Russia, Ukraine, Europe and the United States

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with Moderator

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Jim Shepard [00:00:25] So tonight, a very vibrant speaker. Dr. Kangas probably didn't do a whole lot of prep because things are changing so fast it would've been useless. The situation two weeks ago, what we see today and tomorrow will be different. But it's going to be a very interesting conversation. I'd like to go through the whole detail of the bio of Dr. Kangas. Obviously has been around for a bit, has a lot of very interesting things. He's currently academic dean and professor at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, a tremendous amount of experience looking all over the world and has some very interesting insights for us. Our moderator tonight is Dr. Thomas Schwartz from Vanderbilt. who is kind enough to facilitate and moderate a number of our other programs and he's known to not ask too tough a question. So, with that we'll get the program started. Thank you for coming.

Thomas Schwartz [00:01:39] Well Dr. Kangas, we're now almost entering, I guess, the end of the fifth week into the sixth week of war between Russia and Ukraine, or, I should

say, Russian invasion of Ukraine. There has been a lot of changes over the last few weeks in terms of our assessment of the military situation, our understanding of the possible goals of Russia, the question of what American policy should be. The question of how best to handle or deal with the situation on the part of the European countries as well. I wonder if you could start us off, maybe with your assessment of the current situation in Ukraine, what it looks like, what you think seems to be happening on the ground, as well as in the diplomacy of the period.

Roger Kangas [00:02:31] OK, well, thank you very much and I should start first of all, thank you, you all for being here today. I really appreciate this opportunity to speak with you on this issue. Yeah, the situation in Ukraine, there's no question that as we go week by week, it changes. And the fact that I'm saying week by week itself is a bit of a shocker. This was supposed to be probably a five-to-seven-day conflict. The goal was to bifurcate the country, to obviously surround Kiev, no indication it would be an occupation of Kiev but to split the country and to take the coastal regions and ultimately the Ukrainian government would collapse. Every indication by the Russian intelligence was that this was the case. It obviously wasn't. And of course, today if we're looking at what's the current situation, first, we start with the phrase you used, Russian invasion of Ukraine, and that's an important one because the battle of the narrative is still out there. A number of countries still call it the special military operation. They don't use the word war. In fact, if you use the word war in the Russian media, that is subject to fine and imprisonment. So you cannot call it a war. You know, you can call it, you know, certain military operations, special military operations, it's a limited campaign. That has bled into the narratives of other countries in Central Asia, the Caucasus, in South Asia, in the Gulf states, different places I've had the either the pleasure or misfortune over the last five weeks to visit and to meet with individuals. And you see this approach coming out.

So first and foremost, after five weeks, we're still discussing what is it. Secondly, again, the fact that we're discussing it means that there's been resistance. No kidding. I think that was probably the gross underestimation of the West in addition to Russia and other states. Now, you know, where does this come from? Where does this resolve of the Ukrainians to fight back? Some will talk about the modernization of the Ukrainian military that was slowly, slowly taking place since 2014. Others simply note, because they're there. When you're defending your home turf the motivation is a little harder, right. And so we do see that taking place. In fact, even early this morning, I was on a call with a colleague of mine in Odessa. She runs a research center there. And, you know, she's getting quite feisty about this and talking about our boys doing this and our boys doing that. And there is a pride in Ukraine of what's happening now. This doesn't negate the fact that there's violence, bloodshed, destruction taking place, and this is angering Ukrainians. But clearly there's you know, from their perspective, there's motivation to fight. And then just the third quick point is if we're seeing this conflict, which is really one state invading another, the fear that it can expand or may already be expanding is being talked about much more.

