

# George Beebe: NATO Lost Ukraine & Europe Prepares for War

George Beebe is the former CIA Director for Russia Analysis and currently Director of Grand Strategy at the Quincy Institute. Beebe discusses the panic in Europe as the proxy war is lost, and why they may provoke a direct war with Russia. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: [https://x.com/Glenn\\_Diesen](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](https://buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng) Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

## #Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by George Beebe, the former director for Russia analysis at the CIA, and now the director of grand strategy at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Thank you for coming back on the program.

## #George Beebe

Well, thanks for having me. It's always a pleasure. Thank you.

## #Glenn

So again, I've been looking forward to getting your analysis on things. That is, well, first of all, it appears at least that Ukraine has reached a very critical point. And at the same time, we are seeing a lot of rhetoric, especially from the European leaders, almost in unison, that are all kind of saying—well, arguing—that the war is coming, we have to prepare for war with Russia, and you can obviously feel the panic in the air. And I was wondering, how do you assess this situation? I mean, are they preparing for war with Russia? Because I don't see the capabilities. As the Prime Minister of Slovakia is saying, the European leaders are now diverting attention away from their own failures at home. But he's also saying that they're provoking a war with Russia. So how are you making sense of all this new noise coming out?

## #George Beebe

Well, it's not an easy thing to make sense of because there's not a lot of sense to it, unfortunately. It's not very sensible, what's going on. Part of this, I think, is a panic over the way events are developing in the war in Ukraine. A lot of Western leaders, a lot of Western media have tried... This

is a war that the Russians are losing and will ultimately lose and suffer some sort of quote-unquote strategic defeat. And as events in the war itself increasingly make it obvious that that narrative is not accurate, that that's not the way things are going.

In fact, the Ukrainians are under increasing pressure on the battlefield, both on the ground and even more significantly through the air. I think Western leaders are starting to panic—starting to panic because of the potential implications of Ukrainian defeat, for one thing, but also starting to panic politically because the course that they have pursued toward Russia and toward European security for many, many years now is proving to be a failure. And I don't think they want to be responsible for that failure. They want to run away from it or avoid it in some way.

And part of that failure, I think, is expressing itself at the ballot box. We've seen a series of elections in Germany that I think unambiguously indicate that many, many German people are not happy with the government's policies toward Russia and Ukraine and toward European security and related issues. And I think that trend is unmistakable throughout much of Europe right now. And so all of these things are coming together, I think, to create a kind of hysteria. And I think one can analyze it, but it's very difficult to make much sense of it because I think it's largely emotional.

## **#Glenn**

Well, yeah, if it is emotional or they're seeking to distract, if this doesn't accurately reflect the intentions of what they're going to do, again, we don't have a window into their heads. But again, I'm a bit concerned that they all seem to be suddenly saying all these things at the same time. It's very coordinated, it seems. And I was speaking with Alastair Crooke. He was making a point: why did they all start showing up in military fatigues, all these European leaders, at the same time? Obviously, there's coordination here with the messaging. But if you look away from the intentions, just towards the capabilities, I mean, how do you assess it in terms of what the Europeans can achieve? What resources can they mobilize towards what end? I mean, what are the limitations here?

## **#George Beebe**

Well, I think they have a lot of limitations. From a conventional military point of view, if one assumes that war with Russia would not go nuclear, which I think is actually a poor assumption, but let's assume that for the sake of argument, the Europeans don't have a lot of ground forces. They're greatly outnumbered numerically when you look at the size of their militaries relative to that of Russia. They have important gaps in their conventional military capabilities. They've relied overwhelmingly on the United States for logistical supplies, for example, for transportation. They lack a lot of indigenous European capability in that area.

So getting to the battlefield is a big problem. They've got some huge air defense problems, and part of that is a reflection of the wars that have gone on both in Ukraine and in the Middle East, which have expended a great deal of air defense assets. And Europe is in no position really to defend its

airspace very well under the circumstances. And so, from a conventional military point of view, they're in trouble. From an intelligence point of view, they're in trouble. They're largely reliant on the United States, particularly its technical capabilities for battlefield intelligence and targeting capabilities.

