

War Has Been Won & Russia Faces a Dilemma

Scott Ritter is a former Major, Intelligence Officer, US Marine, and UN Weapons Inspector. Ritter argues Russia has defeated NATO and Ukraine, and now faces a dilemma about what kind of peace it wants. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Scott Ritter, a former U.S. Marine intelligence officer and UN weapons inspector, to discuss some of the things now happening here in Europe. Thank you very much for taking the time. We seem to be reaching the endgame in Ukraine, which could be a reason for optimism, but it's also a very dangerous time. In defeat, countries are often willing to take great risks. For the Europeans, it seems they're now split between two options: a dangerous escalation or accepting a very humiliating defeat. So, what do you see happening now on the front line, as well as on the diplomatic front?

#Scott Ritter

I mean, this is what I and others have been saying was inevitable. This is the inevitable collapse of Ukraine. The whole Ukraine venture was unsustainable. Militarily, Ukraine simply can't slug it out with Russia, even with the material and financial backing of Europe and the United States. We're now seeing Ukraine economically—it's a literal basket case. There's no functioning economy; it's all artificial, propped up, corrupt as the day is long. And we see a very difficult winter approaching for Ukraine. Their energy infrastructure has been destroyed—taken out.

They're now going to a generator economy, which means that prices for everything—even under, you know, optimal conditions—will rise 20 to 25 percent this winter. And that's 20 to 25 percent in an already dysfunctional, non-functioning economy. This will lead to political collapse, and we see that happening right now. I mean, all around Zelensky, the walls are falling. I don't know how much longer he can hold on—if he's capable of holding on, if people want him to hold on. You know, he was always a figurehead around which different power structures were, you know, constructed. And we see now one of the big power structures, the Yermak power structure, totally collapse.

And, um, there's really nothing to replace it. Then we layer on top of that the fact that Europe is just completely dysfunctional when it comes to Ukraine— all talk, no action. They're incapable of any real action. I'm not worried about any escalation from Europe because they can't escalate; they have nothing to escalate with. So it comes down to the United States managing the fall of Ukraine. And this, in the end, is what we're witnessing here. You know, is this a helping hand, or is this euthanasia? We don't know exactly what's happening right now. One thing we do know is that Russia's in the catbird seat here—they're driving this.

All they have to do is sit back and literally point to the scoreboard. Anytime the United States hesitates or tries to play tough with sanctions, just point to the scoreboard—because Russia keeps scoring every day, more and more. And there's nothing left for the Ukrainians. So we're looking at, we're approaching, total collapse of the military. And when that happens, it's over. It's unconditional surrender. So the United States, in many ways, is in a race against the clock to see if they can get Ukraine to agree to something that allows, you know, some version of Ukraine that isn't totally controlled by Russia to exist—or if Russia just gets everything at once.

#Glenn

So, well, the economy is, of course, melting down. Militarily, they seem more and more defeated every day as the Russians are now pushing faster and faster forward. But the political meltdown is interesting, and of course it intensified with the departure of Yermak, which surprised me a bit. I thought Zelensky would hold on to him at all costs. But to a large extent, he was taken down with this anti-corruption agency. You said that America might be managing the decline or exit of Zelensky. To what extent, though, is this anti-corruption agency influenced by Zelensky—or by the United States? Because, as we've learned from the beginning, the politicians, the military, the intelligence agencies, the media—a lot of this has been under very strict American control. Is the anti-corruption agency also a tool for the U.S. to have some influence over who sits in Kyiv?

#Scott Ritter

I believe so. I mean, I don't have proof of this—it's purely speculation on my part. But, you know, the United States tolerated Ukrainian corruption, encouraged Ukrainian corruption. Some could say it even benefited from Ukrainian corruption. As long as Ukraine was able to deliver the goods on the battlefield, to have a robust defense, carry out counteroffensives on call, invade Kursk—all these things—the United States held its nose. I mean, it was so blatantly obvious when Congress wouldn't even allow auditing mechanisms to be put in place, because they know the truth. The truth has been known from day one: Ukraine is fundamentally corrupt from top to bottom.

