George Beebe: Europe Must Face U.S. Consequences if It Blocks Ukraine Peace Agreement

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#Glenn

Welcome back, everyone. We are joined today by George Beebe, who was previously the director of Russia analysis at the CIA and who is now the director of grand strategy at the Quincy Institute. Thank you for coming back on the program.

#George Beebe

It's always a pleasure. Thank you.

#Glenn

There have been a lot of developments in what I'm not sure you'd call the Ukraine war or the European war. The US seems determined to restart diplomacy in a US-Russia-Ukraine format. And we now have two Scandinavian leaders who broke away from this boycott of diplomacy by actually calling President Putin. Ukraine, I guess, appears to also be unraveling under these heavy strikes by Russia. So, you know, given all these developments, what do you see happening? Where are we headed here? I mean, is the Ukraine war approaching a negotiated settlement, a strategic defeat, or, you know, a more dangerous confrontation between NATO and Russia?

#George Beebe

Well, I think all of those are in the realm of possibility right now. Certainly, the United States is trying to reinvigorate the settlement talks. It's struggling to do so for reasons that we can get into. But the situation on the battlefield for Ukraine is not looking good. You know, it was only a few weeks ago, really, that Western media were advancing a narrative that the momentum in the war had shifted to Ukraine, that Ukraine was winning. And now, suddenly, we're getting a very different picture. We're getting, you know, op-eds from former Google CEO Eric Schmidt about how dire the situation is in Ukraine and how much the United States and Europe need to invest in really stepping up their involvement and support for Ukraine's war effort, or Ukraine will lose.

And then we have, you know, Garry Kasparov just a few days ago publishing an op-ed in The Telegraph in the UK saying essentially, you know, unless the West is willing to go all out and fight back against Russia in Ukraine, Ukraine will lose. I think that's a reflection of just how much trouble Ukraine is now in on the battlefield. And it's not so much on the front lines, although the Russians are continuing to make steady but incremental advances. It's really in the strategic air campaign where Ukraine is in big, big trouble. They do have a big manpower problem. I think that's been obvious for a long time. But the lack of air defenses against Russian missile, glide bomb, and jet-powered drone strikes is really a crisis for the Ukrainians, particularly as they head into the winter.

So I think what the United States is looking at is a situation where, unless we make some real progress very soon to find a way to end these hostilities, Ukraine is going to be in an enormously difficult situation this winter, lacking electricity, heat, and probably water as well. That's going to be a humanitarian crisis. And I think that is underscoring the urgency of the Trump administration's negotiators in trying to find an alternative path forward. I think the Europeans are seeing essentially that same picture. And they are increasingly, I think, of the opinion that they've got to get involved in some way here to try to find a way to end hostilities, or at least advance a ceasefire of some kind, so that the situation the Ukrainians face this winter is not as dire as it looks like it might be.

#Glenn

I heard this argument for doubling down, especially coming out of Britain, that it's time to close the skies or send troops to Odessa. But all of these things, all these last options for escalating to keep the war going, would mean direct war with Russia and World War III. There's no way to get around that. So it looks as if there are only a few options: either accept a painful compromise to end the war or go to war with Russia. But there's also a third option, as you alluded to, which is, you know, just get Ukraine through the winter.

So a ceasefire would be—well, I'm not sure if you can call it deceptive diplomacy, but it would be with the intention of prolonging the war. But, you know, from that perspective, with those three options in mind, what do you make of these November talks, with the Americans, the Russians, and the Ukrainians meeting? I mean, is this a genuine effort to put an end to the war, or is this about getting Ukraine through the winter by telling the Russians to ease off the pressure?