So, you know, one has to question whether getting involved in a European conventional war with Russia would go well if you assume that the United States would sit out. Now, if you assume the United States doesn't sit out, now you're talking about a conflict which would almost certainly be a nuclear one, and that would be short and extremely destructive, and there would be no winners in that kind of situation. So, from a purely military point of view, it is highly irrational for European leaders to be whipping up war hysteria and trying to prepare European publics for going to war with Russia. That war would not go well. It's one that the Europeans should prefer to take extreme measures to avoid, not to encourage.

And there is a great danger, of course, that this rhetoric gets out of hand and that it, to some degree, hastens a conflict that I don't think either side really wants. Certainly, the Russians are not going to initiate a direct conflict with a NATO state. That would be something that they would want to avoid, and they have tried to avoid that. If you look at how they've conducted the conflict in Ukraine, they've tried to defeat the Ukrainians while minimizing the risks that this war would expand into a direct conflict with NATO. So the notion that the Russians are about to attack and Europe needs to be prepared for that, I think, is simply wrong.

And I think it's interesting that Estonian officials, with some obvious exceptions, have in recent weeks been starting to put the brakes on this rhetoric, starting to say, "Wait a minute, this is getting a little out of hand. It's not as if the Russian military is poised to invade. I think we all need to calm down a little bit." And I think that is a reflection of just how poorly states that would be in the front lines of this kind of conflict would fare, and why I think they don't want to see this happening, escalation of rhetoric turn into an actual escalation into direct conflict.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah. Well, on the frontline states, I think, as you saw during the Cold War, if you were a frontline state for the United States, it was not a bad position. You had very generous trade agreements, had assistance with the military. I mean, during peacetime, it's not bad to be a frontline state. I think during wars, as you see now, it could be problematic. I'm sure much of the Baltic states are looking towards the Gulf states and thinking, "Oh, well, you could be sacrificed in the efforts of knocking out this rival." So I'm sure there's some concern there, not just in the Baltic states, but in Poland as well, where they don't want to become the next Ukraine, the new Ukrainians to be sacrificed.

But also the... I guess what's missing from this warmongering, though, is what they think the war will look like, because it seems to be maybe some ideal scenario where, you know, the Europeans will contribute with some German operators in the field, and they would have an agreement with

Russia that we can still strike the Russians, but they can't hit our territories. And, you know, I guess the response from the Russians, as you suggested, which we heard from at least Lavrov, was, you know, "We don't want any war with Europeans. We have no intentions. But if you attack us, it's going to be a very short war," which suggests they're not going to fight it out in some war of attrition in the trenches, but they will come after the cities or something bigger. Yeah. But do you see any off-ramp then? Where is this all headed? I mean, on the diplomatic front, it seems to be pessimistic, but again, they don't do everything in the open.

## **#George Beebe**

Well, there are lots of off-ramps that are out there, should cooler heads prevail in this situation. Unfortunately, right now I don't see a lot of rationality and cool-headedness on the part of the West. I think there is still a belief that, for example, Russia ought to sit passively while Europe and the United States provide Ukraine with both the targeting data and the actual military wherewithal—the drones and missile components—to strike deep into Russian territory, and tell the Russians, "And by the way, you can't do anything about that. You simply have to recognize that you are the aggressor here. You deserve these strikes deep on Russian territory."

And it's out of bounds for you to do anything against Europe in response to this situation. Now, obviously, the Russians don't see things that way. They're trying to figure out how to, quote unquote, restore deterrence, to convey the notion to the West that the West is not immune to retaliation in a situation where they are increasingly using Ukraine as a means of striking deep into Russian territory at various economic and strategic targets. So I think we're in a situation where, if we want to find an off-ramp to this, it's not going to be an off-ramp where the West says to Russia, "You have to just stop attacking Ukraine, and then everything will be fine."

