The Great Simplification

PLEASE NOTE: This transcript has been auto-generated and has not been fully proofed by ISEOF. If you have any questions please reach out to us at info@thegreatsimplification.com.

[00:00:00] Nate Hagens: Greetings. I do not want to do this frankly, but my conscience compels me to, each time I do a frankly on the Russia situation, which is, almost two and a half years, unfolding. I swear to not do another because it's not my wheelhouse. It's extremely polarizing. There's a huge information gap between what we hear and see in the media and what's actually happening.

[00:00:26] And then two months later, we're in a worse spot, and I feel like using this tiny little platform, this sandbox, which is this Frankly playlist, to share some thoughts and questions with the viewers. to be clear, I do not want this channel to sell fear, or be a catastrophe channel. My goal all along is I want this channel to stay rooted in science and current events and offer these dialogues to cover all facets of the human predicament.

[00:00:59] Geopolitics, potentially World War Three, is a huge piece of the conversation about sustainability and as long as things are moving in the direction they're moving, I'm going to keep commenting on it because I think it is the mother of all elephants in these conversations. Okay. So let me start with an update.

[00:01:23] And then I'm going to, offer seven questions on war and sustainability and our civilization in the future.

[00:01:47] If you've been paying attention, and it actually surprises me how few people know the things I'm about to say, and I don't know why that is, but in the last couple of weeks, Britain, France, the United States, and the NATO General on Jen Stoltenberg, all announced that they're, planning to rescind or walk back the rule of not using NATO weapons and technology to direct attacks inside of Russia.

[00:02:18] When this was announced, Russia called the ambassadors for these three countries, to a meeting and handed them a diplomatic, pouch, a demarche with legal language saying, If you do this, we will retaliate in kind. Meaning we will retaliate not in Ukraine, but against you. so there's that. also, a few days ago, the head of Estonia, who is a NATO, nation, said that Russia would be best carved up

into 19 or 20 odd, States so that the resources could be better spread around the world in the, open markets.

[00:03:02] you know, similar to what happened in the Soviet Union. This is echoing what a RAND report last year wrote about most importantly over the weekend. Two of Russia's early nuclear detection, platforms were taken out by western missiles inside of Russia. These are to detect if there is a nuclear attack and, early warning is really important in the game theory calculus and all this stuff.

[00:03:31] Not only that, but these, this technology allows Russia to detect stealth fighters, which is. Both the stealth fighters and the, nuclear detection have no benefit to Ukraine. there are only a benefit to the West if they were planning something larger. Of course, I have no data or intelligence on this, but if I was, Putin, I would be really scared at this, amalgamation of new events.

[00:04:03] and to be clear, I, have to utter this phrase again. I am not pro Putin, I am not pro Russia, I am pro complex life. I am scared, and respectful of the military, power and abilities of this country and we are really, poking a bear with, these little things I updated. So, today I'd like to offer seven kind of rhetorical questions that we should be asking about this situation.

[00:04:37] First of all, question zero, and I have my, little list here, is, Who is the we that should be asking these questions? And, I think that's the rational, pro future listeners of this podcast and citizens in the world who want to play a role in our collective future. We have to understand the calculus, so it's as simple as that.

[00:05:00] Question number one, should we even be discussing This war, this nuclear threshold that we're at because individual people seem to have no agency. This is all at the very top, top of decision makers. And it's just depressing to add potential nuclear war to climate change, and ocean issues, and inequality, and I can't pay my bills, and, there's no meaning in our society right now.

[00:05:32] this just is another, a block to, to carry around. And yet I feel that we need to understand, someone needs to understand the risks and what's going on. We used to have a very active anti war movement, in the West, 50 years ago. I don't know what happened to that. Either people got tired, or it's a risk homeostasis thing.

[00:06:00] We warned about nuclear war for so long that we Didn't think it was a risk anymore. Like running 10 red lights in a row with nothing happening badly. the odds are still quite bad though. given that any miscalculation or misstep or small escalation. Based on, well, Matthew Broderick and war games, and the AI modeling now and the proud profit exercises, any small, miscalculation or small retaliation eventually results in full on, nuclear escalation, called a strategic exchange.

[00:06:44] So. I'm torn whether to talk about this or not. I'm actually calling people that are, quite high up that I know in hopes that they can influence conversations, in their own world. But for now, I think to ask the questions I'm about to ask is, is, borderline net positive. At least that's how I'm thinking about it.

[00:07:08] You know, really there are three scenarios. One is that we have a nuclear war, in which case all the work that I've worked on is, for naught. Number two is we don't have a nuclear war, and I was a chicken little, warning about this, and the superorganism was so strong and so smart that it understood this risk and avoided it, in which case we all go back to our, energy transition work, which is really a cultural transition on our values and our relationships and our consumption and our interaction with the natural world.

[00:07:38] and then the third scenario is a scenario that there is no nuclear war and there isn't one because some people had conversations and persuaded others about the logic and the game theory and the risks and that, you know, intervened in what might have been a nuclear war. And the tiny, possibility that is the case, I think it's worth discussing, and passing the baton of this understanding.

[00:08:07] Second question, what does winning this war, between NATO and Russia look like? well, Russia could win, in which they would accomplish their strategic military objectives of denazifying Ukraine and creating a buffer between, Russia and NATO. I don't know that they will just stop at that at this point, but some sort of a, a buffer between them and NATO.

[00:08:37] what does the West winning look like? Meaning Russia losing? I actually think that would be an Armageddon scenario, and I don't know what we think the end game is, but there are people that I've talked to that truly believe that the West can beat Russia militarily, conventionally, and if we can't, there's, nukes.