#George Beebe

Well, I think the two sides have starkly contrasting expectations of what those talks are going to be about. The Russians have said officially that these talks are about security guarantees for Russia and for Ukraine in the aftermath of the war, once the war is over. That's what they want to talk about. That's what they expect these trilateral talks to be about. Zelensky has come out and said, you know, we're going to talk about a ceasefire, an energy ceasefire, a sectoral ceasefire in the Black Sea. We're going to talk about security guarantees for Ukraine, which is a very different agenda. And I think reconciling those conflicting expectations is not going to be easy.

Now, one of the things that has evolved in the American position, at least in terms of their public rhetoric about settlement talks, is that the United States is now saying we need to expand the agenda of what we're talking about. We need to talk about European security architecture. This is really the first time that the U.S. side has said, yeah, this needs to be about more than just a narrow Russia-Ukraine bilateral agenda. There's a bigger issue at stake here that we have to talk about. That's something that the Russians have been urging for years and years and years, something that the United States has not heretofore been willing to address. I think it's quite interesting and potentially a hopeful sign that the United States has acknowledged that we have to talk about these things.

That suggests to me that the United States has at least accepted part of what the Russians say these trilateral talks ought to be about—that we're willing to say, yes, it's about more than just a temporary ceasefire. It's about more than just security guarantees for Ukraine. We do have to talk about the broader European security arrangements here. The question that I have in my mind, however, is: Is the United States actually capable of engaging in talks on that subject? That's not something that Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner have a lot of expertise in. And it requires, on the United States' part, the involvement of different parts of the permanent government that haven't really been involved in these talks.

These talks have been very tightly held by Steve and Jared, focused very narrowly on these bilateral arrangements, on territorial compromises, on economic and business deals with the two sides. But as soon as you start talking about broader European security architecture, I think you're going to have to involve the Pentagon because you're talking about weapon systems, force postures, notification arrangements. These are things that the Pentagon has direct stakes in, so they've got to be a part of that. You're going to have to involve the CIA because you're immediately going to be talking about things like verification, monitoring of where these forces are and what kind of weapon systems are being deployed where. You're going to have to involve the State Department at the working levels in all of this.

And that means you have to have an interagency process. And that's something that has not really been happening under the Trump administration. They recognize, I think accurately, that the so-

called deep state, the permanent government in Washington, doesn't want to compromise with Russia, doesn't want to talk about these kinds of European security issues with Russia. They're staunchly opposed to that sort of thing. You start bringing them into this discussion, and you're likely to bring into the room people who don't actually want to see a compromise arrangement with Russia. So how do you handle that?

You've got to have people in the room who have stakes in this, but you've also got to involve them in such a way that they don't sabotage the prospects for a settlement. So the Trump administration has a real dilemma here, a problem that it's going to have to deal with. And that makes me, I think, somewhat skeptical that we can see rapid progress on this kind of issue. So I think it's positive that the Trump administration is saying, yeah, we have to talk about these things. But simply saying we have to talk about it doesn't get you to a deal. This is going to be a tricky issue. Now, I think there are some ways to handle this. And we can talk about what we might do pragmatically to manage this problem.

#Glenn

But it is a problem. You said the Russians have been talking about this for years and years. I mean, we're going back to the '90s here, when the Russians said we need a mutually acceptable post-Cold War security architecture in Europe. And I guess our response was more or less, well, you know, you're weak. We can create whatever Europe we want. But, of course, that was premised on them being weak and getting weaker. And now Russia is back. It's strengthened again, as George Kennan warned in the '90s it would, and it's beginning to push back and recover.

I just feel like we almost have to bring some American statesmen out of retirement who were there in the ’90s, who dealt with these issues of European security, because it’s not an easy task to go back three decades and reconsider the bloc politics system we built. But the Russians’ main concern is probably that this diplomacy will be deceptive—that it’s meant to get Ukraine through the winter. So, you know, it’s to prolong the war, not end it. That would be a main concern. And even if they think, well, at least the US wants to put an end to the war, they will also suspect that the only reason there are real initiatives now to put an end to the war is because they’re winning, or Ukraine is losing.