You know, we've hit a stalemate moment. Institute for the Study of War, other organizations do these daily maps of what territory Russia controls, what they don't. I'm going to give everyone in this room a caution. Any time you see these maps that show here's territories Russia owns, here's territories they don't. I spent over 20 years working in Afghanistan or with Afghanistan, and we did the same thing. Don't - you know, use these with caution. Often the Russians controlled the road in a space. They don't control the fields on either side. They don't control the rest stops. They don't control the small villages and towns. And so, I've even seen some maps which show actual Russian troop presence. Bellingcat is a wonderful source for you researchers. They love to look at specifics. And

you almost see this like veins, you know, spider veins going through areas where Russia controls in the south. It's a little more effective, in part because the military units in the south are better. These are more seasoned troops in the north, you have more conscripts. But at the end of the day, we have a stalemate.

And so the concern is - and this is what I'll kind of end with - this first point is the inclusion of outside forces. Now when they say, oh, we're bringing in Chechens, these are still internal Russian forces, let's be clear. Chechens are citizens of Russia, the Russian Federation. But when we start bringing in Syrians, when we start bringing in individuals, as I say with experience in Libya - I don't know how we're going to phrase that other than outsiders coming in - we might see an expansion. And of course, on the Ukrainian side, you know, I've been criticized by Russian colleagues who will say, well, wait a second, you're also helping the Ukrainians and NATO is helping the Ukrainians, the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Germans. The Germans, yeah. You know, they want to supply lethal assistance. Yes, it is expanding in other directions. And then I should add on the Ukrainian side the inclusion of volunteer units.

When the war first started, and I sort of, you know, saw this large power invading its smaller neighbor, are we going to end up with some sort of, you know, partisan effect? Those of you who know the history of World War Two know that Ukraine and Russia have a long history of partisan warfare. Or is it like a Spanish civil war where international brigades, Abraham Lincoln battalions come in? Guess what? We're having that. Americans, Canadians, Australians of Ukrainian descent, Brits of Ukrainian descent. It was a buddy of mine, he is a BBC journalist. He was in Kiev and he saw this Ukrainian defense unit and they all had, you know, North England accents. And he's like, you know, what is this? Now, these are small in number. Don't think that the conflict is being flooded with outsiders, but the potential for expansion continues the longer it stalemate.

Thomas Schwartz [00:09:00] You raise a lot of issues that I'd love to explore in different details. Let me take us, though, to the United States. I had, I was talking before the meeting that we both had unpleasant experiences with interviews and reactions on Indian TV. And I was doing a Zoom presentation there, and I was accused of falling for the American media's narrative that the American media is portraying the conflict in good versus evil terms. I'd like to ask you about the American response. It does seem that there is a great deal of interest in this country. There's a great deal in the polling that indicates support for the Ukraine. There have been extremist comments on both sides of the political spectrum. People saying, well, we shouldn't be involved or that Russia or backing Putin and that is still there. But it does seem like there's an overwhelming consensus in this country to support Ukraine. In what ways and what manner should or - do you see the United States acting and what types of things might it still consider that you think would be prudent? What do you fear that it might do that might be improved?

Roger Kangas [00:10:30] That's the harder question, right? No, I mean, to get to the image issue and how the Russian invasion of Ukraine is being viewed in the U.S., you're absolutely right, this has hit a certain chord. And you know, and in in part because, you know, yes, it's a European country being attacked and we haven't, you know, we haven't seen this since the Bosnian conflict and even that one seemed less attached, you know? You know, the notion of, you know, the siege of Sarajevo, which, by the way, went on for two and a half years. So, when we think of longevity of conflict, you know, those of you who remember the wars of the 90s know that these things can drag on. But I think sort of the images of, you know, when we see the civilian destruction, the purposeful targeting of,

you know, whether they are hospitals or your kindergartens and all this, you know, the graphic images of, you know, people burying their children. This hits a nerve.

