame von der Leyen put up the Israeli flag on the 7th or 8th of October when it happened over the whole Berlaymont Palace. And you can go on like that. So there's so much you must cover up for, all your mistakes, all your brutality, all your cynicism, all your militarism, all your missionary activities, that you know, how could you have an open discussion about these things?

Because if you had open media, open politics, open research—free research doesn't exist anymore in this field, at least—people would begin to think. And the last thing these people who run the show at the moment want is somebody who could rise up and say, "I'm critical for the following reasons. And what is your answer to it?" As far as I know, the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, has not had a public meeting about her, I would say, front-leading militarist policies in Europe. Or why the country that is threatening Denmark, even with military means, about to take Greenland is now—I think it's on the 12th of April—there will be a discussion in the Danish Folketing, the parliament, to pass through the agreement signed in December '93 for a minister in Washington.

You call that democracy? The same happened with 17 bases in Sweden. It took one year to pass it through the parliament, but it had been signed, and it's a binding agreement for 10 years. So you invite your aggressor. I mean, this is for UNESCO or Beckett or absurd theater. It has nothing to do with, I mean, I would now say political science, international relations, all that doesn't help us anymore. What helps us is psychology, eschatology, group thinking, emotionalism, maybe theology, because we are at the later times of the Western world, etc. You know, I could spin off a long one. I don't want to do that. But I think we are way beyond anything rational.

#M1

It's part of the fragmentation of the unipolar world, really, because actually what we're seeing today is Western powers clinging to the need to pick sides in disputes, to be on one side, the winning side. In the case of Gaza, that's to be on Israel's side. In the case of the Ukraine war, that's to be on Ukraine's side against Russia.

In the South China Sea, that's to be on Taiwan's side. In any conflict around the world, you'll find the Western powers are taking one side over the other. They're not actually seeking to bridge divides, bridge differences, and bring peace. I think that's the big shift that is taking place now. That's why you see fascinating things like the Islamic world filling the void. Whenever there's any kind of peace dialogue, it's always happening in the Gulf states or in Turkey. And, you know, having vilified Muslims for the past 24 years, they're now the leading global diplomats. So there are some fascinating changes taking place, but it's all really about the collapse of the unipolar order and the pain that we're going through to get to something more multipolar.

#M3

And China being the only one who talks about the United Nations Charter, the norms, values, international law, and produces the best peace plans or approaches to peace, both for Ukraine and other places. It's an upside-down world, and that is in itself good. Things are moving, but there are also huge dark clouds over the Western world at the moment. It could go madly wrong because we are led to some extent until people rise, and I'm glad to see that millions of people are rising now in the U.S. peacefully. You know, until that happens, we are led by kakistocrats, the worst people, the least competent people. And I am at a loss understanding why some kind of democracy has produced such bad leaders.

But we should not only say leaders because the people are also not getting engaged yet. I wonder how bad it's going to get before the Europeans see that they will have no welfare states in the future. I mean, we will see economic crises. We will have our lives destroyed. We will sink down to a form of what we formerly called third world status in Europe because of this combination of militarism, less creativity, innovation, and economic growth, and leadership which is so bent on warfare, but it doesn't seem able to understand. I mean, they're all conflict and peace illiterates. There's no peace ministry. There's no peace advisors. There's no peace policies. As I said, peace is a taboo now. And they think that they can pull us through. This is damn dangerous.

#M1

Well, I mean, the foreign ministries are meant to be peace ministries. And actually, it's the fact that they've given up on diplomacy. You know, diplomacy is never a dirty word. They've become simply the mouthpiece for militarism, foreign ministries, it seems to me.

#M2

We're also at a point where European governments and the EU keep making plans for war and keep telling the general public that they must do their duty and not just run to the bunkers. I forgot the term, but it's something like civilian resistance, the idea to enlist civilians in fighting other armies, which is basically, you know, throwing out the whole concept of non-combatants, as in making everybody in society a military target. It's just new levels of warmongering insanity to me.

#M1

And it's doubly insane, given that we can't even agree to send our actual troops.

#M3

Exactly. And the fact is that we've put so much into Ukraine that the Western world and NATO countries would not be able to fight a war. Not that I think Russia would win if there was one. But, you know, having all this rhetoric and then being perfectly aware that, you know, you take air forces, you take missiles, you take spare parts, you take ammunition—there's too little of it to fight a war. And they keep on talking about this, which I presume they ignore because they have war on their minds. I think there's one thing we should add, and that is what is now creeping up, like this will be good for the European economy—that we militarize and we pull together and we get big companies to produce. For instance, in Denmark, there's now an expert commission set up exclusively by business people and advisors. There's nobody who has any knowledge about security.