So it's hard to imagine that they would reduce any of the pressure on Ukraine. They would go all out with warfare, even during the talks. So how does that harmonize, you know, if they will go all out with war until they have a political settlement, while Zelensky went on Twitter and said, you know, we're not even going to discuss neutrality, and the Europeans still insist on a ceasefire before we talk about European security? Yeah. I mean, even taking America out of the mix, is it possible to get any of this done?

#George Beebe

Well, it's possible, but the tensions that you're pointing out here are absolutely real ones. There's no way that the Russians are going to take their foot off the accelerator on the battlefield or in the strategic air campaign that they've intensified over the winter. They recognize that they've got their foot on Ukraine's throat, so to speak. They're not going to relieve that pressure in the hope that maybe down the road they might get a deal that satisfies their core interests. So I think, at a minimum, we're headed toward a situation where we're going to be fighting and talking. Now, that's not unusual. Historically, a lot of wars have featured that kind of dynamic. But the notion that the Russians would agree to some sort of temporary ceasefire while peace talks proceed, I think, is just a pipe dream.

So this will create, I think, a lot of pressure on the negotiators and on the Trump administration because the headlines that are going to be coming out of Ukraine over the next few weeks and months are probably going to be quite ghastly. We're going to see a lot of civilian deaths. We're almost certainly going to see some sort of humanitarian crisis where people are cold, they're hungry, they're fleeing the capital. And that, in turn, is not going to create pressure in Washington and Europe to give in to Russian demands, to try to find a compromise with the Russians. That's going to produce public pressure to do something forceful to protect the Ukrainians in this humanitarian crisis that is likely to emerge.

And it's going to double the political price that Trump will pay for saying, "No, no, no, we do need to find a way to normalize relations with this country," which is, in turn, inflicting such damage on Ukrainian civilians and on Ukrainian infrastructure. So that's going to be a very difficult reality for people to cope with going forward. And I just don't see a high likelihood that we can find a compromise early enough to avert that kind of situation in the next few months. Now, I hope I'm wrong, but the issues that are at stake here are complex ones. They require a fair amount of technical expertise. I'm not sure the United States government is organized to produce that kind of technical expertise and negotiating positions and all this. And then you have to coordinate all of this with the Europeans.

And the Europeans are even less prepared, I think, to engage on these issues right now. So it's not impossible that we might find a way forward in the next few weeks, but it's not likely. Now, what is possible? The Russians obviously want assurances that NATO is not going to continue to expand, and they want those assurances to be legally binding, not just politically binding handshake agreements, because they've gone through several decades of finding that those handshake agreements and oral assurances weren't worth anything to them. So they're going to want some sort of commitment on paper with the force of law that says that NATO will not continue to expand and that it will not take Ukraine into the NATO alliance. You know, full stop. Now, could the United States do that? Yes.

I think, you know, the Trump administration is fully capable of doing that. Expanding the NATO alliance requires full consensus of all 30 NATO member states. If the United States says, you know, this is not going to happen, then it won't happen. We have a veto over this. So that's something

we're completely capable of agreeing to. Now, will that cause controversy in Washington? Will that be something that will cause a lot of criticism of Trump personally for agreeing to it? Yes, no question about it. There are a lot of people in Washington who are still firmly opposed to that, even though—and I think this is highly ironic.

We have demonstrated since at least 2008 that we're not willing to go to war to defend, for example, Georgia against Russia or to defend Ukraine against Russia. We've shown for nearly 20 years that we're not going to regard an attack on Georgia or Ukraine as an attack on the United States. We're just not going to do that. Why, then, do they insist that we leave the door open to taking on that very commitment? It doesn't make any sense, actually. And, you know, it's not vital to American national security to take on that kind of commitment. In fact, it's probably vital to American national security that we don't take on that kind of commitment because it would mean war with Russia, which would be devastating for every party involved, including the United States.

