

# USA Rules Ukraine Through Anticorruption Agency

[Subtitles available — turn them on for clearer understanding] Ukraine is marred in a corruption scandal, investigated by its anticorruption bureau, NABU, linking very high profile politicians to all sorts of illegal money schemes. What a coincidence that this is coming out right now, when the USA is trying to exert power over Kiev to accept Trump's so-called "28 Point Peace Plan". Here to make sense of this is again Professor Ivan Katchanovski. Professor Katchanovski is a Ukrainian-Canadian political scientist at the University of Ottawa and the author of the books "The Maidan Massacre in Ukraine: The Mass Killing that Changed the World" and most recently "The Russia-Ukraine War and its Origins." Links: Help Prof. Katchanovski: <https://gofund.me/79a58e94d> And read his new book here (free): <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-98724-3> FB post about NABU and FBI: <https://www.facebook.com/ivan.katchanovski/photos/as-i-said-nabu-which-went-against-zelenskys-cronies-is-a-us-proxy-in-ukraine-nab/25684146844521859> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Goods Store: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Intro 00:08:38 The Link Between NABU and the FBI 00:17:10 Is NABU Constitutional? Structure & Funding 00:27:10 The "Guillotine": Controlling Ukraine via Corruption Charges 00:34:08 Is the US Serious About the Trump Peace Plan? 00:43:59 Deep State Sabotage & Internal US Power Struggles 00:54:10 Professor Katchanovski's Books & Research

## #Pascal

Ukraine is deep in a corruption scandal, investigated by its anti-corruption bureau, NABU, linking very high-profile politicians to all sorts of illegal money schemes. What a coincidence that this is coming out now, just as the US is trying to exert power over Kyiv to accept Trump's so-called 28-point peace plan. Here to make sense of this is, again, Professor Ivan Katchanovski. Professor Katchanovski is a Ukrainian-Canadian political scientist at the University of Ottawa and the author of the books \*The Maidan Massacre in Ukraine: The Mass Killing That Changed the World\*, and, most recently, \*The Russia-Ukraine War and Its Origins\*. Both of these books are available online and for free, by the way—they're open access, so you can download them. The links will be in the description below. But now, Professor Katchanovski, welcome.

## #Ivan Katchanovski

Yes, thank you for the invitation.

## #Pascal

Thank you very much for making time again. You're one of the voices in academia who's really been trying to work through the sources of what's going on politically in these—well, in these very tragic circumstances. Most recently, let's start with NABU and this corruption scandal. I mean, Ukraine hasn't exactly been famous for its anti-corruption efforts, but now NABU is cracking down on even very senior officials. You wrote a Facebook post in which you also pointed out the connections between NABU and the FBI. Could you give us an overview of what's happening and what the link between the US and NABU is?

## #Ivan Katchanovski

I think in the past week or so there were two major developments in Ukraine. One was this new peace plan suggested by Donald Trump to Zelensky, which is now again a top story in the news. The other, which actually preceded the announcement of the plan, was a corruption scandal in Ukraine—a major story there recently. It was, to a lesser extent, not as well reported by Western media, and there was almost no reaction from the American government or politicians. But I think this is also a major story because it's closely linked to the peace plan now being discussed by Trump and Zelensky, given the impact of this corruption scandal on Zelensky and his close associates.

So this scandal happened on Monday, November 11th, when the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, known as NABU, launched investigations and filed charges against top officials in Ukraine—people closely connected to Zelensky. All of them were basically part of his inner circle. These charges involved the First Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, then the Vice Prime Minister, Chernyshov, who is again closely connected to Zelensky and his wife—he's the godfather of their children and also a personal friend. There were also two other members of the Ukrainian government implicated in the scandal: the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Energy. They had to resign—or rather, they didn't actually resign but were dismissed by the Ukrainian parliament. But again, there were no serious consequences afterward.

And you also have businesspeople who were very closely connected to Zelensky from the time when he was not yet president of Ukraine. One of them, who founded and actually owned Zelensky's comedy studio called Kvartal 95—"Quarter 95," basically a translation from Ukrainian—was a businessman named Timur Minzhin. He wasn't very well known in Ukraine, but he was very closely linked to Zelensky because of his business ties and also because of a kind of personal relationship with him. There were stories that Zelensky celebrated his birthday in a room, in a very elite apartment in Kyiv, which was owned by this person. And there were also other ties going back to the time when both of them were working for the Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky, who's now in prison.

