

Empire of Lies is Imploding Fast | Stanislav Krapivnik

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#Pascal

Hello, everybody, and welcome back to Neutrality Studies. Today, we're joined again by our friend of the show, Stanislav Krapivnik. Stas has his own YouTube channel and has been on here many times. He's giving us an update on how world affairs look from Russia. Stas, welcome back.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Thank you, thank you. Always a pleasure to be back. Always fun to watch the world turn into... no, actually, I don't know how else to put it these days.

#Pascal

I'm very, very desperate now because, you know, in 2026 I had a sliver of hope. It seemed as though Trump was not acting on Venezuela, just threatening. And it looked as if the attack everybody expected on Iran in December wasn't coming. So maybe they were holding off. Maybe we were getting to some form of strategic equilibrium. Maybe the discussions with Russia, even if they didn't lead to a result, would bring at least some stability. But now it seems that everything's coming apart. Stas, what did you make of the first week of January?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, one thing you learn really quickly is that all those MAGA people—well, I won't say all of them, that's not the right way to put it—but a good two-thirds were a bunch of hypocrites. They're the ones screaming, "Oh, we don't want any more forever wars, we don't want any more wars at all, we want peace." What they actually meant was, "We don't want any more Democrat wars." But if Trump starts a war—my God—they're going to back him because they're groupies. It's basically

cultists. I mean, look, these are the same people who gave Trump—uh, bought up Trump coins, bought up Melania coins, earned Trump thirty billion dollars in a month. These are not rich people; these are the last ones who can afford to go into the worst investment you can possibly make, which is cryptocurrency.

Cryptocurrency is great if you're paying for something. It has a transitional, transactional use. But as an investment of value, it's pointless. You know, somebody blurts something out and it goes up, then it goes down. There's absolutely no foundation for how it moves, where it moves, or why it moves. And people are invested because, you know, Trump said, "Hey, it's my coin." Oh, okay. Yeah, yeah. I mean, that's a groupie mentality. That's a cult mentality. And you see that right now. "Oh, but Trump, but—ah, yeah." Any crap they're putting out, I'd say at least half of MAGA is buying it up, no matter how absurd it is.

#Pascal

The number of people who—well, the number of people who are now saying, you know, the intervention—and let's not kid ourselves, this is a kidnapping and a military aggression against Venezuela, close to the threshold of actual war. Eighty people were killed in Venezuela, and the president was abducted. And there are people saying, "Oh no, but he had it coming, he's a bad guy anyway." If you've never lived in Venezuela, if you're not one of the people who had to flee, then you have no right to say anything. So shut up—it's good that he's gone, and now we'll have peace on Earth in Venezuela. I can understand how, after Iraq, Syria, Libya, there are still people who argue that. Can you somehow make sense of this?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, yeah, of course. First of all, Americans—as they say themselves in America—have a 30-second attention span, like in the average commercial. And unfortunately, that's true. Most of them can't find Venezuela on a map. I guarantee you that. You know, there was a National Geographic survey done for 18- to 25-year-olds about ten years ago, somewhere around there, and it found that almost a quarter of American 18- to 25-year-olds couldn't find America on a map. You can't find your own country on a map. But then again, you're dealing with a population where, between total literacy and partial literacy, it's 53% of the population.

We're not talking about immigrants; we're talking about the native population. Half of them can't read, or barely read at all. They don't read, period—in other words. If you're reading at a second- or third-grade American level, which is about a first-grade Russian level, that means you're probably not reading a lot of books. You're probably not reading those nasty, ugly things with dates and names and trends and, I don't know, maps. So, you know, whatever Trump says, or whatever the media tells you, that's the latest news of the day. Read *1984*—which most of them don't read anyway—so they wouldn't know anything about that.

#Pascal

So, simply, there's a relatively large part of the population—20, 30 percent—who literally don't remember, literally don't know the context of Iraq, Syria, Libya, the other interventions in South America during the entire Cold War, all the regime change operations, and all the miseries they brought. The regime of Pinochet that was installed and killed tens of thousands of people in Chile—they just don't know about this. And that's enough of a political base to allow this to go on and make some kind of sense in the overall news environment.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, I'll give one shout-out to Pinochet that he does deserve—well, two shout-outs. Out of all the governments the U.S. helped prop up, Pinochet was probably the least bad, because, as he stated, "My goal is that if every Chilean can afford a house and a car, they'll never go communist, they'll never go Marxist." And he actually worked toward that. He did stabilize the economy, and he left power willingly—without a civil war, without any revolutions. That's an exception, because the vast majority of people set up by the U.S. are not nationalists. That guy—Pinochet—was actually a nationalist. He was out to make life better.