So this is something that we in Washington have not really come to grips with, and we're going to have to do that. Now, all that said, the Russians aren't simply going to end the war if they get some sort of legally binding commitment against continued NATO expansion. They're going to want assurances about U.S. and European military presence and military infrastructure on Ukrainian territory. They're going to want a commitment to at least begin negotiations over broader European security arrangements, conventional arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, and theater nuclear weapons in the European theater. Those are all things that we, in the past, have been willing to engage with the Soviet Union on.

We did have arrangements in place that, you know, had they continued, probably would have at least complicated, if not averted, the kind of invasion that we've seen in Ukraine since 2022. So in principle, these are things that we have negotiated in the past. It's something that we probably can negotiate again in the future. But those negotiations are going to be enormously complicated. There are new factors that have been introduced into this equation—drones, for example—that we're going to have to find ways of handling. So that can't be resolved in a matter of weeks or even months. That's going to require years. But I think what the United States can do now is to commit itself, in a legally binding way, to negotiations on these issues.

#Glenn

And we could probably put down on paper some principles that would guide those negotiations, set the table, and set an agenda.

#George Beebe

Now, if we were to do that, then I think the Russians might have some real incentives to show some flexibility on things like territory. But absent that kind of situation, I think the Russians have every incentive to draw a very hard line on things like territory, which they're doing right now. So, you

know, we're not going to resolve these issues of European security quickly. We probably could agree to some principles that would be binding, right? That would give the Russians some hope that we're actually going to engage in a serious effort to find new approaches to European security that are not built against Russia but are built with Russia. Those approaches would combine a balance of power, which is going to continue to be necessary in Europe, with some rules of the game that minimize the likelihood that we're going to get into a war with Russia that would be devastating for everybody involved.

#Glenn

It's going to be a hard deal to get, though, because what you're suggesting is that there have to be very explicit security guarantees for the Russians as well, which they would believe. Because if it's merely Ukraine changing its law, it wouldn't mean anything, because it can just be reversed again in a few months. Even with the United States, I mean, a key concern, I know, in Moscow is that whenever the next president comes in, he can just disregard it. So there will have to be some really specific deals, agreements.

And I think it would be hard, especially for the Europeans, to accept any of those very specific agreements because once they accept them, they have to recognize that this conflict is not about territory but about security. That is, the Russians actually see NATO expansion as an existential threat. Again, this is not a story about territorial conquest and imperialism; this is an issue of European security. Then they would also have to recognize that over the past 30 years, they helped to provoke this. And if it was provoked, then why did they boycott diplomacy for four and a half years while all these hundreds of thousands of young men died? I mean, this is going to end political careers and political parties. We're talking about political illegitimacy if they sign these documents.

In addition, it's not all deception. I know for a fact that a lot of the European politicians genuinely believe this: that Putin is the new Hitler, that he just wants to conquer Europe, that Russia wants to restore the Soviet Union. These kinds of stories, you know—they've all been in the same room saying the exact same thing year after year. So after a while, you know, it started to make sense to them. But it's going to be hard to do. And as you said, it's going to take a long time. And during the time it takes to get such an agreement in place, Russia will wreck Ukraine, though. And it will probably start to look toward more territory, I assume—that is, territory which it can't allow NATO to control in the future. So what do you see happening there?

#George Beebe

Well, I don't think the actual active fighting on the battlefield has to continue until all of the various European players agree on new security arrangements for Europe. I think the Russians might well agree to end hostilities in return for some legally binding commitments on the part of the West, one of which would be an end to NATO enlargement. Another would be no deployments of Western military forces or infrastructure on Ukrainian territory. And then some binding principles that would

govern negotiations that would begin at a certain future date. And, you know, you could lay down what those principles would be. Some of them are already in place, of course. You know, the Helsinki commitments, the principles in the 1990 Paris Charter for a New Europe—I don't think those need to be renegotiated. Those are all principles that we could, even today, say continue to be in effect. The problem with those principles, of course, is that there's a tension between the question of national self-determination and...

