TFTC 417

**Marty:** [00:00:00] Lisa Lusher, welcome to the show.

**Lee:** Thanks, Marty. Good to

**Marty:** be here. It's good to have you on. Uh, Dave Colum dm me a couple weeks ago and said, Hey, you have to reach out to this guy, Lee. I think he's got a very interesting perspective on the world. Very interesting background. So I dove into your ck I read a bunch of your Twitter page and I, I definitely agree with him at first with your Twitter handle, uh, BT Consulting.

I thought it was B tc. I thought you had a, a Bitcoin

**Lee:** tilt to it, but Oh, no, no, unfortunately not. I had created another company, uh, in a different state before I knew I would be moving to Virginia. And, uh, I put all kinds of thought into it like, oh, I'm a writer so I'll call it Sumerian Consulting cuz you know, the Sumerians invented language.

And then when I moved it was just easier to create a new company altogether. And I said, how to hell with it? I don't want to put another, all this thought into a new name. And I said, BT is in about time. So that's, that's the [00:01:00] whole origin story of the day. It has nothing to do with Bitcoin. And

**Marty:** so I guess to jump into it before we talk into like the wider geopolitical landscape right now, I think talk a little bit about your background.

Sure. Where you came from and why you decided to start this consul consulting firm.

**Lee:** Yeah. I started my career about 25 years ago in the US Army. And I was what's called a cryptologic linguist. So I had to study foreign languages in cryptography. And then I worked in signals intelligence and electronic warfare.

So I got to study, uh, Russian and Servo Croatian. And then after nine 11, uh, Dari, which is Afghan Fari. And after I left the military, I continued to work in the defense department in various capacities doing intelligence work, uh, sometimes for the intelligence community directly, but much of it for an army organization that's now deactivated, uh, known as the asymmetric warfare group.

And I had the opportunity to do, um, basically both real world intelligence operations and the [00:02:00] strategic stuff. So in terms of the real world stuff, I deployed to Afghanistan four times once to Iraq. Uh, and in terms of the strategic stuff, I wrote national intelligence assessments mainly about things like foreign military capabilities, irregular warfare, that sort of thing.

Uh, and with that background, I was able to go do things that I found a bit more interesting. I ended up, uh, working in Taiwan off and on for a few years as the architect of an effort to re revamp their defense planning. And, uh, we can get into that in a little bit. I also was in Ukraine in 15 as part of the team that, uh, assessed the Ukrainian military for future security cooperation.

Uh, I've written a bunch, uh, for the defense department about how Russia took Crimea, Russia's capabilities, all sorts of things like that. And, um, I've worked with a bunch of NATO countries in Europe and in Afghanistan and here in the States. At about five years ago, I started my own consulting company and, uh, initially with some legacy kind of [00:03:00] defense clients, but mainly now going more into the private sector, uh, the real private sector, not the, the defense contracting private sector.

Um, and last year I started, uh, my own ck, which is a deep dive with East Lesser. Mm-hmm. So happy to take it wherever you'd like to go.

**Marty:** Yeah, no. Uh, we mentioned this before we hit record, but diving into your CK and looking at your Twitter, having been in the intelligence community for as long as you were.

It seems that you've broken off and you're going a bit against the grain of the mainstream. You may not completely agree with the strategy that's being employed by the US particularly, I think

**Lee:** Yeah, that, that's correct. I, in fact, I, I disagree entirely. I've written about this for many years now. Uh, and even it, especially when, um, Russia, annex Crimea, they invaded an annex Crimea and then the war in Dunbat started, this was 2 20 14.

That's when the US I think, re awoken and started paying attention again to Russia because the focus [00:04:00] had been elsewhere. It had been on all of this global war on terrorism stuff. It had been focused on this pivot to Asia that Obama wanted, but then here was Russia again, and by this point, a lot of the people who had expertise and language skills had already retired and passed away.

There weren't that many of us, but I was there and I got to do a lot of the work. And from very early on, uh, whenever. I or anyone else I saw tried to explain what Russia thought, uh, its policies, like what it really could, could do realistically, it would result in raised eyebrows or, uh, you know, head nods.

There was this really cartoonishly two-dimensional view of Russia, of what it wanted. Everything was, you know, this kind of Boris and Natasha sort of nonsense. And that path has led us to where we are now, um, that I've written a lot on my ck about, uh, the war in Ukraine. Rubble and rhetoric is the, the big piece that's gotten the most views, which basically says that this war [00:05:00] in a war between Russia and Ukraine, Russia wins easily and a proxy war between NATO and Russia.

In Ukraine, Russia wins eventually, but with a lot more death and destruction, and mostly for Ukraine and none of it needed to happen. And I was just bewildered over the past, uh, year, nearly year and a half, Well, even longer than that, when the current administration came in, they started talking about Ukraine and nato, and it was Biden and Harris and Blinken and, uh, Austin, all of these people.

And I thought, like, what on earth are they doing? Like, are, are they trying to, to start a war? And when the war eventually started, I think a lot of people forget, our leaders were saying that Russia takes Kiev in a weekend, right? Like this, this proxy war, at least in my view, is largely a reaction. And that makes things much more dangerous because it's not part of, you know, we did from 2014 to 2022 build up this massive Ukrainian force.

I'm well aware of that. [00:06:00] I had some role in the early days of it, but uh, the response seemed very ad hoc to me. And we're playing chicken with, uh, first of all with a country that has nuclear weapons and secondly over something that really isn't international interest at all. And it's, it's doing all sorts of things.

I mean, it's killing hundreds of thousands of people. It's using up all of our munitions. It's causing a lot of discord within Western alliances. I mean, we see many weekends, we see these massive protests all across Europe, like, get out of nato, you know, and the war, at least talk about peace, these kinds of things.

But the people at the helm don't appear to be interested in any of that, but they can only keep that up for so long because reality is, is coming back around to hit 'em in the face. And so I think they're looking for, well, in the, in the piece in rubble and rhetoric, I explained how a series of excuses that I think these, these leaders will employ when after Russia essentially achieves all of its [00:07:00] goals in, in Ukraine.

Um, and I think right now what we're witnessing. Through the press is the White House trying to desensitize the population to the fact that the outcome is not going to be the one they had promised. In fact, it's the exact opposite of that. And as it comes along, they keep, you know, like early in the year there was that massive meeting at Ramstein in Germany of, of all the nations supporting Ukraine.

And they pledged this huge weapons package, which we were told from, you know, by all sorts of people, was going to be decisive. And it was going to, you know, not just that it was going to push the Russians back, but it might even allow them to take Crimea. I mean, it's all of this fan nonsense. Well, a few months later it's woo, man, maybe we can't keep up.

Or a defense production or defense industrial base isn't sufficient to support this high intensity industrial warfare period and or to do, uh, to supply our own needs. You know, we can't do both. And then now the message is, well, this, this upcoming counter offensive is make or break. Like they're just slow walking it.[00:08:00]

To sensitize everybody that it's, it's not going to work out. And when it doesn't work out, I think we're going to see some variation of the various types of excuses. I, I wrote about in the concluding section of, uh, rub and Rhetoric. Um, but I'd like to back up just a moment. I think broadly speaking, there are two possibilities going forward.

One is that there is some sort of direct Western intervention, not the funding of a proxy war as we've seen thus far, but an actual direct intervention, be it from NATO or some sort of coalition of the willing. This is the worst case scenario. If this happens, all bets are off. Uh, and the potential for nuclear escalation is certainly there.

Then the other possibility is for Russia to win decisively enough militarily to really set the terms for peace, because if we look at any talk of peace, there were various points when Kiev, uh, seemed open to it, but the west, uh, B basically stopped it at every turn. And they started and everybody started saying really crazy things like, well, a [00:09:00] pre-condition for negotiations is that Russia re uh, simply gets out of Ukraine.

You know, not only that it returned to its pre February 22 boundaries, but that it get out of, uh, Crimea as well. Well, this was never going to happen. So in effect, this was a refusal to negotiate. And so now, um, you know, Russia is systematically destroying the Ukrainian military and much more of Ukraine.

Despite the, the nonsense that we see in the press about shortages and dysfunction in all of this. They're doing quite well. Um, and they're being patient, which is the, the smart thing to do. They're not rushing in, they're building up an army, not just to. To achieve their goals in Ukraine, but because they too are worried about a Western intervention.

So their defense industrial base is in full swing. They're mobilizing, they have hundreds of thousands of people presently in the field. And that's not just, uh, to crush Ukraine and to, to achieve their objectives there. But it's also [00:10:00] that they're on guard for a potential western intervention. This is all very dangerous.

Yeah.

**Marty:** Yeah. It seems extremely dangerous. And as an American citizen who's extremely online, has been following this since the beginning, I, I completely agree. It seems like the mainstream media and this current administration is completely trying to gaslight the American people about the situation over there and the status of Ukrainian army verse Russia and.

I think it's important to go back to like 2014. Cause that's another thing that people like to gaslight others about, which is you have the videos or the pictures? No, the videos of like Lindsay Graham and John McCain mm-hmm. Uh, saying, Hey, we're gonna, we're gonna build up your army and you're gonna go defeat Russia.

