

# Russia's Long-Game Strategy

Over the past weeks, something has changed about the war in Ukraine. Although the fighting is still raging, it feels as if we have crossed a tipping point. Zelensky is under fire even in the West for corruption, the Americans once again said they want to end it A.S.A.P. in their new national security strategy, and the battle field losses seem to be getting faster. Here to help with the developments is once again, friend of the show, Stas Krapivnik. Links: Stanislav Krapivnik's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@MrSlavikman> Stanislav Krapivnik's Telegram: <https://t.me/stastydaiobratno> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Goods Store: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction: Situation in the Donbas & Avdiivka 00:16:21 Zelensky, Corruption, and Internal Politics 00:20:13 New US Security Strategy & "Project Ukraine" 00:25:23 NATO Article 5 and the Risk of Direct Conflict 00:31:09 Did Russia's "Go Slow" Strategy Backfire? 00:36:39 Europe Doubling Down: "Death by Neighboring Bear" 00:39:10 Historical Context: Russia's Attempts at Security Structures 00:46:59 Future Peace Conferences and the Role of BRICS 00:50:17 Russia's Long Game: Betting on Western Collapse

## #Pascal

Over the past few weeks, something has changed about the war in Ukraine. Although the fighting is still raging, it feels as if we've crossed a tipping point. Zelensky is under fire, even in the West, for corruption. The Americans have once again said they want to end the war as soon as possible in their new national security strategy, and the battlefield losses seem to be accelerating. Here to help us understand the developments is, once again, a friend of the show, Stas Krapivnik. Stas, welcome back. Thank you. Always a pleasure. Great having you back, because you actually just visited the Donbass region. What was it like? What did you learn over there? And what's your impression of how the battlefield is changing at the moment?

## #Stas Krapivnik

Yeah, we came into Donetsk from the east. The last time I'd been in Donetsk was in May, so it's been a little over five months. There were buildings in eastern and central Donetsk—a couple of buildings we saw that had been destroyed. They hadn't been destroyed before. So we're probably talking about attack-based missiles, maybe Storm Shadow missiles hitting civilian buildings. There's no military in Donetsk. There are soldiers walking around here and there, but they're mostly people on leave visiting their families. That's still something I'll focus on next time I'm there.

There are still plenty of men walking around who aren't in the military, because the story you hear is that everybody in Donetsk—all the men—have been killed, since Russia is supposedly losing millions upon millions of people. But you see a lot of men here, doing different jobs, with their families, even though Donetsk does get hit. Where I was staying—one of the hotels—you could hear the Pantsir

working at night, because something had come in, gotten through the outer rings, and was heading toward the city. So there are anti-aircraft systems inside the city as well; it's the final ring of defense. The missile systems, though, Russia doesn't place inside the cities.

Unlike in Ukraine, the Ukrainian forces place their missile systems—like the S-300s and S-400s—on the outskirts of cities. The reason they do that is because the Ukrainians use their own population as human shields. So if you destroy their anti-missile systems and they're by schools, near hospitals, or in residential areas, you're going to have flashback from that explosion on the surrounding buildings. And, B, they're firing missiles from inside the city. Well, everything that goes up—physics is still physics—comes down somewhere. So even if it takes out a Russian missile over a Ukrainian city, all of that debris falls right back down on that same city.

You get civilian casualties, and then the Ukrainian and Western media are screaming, "Ah, the Russians are targeting civilians." They're not. But metal still comes down—metal comes down hard. The Russian missile systems are all on the outer ring of any city. Moscow has them too; all of these areas do. And on the inside, you have more point-defense systems like the Pantsir, which uses autocannons and short-range missiles that can take out a large drone or airplane-style drone, what have you. And when it falls—because, you know, pieces will fall, of course—it causes minimal damage. Of course, it could kill somebody if a chunk of metal falls on your head.

It's not exactly pleasant. But you're not having those, you know, five-meter-long missiles or chunks of missiles falling down all over the place like you do with systems such as the S-400 or the IRIS. The IRIS is, I guess, about three meters long, but still, that's a pretty big piece of metal coming down. Now, when we got into western Donetsk—the Kyiv district of western Donetsk—that area is damaged, and it continues to get hit. The tube artillery and the mortar systems are no longer within range; they've been pushed out. There's some tube artillery with a rocket-assisted shell that can reach western Donetsk.

Mostly it's rockets or missiles, and the city's damaged. People keep living there—they just won't leave. There's a lot of damage farther west, on the edge of the city. The farther you go, the worse the damage gets. And then we went to Avdeevka. Now, Avdeevka is a suburb, but not a directly connected one. I guess a better word would be "satellite." There's about six or seven kilometers between the edge of Avdeevka and the edge of western Donetsk. For American audiences—because most Europeans already understand this—there's no major urban sprawl. The city just ends. You've got one or two streets, and then it's fields. That's where the city stops.