#George Beebe

The inviolability of borders, the tension between a state's sovereign right to choose its own allies and security arrangements and the principle of indivisibility of security. You know, there are natural tensions among these. And the trick is to find where to strike the balance among these things. And that's a diplomatic process. But putting those principles down on paper and indicating that we have to discuss how to find a balance among them would be an important step forward, I think—something that would be encouraging to the Russians and provide them with an incentive to end hostilities.

And don't forget, the Russians have other reasons to want to see this war end. This war has not been good for Russia strategically. They find themselves in a corner in that they have no relationship with the West to speak of right now. That has increased their dependence on China, and they don't have a lot of geopolitical room for maneuver as a result of all this. And I think they're frustrated that the Chinese have not really invested in the Russian economy in ways that will lead to dynamic growth for Russia over time. The Chinese are basically exploiting Russia's dependence on them to strike some very, very hard bargains. And I don't think the Russians like that.

And the fact that the Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline, which has been on the table, ready to go for years, has still not moved forward, largely because the Chinese are striking a pretty hard bargain with the Russians on this, is an indication of how frustrated the Russians are right now. That gives them an incentive to try to restore a normal relationship, particularly with the United States, but also with Europe, so that they're not in such a corner geopolitically right now. That is something that we do need, I think, to recognize. And that can be something that we should use in these negotiations to try to find a way toward a compromise.

#Glenn

No, I agree. And I think everyone wants peace now. It's just a question of what peace means. But I think on the foundations—the European security architecture and neutrality for Ukraine—there's little, if any, room for negotiation on the Russian side. But on the territorial issue, I think this is where they could be more flexible.

#George Beebe

Well, we absolutely could. The Russians themselves say that this war isn't about territory, that they've got more than enough territory. The fact is, they do have a lot of territory. There's a political optics problem in Russia, in that Putin doesn't want a situation where it looks like Russia has lost—that they've sacrificed so much, including suffering so many casualties, without much in return that they can point to and say, "Aha, this was worth it." So at this point, we're really trying to find a way to give the Russians and the Ukrainians a face-saving way forward, where they can each say, "We've achieved something important strategically for our countries."

Now, for Ukraine, I think the answer should be obvious: they can potentially come out of this war with a sovereign state. Yes, they're going to lose some territory. They're not going to get back the territory that the Russians now occupy. But they could come out of this with a viable state, and they could also come out of this with a realistic path toward economic and political integration with Europe, through some sort of membership in or association with the European Union. That could be very beneficial to Ukraine over time. And that is a significant achievement if they're able to seize the moment.

Now, if they don't seize the opportunity for that kind of achievement, they're likely to be on a path toward a failed state. And I think there's no question that if the Russians don't get the kind of bigger geopolitical deal that they're looking for here, they are simply going to wreck Ukraine. And it's not going to be reconstructed. And it's going to be in a demographic crisis. And it will not integrate into Europe. And it's going to be a big problem for everybody involved. So they've got a fundamental choice that they're going to have to make. And they're going to have to make it soon.

#Glenn

I was wondering how the actual negotiations would work. Would the approach be that NATO comes with a common position and then meets the Russians? Because, you know, this was kind of the formula with the NATO-Russia Council, and the Russians did not care for it because it didn't work from their perspective. That is, if all the NATO countries meet and come up with a common position, by the time they meet the Russians, they have very little room for maneuver. To change any of this, they would have to go back and seek a new consensus. So that doesn't seem to be a good formula. The alternative is not to meet with a common position, but then you would have outrage, especially from Europeans, arguing that, well, if we're divided, we're weak. This is kind of what we saw now with the Finnish and Norwegian prime ministers calling Putin, and immediately the Swedes and the Danes were upset because, “Oh, we have to stand together.”