There's one Norwegian general, I think, who participated. The rest are people from the finance, capital, and production world who are going to discuss and, in one year, produce a report on how to militarize, how to optimize militarism, and further military production as fast as possible. Now, the stupid assumption is that this can help the civilian economy. It cannot. There is no study that proves that the military industry has more beneficial effects on the civilian economy than civilian investments of the same size would have. This is bullshit. What it only helps is the MIMAC, the Military-Industrial-Media-Academic Complex. It does not produce better hospitals or cultural life or anything. It doesn't contribute anything positive to the civilian economy. But that's what these guys, again, are obviously going for now in their total ignorance of reality and theories and concepts.

#M1

Well, it's a perishable investment, isn't it? Particularly at a time of war when all you're doing is producing munitions, and those munitions are being fired at other people. That's not productive. You know, that's not productive investment. That's not helping anybody. No, it's destructive investment. Yes, I agree with you.

#M2

I mean, to me, it seems that, as you also already alluded to, Ian, this is not just the collapse of the unipolar world, but maybe also the collapse of the way that Europeans generally thought of themselves, not just for the last 30 years, but for the last 200 years. You know, the fact that now we are reaching the final end of colonialism. Many European states are still colonial or neo-colonial in the way that they treat most parts of Africa and even in the way that they have trade relationships with Asia, although that has reduced. But this colonial mindset also allows you to just ignore all of the atrocities.

Belgium could just ignore 10 million dead Congolese 150 years ago. Britain could ignore the millions of people who died under its empire. The European Union was able to gloss over its own involvement in the whole Yugoslav wars because you could, because you had narrative dominance. But the narrative dominance is now going away, and it doesn't convince the rest of the world anymore. What do you think this does now to the European minds?

#M1

So I think European states are actually becoming colonies of the undemocratic institutions in Brussels. The European Union itself, as a project, is a type of empire. Some states like Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia are now starting to rebel against this colonization. The UK rebelled by leaving. I'm still not sure whether that's a good idea or a bad idea. But essentially, the European Union has moved on from what's essentially an intergovernmental framework that really focused on economic, social, and cultural issues towards this ridiculous idea of ever closer union, which is just giving more and more powers to a central supranational body that wants to cancel and dominate. It's what Jan was talking about earlier. It's this complete assault on diversity and plurality within the European Union as it seeks to gain ever greater powers, it seems to me.

#M2

Jan, do you want to respond to that?

#M3

Yes, I think that what worries me is not so much thinking about the past and the present, because, you know, as a peace researcher, you have to be engaged with the future. And our whole culture is looking backwards. You look at our media, you look at political discussion, you look at research, it's all about what happened now, what happened yesterday, and what happened in the past. I'm trying to say if we want to save Europe, we've got to think about a completely different future. We've got to have future studies, we've got to have future seminars, we've got to have strategies, we've got to have vision. And I don't know at the moment where to take that. I don't even see it among intellectuals or people of culture in Europe. They seem not to be politically engaged.

Whereas if you go to other countries, China in particular, you see a vision. These guys know where they want to be in 30 or 40 years from now. At least they're discussing it and they're making plans for it, etc. If you ask a European leader where they want their country or the European Union to be in 30 to 40 years, you would get nothing of any interest. I can't point to any European leader who would be able to say, "I'm working for this country; we're going to achieve..." It's helter-skelter crisis management, and we're sinking down into a big black hole at the moment. That worries me very much. I think we should be honest as intellectuals to tell the world that we are deeply horrified by the future perspectives of this.

If this goes on, if we don't get something new coming in, including the nonviolent rise of the populations of Europe, as in the United States, which hopefully is starting now, I don't see where change is going to come from. It did come sometimes from smaller groups of intellectuals, people who thought new thoughts, authors who wrote a vision, and people began to talk about it. It's dead at the moment. I'm sorry, Europe is dead intellectually and philosophically about the future. And that really worries me because one of the reasons we, for instance, have a nice society relatively in Scandinavia was that there was social democracy. There were people who had a vision. There was a party that had a grand idea about making more equality, a welfare state, women's equality, and all this. It's all gone.

