

EU sanctions Swiss analyst Jacques Baud for Ukraine 'conspiracy theories'

The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal and Aaron Mate discuss the farcical claims by EU Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen to uphold freedom of speech as she sanctions former Swiss intelligence officer and analyst Jacques Baud for challenging official Western narratives of the Ukraine proxy war. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Max

That's what I know. Let's talk about this—Tulsi Gabbard mentioned that the EU wants war with Russia. Ursula von der Leyen is one of the main forces pushing for war with Russia. Von der Leyen is centralizing authority around herself and the EU Commission. She did so with COVID-19, and she's done so through the censorship policy, which has seen her sanction journalists simply for doing journalism that contradicts the EU line. And now, here's what Ursula von der Leyen had to say in response to the Trump administration's statement placing visa restrictions—basically banning several figures from the censorship industrial complex in the EU from entering the U.S.: "Freedom of speech is the foundation of our strong and vibrant European democracy. We're proud of it."

We will protect it, because the EU Commission is the guardian of our values. They're protesting—or condemning—the U.S. decision to impose travel restrictions on five Europeans, including Commissioner Thierry Breton, who's the most high-profile of them. I mean, these were figures from NGOs that produced lists of so-called proliferators of misinformation and disinformation. We've been on those lists constantly for journalism that contravened the objectives of the EU and the Biden administration—the imperialist objectives, the pro-war objectives. And no one ever bothered to challenge the facts or debate us on the merits. Aaron, you were named the leading purveyor of disinformation on Syria by which EU- and State Department- and Bill Gates-sponsored group?

#Aaron

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Funnily enough, in Doha I ran into one of the people who was behind that so-called study. And how'd that go? Well, you know, what am I going to do? I thought about whipping out my phone, but who cares? That study was a joke. The Guardian took it seriously—but who takes the Guardian seriously? So, you know, I decided to let it be.

#Max

You destroyed the Guardian reporter because you called him and asked him to back up his claims about you, and he couldn't do it. He was just a hack. But the Institute for Strategic Dialogue had all those Syrian regime-change, Arab NGO—class types who are kind of Qatari-adjacent—from the Syria Campaign—come in and basically write the report. And I guess there were donations to the ISD to attack you. It was kind of like a mercenary job. So you ran into one of them in Qatar, of course. I would've whipped out my phone, but you had bigger targets, I guess. Hillary Clinton was there, so props on that.

#Aaron

I just feel like those people don't matter anymore, so it felt like punching down. I think that whole episode showed how completely empty these claims about spreading disinformation are. They can't even cite one example of anything I've said that was false, and they couldn't back anything up. So I felt like I already won that battle, and it wasn't worth relitigating it—especially since I'm not even sure if the Institute for Strategic Dialogue even exists anymore. I mean, who pays attention to these people to begin with? But yeah, that's the kind of crowd that's now faced some sort of reckoning as part of Trump.

#Max

And Imran Ahmed, who we've reported on at The Grayzone, from the modestly named Center for Countering Digital Hate—which was basically a tool of Starmer's camp in Labour for first destroying Jeremy Corbyn, painting them all as anti-Semites. Then he moved to the U.S. to go after Trump world on behalf of Biden. And I exposed, through emails from Israeli embassy officials and by calling them and calling him, that he was being paid by the Israeli government. So I have no sympathy for Imran Ahmed being kicked out of the U.S. He's a British citizen, and they're making him into this kind of anti-disinformation campaigner.

The Guardian is doing all this positive reporting on this slimebag. This is actually one of the praiseworthy things the Trump administration has done. Of course, using visas and deportations on political grounds is suspect, but I really have no sympathy for these characters. It's also inadvertently exposed the hypocrisy of the EU and Ursula von der Leyen, who's now trying to claim the mantle of free speech—defending free speech—when she's just sanctioned Jacques Baud, whom you've interviewed for The Grayzone. Who is Jacques Baud? What's happening here?

