

NATO's Next "Wonder Weapon" FAILS.

Ukraine Nears Collapse | Rainer Rupp

The Ukraine Proxy-War is turning now so decisively against Ukraine that the Europeans have no more other option than to escalate the war into their own territories—and they are preparing just that after also the last "Wunderwaffe" is failing. Rainer Rupp, former high-level NATO officer and East German spy, discusses the limits of AI and Palantir-style systems in Ukraine, the importance of intelligence gathering and industrial capacity, Iran's independent military capabilities, the vulnerability of US bases, shrinking Western weapons stocks, and the political crises unfolding in Europe and Ukraine. Links: Rainer Rupp Substack: <https://rainerrupp.substack.com/> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 AI Hype and Ukraine's Data Systems 00:08:40 Data Gathering and AI Force Multipliers 00:16:47 Why Drones Cannot Decide Wars 00:18:49 Iran Versus Ukraine's Capabilities 00:26:08 Intelligence, Human Networks, and Targeting 00:32:53 Why US Bases Become Liabilities 00:45:11 Air Defense Costs and Western Capacity 00:52:35 The Future of Warfare and Iran 01:00:04 Political Breakdown in Europe and Ukraine 01:06:33 Closing and Rainer Rupp's Work

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies today for an update with the always brilliant Rainer Rupp, a former high-level NATO officer and spy for East Germany. Rainer, welcome back.

#Rainer Rupp

Oh, bless you.

#Pascal

Well, Rainer, you recently wrote an article that I would like to discuss with you. It is this one here. It shows in German, but the title reads, "Palantir Data Room and the War in Ukraine: A Lot of Data Power, but No Change on the Battlefield." And you're kind of making the point that the entire AI game for Ukraine has been overhyped, especially in the West. Can you maybe flesh out your argument here a little bit, and then later we'll talk a little bit more generally about how the Ukraine war is unfolding?

#Rainer Rupp

Oh, yeah. The sober assessment of all this AI hype concerning modern warfare shows that while the technology can accelerate, say, processes in weapons systems, it is not a wonder weapon, a kind of wonder weapon capable of deciding the war in favor of Ukraine. So, in the case of Ukraine, we are talking about the use of Palantir systems, data rooms, Brave1, etc., that are at the center of the discussion, including German-Ukrainian cooperation in the defense sector, also in that area.

Some of the West's uncritical technology buffs are fixated on bringing over the impression that modern software should fundamentally transform the nature of war and give, in fact, Ukraine a decisive military advantage over Russia. But a sober assessment of the available information presents a far more nuanced picture. These systems allow Ukraine, or the Ukrainian defense systems, to react faster, more precisely, and more efficiently. But they are neither what one calls a Terminator system, nor a substitute for hard weapons, soldiers, or defense industrial production capacity.

#Rainer Rupp

Their principal value lies in adding a digital force multiplier to military capabilities that already exist. Now, amid all the hype, the most important component in this discussion is often overlooked, whether deliberately or through ignorance. Without this component, Palantir and Data Room and all the other systems would lose much of their force-multiplying effect in Ukraine and elsewhere. And I mean, without the intelligence gathered by U.S. satellites and other sophisticated military signals intelligence systems, their results being fed into Palantir and Data Room in real time by U.S., again, by U.S. or other Western intelligence agencies, the current fascination with these modern AI systems and warfare would probably not even exist.

All these systems, however, are prohibitively expensive. Not necessarily the drones, but the systems allowing the drones to become more effective are prohibitively expensive. Neither Ukraine nor, for that matter, Iran possesses the money or the technological capacity to create an environment of this kind, which took the United States and the Soviet Union, let's be serious, decades to build, and fortunes to spend on it. But, well... let's return to this kind of Brave1 and Delta systems.

#Pascal

Can I just ask one thing? Basically, your main argument is the whole AI thing relies upon data, on the intelligence coming from the satellites and coming from the other ways through which the United States gathers its data. And, well, then the AI helps process that. But the real value on the battlefield is actually in the data gathering, not the AI processing. That's a bit the main issue, right? That we should never, ever forget AI cannot replace information gathering.