And there's two things that come out of this one. And I think it is a fair criticism that a number of Americans would say, well, they look just like us, you know, and pause for a moment, right? Because there's death and destruction happening in Yemen every day. We see this in Afghanistan, you know, in Myanmar and other countries. But perhaps those are too distant. Perhaps they're not quite, you know, European enough for some viewers. There is a segment, I would say, who do attach to that perspective. There's another one, though, and I think this is this is maybe the more important. It's a conflict where everything is being filmed. And again, I'll go back to the Bosnian War. We didn't have a lot of imagery. If you think of the siege of Sarajevo and I had a chance, unfortunately, I should say in the 90s to go to Sarajevo and, you know, to see Sniper Alley and to see the places where horrible things happened after the fact. I was told, well, this is when this happened and this is where this happened. To go to Srebrenica - this is where the massacre happened. OK, great. Today we have these (cell phone), right? So, Ukrainians are out there in numbers filming everything. International organizations, I mentioned Bellingcat, but others, groups using satellite imagery are focusing on this.

So I'll give actually a case for a Russian coverage. There was an anti-missile or a Grad rocket launcher unit that was a Ukrainian one that was hiding in the parking lot of a shopping mall in a Ukrainian city. I want to say it was Kharkiv. And it would pop out, fire its rockets, go back into the underground garage. And so eventually they just dropped a bomb on the garage and blew it up. Eight civilians died. Now, the argument that the Russians will make and this is actually fair is there was a curfew. There shouldn't have been any civilians there. They were hitting a military target that was going after them. But the fact that we can have this back and forth about one single event with multiple images is something we've not had in other conflicts. We don't have multiple images of events taking place in Yemen, for example, or in Afghanistan. I mean, we might get an image. And so I just think this flood of if you want to say this assault on our senses of pretty graphic images if we choose to look are out there and that does shape public opinion. So now getting to the so what, what do we do? From the U.S. side, I'm actually pleased with the fact that there is talk. Sometimes it can be hostile, sometimes it can be nasty. Yes, I know we've we spent a couple of days with the what is it, the guy's got to go, or what was the phrase? Hunt Putin, right? You know, and oh no, this is regime change. I say that about every Chicago Bear coach, you know, every two years, but I don't mean anything existential to the guy, just the new coach.

But the concern that the U.S. is having is obviously we are technically not a party to this war. And even when people say, well, we need to do this and we need to do this, painful as it might be we are not a party in this conflict and adding extra sanctions on Russia, possible, although now we are seeing, you know, sort of economic levers used as war weapons much more effectively than I think we've seen in the past. But dragging, you know, NATO, the U.S. into an actual kinetic conflict, you know, into the war, I think is still something that that, you know, U.S. decision makers don't want to do, they don't want to make that step. And so what you're going to see is still rather belligerent language being used, economic measures still being addressed, attempts to bring in other countries. Right now there's a big campaign to get the Gulf countries involved - good luck with that - and our South Asian friends.

But you know, that's the approach you're seeing. The fear is what happens if there's an accident. You know, you have a lot of NATO's troops creeping up along the border. By the

way, within the borders of sovereign states, within the borders of Poland, within the borders of Lithuania. But what if there's an errant Russian missile or even a purposeful one, just like, you know, the errant Indian missile that launched into Pakistan the other week and the Pakistanis were like, oh, how could you do this? Well, these mistakes do happen or even purposeful mistakes. And I worry that, you know, whether you want to call it a false flag event or a real accident takes place, that escalates, and the fear of escalation, particularly with a leadership in Russia that may or may not be detached from reality. And I'm just going to phrase it that way. Both sides with weaponry that, quite frankly, is effective when you use the higher-level ones. Yes. You know, when Mr. Putin even uses the N-word nuclear weapons, we have a problem. And so, you know, I do worry that that escalation because of an accident or a misinterpretation could still be in play.

Thomas Schwartz [00:17:08] Your question leads me to ask a little bit about your own sense of what is going on in Russia. We are getting various reports with media has been largely restricted now, so it's much more difficult, perhaps. But for a time, of course, it was possible to see demonstrations occurring, to see some opposition to the war, to see support for the war. The character, Putin has been variously characterized as a mad man, as very clever by a certain former president. All of these sorts of discussions or directions, the whole question of the oligarchs and what could be done to influence Putin and whether Putin can be made to see this differently.