He had a different view of what the economy should be than, say, the people he replaced. But he was a nationalist—he was out for the betterment of his own economy. Most of the people the U.S. set up are either globalists or just sold-out types with bank accounts in the U.S. They don't give a damn about anything except fattening their pockets, which means fattening the pockets of U.S. corporations. And this isn't just a Cold War-era phenomenon. The U.S. has been doing this for the last 150 years. When they say there's going to be a physical intervention—I mean, boots on the ground—as Trump is now flippantly saying, "We don't mind, we're ready to go boots on the ground."

You know, they got five deferments from Vietnam, as usual. It's always the people who never served who are more than happy to send everyone else's kids into some kind of butcher shop. Not their kids. But, you know, in South America, it's not just the leftists or the Marxists—no, it's everybody. There are rightists who want revenge against the U.S., there are leftists who want revenge against the U.S., and there are centrists too. Because the U.S. has screwed everybody across the board in Latin America for 150 years. It's a curse on Latin America, the biggest obstacle to their development.

#Pascal

How is this being reported right now in Moscow, in Russia? I mean, what's the general vibe about it?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, I mean, it's being reported that Maduro has been snatched. I'm not going to say arrested—snatched, to be proper about it. He's been snatched. There's a war. I mean, Trump can say, or, you

know, the former vice stories—Narco Marco—can say that we're not at war. You are at war. You've attacked a nation. You blockaded them—that's already an act of war. A financial blockade is an act of war. You attacked the nation, you murdered citizens, you kidnapped its legal government. Whether it's an elected government or a monarchy or whatever, it's the legal government of that country, and it's up to that country to decide what its legal government is. You kidnapped the leadership. That's all war. That's not even acts of war—that is war.

Whether or not you say you're at war or not, the latest as of yesterday is they're demanding tribute. Yeah. There's no other way to put it. They're flat-out demanding tribute like a bunch of marauding psychopaths. "You give us three billion dollars' worth of oil or we'll attack you. And we'll settle it for the profit of the people." Translation: the U.S. is saying, "Fill up our tanker with three billion dollars' worth of oil, we'll sell it, and we'll keep the money—for your profit." Yeah, okay. "We'll take a cut of it." And that's, you know, there's an English saying: the problem with paying the Danegeld is not what you do about the Danes, because the Danes are always going to come back for more gold. And the Americans have an appetite to steal everything that's not nailed down in any nation that doesn't resist. They are...

#Pascal

Apart from the oil and the audacity of this whole thing, people are saying, "Oh, the U.S. has taken out one of the allies of Russia and China." Is there any reason to believe that Venezuela was strategically important to Russia and should be regarded as an ally, rather than just a trading partner?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, it was an ally. I wouldn't say it was a strategic ally, but it was an ally and a trading partner. By the way, I loved that from Hex—I think it was Hex who said, you know, "Yeah, we're in there." What were China and Russia doing there? Connecting business and buying legally. China, for example, was buying the heavy crude they were buying. It's not only in Venezuela, obviously. Venezuela produces it; the oil sands up in Canada produce it, though they require about sixty-five to seventy dollars a barrel to be profitable. Russian Urals blend is heavy crude, Iranian heavy crude. There are other countries that produce heavy crude, but in very small amounts. Those are your major sources of heavy crude.

And the southern refineries are set up for that heavy crude because they used to get it from Venezuela. The reason they nationalized the oil platforms was that the deals the previous government had signed before Chávez were basically giveaways to the U.S. And considering that the Yeltsin government signed exactly the same types of deals—with Exxon, by the way, and other companies like Shell—in Sakhalin, you know, Russia knows what those deals are like. So the deal

that Exxon, Chevron, and Mitsubishi had all shoved down Yeltsin's throat, or bought him out for, was that at Sakhalin-1 they would invest one billion dollars and wouldn't have to pay any taxes until they got their money's worth out of it.