#Rainer Rupp

Exactly. AI cannot replace information gathering. The systems which, for instance, neither Iran nor Ukraine have. Because the discussion also goes: small countries can now show—and Ukraine or Iran are used as examples—can actually stand up against the former superpower, the United States. But they can produce missiles, even very good missiles. They had a lot of time, and the Iranians are very capable. I mean, they taught the best to calculate math a few thousand years ago already. And the point, however, is: without these inputs of very expensive technology, even the accuracy of these fantastic new missiles of Ukraine, of Iran, would not deliver what they are doing right now, because you need, in fact, real-time intelligence, especially on moving targets like ships, etc.

But that's another matter; we're going to sidetrack the issue. Nevertheless, artificial intelligence and these Brave1 and Delta systems which Ukraine is using, even without these inputs from Western intelligence agencies, have a value by themselves, because even with the existing reconnaissance systems which the Ukrainians still have, these artificial intelligence systems can put all the information rapidly together and speed up the reaction: how and with what means and where to attack.

#Rainer Rupp

Now, I give you an example of what the Russians were doing, were already achieving, maybe even with this AI, already about two, three years ago. I think it was already 2023 that the Russians reduced the time of discovering a target.

#Rainer Rupp

a Ukrainian tank to its destruction by means available, to about five minutes on average. Now, this is outstanding because if you remember what happened before, weapon systems were not integrated. The command-and-control systems of the various units were not integrated. The local commander, the guy who discovered—or the drone pilot who discovered, the reconnaissance drone pilot who discovered—the tank in the field, the Ukrainian, called it back to his base. His commander then called the commander of the local artillery unit or attack helicopters or what was available to kill the tank.

And all this would last much longer than five minutes—half an hour, one hour, or even longer—by which time the tank has long disappeared or is somewhere else. Now, they reduced this process to five minutes. Now, how they'd done it: they streamlined the command systems, et cetera. But I think they also introduced, in this particular case, artificial intelligence. And because artificial intelligence, with the names of Brave1 and Delta, are doing the same thing. They know what is available at any given time with the capability of shooting down or attacking this particular system, and they give the location. And basically, within seconds, they can say, this unit, being artillery or something else, or an anti-aircraft gun,

#Rainer Rupp

Or anti-aircraft missile, et cetera, will be used to shoot down this aircraft or attack drone, et cetera. So this whole process is being condensed into a very small time. So it is, in fact, a multiplier of the existing forces. Yeah? One should not belittle it, and the Russians do not belittle it either, and they consider it as an additional threat. However, contrary to the Western view of these things, which are in the media and, I think, also in the minds of many politicians and maybe even generals, considered as Wunderwaffen, wonder weapons that change the war, they don't do that.

Because they cannot produce soldiers. They cannot produce artillery shells. They cannot increase the defense industrial capacity, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And that is what they cannot do. AI and drones cannot clear trenches. And drones cannot, I mean, conquer and clear out a town or a village. You can see they cannot hold on to territory. And from that point of view, the real hard weaponry that is still in the field and still needed and still used in the war cannot be replaced with drones and artificial intelligence.

#Pascal

Yeah, it's not clear. Yeah, you did. You did. And I think this is quite important because especially in the West, there's this constant tendency to overestimate whatever kind of new weapon system it is, to then also, in the media, hype it up as, "This is going to turn around the war," because it's basically like the equivalent of the nuclear bomb. The difference to the nuclear bomb in the Second World War is that one really was a brand new technology that actually could impact the battlefield scenarios significantly, apart from the fact that it came at the very end.

But we put that one aside. I think the important thing to take away is, we are not yet in Terminator scenarios where these things then run autonomously on each device that is used on the battlefield, and therefore you can produce soldiers. We are not there yet. We are at the point where these systems are centrally run on a cloud server, and they can be used in order to coordinate, but not to replace the human battlefield, right? I think that's the point. Absolutely.