And then you have Victoria New Newland in the mix really throwing, um, uh, her weight around in that part of the, uh, the world. And what [00:11:00] leading up to February of last year, like what were the options that we had and like what actually led it to the point where Russia felt compelled to

**Lee:** invade. It's, it's a long slide.

I mean, even before Crimea, so you have to look. A real brief summary of, of some of the key points since the Soviet Union collapsed, right? The nineties were basically this wild West period. Uh, there was very weak governance. Russia was involved in one and then a second war in Chenia. Uh, it, there was a lot of organized crime.

The oligarchs were taking over in came Putin, and by about the mid two thousands, he had reigned in the oligarchs, um, in various ways, but he basically brought them to heal. He was restoring some order. Uh, and, and once he had the, his domestic house in order sufficiently, he turned his attention elsewhere.

He started resuming the long range bomber flights, uh, out of Russia, along, uh, Ukraine. He did all sorts of things. Uh, there.[00:12:00]

Their, uh, the Russian view is not, is not a mystery. I think we get, when I, when I say things like Cartoonishly two dimensional, what I mean is we think of the Russians that in a way that everything is a lie. Everything is subterfuge. Now, no doubt they are masters at deception, but that doesn't mean that everything they say is nonsense.

And we have to find a way to figure out some baseline of what they think and what they want. And the way that I've done that successfully is you look at a handful of different things. Russia has, uh, just many voluminous public policy documents often that are translated into English. So that's what their, and then that's what their official policy is.

Then they have, for example, key speeches from leaders, and then they have things like defense appropriation. So in other words, over time, is their message consistent and are they putting their money where their, their mouth is, so to speak? And they were doing that, but. The West, uh, with the US at the helm was really blind [00:13:00] to this.

So I, I think there's some disagreement, um, even among people who agree with me on all sorts of other related topics as to whether, you know, the, the west has been out to destroy Russia all along. Now my view from having worked in government and just from looking at the situation analytically, is that up until about 2014 we didn't really care.

Um, you know, Putin on, for his part, he was kind of consolidating and starting to reassert himself abroad. You know, we have the Georgia War, we have all sorts of things like that, but nobody was really paying attention outside of these really niche circles like mine. Um,

and now what we ended up with was, uh, some people think that there was this intentional plan to destroy Russia, but my view is basically everything I saw was. Our leaders saw Russia as a, a sort of semi civilized hinterland that provided [00:14:00] resources and the occasional headache. And the only real policy was to maximize the former and minimize the ladder.

It, we, the Western Order was dominant. We were going to do what we were going to do and they were just going to take it. So it's an issue of motive. Not that I think we were bent on destroying Russia, but that we just said, well, they can't really do anything. What are they going to do about it? I mean, if you look at the 2008 Georgia War, despite all the many warnings, despite things being written in policy documents and, and included in key speeches from, from significant leaders, no one in the West really objected to Russia having the Sochi Olympics in 2008, and then shortly thereafter, they conducted a war, like right next door in Georgia.

So it's that kind of disconnect. I don't think the plan was destruction, but then came the coup in 2014 and let, let's call it what it was. It was absolutely a coup, uh, I think I've seen over the past, whatever, 14, 15 months, I've seen a lot of people reference the [00:15:00] electoral maps in Ukraine, right? To show the sort of the pro-western and, and the pro-Russian sides.

And, and it is been used for both sides to say, oh, see, you know, we, we didn't understand them. And, and on another side people say, no, no, that's just democracy. You know, the, the side that wins gets to decide things. Well, what those people misunderstand is that the things that have been ongoing in Ukraine for quite some time, but uh, most especially since 2014, are things that under other circumstances our government would consider ethnic cleansing.

Uh, you know, this deification campaign of, of telling people that they, they shouldn't speak Russian, the renaming of towns. I mean, we've heard, uh, for months now about bakk and, uh, Eastern, you know, in Dunas that's not even his real regular name. I mean, it was renamed in 2016. So there's this campaign to systematically excise the, the Russian ness out, out of that part of society.

Even though huge swaths of Ukraine are Ukrainian and name only. I mean, I, I've had many Russian friends over [00:16:00] the years whose families kind of are from both of those regions and every time we met we spoke Russian and they seemed just like the, the other Russians I knew. It's, it's a, this system has been ongoing for, for a long time.

And, um, I'm sorry, I'll pause there.

**Marty:** No, I mean, it's, it's really perplexing cuz because again, going back to like the mainstream narrative here, You bring up the Asthma of Battalion, you bring up Donbass and you bring up the points that you just mentioned, like, Hey, it seems like there is some form of ethnic cleansing or Sure.

At the very least, some prejudice that's going on or people are being singled out and uh, isolated and picked on and, uh, attempted to get thrown out of the country. And the media just wants to focus as like, no, Russia. Russia, man, bad. Like this is, yeah, this is not happening. But, and that's been very confusing cause is it you see stuff on social media and they'll be like, no, [00:17:00] this is like one off.

It's not as big as they're portraying, uh, the asthma battalion. Specifically, um, and like, no, there's no ethnic cleansing going on, like Russia's just being a bully. But it seems like from what you're describing, it is not the

**Lee:** case. Well, if people think it's ethnic cleansing or not, we, we can put the definition aside and just talk about things that have happened.

They're forcing people to speak one language and not their native one. They're renaming their towns, they're shutting their churches. There's outright animosity. So it's not simply that, you know, there, there was a pro-western side and a progression side and, and the former won out, and so be it. That's democracy.

There really is, uh, a lot of violence and tension there. When I was in Kiev in 15, um, as part of this team to evaluate the Ukrainians, my hotel was more or less across the street from the headquarters of the Isol Battalion, and they left nothing to the imagination. I mean, they basically look like World War II Reenacters and they get a lot of attention now, but there they're a bunch of other, [00:18:00] uh, similar groups.

Now, what happened? Ukraine had to incorporate them into its formal military, into the National Guard because they needed the fighter. Like they're, I want to dwell on this point for, for just a moment. When people talk about 2014 and the shift, uh, something that gets glossed over is the difference between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior.

Now, here in the US the Department of the Interior deals with national parks and national resources and stuff like that. In most countries, the interior ministry provides a security function, whether it's, uh, anywhere from national police to a paramilitary force like Francis John Armory, or all the way up to an actual military force.

So, like many of the Russians that we saw fighting in the two Chechen wars from the late nineties to the early two thousands weren't actually in the Russian military. That is the d o d, the m o d, they were actually interior ministry forces, right? Even though they had tanks, artillery, helicopters. So in [00:19:00] Ukraine, uh, after familiar with the Budapest memorandum, Basically there were some security guarantees mm-hmm.

To Ukraine. So they gave up their nuclear weapons, and they weren't supposed to be the subject of military or financial or economic coercion. So the Ukrainian military, from that point in the mid, uh, in the early nineties all the way through 2014, it wasn't meant to fight anybody because who was the enemy.

So all the resources went not to the m o d, not to the military, but they went to the Ministry of Interior Forces that basically, uh, in most of these eastern former eastern block countries, they provide regime protection. They're pretorian guards. Uh, not to say that they don't have a legitimate security function, but the Ukrainian military was decrepit.

It was the Soviet legacy that served mainly as a jobs program. Uh, but it wasn't expected to fight anyone. And that's one of the reasons why it was so easy for, for Russia to do what it did in 2014. But the shift was, US security [00:20:00] cooperation up until that point had been with the interior ministry forces and at a very low level, and the shift in 20 14, 20 15 was to switch to the actual military, the, the force that was designed to fight someone else and not to keep security.

Uh, to maintain security in, in the interior. And so that's something that happened there that I think Russia could not mistake in any way. Right. I mean, you used to work with them, the interior ministry. Sure, that's fine. But now you're building up this massive army and that can only have one purpose. Yeah.

**Marty:** Um, it's, it's, it's so sad too because it does seem like, I mean, it is a proxy war. Mm-hmm. It seems like the US and its allies in the West are just using Ukrainian citizens as cannon fodder essentially with this measuring contest with Russia. This, this flex on the international stage. And I think. I'd really like to get your perspective on [00:21:00] like the current state of the Ukrainian army.

Like are the rumors that they're sending tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of troops to the front lines just to be slaughtered within hours? True.

**Lee:** Yeah. They don't have any real capability left. So from 2014 to 2022, we built this massive army. Well, that army got destroyed in the early part of the war last year.

And then, so Ukraine hurriedly fielded this other army and they launched it at places like Ha uh, and that was largely annihilated. So now they've had press gangs, you know, running around for months, basically snatching people off the street. Um, there was a, I think it was the Times of London had a, a story a month or so ago about morale is high.

And right beneath that headline or that subtitle. Was a picture of an old man in a trench. Like how high can morale be? You're forcing elderly people, you know, into the me grind or into trenches. So, no, their military capability is severely degraded. So what, what people have to understand is they're, [00:22:00] they're trying to engage in basically combined arms maneuver, combined arms warfare.