[00:09:02] they also think that we can do a first strike and take out almost all of Russia's, nuclear weapon capacity, the key being there almost. I don't believe that's true, but even if it were true, even if one of the thousands of missiles escaped, it would mean millions of casualties. in the United States or in the West, and millions of casualties, given the Rube Goldberg machine makeup of our current civilization, would crash our economy, economic system, and society.

[00:09:33] so you would have to be 100 per certain, 100 percent certain for this to happen, and I don't think anyone can realistically give such a certainty. so I think winning, probably, to some people in the West, looks like Weakening Russia, so that the real adversary in the geopolitical game of monopoly in coming years, China, has, a weaker ally that can't team up against a unipolar, United States.

[00:10:06] Again, I'm speculating on that. What does winning for the rest of the world look like? Stability. Winning looks a lot like stability. I'm not a big fan of Henry Kissinger, who just passed away, but one thing he always said was stability above all. And given the circumstances in our world, I think that's, pretty wise given what's happening, in, Ukraine right now.

[00:10:33] Third question, what is, winning for whom? Who is doing the game theoretical calculations? Because for us, clearly, a war is bad. But for certain people, it might actually, the costs and the benefits of such a war might give them completely different calculus. one of the things I'm afraid of as growth ends and, we go into the downside of the carbon pulse is our evolutionary game theory matrix, which I've talked about before.

[00:11:08] real briefly, if I do something and you do something and we both benefit, that's called cooperation. If I do something and I benefit at a cost to you, that's called selfishness. If I do something at a cost to myself and you benefit, that's called altruism. If I do something that hurts myself but it hurts you more, that's called spite.

[00:11:30] But from an evolutionary standpoint, spite is adaptive because it increases your relative fitness. I'm worse off. But my competitors are worse, off. Therefore on a relative basis, I'm better off. Except in a nuclear war, the absolute fitness of everyone would be zero. but I'm afraid that the people that are calling

the shots are a tiny, like a few people, in our societies that no longer speak for or have the same objectives of the rest of us.

[00:12:01] And I don't know how to stop that, or how to change that other than to talk about it. Okay, fourth question. As it pertains to XYZ, and XYZ could be the issue in the world that you're most interested in, climate change, net zero, social equality, you know, better governance, better political, no money in politics, or whatever the issue you're concerned about, what is the conditional probability of that issue with respect to the Russia NATO war ever?

[00:12:37] ending in some sort of a benign scenario, because if it doesn't, it trumps all of the other things we're talking about. How can we even conceive, and I think net zero is delusional for, from a material standpoint, let alone, plus the carbon pulse is going to be declining, but how could we get all the minerals, mineral, metals and complexity in a global supply chain if Russia is offline?

[00:13:05] and or China and or Iran or anything like this. So we've got this really complex, system built up that is very fragile. And we tend to think of things in, silos, but this nuclear situation, this war situation between NATO, and Russia affects all of our plans, which is why I've called it one of the four horsemen.

[00:13:32] Fifth question, how do we reframe the concept of war? When we talk about wealth, we talk about increasing our wealth and growing our portfolio and things like that, the deeper question of reframing is starting to happen in our society, which is What is wealth? all that monetary stuff is just a marker for the things we really care about.

[00:13:58] Same thing with growth. Yeah, we want more growth. Growth is good. But a reframe of that topic is what kind of growth? do we want to grow pollution the same as everything else? I think we want to grow, collaboration, and technology and well being, but there's a lot of things we don't want to grow.

[00:14:20] The same thing with war. we just assume that war is a part of the human condition, but what is war for? is it just for power? Is it just for a winner take all? I think a new conversation around war, needs to happen urgently. sixth question. When we talk about solving the, various geopolitical wars, that are brewing in the

world, the answer to that is the same as the answer to the end of growth and climate change and, many of the other challenges we have.

[00:14:59] We need a new form of governance. both nationally and internationally. Otherwise, I don't know how we're going to solve the problems of, AI and ecological degradation. And, to be honest, a, we are murderous fire apes, genetically. Our past, if you look back all the way from the Neanderthals, we have gone to war when things have been presented opportunities and constraints for our tribe or whatever it was.

[00:15:31] How can we break that cycle? can we break that cycle? I think really deep analysis of different forms of governance is something that will take a generation, but we only have months or weeks. so I'm, just throwing that out there that I think governance, is at the root. of all, of our existential issues.

[00:15:58] lastly, how do we expand the Overton window of war in the short time window we have? So right now the conversations about this in the world, are really limited to three. proxy war, conventional war, and nuclear war. And as long as that's the extent of, the drawing, this tends towards conflict in the, war game sort of context.

[00:16:25] A proud prophet scenario. Things tend to escalate as they have been escalating since I've been commenting on this, how can we expand the spectrum of possibilities? Maybe, add some things like cold war. or cold peace. These are conditionally stable states. and even to expand the spectrum, the Overton window further, what about passive cooperation between nations or active cooperation between nations or even close cooperation and integration at this time of, the human predicament, the species level conversation?

[00:17:08] These things actually flip the momentum and create a tend towards cooperation. So, I think we need to really change how we're talking about, the war situation. Again, this is a, an ominous topic and, I don't have any solutions to this. It makes me feel 2 percent better to talk it through, with you, the followers who've, many of you have followed me for over a decade, and you know that I deeply care about the natural world and the environment, and I think a nuclear exchange would be the Armageddon scenario of all environmental scenarios.

[00:17:50] so my next, frankly, will be on something, milder and, more insightful into things that we can do, and, you know, I hope you're all well. Thank you.