The West's position right now is, let's have a ceasefire that deprives Russia of the battlefield advantages that it has, that allows Ukraine to rearm and rebuild its military manpower, and then return to the battlefield at some point in the future with less disadvantage in dealing with Russia. The Russians simply aren't going to do that. There's absolutely no rational incentive for them to agree to that situation. What the Russians are saying is, if you want to end these strikes, you want to change the situation on the battlefield so that Ukraine is not suffering the way it is, we have to have a comprehensive peace settlement that addresses what the Russians call the root causes of the war. So far, the West has not been willing to do that. We're still talking about either a general ceasefire or a sectoral ceasefire of some kind.

And that's going nowhere. And the longer that we persist in this, the longer we refuse to engage on the bigger issues of European security that the Russians think are central to this war, we're going to see this war continue to escalate. And we're in an escalation cycle. We have been for a long time. Contrary to the hopes that President Trump expressed a few weeks ago when he said publicly, "Yes, we're in an escalation. We hope it's an escalation that will lead to peace." That's not where this escalation cycle is going. It's an escalation that's not leading to de-escalation. It's leading to even

more intensive military combat, more destruction. And it could continue to escalate both horizontally and vertically unless we get serious about a comprehensive peace settlement. And the sooner we do that, the better.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, I've seen some of the speeches being made at the UN. For example, the president of Finland, they just make these statements: "Russia, bring an end to this war. It's horrible." But they never discuss, well, what are they going to do? And it's kind of based on their premise that Russia just invaded, you know, unprovoked. And if they leave, then the war is over. But they don't want to discuss what Russia says, which are the root causes, that they can't live with NATO inside Ukraine, that they won't accept also this de-Russification of the Ukrainian population. So it's just very strange to see these efforts because they say, you know, we're really trying to put an end to the war. We'll do anything except discuss Russian concerns. That's right.

## **#George Beebe**

And many of these things are things that I think, if you were to really ask the Europeans in their candid moments, don't you think that the rights of linguistic and religious minorities are things that have to be respected? You're talking about bringing Ukraine into the European Union. Shouldn't its practices in these areas be in conformity with EU standards? They would say, well, yes. They just don't want to say that. They won't say it publicly. They won't give Russia any hint that they're willing to discuss this issue. They're calling for an unconditional ceasefire. The Russians want to know, well, during the ceasefire, do you continue to arm Ukraine? Does Ukraine continue to prepare for future re-engagement in conflict after the ceasefire is over?

Are you willing to talk about a situation where, if there is a ceasefire, the two sides don't get outside assistance for building up their militaries? And I think the answer that the West offers is, well, no, we're not willing to do that. So right now, we're not actually serious about ending this war. We're not really grasping the nettle and wrestling with the things that we have to wrestle with if we're going to come up with a compromise peace. Ukraine and the West are going to have to make some concessions. The Russians are going to have to make some concessions, too. You know, what are they? And right now, we're not serious about really wrestling with that trade-off.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, the rhetoric appears to be that, well, we want an unconditional ceasefire. That's what the Europeans are saying. And then we can discuss a political settlement thereafter. But we just have to get the guns silent first. But they don't want to talk now, so they keep boycotting diplomacy. They will only talk once the ceasefire is there.

## **#George Beebe**

Yeah, right. Trust us. Trust us, and we'll talk about this. Maybe we'll make a concession. In the meantime, you need to give up your advantages on the battlefield, Russia. Yeah.

## **#Glenn**

But that was Minsk, I feel. At least in Minsk there was an agreement. But I did want to ask about the possible return to Alaska. The Russians do not seem to indicate that's possible anymore, that the spirit of Anchorage is dead. But last time, or it might have been last time I spoke to you, you were saying that you suspect that one of the deals that were made in Alaska, one of the concessions for the Russians was that, yes, Russia gets Donbas, but we freeze the front in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia and then just make that the new administrative borders.