So there's infantry tanks, uh, artillery. They have to synchronize all those things. That's difficult. That's difficult for the best armies. That's difficult for professional armies. And Ukraine really doesn't have one anymore. Yeah. It's all been, you know, worn down. So what on earth are these poor people supposed to do?

I mean, they're gonna be, excuse me. So like, Russia has built tremendous, uh, defenses. I mean, they have this massive trenching, and I mean, it's all fortified. Russia has tremendous overmatch in firepower, like way more artillery, way better artillery, and then they can even use their bombers. Uh, to fire, air launch cruise missiles without ever getting in range of the Ukrainian air defenses.

And then they have missile subs and missile boats that can fire from both the black and Caspian seas, all in concert with, uh, the bombers that can fire, um, cruise missiles [00:23:00] and, you know, hypersonics and things like that. So basically you've got this very fortified Russian defense line with a tremendous amount of infantry, very well supplied directly behind them.

You have way more artillery than the Ukrainians are going to have. And then behind them, you have these over the horizon systems, like all of these cruise missiles. Uh, you know, like what we saw the past, uh, several nights over the past week where they're just methodically destroying both air defense supplies headquarters.

I mean, maybe the Ukrainians might be able to mount some kind of operation, but it isn't going to amount to much. Yeah.

**Marty:** And then talking about like the state of the Ukrainian army too. I think I saw a headline earlier this week or last week, where strategically they're. A bit inept as well where we're sending a bunch of weapons, the US and other countries, and apparently they warehoused all the weapons in one spot.

Russia identified it and completely destroyed

**Lee:** their, their weapons depot. Yeah, I mean some of that is legitimately difficult because the [00:24:00] front, um, and Ukraine's a very large country and the front is very long, but there are only so many ways to get to the places where they would need to unleash these weapons.

And at some point there would have to be some consolidation closer to the front. And maybe that can happen when you aren't Overmatched so heavily. But the Russians watch all of this. It's not just through satellites or signals intercepts. They have people on the ground who are feeding them intelligence.

I mean, of course they know where this stuff is and they're very patiently, very deliberately destroying all those things. And, uh, there, I can't imagine there's much left of Ukrainian air defense. So at some, right now, most of what we've seen has been like stand the standoff use of air power, right? They, they release their weapons before they're really within range.

Um, but at some point, likely not to, in the, the distant future, they're going to be able to more or less dominate the skies. And I just, I don't see a, a, a chance in hell for anything that Ukraine wants to do. And [00:25:00] there seems, I, I can think of no good reason why this slaughter has to continue. I mean, they've lost the better part of a generation of young men and they're going to lose their sovereignty.

And for what I mean the, I I'm not, uh, pro-Russian or anti Ukrainian or any of that. I, I'm very fond of that entire part of the world. And this slaughter is senseless. Yeah. Just utterly senseless.

**Marty:** Yeah. Going back to something you mentioned earlier, which is key. The Ukraine has signaled that they'd like to come to the table to find peace, to stop, uh, just sending people, uh, to the slaughterhouse.

And I, I, I think a signal toward that direction was Linsky picking up the phone and calling g uh, a couple weeks ago. Mm-hmm. Um, but like what, like what is happening is like the US and the allies is basically saying, no, uh, keep going. Well,

**Lee:** I, I want to be very clear that, um, some of this is supposition because clearly, you know, I'm not on the phone calls and I don't have hard information.

But my general take is [00:26:00] everybody sees the writing on the wall. Washington is looking to distance itself. Ukraine is looking for a way out, but there are still all these other pressures. I mean, sometimes in all throughout history, a lot of these tragedies continue to unfold simply because of inertia. I mean, there's so many pieces in play and in motion.

Um, yeah. I think that he has to, zelensky has to be looking for a way out. Uh, but whether he pursues one or says so publicly, I have no idea. I think the us, like I said, is conditioning the public that it's not going to go well. You know, and, and fingers crossed that, uh, some of the more, uh, deranged leaders in, in our country don't try to provoke some kind of intervention because we've, we've heard for many months, even from people like, uh, retired general Petraeus that, oh, well there should be a Western intervention.

Um, when I, I wrote a piece called, uh, that I titled Amateur Hour Armageddon, and I did that because as soon as the war started, there's [00:27:00] all this, uh, Talk about escalation and the potential of nuclear war and, and understandably so. But I hadn't heard anybody explain in very specific military terms how we could get there.

How do we get there from, uh, from here, not that we want to, but how, how might it unfold? And so I explained it and it's with essentially a Western intervention that then goes in and has to suppress Russian air defenses or attempt to, and at that point, the Russians have no way of knowing is this operation limited to the battlefield here in, in Ukraine, or is it part of a broader move?

And there's a lot of history there going back to the Gulf War, but yeah. Um, yeah.

**Marty:** If that intervention does happen, how long does that extend this

**Lee:** conflict? I don't think anybody can really answer questions like that because there are too many unknowns. Uh, for much of my career, I've heard people talk about escalation and how the Kremlin views escalation, you know, what steps they might be willing to take.

People who tell you they know what escalation looks like in the minds of Russian leaders, [00:28:00] at, at least in, in my opinion, don't know what they're talking about. We don't know. I'm not sure that they know. Um, I mean, I'm sure they have some kind of a process or procedure, but what actually happens when things ratchet up with all that tension, I don't think anybody can reasonably say.

So. How long could it go on? Well, it depends if, okay. Couple of things. Um,

The length of time would require, uh, would depend on the amount of restraint each side showed, right? Is, is there, are we unleashing nuclear weapons? Is it ratcheting up right away, or are we just, uh, to con, you know, determined to fight some kind of conventional battle in Ukraine? So that's kind of the, the first high level thought.

The second, um, and I wrote about this in rubble and rhetoric, NATO is not what it used to be, uh, during the Cold War. I mean, I have worked with on NATO operations for many years and, and I met interesting people and drank some good coffee. But it's not a fighting force. [00:29:00] It's almost more of a club. I mean, I think of nato, much like I think of the eu, it's a source of cynic cures for the credentials, right?

It's as jobs for cosmopolitans, that kind of thing. Um, most of the military capability comes from the US and we have our own problems in that regard. In terms of defense industrial base. We couldn't sustain that fight. So if we, you know, everybody looks at Russia, like, oh, is Russia gonna escalate? If there's some kind of intervention, are we going to escalate?

We don't have the forces, we don't have the material. Uh, I don't think we have the public support for any kind of war like that. I mean, it's, there's not a whole lot backing us up. And so NATO used to be this really massive, very powerful military force. I mean the West German army right up until the end was just fierce.

But it's not like that. It hasn't been like that in a long time. They got rid of their militaries and essentially we provide their security. They reinvested that money in, basically in social welfare programs. [00:30:00] Uh, so most European militaries are. Almost token forces. And I don't, I've worked with many, if not most of them, and I don't mean this as an insult to the individuals.

I've met very competent soldiers from all these armies, but there aren't that many of them, and they don't have the stuff they need to fight. So, you know, this intervention, I don't even understand how it would happen without some kind of escalation on our side. Yeah. We don't have the forces. Just, just real quick.

We, we put the hundred and first airborne over there as, as it's supposed to look like. It's some bull work against a massive, uh, mechanized horse. Now, I've worked with the hundred first a lot. Uh, it's a capable unit, but it's a light infantry unit. It would get ripped to shreds. Do you know what I mean?

Like, we don't have the numbers, we don't have the right kind of people, we don't have the production to sustain that kind of war. We don't have. The forward deployed forces, the forward deployed, uh, material. We don't train to deploy directly into that kind of environment. And if we were to start doing that, Russia could then, [00:31:00] uh, there over the horizon, systems can target much of NATO as it is.

So where would we have a staging area to even get started? When you start, when you start backing out, then Russia, like it relies on the US shipping over a lot of stuff by sea or air. Uh, again, we don't have all the stuff we would need, but let's just assume for a moment we do. Russia can contest those SEA and airlines.

They have fantastic sundries that can sink ships. They have planes that can shoot down hours, they have missiles. So from start to finish, we no longer have this sort of fold a gap, uh, NATO scenario in which the, the European allies hold on as long as they can. And then the US starts reinforcing and we fight this conventional war against the Soviets that hopefully doesn't go nuclear.

It's, it's nothing like that. I mean, NATO militaries in Europe are, are small and, and don't have any of the capabilities. And there's also a loss of know-how. I mean, like I said, these combined arms maneuver, uh, combined arms operations are very difficult. They have to be practiced a lot. And even [00:32:00] then, you know, we mess it up all the time.

It's, it's not easy stuff to make that many people work in concert over a broad area. And, uh, they really haven't been doing any of that. They've just been plugging in, in small numbers with boutique capabilities to all of our operations over the past 20 years to, to, you know, Afghanistan and such. Yeah, and

**Marty:** that's the really worrying thing, particularly about the situation here in the United States economically.

It's historically when you have economic trouble at home, you try to create distraction and war is one of the first distractions that is Sure. That is pulled out of. The toolbox. And that, that, that's what worries me right now is that we have this banking crisis unfolding. We have mm-hmm. The potential recession on the horizon.