And so, Timur Minzhin was basically a low-level kind of person who was just working for Kolomoisky. He made ties and connections to both Zelensky and Kolomoisky. After the start of the war, he managed to get very rich by receiving a lot of money from a state company called Energoatom,

which is responsible for nuclear power plants in Ukraine. This was again an illegal scheme, and NABU published recordings of this person along with many other top officials in the Ukrainian government—some of whom I already mentioned, but also others close to Zelensky. So this is very large-scale corruption, which, I think, for the first time became public in Ukraine.

But it was very clear that this was, again, not just an accident. This is just the tip of the iceberg of corruption. And Zelensky is, I think, very closely linked to this corruption. In this case, this person—again, Timur Minzhin—and another associate were able to flee Ukraine, or at least leave the country, with assistance, obviously, from the government. They received information about the NABU investigation and were able to leave Ukraine, going first to Poland and then to Israel. So now they are not in Ukraine.

But the scandal was very significant, and it implicated not only, as I mentioned, close associates of Zelensky, but also him as well. There are reports that these tapes include conversations between Zelensky and Minzhin in his apartment, talking about Ukrainians in not very nice terms—basically about ordinary Ukrainians—and also about other people connected to the scandal, including a very important person called Yermak, who is, I think, the second most powerful person in Ukraine and even acts as president at times, while Zelensky often just reads his speeches.

And this person, Yermak, was just leading the Ukrainian delegation for peace talks in Geneva with senior U.S. officials. This is also very important because this corruption scandal has made Zelensky's position and power much more limited than before. Basically, he was a dictator before, and nobody could challenge him. There was no real opposition, no free media. And suddenly you have this anti-corruption agency, which had existed for quite a long time but never had investigations of such scale, and suddenly they release this information, which has significantly impacted Zelensky's popularity and his ability to exercise power in Ukraine.

And this has also had a very significant effect on his stance on the war in Ukraine, because he's now basically accepted the possibility of having a peace deal with Russia, which was not, I think, very likely before. So this is, I think, very closely connected to the current efforts by Trump to also kind of make Zelensky—or try to force him—to sign a peace deal with Russia, which is, I think, another important and very serious issue as well.

## #Pascal

May I just ask, because, you know, NABU has been in the media before as an institution. If I'm not wrong, it was around September or October when Mr. Zelensky tried to crack down on NABU and the anti-corruption bureau, right? And change it. Then there were suddenly mass protests in the streets by the NGOs, right? And you've also researched the NGOs, especially in connection to the Maidan protests, right? So this didn't happen—Mr. Zelensky backed down and said, "I'm not going to change NABU." And now NABU is cracking down on Mr. Zelensky's inner circle at, well, a very opportune time, in order to twist his arm to actually give in. While at the same time, of course, Mr.

Zelensky's right-wing nationalists, who had threatened his life before, are on the other side. I mean, can you talk about the connection between NABU and the United States?

## #Ivan Katchanovski

Yes, I think this is basically the reason why NABU was able to launch this investigation in the first place and make it public—because there's no other structure in Ukraine, besides the far right, like the neo-Nazi-led Azov and other far-right organizations, that can act independently from Zelenskyy's government. He's basically eliminated everything. He took control of the parliament of Ukraine, he took control of the state security service of Ukraine—the equivalent of the FBI in Ukraine. He took control over his own faction in parliament. So he also controls the prime minister of Ukraine, the entire government, and the military.

He issued orders again to Syrskyi, who is supposed to be a top military official in Ukraine. Basically, Zelensky gave a lot of military orders, specifically not to withdraw Ukrainian forces from Pokrovsk and the Mirnohrad area, which is now basically encircled by the Russians. There have been very significant losses of Ukrainian soldiers who were trapped there for a long time, and now there's no real possibility for them to escape. Zelensky basically saw himself as a kind of dictator of Ukraine, someone who would stay in power as long as the war continued. For this reason, he tried to extend the war and avoid making any peace deal. But the NABU agency is not just any other agency in Ukraine.

It was created and organized with strong influence and participation from the United States and other Western governments. Since then, it's basically been regarded in Ukraine as an agency that represents the interests of the United States and other Western countries, including those in the European Union. So it was seen as a tool of the West—specifically of the United States—to control and influence Ukrainian politics by using corruption as a way to do this. Because Ukrainian politics is, I think, among the most corrupt in the world.

And this was long before the Russian-Ukrainian war. Zelensky is no exception. So this is why NABU—well, NABU was created independently from Zelensky. It wasn't fully controlled by him, so he couldn't take control over it. He tried to do this in the summer of this year, after information about investigations into his close associates became public. There was also a photo of a golden toilet made public by one of the members of the Ukrainian parliament, from the apartment of this associate of Zelensky, Kyrylo Tymoshenko.