Well, on paper, that \$1 billion turned into \$5 billion, and they hard-coded the cost of a barrel of oil—not the market value, but \$16 a barrel—when the market value was heading toward \$50 or \$60. So basically, they could pump out a huge amount of oil before they had to pay a single bloody cent in taxes. With Chevron, when Putin came in, he didn't want to scare everybody off by nationalizing anything outright. So what they did with Chevron first—Putin being a lawyer, you know—was latch onto this little clause where Chevron had signed up for environmental laws. But Chevron didn't give a damn, because it was the Yeltsin government before that.

And, you know, it didn't matter what you signed—just send them another case of vodka and give a percent back as kickbacks to the government officials around them, and everything's fine. Do whatever you want. With Putin, it all went very sour because he sat the team down and they started cataloging all the environmental damage Chevron had done in northern and central Sakhalin—chopped down forests where they didn't have the right to, contaminated forests, waterways, the local sea, wildlife deaths, and so on. And they calculated it right up to whatever Chevron had invested. So they said, "Start paying back," and Chevron wound up leaving, which is what they wanted anyway. With the others, later on, they just gave them a hard point: this is the new contract—take it or leave it. They took it.

#Pascal

Your prediction is that Venezuela—they're going to try to do exactly the same thing: extract the oil with no return, or at best a minimal return, for the country.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, they're going to do exactly what they were doing before, before Chávez nationalized. Well, he didn't even set out to nationalize—he just gave hard terms for Exxon to renegotiate basically the giveaway that the previous government had given to the American oil companies. Exxon refused, left, and has been sponsoring all these campaigns against Venezuela ever since. They sponsor quite a few politicians in the U.S. So yeah, they want their privileged position back—the oil that belongs to America, the land that belongs to America, all this other crazy crap that Trump spews out. I guess, you know, there's an old computer game the Japanese came out with back in the '80s, and with the poor English translation, these aliens come down and it comes on the screen: "All your base belong to us." And this is Trump: all your resources belong to us.

#Pascal

But, you know, this is—well, this is so different this time, right? I mean, this isn't the first time the United States has militarily overthrown a government in Latin America. It's not the first time this has happened. They've done it in the Middle East dozens of times. They did it during the Cold War, even in Europe, even in Southeast Asia, right? What's new is that they don't even try to put on the velvet glove of humanitarianism. It's new that they just go in and say, "This is ours, period. Shut up or die." Plus, they're doing it now on a different scale. They're already threatening Iran, they're threatening Cuba. There's even a Russian oil tanker that was seized—I haven't read that story, but maybe you can fill me in.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Yeah, Bella One. The thing is, the Bella One wasn't originally running under a Russian flag. When they were being chased, they switched to a Russian flag, which is the only loophole the U.S. has on this without it basically being a declaration of war on Russia. But then again, Trump just attempted to assassinate Putin. Whether Trump knew about it or not is another question, but the Trump government did. Those 91 drones—the Russian side isn't saying where Vladimir Vladimirovich was at that moment. But Western media was reporting that he was at his residence in the Novgorod oblast, waiting to continue telephone negotiations with Trump. Which would be Trump's SOP—that's his standard operating procedure: set somebody up and then try to take them out instead of talking to them.

It's interesting that the people who never served—I mean, Trump never put a uniform on. He had five—what's the word? I haven't had my coffee—deferments. Thank you. He had five deferments from Vietnam. The same guy who goes on stage and says, "Oh, Vietnam was run by a bunch of idiots. I could have done better." Well, maybe you should've shown everybody how much of a genius you are. He's a coward, let's begin with that. The problem with the Russian government is it still, I think, believes there can be some kind of negotiations with them.

And the unfortunate part is, Russia is doing everything—maybe inadvertently—but doing everything that's going to lead to World War III. Because sooner or later they'll cross a red line, like a direct strike on the Kremlin, for example. Even if it's not a nuclear strike, a direct strike on the Kremlin, because they're going to feel they can do whatever they want. And then the Kremlin will be either forced to destroy Russia by destroying its own government, or at least carry out a heavy strike on the West and on America, because they've been trying to avoid escalating with the U.S. The U.S. doesn't understand—the U.S. government is incapable of understanding anything but a punch in the teeth. Unfortunately, that's the kind of people we have in power, and that's the kind we had in power before that.