We're going into an election year and is the situation in Ukraine and Russia used as a political tool to either distract from the, uh, [00:33:00] very fragile economy or to drum support up for a president heading into an election season? I think

**Lee:** those are all very valid concerns. Uh, unfortunately. Yeah. Um, now look, I, I don't know what's going to happen.

I have no crystal ball, but I can talk about, you know, capabilities of what it would take to do certain things. And the things that we are claiming we can do and perhaps even want to do, we cannot back up. And that's just, just with looking at, you know, intervention in Ukraine or even just continuing to supply the Ukrainian.

Um, and then you bring, you know, Taiwan or China into the picture and it's just, it's all fantasy, land nonsense. We, we are not positioned to do all these things that many people are demanding We do. And it's like we could put aside for a moment whether we should do these things. I mean, I, I don't think we should, but we can even put that question aside for a moment and say, can we, not, not true to me, but can we even pull these things off?

[00:34:00] Yeah, yeah.

**Marty:** I mean, when you look back at the last 20 years of America's involvement in war is particularly Afghanistan, Iraq, which you dealt a lot with. Like, it, it seems, I don't know personally, I'm 31 years old, so I was 10 when nine 11 happened. Teenager, uh, two young man when Afghanistan and Iraq was going on.

And I don't know personally, I'm. A bit, uh, jaded and disenchanted by the whole US War machine, and so am I. It doesn't, it doesn't seem like they've been very successful for most of my life. And, uh, starting a war with Russia seems like a terrible decision. Like, it's almost like end of empire stuff where getting sloppy, expanding your army, not really being as successful as you have in the past, and using the hammer as a way to imbue force in the world where it's really not gonna [00:35:00] pay off in the long run.

**Lee:** I, I think that's a reasonable assessment. Um, we need to get back in touch with, uh, what these institutions actually mean. Look, I, I'm not a pacifist. The world's a a bad place. And, and at times violence is the answer we need, uh, an effective military, we need security services, but they have to be used for what they are, and they have to be restrained.

One of the first things I learned from my drill sergeant in basic training was that the army had two purposes to kill people and to break things. If you weren't doing those two things, you were doing something to enable others to do those two things. Now, that may sound catalyst, particularly with, uh, contemporary sensibilities, but it's absolutely true.

And so if you're going to employ the military, understand that what you're doing is killing people and breaking things. And if you don't want to do that, then the military ought not be used as a tool with which to achieve foreign policy objectives, which is exactly what happened. I, I'm writing another series right now about, uh, What I consider to be the, the, the [00:36:00] impending demise of, of nato.

And it talks about the transition from a defensive alliance to an offensive alliance. And, uh, I'm sorry, was it for your question? Nope. Oh, okay. Um, yeah, the, there was a policy debate, um, Within the White House basically after the collapse of the, the, after the end of the Cold War. And so Clinton comes in and he really doesn't have any foreign policy chops.

That's one of the big dings against him at the time where it was. And so there's this sort of debate, and we can maybe put some faces on it. There's Madeline Albright who says, we're the indispensable nation and we need, we have this massive military force, and why can't we use it for good? And then you have people like Colin Powell who said, you know, whose experiences were rooted in Vietnam and, you know, he didn't want to go that route.

Well, we know which camp won out. You know, it was the Albright camp and it, it happened in Bosnia and uh, and, and in Kosovo. And then as it [00:37:00] continued into, um, Afghanistan, I mean there, there's a huge stretch of that war, nearly half of it that was completely aimless. I mean, I, I don't, uh, I'm not saying the rest of it was productive after the initial months that there wasn't much.

Uh, productive activity or fighting going on, but there was a whole section of that war that was just completely aimless. We didn't really even have a policy when Obama came in and, uh, they settled on the surge. It was, uh, basically a, a political necessity, right? He got elected as the guy who was saying, we're gonna, we're gonna undo these bad things that the Bush administration did.

We're gonna end these wars. And so his basic plan was, well, reelection is 2012, so by 2011, uh, we're going to wind down. And so they started winding down. Iraq immediately didn't go quite well, but they eventually got out in 2011, although we went back in, um, and then in Iraq or in Afghanistan, you know, they settled on this whole like, [00:38:00] pseudoscientific counterinsurgency strategy.

That was just nuts. I mean, I was there. I went through the Counterinsurgency Academy in Kabul and listened to all this, and it was, uh,

A a lot of it just didn't make any damn sense. And, and considering that, you know, we weren't there to kill people and break things, all of a sudden we're there to try to do something very different and it just dragged on and on. Um,

**Marty:** yeah. And as somebody who spent many years of your life in both those wars, like how do you feel personally about the pullout of Afghanistan and looking back on the last 20 years?

**Lee:** Yeah. Um, the, well, the, well, initially of course, I, I supported the war in Afghanistan. I mean, nine 11 was, uh, a big moment. And, but the, but by the time, uh, the Iraq war was winding, uh, get, getting ready to kick off, I [00:39:00] thought it was a bad idea from the start. Uh, and I only went over there once and it was for a, a particular, a specific mission.

And then I got back outta the country. Um, So I don't think, I think Iraq, I mean, there's, I don't understand any redeeming quality from what we did there. So I think that was just a mistake altogether. I think, uh, in Afghanistan, I really don't see anything wrong if we're attacked with going in and killing people and breaking things as long as we're directing it appropriately.

But by, by the spring of 20 of 2002, we've basically taken most of the Al-Qaeda we had basically killed, captured, or caused to flee most Al-Qaeda operatives in the country. And of course, uh, Osama Bin Laden fled across the border. Um, As well. And so by the time like early oh three rolls around, there's a lot of like mopping up operations right there.

There are a lot of operations that are driven by reports of Al-Qaeda and Taliban, but with dwindling evidence of their presence and sometimes none at all. [00:40:00] So by that point, you know, we're basically getting played by Afghans who were paying us or who were receiving money saying, oh yeah, Al-Qaeda's over there.

I mean, I remember when I studied, uh, Dari, and one of the first, uh, jokes we were making was, um, you know, everything was Al-Qaeda's fault. Like, you can't find your pencil. Ooh, maybe Al-Qaeda took your pencil. Like, that's how far it started to get after the initial months, and particularly after the first year, year and a half.

Uh, but we stayed on. So in terms, I mean, I, I think we should have left then, um, in terms of the, the pullout and the way it went. Yeah. That, that caused some turbulence for me personally. I mean, we, we should have gotten out of there much sooner, but good lord, did it need to be a fiasco? Did we need to harm the Taliban with 90 billion worth of weapons, or we relied on our enemy of 20 years to provide perimeter security to cover our withdrawal.

I mean, you can't make that kind of stuff up. We left our ally, we didn't particularly work particularly well with our allies. And you know, the Brits [00:41:00] complained about it openly about, uh, it was a sort of like an every man for himself kind of thing. I mean, it was completely inept. Yeah. Didn't, didn't need to go that way.

I mean, again, should have been out of there many years before then, but you know, you, you are where you are and you have to deal with the situation that you have. There was no way, no reason for it to go that way. Um, and I did some videos for a consulting network I belonged to called Poly Age. And so basically this is July of 21 and these are on my website.

It was, it was right after, uh, Biden had come out and said, Nope, the Afghans can hold. Right. You know, we've built up an air force, we've done all this, and the same thing from the Pentagon and the State Department and everyone else. So I did a video explaining precisely how they were wrong, how they were wrong, how the Afghan, the Taliban, was gonna retake the whole country.

I explained how they were already in the process of retaking the country. Basically the only places that where the, this sort of fictitious government of Afghanistan existed was in a handful of major populated [00:42:00] areas. And you basically had to fly between them because all the hinterlands in between were controlled by insurgents.

So I did that video. Shortly after they said everything was going to be okay, and a month later the tele retake the whole country. Um, And then if you remember, there was this, uh, brief flurry of interest and compassions for the Yeah. Afghans, right? For, for the girls and for all sorts of people. Like, we're not going to abandon you.

We're gonna have all of this international funding and everything's going to be okay. So I immediately did a video there, kind of dispelling that nonsense, you know, do, if you recall, there were people talking about Taliban 2.0 as if there's this new, very sophisticated version of the Taliban, you know, as if 20 years of warfare had made them more cosmopolitan.

I mean, it was completely ridiculous. So I made a a second follow up video basically talking about this Taliban 2.0 stuff was nonsense. The international community is going to drop Afghanistan as soon as possible, which is exactly what they did. [00:43:00] Um, and now Afghanistan is facing famine and it's basically not even in the news.

Uh, the threat of widespread famine for a country that's already horrendously poorer than abused as it's. Yeah, so I, I mean, between that, yeah, it's

**Marty:** very disconcerting and again, emblematic of like late stage dying empire stuff, which is extremely hard to stomach as an American citizen with a young family trying to Yeah,

**Lee:** absolutely.

I have one too. Yeah.

**Marty:** Yeah. And it's, in bringing it back to like Russia, Ukraine, like you mentioned, like put aside whether or not we should engage in direct conflict with them. But if we were to, could we actually be successful? And what you're saying is likely not, we're not prepared. And so let's play that, um, that hy hypothetical, like if we did and we [00:44:00] lost, like what does that mean for the state of the geopolitical landscape?