Like most Europeans, really. You can't say that about Moscow or St. Petersburg—big cities like that—because now you have massive urban sprawl. The little satellite villages have all been sort of absorbed, and the city just keeps going because people are building single-home communities. You don't have that in Donetsk. You don't have that kind of investment, partly because of the war, and

before that because the Ukrainian government was mostly taking money out and not investing anything in. So the city just ends. It's about six kilometers from Avdeevka to Donetsk—open fields—so you can understand how difficult it was to advance through those areas.

And Avdeevka—Avdeevka was probably the major fortress city of the Ukrainian line that they'd been preparing for eight years. They were planning, you know, they were massed to attack from that area into Donetsk when Russia preempted the attack. About half the Ukrainian forces were piled up there. In Lugansk, they were in jump-off positions that weren't really fortified, while in Donetsk they were in jump-off positions that were fortified. So while Lugansk got cleared very, very quickly—Lugansk Oblast, Lugansk Province—Donetsk was a slug match that's only now beginning to end. And, well, you know.

### **#Stas Krapivnik**

Stas Krapivnik here—go on.

### **#Stas Krapivnik**

Hello. Yeah, I dropped my VPN, so they'll probably hear it.

### **#Pascal**

No worries. I lost you at the point where you said Avdeevka, you know.

### **#Stas Krapivnik**

Yeah. Avdeevka, you know, was the major fortification along the line. So taking it was a slug match. And it was—well, it's cleared now, fully cleared. The front has moved about 30 kilometers to the west. So much for this idea that it's all a stalemate, that nothing's moving. You'd have to be blind not to see that it's moving—or absolutely deluded. But the city's gone. I mean, there's that one church in the video that survived and looked like it survived absolutely intact, thank the Lord. Because the Ukrainians these days, by the way, are droning churches. They've been doing that for the last year.

The older the church, the more it draws drones. Fighting God never works. But that seems to be one of the targets, because they're not posing any strategic threat. It's only a cultural attempt to wipe out the culture and the religion—which never works. So the city itself, I mean, it's going to get razed, and it's going to get rebuilt. It will be rebuilt, just like Mariupol has been rebuilt. It just can't be done right now because it's still within drone range. There are drones that show up—there aren't that many—and some people have come back. There isn't much of the population left. Part of the population was evacuated west by the Ukrainians.

The people who refuse to leave—the Ukrainians call them, or in Russian they're called \*Zhduni\*, "the waiters," the ones who stay behind, the people who don't want to move. In this case, because they're Russians and they're waiting for the Russian army. So the Ukrainian military has a policy of murdering them. They've tried several "Bucha 2.0" operations, creating corpses, but a lot of times they haven't had a chance to publish the videos when the Russian forces move in and record all the bodies everywhere. There was an old woman who was shot in the head while sitting on a bench, and a year later her body was still there when the Russian army came through and cleared the area.

She was just left there by the Ukrainians—or maybe by Ukrainian mercenaries. They're even worse than any of these... well, as bad as any of those SS-type units like Azov, Tornado, and the others, Da Vinci's Wolves. Most of the bodies have been cleaned up over the last year, but there are still bodies under some of the rubble. The rubble just has to be cleared out. The city is so damaged it has to be rebuilt; very few buildings are salvageable. Some people have come back and are living there. If you see my videos, you'll notice windows in some of these badly damaged buildings—on the first floor especially—have been boarded up because there's no glass left.

There's no glass. I saw very few panes that were still intact. In most areas, there aren't even panes—just shards of glass, or nothing at all. The whole window frames have been taken out. Some people have boarded up the windows and are living there. It's the apartments they have, and they don't want to leave. But the city has to be rebuilt. It's like any of the big battlefields of World War II—you look at those cities, minus the firebombings from the Americans or the British or the German cities—but any of the cities that were fought over, it looks like that, because that's exactly what happened.

## #Pascal

Have you talked to any of the people over there? I mean, how did they manage to survive this? This region has been fought over for about two years now, and of course, it goes through quieter and then very, very hot periods. I thought people would all just leave. But as you're saying, there were people staying behind, even in Bakhmut.

## #Stas Krapivnik

There were civilians who climbed out of basements in Stalingrad when it was all over. You know, the Russians were kind of like that—we're stubborn. But, you know, in Germany, if you look at Germany, the only areas where civilians didn't survive were the ones the Americans and the British firebombed. Everybody remembers Dresden, but it was every single German city—without exception, they were all firebombed. And that was meant to exterminate the population. But in those areas where it was just conventional combat, civilians survived. They hid. Now, the Ukrainians killed a lot of those civilians as they were retreating out. So again, when they say, "Oh, these are our people"—yeah, except that you're murdering your own people. They're your people. You want the land; you just don't want the people there.

Even right now, if you look at Miragrad and areas like that, there are a lot of videos showing Ukrainian drones killing civilians. The Russian drones are leading them out, and you can hear the Russian drone operators screaming and cursing because they're trying to guide the people to safety. Then you'll see Ukrainian drones come in and start attacking the civilians. They'll torture them, too—there are videos showing that. They took out an old man with a dog; the woman beside him was wounded, on her knees praying, and the drone was hovering right in front of her before it took her out. They like to play with their victims. And you can hear the Russian drone operators—the ones filming this—cursing and screaming, but there's nothing they can do about it.