#Pascal

I mean, it's absolutely incredible to me that the U.S. and Europe, in such close lockstep, seem to be running willingly toward a Third World War—just crossing every single norm of international relations we have, and then even turning around and spitting on it with the media coverage they're giving it. I mean, it's insane that we've even reached the point where they abduct sitting presidents and launch these attacks. And this is part of a long series of things. They openly say, "Yeah, Iran is going to be next—locked and loaded—and we're just going to do that." And anyone who's not on board is a bad guy, and we'll hammer you down too. And Europe—by the way—you have to give us Greenland. Whether you like it or not, that's going to be a fact. And the Europeans are currently debating whether they should applaud it or protest slightly. That's the discussion in Europe.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, you know, from certain sources, I've heard Iceland is next on the list as a—this has nothing to do with security, let's just begin with that. The U.S. has had bases in Greenland since the '50s, and it has as many bases as it wants. The Danes sure as hell aren't going to say anything, especially if they're getting rent payments from it. The U.S. has had nukes, the U.S. has had radar stations—it does whatever it wants in Greenland. But it doesn't get the resources. Greenland has a lot of offshore oil—let's just begin with that—plus a lot of resources on the island itself. Unfortunately, most of those resources, realistically speaking, are deep underground. Now, new Russian bleeding-edge technology that's being test-fielded in the Kuril Islands allows the extraction of certain rare-earth elements and metals in a gaseous form, directly out of the vent gas from volcanoes.

Iceland has lots of volcanoes. It comes out pretty much in all of them because it's coming up from the mantle, and it's liquefied rare elements—rare earth elements. So there's that angle too: if you've got a volcano, you can start extracting using that Russian technology. It's panned out; it's just a question of whether it can be economically viable. That's what's being tested now. You can get those rare earths. The problem is, of course, the U.S. can't process them. That's a different issue. And after grabbing the Chinese tanker, about twenty million American arms manufacturers have just been cut off from rare-earth magnets. It's going to take the U.S. a while to invest in any kind of real purification, extraction, and magnet manufacturing.

#Pascal

Yeah, I mean, just the level of belligerence, the level of pure land grab, resource grab, is through the roof—while at the same time not coming to a conclusion in the proxy war, in the Ukraine proxy war, or even firing it up. I mean, do people in Russia still believe that, with this government in Washington, there's any chance of coming to a negotiated settlement? But it seems that Mr. Putin still goes that route.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

The government seems to still be going that route. But even then—okay, look—if Trump actually can't control the Europeans or the Ukrainians, and it's questionable whether he's even trying, then anything you sign with the Americans is pointless because the war continues. And again, if Trump really wanted to stop this, he could cut off all intelligence sharing, including through the Five Eyes. He's done that before to the British, when the British under Starmer, as a matter of fact, weren't playing ball and were getting too close with the Germans. They just came in one day, and everyone was cut off from the American systems. That's it—you're switched off. That's how fast they can do it if they really want to. Once Starmer got back to playing ball with D.C., they were switched back on.

I mean, they could quite literally just switch them on and off at any point. They can cut off the intelligence sharing. There's even a line item for about a billion dollars in the Pentagon budget for Ukraine. Not to mention, most of this isn't paid through line items—it's paid through secondary, supplementary spending. If you add that supplementary spending in the U.S. to the actual budget for the War Department, it's huge. And when you consider Veterans Affairs—which in most countries would be under the same budget—is a separate entity in the U.S., it's massive. There was an NGO a few years back, I think under Obama, maybe during Trump's first term, that went through the U.S. budget line by line, all 10,000 pages of it, and counted how much of it was military. The U.S. came out with about 26% of the government budget going to the military.