I spoke to Professor John Mearsheimer, who had dinner with Sergei Lavrov in Moscow, and he was making the point that, well, that's more or less what it was. So it seems that... Well, I think there were some good reasons behind the rhetoric, because you heard a lot of the Russians saying you have to pull out of Donbas, but they didn't make references to the two other oblasts. But do you think the basics are still on offer? That is, at the table? Or do you think that the Russians will see it necessary to increase the demands for a variety of reasons? They might want to build in for NATO and Ukraine to admit something big in case they don't live up to their commitment, so they're not cheated.

## **#George Beebe**

Well, I would offer a couple of thoughts on this. The Russian expectation, I think, coming out of Anchorage was that the United States had offered a compromise. Russia had accepted that compromise. The United States then had to deal with Ukraine and with NATO allies to deliver the other part of this. And I think the Russians expected that the United States would put a lot of pressure on Ukraine to accept the deal. And that didn't happen. In fact, a lot of pressure got put on the United States from Europe and Ukraine not to agree to that deal, not to withdraw from territory in Donetsk that it held but Russia claimed. And eventually it became clear that the United States was not willing to put that kind of pressure on the Ukrainians. And my sense was that the White House didn't like the optics politically of twisting Ukraine's arm to give up territory.

It felt that it would then be saddled with a lot of blame politically from people that said that we had sold out Ukraine, sold out our NATO allies, put everyone in danger by, quote-unquote, appeasing Russia. And I think also there was, in addition to that political fear, there was a practical reason. Ultimately, I think the White House recognized that it needed to get approval from places like the U. S. Senate. If you're going to ratify deals, I think the intention was there would need to be Senate ratification of some sort of end to NATO enlargement. I think the Russians wanted a legally binding

commitment, not just a handshake deal. And one of the best ways to do that, I think, would have been to get Senate approval. I think also we were going to undertake some security guarantees for Ukraine that would require Senate approval.

And that was not likely to happen unless the Ukrainians themselves, unless President Zelensky and others, came to the U.S. Senate and said, "We support this deal. We need this deal. Please vote in favor of it." And there was no chance that that would happen if the Ukrainians were saying no to the compromises that were being asked of them in that Anchorage proposal. So what has happened, I think, since then is the United States has increasingly simply walked away from that. And the most explicit articulation of that was Marco Rubio a few weeks ago when he said, "Yeah, you know, Anchorage is dead. There wasn't a deal. Yes, the Russians agreed to some things, but Ukraine did not. And if Ukraine doesn't accept the package, the proposal, there wasn't a deal."

And he then went on and said, "So this is not a possibility anymore. We need some new ideas." Well, I think what has happened in practical terms is, instead of the United States putting pressure on Ukraine to leave the remaining parts of the Donbas that it holds, Russia is performing that function. And it's doing so on the battlefield. It's putting extreme pressure on Ukraine, both in the strategic air campaign that's underway and is continuing to intensify, but also in ground operations, where the Russians are getting closer and closer to the two remaining fortress cities in Donetsk, Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. And it looks to me as if it's a matter of time, a when, not an if, that they take control of that.

Now, that, I think, raises a very profound question for Ukraine. Do they wait until those cities fall, cross their fingers that the Russians will continue to adhere to what they had said they would agree to at Anchorage and not increase the ask, as you suggested, not make more demands because of the changed situation on the battlefield? Or do they anticipate what's coming down the road, use the leverage that they still have, and try to strike a deal now? Now, I don't know the answer to that. I think it's very hard to know. This is really a political decision that Zelensky is going to have to make. Is he better off striking a deal now, telling the Ukrainian people, "This is the best we can do. We have to end this war."

We have to have a future for the country where we can rebuild, reconstruct, and heal, and get strong and have a sovereign state with the prospect of joining the EU. Or does he cross his fingers and hope that the Russians will show restraint after their ambitions in the Donbas are complete? Now, I think it's an extreme risk to hope that the Russians would restrain themselves on the battlefield and not increase their demands once they hold the entirety of the Donbas. You're in a different situation then. The Russians' advantages on the battlefield will be even more pronounced. And there will be, I think, an enormous temptation to not only take, for example, Zaporozhye and Kherson, but even go beyond that.