Because as we're seeing now, We cut them off from Swift. It seems like Russia, China, and other bricks countries are teaming up to completely sever their economies off from the US dollar system to the best of their abilities. And it seems like they're preparing for, uh, a world in which they are the dominant economies, dominant militaries.

Um, and the US is sort of sitting here like, oh no, that's not gonna happen. But it, it seems very plausible that it could become dominant forces in the world if we continue to screw this up. Well,

**Lee:** whether they become dominant, um, perhaps, I don't know, but I'd say the, the first thing they're trying to do is insulate themselves.

From, from our capabilities, right? Whether they're trying to set up a system that rivals and ultimately overtakes ours, that's secondary what they need to do initially. And it's something that Russia's been engaged in for some time, [00:45:00] is coming up with ways to make themselves less vulnerable and ultimately not vulnerable to our manipulation of the financial system, to all sorts of things like that.

So right now, that's, um, it's more the initial stages are more defensive in nature. We have to, like Lab Roth gave a speech, uh, last year and he basically said to never again, we, we are not going to allow ourselves to be dependent upon you in ways that allow you to manipulate us like this. So I think the stages we're seeing now are those stages and some of the early relationships necessary to build the kind of thing you're talking about.

Mm-hmm.

**Marty:** Yeah. I mean, that's why I like to focus a lot on Bitcoin. Or my whole career on Bitcoin is because I do think a lot of the issues that we're talking about today stem from the fact that the US feels the need to preserve its status as the world reserve currency maintainer. And I view Bitcoin [00:46:00] as an apolitical monetary network that sort of takes that power away from the US and doesn't give it to anybody else.

And sort of levels the playing field in terms of the global monetary system where we're not really forced to project power militarily to protect this monetary system. And everybody is just forced to work within this open network and the rules set forth by that and hopefully get along peacefully because the monetary network can't be weaponized and you're not incentivized to protect the petro dollar, uh, in the Middle East.

**Lee:** Yeah. I mean, I, I think that'd be wonderful. Uh, the, the big hurdle of course is that the people who tend to gravitate toward positions of power, uh, are the kinds of people who aren't interested in creating that kind of, uh, equilibrium or safety, right? I mean, this, we're in this problem increasingly over the past few decades in particular because the [00:47:00] people in power want to be able to use every lever they can.

And we've gotten to the point it used to be that maybe they did it a little more, um, deftly or with a little more restraint, a little more focused. But now it's just entirely, uh, you know, every ham handed attempt to smack down anything that isn't within the existing order. Yeah,

**Marty:** that's the other, it's extremely sloppy.

Everything.

**Lee:** Yeah. They don't even lie. Well, even the lies don't make sense. Um, Yeah, that's, uh, my, when you wrote me and you said we were gonna talk geopolitics, I, I had this, uh, you know, I wanted to explain that I don't have, I'm not a theorist, I don't have some grand, uh, unifying theory of geopolitics, but my, my focus, uh, which is a bit more narrower than that, is based on the following thesis that we're, we are still led by the architects and the administrators of a failed worldview and all their power rests in perpetuating all the systems that we now see under threat and in some cases collapsing.

[00:48:00] So what do people like that do? Well, they don't say, ah, we made a huge mistake. Let's reconfigure the entire power structure and bring in new people. They're going to fight harder as things. Get more difficult. Uh, you know, we've seen a lot of the level of government kind of surveillance of its own people that we've seen in our country is something that I just couldn't have imagined in the eighties or the nineties.

Uh, not that the government didn't, um, have means to do that, but that there's just this widespread lawless surveillance state. Um, they're not going to give that up peacefully. So, uh, turbulence ahead.

**Marty:** Yeah. The Patriot Act now with the restrict act on the table. Mm-hmm. Seems like Patriot Act 2.0 and Absolutely.

I know you're, you just mentioned like you don't wanna, like, you don't have like vast theories of what the perfect solution is to this problem, but if you did with that in [00:49:00] mind, um, what advice would you give to the government to do, to either quell the, the situation in Ukraine? Set us, um, Military policy, like on the right path to Sure.

Sort of clean things up and hopefully bring more peace to the world instead of trying to smash

**Lee:** everything. Well, several things. I mean, the, the current fighting would need to, to cease and, and we'd have to accept that that means Russia's going to win. It's a question of how much more destruction and death there's going to be.

So just accept it and achieve peace. But, uh, the, the broader perspective though, this, the scheme of it, which we are Europe's protector, uh, it has to change. Europe has to find its own way. I think there are a lot of problems with the, the eu. Uh, I'm not real bullish on its long-term prospects, uh, nor on nato.

Uh, like I said, I'm writing a series about what I think [00:50:00] is the demise of nato. So they have to find their own way. And I think we forget that Europe is a pretty, it's been a pretty unstable place over, over time. And so this intense push to to, to expand the union, the eu, and to have a ever greater union, at least ostensibly, is for the purpose of, kind of for stalling the kind of violence that had plagued the continent for, you know, millennia.

Um, they need to come to terms with their reality. The, one of the things being that union is, is too broad and it doesn't, there is no common tie that binds. It used to be that most of these central and and eastern European nations want it to be in the eu, basically to be brought into the first world.

There was a huge economic incentive. You know, nobody wants to live in the land that time forgot. You know, you see this, this, um, you see your neighbors prospering and having other opportunities by joining this. Of course you do. Well, how attractive is that [00:51:00] going to be in the future? With, uh, the economic degradation ongoing in Europe with the de-industrialization that's slowly underway.

I mean, Germany, o other countries too, but Germany in particular, you know, their whole approach was built on, uh, cheap energy, uh, that gave them uh, you know, a competitive edge in terms of pricing. Cuz everybody likes German quality, but quality costs. But with that cheap energy, they were able to, to keep it up.

But that's gone. So what I think about it, and I'm kind of a visual person, so when I'm writing or thinking, there's usually some visualization I'm trying to explain. And when I think about the de-industrialization process in Europe, I see like a boat that's becoming unmoored from the pier, right? And when it initially happens, the people are still right there.

It doesn't, it doesn't seem like a problem. Oh no, I could even jump off back onto the pier. But then it slowly starts to drift off and that's where the dissonance really starts to take over. Like, oh, well it's right there, but I can't quite reach it. And then it just keeps shifting and shifting, you know, more, more adrift.

[00:52:00] And I, I think that's what we're going to see. I mean, what, I don't have a background in economics or finance, but just a, from a broad perspective, if their whole industrial, uh, theory was based on this cheap energy and, and they can't get it anymore, I don't understand what they do, I don't understand how they kind of return to the sort of, uh, prominence and, um, that they had before In that regard, what's the alternative?

I mean, we see not only the prices of energy going higher, we see these hair-brained, uh, policies from governments, but, you know, shutting down, you know, their existing sources of energy and for, for more renewables. So how attractive is the EU going to be when this plays out? Also, there's, oh, go ahead.

**Marty:** I was gonna say, I, meanger Germany is the economic powerhouse of Europe, and like you, it's, it's been.

Mind boggling how they just shot themselves in the head with this transition away from [00:53:00] nuclear. Mm-hmm. And reliable coal towards unreliable wind and solar. Like, it doesn't make any sense.

**Lee:** No, it's, it's cult-like. Um, and it's really a shame because when I say that Europe needs to find its own way, Germany needs to lead that process.

They are the continental power. Sure. Poland has, has gotten, uh, you know, a lot wealthier and, and they have a, you know, a much larger military in the past, uh, couple of decades. But Germany needs to, to chart a course here. And I don't know, what does Germany look like? Like for, for example, over the past, I don't know, 10 years or so, um, maybe not quite that long.

You know, we've seen this resurgence of populism and understandably so. People are angry at the elite, and so they're looking for something different. And in, I, I pay attention to a lot of European media, particularly around elections. And the story was always the same. Oh my god, you know, these, these populist barbarians are at the gate and we have to fight to keep them out.

Or, or who knows, you know, we'll lose our democracy. And [00:54:00] then when the establishment candidates win, sometimes not by all that much, they declare like, you know, emergency over, well, all those people who were motivated to support the populace in the first place, one, they're still there, and two, now they have evermore reason to go that way.

So give this a couple of election cycles, even if it takes that long of the de-industrialization of the anger over the war of people who had lived very comfortable. Uh, prosperous lives suddenly being much less comfortable and prosperous and worried about war coming to their doorstep. I don't think that bodes well for the union.

Um, and so there has to be some kind of new accommodation for Europe, whether it's, uh, rman with Russia and then they kind of bring in the gas. Again. I don't know, it's a little too far out, but for Europe, I think that's the case for the us. Um, you know, it's interesting that when we used to be have a Department of War and not a Department of Defense, the, the Department of War was more focused on actual defense of the country [00:55:00] than, but we created the Department of Defense.

It was basically conducting war abroad. So, you know, all of that nonsense has to stop. There are a lot of myths propagated about why we need to be in different places and if we pull out, everything's going to go to hell. Uh, there'll certainly be a change if the US isn't there. Um, but I think. Allowing some kind of equilibrium to establish in a lot of these places and refocusing the us uh, military on, on defending the country territorial defense.