There's no aspect of Ukraine that's not corrupt. Even the anti-corruption forces—they don't work for Ukraine. They appear to have been created at the behest of the United States as a mechanism of control. According to Ukrainian Telegram channels—take that with a grain of salt—but historically, I

wouldn't quote them except that they've actually been fairly accurate in reading the tea leaves of Ukrainian politics and calling things out. You know, they say things that, a couple of weeks later, turn out to be true.

So they say that the NABU—the anti-corruption agency—has the goods not just on Yermak but on Zelensky. They say they have his voice, knee-deep in this current, you know, Mykhnuik or whatever the guy's name is, Mykhnuik corruption scheme. But we've known this. I mean, that's why this isn't a shock. We know they take a cut of everything. This is how they stay in power. This is how they build power structures. This is how you build your allies—it's your ability to funnel money into their pockets in exchange for getting contracts to them. In many of these contracts, it's the equivalent of mafia-style no-show jobs. You know, you want to do construction in Brooklyn? Well, then you've got to fund 50 jobs.

You know, 40 of them—people will show up. Ten, nobody shows up. You're just paying for ten bodies, and the mafia pockets it. That's how Ukraine has been functioning from day one. It's not a surprise to anybody. So for corruption suddenly to become an issue means somebody wanted it to become an issue. And there's only one nation in the world that has that kind of power over Ukraine—that's the United States. I do believe this is a mechanism for pressuring Zelensky, manipulating the system. And if I were Ukrainian, I'd say every single one of them is corrupt. There's not a clean person there. Everybody at that negotiating table is owned by the United States. When we decide to make them fall, they'll collapse like a house of cards. That's my take on it.

#Glenn

Well, you mentioned before that the Europeans can't really escalate because they don't have the armies. I won't push back on that. But we've seen some bolder behavior from Ukraine—attacks on Russian commercial ships, the ones referred to as the Shadow Fleet or Dark Fleet. You know, the branding is kind of obvious. But Erdogan has now complained and expressed concern, given that there have been attacks on a Russian oil tanker within Turkey's economic zone. Do you see this as desperate attacks toward the end of the war, or as an attempt to prove that Russia can be beaten? What are the risks of these attacks, though?

#Scott Ritter

It's British-driven. I mean, let's just be honest here. When we're talking about Ukrainian naval drones, this is a 100% British-driven operation. The Brits have been screaming the loudest about the Shadow Fleet, influencing the Balts to take action. So this is just a desperate move on the part of Great Britain. It'll have zero impact. I mean, these aren't Russian ships. I think one was Panamanian-flagged, Turkish-owned. The others were Ghanaian or some other African-flagged ships. Yeah, they're part of the so-called Shadow Fleet—uninsured vessels, or ones outside the Lloyd's insurance umbrella, that Russia relies on to move oil despite the British-driven sanctions.

But, you know, it's just going to backfire. I mean, already we see Turkey condemning Ukraine's actions. Kazakhstan and other nations that were sympathetic to the Ukrainian cause are now, you know, speaking out. They attacked an oil platform that pumps Kazakh oil, costing Kazakhstan over a billion dollars. You know, how long do you have diplomatic support when you pull stupid—when you do stupid stunts like this? So this is just British stupidity. This is the Brits, you know—step off the ledge, boys, we're going to stick it out to the very end. Yes, stand your ground.

The thin red line. You know, except the Brits aren't dying—it's the Ukrainians who are going to pay the price. And they're going to pay a horrible price. They'll be abandoned by everybody when this is done. Nobody likes them. I've said this from the very beginning. The only thing that makes Ukraine attractive is the money that goes into people's pockets. There's nothing attractive about Ukraine. It's not a functioning democracy. People don't look at it and say, "This is the model we want to follow, boys. Good old Poroshenko democracy—the European equivalent of Jeffersonian democracy." No. Nobody likes the Ukrainians. Nobody respects the Ukrainians.