But, you know, standing together is only possible, apparently, with a war agenda. So that would meet opposition too. And I guess the third option would be the US and Russia reaching some kind of a great-power deal and, you know, shoving it down the throat of the Europeans. But this would be demonized as some horrible Yalta, and they would resist this as well. So how can we actually move forward? I mean, just in terms of the format here, because I'm not sure why the Europeans are not calling Russia. I think it's wonderful that they're decriminalizing diplomacy, but I'm also wondering if

it's just to get a seat at the table, where they will act as spoilers. So I'm not quite sure where we're actually going with this.

#George Beebe

Well, it's an excellent question. I think if we sit down together in a huge conference room somewhere in the world—the Russians, NATO, non-NATO European states, and there are still a few of those left, and the United States and Canada—and say, "Let's negotiate all of this," it's going to be very awkward and very slow. And the prospects for a consensus position, even within NATO, on how to approach this are not great, because NATO has expanded to the point where we're at 32 nations now, double what we were at the end of the Cold War. These NATO members have disparate interests, and some of them have very starkly different understandings of the Russian threat, so to speak. So it's going to be hard to find a consensus position within the West on all of this. And I don't think the Russians are going to want to negotiate at all in a situation where it's one or two against 32.

#George Beebe

What I think is probably going to have to happen is a combination of all of these things. There's going to have to be a grand plenary kind of negotiation that goes on formally. But I think behind the scenes, there's going to have to be a variable geometry of negotiations, where the United States does meet with key European states and tries to find a way forward that is acceptable on the Western side of things. The United States is going to have to meet bilaterally with Russia on all of this as well. There's going to have to be an understanding that compromise will be necessary. This is going to be very, very complicated.

So to get all this going, I think the United States and Russia are going to have to create a moving train effect, where the Europeans understand that if they attempt to sit on the sidelines or if they attempt to obstruct progress, they're going to be left at the station. So we want a fear-of-missing-out kind of phenomenon where they realize, number one, that they had better get on the train, and number two, that if they attempt to obstruct a deal—if they envision their role in this as essentially making sure that no compromise is reached—then they're going to have problems with the United States, not just with Russia. And that's going to be a very complicated situation.

It's one of the reasons why this is going to take a very long time to work out. But the principles that I talked about earlier, which could be established to govern these negotiations, set the agenda, and set the table over time—those are things that I think we could probably agree on in a relatively short period. And if that were achieved, if we had a framework established for a peace settlement, then I think there's a good chance that the Russians might say, "You know, we need to seize this opportunity now because the opportunity might go away in the future, and then we're left holding air." And I don't think the Russians want to be in that position either.

#Glenn

I agree, and I think a lot of the Russian position might seem excessively demanding. But I think, again, the bargaining position one starts with isn't necessarily where one ends up. And I also think there's a strategic necessity for Russia to continue to harden its position, not just because it's doing better on the battlefield, but also to impose a cost, I think, on the West for dragging out the war. So the West also has an incentive to put an end to this. I agree. If they see, to use your analogy, the train leaving the station, it might not be possible to get such a deal in the future. I think they would make real concessions, but not concessions that would undermine the sustainability of the peace.

So again, an unconditional ceasefire doesn't make sense. But you did mention that the West is, of course, very divided. The U.S. may have to coerce the Europeans not to obstruct any peace deal. But what happens within the U.S. now? Because it seems like there are divisions within America as well. At least you have people like Keith Kellogg who are essentially saying, "We should use the Ukrainians to weaken Russia so we can focus on China." Then you have the other side, who are more concerned that the Ukraine war is pushing Russia towards China, that we're destroying Ukraine, and that it's taking us towards a possible nuclear war. So you kind of have these two positions. And how is this being thought out? I mean, this seems complicated if the Americans don't stand united either.