#Pascal

Which actually brings us to the next topic. I mean, Trump just announced a 1.5 trillion U.S. dollar military budget. He increased it from 1 to 1.5. I'm just speechless. It makes no sense. They're under no threat whatsoever. You're the furthest away from any kind of real, non-self-made threat that you've ever been. And that's where they're going.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Look, the empire is in decline. It's obvious to everybody. De-dollarization is doing nothing but accelerating. The dollar is worthless. I mean, look, the dollar—the first priority of the private banking system called the Federal Reserve, and most Americans have no idea that they're under a private banking system, not even a government system—is to maintain the power of the dollar. Well, the purchasing power of the dollar compared to 100 years ago is about 1% or 2%. I think they failed. What do you think? I think they pretty much totally failed on that little mission statement. Most companies—and they're a company working for the government, if you think about it—would've been fired by now and had their bonuses taken back.

But no, they keep going. They're the big financial banks. Officially, the financial sector in the U.S. is 21%, maybe 22%. In reality, it's probably closer to 30% or 35%. And this is a sector that produces nothing. Big Finance is the antithesis of industry. That's their job—they raid industry and destroy it to get their bonuses, to get cash in hand. Compare that to some small bank in a village that invests in that village because the owners live there. They're investing in local business. Big Finance doesn't

give a damn about you or your little town. They'll raid you just to get the money out. That's what Big Finance does.

#Pascal

So, is what we're seeing right now—the resource grab, this desperate attempt to get their hands on more things that can be financialized, restructured, sold off as debt—is it, in your view, the final moments of that empire before the internal disruption comes? And we're seeing now ICE agents running around shooting Americans. This morning, apparently, a lady got shot in the face and died in her car because ICE agents shot her. I mean, it's getting... I've just not seen this level of internal escalation before.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, you've got to remember that under the Biden administration, they put out something like 800 or 900 IRS agents—maybe even more. These were armed IRS agents who are supposedly going to be running around shooting people for not paying their taxes. Yeah, not the police, who normally execute search or arrest warrants, but armed IRS agents. So I guess the IRS now has its own SWAT teams that will go in, raid your house, and take your last pair of underwear because you didn't pay your taxes—and maybe shoot you dead on the spot. You know, most Americans—because most Americans never read history, and these days I don't think most Europeans read history either—that just comes with the degeneracy of mental capability in the West.

What an empire does on the fringes sooner or later comes back to the center. And what we're seeing are the heavy-handed tactics that the empire—the empire of lies—has used all over the world, including in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, murdering locals, and now it's all coming back home. Because, by the way, the people who've been desensitized, the enforcing class in those areas, end up getting hired as police or special agents here at home. A lot of those FBI agents have military backgrounds where they've done occupation service in different regions, and so do many local police. And the local police have been heavily militarized. They go through boot camps—military-style boot camps.

#Pascal

We'll come back. I just want to ask, because sometimes we also have a tendency to over-dramatize things, right? Whatever's in the news at the moment feels like the biggest thing ever, and everything else fades into the background. So we tend to say, "Okay, this is extraordinary." But this time it really feels to me like it's a new level of general escalation—the way things are running, the way these systems are kind of running themselves into the ground—because there seems to be no more long-term strategic thinking behind any of it.

Everything seems to be geared toward very extreme short-term policies to mitigate the last kind of problem they ran into. I mean, the US and Europe—like now using Europe’s sanctions, Russia’s sanctions policy—against internal dissent, which is, again, the same pattern, right? The empire turns its guns toward its own citizens. Do you agree that this is relatively new? I mean, this isn’t something we can easily compare to the ’80s, ’90s, or 2000s.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

It’s new in the sense that it’s just new for this iteration of the empire. Right. Unfortunately, it’s not new in history—it’s a constant repeat. And to say, “Oh, it’s a democracy, a republic, it can’t be an empire,” is a lie. A) Realistically speaking, there is no constitutional republic in the U.S. It’s one-man rule. Sure, the man isn’t crowned an emperor, but he seems to think of himself as one. And sure, a new one may be elected by the power—the oligarchy—that sits behind it. But there is... you know, I’m a monarchist, and there are reasons why I’m a monarchist. You’d be surprised. You’d be surprised that among the intellectual classes in Russia, I’d probably say the majority are monarchists. And there are very good reasons for monarchy.