Now we're blessed, of course, we have oceans, uh, we have peaceful neighbors to the north. Um, but there are some other security problems that we just overlook. Uh, I'm not suggesting we need to go to war with Mexico, but people completely underestimate the extent of the cartel violence. Um, I mean, here in my town in Charlottesville, there's this crazy story I just read yesterday.

Uh, there was a shooting, I think last year, uh, or perhaps earlier this year, and. What we found out was, [00:56:00] uh, this fella who lived in Maryland, his wife had been kidnapped in Texas, and he and the kidnappers are great to meet here in my town. And then there ended up being a gun fight and he killed the people.

And we were like, what the hell is this? Well, it's all related to, uh, an open border and a cartel violence and the kidnapping for ransom and all of that. And it's even come to a sleepy little Charlottesville, Virginia. So there's, there's gotta be some coming to terms, uh, with what's going on in Mexico. And I know a lot of people tend to default to, well, we have the appetite for drugs, they have the drugs.

It's always going to be like that. Well, perhaps that's true, but it doesn't mean it needs to be, uh, what it presently is, there's some cartels operating freely on both sides of the border. They're making more money now off of trafficking people than they ever did off of trafficking drugs. Um, You know, a great, many of these people suffer terribly in that process.

Their women and children are routinely sexually abused. So there has to be some coming to terms for the [00:57:00] US with what's going on in the south. Yeah. Um,

**Marty:** somebody who lives in Texas. I completely agree. Yeah. And, and that, and also agree, I think we're sleeping on this like when you talk about oh, 100% fentanyl and overdoses being, I think, the number one killer in the United States right now for a particular segment, uh, of the population in particular age group.

Mm-hmm. There is, and almost seems like a reverse opium more, cuz from what I can tell, looks like the cartels have teamed up with China to get the fentanyl into the country. Sure. And it's just slowly, I mean, right outside this wall right here on sixth and Congress, you, you see the open drug markets like right on the

**Lee:** corner, like, no, no.

Yeah. I haven't been to Austin in quite some time. There were no. No open air markets when I was there. That's sad to hear. It really is. It's sad. Yeah. It's everywhere now. Yeah. And

**Marty:** so, like as an American, as a patriot who served your country, like, [00:58:00] do you think we have a chance to get back on the right

**Lee:** track?

I do. Um, I think there's some kind of domestic cataclysm that will occur or that we have to go through. A part of it, of course, is this economic degradation that we're talking about. Um, You know, I, I'm not a, I don't have a background in finance or economics, so this is part, uh, unqualified opinion and part unsatisfied curiosity.

But when I look at all the analyses of, uh, various aspects of the market, right, the bond market, the housing market, all these things, I feel like nobody, uh, there, there's no real overarching, um, no ability to really have an overarching analysis. Sort of like how I said about geopolitics. I mean, I don't think those analytical frameworks really work too well, but if I had to put my money on it, I'd put my money on some kind of calamity.

And once that happens economically, um, everything else is impacted. And, and, you know, we have serious social problems. You know, we have the, the crime in the [00:59:00] cities and racial division and all sorts of other things. So I think there's going to be some kind of confluence of those things. Yeah. That, uh, is cataclysmic or we, I think we have a rough patch to go through, but.

I don't think all is lost. And, um,

yeah, the professor out of, uh, Vienna, who I follow, uh, he, he said something that I like. He said, you know, America has many sources of renewal and I do believe that. And he was talking about how in a lot of places, or like I would say in Russia, you know, a huge part of the overall population lives in Moscow.

And a lot of the power is focused in Moscow. Well, in the US we have many cities and we have, you know, arable land and all of that. So I think in the end there are many, like he said, many sources of renewable. I think that's the way I would put it. The, the ingredients are there when we sort through, whatever's coming our way for us to, uh, rebuild.[01:00:00]

**Marty:** Agreed. I'm an eternal optimist. I do think we will right the ship. I do think we are gonna go through a calamity. I think it's actually happening right now. Um, sure. With the, yes, the banking system, the debt ceiling. Um, nobody's gonna be buying our treasuries moving forward. The economic calamity, I think we're in the middle of it, and most people just don't realize it yet.

Absolutely. But again, that's why I focus on Bitcoin too, is I think that's an incredible source of renewal for the United States if they're the politic politicians and, uh, the federal government is willing to allow us to just build the network out here in the United States in our little part of the world.

Um, Bitcoin, the network aligns very tightly with the ideals This country was founded on free speech, sound money. Mm-hmm. Um, and the ability to associate with who you want to. Um, sure. So it's an open peer-to-peer protocol. It has all those. And then from an energy [01:01:00] perspective, we're shooting ourselves in the foot here to a certain extent in Bitcoin mining as an industry, even though it's, uh, picked on a lot by the Elizabeth Barnes of the world and the New York Times of the world, and mm-hmm.

I'm very much involved in the industry and I see it up close and personal. It does strengthen our energy systems, our grid systems. It allows us to, uh, take advantage of stranded energy sources like stranded natural gas wells, or flared gas. Like there, there is so much opportunity for renewal via Bitcoin, whether it be at the application layer, financial layer, or the physical layer with the mining industry.

And that's why I have this podcast. That's why I write my newsletter. That's why I invest in this space, because I think. Bitcoin is the ball that we can run with and begin to rebuild a stronger America on strong financial footing with sound

**Lee:** bite. Mm-hmm. Jim? Yeah, I think, [01:02:00] uh, like j uh, Washington said, you know, he, he didn't want us, uh, to have all these foreign entanglements, but he, he wanted the US to be an engine of prosperity.

And, and I think at some point we could get back to that model whereby, uh, we, we aren't in invading other countries or we aren't using our diplomats and our business, uh, power to basically lecture and coerce them, but we could be an engine of prosperity and who knows? Fingers crossed. Maybe even an example of good governance, but yeah, we are not there.

**Marty:** Yeah. And that, I mean, one of my theories is that, and we saw begin to take play in Covid during the lockdowns and all that is just a return to. Individual states asserting their autonomy from the federal government, which I'm very bullish on. And I, I think is the cleanest way out, uh, of the calamity is just the state standing up.

Say, Hey, federal government, uh, you put us in a pretty bad situation. We're [01:03:00] not gonna listen to what you're saying. We're gonna, we're gonna run things our way. And thank you, but no

**Lee:** thank you. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the mechanism's already there in the, in the constitution. It's just an issue of us actually following it.

Yeah. The

**Marty:** political will. Yeah. It's, and so how do we get this, this fire in the bellies of the silent, silent majority, if you will? Cause you can tell, I mean, at least I can, I won't speak for you, but I can tell that many people were sensible. Were just good people who wanna raise families, work hard. Put food on the table, enjoy time with family and friends.

They, they know something's off, not only off, but terribly off. And yeah, they're looking for a solution and typically they go to the government and say, Hey, you need to fix this. But I don't think that's the way out. How do we engender a sense of [01:04:00] urgency in the silent majority to speak up and seek mm-hmm.

Options that, that lead to peace internationally, and then economic strength here at home?

**Lee:** Um, well, I definitely agree that there's a silent majority that feels that way, but, uh, it typically, it's the case that a majority silent or otherwise doesn't get the, the fire in their belly. It's usually, you know, a smaller percentage of the population, uh, that are the actors and the catalysts and, you know, you've got, then they have the people they are against.

And in the middle you just have this sort of public that wants to go about its life. Um, I think we're seeing some of the early stages of it with people taking back school boards, uh, with people focused on local elections. Um, people focused on, you know, becoming precinct committee men and women and all sorts of things down at that local level.

Uh, so I think it's underway. Um, there's just some sort of a tipping [01:05:00] point. Um,

I, I think a lot of what'll propel us in that direction is gonna result from this, uh, kind of calamity that we're discussing right now. The people who are active are the people who are inclined to be active. Uh, there'll come a time I think, when other people don't really have much of a choice because things are going so poorly.

Yeah. Yeah. Unfortunately,

**Marty:** get Bitcoin before you need it, is what we said. Um,

**Lee:** yeah.

**Marty:** Yeah. I mean, and. Another topic we haven't even touched on. You mentioned, uh, in the beginning of the discussion that you spent some time in Taiwan. That's another thing. Sure. Uh, externally, internationally, that seems to be bubbling up.

Um, obvi, there's a lot of speculation that China would like to take over Taiwan. Uh, we just watched them take Hong Kong in 2019, take Hong Kong back. Um, we had John Bolton [01:06:00] over in Taiwan a couple weeks ago, meeting with their leaders. What, what is your perspective on Taiwan? What's going on there? I am admittedly ignorant to the Thai Taiwan situation outside of the fact that, uh, T S M C is there and they create a lot of the chips, particularly the chips I use to mine Bitcoin.

But outside of that, I'm, I'm a bit ignorant to the situation over there.

**Lee:** Okay. Um, where to start? So, It's important to remember right off the bat that the people on the island of Taiwan, Formosa are Chinese. Right? They're, they're a different, they've been separate from the mainland for quite some time, for decades, but culturally, linguistically, they're almost, they're, they're Chinese.