Because there are gains up in Sumy that they may well want to hold on to. And if you've got Zaporozhye, you know, at that point, it's not unrealistic to think, well, Odessa is—you know, there's

an enormous advantage to taking that. So there, I'm sure, will be a temptation under those circumstances to go beyond the terms that they had said they were willing to settle for at Anchorage. I wouldn't want to predict one way or the other. There are also reasons why the Russians might want to stop. But, you know, we're really starting to roll the dice. I think the Ukrainians are rolling the dice in the situation that they face right now.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, well, if I was Russian, that might be my thought, though. That is, if you don't think NATO's going to either sign a deal or live up to that agreement, and you risk having Odessa being absorbed or fall under NATO control in the future, it would make more sense to take it. And not only would you have the Black Sea coast, you would strip any strategic territories from Ukraine that can anymore end up in NATO's hands, but the rest of Ukraine wouldn't be viable anymore either. So it wouldn't be able to be powerful. Yes, full of instability for decades to come, but at least not a strong NATO frontline state.

## **#George Beebe**

The danger with that for the Russians is a fundamentally unstable Ukrainian state causes problems for Russia too. The security problems that would radiate out of a failed Ukrainian state would affect Russia as well as Europe. And the Russians will have to take that into account. And moreover, they haven't solved their bigger European security problem in that kind of a scenario. They still are facing a Europe that is rearming, is very hostile to Russia, is likely to remain very hostile to Russia under those circumstances, with little prospect of normalization of relations with the United States.

So Russia will have essentially cemented a very problematic Western front that it will have to live with and will be constantly prone to crises that endanger Russia. So I don't think it's a given that they will simply say, you know, let's take as much of Ukraine as we want. Let's turn it into an unstable rump state. They're certainly capable of doing that. I don't think it would be Plan A for them. I think it's probably a Plan B that they would resort to only if they think the opportunities with the West really aren't there.

## **#Glenn**

No, I agree. And I think it would be horrible for all parties, including the Russians, this kind of solution. But you mentioned before this option of either, you know, will they gamble that we prolong the war a little bit more and hopefully the Russians won't increase their demands anymore? This was essentially the argument of Yulia Mendel, the former spokesperson of Zelensky. She was making the point that they're heading towards national suicide for a variety of reasons, but one of them would be what you're referring to. And again, the response by Zelensky was to sanction her, and the EU didn't even let her enter the parliament building where she had been invited to speak. It doesn't bode well. It doesn't look good. No, it doesn't. It doesn't.

## **#George Beebe**

This is a problem because there isn't a real debate in Ukrainian society over this. And there isn't in Russia, or really in the West either. War does terrible things to democracy. It does terrible things to liberal society, civil discourse. And that's true everywhere. And the more your nation is at war, the more central you are to that, the worse the situation is. But that makes what I would call, you know, rational discourse about the options that we have in front of us more problematic.

## **#Glenn**

Well, what do you think might happen now, though? Again, I know you're not positioned on the front lines in Ukraine, but if you look at the different variables, be it the military, the economy, the social stability, the political stability, the ability of the Europeans and the Americans to continue to fund this whole thing, did you see? I mean, it does look like they're hitting a breaking point. On the other hand, I'm amazed. I thought that in the past, but they keep pushing through. So I've been wrong on this. So you don't want to make too many predictions unless it's based on something solid. But where do you see us standing at the moment, though?

## **#George Beebe**

Well, I don't think we're going to get a peace settlement this year, the way things are looking. Not impossible. It would require, I think, Ukraine to come to the conclusion that they better make a deal now because they're going to be in an even worse position then. And the terms of the deal will be much more disadvantageous to them if they wait till next year. But I don't think that's a very likely scenario right now. Not impossible, but I certainly wouldn't bet on it. They're probably going to see, you know, how do they fare during the winter? How cold are things? How much damage does the Russian air campaign do? And then reassess things come spring. Yeah. By that point, hard to know whether Kramatorsk and Slavyansk have fallen. It's an unpredictable thing.