#Rainer Rupp

And the AI support of which we've been talking does not even eliminate the Russian drone problem for Ukraine, because Russia can increase the number of drones, which it is doing, in launches, alter their flight profile, deploy decoys or intensify electronic countermeasures, or make their drones faster, which they're also doing right now, or successfully for a while now, having the Geran—and I forgot the other name of it—now having them with small jet engines, so they can fly much higher and much faster. So they become almost invisible for the traditional methods, or the methods the Ukrainians have developed, to shoot down the propeller-driven Russian drones.

And they also have changed, for instance, the attack modes of these jet-driven drones. They actually, when they're over their target, they are diving down in an almost vertical way. So that makes the attack much, much faster. And for the defense, it is much, much more difficult to shoot a

vertically falling drone down. So all these kinds of things are, well, put it that way, it's a race of technical adaptation between one and the other in the drone warfare system. And the drone warfare system is only part of the overall warfare, which is definitely decided not by drones, but by, as I said earlier on, industrial capacities, by tanks, traditional weapons, et cetera.

#Pascal

Yeah. So, I mean, it's very interesting, right? In this sense, like AI and talent, what they can do is they can speed up a couple of things and make certain things easier or more difficult for the enemy, on whichever side you stand. But the overall picture isn't changed, especially in a war like Russia's, because it's a war of attrition, which is built upon industrial capacity, basically outperforming the other one. And this calculation is currently, in 2026, not changed.

#Rainer Rupp

Again, as I said, the drones and the AI systems used within the context of drone warfare, the impact is real, but they operate within, as I said earlier, within a much larger military system. The decisive factor remains—I've noted that in my article, of which I'm just finding the right—the decisive factor remains troop strength, mobilization, ammunition production, air defense, artillery, logistics, electronic warfare, and the ability to hold territory once it has been captured. Greater digitalization can therefore change the way the war is fought without, however, determining its outcome. That is the basic conclusion of my article.

#Pascal

I'm very sorry, we had a technical interruption, and we are now continuing the discussion. I was just asking you, Rainer, I think, when we got interrupted, what we didn't learn about the differences of these two battlefields, right? On the one hand, we have Ukraine, which, okay, now has access to these AI data rooms and whatnot and can do targeting maybe with the information that they get from the Americans and satellites and so on. On the other hand, we have Iran, which has been able to not only destroy U.S. radar systems and so on, but also successfully defend a lot of its territory. It couldn't shoot down everything, but it could do much, much more to the United States than Ukraine could do to Russia, especially on its own. So how do you assess these different capabilities, let's say Iran versus Ukraine? Yeah.

#Rainer Rupp

Well, I can only guess. I mean, I'll give you an educated guess, as one would say. And as an example, we could, for instance, take the event of about five or seven years ago when the Iranians captured the most updated, the crown jewel of American air reconnaissance drones, captured it and forced it to land without damage on Iranian soil. Now, why this capture was so important and why it hurt the Americans: this drone was actually not the prototype anymore. It was already going into

serial production. And this one was the first example that was actually being used. It was supposed to be used against Iran and the surroundings of Iran.

And this drone was to be the centerpiece, or the core, for the complete operation, interconnection and surveillance of the Pacific, the entire Pacific, for the United States Navy, meaning to integrate all information in the way we talked about earlier on. Artificial intelligence is integrating all information from all directions, elements from this radar station, from that satellite, from that OSINT information, et cetera, et cetera, into a combined picture of the Pacific. And that drone landed undamaged on the Iranian airfield. The Iranians captured it. I mean, that gives you—I mean, that should give everyone an idea what the Iranians are capable of doing in the field of electronics, violence, et cetera.

Also doing their own radars and developing radars, counter-radars, etc. Now, I don't know more about it, but this capture of this drone was not the only time. Recently, they captured another. I'm not even talking about the artificial tuna fish or whale, as they call it. But they caught another state-of-the-art American drone, undamaged. So they have a capability. Probably what we are seeing there is only the tip of the iceberg, because the public sees it. But in the way of intelligence gathering, electronic intelligence gathering, I would assume, at least in theory and in smaller systems, the Iranians are also very advanced.