You don’t get a Trump type, because monarchy is self-regulating—by tradition, by the church, by different social classes. It’s self-regulated. It’s an inherited system where each generation builds onto it, so you can do long-term economic planning, which you can’t do in the West. Look, when you’re talking about long-term economic planning, on any major project you’re looking at ROIs of 10, 15, 20, even 30 years. When you have a presidency that gets reelected every four years, maybe twice, they have no incentive to do any long-term planning or investment, because they’re not going to get the credit for it. Why the hell would I want to give the credit to the next guy? And the next guy might not even be from my party.

#Pascal

Yeah, but this is the main problem with trying to combine democracy with pure, cold-blooded capitalism. That’s when you get a mix that discards any kind of long-term thinking. If you combine it with some form of market socialism, plus the idea of the nation or the people, then you get people who will at least try to have certain projects and manage them. But that’s not what we’ve got. We’ve got a form of massive, aggressive capitalism that’s going to eat away at everything, without regard for the medium- or long-term consequences. It seems we’re in the middle of that, because the high capital in the United States—including Elon Musk and so on—are cheering it on. They’re paying for it.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, look, we’ve been told how this works—the Republic. It was laid out two thousand years ago, how all of this works. The three worst forms of government are populism, oligarchy, and tyranny. They don’t show up in a constitutional monarchy. They don’t show up in monarchies, period.

Tyrannies always rise from the people—that's the reality of it, first of all. And how it works, normally, is the people have the power, which usually turns very quickly into the oligarchs having the power. And then, sooner or later, some populist rises up and says, "I will free you from the oligarchs. Give me the power. I will free you."

And he becomes a tyrant who's just there to enrich himself at the expense of the people. Which, by the way, is why they start importing lots of foreigners who have nothing to do with you. Because if they're bringing in people from very poor countries, those foreigners will be loyal to the government that imports them—not to the citizens, not to the country, but to the government. Even as standards are falling in your government and your economy, for those foreigners coming in, it's still better than where they came from. They'll stay loyal to the government, while the citizens are going, "Wait a minute, didn't you promise something else?"

At which point you get the butt end of a rifle in your teeth, and you go, "Oh, okay, got it." And that's the problem with any of these types of governments. I mean, I'm a constitutional monarchist. And the other thing about monarchy—there was an interesting, I think it's still on my playlist—there was an interesting video where economists went through, historically, the difference between monarchies and republics. Monarchies... the more enfranchised the government becomes, the more people are voting, or the bigger the parliamentary or legislative side is, the higher your taxes, the more infringement on your human rights, and the more totalitarian the government becomes.

The standard monarchies had tax rates—this is going to sound unbelievable to people today—of 10% or lower, overall taxes. The government didn't give a damn about what you did day in and day out. The government was built on tradition and built on religion. It's not going to tell you you can't worship God. It's not going to tell you, "Oh, don't do this," or "Don't do that," because that's the foundation of how the government gets its legitimacy. Now, the more people are involved in that government, they have their staffs, they have their pet projects, they grow their bureaucracy—and that all takes money. Plus, you've got to show some kind of, you know, motion. "Oh, what does a legislative body do to show motion?"

Well, the easiest way to show motion—especially if you're not mentally or intellectually very capable—is to ban something. So now the government is getting more and more into your daily life, saying, "Okay, you can't do that. We don't like that." And if they get some kind of progressive, woke tangent to them, they really try to redo social engineering on you. That then breeds a lot of anger, and it also breeds things like 62% tax rates in Finland on people's income. You know, you were maybe a subject of the crown; now you're a slave of the legislature or the government. And basically, most of the West are slaves—tax slaves. Try not paying your taxes; you'll probably get shot by the IRS.

#Pascal

I do have some counter thoughts here, being myself basically a social democrat. But let's not go there—let's not discuss the best forms of government. The real problem we're having at the moment, in 2026, is that the world seems to be coming apart. And it's coming apart so badly that even people who've been fairly consistent with their analysis—and with the view that at some point some form of stabilization, in the form of a multipolar world, would set in, like Chas Freeman and others—are getting to the point where they're so frustrated they're saying, "No, this stability isn't working if one of the poles is actively trying to push for all-out warfare."