#George Beebe

Oh, it's very complicated. That's one of the reasons why I'm somewhat pessimistic right now. I don't accept the premise that the Russians simply don't want to agree to a deal, that they want to conquer the Baltics and eventually invade Poland and Germany. I think that's an absurd line of analysis, frankly. But what concerns me is these divisions in the United States. And they aren't just between the Trump administration and other parts of the government or the so-called blob in Washington. There are actually divisions within the Trump administration itself.

I mean, I think there was an article in The Atlantic magazine just a few days ago about the CIA and Trump, and it highlighted some real practical divisions between people who want to go all out in supporting Ukraine and inflicting maximal damage on Russia and those who are pushing for some sort of compromise deal and for commercial deals between the United States and Russia that will ease some of our inflationary problems—the costs of diesel and gasoline and that sort of thing. Those are real practical contradictions within the Trump administration itself over the way forward here.

And managing those sorts of tensions requires a functioning interagency process. This is why the National Security Council and the National Security Council staff were created: to manage this interagency process. But that's not really going on effectively right now. I think the Trump administration worries that if you bring the interagency into this process, they'll sabotage prospects for a deal. So their approach has been to isolate them, to freeze them out of negotiations, and to

manage negotiations with the Russians through a very tightly held circle led by Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. And I understand the reasons why they would want to do that.

But I think we're getting to the point where their approach has reached the limits of what it can do, particularly if you start saying, as I think they should be saying, "We have to talk about broader European security issues." At that point, I think it's not viable to manage this process the way the White House has tried to manage it so far. You're going to have to actually bring the interagency to heel in some way and forge a much more unified and coherent approach. That's going to be hard to do. You talk about trying to find a unified European position and how hard that is. It's going to be very hard to find that same sort of unified, coherent position within the U.S. government as well.

#Glenn

Well, in political science, when we talk about rational actors, it often refers to the ability of states to act as unitary actors, that is, to speak with one voice. And I think that's becoming a huge problem, not just in the U.S., but obviously in Europe as well. That's one of the challenges, I think. Offering possible EU membership to Ukraine would be a good way to provide some incentive to get some concessions. But even this would sow further divisions within Europe. So there are no good solutions anymore. I think that's the problem with prolonged wars. It just gets worse and worse. Do you have any final thoughts on where we're headed before we wrap up? Any predictions in your crystal ball? Well, I think...

#George Beebe

It's not a very hopeful picture right now, but it's not hopeless. I do think there's a way forward here. It will require some real leadership, some real statesmanship. That has been in short supply, quite frankly, both in the West and in Russia over the past several years. So this is a challenge, I think, for all the parties involved: to find a way forward that will serve all of our interests. And I do think that there is a desire for peace on both sides. So, you know, it's not hopeless, but there are some real challenges. And we're going to have to elevate the level of our statesmanship on all sides if we're going to find a way forward.

#Glenn

Sorry, let me squeeze in a very brief last question. If diplomacy fails here, the Ukrainian army begins to crumble, the logistics in the rear fall apart, and Ukraine essentially begins to collapse, then it's a Russian military victory. What do you think this would look like for European security, which includes Russia?

#George Beebe

Well, I'm very skeptical of the notion that the Russians would then attempt to push further westward militarily. I don't think they're actually capable of it. And they don't want a war with NATO. This notion that they're trying to provoke some sort of conflict with Europe, I think, is just wrong. But I do think we're going to be left with a failed state in Ukraine that will generate all kinds of problems, not just within Ukraine, but beyond. And some of those problems are going to hurt Russia, too.

You know, organized crime, radical militias, violence, and uncontrolled flows of migrants and refugees who are looking to get out of the situation they're facing inside Ukraine. And the lack of success in finding a settlement in Ukraine bodes very ill for our ability to handle future crises in Europe. And there are any number of future crises that could arise in the Balkans, in Belarus, in Kaliningrad, just to name a few. So we're eventually going to have to grasp the nettle, I think, and find a way to manage this situation. And failure to find some sort of acceptable resolution in Ukraine will not make that any easier. In fact, it'll make it a lot harder.