

Bill Walton (00:00.369)

People have been talking recently, hopefully, about a ceasefire and maybe a truce. Instead, it looks like with a couple more blunders, we could be heading towards a World War III. It's a mess. And to learn where this might be going, I'm back talking today with my go-to guru on all things national security, Stephen Bryen, senior fellow at the Center for Security Policy.

A of Stephen's recent columns headlines are, don't expect a ceasefire in Ukraine. Is Ukraine President Zelensky is on the way out? And this one, fire the head of NATO, Jen Schultenberg, now before it's too late. Sounds dire. So Stephen, let's, yeah, well, let's start wherever you want. A ceasefire or the head of NATO, where do you want to?

Stephen Bryen (00:50.672)

It's dire. I mean, it's a bad situation.

Bill Walton (01:00.271)

launch into this. We've got a lot to cover.

Stephen Bryen (01:02.832)

we do. Well, the problem with the head of NATO is he's a warmonger. And the latest utterances was he gave permission as if he has the right to give permission to the Ukrainians to go and bomb Russian territory, Russian targets in Russia with the new F-16s that they're supposed to get this by around June. It's reckless because...

You know, the Russians will retaliate. They're not going to sit there and take it. And what's the purpose of it? It's not going to change the outcome of the fighting in Ukraine. It's just punitive operation aimed at Russia, which is a big part of what the Biden administration has been doing and promoting with long range weapons, that sort of thing, for some months. It doesn't change the outcome in Ukraine. It only makes the Russians nastier.

and more aggravated with the West and with the United States in particular.

Bill Walton (02:05.617)

Who authorized him to say that?

Stephen Bryen (02:10.064)

My guess is, it's my guess, is that the White House did.

Bill Walton (02:17.553)

That's, you know, we've talked in our previous shows about the wisdom of the team leading our policy there. Victoria Newland and the rest of the crew, you know, this is warmongering of the highest order. We could get ourselves deep into, as I mentioned at the outset, this is World War III scenario.

Stephen Bryen (02:40.752)

Yeah, it's very risky. We've been playing chicken with the Russians for quite a while, and it's not a good idea.

Bill Walton (02:48.657)

Well, how do we how but so, you know, the war has been grinding on Russia keeps making advances. Certainly, Ukraine does not. Ukraine, as you pointed out, is on its third army and a bad out of that one. And there's nothing much left. So nobody left really to fight. Zelensky has become, of course, you wouldn't know because there are no polls in Ukraine, but I guess he's.

Stephen Bryen (03:05.904)

I almost got rid of that one now too.

Bill Walton (03:18.737)

He's not beloved at this point. And it's clear that Ukraine doesn't have anything. In the United States, Congress is unlikely to, except under a scenario that would be a bad scenario, contribute another \$60 billion to this. So why now would Victoria Nuland order this provocative move? Is she trying to force Congress' hand? Does she want to see this thing escalate?

so that we're left with no choice but to put money in.

Stephen Bryen (03:50.8)

Well, remember, she's out as acting deputy secretary of state. Yes, she's out. And so she, because she wasn't confirmable, that was the problem. They would have held up her confirmation forever. So they got Kirk Campbell to come in and take that job. So.

Bill Walton (03:54.801)

I didn't know that.

Bill Walton (04:03.281)

Okay.

Bill Walton (04:11.217)

But she's still on the premises, isn't she?

Stephen Bryen (04:14.958)

Presumably, yes, but what her exact title is and what she's actually doing is not clear. The last official thing she did was about two weeks ago when she went to Ukraine to try and persuade Zelensky not to fire General Zaluzhny. That request was not honored by Zelensky. He fired Zaluzhny a few days after that. So, yeah, I mean, but it's a White House policy too, you know.

Bill Walton (04:43.537)

Well, whether it's her or Jake Sullivan or, but it seems like they're trying to get Congress, it seems like they're trying to heat things up on purpose so that we're forced to go in with another

50, 60, 70 billion dollars. Is that, you know, I'm not close enough, but does that seem like where this is coming from?