## #Pascal

This is one of those things that will be contested for decades, and the West will say, "This was all the Russians. The Russians are doing this." I mean, these are all the things we keep hearing that Russia is doing. And the thing is, the Russian side can bring as much video evidence as they want, even in front of the Security Council. The general opinion over here—well, over in the West—is simply that only the Russians torture their victims.

## #Stas Krapivnik

Horrors don't torture every time, period. And soldiers—well, it happens, I mean, it happens everywhere—but it's not state policy, and it's not something that's approved. It gets punished. In fact, in the International Court of Appeals, Ukraine has lost. That came out last week. All of Ukraine's case against Russia was thrown out. Russia delivered 10,000 pages of documents and eyewitness accounts about the torture of civilians and murders that were happening before the conflict fully exploded. That gave Russia the credence for Article 51—the right to protect—that launched this whole operation. So yeah, Ukraine's lost. It's not something that exactly hit the Western news. Obviously, that's not good news for the Western position.

## #Pascal

Yeah, but let's maybe switch now to the political side a bit. I mean, how do you interpret this? We now have this corruption scandal, and for the first time in four years, the West is saying there might be a little bit of corruption going on. And we know from people like Ivan Kachanovsky that NABU is fully controlled by the Americans, by the CIA. So this coming out is additional leverage for the U.S. to seriously put real pressure on Zelensky's politics without actually taking away the intelligence and military arm, right? So how do you interpret what's going on?

## #Stas Krapivnik

NABU, I think, is less CIA and more FBI, interestingly enough. Sorry—yeah, you'd think it would be the other way around. Interesting little fact: there have been no charges against Yermak, and Yermak is still there. This is a man who's spent the last four years insinuating himself into

everything. I mean, out of the 27 governors, 20 or 21 of them are his people. His people are in every single ministry. He's everywhere—big, broad, and all about it. The reason he, quote, "went to the front" and took some photos with a tank is to avoid any prosecution—government or judicial, not persecution. But yeah, it obviously goes that way, because his enemies are all now screaming at him: "Oh, he blocked this," or "We could have won if he hadn't done that."

But that's an internal war of the rats—Ukrainian politics. It's always been like that. The political elite in Ukraine are masters at knowing when to switch sides and betray their allies and buddies. Today's buddy is tomorrow's pincushion for a dagger in the back. That's the way Ukrainian politics has always been. Even when there wasn't a Ukraine but rather the hinterland—which is what "Ukraine" translates to—the various nobles living in those areas would often switch sides between the Russian Empire, the Poles, and the Turks whenever it suited them. They'd backstab each other constantly. It was, you know, loyalty built on a foundation of Jell-O—always wobbling. You never know whose side they're really on, and they don't stay bought.

## #Pascal

No, you're telling me the family of Kayakalas wasn't a committed communist through and through for the cause, but actually just political opportunists? No.

## #Stas Krapivnik

Oh yeah, the Free Baltics are a whole different issue. Yeah, they're the worst—maybe. It's hard to say, because part of her family, by the way, were Nazis. They were forgiven by Stalin, and then they became apparatchiks. And, you know, they're always looking for who to suck up to—like little leeches—"Who's going to feed me now?" It's sad to watch. So the woman who says, "We know how we suffered under occupation"—her family was one of the elites. And by the way, her husband's millions were made through business with Russia. I think he still has those business ties; he's still making money. So, you know, her whole lifestyle is based on business with Russia. Interestingly enough.

## #Pascal

Right, it is. But sorry, this got us sidetracked. What do you think is going on now? Are we at a tipping point, as I said in the introduction? Do you think things are going to develop much faster now? Because the United States—this new national security strategy—while it's not a complete surprise, it's more or less what Trump has been saying for a while, but now it's on paper. And it really seems as if the U.S. just wants to end this even faster than we thought. So, is this going to change something?

## #Stas Krapivnik

Well, the security strategy—it's one thing what's on paper, and another to listen to what they're actually saying. And Haxsmith already said a lot. Haxsmith gave a 40-minute speech at the Reagan Library. Yes, I listened to the whole thing. It was actually easier to listen to than Trump's speech, which I had to take in three chunks because it was just too hard to sit through. I can feel for those generals—what a captive audience. But actually, you know, basically, as Bartlett says, it's about divvying up the resources.

Russia is no longer listed as the enemy of America, but Russia is a foe of Europe, as Boba Fett said. And Europe needs to stand up, and we'll support them. What I've been saying all along is that America's role now is—we've got this conflict going, and we're not giving up on Project Ukraine. We've invested in the project; now it's time to make money out of Project Ukraine. How do you make money out of a losing war? Well, the point isn't to win or to lose—the point is to make money. You know the saying, "It's all over but the dying." And there's still a lot of dying that's going to happen, especially among the Europeans.