There's nobody who has anything to say about the interesting future because they can't envision it. They're looking at, you know, what did Russia do or what have others done? Everybody is a threat to us. China is not a threat to anyone. The terrible thing is that everything that is happening in the Western world at the moment is self-destructive. There's nobody who's out to destroy us, not even Russia. They're not going to take a NATO country. Come on, this is stupid. It's fantasy, and that worries me. It's a fantasy based on the past, but not a vision based on thinking constructively about where we could be. And, you know, that's Bernard Shaw that I always quote. We are looking far too much at the world as it is and asking why. We should ask, what could the world look like? And then ask, why not? And then get going.

#M1

I'm into that.

#M2

And let me maybe follow up just by saying, if we accept the analysis that Europe is currently at one of its most irrational places in decades, if not centuries, of not being able to reconcile intellectually the power distribution and the political distribution with what should happen. If you just accept that this is the case for Europe and it probably will remain for at least years, then what would be your recommendation on how the others should treat Europe? Russia, China, maybe African states and other Asian states. I mean, how should they... What would be a signaling process that would help the Europeans to get over this moment as fast as possible? Do you have any ideas?

#M1

I don't think there is one, to be honest. I think Europe is set on the track of ever closer union, ever greater centralization. You know, I think whatever moves Russia makes, China makes, I mean, the answer is economic, social, and cultural. But actually, that requires Europeans to be susceptible and amenable to that kind of level of engagement. And they're not. And they're not because actually they're creating ever greater powers in terms of the unelected bodies in Europe.

So, I don't think it's possible right now without a more radical rethink of the European project that steps back to a more intergovernmental nature, focusing on the economic, social, and cultural aspects, and ditching all the political and military baggage. And maybe the accession of Ukraine at some indeterminate point in the future will help them do that because Europe simply can't afford to allow Ukraine to join on current terms anyway. But I think there needs to be a more fundamental change. I think Europe could be much better than it is, which frankly is not very good right now, but it needs more structural reform. Until then, it's just not really susceptible or amenable to any engagement from China, Russia, or frankly anybody else.

#M3

Well, I would see some hope in the possibility that the Trump regime, and I call it a regime, will go so bizarre and continue down the path they've chosen in the first three months and will therefore force de-linking in Europe. You know, it's obvious that the Americans could now use technology and codes, et cetera, to put a brake on the use of F-35s and things like that if they want to. I suppose that Trump is going to take Greenland. And I suppose he will go for this autarkic U.S. from Panama up over Canada, etc.

In one way or another, everything for him is about resources to create a self-reliant U.S. by stealing others' resources. Now, if that becomes so impossible to accept for the Europeans, they will begin to think, not with American brains, listening to his master's voice as they've done for the last 50 years, there might be some kind of push—God, we've got to do something else than what we've done so far. And that could, in the best of cases, lead to opening up again to Russia, to China, to the rest of the world, to the non-West, because they will find out by the shock therapy that you cannot have anything to do with the United States anymore. I would say total embargo, isolation, whatever, suspension of memberships of organizations.

This regime of Mr. Trump is going to be so bizarre and so destructive, both to the United States, which I say with pain in my heart, and to Europe and large parts of the world. But the Chinese are going to take it as an opportunity to do what they've always done because they have two economies and they can live without the West. The West cannot live without them at all. That's a long story. But the bizarreness of the Trump regime could be a catalyst for Europeans beginning to think we better reorient ourselves to a larger world and not to the U.S. anymore. And that would perhaps,

perhaps, perhaps—I would pray for it—be an opening towards a better future because we've been so terribly arrogant in Europe that we did not need to cooperate with anybody, blah, blah, blah. Now we have to cooperate with anybody else but the United States.

#M1

And now we're getting to a situation, particularly as Russia started its move to autarky over 10 years ago when the Ukraine crisis started. The U.S. is making a very similar move. It's interesting. Right now, Europe is the big power center in the world that has no resources of its own. I mean, obviously, Norway has considerable resources. So we can't be part of that shift unless we have a better relationship with Russia, which nobody wants.

#M3

So that's the conundrum we're in right now. You could also see a catalyst in letting them go for this crazy militarization, waste all the money, and go bankrupt. And then somebody will have to say, well, militarization was not a good idea. We start all over again. But it's very sad that we can't get to that conclusion intellectually in time. We may have to have a total economic catastrophe in Europe before we begin to think.