Stephen Bryen (04:46.042)

Right, exactly. Exactly.

Stephen Bryen (05:05.52)

Maybe. I'm not convinced that's the case, but I am convinced that the first objective of the administration, the Biden administration, is to drag the war out as long as possible. He doesn't want Ukraine to collapse while he's running for president.

I mean, it's real simple. It doesn't take rocket science. I mean, now the real intent of the administration has been to get regime change in Moscow. You know, they focused entirely on that and they used all our intelligence assets and the Ukrainians and anybody else they can tap into to try and knock off Putin or replace him or create a revolt inside Russia or whatever they want to do. All of it's based on

premises that really don't hold much water. But that's what they've been trying to do. Whether they care about Ukraine per se, I doubt it. I think what they care about is threatening Moscow. That's the key.

Bill Walton (06:10.609)

Well, it seems like Putin's more firmly ensconced than ever. And I was just...

Stephen Bryen (06:15.128)

Yeah, well, he's going to he is running for election, you know. So so to speak. But he goes through the motions, you know, he tries to campaign. He just flew a tuple of bomber, strategic bomber flew in it for about 30 minutes or 40 minutes to show how macho he is.

Bill Walton (06:18.545)

Well, well, I don't.

Bill Walton (06:37.393)

I can only imagine. He had the flight jacket on and the scarf and the whole, yeah. What do you make of his interview with Tucker?

Stephen Bryen (06:41.528)

Oh yeah, the whole thing and the oxygen mask and oh, nine yards. Yeah.

Stephen Bryen (06:51.024)

Two hours and eight minutes or something like that. It was very long. And he filibustered it. Yeah, I mean, he filibustered the first 20 minutes. Well, I mean, I think it was useful because I think people should listen to what he says and his explanations, whether you agree with him or

not, it's your business. But I don't agree with them all. But I think that it's important to hear out what the Russians are saying.

Bill Walton (06:54.129)

Yeah. We learned a lot of medieval central European history. Yeah.

Bill Walton (07:12.049)

I did, yeah.

Stephen Bryen (07:21.232)

It's not the first thing. Well, it is the first where there's been a real interview of Putin. And now there's a TV program in the UK on ITV called Ukraine, the other side. Pretty gutsy by it because the UK has been very pro-Ukraine, almost to the point of ridiculousness. And this is kind of shifting the balance back. So it's kind of interesting. I think voices are starting to be heard.

that don't reflect the party line as it's been portrayed in our press. Even our press is starting to shift direction.

Bill Walton (07:58.833)

Did you notice that he seemed to be mirroring Tucker's body language? And then I read later on that that's an old KGB interrogation technique. And that's one of the ways you get people feeling comfortable as you mirror their body language.

Stephen Bryen (08:07.632)

Is it? Well, it's a good debating tactic.

Stephen Bryen (08:15.792)

Well, I always learned that I was a college debater. We were we were knocked off by a group of Catholic girls who decimated us. But I was always told, follow their hand motions and do the same thing. So I think it's the same point you're making.

Bill Walton (08:20.241)

I bet you're pretty good.

Ha ha ha ha ha ha

Bill Walton (08:35.153)

Yeah, well, it looked, you know, Tucker was striving to be relaxed. I'm sure he was terrified. You go into the Kremlin and your imagination's got to catch fire and then you sit with Putin and I don't know, that's, he handled it pretty well, but I think he was working hard to look calm and succeeded.

Stephen Bryen (08:38.64)

That by the didn't work.

Stephen Bryen (08:56.272)

and in possession of his wits. I've been in the Kremlin a long time ago and toured it. It's incredibly impressive. It's beautiful.

Bill Walton (09:09.233)

Well, he said it looked more like the old executive office building here across the street from the White House. Better?

Stephen Bryen (09:14.512)

Oh, no, no, not at all. Of much. It's gorgeous. I mean, it's got this incredible parquet flooring and beautiful carvings in the walls and paintings. And the furniture looks very Scandinavian. And very beautiful, too. So I suspect that the Scandinavian furniture guys came over and made it for him.