Whether the Europeans—okay, well, you know, we own a third of Europe, which, well, that's the wrong way to say it—the EU countries. The former USSR people, and even then, there are countries like, I don't know if they're still considered countries or provinces, like Hungary, Slovakia, and now Austria, that are less than thrilled with this and don't want to have anything to do with it. And the Czech Republic—well, Austria voted in the conservative party, but they're not in power yet because the opposition was able to form a government and keep them out. But I think in the next elections, unless they get banned, it'll be without a doubt that they may even have a supermajority to form their own government without any coalitions.

But for the Europeans—well, what the heck, let's say 5%. And those of our allies that refuse to spend 5%, we have tools to punish them. You know, Spain, Portugal. And since European industry can't really produce—well, it produces some equipment—the Germans are remilitarizing, reindustrializing faster than most people realize. But they still can't produce the vast bulk of what they need for the half-million-man army they're getting ready to start. And, you know, by the way, the demonstrations in Berlin—there were only about 8,000 people in those demonstrations, 8,000 kids. That's not a massive demonstration for a city the size of Berlin. But the Americans—let's not forget—America has 2,500 M1 tanks parked there. They're now upgraded M1 tanks.

Pseudo M1A1s, because they still have steel armor—they don't have the composite armor. They're changing the main gun from the 105 to the 120. They have 2,500 M1A1s parked. They've got lots of anti-aircraft systems—old systems from the 1960s and '70s—hundreds of them parked. They have thousands of older Bradleys parked. You know, either you scrap them, or better yet, you sell them. And you're better off selling them at today's prices, not the prices you paid back in the '80s. Europe needs the tanks. And if Europe's in the fight, they're really going to need those tanks. This is where you make the money. You know, if you're popping a tank at \$14 million apiece, you do a tank division—that's about 400 tanks—uh, you know, multiply that out, that's, what, about five billion dollars.

## #Pascal

Sure, sure, sure, but I mean, the United States made it clear that they want Europe to spend more money—but they want them to spend it on U.S. equipment, right? I mean, they’re not thinking that you can produce this stuff yourself. If you do, then again, we’ll see to it that that doesn’t happen. But again, you know, there’s this issue—it can’t be the strategy to kind of lose Ukraine but then bring the fight to Europe, right? Because the big problem is, once you reach the Polish border, you actually reach a NATO border. And then, with NATO, it’s kind of all or nothing.

## #Stas Krapivnik

Not really. Look at what Article 5 actually says. First of all, Article 5 doesn’t say every country runs in to fight. It says there will be general consultations, and every member state will decide how they can help. Somebody will send a division, somebody will send twenty sleeping bags, and somebody else might light a candle and say a prayer. So in the U.S., I think in this case we’d go, “Well, we’ll say a prayer. Oh, and here’s some equipment on credit.”

## #Pascal

Absolutely. But that would be the moment when the spell is broken. If that happens—if one of the NATO countries ends up in a hot conflict and the others don’t rush in with troops—that’s the end of NATO as the collective West thinks of it, right? So while, of course, some military equipment would still flow and so on, I mean, NATO as a headquarters, the root of it and so on, would be gone.

## #Stas Krapivnik

Well, you know as well as everybody, Pascal, that once—well, I won’t say combat, but actual warfare—is initiated, it takes on a life of its own. It does. It’s very easy to start a war; it’s very difficult to stop one, especially one that’s been heated up by a lot of propaganda in the West—“the evil Russians.” And once war starts, you know, to say, “Oh, NATO is like this—okay, never mind, never mind, let’s stop this,” it becomes nearly impossible. It takes on a life of its own, and I think that’s what they’re counting on. You know, certain nations in NATO, of course, will not fight. Some nations will probably have a revolution—Greece, Bulgaria—if they’re told to go fight the Russians. Other nations will go happily. Romania, maybe, maybe not.

I mean, if you look at the last elections—if they were kept instead of buried—the Iranians obviously said, “No, we don’t want this,” 65%. But again, once emotions are flared, how it goes is hard to say. And once combat is initiated, it doesn’t matter who starts it. This may insult Europeans. I think they—well, okay, not Europeans, the E-U-S-S-R—the peasants of the E-U-S-S-R. Because that’s the role the elites have given their people. There’s no real freedom of voice or choice in most of these nations, obviously, because the crowds have been ignored for years. Look at France and the Yellow

Jackets and so on. But what I think upsets a lot of them—or insults a lot of them—is when you tell them there's nothing there that Russia wants. Quite literally, there's nothing in the rest of Europe.

No, in Ukraine we're fighting over our historic lands—lands that have been ours for a thousand years, the ones the Soviets chopped up and turned into artificial states. That's it. Beyond that, we don't want anything there. There's nothing there. The only reason the Russian Empire ever went further, like into Poland, was because there had been incessant warfare with Poland for a thousand years, and you get to the point of asking, "What do we do with them? We could exterminate them, but that's not very Christian of us. Okay, let's try to incorporate them." Even then, Poland was an autonomous state within the Russian Empire. It was its own kingdom within the empire, a feudal system where the emperor was the king of Poland. They had their own government that they elected and put in themselves.