#M2

But what I'm worried about is that total economic catastrophe and mass impoverishment are actually part of militarization because you need the poor to go to the front, right? I mean, if you want to fight a big war, like trench warfare, just a bigger version of what you've seen in Ukraine, you need massive numbers of poor people who have only the gun to actually then nourish their families, right? So in a very real sense, the impoverishment of Europe is actually going to further drive this war mentality that I'm seeing.

#M1

But that mass mobilization has only been possible in Ukraine because Ukraine is such an undemocratic state that it's been able to use undemocratic means to make that happen. Now, the question is, could you do that in France? Could you kind of forcibly mobilize French citizens to go to the front? No. Could you do it in Britain? Absolutely not. Because one of the good things about our nations, among many faults, is that we are democracies. So the ability of European nations to kind of mobilize in the same way, I think, is not frankly the same as has been the case in Ukraine.

#M3

It might also be, Pascal, that you will see labor unions and others saying, we're refusing that role that you point to. I mean, earlier, if you take the '80s, the labor unions and people, intellectuals

around that, Marxists and people like historian E.P. Thompson and people like Rudolf Bahro in Eastern Germany at the time, they were intellectuals who could think beyond these, but they were also people who thought of the masses and the workers and the potential for people rising at the time. And so what I think is now going to happen is what I predicted more than 40 years ago, not to boast about it, but that was pretty predictable for me, was when the East and West had gone down. And that was the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

It would be time for the West to go down. I mean, we are similar societies, one run on Adam Smith and one run on Karl Marx at the time, you know, and the whole West is now falling. That's a completely different thing from when the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact were falling. But, you know, dialectically speaking, out of the catastrophe can come something positive. And that's what I hope to see while I'm walking around here. But I can say, honestly, if I were 40 years younger, I would think of moving out of Europe. I don't know, don't ask me to where, but I would think of moving out of Europe. It doesn't look good to me, and I'm very scared on behalf of my children and my grandchildren, I must honestly say. It sounds pathetic, but I'm going to say it anyhow.

#M2

Likewise, I mean, you know, Europe, funnily enough, is a continent that constantly changes. It changes its borders, it changes its political setup constantly. It has a heartbeat. And then you always see forces that push toward centralization. Napoleon did so, and Hitler tried to do so, and the European Union is a political approach, and it's a peaceful approach to doing that, but it seems, again, to run into its fundamental problems, which is that Europe is also a very diverse place that needs diversity and needs its individual arrangements, and somehow we don't get around to that. Plus, then... Ian?

#M1

Well, that's what made it a success economically in the first place, this Ricardian idea of, you know, sort of a bit of difference, right? That, you know, difference actually creates a kind of powerful internal market for goods. Cultural and social difference makes it a really vibrant community when people engage and cross borders through business, study, and other things. That's an immense driver of peace. When you try to diminish the very specific nature of individual states in the interest of greater centralization, as we see in the case of Hungary, for example, you just generate tension.

You see the same in Poland and many European nations. European nations want to be unique. Nationalism isn't necessarily a bad thing, so long as it, within an intergovernmental framework, leads to a better, more harmonious, mutual kind of coexistence. And I think we've lost the sense of that. Nationalism now is branded as something negative and hateful when actually, when you try to water down people's identity, that is causing some of the problems we see with the European project today.

#M2

Do you think that the horribleness, the monstrosity of some of the things that are going on at some point are going to be so large that they will lead to a change in thinking? I'm thinking, of course, of the Ukraine war on the one hand, but even more obviously and blatantly, of course, the genocide in Gaza. It's something that is just so overwhelming that, for historical reasons, it's not going to be possible to ignore it and then lead to a change in approach. I don't know, maybe Jan?

#M3

Well, maybe, I mean, you can speculate the terrible thought that if there was a civilian breakdown in Europe, economically and otherwise, or a military breakdown, some kind of exchange of military means, that would make people think, what have we done wrong, what could we have done differently, etc. I mean, you can have a shock therapy, but we sitting here, and I presume billions of other people around the world, do not want to see that. We would like to believe that there are brains and hearts enough and wisdom enough for us to avoid the catastrophe and learn from the catastrophe and start learning at least while we're in crisis.