Recently, I read a fair amount about the idea that the military may be disillusioned and or simply giving Putin the wrong information. That was one of the big stories today. In fact, I think the president, President Biden actually echoed that. Taking somewhat of both a distant or perhaps ... what's going on? What do you think is going on in Russian leadership circles now?

Roger Kangas [00:18:30] Yeah, that's - no, this is the question I think we're all trying to figure out. In fact, I read there was an intelligence group, this is an open-source document they put out. It was a psychological assessment of Vladimir Putin and his leadership. And I think it was - it was a lot of I would say strange language trying to basically say, you know, he's a bully that can't back down, OK, got it. And so, the question is, how do you get him to back down? And I think that's a debate that some are having, which is in the Russian leadership. What was supposed to be a short, victorious war, wasn't. Now I'm going to stress that this war is not over. And in fact, Russia still is in the superior position as much as we, and you know, people may applaud the fighting capacity or I should say will of the Ukrainian people, I'm reminded of if you want to say something in my own family history in Finland, where in 1939 we did a, you know, they did a really good job in fighting back the Soviet Union in 1939. By March of 1940, the Soviet Union defeated Finland. At the end of the day, Soviet Union won that war. The larger power prevailed.

So could Russia prevail, control Ukraine or part of Ukraine, cut it in half and have an East-West? These are all possibilities, and I still think, in my opinion, that this is a thought process that is probably occupying Mr. Putin and some of the senior leaders. Now we're getting into debates of, oh, we haven't heard from the Russian mob in a while or Shoigu is a little silent. And of course, you have Tobias' departure. You know, you do see some defections. Yeah, there could be people looking for alternatives. And I think what we're seeing, and I'll sort of end by, the notion of looking for an off ramp that would allow Russia to claim some semblance of victory. You know, some have said, well, that's what we need to do. So, when Zelensky made the comment of, well, Ukraine is willing to discuss neutrality, that hits a red button issue for Mr. Putin. The fact that people would say, well, Crimea is gone, you know, Crimea is Russian. That hits if you want to say the right note for

Mr. Putin. There could be these special moments. And in fact, just the other day, he himself commented that, you know, our major goals of the first phase are done. You know, the sort of so-called consolidation of Luhansk and Donetsk. Would that be sufficient? And so, you know, there are some who will say by creating these off ramps, we could de-escalate.

But I'm just going to throw two quick things out. One. A year ago, January 21st, 2021, Mr. Putin writes, his name is affixed to a 5000-word document that basically says, you know, Ukraine is this artificial state. And there's this whole notion of a unified Slav world - Belarus, Ukraine, Russia. And he lays out a map of what he sees the future of the space being. We shouldn't discount the words of dictators and people in power. You know, if they say something, maybe he actually believes that. So, point one. Secondly, when it comes to, you know, if you want to say the end state of how this, you know, if in fact, he's able to walk back and says, OK, what I've done is sufficient, the consequences of this war are still going to be addressed. We're still looking most likely at instances of war crimes. We're looking at instances of one state causing irreparable damage to another. When we look at what's happened in Ukraine, the cost of reconstruction in that country is well into the multiple billions. Who's going to pay for this? Is this going to be money confiscated from the oligarchs, Russian trust funds and everything else from outside of Russia? Who knows? Can Russia go back into the community of nations? Can we all say, oh, you guys were bad but now everything's fine. You threw a tantrum and you broke a few things, but it's OK. I think we've passed that. It's been five weeks.

We've passed that mark. So, what are the consequences that Russia will have to face? You know, look, it's been over a decade and we're still struggling with this with Mr. Assad in Syria. We've had this with other leaders around the world. Mr. Putin now joins that club of pariahs and I worry that not just how do we deal with him, his government, but also Russia as a nation and Russians as people. Russian academics, Russian athletes, Russian musicians, the people that we've kind of gotten to know over the last 30 years. What's going to happen in that world? And I think even if the war were to stop, boy, the consequences are significant.

