

the presence of a very big moment, because I think the crisis about Ukraine will show the world the end of the American supremacy. Of course, it will not be tomorrow; but it's a sign that now the world does not accept anymore the supremacy of the United States over all the world. Especially I think for my country, France, and for all European countries, the truth is that NATO has no reason anymore to exist and that we should leave

this organization which is a war organization for the interests of the United States.

The interests of the United States are no more to lead the whole world, but they have the dollar. The dollar is now threatened by other currencies, and that's also why the Ukrainian crisis is also an economic crisis, because the United States wants to preserve its supremacy with its currency, and this is not anymore possible.

Jens Jørgen Nielsen

## Why We Need a New Security Architecture

*The following is the edited transcript of the presentation by Jens Jørgen Nielsen to Panel One of the Schiller Institute conference, "100 Seconds to Midnight on the Doomsday Clock: We Need a New Security Architecture!" on February 19, 2022. Mr. Nielsen is a former Moscow correspondent for the Danish daily Politiken; author; Director, Russian-Danish Dialogue; and Assistant Professor, Communication and Cultural Differences, Niels Brock Business School.*



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It seems now we are on the brink of maybe a new world war or something. I think it would be interesting to try to find out how everything started, how we got there. I have an age, I was young 30 years ago, and I remember we had a new world—the Cold War was over. I grew up in what we called the shadow of a nuclear bomb. We were somehow afraid of the nuclear war, and we were very relieved and very happy when at last the [Berlin] Wall came down and we entered a new world. I was very enthusiastic about Mikhail Gorbachev and the *perestroika* process, and in this process I actually found my Russian wife thirty years ago. We got married at this time, so there's a kind of symbolic significance to that, that we had a new world, that we could freely move across any borders. And there was a lot of enthusiasm at this time.

### How We Got So Close to War

It begs the question, of course, of why have we ended up here close to a new war between Russia and

NATO? I'm not sure we're that close to it, but it seems to many people we are there.

I have a take on what actually happened, why we entered here. I would say that everybody thought 30 years ago that NATO was a thing of the past, like the Warsaw Pact. Of course, everyone knew that Gorbachev was given a promise that if he would accept German unification, NATO will not move one inch to the East. But it didn't go that way, it didn't happen like that, because Bill Clinton wanted something else. Gradually, he took new members—Poland, Czechia, Hungary, and other countries—into NATO, and presumed that Europe would be much safer. But some of

us could not forget the European House which Gorbachev spoke about. The Russians were very weak at this time; the Russians didn't have any military power, didn't have political power. So, the West took advantage to move their sphere of influence further to the East.

But Russia eventually became very strong. I would say one thing. George Kennan, for any historian, is a very important person, because he was the one who started the old Cold War in 1946, with a long telegram from Moscow where he worked. He warned against the Soviet Union. He wanted us to be a deterrence against the Soviet Union. But in 1998, he was a very old man at this point. Mr. George Kennan gave a very strong warning. He knew Russia, he knew the Soviet Union. He was fluent in Russian, and he warned and said at this time, "Why should we do this?" Because eventually it will end up with the Russians being very angry at us. They will be strong, and we will have a

very strong opponent. I think those were very wise words at this time.

And Henry Kissinger and many other people at this time, not left-wing people at all, warned against this NATO expansion. Even in Europe there also were voices who said that we should actually try something new, we should have a new indivisible security organization. But the European House, which Gorbachev talked about, ended up being NATO. The worst thing is that Russia was deliberately excluded from this. Because even Vladimir Putin when he became President, 20-something years ago, actually wanted Russia to become a part of, or a member of NATO, or to have some very close links to NATO. But it didn't work out, and he was not allowed.

I thought that if we at this point had taken another path in Europe, maybe everything would look quite different. If you look at it from this point, it seems extremely stupid that we are now close to a war. Secondly, we use a lot of energy, a lot of financial resources, while clever young people will study how to build new weapons and things like that, we could use that in quite another way. So, it's a very, very stupid thing that we ended up here.

So, I think it's very important that we scrutinize much more, what can we do to change this security architecture. It's a basic problem in Europe that we don't have a proper security architecture.

### **The Paris Accord of 1990**

There was a meeting in Paris in November 1990 where the Soviet Union, the East European countries, and also NATO pact countries signed a document called the Paris Accord. It said very clearly that security and peace are indivisible. So, you can't have any new organizations against other countries. So, we are actually violating the Paris Accords today, it seems to me, because we didn't make this common security architecture. Instead, we have this tension, we have this very bad tension that seems to become stronger day by day.

What I think is needed now, we have to go back to the starting point in 1990 with the Paris agreement. We have an organization called OSCE (the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), and we could use it much more, because Russia is also part of OSCE. At any rate, we need something quite different, because NATO is not giving any

security. Not at all; it doesn't guarantee any security stability.

The first victim, I would say we are many victims, we, all Europeans, are somehow victims of this process, but the first and foremost victim—is the Ukrainians themselves, because Ukraine is a very poor country today, the poorest country in Europe at this point. And even now because of this war propaganda basically from American security services, all investors are fleeing from Ukraine; they don't want to be there, and the economy is suffering extremely right now.