The Poles don't like to talk about that little point during the Russian Empire—lots of Polish officers served loyally under the Tsar right up to the end. That's the point: we don't want anything there. What do we have there? A culture that's degenerated. Massive numbers of immigrants who don't work—they're just sitting there, feeding off the system. Infrastructure that's crumbling. Industry that's been deindustrialized. No resources. What is there that we would want? Anything—any technologies we don't already have—we could pretty much go buy one way or another, or just hire the people to recreate it if it came down to that. So what's there? And that really insults them. I know it hurts the feelings of the Europeans, because they think they're the center of the universe. Well, gentlemen—no, not really. Not anymore, Abe.

## #Pascal

I mean, that's one of the things that just doesn't get into the heads of those EU people with their dumb policies. But the danger still is, of course, that they talk themselves into a war frenzy, right? That they talk themselves into a preventive war—"We need to go in first to stop the Russians from coming," right? I mean, we've got people now inside NATO who even entertain such thoughts, on the record, which is very, very scary. So what do you think Russia is planning to do to defuse this potential time bomb?

## #Stas Krapivnik

I don't know if Russia's doing that much to defuse it. I mean—okay, let me rephrase that. Russia has continuously said, "We don't want this war, period. We don't want a war with the West." Russia has said that again and again. But Russia has gone slow, and I think that's had the opposite effect from what it should have. I've been saying this for over two years in the media: we shouldn't be going slow, we should be going fast, because that would scare the West into saying, "Okay, let's talk." If you notice, when this all started, all the embassies fled Kyiv. And then they turned around like, "Oh, the Russians aren't coming down as a sledgehammer."

We'll just go back and start business as usual. And going slow has had the opposite effect. Because—well, Russia, it's a difference in mentality. Russia doesn't want to project high aggression, like "we're going to just grab everything," blah, blah. So they go slow, thinking that way others will understand this is contained, that they're not in a state of war. They're in a state of special military operation. Meanwhile, in the West, it's like, "Oh, well, we can take them. Look how slow they're going. We can take them. They're nothing to be afraid of." It's the exact opposite effect. But I think the Russian government is finally starting to catch up on that—that the message is getting garbled. It's a bizarre world. It's going the exact opposite way.

## #Pascal

On the other hand, it did have the effect that the—well—the NATO troops in Ukraine, or Ukraine's NATO-equipped troops, were basically sent into the meat grinder, right? Russia just had to wait and carry out its attrition. And from the moment it was clear this would be a war of attrition, that's kind of the best thing you can have, right? You don't need to go on the attack; you just grind it down. As horrible as it is—and by the way, Vladimir Putin has said several times that it's absolutely gruesome—but it is what it is.

On the other hand, NATO also made it clear that what they do not want is a NATO war. Whenever there was a missile or something landing on Polish territory, killing two Poles, and Zelensky said, "Well, Article 5, now you have to—," they immediately slapped his fingers and said, "No, no, no, shut up, shut up. This is a proxy war, and you're the proxy, so go to war and shut up." They made that very clear, and they did that several times, actually, to tone it down again when it came to the brink of actually becoming a NATO–Russia war. So, do you think that strategy is now going to change?

## #Stas Krapivnik

I think the Europeans have changed that strategy, because you're right—they've worked themselves up into a frenzy. I mean, look at Brussels Airport and the so-called drone incidents. The last "drone" was actually a police helicopter that the government refused to admit until the local media exposed it. Like, "Look, this is the helicopter—yeah, we're flying over the airport." Okay, that's not a drone. And it turns out every other "drone" was something else—helicopters, small airplanes, even stars. You know, stars twinkle—"Oh, that's a drone!" And this is the level of hysteria they're trying to stir up in people. And to some degree, it works.

I mean, look, you know, we like to see the people who say, "No, this is wrong. We don't want it." And they get some coverage, at least in the Eastern media here. But the reality is, the majority of people are buying it—and that's the problem. I mean, look, the anti-war demonstration in Germany, in this case in Berlin, had about 8,000 students. For a city of—what's Berlin's population, six, seven million?—it was 8,000 students. And that's mainly because they're the ones getting drafted. Now that it's starting to hit home, they're like, "Oh, okay, well, we're anti-war." But the frenzy is there, and it's still building.

The Eastern Germans who were actually denazified—really denazified—don't want this war, and they're very much against it. Western Germans, the majority, are still backing Marx. They haven't felt the pain, the economic pain. And now the Germans are bringing back the draft. They're going to have half a million plus, which is making the Poles nervous. There's that little historical precedent—because to get to Russia, you still kind of have to go through Poland, and Poland hasn't exactly had the best relations with Germany. In fact, it's demanding one trillion euros in compensation for World War II. By the way, Poland also got rid of all its Germans—became a mono-ethnic state.