They're mostly haunt Chinese. So when we talk about China, like taking this or taking that, we have to understand that although, uh, Taiwan and Ukraine are different, in some ways they're similar and, and really important ones. China's not going to [01:07:00] lose Taiwan like, period. Just like how Russia's not going to lose Ukraine.

It's too close, it's too near and dear. It's, it's, it's too important to them. So the policy for a very long time has been eventual, but peaceful reunification. China does not want to attack or invade Taiwan. They don't wanna destroy the place. They just want to pull it back under their dominion. Now, they don't want to go to war, but they certainly will if things push them in the direction of a military.

Operation being the only way to achieve that reunification. Um, so the US policy for a very long time has been, uh, strategic ambiguity, meaning we're not going to say if we're going to support Taiwan in the event of a war, we're just going to leave it the possibility on the table. Beijing, you know, maybe we will, maybe we won't.

So stay off. So back off. Right. Well, a lot of things have changed. If you go back, we used to recognize Taiwan as a country. We do not, our leaders talk about [01:08:00] Taiwan. It is not a formally recognized country. Uh, we switched our recognition from Taipei to Beijing, uh, in the early seventies when Nixon was trying to kind of play China against the Soviet Union.

Right. And in that time, of course, we've made China, the, the world's factory. They've become much wealthier. They've created, they have a lot more, um, not just uh, economic cloud, but international clout. They've been on this. Really years long campaign of kind of co commencing and coercing other countries to not recognize Taiwan.

I forget what the exact number is right now, but it's, I, I don't know, 12 or 13 countries recognize Taiwan and they're usually in Lake Africa and the Caribbean, places like that. So there's, they're, China is using a whole bunch of levers that it, to really constrain Taiwan's options and to say basically you're going to come back home.

It can be the Hong Kong model, the Macau model, but basically we're not losing Taiwan. They have the diplomatic, uh, lever. There's [01:09:00] also just people underestimate, they talk like these are, uh, two fortresses, you know, one's about to go do battle with the other. Uh, at least when I was in, uh, going back and forth to Taiwan, the greatest number of flights per day were the mainland in China.

The, the business ties are there, the cultural ties, the linguistic ties. I'm not saying the two people are entirely the same, but they're, um, Incredibly similar. And so, like when Chika Shaq fled to Taiwan, uh, during the Civil War, he took most of the artifacts that are important to the Chinese, uh, civilization.

So the museum that all the Chinese go to, to see their own history is in Taipei. They fly over there. So we need to realize that these are real people who have an interest in working together. There's an election coming up next year and the party, uh, that might win, could push more in the direction of reunification.

It's a possibility. Uh, it's not that China has to conduct a military assault, uh, that we could, but it's, it's a possibility. So on the, [01:10:00] a couple of important things on that topic, it's, I am aware of. The fact that the Chinese military, the People's Liberation Army hasn't really fought anyone in a long time.

There are probably some qualitative issues there. I'm aware that, uh, amphibious operations are extremely difficult under the best of circumstances, and Taiwan does not present favorable circumstances for such an operation. Even so, uh, my view, uh, and I know this, uh, preferably aggravates a lot of former colleagues, is that if China wants to take the island, they'll take the island.

I mean, we have tremendous problems. I mentioned the defense industrial base that can't support the war in Ukraine. How on earth is it going to support a war on the other side of the Pacific? Like people have to stop and think in a really practical way, what that would mean. We'd have to put the entire country on award footing.

We'd have to invoke the Defense Production Act, basically take civilian factories and turn them into munitions factories. Sort of like how Detroit was producing bombers and tanks throughout World War ii, right? [01:11:00] We'd have to do that. Well, there are lots of problems. One problem is we don't have that many factories anymore to convert.

Another problem is, does the public want to go on a war footing? You know, we've already had this monumental spending for Covid and all the rest of it. Are we really going to spend many times that in an inflationary debt ridden environment to put the country on a war footing? Another problem, even if we were to do all of that, it would take a long time to build up the material and the capabilities we would need to even initiate such a conflict, much less the sustained one, because we don't know how long it could last.

Another point is, uh, simply geography. Because of Hawaii, Alaska, Guam, the, the West coast. Our leaders, uh, say kind of proudly like, oh, we are a Pacific power. Well, sort of in a certain part of the Pacific. I mean, we are not an East Asia power. It's a pretty big ocean. Yeah. We have a tremendous amount of influence in certain parts of [01:12:00] East Asia, but that's not where our power resides.

So the idea that we're going to suddenly, like we, we don't even, again, this whole divide between, uh, should and, and could. Let's put aside the should, which obviously I don't think we should push any kind of war there. Um, could we, well, how do we get there? Are we stopping Ukraine because we're running out of munitions?

Are we gonna mobilize the entire country and turn it into a big munitions factory? Are we gonna suddenly, uh, conscript or grow our military? I mean, A lot of people, uh, there, there was an article recently in foreign policy, uh, about how we need to do more to deter China and Russia. And a lot of people online kind of lost their minds and said, this is crazy.

You know, these, these Americans are talking about basically standing up to China and Russia and, and if we need to, you know, in whatever ways we need to, well, What I think people don't understand is that's part for the course in the defense establishment. You know, the thing, people were going crazy over this article.

I had heard every argument in that entire [01:13:00] article many times for many years. You know, it's not the only view in, in DC in the establishment, but it's the prominent one. Like the, the assumption, the kind of knee-jerk reaction is, well, we've gotta do something. You know, we've got these, they're called revisionist powers, right?

Because we say that they're rewrite rewriting history. Uh, you know, and, and, and we have to kind of stand the defense not only of the, you know, these places, but of, of, of history, I guess. Um, these ideas are perfectly mainstream in the defense establishment, in the foreign policy establishment that we have to go do something.

So I ask how. Like sit down and explain cuz all these articles talk about what we should do, what we need to do. They're all very normative or moralistic or sometimes emotionally driven. Like, oh. But we just have to, we have to find a way, you know, people, things like good leadership, you know, steely, resolve, determination, all that stuff's important.

But if we look across history, it is not the case that those attributes alone enable people to triumph against all odds. [01:14:00] You know, the other stuff matters too, and it's typically the, the less sexy stuff that matters a great deal. So people who are pushing these policies, I, I simply have to ask how with what, we've already depleted things in Ukraine.

We don't have the, the industrial base. We used to have, we would have to convert this smaller industrial base at tremendous expense during a time of debt and inflation, uh, just to produce this stuff, which would take a lot of time. What is the goal here? I mean, there's just this really, look, I understand that.

The, the chips are, are, are made there. And, and I get the concerns about that, but what's more damaging, uh, China potentially having this reunification, uh, or taking over Taiwan on, or a war with China? Like, you know, I've heard of these estimates. Oh, well if you lose the chips, it's uh, you know, this much of a, you know, you can take off whatever, 10, 15% of the GDP immediately, or something like that.

Well, that

doesn't

**Marty:** even make sense though, because China's our biggest [01:15:00] trading partner in the world. Right. And like, if they take it over, it's not like they're gonna stop selling chips to us. They're gonna wanna make that money.

**Lee:** 100%. And that's what annoys me so much about these conversations is, uh, it's, it's a lot of boogeyman stuff.

Like, oh, you know, did you, have you ever seen Dr. Strangelove? Do you know the big board? Mm-hmm. Yeah. I mean there's like a big board kind of approach and, and I saw it for years in government. I. Where it's like, oh my God, the Chinese are investing here and they're doing this there. Well, yes, there is geo strategic geopolitical competition.

Um, undoubtedly that's happening, but we're so intertwined, not just in terms of, you know, manufacturing and tech and finance, like I just, I I still think we could just buy their stuff. Um,

if the one thing, yeah, I'll layer this grievance. The, uh, there are a lot of, uh, the China Hawks in the US and, and most of them are talking about, you know, great [01:16:00] power competition and we need to rebuild shipyards and all of this stuff. And I understand where they're coming from though. I, I don't necessarily agree, but.

They never seem with, with very few exceptions, they don't look at what's going on internally in the US at counterintelligence threats or at, uh, you know, IP theft and things like that. Don't look, IP theft has always occurred, but never on this scale, and never with the person being looted, basically saying we can't do anything about it.

So that, that's kind of my big beef with the Chi. The China Hawks is, um, you know, there are plenty of public FBI reports talking about how, uh, the CCP tries to coerce. Uh, they'll, they'll try to get politicians earlier in their careers so that they can be useful, you know, later on, uh, that I forget what the, uh, the exact timing was, but, uh, the director of the FBI said they have to open a new counterintelligence investigation, something like every 15 minutes.

I mean, it's extraordinary. Look, I'm not anti-China and, [01:17:00] and I certainly don't want war with China, but the people who are running around beating the war drum about the things we need to do externally, Don't really seem to care a whole lot about, uh, you know, the, the leaky ship that we're, that we're on at present.

And so that's, that's something that I never really understood. No, neither

**Marty:** do I, like, we don't need anymore war when you get our house in order. Like, uh, yeah, I'm a very big Ron Paul Guy. Like, let's bring it home and like figure out like let's get our own house in order before we go tell other people what to do.