To help Ukrainians and to have security, both in Europe and in Russia, we have to take quite another approach, to find a quite new security architecture, so we can have a much more flourishing society. The potential is there in Europe and Russia for a much, much more flourishing economy and much more flourishing society.

There is a huge need now for a new way of thinking. Because the old way of thinking I've seen is obsolete. It belongs to, I would say, yesterday, to the attitude of the old Cold War. It's the same way of thinking that Russia is the enemy: "We have a strong enemy, we have to have many more weapons, we have to arm much more, because Russia is threatening us."

I think that it's a dead end. Of course, it is possible—if there is a will. I think there's also a will from the Russian side that we can make arrangements. There are a lot of things we can do. But diplomacy should work much more now, and not the army, and I would even say not the politicians, because the politicians have some very strange agendas in my point of view. I think now is the time to use your brain more, not your heated emotions and things like that—use your brain and see if we are going the right way. If you do that, I think the answer will be, "No, we are not." I also think many politicians now are looking for ways to open this up, to change this situation. It seems like a deadlock we ended up in, but there are ways to go, there are ways to solve these problems. I do not doubt it at all.

### **What Went Wrong After 1990?**

I would say President Bill Clinton played a role in getting us where we are now, because he decided to extend NATO. He didn't have to at this time. There were many options. There were many people also in America, in the elite who had other points of view at

this point. But to my mind, Clinton pursued this policy in the 1990s.

I was a correspondent for a Danish and a Norwegian newspaper in those years. I actually met with Clinton at this point, and Boris Yeltsin. I think that even Yeltsin was angry, because in 1994, even Yeltsin was angry about the NATO expansion. He didn't like it. All the old dissidents—I met the widow of Andrei Sakharov, Yelena Bonner, and she was opposed. She certainly did not like this NATO policy toward Russia, and thought it was the totally wrong way to go. In the West some people think that the Russian population longs for America, longs for Western things. No, you are going in the wrong direction, if you look at it in this way. The Russian population now is turning against the United States first and foremost, and also Europeans. I think it's a result of this policy.

It was a temptation, you see. Russia was totally weak. You had a drunk Yeltsin tumbling around. You could do anything. There was a kind of power vacuum after the Soviet Union, because the Soviet Union left without doing anything. They just left peacefully. There were no battles, not one shot was fired when they withdrew. So, you could say that Russia was not at all threatening anyone at this point, not at all.

The West took advantage, in combination with the fact that there was a widespread illusion that now we own the world. And now the world is open for American democracy, and now American democracy will spread to all of the world. We will have a unipolar world like the Russians call it; and it was an illusion. You might remember the book by Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History*, and things like that. There was a widespread feeling that we could do anything, and we can change the world; not only part of the world, but all of the world.

These ideas about unilateralism, this idea of one power and one ideology, liberal world order, we still have it today. People think that the world should be governed by one ideology, this liberal democratic ideology, the American way, but it's a very dangerous one. *Per se*, I'm not opposed to it; not that I think you shouldn't have the freedom of speech and things like that, but if you want to spread a certain societal structure, and a certain ideology, and things like that, you end up 100% bound to have trouble sooner or later down the road, not in the beginning—but Russia

became strong again—then we'll have the problem.

We were warned by George Kennan, Henry Kissinger, Robert Gates, many of the very top people in America warned us: The bill will come down the road. Maybe not now, maybe not next year, but in 10, 15 years, we will have a big problem. And we have it now, because you can't change Russia. That's the thing. We say we can change Russia. We pay some liberals in Russia, ok, they'll change their mind and maybe get rid of Putin. No, definitely not, it's not the way it works.

On the other hand, now we have an alliance between Russia and China, of course, and upcoming probably a military alliance. It's the result of this policy. And you have an estrangement between Russia and Europe, which is very, very bad for Europeans. Maybe not for Americans, because Americans do not have that much contact with Russia. Like Germany for instance, Germany had principally a lot of trade with Russia. Americans do not. Europeans pay for the sanctions, not Americans. Actually, Americans have enhanced their import of oil from Russia. It's very interesting, by the way, it's a very peculiar fact that the Americans think that the Europeans should pay for the sanctions, not the Americans.

So, there are many peculiar things, and I might be tempted to think that maybe—I'm not sure, but maybe—it's part of American policy to split the European Union, especially Germany and France, from Russia, so there will not be too close cooperation between Russia and Europe, because it might turn out to be a power center, which Americans would not like. Maybe to some extent, it also goes a way toward explaining the situation we are in now.

### **And the British?**

The British are playing a very, very strange role now. They think that they are still an empire, and they can rule all the waves on the planet. But no. The British are a little pathetic right now, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is a little pathetic because he thinks he could play a very big role in this power game, but I don't believe they can. Of course, they play a big role, but their militaries are much weaker than the Americans. The Russians pay attention to the Americans because the Americans are the ones who make the decisions, not even Europe, and certainly not Britain.