They could certainly fall this year. But, you know, again, if I had to bet on this, my guess is it's probably going to take a little longer than that. And we're probably looking at a situation where Ukraine is going to be under much greater pressure in the spring of next year. Now, unfortunately, I think by that point, the political circumstances in the West will be changing. France is coming up on elections in the summer that could result in a very serious change domestically in France, which would have implications for its dealings with Ukraine and Russia. The United States, by that point, will have gone through a midterm election this November. Right now, it does not look good for President Trump and the Republican Party.

So probably they will be in a weakened position domestically, which in turn, I think, is going to make their ability to deliver a diplomatic breakthrough that much more compromised come next year. Germany is in, I think, a very volatile situation politically, and we could see some serious changes

there as well. The U.K., certainly there's a big gap between the ruling parties and the people that I think is going to intensify during this period. So all of this could come together in unpredictable ways.

One way would be for the Ukrainians to say, "Uncle, you know, things just don't look good for us economically, politically, or militarily, and we need to get out of this now." Another possibility, though, is under these circumstances, people panic. They look at the prospect of Ukrainian failure, of Ukrainian defeat, and they move into do-something mode. And we've already got voices in the United States that are calling for just that. "Let's impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine," which would almost inevitably result in a direct conflict between the West and Russia, between NATO and Russia, which would be, I think, disastrous for everybody involved.

Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google, had an op-ed in The Washington Post just a couple of weeks ago where he, I thought, very accurately and very candidly painted a picture of the Ukrainian battlefield situation as being in very dire straits: that the ability to out-innovate Russia, which Ukraine had been counting on with the help of its Western supporters, had entered a phase where the Russians were effectively finding technical countermeasures, developing capabilities of their own to overcome the advantages that the Ukrainians had been pursuing, and in fact were producing technically quite capable weapons, but on a scale that vastly outpaces that of Ukraine and its Western partners. But rather than saying, "Okay, this is not going well," his formula for reacting to this was not, "Hey, let's make a deal."

"Let's find a diplomatic settlement here that preserves Ukraine." His recipe was that the West has to mobilize for full war with Russia, really go into full military mobilization mode, and ensure that Ukraine wins and Russia suffers a strategic defeat. And unfortunately, I think that sentiment is not an isolated one. There are going to be a lot of people in the West that argue just for that kind of response. And I think that means the moment of danger here is not just one that Ukraine faces. I think all of us face a real threat that this war could escalate, not just vertically but horizontally, and drag the West into a direct conflict with Russia, which is not, as I said earlier, not a conflict that would have any winners.

## **#Glenn**

Well, that's been one of my key concerns there. That is, it looks as if Ukraine is heading at least towards unraveling. And once that happens, there's two decisions: either make a deal or escalate in this way, that is, to go directly to war with Russia, whatever they think that might entail. But as you said, if there's no willingness to make a deal, suddenly this crazy talk about going to war without the capabilities, it sort of starts to make sense in its own twisted way. But as you said before, I think especially Europeans got trapped in a lot of these narratives, you know. That's just my last question, because we say, "How did this war start?" We say, "Well, it was unprovoked." Where is it headed? It's just assumed the only acceptable outcome is Russia's strategic defeat.

I thought it would be good to look towards someone who did see some of this possibly coming. I can't help but come across your book because you wrote a book in 2019 called *The Russia Trap: How Our Shadow War with Russia Could Spiral into Nuclear Catastrophe*. So, kind of recognizing this, what happened then three years later wasn't out of nowhere, and also the consequences of such a war could be quite devastating—well, could eliminate all life on Earth. So I was just wondering if you could, yeah, explain your, I guess, key argument there in your book. A bit of self-promotion, perhaps, but this seems like a very important book to know. This should be one of the key books we should be reading now, is what I'm trying to say.