Bill Walton (09:44.401)

Interesting. Well, you know, the thing about the Russia, you know, what happened with our sanctions, guess who is now buying almost half their oil from Russia is China. And instead of buying it at deeply discounted prices, I think they're paying a little above the world market price because China is looking for that secure land-based supply of energy, which Russia can do. And I just learned that...

Stephen Bryen (09:44.784)

This is really worth seeing.

Bill Walton (10:14.671)

Russia now 80 % of the cars sold in Russia, Chinese.

Stephen Bryen (10:18.768)

trying to eat.

Yeah. Well, no one, the West won't send any there. I mean, the US can't, the US or the Europeans or the Japanese can't import cars anymore to Russia because of the sanctions.

Bill Walton (10:23.087)

and

Bill Walton (10:34.065)

See, this is the thing about the political class that I am just stunned by. They never anticipate the cleverness of the market and people's ability to get around a sanction, around some big edict, that people always adapt. And even with semiconductors, I think they're getting semiconductors made in China, but through other suppliers. And...

They never anticipate the way people react, and it looks like all these bad things we were supposed to be doing to Russia have failed to do that.

Stephen Bryen (11:09.616)

Well, one of the vulnerabilities of the Russian defense industrial base, if you want to call it that, is the lack of microelectronics. They have a place called Zelenograd, which is north of Moscow, which was set up under the Soviets to try and produce semiconductors. And it does, but they're not at the same level of China. And they're certainly not the same level as Taiwan or the United States.

Bill Walton (11:16.081)

Yeah.

Bill Walton (11:19.919)

Mm -hmm.

Bill Walton (11:39.217)

Well, aren't they ripping semiconductors out of some of the consumer electronics they're buying and putting them into the Russian equipment? Or is that apocryphal?

Stephen Bryen (11:39.344)

So the Russians need to go out to get them.

Stephen Bryen (11:45.104)

No, that's...

Stephen Bryen (11:51.184)

No, that's nonsense. I mean, first of all, they have enough washing machines in Russia to do their job.

Bill Walton (11:54.737)

Okay. Good story.

So we digress, but I enjoy digressions. So we go to interesting places. But I think we've got to go back to something that is pretty stark, which is the idea of F -16s flying over Russia to hit targets inside Russia flown by NATO pilots. It strikes me that that's war.

Stephen Bryen (12:19.472)

Yeah, it looks that way.

Stephen Bryen (12:24.496)

Oh, it is. By the way, the White House this week said that there weren't enough Ukrainian pilots to do the job. So, you know, they're only going to be about 30 F -16s. So if there are not enough Ukrainian pilots, that means they're mostly all dead. At least in my opinion.

Bill Walton (12:44.017)

So they're dead. We're bringing in NATO pilots. That's a declaration of war, essentially. And then you point out in your article that the F -16s are putting it mildly, late model F -16s, and they're likely to be shot dead. Well, but OK, well.

Stephen Bryen (12:59.438)

Oh my.

Stephen Bryen (13:03.312)

They're at least 20 years old.

Well, so there's a lot of our stuff in our Air Force. So, you know, be careful. But these were European ones, Belgian, for example, Dutch, that were retired, essentially retired from service because they're moving on to things like the F -35 or things like the Eurofighter, you know, they're more modern airplanes. So I don't know what, you know, because no one has told us.

Bill Walton (13:13.105)

you

Stephen Bryen (13:36.89)

what modernization may have been done to get them ready for the Ukrainians. I have no idea. But even if you did it, there's still not superior aircraft compared to what the Russians have. Like the Sukhoi 35, which is an agile, fabulous piece of equipment. And so it's going to be difficult.

Bill Walton (14:00.113)

Well, I think you said that they're not survivable against Russian air defenses. And so we've got essentially a declaration of war where it's nothing but a gesture. And I don't want to say I'm sympathetic to Putin, but if you look at from his perspective, they're looking, you know, we're now seeing mercenaries turning up dead.