So this was a big scandal, and Zelensky basically tried to take control over NABU and a related agency called SAP, the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office. He kind of issued a new law overnight that stripped NABU of its powers and put it under the control of the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine, which was basically a pocket agency of Zelensky, since he controls the Prosecutor

General's Office. Zelensky believed this would be a quick way to resolve the issue and eliminate NABU's influence, but he didn't, I think, take into consideration that this agency has the support of the United States and also of European Union countries.

After his attempt to do this, there was an immediate reaction from the West—specifically from European Union countries. There wasn't any public reaction from the United States, but I think a private reaction was very likely. There were also protests against Zelensky and his attempt to take control over NABU, and he failed to do this, so he had to step back and cancel the law. He also tried to claim that NABU was acting as a Russian agent, which is, again, a standard tactic in Ukraine: whenever anybody says anything against Zelensky, they automatically become "Russian agents."

## **#Pascal**

Sorry, may I just ask, when was NABU created? Which year?

## **#Ivan Katchanovski**

I don't remember exactly, but it was created, I think, after Maidan—after Maidan, yeah—when Ukraine became a client state of the United States. So this basically led to the U.S. government controlling Ukraine as a client state and acting as a patron of Ukraine. And again, they created this after Maidan in 2014, and it's just another manifestation of U.S. control or influence—of the United States and Western countries—over Ukrainian politics and government. And this agency is, again, very important. It's just an example of how it's connected to the U.S.—there's an FBI agent who is permanently stationed in this agency.

And this agent—this was reported by Ukrainian media just recently—this person from the FBI has access to all kinds of investigations by NABU. So this again shows the question of real independence of this agency. You basically have an FBI official stationed there who has access to all these investigations, which means that the investigation made public against Zelensky's associates could not have been conducted without agreement from the FBI or the U.S. government. This was under the Trump administration, and that's why Zelensky was not able to take control over NABU. His power diminished, and I think this had consequences—he now has to try to accept this agreement, which was issued by Trump initially as 28 points. But now Zelensky is again trying to change this agreement and make it more favorable to himself, which I think might make it impractical.

## **#Pascal**

This is really fascinating because it's a proven fact that the FBI has a permanent office there, based on a state agreement with Ukraine, allowing this person to be stationed on site and have full access to NABU and its investigations—permanently, not just remotely, but on the ground. Just being integrated. And NABU itself—can you explain to me again what its structure is? Because, okay, you have Zelensky, who's the president, overseeing the government of Ukraine and, of course, all the

ministries. NABU must be part of one of the ministries, but how is it that NABU is actually independent of, say, the Minister of Justice or whichever ministry it's under?

## #Ivan Katchanovski

No, it's separate—totally separate from the government. Totally. Yeah, and it was created so that the leadership of NABU would be independent. Normally, in Ukraine, Zelensky and his government would just appoint their own person to head an agency, like they did with the State Security Service of Ukraine or the Prosecutor General's Office, which basically act as Zelensky's personal security and prosecution agencies. But this agency was actually headed by a person who was selected through a process that involved the United States and Western countries. There was a special kind of selection process with the participation of experts from those Western countries.

This was not just a decision by Zelensky. The heads of NABU and SAP—the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office—were appointed through that independent process. So basically, he had to accept that he had no control over this agency. He was only able to appoint a deputy, actually. That deputy was the deputy head of SAP, which is the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, a sister agency of NABU. It's also independent from the General Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine and not controlled by Zelensky. And this deputy head of SAP, I think it was reported by NABU and by Ukrainian media, leaked information to Zelensky and his associates about NABU's investigations. That allowed some of Zelensky's associates to flee Ukraine before they could be arrested or charged with corruption.

This is why I think it's quite significant. And besides NABU, there are also reports in Ukrainian media that another deputy head of NABU was appointed by the U.S. Embassy—that they're basically controlled by the embassy. There was a specific department in the U.S. Embassy that was in charge of law enforcement agencies in Ukraine.

And they have power, basically, kind of an influence to appoint top officials, specifically in NABU. And this is how this agency is controlled by, or represents the interests of, the United States government and Western governments, and is not controlled by Zelensky. Even so, he wanted to do this. And just a few days ago, there was a publication in Ukrainian media that another close partner of Zelensky, who is in charge of his Office of the President, Yermak, wanted—after this scandal became public on November 11—to arrest Zelensky and charge the head of NABU with state treason, basically.