## #Pascal

So it's... it's quite interesting. There are these countries in Europe that are always kind of just, you know, in the way. Poland is one of them, and Belgium is the other. You know, as a Swiss, what I usually say is I really have to thank the Belgians, right? They were our lightning rods twice—they took the hit twice instead of us. Switzerland's the same; it's just in the way. But yeah, what do you do? Anyway, let's get back—sorry, stupid jokes aside. I still can't really imagine what they're doing at the moment, because the way the Americans are now kind of changing their tune—and Brian Berletic is saying they're only changing the rhetoric, not the aim.

Berletic says it's still a continuation of the same agenda. The other side is saying, "Look, this is completely different." And the Europeans are going to be seriously pissed off about that—not just superficially. This is a deep, deep-seated shock for them, whichever it is, or maybe both at the same time, right? It's going to have an impact on how Europeans think about security. One option might be some kind of rapprochement with Russia—highly unlikely. The other is doubling down on something really dumb. But how could they even double down at this point? It would take them years to build up anything that even resembles a proper fighting force against Russia. I mean, they can't be that crazy to go that route.

## #Stas Krapivnik

Okay, I'll use this analogy. I've used it once before on a different show—or maybe it was my own, I don't remember. So, the analogy is this: you're in an abusive relationship. The husband has been abusing the wife, and she finally says, "You know what, I'm sick and tired of this. I'm leaving. That's it, I'm leaving." And the wife says, "No, no, don't leave. Even if you're abusing me, don't leave." And he says, "No, I'm going to leave." Then she says, "Well, if you're going to leave, I'm going to go over to my neighbor, start a fight, and he's going to knife me."

And it's going to be all your fault. So you're going to have to come save me, no matter what. That's the kind of mentality of, "Oh, fine, then we'll just start the war. And then you're going to have to stay—you won't have a choice." I'm afraid that's the mentality we're seeing with people like Merz,

Starmer, and Macron—and not only them. The whole EU leadership seems to be in that mindset: “We’ll just keep escalating with Russia, death by the neighboring bear.” And then it’s going to be on your hands, and you’ll have to do something about it.

## #Pascal

Russia is signaling that that’s exactly what it doesn’t want, right? It’s signaling to the United States, saying, “You have to help us build a goddamn security structure the way we’ve been telling you for decades.” The last time was around December 2021, when you just threw it back in our faces without anything. But they’re saying, “You have to help us build a structure.” And that’s kind of part of their negotiation strategy about Ukraine, right? Yeah.

## #Stas Krapivnik

Right. I’ll take this one step further—something most Westerners, particularly Americans, have never heard of. The first time Russia offered this was in 1948. Stalin got wind of NATO being built and wanted to join NATO as a kind of European security council. The Soviet Union didn’t want to invade Western Europe or even Eastern Europe. It set up those buffer states because it figured, “Okay, now round two’s in our way.” You’ve got, you know, Churchill wanting to start the war—it was called Operation Unthinkable. He wanted to just continue the war, rearm the German POWs, and shove everybody eastward. Insane as that may be, but that was an actual British plan he proposed to the Americans. Thankfully, it didn’t go very far.

In 1948, Stalin asked to join NATO. In 1992, Yeltsin asked to join NATO. Later, Putin also proposed joining NATO. The last thing NATO needed, for two reasons, was to have an actual security pact. In 1948, it was understood that NATO was set up against the Soviet Union, so there’s never been a desire for any kind of real security in Europe. Europe was always meant to be the battlefield, even if it was just a Cold War battlefield. In 1992, and then later when Putin asked, the last thing the U.S. needed in NATO was another U.S., because the U.S. dominates NATO. If you let the Russians in, it’s pretty hard to dominate NATO when you’ve got a counterweight just as big as you are sitting on the other side—one that’s recovering very quickly, recovering very fast.

## #Pascal

In a sense, I mean, you can take it even further back, and you can make the argument that the Americans learned their lesson. The Soviet Union agreed to join the U.N., agreed to help build it, and agreed to be part of the Security Council, right? And the Security Council was not a vehicle to dominate global politics—except for Korea, when the Soviet Union actually boycotted the council. But that’s it. So, in a sense, it’s like, okay, instead of building a structure, you build a counterforce. And that one, you don’t think would change in the near future as a U.S. strategy. Pascal, we’ll take it even further than that.

## #Stas Krapivnik

Nicholas II, before World War I kicked off, was pushing and trying to set up a League of Nations—which, by the way, was only established after World War I. The Russian government was trying to create a League of Nations to make sure there wouldn't be any more wars in Europe. We've been trying to achieve this for about 150 years, and the West has done everything possible to avoid it—to sabotage it and keep the wars going.

## #Pascal

You know, one of the things that frustrates me so much is that the two largest peace conferences on the European continent—actually global peace conferences—the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, which were the birthplace of some of the most important international law we still have today, were the initiative of Tsar Nicholas. It was a Russian idea. It didn't work, but the real question is, what sabotaged it? The fact that you never get to a proper structure, that you never create the actual outcome. And the CSCE was also a Soviet approach. So it extends to Russia. How do you force a peace structure on a continent that doesn't want to be peaceful?