Everybody despises the Ukrainians. But as long as Ukraine is able to funnel money into people's pockets and be used to, you know, empower people geopolitically—well, hell, Europe's had a great moment there, letting the Ukrainians die by the hundreds of thousands for them. But it's over. Ukraine will be abandoned. There's only one nation in the world that will ever reach out a sincere helping hand to Ukraine, and that's Russia. Ukraine is going to learn that in the future, because their only salvation is through Russia. Unless you're a Western Ukrainian—then you die.

#Glenn

Yeah, that was actually a comment by Zelensky's former advisor, Arestovich. He was making the point that, ironically, the only two countries that would actually fight and die for Ukrainians were the Russians and the Belarusians. Ironically, because they're the ones now at war with them, given that they made themselves a front line to Ukraine. He said that if he were president, his first trip, on his first day, would be to Moscow, and he'd promise that Ukraine would not allow itself to be used anymore as a front line against the Russians. But, well, it seems very predictable now that once the proxy war is over, the Ukrainians will be thrown away, as happens toward the end of a proxy war.

What does this mean for the peace deal? Because it does seem, irrespective of all the desires to put an end to this war—given that, well, NATO, we're losing the war, so we'd like to end it—but there seems to be a great reluctance to put a permanent stop to it. They'd like to keep, in the future, I guess, a proxy Ukrainian army they could use against Russia if they wanted to escalate tensions. So I'm very split on this peace deal in some ways. I'm quite optimistic, given that some pressure is now being put on Kyiv and the Europeans. On the other hand, I'm a bit skeptical, because one doesn't really get the impression that they're ready to give up on this final opportunity to break Russia.

#Scott Ritter

But listen to your last statement—"final opportunity to break Russia." Do you think the Russians are so stupid they don't understand that? I mean, that the Russians are just dumber than dirt? I hear people say, "Oh no, we'll do this peace deal. It'll be so that the Russians will think they won." Wow. So the Russians are really the dumbest people on the planet? They're children? You can hand them a lollipop and tell them it's dinner or something? No. The Russians are the smartest people at the table right now. Their diplomatic corps is genius. Do they make mistakes?

Everybody makes mistakes. But Russia knows exactly what's going on. Putin has said from the very beginning that this war won't be over until the root causes of the conflict are resolved permanently. So what the hell does Europe think they're going to do? You think Russia is going to sit there and go, "OK, yeah, we were just kidding. We're not going to solve the root causes. We're going to leave Ukraine there so you can pump them up ten years from now and we can do this all over again." That isn't going to happen. There will be no peace deal that allows this to happen—none, zero. And Russia is in the driver's seat.

There's no pressure that can be brought on Russia right now to make them change their mind. None. And, you know, right now we have the Trump administration solely focused on financial gain. I mean, traditional geopolitical thinking is out the window. Europe—nobody cares. That's just the reality. You don't matter. It's over. They're not even coordinating with you, not even calling you. They had their meeting with the Ukrainians, and Rubio doesn't even get to make a phone call to Europe. He just goes back to play Venezuela games. You know, Witkoff and Jared are off to Moscow to do their thing. Why?

It's all a business deal right now. And I'll tell you what, Russia has far greater business potential than Ukraine does. At the end of the day, that's what's going to sway the United States. If Ukraine doesn't want to play games, then Russia will absorb Ukraine. Trump has already acknowledged this. Then the United States will indirectly be able to reap the benefits of Ukrainian resources by having business deals with Russia. But this is coming down to one giant business deal. Is it going to succeed? I don't know.

I don't know if Trump has the ability to pull this off, because there's a lot of political opposition to it in the United States, and the midterm elections are coming up. But the idea that you're going to strong-arm Russia into accepting a deal that doesn't give Russia what it would get if it just keeps fighting—there's nothing anybody can do to stop that outcome on the battlefield. It's over. It's all over but the dying. I mean, there are a lot more Ukrainians who could be killed, and Russia, tragically, is willing to kill them if that's what it takes. But Europe is gone—it doesn't even register anymore.