Again, working for the Russians, he gave an order to the head of the State Security Service of Ukraine, the SBU, and to the Prosecutor General of Ukraine to arrest this person—the head of NABU—and also to arrest and charge him with state treason. Again, the head of Zelensky's faction in parliament, because members of parliament demanded an investigation into this scandal, demanded Yermak's resignation from his position—a very powerful position, though not a constitutional one. So Yermak, basically acting on behalf of Zelensky, wanted to arrest and charge the head of NABU, but

he couldn't do it because the head of the SBU and the Prosecutor General of Ukraine refused. And this is not accidental, because in the past they acted differently—they would arrest top politicians in Ukraine, they would charge almost anybody—so there was no problem for them to do that. But now, you have the head of NABU, who has very close ties to the United States.

So you have, basically, even the head of the SBU—the State Security Service of Ukraine—and again, the head of the Prosecutor General's Office, the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, who are not able or not willing to act on behalf of Zelensky, even though they did this many, many times before against other politicians and government officials.

## #Pascal

So this is a very, very significant power struggle, right? At the top echelons of the institutions that actually hold real power in Ukraine. Some of them are loyal—or used to be loyal—to Mr. Zelensky, and some of them are now loyal to, or afraid of, NABU. And I just need to clarify again: NABU... The Ukrainian state is, of course, like—on top, the very top—is the Ukrainian Constitution, right? And the Constitution defines the government powers: the executive, then the legislative powers of parliament, and the judiciary. Those branches are usually separate. Now, of course, politically, you can create interconnections between them. But NABU—is NABU part of Ukraine? Is NABU founded by the legislative? Is it under the legislative branch? Or is NABU now even part of a separate branch within the Constitution? Where is NABU, legally speaking, under the Constitution?

## #Ivan Katchanovski

I think when the Ukrainian Constitution was adopted in 1996, there was no NABU. NABU was not in the Constitution, and I don't think there was any constitutional amendment about NABU or the related agency called SAP. I think that's why they're quite unique in the world, because I don't know many other countries—maybe something in Romania, something similar—but I don't know of any such agencies in, for instance, Canada or the United States, or in other Western countries. They wouldn't accept this, basically, because it's unconstitutional. And this just shows again that Ukraine is not a fully sovereign state, as it's often presented by Western media and politicians.

This means you actually have strong influence from agencies that are not part of Ukraine's constitutional system. They're basically separate, and they're influenced and backed by the United States and other Western countries. And even though, again, in the Constitution of Ukraine you have this idea of an independent judiciary and so on, that's not how it works in practice. The judiciary in Ukraine is totally controlled by Zelensky, with the exception of NABU and SAP.

So this is, again, that he can issue orders to judges about what kind of decisions to make. And, as I mentioned, he also gives orders to the head of the SBU and the head of the General Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine about whom to charge and with what crimes. So he has the power to do this, and the Constitution is totally disregarded. Even Zelensky stated at the start of the Russian invasion that

the Constitution was not in effect in Ukraine. So basically, he even said that the Constitution is not active right now.

## #Pascal

Where is NABU getting its money from? Does Parliament—is it a separate budget line in the budget that Parliament passes, which then goes to NABU?

## #Ivan Katchanovski

Again, I'm not sure about the money—exactly what sources of funding—but I would assume there are a lot of Western agencies, like USAID, for instance, and similar agencies in the European Union, which provide money, basically grants and other funding, to NABU. After Maidan, there was open funding of the General Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine by the United States and specifically by the U.S. Embassy. So you basically have the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine funded by the U.S. government and the U.S. Embassy. You also have the National Police of Ukraine, which was created and funded with the involvement of the United States and other Western countries.

So these are basically agencies in Ukraine. There was even a publication in the New York Times recently which said that the State Security Service of Ukraine, the SBU, and the Military Intelligence Agency of Ukraine were also, in some parts, created from scratch—some of their sections or branches—by U.S. and British intelligence agencies. So again, you have a very strong influence from the United States and other Western countries on these agencies. I'm not sure about the exact funding, but I think it's very likely, almost definitely, that they receive funding from Western countries.

## #Pascal

It's just fascinating because it's such a lesson in modern, you know, colonial—neo-colonial—power grabs. What this means, basically, is that on the one hand, we have the NGO space in Ukraine that's used with U.S. funding to initiate certain popular pushes for whatever. And on the other hand, we have an anti-corruption bureau that is a fully owned subsidiary of the United States, which acts like a guillotine on the appointed personnel, right? Whoever goes in knows that if they fall too far out of line, the guillotine is going to come down on them and somebody else will go in. And you can't escape that, because corruption is baked into the political system. So whoever controls the anti-corruption bureau controls the hard guillotine of making sure that, you know, personnel that get out of hand can be replaced. That's fascinating.