## #Stas Krapivnik

Well, we could do it the Western model. I don't know if you're familiar with this, but during the religious wars in Europe, they had the League of Armed Pacifists, which is an interesting concept. You will be a pacifist as part of our league, or we'll burn your castle down and kill all your people. There's that way of doing it. But the thing is, as Orthodox Christians, as a society built on Orthodox Christianity—where war is always a sin—we don't have, we've never accepted, the concept of a just war. There is no just war.

There is war because not committing to war is seen as a bigger sin than committing to it—because you're allowing a worse evil to happen. But it's always evil. War is always a sin. It may be the lesser of two evils, and you have to do it because the world is a fallen world. That's how it is. The thing is, except for the break from the Soviet into the Bolshevik mentality back in the twenties—Stalin was in training to be a priest in his youth—and he had a kind of "come to Jesus" moment in 1941. The restraints on the church were lifted then, and the pressure on the church only returned after Khrushchev came to power.

And that was already happening at different levels—propaganda, information war against the church, and pressure on people who went to church, threatening to end their careers if they kept doing it. And by the way, when Khrushchev was removed by the Politburo, one of the reasons was his attacks on the church, interestingly enough. So the mentality was still there, because the culture is still based on Orthodoxy—on a thousand years of Orthodox Christianity. Like it or not, except for,

as I said, Lenin and Trotsky, the society was still built on that foundation. Stalin built it at first without God, and then he allowed God to start coming back into it. And that mentality is still there. You know, after World War II, the last thing Stalin wanted was another war.

Quite literally, the last thing they wanted—I mean, the Soviet Union, Russia—well, it wasn't just Russia. The Soviet Union suffered huge casualties. They didn't want to repeat that. They wanted to rebuild and create a prosperous state. Whether or not you agree with the Soviet system, that's a different issue. But the mentality was: we don't want another war; we want European security. And before that, as a Christian monarch, as an Orthodox monarch, the drive was to preserve security and end these wars. In fact, under Alexander III, when he was emperor, there wasn't a single war.

There were border skirmishes, but there wasn't a single war because he was the second son. He wasn't supposed to be emperor—his brother George died unexpectedly, and he became next in line. But as a second son, Alexander III fought in one of the Russo-Turkish wars, so he knew firsthand what war was. And he didn't fight in the rear; he actually took part in combat. He knew very well what that war was like. So when he became czar, he avoided wars wherever he could. There were plenty of opportunities to fight with the British, but he avoided them. That's been a drive—a multi-generational drive.

Again, the Western propaganda—you'd think that every day Soviet children get up, file their teeth into points, sharpen their claws, and ceremoniously kill a Yank because, yeah, we're animals, you know, and then have a glass of blood. That would be the Western propaganda. But if you look at the realistic historical facts, like you said, the two peace conferences before the Hague Conference were absolutely driven by Russia. It's been that way for over 150 years. It hasn't been successful, unfortunately, for the most part, but it has been.

## #Pascal

If we learn from the past, one of the things about us humans is that when we're not successful at doing something once, twice, or three times, we try a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth time. In this sense, the long trajectory—from the first two peace conferences, through the League, the UN, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the 1990s, which was also a moment of negotiation, and the reunification of Germany—was, in a sense, the Soviet Union saying, "Okay, fine, guys, go be together, and then we'll build something—the common house." So what would be the approach now, once Ukraine is—once it's decided—that might allow for a conference that finally brings things together? Because one of the things we haven't seen, for instance, is bringing in the Chinese, or working through BRICS, in a way that creates structures the West, in the end, just can't say no to.

## #Stas Krapivnik

Well, we've seen attempts to bring in the Chinese. They're actually very silly attempts. Macron was just in China, begging Xi to pick up the phone and force Vladimir Vladimirovich to do as he tells him. Because the problem in the West—particularly right now, though it's been there to some degree before, but really since the end of World War II—is a master-vassal mentality. Right? You know, okay, well, the Americans tell us what to do, and with Russia and China, it must be the Chinese who are in charge, who can tell the Russians what to do. They don't understand countries working on an equal footing. You know, we can consult, we can talk, but we don't order each other around.

That's a concept in Brussels that they can't understand, because they grew up under this idea: I'm subservient to this guy, this guy is subservient to that guy. And that mentality among the elites in the West, particularly the Western Europeans, has been around since feudalism. It still is. It hasn't changed. You know, feudalism in Russia died out under Ivan Vasilievich III, the Great—the grandfather of Ivan Grozny. But feudalism died out because he created a system of pomestie, which was land given to nobles in exchange for military service. But there was no hierarchy; they all answered only to the tsar. Or actually, at that point, it wasn't yet a tsar.

It was the high prince. So feudalism as a system broke down. It was forming in Russia, but I won't say aborted—it was already there, but it was killed off in early childhood. So this full system of feudalism didn't really exist. Everybody just answered to the central authority. But the Western feudal mentality is still there, at least among the elites. You know, we always answer to somebody. And then the hierarchy in BRICS doesn't have that. And I think that's a big problem. That's why they go to China—"Hey, tell the Russians what to do." Why? How? You know, we can't tell the Russians what to do. The Russians do what they want to do. We can talk to them.