Stephen Bryen (14:07.182)

No.

Bill Walton (14:28.049)

from Poland, the United States, when there's something like 60 French mercenaries killed recently. And so that's already become a NATO -ized effort. And we're trying to pretend this is Ukraine defending itself. It looks to me like very quickly, especially if Sultenberg's got his way, we're going to end up a NATO versus Russia war.

Stephen Bryen (14:35.406)

New car key, yes.

Stephen Bryen (14:51.44)

Well, you know, there's an interesting thing here. What is a mercenary exactly? If his government sends former troops to Ukraine, are they mercenaries or are they insertions of troops by that NATO country? I'm more and more inclined to think they're not mercenaries. They're sent there on purpose to try and salvage the situation in Ukraine.

units of Romanians, units of Poles, units of French, some Brits, Americans, they wear national patches on their Ukrainian uniforms. So you know who they are. And a number of them were found dead after the fall of Avdivka two weeks ago. So they were Poles mainly and a couple of Americans.

So I'm not sure they're mercenaries. I think this is why we're tempting the fates, because when you do this sort of thing and the Russians say, hey, you're involved in the war, you're making war on us, then the game's starting to change, isn't it?

Bill Walton (16:04.273)

Well, it seems like we're counting on Putin's forbearance.

Stephen Bryen (16:07.408)

Yeah, but how long?

Bill Walton (16:10.033)

Well, that's the big question. I'm hopeful to get an answer from you. What do you think? Yeah.

Stephen Bryen (16:13.488)

Everyone wants to not remember.

Well, I wanted to mention one thing in this connection. They keep erasing the point in the discourse that takes place in this country and elsewhere, that Russia is a nuclear power.

You're playing with fire. It's a very dangerous thing because at some point the Russians could unleash. And we don't want to create that kind of situation. What we really should want, we're not doing it, but what we should really want to do is try and find a solution to the Ukraine crisis and stabilize the situation in Europe so there's no war in Europe. That's what we should be doing, but we're not.

Bill Walton (16:59.761)

So, but we want to keep a war in Europe because that will help get Joe Biden elected, presumably. That's the thesis.

Stephen Bryen (17:07.248)

At least in Ukraine, yeah, keep the war in Ukraine going. I don't think there's any doubt about that. There were plenty, you know, the US has never participated in any peace process in Ukraine. Not in 2014, not in 2015, not this 2022 when there was tried. Not at all. In fact, the US played the opposite role. If you listen to what

Bill Walton (17:12.017)

So.

Stephen Bryen (17:37.168)

a former Israeli prime minister, Naftali Bennett says, and he was trying to broker a deal. And he talked to Schultz in Germany and Macron in France, and finally to Biden people in Washington. The Biden people told him, forget it, we're not going along with it. And he reports that quite candidly. So they have not wanted a peace process.

They've been against it. And I think, and so is Zelensky, of course, but he's doing what he's told.

Bill Walton (18:13.233)

So where's Lenski end up? Where's Lenski gonna be three months from now?

Stephen Bryen (18:19.472)

south of France, maybe. I mean, I don't see him surviving politically. I'm not speaking physically, but politically, because someone has to bear responsibility for all the losses that the Ukrainians have suffered and it's mad.

Bill Walton (18:23.409)

Is he already got his voice?

Bill Walton (18:40.433)

What do you think that number is now?

Stephen Bryen (18:44.496)

I'm guessing, it's only a guess, somewhere between 600 and 800 thousand.

Bill Walton (18:49.521)

That's stunning. That's stunning.

Stephen Bryen (18:51.088)

Yeah. The Russians have lost a lot too, but we don't know the Russian numbers because they're very hard to come by.

the Ukrainian ones are too. But you can figure it out. And people have surveyed the burial grounds, the new burial grounds for the troops and all that to try and come up with a number. Of course, that doesn't tell you how many were wounded and survived.