Thomas Schwartz [00:23:40] Let me shift a little bit to ask you about the role of China and how we should assess that. In fact, of course, you know, one of the things that has been characteristic of the Biden administration has been the emphasis that we need to focus on China. The desire, for example, to get out of Afghanistan was the notion of let's focus on China. And in fact, even as the buildup was going on, the administration was talking well, we have to keep our eyes on China. Well, now we have a situation in which Russia has acted and China's position in all of this creates real challenges for both the United States and you might say the EU as well. How do you see China reacting? Is the alliance there one that they seem to be valuing with Russia or are they still playing a double game?

Roger Kangas [00:24:44] It's an interesting double game because quite frankly, if Russia wins, China wins. If Russia loses, China wins. Got that? You know, not to be too cynical, but first, to your point, yes, the United States is focused on China. The new U.S. National Defense Strategy is going to come out in the next couple of weeks. It's sort of public form. And you are going to see threat number one, China. You know, what is it - yeah, China, COVID and climate change. The three C's are things you're going to need to remember. And you know, it's the one state that keeps getting brought up.

Now, the other three states that we constantly think of threats Russia, North Korea and Iran are in there. But China gets front and center. Interestingly, and this is now for folks

here on both sides of the political aisle. If you were to take the Trump National Security Strategy and the Biden one and overlap it, it's a happy Venn diagram. There are a lot of similarities. Language is different. And there are some things in the Biden strategy that are not in the Trump one - climate change and, you know, some human security issues. But China for both are important.

And so, you know, when I look at this for the U.S., again, I'll just mention us for a second, the fact that this war is happening is quite frankly, the last thing the U.S. wants or needs because it draws our attention away. You're absolutely right. The departure from Afghanistan, no matter how chaotic it was, was something that needed to be done because the - speaking from the administration's perspective - because this is what we want to do, you know, we want to put our attention to the Pacific. Russia is now attempting to shift this away. Now why do I say China wins in either way? If you know, say Russia were to pacify Ukraine, you know, say it achieves its goals. They have a strategic partnership. It is, you know, they are in a security arrangement, most more so through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It's not a collective defense treaty, so I know sometimes this gets brought up of, oh, you know, they're both in it together. No, China's not in that. They do not have that kind of relationship with Russia, but they're definitely willing to help. They're not criticizing. They're leading, if you want to call it the foot dragging in the international community against Russia.

And so, if Russia were to win, it would by definition be seen as a defeat of the West because that's how their narrative is. This is not about Russia-Ukraine. I keep saying Russia-Ukraine. In China's perspective, this is Russia-NATO. Russia-U.S. Ukraine is just a chessboard. It's just a chess piece in this competition. And so, it would be seen as a public relations and image defeat of the West, which helps China. It also would create conditions for shifting economic bases in the world, moving away from the dollarized economy, et cetera, et cetera. If Russia fails to achieve its goal, we have a severely weakened Russia, but it's not going to disappear. Russia's not going to vanish. It will just be a weakened state. And from China's perspective, in the long run, Russia is no different than the West. These are all declining powers, we're the ascendant power. And so this just accelerates Russia's decline. You know, it gives us a little more leverage over them, and Russia, in fact, is solidified as the junior partner to China. And so that, if I'm in Moscow or in another Russian city isn't a very pleasant thought, but in Beijing's mind, that's the end state. So for China, it's an interesting fence sitting that's taking place and they want to wait it out. They want to see how it works.

Thomas Schwartz [00:28:35] Well, let me follow up and ask you whether we should allow them to fence sit. Should the United States insist that China, for example, obey more of the sanctions? Or is there a way that the United States or the EU together could put pressure on China to isolate Russia more? Or would this be resisted very strongly? Or is this something that would not even be in our interest because it would drive Russia and China together in a way that might be dangerous?