We can consult them, but that's the majority—and that's the problem. Ukraine, it's all over but the dying. There's going to be a lot of dying over the next year or two, like it or not. The question is, what will the Central and Western Europeans do? Russia is betting on the long game. That's one of the reasons this has taken so long. And the long game is collapse and revolution in the West—at least the removal of these people from power and their replacement by others. But these people—and they understand this—I'm pretty damn sure they're psychotic. They're very undereducated because they don't understand economics.

Most of them have never been in business. You know, they grow up, finish university, and go straight into political careers. Most of these people have no understanding of how businesses are run, how economies are run, or how their own people live. But they do understand how to hold on to power. And they do understand that they're on the cusp of losing it. I think they're getting desperate. They're going to do whatever they want. We've seen Europe—well, Western and Central Europe—become an absolute tyrant in so many ways.

I mean, for God's sake, there was an article out—a British guy just got arrested because he was in the U.S. visiting a friend, and he posted on Facebook photos of himself shooting rifles there. Yeah. I

mean, what can you say? England is an open-air gulag with about 20,000 political prisoners. How else would you describe someone who gets arrested for voicing their opinion on Facebook and gets two, three, four years of actual jail time for that? That's insane. But that's a police state—an absolute police state. And most of Europe is heading in that direction.

## #Pascal

Britain arrests people for protesting the genocide in Gaza. The Germans are taking people down and prosecuting them. I mean, it's a very ugly moment in Europe, actually—all while still screaming that they are the cradle of democracy. So your prediction overall is that Russia is basically betting that this system can't sustain itself for much longer.

## #Stas Krapivnik

That's what they're betting on. Whether or not they're right, it's hard to say. It's like, you know, routs in combat. You could have a unit that stays and fights long and hard, and all of a sudden morale breaks. Sometimes, even when victory is within reach, morale breaks and it runs. Other times, they'll just stay and fight to the end. It's hard to predict, but it's the same thing in this case. Will they rout? You know, if a civil war breaks out in France—or in Ireland—will it jump to England? Absolutely. Will it spread like wildfire? Possibly. And I think that's the fear. So they will do anything possible to lock down.

And the problem is, one of the best ways to get rid of your political opposition is to have them die on a battlefield somewhere. Because once you get into war, all the rules of civil society are gone. That little protest against joining the military—that's sedition, ladies and gentlemen. Sedition is punishable by execution, or we'll just ship you off to the front anyway. Oh, you want your own political party that doesn't agree with us? You're agents of the enemy. Well, we just shut you down, arrest you, and off you go to the camps. And we've seen that before. I mean, this isn't me just fantasizing about something that could happen.

## #Pascal

We're seeing how it happened in Ukraine, right? We saw how Ukrainian democracy collapsed under the dictatorship that the war brought with it. It all worked.

## #Stas Krapivnik

Democracy was collapsing. Well, I won't say democracy—I don't like the term. Democracy is mob rule. As Jefferson said, it's the 51% taking away the rights of the 49. The republican system—a system of checks and balances and representation—was dying, or maybe already dead once combat really started. It had already been dying since 2014, when the old SBU was gutted and the new Security Bureau of Ukraine was created by the CIA, MI6, and the 5th and 6th Directorates. I don't

know why MI6 had to name the Ukraine Directorate the 6th Directorate. I like the number six. But, you know, then you've got the Gestapo that's effectively in place today, and it's murdering people. It's murdered—there are thousands upon thousands of people inside Ukraine who disappeared between 2014 and 2022. And it's only gotten worse since then.

Eleven or twelve opposition parties have been banned. Leaders have disappeared or been murdered. Property's been confiscated. All the news outlets have been consolidated under Zelensky. Oh, and, you know, no elections. But this is how democracy works—that's what the West has been told. "Oh, this democracy under stress." Well, you know, if you're talking about 52% taking away the rights of 49, maybe. But I don't think there's any 52% there. It's more like 20% taking away the rights of 80—the 20/80 rule. But that's what you have. And the West is doubling down, tripling down, quadrupling down. So I'm afraid the Ukraine issue won't get settled. I think, in the end, these Western leaders are going to intervene. It's going to be death by the neighboring bear. So, damn it, you won't leave me—I'm America. Desperation is growing. I hope I'm wrong. I'm hoping more than I am.

## **#Pascal**

Somebody bring her a new TV with better programs, please. Okay. Thank you very much for your analysis and your estimations. I really value those, since you come from various perspectives. People who want to see more from you should go, first and foremost, to your own YouTube channel—Slavik Man, right? Mr. Slavik Man, but with a K, not a C. Mr. Slavik Man with a K. I'll put the link in the description below, along with your Telegram channel and the other links where people can find you. And then we'll do an update again soon. Absolutely.

## **#Stas Krapivnik**

Thank you. We can pray—thank you.