## **#George Beebe**

Well, I wrote the book as a warning, and I called it an examination of a future failure, something that hadn't happened yet, a pre-mortem. When you do a postmortem, you look at a dead body and say, "What happened? What caused the death?" A pre-mortem is anticipating an outcome and then working backwards and saying, "What could produce this kind of outcome? What do we have to do to avoid that?" And I was doing it in the hope that this analysis would sober people up and cause us to look at the prospect of conflict with Russia in a different way, to change our paradigm. And the paradigm that I offered was essentially the spiral model of how countries wind up in conflicts that they don't actually seek.

You know, a World War I kind of scenario where a variety of different factors come together to produce a devastating great-power war that none of the great powers actually wanted. The problem that I posed in the book was that we assumed we were dealing with a World War II problem, the case of a Nazi-like expansionist country that will just expand until it reaches some sort of determined resistance. And the recipe for dealing with that kind of aggressor state is, well, more deterrence. Show the other side that you're willing to fight, you're willing to resist, that the fruits of aggression will be vastly outweighed by the costs of the harm to your own interests that that aggression does.

That's what causes deterrence. And my argument was the West thinks that it is facing a deterrence problem, a Nazi Germany kind of problem, when it thinks of Russia. In fact, we're not. We're dealing with an escalatory spiral, a World War I kind of problem. The only way you can effectively avoid a World War I escalation spiral is diplomacy. It is addressing some of the root concerns that the sides have, the perceptions that each side has of the other's aggressiveness, and finding a way to compromise so that you understand where each side's red lines are and you understand that you each have an interest in not crossing them.

But that paradigm, I think, is as firmly established today, unfortunately, as it was in 2019 when I published the book. And it's a very stubborn paradigm. It's very difficult to get people to examine it, to even think about it. For a lot of the reasons that we've talked about in a series of interviews that

you and I have done, there's very little appetite to even question the notion that this war was entirely unprovoked, that Putin, like Adolf Hitler, woke up one day and said, "This neighboring state should be part of my country, and I'm just going to go take it."

It's a far more complex situation than that, but those of us that say, "Hey, wait a minute, let's take a step back and understand that there are a lot of different factors that led to this war, some of which, you know, we could have and should have affected"—you know, there's little appetite for doing that. And those that say, "No, we need to," are said, "Oh, you're reading Putin's talking points. You're essentially disloyal." And that doesn't help the situation at all. We need to be able to step back and say, "Wait a minute, our deterrence medicine for dealing with this problem is actually making the patient worse." We are in grave danger of not just Ukrainian failure, but a broader failure of European security that endangers all of us. And we need to rethink what we're doing.

## **#Glenn**

No, I think that's a good idea—or a good point. And that is, you know, because you have kind of two competing hypotheses about the war here. One is, yes, it's unprovoked expansionism by the Russian Federation. And then what's the response? It does make sense then, you know, just deterrence. You know, we have more weapons, increase the cost compared to the benefits—essentially what NATO is doing now. But if the second hypothesis is correct, that is, Russia sees NATO provoking this and it's an existential threat, now every new piece of weaponry that's sent, every hawkish speech, everything we sell as deterrence is escalation, which then the Russians must respond to.

I just feel like this should be the central discussion the political West should be having now. Which one is it? Is it one or two? Where does the evidence point? But as you said, we don't even have these discussions because if you say, well, actually, most evidence points to hypothesis two here, well, then you're undermining—you're legitimizing Russia's hypothesis, as you said. You are repeating Putin talking points or Kremlin talking points. So we essentially censored the debate and just agreed there must be the first hypothesis. And now we're marching to war. But anyways, yes, I think we've run out of time, unless you have some final thoughts.

## **#George Beebe**

No, no, we probably should stop before we depress ourselves even more.

## **#Glenn**

It often goes that way. So, well, thank you very much. I appreciate you taking the time. Good.

## **#George Beebe**

Good talking to you. Thank you.