Bigger systems, like having a satellite network, etc., etc., that's still too expensive now and requires missiles that go into space and requires a completely different set of financial resources and military resources to do that. But in other ways, they are very much more advanced. Now, if you're looking at what Ukraine was left with after the Soviet Union split up in 1991, I mean, the aircraft industry, Antonov, was very, very, very strong and powerful. And they were producing missile parts and some missiles, actually, etc. But I do not know of any kind of major radar or thing that was actually being produced in Ukraine.

It was more on the—I mean, it offered itself heavy industry in the Donbas and steel, special alloys, et cetera. The Donbas offered all these things, and that was not necessarily combined with the fine mechanics or even goes beyond fine mechanics. We're going into radar building and electronics. So I have not seen any capacity or capability of the Ukrainians to be anywhere close to the capabilities of the Iranians. The Ukrainians must, for their deep strikes, et cetera, must rely—not even for their deep strikes—in order to see where Russian troops are concentrating near the front line, even for that they need to rely on inputs from Western intelligence services. That is my take.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, it's quite interesting. Then, if we look at which countries actually possess the ability to move more or less independently, there's not that many, right? I mean, even Germany and France, and probably also Britain, when it comes to the information, the raw data that they need, this is all

integrated. They couldn't actually move independently of the United States, whereas Iran, Russia, China, probably North Korea, they maintain that capability of producing this first-order information that's needed to then feed the systems downstream, I suppose.

#Rainer Rupp

Now, on top of that, one should not forget the importance of human intelligence. I mean, in that respect, the Iranians are, at least in the Middle East, in a situation similar to that of Mossad, because Jews are all over the world—not all over the world, but in many, many countries. And you always have possibilities to connect for an intelligence service. Now, if you're looking at the Middle East, the Middle East itself, there are a lot of Shia. And even in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I mean, in the oil area—in fact, the oil-rich regions—they are dominated by Shia population. So in every Middle Eastern country, there are Shia people. I mean, there's a large minority—a minority, but a large minority. And Iraq is the same.

And so, of course, in order to get agents on the ground, it's not quite easy. I mean, compared with countries who don't have the cultural and intellectual and religious connections, it's much easier for Iran to engage people to support them. And the support is all they have to do is drive past one of these—drive past one of, what they know, one of the American or stationary potential targets needs to be stationary. And nowadays, you just, with your handy, with your mobile phone, you can immediately send the coordinates of that locality. You can even then go into OpenSky, I mean the satellite services that you have. I'm quite sure the Iranians have not just started right now to collect the open satellite services of private commercial companies to have the pictures of the entire Middle East.

They probably have them stored, even if the Americans now have stopped their service maybe in some places. But at least with the possibility of using the coordinates of a drive-by mobile phone, you can then go back into your own database and get exactly the locations: where are the hangars, where are the et cetera. And you have—you can, with a very high degree, I mean, not a perfect degree, but with a high degree, you can actually then shoot a missile there, especially if it's one of those missiles which has a lot of MIRVs, multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles, that comes up and then sends about 10, 20. I mean, you can see them on some of the videos that come out of the region, how these split up very high already in the sky when they reenter into the Earth's atmosphere.

And there are lots and lots of bomblets, basically, of, say, two- or five-kilo bomblets or six-kilo bomblets that come out independently in an area. So you can destroy multiple—an area of a couple of football fields. So ideal to destroy, say, U.S. bases. And if I've just—I think it was the New York Times that just presented a whole lot of photographs. I can't remember which. It was one of the mainstream U.S. media, a whole bunch of photographs of some of the U.S. bases there. There's not a wall standing anymore. Yeah.

#Pascal

Yeah, I think they just came out actually today, these pictures, and CENTCOM for some reason actually cleared them for publication. And you can see all the destroyed vehicles, airplanes, and barracks. And as we know now, the U.S. was so sure about its interception capability that they didn't even build underground bunkers in these areas. And as you're saying right now, it's not that every Jew is a spy or every Shiite is a spy for Iran, but the potential of finding people who will forward information is just quite large in these groups. And that just really casts doubt on the entire strategy of the United States to build all of these bases in the first place. I mean, is this base strategy that the United States has been using, of putting bases everywhere around Iran, around Russia, around China, is this still like part of the thinking of, you know, the Cold War 1.0, where that was actually a real power projection and you could threaten an enemy, and by now it has kind of reversed and become a liability?