It's embarrassing to be European today. Literally. I'm sorry, but you earned it. You earned it through sheer incompetence, a lack of ethics, a lack of morality, a lack of anything. You allowed Ukraine to be sacrificed as a proxy, and now you're paying the price because there's nothing left. I mean, I don't know how many times I have to hear Germany and France and everybody talk about this

800,000-man army they're going to build. Good luck. I wish you the best. Please, build it. That'll just speed up your collapse, because you can't afford it—and there aren't 800,000 Europeans ready to fight and die for your cause.

Already in Germany, you know, what, 16%—and I think that number's dropping as we speak—16% are willing to die for Germany if they're invaded. How many of them are willing to die for Germany if Germany invades somebody else? So, Europe's just irrelevant. It comes down to Trump, and can Trump, you know, game the system? We'll see. I'd like to know just what he has on Ukraine, because that will—because remember, the problem with corruption is a two-way street. And if you start playing the corruption card, it may come home to roost, meaning you may find out things about American politicians you don't really want to find out.

So Trump has to be a little bit clever here in how he puts pressure on the Ukrainians. The good news, though, is that the CIA knows everything about Ukraine. We've owned Ukraine for a long time. We own every single one of these guys—they're all on our payroll. We have files on them. We know every dirty secret about them. Everybody. And we can play it, you know, as we want. But like I said, at some point, somebody may not be willing to just sit there and quietly go down. They may start bringing out the receipts—and those receipts may be ugly for many American politicians, including Trump, by the way.

#Glenn

Yeah. Well, the foolish thing is that the complaint now, again from the Europeans—not that it matters that much anymore—is that any peace now can't be accepted because it would look like capitulation. But again, if they'd wanted a more balanced outcome to the war, they could have done things earlier. I mean, if you go back to 2014, or February, a unity government would have been enough to solve the internal crisis under Minsk. With the Minsk agreement, they could have reintegrated Donbass into Ukraine. And now, after three years of having no diplomacy, yeah, any deal only gets worse and worse. And still now, they don't want to call. For me, this baffles me.

They don't want to talk to Moscow, but they want a seat at the table for the negotiations. I'm not sure how that would work—you know, they'd just sit there and condemn them. I'm not quite sure how that would actually pan out. But I saw a report from General Sir Richard Shirreff in London, where he argues that any peace deal that doesn't eventually result in the collapse of the Russian Empire is pointless. Still, he's in favor of a peace agreement because it would give Ukraine time to rearm and prepare for future clashes. Which, again, is basically a Minsk 3. It's very strange, given that the deal will only get worse the longer they wait. Russia will never go for a Minsk 3.

#Scott Ritter

To do a Minsk 3, you have to have leverage on Russia. And there's nothing. I mean, you know, I just came back from Russia. Let's look at some realities. Putin's getting ready to go to India this week, I

believe, where they're going to shake hands, embrace, and sign massive energy deals. So the idea that India is going to lock Russian oil out of its market isn't going to happen. The secondary sanctions aren't going to work. China's already thumbed its nose at them. And what's the United States going to do—go into a full-scale trade war with India right now? No. And India's going to buy Russian weapons.

They're going to talk about massive trade. This is what BRICS means. You know, Trump didn't beat BRICS—BRICS is still there. So, you know, the pie-in-the-sky idea about collapsing the Russian economy—understand this: unlike Europe, the Russian economy has a fallback. Let's just hypothetically say all the sanctions hit the way they're supposed to, and Russia finds itself strapped for cash, can't afford the war. If it were just a traditional capitalist, finance-driven economy, you'd have a lot of problems. But all the big industries in Russia are joint-stock companies where the state owns most, if not all, of the shares.

Russia can militarize its economy that quickly—just switch to a war mobilization economy overnight. Bam. They don't even miss a step. People's savings won't be there, won't be accessible. You know, there'll be things that have to happen, people will have to tighten their belts. But you can't beat Russia. You can't beat Russia. It just isn't going to happen. And so, I don't know what Zaluzhny thinks is going to happen here. There's no pressure left. Zaluzhny is over—finished, done. He has no viability. There will be no future in Ukraine. He'll spend the rest of his life in London working for MI6, playing stupid games, trying to round up Bandera's elements to infiltrate back into Ukraine and "revive" Ukraine.