Bill Walton (19:16.913)

Those are deaths, those are not casualties. Those are deaths only. You've got so many casualties beyond that that, you know.

Stephen Bryen (19:20.238)
Yeah, those are deaths.

Stephen Bryen (19:25.808)

The general attitude in Ukraine now, you know, they've come up with this idea of recruiting people up to the age of 60 into the army. And the general, and they're pulling people off the streets and out of health clubs and out of the nightclubs and out of restaurants, out of their apartments. I mean, it's really rough. They're not volunteering. But I think the key is they all have the same point of view and they say it out loud and their families say it.

They're going to be thrown into the front with no training and they're just going to be killed. That's it. That's the outlook of the Ukraine, Ukrainian men being pulled into the army now. It's very grim, very grim.

Bill Walton (20:12.369)

So Sebastian Gorka, who is very, I guess, I don't know quite how to describe him. He says, send Ukraine what they need. Send ammunition. Send them Soviet equipment sitting unused in former Warsaw Pact states and use America's peerless intelligence to end the war and reestablish their national sovereignty. Now, this column was written yesterday.

Stephen Bryen (20:42.992)
Really?

Bill Walton (20:43.605)

Gorka worked in the White House. He should know better to know what the situation on the ground is. And I think it's just reckless for us to start acting like if we throw more money and just try a little harder that we're going to turn this thing around. I don't see it getting turned around.

Stephen Bryen (20:48.496)
Yeah, you should.

Stephen Bryen (20:59.888)

Well, exactly. Look, the first problem is manpower, not ammunition. The number one problem facing Ukraine is manpower. The second number two problem is morale, which is very bad. The number three problem is ammunition. Yeah, they're short, especially artillery, but we can't replace that because we don't make it. Not enough of it to replace at the level that they would need. But...

You know, right now the Russians have air superiority over the battlefield. And that's a big deal. So they bomb, heavily bomb, Ukrainian positions relentlessly. Secondly, they have lots of artillery and they have lots of missiles and they have a lot of troops they can add to any day in a week. They have more troops trained and ready to go in. Basically, I think the Russians have been fairly cautious in their approach.

taking it one step at a time. They have not tried to break through or do anything big yet. They could. There's a lot of talk about another Russian offensive coming. But, you know, it's that kind of difficult situation that Ukraine is in. I don't understand Gorka's outlook. By the way, if you want to talk about US intelligence, the New York Times on Sunday, this past week,

reported that the US has 12 major intelligence stations in along the Russian border in Ukraine, and is assisting the Ukrainians not only to spy on the Russians, that's a given, but also to support their operations to carry out assassinations and attacks inside Russia and inside the Donbass and down in Zafareets and Kyrsten, places like that, Crimea too. They have two units.

that are dedicated to that supported by the CIA. One's called Unit 2245 and the other one's called the Fifth Directorate. That's more of the assassination side. Now, none of this is going to stop the Russians. Okay, none of it. All it's going to do is make the Russians more furious, more angry and more difficult. So I don't see the benefit of this at all, but...

Stephen Bryen (23:21.968)

somebody in Washington does because their objective is regime change. Still.

Bill Walton (23:28.337)

Well, as you, I think you point out, the regime shame is going to be Zelensky. It's not going to be Putin.

Stephen Bryen (23:34.256)

I think so. I don't see how, you know, after, you know, he did two major blunders. First one was Bakhmut, the city of Bakhmut in the Donetsk area. And that was a hell of a battle, a long battle. But at the end of the day, the Ukrainians were thrown out. Had tremendous losses on both sides. The second one was Avdivka, which is very close to Donetsk city, the capital of

the Donbass. And the Russians won that one too. But in both those cases, Zulinski said, we stay to the bitter end. We're not going to retreat. We're going to win. We're going to roll the Russians back. We're going to do blah, blah. He even went to Avivka and got his picture. He made a selfie standing at the city gates. Here I am. But, you know, they lost. And the casualty rates were very high. And it was a route.