#Rainer Rupp

I think you hit the nail on the head. And it's at that point—well, I've been giving this idea, this point, quite a bit of thought. If you have—what is this?—if we have a state which is not unlike Iran, where the population is prepared to suffer and stands behind the government's decision against a foreign attack. If you have a situation where the leadership is split, the population is split—take Venezuela—you can actually get away with it. If, however, you have a different situation, you can't.

And that was already—you can bomb Venezuela, the country, into smithereens or back into the Stone Age, but again, Iraq showed that you cannot. If the population doesn't agree or is not split, it does not become a vassal at the top. It won't work. You cannot impose your policy on it. We can go back even to Vietnam. That is a more complicated system, but I was just trying to point it out. If you can threaten the elite that, well, they will be killed and they will lose all their money, and quite sure in the end they will be sold by their own population—take Yugoslavia or Serbia. Yeah, Mladić was delivered on a platter to NATO, to put him to The Hague in front of the tribunal, against the promise that that would accelerate the Serbian accession to the European Union.

And as so many millions of Serbs still now work in the EU, the EU has leverage over these people. So if you have that leverage, if you threaten the elites that they will either be killed or they will be put in front of some court, etc., there is a possibility that this policy still works. I think Venezuela is a case in point. If, however, you have a situation like Iran, you're lost, because they are prepared to fight, and they have the capability to fight. They are strong in those areas. I mean, they are also strong because a land invasion, a ground invasion, would be suicide for the Americans.

#Pascal

Yeah.

#Rainer Rupp

Not because American ground invasions by themselves would not work, but for a number of new possibilities. Remember how long—first of all, you could only access without much opposition if your ground invasion came very much down from the south, but then you would have to go through hundreds of kilometers through the desert. Open air, not very recommendable, especially as your ships would also be subject to attacks, et cetera. Now, if you want to invade from the Gulf of Hormuz, I mean the Persian Gulf, well, we've seen the pictures of the coastline, very rugged. And that's not just the coastline. It goes up and down and up behind there. Have a look on the map. Up and down, up and down, up and down, up and down.

And over land, you just have to go. Of course, there are mountain passes. What's easier to defend than a mountain pass? But it's not only one. It's one after the other. So the ability of the Americans to really use their army's firepower isn't given there. So the alternative would be via the Caspian Sea, and nobody even talks about that because that is ridiculous. And so they had thought they could mobilize the Kurds, including the Kurds, a Kurdish group, something called PKK. They are an extreme radical kind of—they call themselves Marxists, et cetera—but they are an extremely radical group, a group which has for a very long time been on the terror list of the United States.

However, the United States discovered them as a useful tool after they had found refuge under Saddam Hussein in Iraq, this group. They had become their own little region where they could have autonomous villages, et cetera, where they could operate. And the Americans continued with this because they thought, after they had liberated or conquered Iraq, they continued with it and invited leadership to Washington, et cetera, et cetera. So they had hoped to use this group as special forces, and the other northern Iraqi Kurds, plus the Kurdish minority in the border area, with the promise of an independent—that is the great Kurdish dream—of an independent Kurdistan, which of course is not at all liked by Turkey, which also has a sizable Kurdish minority, which is where it is just quiet now.

So they were absolutely up in arms about this kind of American plan. And, of course, it failed. I mean, the Iranians knew what it was. They sent quite a few missiles to the training camps, et cetera, and told the Kurds what they had to expect, because the Americans also don't have a very good track record. And they drop allies from the moment they're not useful anymore. So then the Kurds would stay in the region. So it's calm that way right now. So the ground invasion isn't coming, can't come. And the war is getting more and more expensive for the Americans. I just read this morning, I just skimmed the news, there was a report by the Pentagon's Inspector General that alarmed us, that the war against Iran has emptied the strategic weaponry, gone even into the, what are they called, the iron reserves.