Ukrainian nationalism, things like that. The same thing Khodorkovsky does with his billions, sitting there in London trying to mobilize Russian businessmen against Putin. It's an MI6 fantasy—a wet dream. It isn't going to happen. There will be no peace deal the way Europe thinks there's going to be one, or the way Ukraine wants. What there will be is unconditional surrender. Now, it might be packaged so it sounds like a peace deal, but this war doesn't end until Russia gets 100% of everything it wants. And the longer this goes on, Russia's appetite grows. That's just the reality of it. Russia's not going to yield on any of this. That's the bottom line.

#Glenn

Yeah, the appetite is growing. I've seen some indications of this as well. In the past, they used the language of cities being "taken" in Sumy or Kharkov. Now they're saying "liberated," which is kind of an indication that the demands for a peaceful settlement will only grow, I guess, the longer this goes on. On the other hand, they did warn that it would grow if the Europeans—or the West—prolonged this. But what does this mean for the wider security structures and the political West? Because again, this war, if we're honest, is about the collapse of the system—the collapse of the pan-European security architecture, the post-Cold War dream of creating a Europe without the Russians. That's a hegemonic vision of Europe fitting into the unipolar world.

But now that this is collapsing, what happens? Because the whole point of NATO was, you know, keep the Americans in, the Germans down, and the Russians out. It looks like the consequence of this war is that the Americans will begin to pull out—not completely—but it's impossible to keep the Russians from having a seat at the table. I mean, we can deny them a voice and a seat at the table, but if you deny them an institutional voice, they'll assert themselves in other ways. So it's not very smart. So what does this mean for NATO? I guess America's hegemony, the future of Europe, and the role of NATO.

#Scott Ritter

If I were the Europeans right now, I'd go back and pick up that Russian draft treaty they provided on December 17th, 2021, to NATO. I'd blow the dust off it, put it on the table, and ask the United States to bring their copy. Then I'd turn to the Russians and say, "We're ready to talk." Make the Russians react to you, all right? Make the Russians begin the dialogue now. Why? Because the more responsibility you show in taking a constructive approach to improving genuine European security frameworks, the less paranoid Russia will be about your intentions in Ukraine. Let Russia win in Ukraine—they've won. Accept it. What you need to do now is save NATO, if that's what you want to do.

And the only way to save NATO now is to sit down and talk with the Russians about a European security framework that allows an empowered Russia to peacefully coexist with a weakened but still robust NATO. There will be a gray zone. There will be part of NATO. You know, there are people out there who have misconstrued what "rollback to 1997" means. It doesn't mean that Poland or the Baltic states stop being part of NATO. Russia's never said they have to leave NATO. What Russia says, though, is that the military infrastructure that's been pushed east since 1997 has to come back. For instance, the ballistic missile sites in Poland and Romania—they have to go. Massive NATO bases—they have to go.

The Eastern European nations will be NATO members protected by Article 5, but they won't be bases from which NATO can project power against Russia. This is what needs to happen if you want to create a real security framework—and the savings would be incredible. I mean, it's amazing how much Europe would save if you did this, because now you're talking about a completely different military situation. You're not talking about building up the world's largest 800,000-man force to fight the Russians. You're talking about normal security structures that protect the integrity of Europe in a sustainable way, and if you play your cards right, that keeps the United States linked in a transatlantic relationship. That's your backup.

The connectivity between the United States and NATO is just deep—really deep. And we don't necessarily want to leave; we just don't want to be involved in a shooting war with Russia where NATO calls the shots. We will never be subordinated to NATO. But if NATO is smart, they'd make sure they can have a realistic European security framework backed by the military might of the United States. That's their security guarantee, and it could lead to genuine geopolitical stability that

could serve as the basis for an economic revival. I mean, this is Europe's chance. But you've got to start by respecting the fact that Russia exists—and that Russia exists with spheres of interest and influence. It's just a reality. You can't keep talking about NATO having spheres of interest and influence and Russia having none.