## #Ivan Katchanovski

Yes, and this is why it shows the power of Western countries—specifically the United States—over Ukrainian politics and decisions. And this is not accidental. This is what I described in my book,

which was just published about the Russian-Ukrainian war and its origins, and it's still available as open access. So again, I think this is also very important because, in addition to these institutions like NABU, you have anti-corruption NGOs that are basically controlled and funded by the United States—through USAID, other agencies, and the U.S. Embassy. They are very closely connected to the United States, and they often act on its behalf in exposing corruption within Zelensky's administration.

And Zelensky also tried to go against them. He recently even tried to launch a criminal case against the head of this anti-corruption NGO, who was closely connected to the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, and he tried to mobilize him for military service. Which is, again, very important—just another example of the power of this kind of structure. All the NGOs funded by Western governments received exemptions from mobilization, from being drafted for military service during the Russia-Ukraine war. So there was a specific exemption given to all these NGOs and the people who work in them, funded by the West, by Western governments, and I think also by organizations like the Soros Foundation. So they could not be mobilized. And this is another example.

Basically, Zelensky can pressure anybody and use force to mobilize ordinary Ukrainians—people who might be caught on the street or in a public place—and they're taken by force, beaten, and some of them are even killed during this mobilization. They're sent to the military without any kind of medical check and without consent, and many of them flee afterward. But he couldn't do this, even if he wanted to, against the NGOs, because they're linked to Western countries and Western governments. So that's why I think he couldn't do it. And I think another important issue, which is still not clear, is why this happened right now—because it happened at the time when there were negotiations between Russia and the United States about this 28-point plan to end the war in Ukraine, which started, I think, at the end of October.

And this plan became public only recently, but it had been negotiated a few weeks earlier. At the same time, when the plan was about to be made public—to present it to Zelensky—this scandal happened in Ukraine. So a lot of people there assumed it was just a tactic by the West, by the U.S. administration, to pressure Zelensky, to put him in a weaker position, and to show that he had to depend on U.S. support. That way, he would have limited power and couldn't refuse such a deal from the United States. So now he's basically showing his willingness to go along with it, even though he rejected the original 28-point plan.

And I think there's another connection to this plan, because according to media reports in the West, specifically from another official—Klaus Czeslanski, or Ustam Umerov—he's actually the head of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and a former defense minister. During the negotiations, he wanted to insert into this plan a point that would eliminate any kind of investigation or audit of all aid received by Ukraine during the war with Russia. Instead, he suggested adding a point that would grant amnesty for all actions by all parties involved in the conflict, which would mean amnesty for Zelensky and his associates for all decisions and corruption that had been exposed by NABU.

And the United States agreed to this and included that point in the plan—the 28-point plan. I'm not sure if it survived in the latest version, but I don't think it's a coincidence, because Umerov, who is very close to Zelensky, was previously the Minister of Defense of Ukraine and is now head of the National Security and Defense Council. He was also on the tapes recorded as part of this corruption scandal. He was specifically mentioned by NABU during their presentation of charges against Zelensky's associates, saying he was influenced by people close to Zelensky, specifically in that corruption case. He knows his name is mentioned there, and that's why I think when he went to the United States, a lot of people assumed he had been exposed by the scandal. That's why I think he agreed to this plan and accepted the provision granting amnesty to everyone involved in the corruption, including himself.

## **#Pascal**

And I see it like you. I just wonder, what does this tell us about the peace process? If we now learn that, even inside Ukraine, the United States is starting to use the guillotine to threaten top officials personally—if they don't fall in line with the plan, they'll be chopped off—does that mean the U.S. is now at a much more serious point in trying to push through this crisis peace agreement than before? Because the big question to me is: is the United States serious about trying to bring an end to the fighting, or is it just a charade to keep the Russians guessing and everyone else on edge about what the peace president wants to do?

## **#Ivan Katchanovski**

I think this depends on specific members of the Trump administration and other senior politicians in the United States, especially members of Congress. Trump has said he wants to end this war, and I think he's acting to end it as soon as possible. For him, the most important thing is to end the war. But he also knows that Ukraine is a client state of the United States, so he can't just leave Ukraine to see what would happen, like what happened in Afghanistan after the U.S. had to flee.