And at the same time, there was an article in the Wall Street Journal recounting that, I think it was on the 8th of September, there was a big Iranian retaliation against the American base in Jordan, Muwaffaq Salti, something, something, I can't pronounce it properly, where the Iranians fired,

according to the Wall Street Journal, 20 ballistic missiles of their newest type, against which the Americans used between 60 and 70 PAC-3 Patriots and more than a dozen THAADs. The Patriots are between \$4 and \$5 million apiece. And the THAADs, they are THAADs. That stands for Terminal High Altitude Area Defense. The THAADs cost between \$12 and \$15 million apiece. So add that together, you are well over—you're getting close to a billion, a billion dollars—just for the defense against one volley of Iranian missiles. And still, some of them got through, yeah? Now, you cannot continue like that. No.

#Pascal

It's way too expensive, but the expense is one thing. The thing is, what you pointed out first, they're running out of them, right? The iron reserves are being used up. Switzerland just was shocked last month, I'm telling you. Probably that didn't reach you in Germany, but the Swiss were shocked when the Americans said that they couldn't deliver the PAC system, the Patriot system, that they had ordered for 2027. And they were like, "My God, why did we not negotiate better?" No, that's not the problem, guys. They don't have them anymore. They don't have anything to give. And selling is a form of giving for something in return. So this hasn't sunk in yet.

But if we then use this information, and on top of the fact that, well, the Russians maintain their military-industrial capability to produce and process data and produce these systems. Secondly, the Iranians, for all we can see, still have systems and produce them, and they are information-wise independent in the sense that they can do their own targeting. What we are ending up with is the conclusion that the West is running out of the capacity to keep waging these wars. Adeline, I mean, that's maybe also the optimist inside me saying that. But does it seem to you, too, that the machine is running itself out now? It's running out of steam.

#Rainer Rupp

Yeah.

#Rainer Rupp

Actually, the machine is running out of steam, especially—we haven't even talked about the economic situation of the United States. But as an economist by training, I've been following that for donkey's years. But Foreign Affairs, you know, it's been one of my regular readings, again, since many years. Since I worked at NATO, I've always been reading Foreign Affairs because you can see what the establishment, the foreign policy establishment, is thinking, in which directions they are thinking. And sooner or later, if there is a congruence in the articles, you will find it translated into policies, maybe not directly, but after a while. So from that point of view, it was, for me, always very important to keep track of what, even nowadays, Foreign Affairs is writing, because it's the sideshow. I mean, it's not just a magazine. It's of the United States Atlantic Council.

#Pascal

Yep.

#Rainer Rupp

And so there are, I mean, you look who is who in there, you find them on the board and you find them as contributors. Now, since three months or so, the first articles came out that the United States has to get out of the Middle East. And since then, there have been more and more of this kind of articles, because even the idea of keeping some of the, I mean, rebuilding some of the bases won't work because the situation hasn't changed. The Iranians can destroy them. So, the best thing is getting out. Now, what would it entail? Of course, it entails that the Israeli dream of becoming the financial center for Middle East money, because that was with the Abraham Accords and so on. And the Jews, since hundreds of years or thousands, five hundred years, have always been the administrators of money for sultans, for sheiks.

We see it, for instance, in... I'm a great fan of Islamic culture and the remnants of Islamic culture in Spain. And Spain was, for over 700 years, governed and ruled by Islamic leaders. And wherever you go... in one of these Andalusian towns with an old Moorish castle on the hill, et cetera, and the walls around there, in the inner circle of protection was always the Jewish community. Most people don't realize. And the finance minister of the local ruler was normally a Jew. Even in the Caliphate of Granada, the finance minister was a Jew because Jews knew how to handle money. And in Islam, usually...

#Pascal

is forbidden. You're not allowed to put interest on money. Interest is forbidden, and that kind of kills the usual banking. But the Muslims do not forbid the Jews from going about their practice, but they cooperate.