Bill Walton (24:24.145)

or that, yeah. Yeah.

Stephen Bryen (24:32.848)

Finally, they ran out and the Ukrainian troops and the so -called mercenaries, they ran out in chaotic way. It wasn't a measured retreat. And these were these blunders.

Bill Walton (24:45.713)

Who takes out Luzinski? Do we take him out?

Stephen Bryen (24:51.12)

Zelensky? No, I don't think I think it has to be the will of the Ukrainian people, basically.

Bill Walton (24:52.153)

Yeah.

Bill Walton (24:58.897)

well we've never really concerned ourselves with the will of the ukrainian people how many times have we engineered regime change there so

Stephen Bryen (25:05.456)

Oh, we did. Yeah. I suppose that was the will. But this was, you know, he was an elected. He's an elected president.

Bill Walton (25:13.521)

So this is a mess. This is a real mess. I don't think we've got anybody smarter, strategic in our administration remotely interested in, I mean, it's just disgusting when you talk about the number of Ukrainians who've been killed, and that's just the deaths, the casualties, and the lack of hospitals. Yeah, it's a...

Stephen Bryen (25:32.944)

and the destruction of the country. There's a lot of destruction.

Bill Walton (25:38.969)

And no grownups. The Brits are hawks on this. The Poles are hawks. The head of NATO is a hawk. They want to just plunge ahead.

Stephen Bryen (25:47.632)

Right. And the Germans are hawkish too. But the German government is not in very good shape these days.

Bill Walton (25:54.673)

Well, what's their approval rating there 15 %?

Stephen Bryen (25:58.48)

It's very low. It's in the 20s.

Bill Walton (26:01.297)

It's only higher than Macron's, what's he at, 11 or something in France?

Stephen Bryen (26:05.168)

Yeah, no, it's higher than Macron's, but it's still in the low 20s. Those governments are really overextended into things that, you know, let's talk about Germany for a minute. Germany

should be a powerful state. It has all the money it needs, but its army is a mess. It has a very small army. Its equipment is a wreck.

Bill Walton (26:07.505)

So.

Stephen Bryen (26:32.88)

It couldn't fight its way out of a paper bag if it tried. And these are the guys pushing for war in Ukraine. I mean, it doesn't make a lot of sense.

Bill Walton (26:41.265)

Well, the climate change agenda has caused them to unilaterally disarm on the manufacturing front. The chemicals industry, I think their industrial production is down 4 or 5 % in the last 12 months, maybe in the last six months. And it's not going up. It continues to go down. And that's self-inflicted. And.

Stephen Bryen (27:06.224)

Yeah, but they're also not meeting their 2 % that they claim they should meet for NATO. I mean, they're not doing that. And a lot of the equipment they say they have and they're supporting is not being supported, missing spare parts. It's in rough shape. And by the way, the Brits are no better off. The British can't even get their two aircraft carriers to the Red Sea to fight the Houthis. And they're talking about winning in Ukraine. Come on, give me a break.

They're in sad condition. The British Army is smaller than the army they sent over to the United States in 1774. I mean, it's smaller. So, who's kidding who here?

Bill Walton (27:52.785)

So as usual.

Stephen Bryen (27:52.976)

I mean, we should be wanting to rebuild NATO. I think Trump's right about that. We should be wanting to rebuild NATO properly and not try and invite conflict. I think that you always get sometimes what you wish for.

Bill Walton (27:57.745)

Well.

Bill Walton (28:10.641)

So barring the new administration coming in in what, 10 months, something like that, barring, if Trump wins, it would be very different. But if Trump doesn't win, where do you see, how do you see this playing out?

Stephen Bryen (28:23.536)

Well, it's something very different, anyway.

Stephen Bryen (28:28.08)

Well, I don't see the war lasting until next January.

Bill Walton (28:32.337)

Okay, what happens after the election?