Is my mindset.

**Lee:** Yeah. I mean if you there, we can call them whatever we want. There, there are people who control the lovers of power in society. We can call them the elites, the establishment, the ruling class, whatever. It's, but that, that group of people are very, you know, foreign policy is sort of like this, their precious jewel, right?

They don't really care much about what happens to large swaths of the country, but this is the thing that they protect. And of course there are a lot of business interests, uh, interests [01:18:00] interwoven, but resting that from them, um, is a, a. I, I'm on Ron Paul's side, but it's a, it's a tremendous challenge. It's a tall odor because this is the thing they value above.

You know, they're, they're part of an international cosmopolitan class. They're not necessarily even Americans in some respects. Right. They have more in common with the other international cosmopolitans than they do with someone in Indiana. Yeah.

**Marty:** And so what is the significance of John Bolton's trip? Um, is it significant at all?

Is it just him being a dick? Is it,

**Lee:** well, I, I think he can't help but do the latter. Um, I don't, I don't know the man, but man, he's, he's been in the public a long time. I think we can call that one. Um, I, I generally try not to read too much into individual incidents where there, whether it's attack, a phone call, a meeting, because there's a constant stream of them and, and we're.

You know, we, we were focused on trying to read into this one, and then [01:19:00] there's another one tomorrow. But I don't think it's good. I mean, he's not there. He wasn't there, at least to my knowledge, in any official government capacity. Yeah. Is he

**Marty:** officially associated with the

**Lee:** government right now? Uh, not to my knowledge.

Um, but I, I mean, I haven't checked, could be wrong, but I don't think he is, uh, you know, he's been out of power for some time. There is, uh, some people use the term uni party, you know, there is that just kind of establishment, uh, that has certain interests and I mean, he's a lifelong member of that. So the fact that he's not in government doesn't necessarily mean he isn't talking to the other people who are, uh, or to interests that are non-governmental, but powerful nonetheless.

I don't really know. I mean, I don't think it's a great thing when John Bolton comes to your country. Um, yeah, there's, there's gonna be a push to produce and, and to sell, uh, a bunch more weapons and. The, my guess is that it has a lot to do with [01:20:00] that. Yeah. But even when I was going there, I mean, you couldn't like clear baggage claim without tripping over defense contractors.

Like, so if we're sending even more over there, it's uh, it's kind of remarkable.

**Marty:** Yeah. Uh, it's also tiresome.

**Lee:** It is. You know, I, I'm not, uh, I am an optimistic person by nature, like you and, uh, you know, I don't like to be a doom merchant, but my career is focused on things like Afghanistan and rock Ukraine.

Like, I think that accurate analysis on these topics is inherently, uh, unpleasant. And so I end up being kind of this purveyor of doom though. It's, it's certainly not representative of my personality. It's not what I, and I don't do it because I like to, I do it because I think that's the accurate take.

Well,

**Marty:** it's not only accurate, it's very important because like we mentioned, like the mainstream media isn't getting this information out there. Like I think No, what you're doing is extremely important. I thank you for doing it because people need to [01:21:00] hear these perspectives and when you lay it out, it seems pretty straightforward and pretty logical.

Like, hey again, go back. Yeah. I'm not a,

**Lee:** I'm not a melodramatic person. I mean, I've never been accused of something like that. It's, it's usually pretty straightforward and logical and if anything, maybe a bit dry. So, yeah.

**Marty:** I mean, and I really like your driving of the distinction between should we and could we, because the mainstream media and the federal government and mil military industrial complex is gonna say, should, should, should use emotion, use fear.

Mm-hmm. And do all that. Mm-hmm. To gin up support for what they wanna do. Um, Nobody really dives into the logistics of could we, which is extremely important cuz you can have all the emotion and all the morale built up that you want, but if you can't actually execute on the back end, it is not a good idea.

**Lee:** And, and on that note, you know, people when it comes to war, at least people don't rise to the [01:22:00] occasion. They revert back to their best level of training. Like with very few exceptions. That's not the story we hear in the movies. You know, it's, it's of something heroic, just sort of erupting out of someone.

People revert back to their best level of training. Do we train to do any of these things that we're currently talking about doing? Do we train at scale for how to deploy so far away and conduct these. Immensely complicated operations against adversaries that are far more capable than any we've faced in decades.

No, we don't. So that's the other thing to consider is, you know, we don't really practice to do any of this. There's just this assumption that, well, somewhere we have, you know, an, a special access program somewhere we have these super weapons or, you know, maybe the other side they're, they're not as big and bad as, as, uh, you know, maybe some people say they are, but you just have to start looking at the, the nuts and bolts of it.

It's, we can't do, we can't pull these things off. It's a completely insane, we could be focusing on making the country [01:23:00] better and instead we're just perpetuating all of this fanatical nonsense.

**Marty:** And it's extremely scary when you consider the technological advancements that have been made with military technology.

Like that adds sure. Many different variables to the calculus. And if you're not training for it, like how outmatched are you?

**Lee:** So on that note, I've done a lot of, uh, work with electronic warfare and, and some analysis of it over the years. Uh, just, I'm going to say a little over two years ago, I gave a briefing when I was still doing things with the government.

I gave a briefing to, uh, very senior leader and I was talking about electronic warfare. And the, the gentleman's response basically was very dismissive. It was like when the US goes to war, we take control of the entire electromagnetic spectrum. Like next topic. And you know, it's, it's hard to impress upon some of these people that this isn't 1991.

Other countries, particularly China and Russia, have [01:24:00] advanced these kind of capabilities specifically because they knew they didn't have conventional overmatch. They saw what we did in Desert Storm, or we asa assembled this massive army and just took apart, uh, Saddam's army, which was also, uh, one of the largest in the world.

And they got fearful. So they looked for asymmetric ways, they looked for ways to, to kind of counter that and electronic warfare, hypersonics, things like that. But, you know, Russia's electronic warfare capability is extraordinarily impressive. Um, it's like these, this two dimensional view of them is incapable and clumsy.

Like that is to our detriment. It is simply not the case. There was just another article from, uh, CNN today admitting that Russia can render high Mars largely useless by, uh, GPS jam, which of course many of us knew all along that, uh, the J dams, like we're, we're exposing a lot of our weaknesses here and giving the other side a lot of real world practice.

**Marty:** Yeah. Do not underestimate the

**Lee:** enemy. It's like [01:25:00] Yeah. But we do routinely almost as a matter of policy. Yeah. Yeah. Ah,

**Marty:** again, it's also tiresome and it's really like scary. It's like, gosh, we have a bunch of vidiots in control right now.

**Lee:** But we do. We really do. And we need to say it in such blunt terms. We absolutely do.

Yeah. Yeah.

**Marty:** And that's actually one of the things I say pretty often, whether it be posturing towards the Federal Reserve, the federal government, military, industrial complex. We need to make fun of these people. Cuz going back to engendering, uh, action and urgency from the silent majority, they react to comedy.

Like it or not. Mm-hmm. And you literally just have to call these people idiots and point out how stupid they are, how idiotic their policies or their beliefs are. Like the emperor in the United States is not wearing any clothes. He's completely butt ass naked. And it's at [01:26:00] again, young family. I like to think, I just wanna work hard, provide value, do good things, be a good person, hold the door, be polite.

Sure. Say thank you. Say please treat people with respect. Uh, and the government's just dragging us into forced conflict and, and misery with their military and economic

**Lee:** policies. Yeah. They're the, like I said, the architects and the administrators have a failed worldview and they're dragging us along with them.

Yeah. Ali,

**Marty:** again, I thank you immensely for your work. I'm very happy that Dave, uh, hit me up and asked me to reach out to you. Cause I, again, I think this type of messaging and, and laying. The situation out, like you just have over the last hour and a half is extremely important. I think this is one of the more important episodes we've recorded in some time at Tftc because most people are not getting this blunt information laid out in the way that you just laid it out because, um, they're being completely [01:27:00] propagandized by the mainstream media and those who would lead you to believe that we need to save Ukraine at all costs.

Um, mm-hmm. What's most important in that phrase is all costs. Like it is going to cost us a lot if we do go down this route. Yes. Whether it be with Ukraine and Russia, or China and Taiwan.

**Lee:** Well, yep. Thank you. Uh, thank you for having me. I'm glad Dave, uh, hooked us up at a, had a good time chatting with you, even though the subject matter is not particularly rosy.

No.

**Marty:** But hearts' need to be, need to be reconciled with. Where can, uh, where can the freaks find out more about you, your ck, your consulting business?

**Lee:** Sure. Um, my website has everything. It has articles, videos, all my social media links, and it's lee bt.com, so l e e dash B as in bravo, T as in tango.com. Um, you can also just search me on Twitter, uh, Lee Lusher, my ck is, [01:28:00] uh, deep dive with Lee lusher uh.ck.com.

Um, so yeah, hope you check it out.

**Marty:** Awesome. We're a link to all that in the show notes freaks. Lee, thank you again. Hope you have a great weekend.

**Lee:** You too. Thank you. All right. Peace

**Marty:** of love freaks.