Roger Kangas [00:29:05] I mean, I think the fear of driving them together is, I don't want to say misplaced, but that's already happened. So, we're there. The question is whether we, you know, if China wants to be a member of the international community and not just, you know, the community of nations, but we're talking a participant in international financial organizations they have to abide by certain rules. And if those other members create, you know, whether it's a unified sanctions or sanctions regime on Russia or other restrictions, yeah, I think that China has to abide by them ought to be forced. Interesting, a very small country in Europe, Lithuania, is in a war with China, you know, kind of an image war, trade

war, diplomatic spat. A country of just over two million people is taking on China and the rest of the world worries. I mean, I'm proud of my Baltic friends. And, you know, but it shows that if Europe and in fact, I should say the EU is now revisiting that and saying, wait a second, we need to back our EU partner. I'm in all of this, you know, as much as I can look at what the U.S. is doing, what China is doing, what Russia is doing, I'm impressed with the EU. They're actually unified on something, you know, that's a shocker. And if there is this unity and if there is a decision to not only detach ourselves from the Russian economic space, which Europeans are now seriously looking at the goal of 2027 being not dependent on Russian energy, you know, wow, that's impressive.

But to even make that statement about China, and if in concert with the U.S., if China doesn't abide by these rules now, China could - and I will say somewhere in the back of my mind, there's a couple of brain cells rattling that says, you know, if China actually takes a good look at this backing Russia's not in their interest, that if they want to be seen as a responsible leader in the world, they need to abide by certain principles and the territorial integrity of nations is one of these principles, by the way that China holds. So perhaps they could be forced or at least pressured into getting off that fence. I think it's going to be a while, though.

Thomas Schwartz [00:31:31] I'd like to turn back a little bit to the Ukraine itself. One question that certainly could be out there soon and was raised by my very belligerent Indian interviewer the other day is whether the Ukraine wants neutrality and the United States was preventing it from offering this. But more importantly, are there things that Ukraine will accept as concessions that might make the West uncomfortable in the fact that a type of surrender of territory or others that that would bother the West or on the flip side of that, will the West continue to support Ukraine if Ukraine insists on continued sovereignty over Crimea and the Donbass Luhansk regions and in a sense refuses to abide by this by any sort of compromise agreement?

I'm fond - one danger with talking to historians is we dig into analogies. And one of the analogies that has come up among Cold War historians about the nature of this conflict is some comparisons to the Korean War, in particular because of the way the Soviets attack, the way the West mobilized in response. But one of the perhaps not as well-known aspects of the Korean War was the difficulty of dealing with the South Korean leadership who wanted to continue the war until they achieved reunification and the fact that the United States had to essentially tell them, no, we're going to, we're going to take a settlement. Do you think there's that possibility here with Ukraine that it could be compelled to cede sovereignty? What do you see as the sort of the diplomatic arrangements that could be adjusted? Or will it all depend?

Roger Kangas [00:33:28] In fact, the other day - this is an excellent question because it reminds us that, you know, all states have agency in some way, shape or form, whether they're small, medium, large. You know, Ukraine, a country of over 40 million people, although now, you know, more than four million of them have left their country, they've crossed the border. But that they do reserve the right to determine their destiny if they can. When Zelensky proposed neutrality he phrased it in a way that gave Ukraine options. And now this isn't, you know, if you think of Austrian neutrality, 1955, right? In order for us to be whole and to get rid of the occupiers, the Soviets, the Americans, the British and the French, we'll be a neutral state, right? And everyone agreed to that and the Austrians agreed to it. I don't think we're going to see something of that nature.