Basically, the U.S. forces had to flee Afghanistan after the Taliban took over, and there had been an agreement signed before that. So he wanted to protect and still keep Ukraine as a client state of the United States after the end of the war, but also to reach an agreement and end the war. But there are also members of his administration—like, I think, Marco Rubio, General Kellogg, and others—who are very anti-Ukraine and oppose any effort to end this war. They want the war to continue.

And there are also very powerful politicians like Senator Lindsey Graham, as well as other Democratic senators and members of the U.S. government. A lot of the mainstream U.S. media, and even the European Union as a whole—the leadership of the EU and the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, and so on—they also want this war to continue. For them, they basically want this plan to fail. They oppose this plan by Trump, the initial one with 28 points. They now want to make this plan, how to say, kind of changed. And I think they've

succeeded to a large extent after negotiations. The plan now has basically eliminated all the important provisions that were crucial for Russia's position—like Ukraine's non-NATO membership, no Western military forces, limits on Ukraine's military, withdrawal from the part of Donbas controlled by the Ukrainian government, and recognition of the territories occupied by Russia as de facto Russian.

So now this agreement, and also other provisions about the Russian language, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and Nazi ideology—I think those provisions were removed in the latest iteration of the plan, after modifications following talks with Zelensky, his representatives, the European Union, and other European leaders. So for this reason, I don't think this plan would succeed now, because Russia is almost—well, basically 100%—not going to sign or accept this plan with such provisions.

So this means now, again, this kind of choice for Trump would be easier—to try to use his leverage against Zelenskyy, specifically via NABU, which is, I think, just one example of such leverage. Not publicly, though, because neither Trump nor other members of his administration have publicly mentioned this scandal. But I think they know about it, and they have strong influence over NABU. So I think Trump could make NABU go after, for instance, Yermak, if Zelenskyy were to refuse this plan. Yermak is on these tapes and mentioned by the head of NABU—his name was "Ali Baba." In these tapes, they use all these code names, and he was referred to as Ali Baba, but specifically he was mentioned as being involved in corruption.

So there were demands from the Ukrainian parliament, even from Zelenskyy's own faction, to fire him, but Zelenskyy refused to do so. Instead, he sent him to negotiate with the United States. Also, as I mentioned, there are reports in the media that Zelenskyy's name and voice are on the tapes, specifically discussing corruption and the illegal enrichment of himself and his associates in the scheme. They also talk about ordinary Ukrainians basically as fools, about how easy it is to fool them, and so on. This would be a major scandal in Ukraine—a shock to Ukrainians and to the West—because there's been this image created of Zelenskyy as a new Churchill, or a kind of Western George Washington, a hero who has sacrificed his life, his efforts, his money, and basically his future to try to save Ukraine.

But actually, he was enriching himself and his associates, because this Mindech is not, I think, the person who was really the head of the scheme. He was, I think, just a representative of Zelenskyy and Yermak, which is, I think, almost definite. So that's why the Trump administration, if they wanted, could just put pressure on Zelenskyy and other members of his government, like Umerov and Yermak, and make them more willing to accept this plan—because otherwise they'd face losing power in Ukraine, backlash from their own faction, and, after that, the information would be made public. But I think it's not clear if Trump would be willing to do this.

Actually, just in the last few hours, other tapes were made public in the United States. These are conversations between Vitkov, who is Donald Trump's special representative for negotiations with Russia, and Ushakov, a Russian foreign advisor to Putin, in which they discuss this original 28-point

peace plan. Another tape was released in transcript form by Bloomberg—it's a phone call between Kirill Mityaev, a representative of Putin who visited the United States to discuss the plan, and Ushakov again, also about this plan. So this is actually an example, I think, of U.S. intelligence very likely trying to use leverage to stop the plan—and to stop Donald Trump from implementing it—by using this kind of kompromat.

But they have such tapes from Ukraine, and they have much more information from Ukraine about corruption, but they never did this again until very recently, until this scandal happened. So I think if they wanted, they could have done it before, but now they're doing it in the United States themselves, trying to do the opposite and stop this plan by Trump from being implemented. And I think it's very likely they'll succeed, because now it would be very tough for Trump to try to pressure Zelenskyy and make this plan workable again. And if the modifications demanded by Zelenskyy were included in this new iteration of the plan, Putin would not accept it, and the war would continue.