#Aaron

He's a retired Swiss Army colonel. He worked for NATO and has been a critic of the Ukraine proxy war from the start. If you read his work, he just makes the basic point that the West has used Ukraine to bleed Russia—the same thing we've been saying for a long time. And he uses primarily

Western sources. He's never said anything I've found particularly controversial. Sometimes, in the space of people who criticize the U.S. proxy war strategy against Russia, you have those who are openly pro-Russia, who support the invasion. Jacques Baud isn't part of that group; he's simply critical of the proxy war. And for his efforts, the EU sanctioned him, calling him a mouthpiece for pro-Russian propaganda and accusing him of spreading conspiracy theories.

For example, accusing Ukraine of orchestrating its own invasion to join NATO. Um, now, first of all, even if that were true—if he did all that—I mean, either you have free speech or you don't. And if you have free speech, then you have the right to spread pro-Russian propaganda, and you have the right to spread conspiracy theories. But this idea that he specifically accused Ukraine of orchestrating its own invasion—what he actually did was, as he pointed out, there was an interview with a former adviser to Zelensky, who's since turned on Zelensky, who said, years before Russia invaded, that one day we're going to have a big war with Russia, and that this is the price of us joining NATO. So he was simply quoting Zelensky's own adviser. And for that, the EU accuses him of spreading conspiracy theories.

#Max

Here's something from a Swiss publication—Swissinfo—about a former Swiss intelligence officer targeted by new EU sanctions. They note that the Swiss government will not abide by the sanctions. Jacques Baud lives in Brussels, so he's not allowed to travel within EU countries, and his assets in the Eurozone are frozen. The European Union's official journal says the reason he's being sanctioned is that he is, quote, a mouthpiece for pro-Russian propaganda and spreads conspiracy theories. But if you read deeper into this article, which is unfriendly to Jacques Baud, there's nothing in there about him being a foreign agent for Russia, on Russia's payroll, or conspiring with the Kremlin.

He's being sanctioned simply because, as a former Swiss intelligence officer, he's making statements that upset the cheerleaders for war with Russia inside Europe. And he's effective. I mean, there are plenty of people spreading conspiracy theories in Russia, but they've targeted him. They also targeted the Valdai Club. Analysts linked to the Valdai Club are now being sanctioned because the Valdai Club would bring Westerners to Moscow, including many credible and brilliant analysts, to present their analysis. And you're not allowed to do that now. So the EU has waged war on free speech in ways we can't even imagine in the United States. It's hypocritical and disgusting for von der Leyen to try to portray herself as some kind of champion of free speech while defending the leaders of the censorship industrial complex.

#Aaron

Well, it's also hypocritical for the Trump team to act as if they're champions of free speech while targeting the EU. And of course, they're cracking down on the free speech of people who support Palestinian rights. For example, Jacques Baud is under sanctions—he can't use his financial assets. Look at what just happened to Francesca Albanese. I saw her in Doha, and it's very hard for her to

travel because all her credit cards have been frozen. She had a medical procedure in the U.S. that she had to pay for out of pocket because U.S. sanctions canceled her health insurance. So now she's on the hook for the medical bill. Everyone's a hypocrite here. But the EU—yeah, it's pretty rich for them to complain while going after Jacques Baud. Look, I don't know if he's been on RT or not, the Russians.

#Max

I think he's been on maybe once in the last year or something. Let's say he was on RT. Sorry to cut in, but that article—I meant to highlight it—it points out that one of the reasons he might have been sanctioned is because he appears on DialogueWorks, which I go on. It's an independent YouTube show with no connection to Russia at all, but it takes a kind of multipolar, anti-imperialist perspective.

#Aaron

But let's say he was on RT every single day, had a show on it. So what—do you have the right to sanction people just because they go on a rival state television network? I mean, again, it's such an attack on free speech. And I'm sure Jacques Baud would love to be interviewed by Western media, but he's not, because our outlets across the spectrum are so subservient to the proxy war narrative. As you pointed out, we were one of the few outlets to interview him back when Russia invaded, because at that time the deference to the narrative was so widespread that even progressive outlets felt scared—like, “Oh no, I don't want to challenge this.”