That is what Mr. Putin would like. He would like Ukraine to be a really big Austria. But I think Ukrainians aren't looking for that. What the Ukrainians are saying is in terms of international alliances, and we're really going to emphasize NATO, that that's probably not in the future any time soon. You know, reality check, it probably wouldn't be anyway. I think NATO enlargement was already at a high watermark. And so, if they were to put on the table, you know, NATO accession, you know, it's something down the future. I don't, you know, I don't think they can never say never, and I would be surprised if we hit that mark. But if they look at this as in the immediate space, Ukraine is neutral, that NATO doesn't pressure it to join. Oh, wait a second. NATO's never pressured a country to join. That's the interesting thing, right? Countries that have joined NATO when NATO's enlarged have always asked to join the alliance. The demand signal has always come from the region. And so for Ukraine to say we'll not send that demand signal. No, fair enough.

The interesting one will be the European Union. If anything, I think this accelerates Ukraine's closer ties with the EU. EU accession is a trickier animal. About a hundred thousand pages of the acquis communautaire. Good luck in joining it. I mean, you, you have to really do your homework. NATO's a political decision, EU is a process, and for them to join the EU would take a long time, but to have a closer arrangement with them, a deeper structure association with them. Absolutely. And so, I do see Ukraine offering up certain things that might, you know, bring the war to a quicker end in all of this. And here's the - I don't call it the ironic thing - is as much as there is this discussion in the U.S. and in the West about, you know, we're really happy to see Ukraine fight for itself. At the end of the day, if there's a settlement that stops the violence w probably would accept it. And from the Ukrainian perspective, and last point because you raised these - Donetsk, Luhansk, Crimea, and now the new territories that have been taken. Could the line go back to the original three? You know, Ukraine may accept that. Crimea is a tricky one. Luhansk and Donetsk, believe it or not, are more - they feel that those shouldn't be contested spaces, that those should be part of Ukraine. But I think the jury is out on that.

And one final point. Zelensky was really smart in saying and oh, by the way, any of this has to be approved of in a national referendum. So, one, politically smart move. But secondly, I think that would really give us the pulse of the Ukrainian people.

Thomas Schwartz [00:37:41] I take your point, but it does sound like there could come a sort of rub of the Russians controlling, for example, Mariupol, which supposedly they're going to be able to occupy any day now. They've devastated it. They control that cold coastal region. Is it possible, then, for a Ukrainian government to survive a peace settlement that would cede territory of that sort and then would in effect, with Zelensky by saying popular referendum, is saying in effect that, you know, anything I negotiate could be rejected. So, it sounds like a formula actually for ongoing work.

Roger Kangas [00:38:23] No, it could. One, you know, sort of talk about we don't want to make parallels, but I'll make one anyway. You know, in in the early 1990s, the small country of Armenia took over spaces in a small country of Azerbaijan. You know, the Karabakh region. Almost 20 percent of Azerbaijan was occupied. I once was at a conference and a geographer said, well, it's really about 18 percent, and he was beset on us being a heretic, you know, because 20 percent is this magical number, 18 sounds like not much. But this territory was taken and for, you know, close to 25 years the assumption was it was never going to be take it back. It was never going to go back to Azerbaijan. Of course, in the fall of 2020, there was a forty-four-day war. Most of it's been taken back. I've had a chance now to go to that area three different times on part of Armenia and

Azerbaijan border things. So, you know, done the battlefield tours, looked at the sites. I'm stunned at how it was done so quickly. This is inhospitable terrain, but people were fighting for land that they really believed was theirs. And so you know it, it was the next generation that did it. The leaders in Azerbaijan from the 1994 agreement to the 2020 conflict, for 26 years they had the same narrative. We believe in a unified Azerbaijan. We have, you know, occupied territories that we want to get back. Not comforting to the population that was displaced, but for the Armenian people was sort of say, OK, let's focus now on the economic development of the rest of our country and move on.

But yeah, it gives you the risk of the continuation of conflict, because never once did they say, oh, we've given this up, you know, even though maybe privately some would say we're not getting it back, nobody would ever publicly say, we've given up it's now Armenian territory. We're not going to, you know, we're not going to regain it. So even in those instances, I agree with you, I think some secession will probably leave in the back of Ukrainians minds of, OK, we don't have Crimea now, but there may be a point where Russia was weakened, where we can go after it.