But I think Trump has the power and influence in Ukraine to try to achieve this. I mentioned this in my book. The most realistic scenario for how this war could end sooner is for the United States to use its leverage over the Ukrainian government and Zelenskyy, and basically force them to end the war by making a peace deal. That would actually be in Ukraine's interest, because there's no real possibility of Ukraine defeating Russia. The longer the war continues, the more casualties there will be and the more devastation Ukraine will suffer. Any future peace deal would likely be much more detrimental to Ukraine compared to the terms of a current one. The same thing happened with the Istanbul peace deal in 2022.

## #Pascal

No, you're absolutely right. The thing is, what your explanation also shows is that we can't really be sure who actually holds the power. I mean, when we say the United States controls Ukraine, the problem is that the United States itself isn't under central control. Because, like, if NABU is basically controlled by the FBI, then that would make Tulsi Gabbard the person who should have the most direct influence over it. But are you aware of other U.S. institutions exerting influence over NABU—like, say, the CIA—since we know the CIA isn't auditable?

The CIA can conceal any actions it wants, even from the U.S. Senate. It's a state within a state. And I think that's correct. We can now see that inside the United States, there's a kind of civil war over how to continue the war in Ukraine. Different institutions and factions, not under Donald Trump's control, are fighting for influence over what's going to happen. That includes influence over NABU and over the NGOs, to pressure Zelensky one way or another. Do you know who else is involved in the power struggle in the U.S. over controlling NABU and the NGOs?

## #Ivan Katchanovski

I don't have access to intelligence information, so I don't know about the role of U.S. intelligence. But I think there's some very key information published in Ukrainian media—that the U.S. Embassy has strong influence over NABU and other anti-corruption bodies. This is basically the State Department, which is controlled by Marco Rubio, who actually became involved in the negotiations. He's more aligned with the neoconservatives and with people who don't want a peace deal on realistic terms. In practice, I think his actions during the negotiations in Geneva led to a lot of changes that have made the plan, as it stands now, not very realistic.

And so this is why I think—this is one example where it's not just a direct line of control, like NABU being run by Trump or the FBI. It's more that the United States, as a state, has a similar kind of control over the relationship between its client state, Ukraine, and itself, as well as other Western countries. It's not just one person or one organization; it's more of a state-to-state relationship. In addition to that, you also have influence that works like a joint-stock company, where different politicians and agencies each have their own stake in this institution. They all have a say in what it does and how it operates. And this influence isn't limited to the United States.

The European Union also has such influence, but less than the U.S. There was a report in the Ukrainian media that, after this scandal became public, a representative of the European Union in Ukraine met with the head of NABU and told him not to release any more information about the scandal—to avoid implicating other politicians and officials in Ukraine. Basically, they were told to stop this. And that's what happened. After that day, there were no new revelations from NABU, even though Ukrainian media reporters said there were many other senior politicians involved, as I mentioned. And just to add, one of the key people in Ukraine, Yermak—who is a close partner of Zelensky and had worked with him before the war in the entertainment industry—was also reported to be involved in this corruption.

There are no such investigations, even though there were reports that he would be charged by NABU for large-scale corruption in this case. And Tucker Carlson recently wrote on social media—on Twitter, on X—that the Wall Street Journal has information about large-scale corruption by Yermak. But they haven't published this information for a few months, even though they have it. And they do this, supposedly, to prolong the war in Ukraine. I think it's very clear that there are many powerful politicians, government officials, and agencies—both in the United States and in the West, in the European Union—who do not want to end this war. They use the influence of NABU in the opposite direction. So they can try to stop this investigation or make it less public, so as not to go against Zelensky and his associates. There's pressure on NABU from different sides.

## #Pascal

That just makes the whole situation even more complicated, because the decision-making power is not in the hands of politicians—neither in Kyiv nor in Washington. It also rests with special interest organizations. Maybe this is one of the reasons why Donald Trump is conducting so much of this

diplomacy out in the open, in front of the public eye—because you need to create pressure on the institutions to fall in line with the published plans.

## #Ivan Katchanovski

I'm not sure. Again, this story is very interesting—how this plan became public. I've researched this war very closely. I follow Ukrainian politics professionally, so I keep up with all the news. I first saw this plan when the full text was made public. It was published by Ukrainian media and by a Ukrainian politician who's a member of the Ukrainian parliament. It appeared on social media through Ukrainian media outlets, bloggers, and this politician, who is actually a member of the Poroshenko faction. They published the plan in Ukrainian after a visit by a U.S. representative—the head of the U.S. Army, basically—who visited Ukraine and presented Zelensky with this plan.

And this is when the full text of the plan became public. I immediately posted it—both the English translation and the original Ukrainian version, kind of a screenshot of the plan—on my X account and my Facebook account, and it went viral. So, again, that's basically how I think this plan was revealed and leaked.