The fact is, both have spheres of interest, and there will be areas where these spheres overlap. And in those areas, you need to come up with solutions. If you look at this 28-point peace plan and the vision of the Trump administration, there's talk about this—about how to work with Poland to deal with the reality of Poland being right there on the border. How do you make sure Russia doesn't view Poland as a threat while still protecting Poland? These are some of the topics that need to be discussed. How do you make the Baltics feel safe without making the Russians say, "Hey, you're just a hop, skip, and a jump away from St. Petersburg," or, "You keep threatening to cut off Kaliningrad," or, "You keep saying the Baltic is a NATO lake"?

Um, you've got to find a way—got to find a balance there. It can be done, but it's going to require Europe to fundamentally change its direction. And it's going to require new leadership, because the old political and economic elites empowered themselves with the notion of a constant Russian threat that justified it. NATO expansion and EU posturing are hand in glove. When we speak of an independent European Union foreign policy, it's really an independent policy only in the sense of casting Europe as a counter to Russia. That's old thinking. It failed—fatally—in Ukraine. Europe has a chance to salvage itself, because otherwise, if they don't, Russia is going to get what it wants anyway. NATO will collapse, the EU will collapse, and, you know, that's it.

#Glenn

That's one of the greatest challenges, I think—overcoming this post-Cold War hegemonic order for Europe. Because you don't have to worry about security competition under a hegemon. By definition, you don't have to care about what other centers of power think. But this idea that we only have to deter the Russians—what you refer to as reducing the security competition—again, how can the Baltic states feel safe without us threatening the Russians? This requires a shift from the hegemonic mindset to recognizing the reality of security competition.

I think it's sophisticated thinking that our current leadership could struggle with. But again, they see the Ukraine war and territory as being the cause of this. Yet the Ukraine war is really a symptom—a consequence of this broken Europe. And the territorial dispute is, again, a result of the unwillingness to manage this buffer zone. Just my last question, though: what do you expect will happen now in the absence of a peace deal? Because the territorial defense line from Huliaipole to Pokrovsk, Myrnohrad, Siversk, Kupiansk—all of it seems to be falling apart, or has already fallen to Russia.

So how does this change the nature of the war? Because this was a very important defensive line that held the Russians back, and now it's collapsing. Not only do the Ukrainians have far fewer troops, less equipment, and less support, but their defensive lines are gone. So, I don't know—I can

imagine if I were sitting in Moscow, I wouldn't be in the mood for compromise right now. If they don't make a massive compromise, given that they've finally punched through this last major defensive line, what would you expect to happen next, using your military intelligence background to assess what the Russians might be thinking?

#Scott Ritter

Well, war is an extension of politics by other means. I mean, that's old Clausewitz there. And I'm sure Sun Tzu said something similar at some point in his many pronouncements about war and politics. We have to be careful not to think solely in military terms. It's very tempting right now because we've reached the culminating point where Russia will be able to accomplish militarily what it hasn't been able to until now. I mean, Odessa is within reach—it's not inconceivable. There's nothing in Kherson right now.

If the Russians collapse the Zaporozhye Front, cross the Dnieper River in strength, and then decide to pivot south, the right bank of Kherson will fall along with Mykolaiv. Then they'll be at the doorstep of Odessa, and nothing can stop them. But now, you know, there's been some frustration expressed in certain circles about Vladimir Putin's lack of, you know, killer instinct—why hasn't he decapitated Bankova? Because he's thinking bigger than simply decapitating Bankova. Remember, what came before the special military operation was the Russian draft treaty for a European security framework. Russia's thinking long term—what's in its best interest.

And right now, if Russia can secure the four territories it claims from the September 2022 referendum and get—and here's the important thing—the United States and Europe to recognize these as Russian territories, if they can end the sanctions linked to Crimea and normalize economic relations with the world, contrast that with winning militarily, seizing Odessa, maybe even getting Kharkov. But nobody in the world will recognize that. And along with that, nobody recognizes it—it becomes a forever situation where sanctions are going to cost you trillions of dollars over the next decade. Strategically, where do you go?