Thomas Schwartz [00:40:53] Okay. I'm going to ask one last question, and then I'd like to encourage now people to be thinking about questions and offer them to our distinguished guest here. What you mentioned at one point, the role of economics in all of this. A lot of people would assume that a country without McDonalds will collapse, that the pain would be so intense to lose these Western features. Give me your sense. And President Biden, of course, was a little difficult on this one. Or at least in saying for a time, we're going to have these great sanctions and they're going to be a deterrent and then suddenly shifting and say, no, no, no, I never said that. They're not going to - it takes time. But what is the role of economic sanctions in the Russian economy? How do you see those sanctions affecting things? And in many respects, are we putting a lot of very false hope in the idea that sanctions will change Russia?

Roger Kangas [00:42:02] No, this is, you know, this is the tough one. And by the way, you know, two quick comments. Yes, I think any Russian who has, you know, like an old receipt that says, come back and get a free apple pie is now really annoying. And secondly, I think when Adidas pulled out, there goes to tracksuits for the Mafiosi. I mean, that was really a tragic moment. But I think these, you know, they make us feel good. You know, it's the we've pulled out of the country. We're doing the right thing now. I do think from certain corporate perspectives, it is a smart thing to do. You're now in a, you know, air quote dangerous situation. Your property could be confiscated, by the way. Let's not think that these sanctions are all one direction. You know, let's not forget the Western companies that were in Iran in 1979 and suddenly found out that, oh, now they've just been nationalized. The odd exception was Kentucky Fried Chicken. KFC lasted as a private entity franchise in the Islamic Republic for about five or six more years, and someone finally goes wait, that's American and took it. But for the others, they were confiscated.

And so even if the West didn't conduct, you know, a withdrawal of companies, they may be forced out anyway. The goal of saying, well, okay, we're going to limit, you know, Russian activity. We're going to give, you know, the, you know, the removal of the SWIFT access and other banking opportunities. I mean, these hit hard, but countries can be resilient. You know, South Africa was isolated in much of the 1980s and into the 90s, and it actually took an internal process to get rid of apartheid. I think outside sanctions could have continued for another couple of decades. Cuba's been under sanctions for more than half a century but just by the U.S., German tourists and others get to go there. But you know, the notion

of sanctions can be effective if there is a large community that's participating in it. We're not seeing that yet. It's Americans, it's Europeans, it's the Australians, it's the Japanese, it's the South Koreans. But India, China, other countries, the Gulf states are still fence sitting. So, you know, we'll see on that.

But secondly, it's not to say you can force them, but it gives a wonderful excuse for the Russians to escalate. You know, they'll say, well, we've had no choice. You know, you're cutting off our ability to sell oil and gas and therefore, you know, so now we're in a desperate situation. You know, we're going to continue this conflict and maybe even start expanding it. So, you know, who knows where this is going? I'm not, I'm not saying sanctions can't work or sanctions are a bad idea, but we have to be mindful of their limitations. But the economic impact of this, we're now going to start to see in second and third order effects. And it's not just Russia. And quite frankly, not just Ukraine. Let's not forget, Ukraine is an exporter of industrial goods, also agricultural goods. Egypt gets over 85 percent of its grain from Russia and Ukraine. Georgia does about 80 percent. Azerbaijan does. You know the neighboring states are going to feel the pinch. Even India has been seeing price rises in wheat products because their supply chains coming out of Russia. Fertilizers and other things are being disrupted. We're seeing this now. It's what, March 31st? Right? So, the spring planting, you know, underway. Guess what? There's not going to be a good crop in Ukraine this year, you know, and probably not in some of the Russian spaces. So, we could see second and third order effects in other countries, not just energy, but also food products and some supply chain issues. And that's not just about Russia now. It's going to affect other countries. And I think that's also what's making a few of the neighbors nervous.

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