Stephen Bryen (28:37.2)

No, I mean, before the election. I mean, I think I'm talking about Ukraine. I don't think Ukraine can. The current government of Ukraine can't last that long. In my opinion, based on my experience, I've been in Vietnam and Cambodia and Laos when they were falling apart and I've seen governments fall apart. I know what it's like. This government can't possibly have much public support left, if any. And I think the Ukrainians are tired of the war.

Bill Walton (28:41.905)

Right.

Stephen Bryen (29:07.216)

And most importantly, the army is tired of the war. The real army. And yeah, there's a few thugs that they use to recruit hapless kids off the street. And there's thugs they can use like the Azov Brigade. It's called the Third Brigade now, which are made up of fanatical nationalist types. But they're too small. They're not going to... They can't hold on to the country, I don't think. So I think that we're going to see the end soon.

Bill Walton (29:33.937)

So what?

So what does Ukraine look like six months from now? You mentioned earlier, I think their objectives were just to consolidate some of the Russia, to consolidate some of the land they've taken and get assurances that NATO is going to drop its desire to get into NATO. But now it looks like there's going to be a much more total takeover of Ukraine by Russia. If this, yeah.

Stephen Bryen (30:04.184)

A lot of it depends on timing. If, for example, there was regime change in Kiev tomorrow morning, if, for example, and assuming that the regime change was a new regime that wanted to make a deal with the Russians and was willing to drop the NATO stuff and all that and just end it, you know, that's one scenario that you...

could happen. What we don't really know is who will be next in terms of leadership, nor the Russians don't know either. I'm sure they're trying to influence that. My best guess is Zeluzhnik.

because Zoluzhny was the commander in chief of all the armed forces of Ukraine until Zelensky fired him a few weeks ago. And I think the Russians respect Zoluzhny to a certain extent. They certainly respect him as a professional. And he might be the guy. I don't think a Ukrainian

politician living in Ukraine today is in a position, there's some candidates for Reshenko, for example.

Bill Walton (30:50.137)

Who is he?

Stephen Bryen (31:18.448)

the mayor of Kiev is another one who could lead a kind of revolt and replace Zelensky. But I don't think it's going to come from there. I think it's going come from the army. This is my guess. And it's a guess. It's only a guess.

Bill Walton (31:31.633)

Well, if it comes from the army, it seems like you immediately want to sue for peace, but that's not exactly the way a military guy might think or might. I don't know. So we get a new leader. What's the first day one thing he does?

Stephen Bryen (31:51.536)

He opens a channel to the Russians.

Bill Walton (31:54.161)

Okay, so that's where the settlement comes from.

Stephen Bryen (31:56.976)

He said, luckily, I want to have a conversation with you. I want to end the war.

We should find ways to live together. We have lived together in the past for hundreds of years. So, you know, Zoroastrian is this pretty smart fellow. It's not that he's pro -Russian, he's not at all.

Bill Walton (32:17.681)

So.

Bill Walton (32:21.169)

So.

Bill Walton (32:26.097)

You know me, I'm always trying to wind my way towards a conclusion where I see a line of action, we get an outcome. It's a problem for me. Geopolitical stuff doesn't lend itself to a crisp solution. It sounds like what we ought to be hoping for is that regime change, is a pragmatic military leader looking at the military situation saying, look, we can't fight this anymore. He talks to the Russians.

Stephen Bryen (32:31.088)

I wish there was an easy one.

Stephen Bryen (32:41.424)
Well, I mean, the Russians...

Bill Walton (32:55.505)
They cut a deal, the thing shuts down, and that leaves Poland and Sultenburg and Britain sort of in holding the bag. And it sounds to me like they should be holding the bag. I think they're.

Stephen Bryen (33:02.896)
called holding the bag.

Stephen Bryen (33:10.96)
Well, whether they should or shouldn't be, they will be. So, you know, that would be the outcome. I mean, Poland has legitimate security interests. I think one part of a deal would be that Western Ukraine becomes a buffer zone to help shield Poland and also Lithuania and to try and calm the situation.

Bill Walton (33:13.967)
Yeah.