I've just been impressed with Russia's ability to think past the glory and think strategically about where it needs to be down the road. BRICS doesn't function well with one of its members in a permanent state of economic conflict with the West. That's not healthy for BRICS. And Russia wants BRICS to succeed. Russia wants to be part of BRICS. The best way for Russia to integrate into BRICS is to be a fully functioning nation-state with an economy that can plug in anywhere in the world, especially with the United States and China simultaneously. So I still believe that Russia's looking for an off-ramp. There's a negotiation there—it's a fine balance.

It'll be interesting to see about the elections because, you know, the United States—again, there are some fascinating things going on behind the scenes. Unspoken things. The kind of stuff where two people sit at a table and just look at each other and give that nod, like, "You know what I'm talking about? I know what you're talking about. We're not going to say it, right? We don't need to say it."

And what I mean by this is that the United States—it appears we're moving toward a total redefinition of what the Ukrainian government looks like, to break these power structures that have held Ukraine together since it became an independent state. Why would we do that? Why would we break everything and reform something? To benefit Ukrainian democracy? It doesn't exist. The Russians, on the other hand, are sitting there with a government-in-waiting. They have a plan.

They have a vision. It'll be difficult for the Russians to slide in if they have to move into the old, traditional, corrupt structures that exist, because Russia doesn't readily integrate into that. But if you break that and create something new through this peace process, Russia slides in. And Russia, therefore, doesn't need to occupy Odessa, doesn't need to occupy Kharkov. What they do is create—well, they give Ukraine options. One, for Ukraine to become part of the Union State. And then Ukraine is like Belarus: visa-free travel. Odessa will be a Russian city. It'll be governed by Ukraine, but it'll be a Russian city. It's visa-free travel. The Russians will come in, they'll be rebuilding everything, they'll own all of Ukraine. Ukraine will still be called Ukraine, but it'll function as a de facto extension of Russia.

I think that's the Russian vision, and they can get to that through a semblance of a peace deal. That's a more realistic vision than the idea of Europe retaining a Ukraine that can forever strike Russia. But if Russia moves too fast militarily, tries to do too much, they spoil that, because then everyone becomes defensive. Russia has to be careful not to become what Europe accuses them of being. And, you know, a pell-mell rush to occupy or seize territory—to be seen as trying to grab all of Ukraine—I think Russia would prefer to avoid that. The other thing is, it would require more manpower. I mean, the bottom line is, the Russians now have enough manpower to take them a certain distance, but to go further, they'd need to mobilize additional forces.

Yeah, I don't think Putin wants to do that. I think the economy right now is geared to sustain, at the present rate, another year or two of this kind of activity. But mobilizing even more manpower would put a strain on the economy. Where's that manpower going to come from? You know, from defense industry jobs? Or are you going to weaken the civilian economic structures so that we start to see collapses in the civilian economy, which then has to be propped up at the expense—and to the harm—of the Russian economy? I think the Russians right now are working with the Trump administration to find a balance that gives Russia everything it wants, but also creates opportunities going forward that don't require the military to be flexing its muscle.

And this is where, again, the Russians... You know, people are just fundamentally ignorant about Russia and what's going on there. I've had the honor and privilege of going into Russia and talking to these people. When you speak to them, you see that there are things happening that the West either ignores or just isn't aware of. There's significant philosophical dialogue in Russia about the future of Ukraine and how to deal with it that goes far beyond the notion of killing Banderites and conquering territory. It's a far more sophisticated, philosophical, ethical approach to conflict resolution than anybody in the West gives Russia credit for.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, I think dumbing it down to just a struggle over territory really misses the bigger picture. So, thank you very much for shedding some light on this. I appreciate it. And, yeah, I hope they find that balance so they don't have to go for a total military victory. Thanks again. Okay, thanks.