As I said before, and I'm sorry to not be optimistic in that short perspective, because in the long perspective, I am optimistic because we will get a much better multipolar world, much more, you know, fascinating, but that's a subject for another discussion. But we're still seeing militarism being what leaders can gather around. And that is frightening to me that they cannot gather around negotiations, diplomacy, a better future for Europe, etc. And that's why I insist on calling them cacistocrats. They are not up to it. They are not intellectually up to it. And they are not morally up to it. And that's a sad thing to see coming up.

But you can also ask yourself, how was it possible in the allegedly greatest democracy on earth, the US, to produce a man like Trump? There's something madly wrong with the whole system, and the sooner it goes down peacefully, I hope, with grace, like the British Empire to a certain extent did after Gandhi, the better it would be. We need a different world, and we need a new world which is possible, perfectly possible, and it's only 12% of humanity who lives in the Western world. I'm looking at the 88% who live elsewhere, where I think there's a lot of things to be happy and positive about. And I don't want these discussions we have here to end just on being sad and depressed. Because we need to mobilize people thinking that, yes, we can do something.

#M2

True. And maybe that's why we should end the discussion on multipolarity. So, Ian, do you think that overall what's happening currently is helping multipolarity? Even the tariffs of Trump are helping multipolarity and the emergence of other states saying, "OK, fine, we cannot take this market for

granted. We cannot take the European market or Europeans for granted. The agreements that we make might be worth nothing tomorrow, so we have to create alternative systems." Do you also think that it's just going to accelerate the trend?

#M1

Well, in some ways it will. In some ways it may accelerate the trend to kind of free trade, actually, because, you know, countries are engaging with the U.S. in terms of possible zero tariff regimes. Like Vietnam, for example. India has been talking about sort of, you know, doing that too. I mean, essentially kind of what the U.S. is trying to do is reposition itself as a more nationalistic, more sort of multipolar-focused power. Now, there's some really negative consequences that come out of that for Greenland.

But actually, what appears to be happening is a drive to just accept countries as they are, to accept China as it is, and so on, and to engage as equals. I think that may be a positive shift, but it's still far too early, and right now it's very chaotic. Good things could well come out of it. The Bretton Woods foundations are crumbling with greater speed. The ridiculous argument about SWIFT is accelerating moves to alternative cross-border transactional systems and that sort of thing. Reliance on the dollar is eroding, and the Americans are accelerating that erosion through their move on tariffs. So the whole post-war settlement is crumbling at greater speed on the back of Trump. And that may be quite a good thing long term.

#M2

Jan, any final positive thoughts about multipolarity?

#M3

Yes, I'm very happy that China exists. I'm very grateful for the fact that the China I saw for the first time in 1983 has changed so incredibly. We should all study why China has achieved what it has achieved. And I would just say you don't have to be positive about China. You don't have to be negative about China. But if you're not curious about China, you're an idiot.

#M2

I love that. I mean, at the end of the day, it's got to be curiosity that's going to help us over a lot of things.

#M3

Absolutely, that's... curiosity is the core of diplomacy.

#M1

Curiosity is the core of diplomacy. It's about wanting to understand other people's human condition.

#M2

Absolutely.

#M1

Finding joy in that and finding ways to connect.

#M2

Real diplomats tend to fall in love with their host countries, don't they?

#M1

Well, and so they should, but they still need to be objective enough to give advice to governments, too. But I mean, it's all part of it. That's one of the reasons why the European project was successful in its early years, because it broke down borders and allowed people to meet people from other countries within Europe that had been ravaged by war for centuries. So, I mean, it's all about human connection. I think we've lost that over the past decade.

#M3

And we talked with the Russians. We had confidence-building measures. We surveyed each other's exercises. We spoke with each other. We did this and that. Now we've cut off. That's the most stupid thing you can do. Sorry.

#M2

In a sense, what we need to do is reestablish these links. Even if it's civil society links, we should just say, "OK, let's have school exchanges with Russia, period. Let's try to build it."

#M1

City twinning, all that kind of grassroots level stuff, it's all really positive engagement. And of course, we've lost it. Engagement between universities used to be really, really positive. All this stuff is eminently positive. Getting more people to visit each other's countries makes a huge difference, actually. But actually getting diplomats to talk to other diplomats and to talk to people in the countries where they live, that's another thing, sadly, that we've lost, particularly with Russia over the past decade.

#M2

We can recreate it. We can do this.

#M1

We can. Let's do it.

#M2

My friends, thank you very much for this positive ending and for your time today. Ian Proud in the UK and Jan Oberg in Sweden. Thank you for your time.

#M3

Thank you for setting it up.