Stephen Bryen (33:37.87)
The Russians could also pull their nuclear weapons out of Belarus, which would be a big help. I mean, there are things that can be done to make this reasonable. But, you know, the US is disengaged from that. We're not actually promoting any solution like that. So it's very foolish of us, actually. Incidentally, Western Ukraine is quite different than the rest of Ukraine, religiously. It's more Roman Catholic.

Bill Walton (34:00.687)
Yeah.

Stephen Bryen (34:07.088)
than Orthodox. And it has some other minorities like Hungarians, a lot of those. And Poland used to have a claim on it. Lwów was really a Polish city at one time. So...

Bill Walton (34:21.169)
So in effect, Western Ukraine is absorbed into Poland.

Stephen Bryen (34:28.302)
I wouldn't say absorbed, I'd say a buffer zone. Some kind of guarantee no military troops there, that kind of thing. Buffer zone is different than absorbed. Absorbed means it's annexed somehow.

Bill Walton (34:30.929)
All right, buffers.

Bill Walton (34:38.545)

Okay, well.

Bill Walton (34:42.225)

Well, yeah, that's not going to happen. But, okay, well, I'm always love sputtering by the time we you and I talk because I'm well, that's all right. It's good for me. It's good. It's good exercise. I. Yeah.

Stephen Bryen (34:50.16)

I don't want to make you a sputter.

Stephen Bryen (34:54.928)

I think we have to think geopolitically, you know, we have to think about how to protect Europe, how to calm the Russians down so they don't do these things again. There are a lot of interests that we have, how to remove as much as possible nuclear weapons from both sides in the conflict area so that they're not part of that.

We've done it before. We did it with the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Agreement, which we canceled, by the way. It was the US that canceled it, not the Russians. Then the Russians canceled it afterwards. We said, well, the Russians cheated. But instead of trying to fix it, we canceled it. They probably did cheat, by the way. I don't doubt it for a minute. But that wasn't the right outcome.

Bill Walton (35:41.615)

Yeah.

Bill Walton (35:48.785)

Well, Stephen, we've got to wrap it up. Let's get back and talk in six weeks or so to see how this develops. You're now writing on Substack. We call it Weapons, and it's a great name. Weapons and Strategy, I highly recommend everybody get on Substack and subscribe to Steve. And he puts out a very interesting analysis rooted in his background. What did we?

Stephen Bryen (36:00.88)

Yes, I am.

Weapons and strategy.

Bill Walton (36:19.089)

What was your title? Yoda of the arms trade for the Pentagon? I mean, well, but still, it's a good one. It's a good one. You know, just you don't have to. It was an it's an appropriate one because you actually know what we're all the how this stuff actually works on the ground, which is very helpful. So I really highly recommend that everybody listening to this read Stephen and of course, watch this show. And Stephen comes back on with some good news about Ukraine.

Stephen Bryen (36:22.704)

Yeah, well, I didn't come up with that title.

Stephen Bryen (36:38.928)

Thank you.

Bill Walton (36:48.625)

in

Stephen Bryen (36:50.862)

The good news will come when the war ends.

Bill Walton (36:52.913)

Yeah, okay. Well, we'll be talking before then, sounds like. So Stephen, thank you, as always, endlessly interesting and hope you all enjoyed this. You know, you can find our show, The Bill Walton Show on all the major podcast platforms. We're also on Substack. We're on CPAC now website. And if you're not already a subscriber, please subscribe and urge your friends to and send us a note.

Tell us other shows you'd like us to be covering and we will work to do just that. So anyway, thanks for joining, Stephen. Talk soon. Yeah.

Stephen Bryen (37:28.666)

Thank you very much.

Stephen Bryen (37:32.944)

Now I understand that I have to stay on until it's fully uploaded.

Bill Walton (37:37.009)

Yeah, there's a, it doesn't take too long. Marina, you there?

Stephen Bryen (37:39.29)

It says 99.

Stephen Bryen (37:49.68)

Yeah, I learned that from Gaffney.

Bill Walton (37:53.009)

So did you?