I think it was very likely leaked by people within Zelensky's government—his administration—specifically to try to sabotage the plan because they didn't like its provisions. That's why they wanted to use the media again, as they did before, along with Western politicians and European Union officials, to oppose it. And I think they succeeded to a large extent, because a lot of EU politicians and media immediately called the plan a capitulation, a surrender of Ukraine, and so on—which is not the case. It's kind of like Munich, and it's remarkable to see, because realistically, I think this plan is one that Ukraine could not get a better version of in the future. If Ukraine refused such a plan, any future one would be on much worse conditions for Ukraine. And if Ukraine tried to change this plan, as they're trying to do now, Russia would not accept it.

So this means, again, the choice is very clear. It's basically a bad peace on terms that would be largely Russian terms, because they're winning this war—or, again, the possibility of capitulation, real capitulation, a defeat of Ukraine if this war continues, or even worse terms, which could again lead to a kind of, um, defeat of Ukraine, a loss of morality, and even worse conditions for Ukraine, with many more lives lost, as already happened with the Istanbul peace deal, which was blocked by Western countries. And I think we now have similar efforts again by the West to try to block this new peace deal, the possibility of a realistic peace deal. Instead, they're again trying to sell the fantasy of Ukraine continuing this war, fighting against Russia, and winning against Russia—or having a stalemate—which is not a real possibility, and achieving a peace deal on the terms of the United States and Ukraine, which is not realistic.

And this is a real situation, not just some fantasy presented by the media and politicians as if there were real choices. There's no real option, basically, for Ukraine to try to impose a peace deal on Russia, or for the West to do so, because Russia, I think, would not accept it. And that needs to be

understood. I discussed this in my book as well. Again, I talked about the Istanbul peace negotiations, and now I see a lot of similar efforts by the West to block this peace deal or make it unrealistic.

## #Pascal

I think you're right. I think the factions inside the US and Europe that are trying to block this are probably currently in the driving seat, unfortunately, and are again sabotaging the possibility to end the fighting and to bring about a constructive process to engage with Ukraine, Russia, and Europe. But, Professor Katchanovski, people who want to follow you and read more from you should go to your Twitter, they should find your books. Is there another place where people can find your work?

## #Ivan Katchanovski

Yes, I can send you links to my open-access books. My recent book, *\*Russian-Ukrainian Origins: From the Maidan to the Ukraine War\**, is published and already has almost 100,000 views and downloads of the entire book on the publisher's website. There's also a similar number of downloads and views for individual chapters. They're free, thanks to crowdfunding. I used GoFundMe campaigns, which are now almost complete—just a few hundred dollars left for this campaign. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult because of the media blackouts. I decided to make this book publicly accessible, free for people to read. There's already a German translation of the book, and other translations are in progress. People can also find my studies, which are open access, through the links on my academic websites—Academia.edu and ResearchGate. But I think the easiest way to find my books is through my Twitter.

I'm also very active on Facebook, commenting on all the recent developments in Ukraine. I do this as an academic, as a Ukrainian scholar who has researched this conflict for a very long time, and I think it's very important for me as a Ukrainian scholar in Canada to see what happens with Ukraine, because this affects me personally. For instance, some distant relatives of mine were killed in this war, and my neighbor actually deserted from the Ukrainian military. He was captured again and brought back to a military training ground, and five days later they found him dead, with bruises and injuries to his head. Nobody investigated this, even though it's very likely he was killed during that military training in western Ukraine.

But again, no investigation, and even his family members were told not to ask for one. So this is like total lawlessness. We have other people who visit Ukraine—again, in the western part of Ukraine—who were also affected by this war. But this is why, for me, it's important to study this war and to see how it can be resolved. That's why I published this book. I hope it will make a contribution to resolving and ending this war, because any other alternative, except peace, would be even worse for Ukraine.

## #Pascal

And I congratulate you. I congratulate you on your work, and on making it open access. Please also send me the links for your GoFundMe page. And everybody, if you want to support Professor Ivan Katchanovski, help him finish his GoFundMe project, because these academic books cost ridiculous amounts of money to publish. We're talking about around 10,000 US dollars, or between 6 and 10,000 depending on the publisher, to make them open access. It's ridiculous, but it's what we have to live with as academics working with these presses. It's very important that you make all of that available to the public, because this knowledge is necessary to understand why and how this horrible war is happening. And again, I congratulate you on your work, Professor Katchanovski. Thank you very much for your time today.

## **#Ivan Katchanovski**

Thank you. Thank you.