I don't want to interview, for example, a former Swiss military officer who was a consultant for NATO. Voices like that couldn't be heard—let alone daring to speak to a Russian. Imagine that. Even speaking to a Western critic of the proxy war, you just couldn't do it. And it's that climate, that climate of cowardice, where you won't platform people who push back on the dominant narrative. That actually helps create space to legally persecute people like Jacques Baud, because it shows they don't have the backing of institutional media that could cause an uproar over someone being punished for their political views.

#Max

Yeah, I mean, we deal with that kind of thing. We're not formally sanctioned at The Grayzone, but they've done everything short of that. Look at our Wikipedia page—it's like something out of a spy novel. It's insane. And Jimmy Wales, that guy was on the board of NewsGuard, which was funded by the Pentagon and the State Department. He's basically a spook—the CEO of Wikipedia. He's personally said that he considers us Russian propagandists. So while The Grayzone is listed as a deprecated source on Wikipedia, in violation of Wikipedia's own rules—meaning all our investigative reporting, which no one challenges, can't be cited anywhere—they also broke the rules to create our page just to defame and denigrate us. And that's then fed into AI systems that learn about The Grayzone, so it isolates us from polite society.

Jacques Baud—they just bluntly sanctioned him in the EU. They're very sloppy there. It's maybe traditional to their culture of Western values to just criminalize people for their speech or arrest them for making forbidden, *verboden*, statements. In the UK, they had Brexit, so they're not necessarily in the EU, but it's a European country that loves to claim the mantle of Western civilization—where Greta Thunberg was just arrested for holding a sign declaring that she supports Palestine Action, a group that has never killed anyone but is proscribed as a terrorist organization in the UK. That's done to deprive its members—who've carried out some of the most effective direct protest actions against the Israeli genocide in Gaza—of their rights under British law to have a trial before a jury, because the juries keep letting them off.

Numerous Palestine Action members in British prisons are now on hunger strike and in failing health. Greta Thunberg went to the UK to support them by holding up a banner with a forbidden phrase—for which you can be arrested there. And how is she treated in the international press? With a shrug. There's very little about this outside of social media. In a normal situation, in a decent civilization, she'd be getting the Nobel Prize. But instead, the Nobel Prize goes to a warmongering gusana who's called for Israel to invade her own country. So the mask is off.

The sort of central pillar of what are supposed to be Western values—the ones we claim to promote around the world at the point of a gun—is free speech. And now the regime is consolidating; free speech is an illusion. Journalistic objectivity and press freedom are being discredited and whittled away inside the U.S. more rapidly than we probably ever imagined. That's why I think independent media is so important. And I'm not just talking about The Grayzone—there are many independent outlets covering this—but they're the only ones. There's no discussion of what's happening to the hunger strikers, the Palestine Action hunger strikers in the U.K., or the fact that the U.K. has just, I think, banned the phrase "Globalize the Intifada" following the Bondi Beach mass shooting. Yeah. Yeah. What a joke.

#Aaron

Yeah. So if you were to say, like, "Globalize the Intifada."

#Max

Yeah, Intifada.

#Aaron

Or the Intifada—would that still be criminalized?

#Max

Yeah, can you say "Globalize the Intifada"?

#Aaron

Globalize the Intifada, yeah.

#Max

You can say, "I support Palestine Action," but you can't say "Palestine Action." So yeah, you have all these pensioners getting arrested every week in the U.K. for holding those signs. And now Greta Thunberg, who's become a pariah because she's protested the Holocaust of our time and done so by putting her body on the line—and was tortured in an Israeli dungeon after being kidnapped on the high seas for attempting to bring aid to people under siege in Gaza—she'll never be considered for a Nobel Prize. The Nobel Committee only gives prizes to regime-change assets.

It's all over. Our institutions are totally discredited at this point. And by discrediting themselves, they've discredited liberalism, which paves the way for a kind of Nero-like figure like Trump—or a more savvy, dictatorial figure in the future—to just consolidate power. That's the future. And it's their fault. It's totally their fault. It's not Jacques Beaux's fault. It's not our fault. It's not Greta's fault, because she wasn't going to be perpetually appearing at Rockefeller Foundation meetings on the climate. It's their fault.