#Rainer Rupp

So I was thinking of that hands-on experience—I have been many times in Andalusia—in the context of the Abraham Accords, where the Americans were pushing and the Israelis were pushing, trying to get the whole of the Arab fiefdoms and sheikdoms, et cetera, which are not really—I mean, they are remnants of the British colonial rule, so they put a tribe that was subservient enough on the top, and the Brits could then lean back and take the oil. Anyway, that reminded me of the Abraham Accords, and the financial elements that kind of came through in the various discussions about it pointed out, to me at least, that the Israelis were actually hoping they could become the financial managers for the entire rich, oil-rich region. And...

#Pascal

That is heavily in doubt now. The viability of this project, the whole Abraham Accords and everything that came out of it, is basically running aground at the moment. Maybe just let me ask you, in closing of our conversation, where do you think that this is going? I mean, in both theaters that we have, because as horrible as these wars are, they give us a lot of information about how modern warfighting actually works. In one case, we have a proxy war that is being implemented and fought in many different layers. On the other side, we now have a symmetrical war between a great power and what we thought was a third-tier power, but it is proving to be at least a second-tier power that is able to stand its ground, and not through guerrilla warfare. That's the difference to Vietnam. Not guerrilla warfare, it's like military-to-military kind of warfare. Where does this leave us, or where does this leave you with your insights about what kind of warfare is even still possible in the 2020s?

#Rainer Rupp

Well, if the Americans finally— which I don't believe, because the ruling class in the United States still don't— I'll put it that way: most politicians are still thinking they're the exceptional nation, and they still can rule the world. And they see they have problems, but they think raw, raw power has always helped to consolidate it or to push back. And so I don't think that they take the advice of the people who are writing in Foreign Affairs, at least not yet. I think it has to get worse first. Unfortunately, many more people will have to die in the process, mostly, unfortunately, also Iranians. But apparently they are prepared not to give in to a foreign invader and a foreign dictator who's trying to push his or their idea of how they should work and live and how they should be governed onto their population. I mean... we must not forget they have 3,000 years of culture behind them. They absorbed the onslaught of the Mongols, et cetera.

#Rainer Rupp

They have a culture that the Americans couldn't even dream of. Now, forget that; that was not what your question was. Trump now talks about after the midterm election, the war will be finished.

#Pascal

Yes, sir.

#Rainer Rupp

Now, critics now have combined this now to another statement of Trump, that he is in the process of preparing the biggest ordnance transfer—ordnance meaning bombs in this particular case, big bombs, up to 2,000-kilo bombs—the biggest ordnance transfer in the history of the United States to Israel. The talk is about 40,000 tons, with an explosive power of basically four times Hiroshima. Hiroshima was considered 20,000 tons of TNT. So on the other hand, these 2,000-kilo bombs...

#Rainer Rupp

Would primarily be designed to try to hit these underground defense industrial installations and defense industrial capabilities of the Iranians and the stocks that they have. If they really, really make a difference, if they are under 500, 100 meters or 200 meters of solid rock or granite, I don't know. But already a certain earthquake can already change things because you can't open doors, et cetera. It can delay use of things, but I don't think even those bombs will succeed in stopping the Iranians from continuing to be able to resist. Now, but on top of it, they think the... Let's put it that way. If they have transferred 40,000 tons of bombs into Israel, A, it will not remain unnoticed where they are.

B, they would have to be taken into Iran and over Iran. How would they do that? The air bases in Israel wouldn't be safe, so they would have to come from Cyprus. Now, Cyprus has been warned already by the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs: if it is housing or allows American or Israeli fighters to start raids against Iran from their airports, they will become a target, and the Iranian missiles can also reach Cyprus. The Americans have actually been thinking of using a Romanian or Bulgarian—I can't remember which one now—airfield as a base to start bombing Iran from there. This whole—just imagine how many refueling flights that takes.

These aircraft also need places to land and operate from. All these are open. We just heard what happened to the airport, to the air base in Jordan. This doesn't make any sense, but it will continue until it doesn't go anymore. With America, with Iran, with Ukraine, I fear we are going into a further confrontation because it could mean that the situation, developments in Germany, could further a situation in which a dam is about to break. And this dam that is about to break is not only in Germany; it will spill over into other European countries. And we can see it already. It has an impact on the ruling elites, even in Germany already now.

#Pascal

You mean the AfD, the victory of the AfD in Saxony? Or what do you mean, which dam? That dam, yeah.

#Rainer Rupp

That dam, that dam, yeah. The dam. And the realization that whoever is in government, I mean, whoever is in government doesn't know any... It doesn't matter in France, in the UK, in the Netherlands, in Italy. They don't know what to do anymore to get out of the situation. And the population doesn't want to follow them anymore. Now, there is a short version of that in German: "Die wissen nicht mehr, was sie tun können. Und das Volk will nicht mehr mitmachen." That is how, I mean, translated: they up there don't know anymore what to do, and the people don't want to follow them anymore.

That is, by definition, it is more complicated and longer, but that is also the definition, Lenin's definition of a pre-revolutionary situation. I don't now think with organized revolution, but I could easily imagine that this could turn into fights in the streets, and also with some extremist groups then using weapons, et cetera. Especially if they are now—the CDU is now, and not only the CDU—openly discussing to ban the AfD. It's only going to help them.

#Pascal

It's only going to help them. I mean, the opposition is only going to strengthen.

#Rainer Rupp

Yeah. But that, again, shows you what the situation is. And then, if you're looking now to Ukraine, there are so many indications that it's at the edge of the abyss and breakdown. The two intelligence services having an open street fight, shooting at each other in the streets of Kiev a few days ago. The attorney general and his staff being arrested for—who were in charge of fighting corruption—arrested for corruption, in a huge effort, et cetera.

And it goes down the line, down the line, and more and more people. Even the former press secretary, for long years press secretary of Zelenskyy, is now a persona non grata because she's criticizing his policies and thinking, well, it's peace. We have to finish this war because it drains the last population reserves that the country still has. And, of course, there's no more money. And the promised \$90 billion by the EU, which they want to raise—they want to raise the money via a loan—but they don't say when the loan will be paid back. They want to sell bonds, but the bonds, when will they be paid back? It would be paid back when the Russians have lost the war and have to pay reparations.

#Pascal

It's the dumbest arrangement ever.

#Rainer Rupp

Nobody's touching that loan with a barge pole. Now, the \$27 billion that the Iranians had gotten, that Fedorov has blown those on his drone war.

#Rainer Rupp

I mean, he got a lot, I mean, a lot of money he put in that. And that was the origin of the fight between Fedorov, Fedorov being that young, flashy minister of defense, versus the supreme commander of the forces, General Syrsky. He blew the money on drone war, which of course got a lot of coverage in Western media, as Ukraine is winning, Ukraine is winning. But the money for the

actual war, as I pointed out in my earlier, I mean, not artificial intelligence, but the war is—the main war is fought without artificial intelligence and with systems. And, of course, for that, the money was lacking, or it had disappeared. And now they want more money again, and the EU actually is asking, oh, what happened to that funding?

#Pascal

Well, it went up and down in the pockets of some of our companies.

#Rainer Rupp

Some of that went into golden toilets.

#Pascal

But it's around the same type of investment. Rainer, thank you very much for this tour de force of giving us an overview of where we stand. I think your assessment is very valuable, also to put the whole hype about AI in warfare and so on in the right place where it belongs. You know what kind of strategic impact it has. People who want to follow your work, your writing, where should they find you?

#Rainer Rupp

Well, I have opened a Substack where my articles are now. Yeah, I have to do it myself, and sometimes that's where my articles are found. It's under Rainer Rupp Substack.

#Pascal

I will put the link to Rainer Rupp's Substack into the description box below, and I'll also link a couple of your other articles that you've published in other outlets. And then we'll talk again soon. Rainer Rupp, thank you so much for your time today.

#Rainer Rupp

It was a pleasure seeing you again. Bye-bye.