So what do you see? How do Russia and China approach this? I mean, the next victim is already decided—it's going to be Iran. Is there anything Russia and China can do to make sure Iran doesn't get, you know... I mean, they might get nuked. Israel at this point could nuke Tehran and just say, "No, no, we told you they were evil," and Europe would go along with it. Then the US would go along, and the general public would go along with it. Is there anything still sacred—any limits left to violence?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, if you look—the reason I was saying what I was saying—if you look at the people in charge in the West, they're part of the tyranny class. We've reached the point in the cycle where you have tyrants in power, and many times unelected tyrants. The EU Commission is a great example. The West, particularly America, has lost its mind completely in this case. I mean, first of all, Trump is just being Trump—he's crude enough to be honest and to say the quiet part out loud. He's not hiding behind human rights and all that. He tries to kind of...

#Pascal

He hides behind jokes.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, here's a little headline that came out in the New York Times the other day: "Justice Department drops claim that Venezuela's Cartel de los Soles is an actual group." Oh, Cartel de los Soles—the one Maduro is supposedly in charge of. We just made it up. What the hell? You know, you illiterate semi-humans over there, the working class—just shut the hell up. We do what we want. We'll just make things up. And here's the New York Times, the mouthpiece of the CIA, just admitting it. Yeah, okay, so it doesn't exist.

#Pascal

Yeah, but that means there's no checks on people, right? There's no, not even like, you know, the idea that I have to look good to my own people. Not even that is a constraint anymore. I mean, this is very unsettling.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, the problem is with a large chunk—I'm not going to say all of MAGA, because Trump has lost quite a bit of support—people who've realized, "This is what I voted for?" But the majority of MAGA, and Democrats, by the way, have the same thing. There's a very large underlying layer of Americans who are "Team America." Have you ever seen that movie *Team America*, the puppet movie? It came out, I think, around 2012 or 2015, somewhere in there. If you haven't, go watch it. It's a parody of the American approach to foreign policy—but it's also the reality of it.

It's not really even a parody. They just make fun of it by showing, more or less, what it actually is. It's an insane asylum—blow things up, and they'll cheer for whatever gets blown up, because they, particularly these beta males who've never been brave in their lives, never had to sacrifice anything, now feel empowered by the government. It's like a football team thing. I never get involved in watching sports; it just bores the crap out of me. But the people who do, they live and die by their sports team—it's the same mentality. Yeah.

#Pascal

It's the same groupthink mentality. But that leaves us in a situation where, really, there are no more limits to what's thinkable in the application of violence—of international violence. How will Russia confront this? There are limits.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Okay, Russia sent a submarine. The Fortune 500 submarine didn't do anything. I guarantee you, if that submarine had put out a radio threat—like, "If that American team lands on that tanker, we sink your destroyer"—and if they actually sank that destroyer, things would stop on a dime. There would be panic in Washington. Are you sure? Instant panic in Washington. Absolutely.

#Pascal

Are you sure they won't send a missile straight into Moscow? If they send a missile straight into Moscow, they all die. Yeah, but they seem to think they won't. They seem to think this is fine. What's it called? Escalation dominance—in the U.S., apparently.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

There is a limit. If they sent a nuclear weapon, they know they'd get a nuclear response. In fact, they'd get an automatic nuclear response, because you can wipe out Moscow and, in about 30 minutes, you all start to die—since Moscow has the Dead Hand, that automated system. The Dead Hand is a ballistic missile that flies the length of Russia, sending out command codes to launch everything at America and Europe. Everybody dies. That's it. And you can't stop it. There are thousands of Russian missiles on carriers—on roads, on ships, on rail. You can't find them. They're everywhere. Not to mention the submarines.

Look, one Russian submarine could turn the U.S. into a medieval economy. Two Russian submarines could make most of the U.S. uninhabitable for the next couple of hundred years, at least, to be realistic. That's the power of nuclear cruisers carrying nuclear ballistic warheads. Not to mention, even the smaller Russian submarines carry Zircon hypersonic missiles, which can still be tipped with a tactical nuclear warhead. Except the Russian tactical nuclear warhead is 75 kilotons—two Hiroshimas. I mean, that's a big tactical nuclear warhead. And that's the point. That's about the only thing keeping Washington alive right now, in any kind of sanity. That's it.

#Pascal

Because you believe there's enough sanity to say, like, "We must not trigger this." Yes. For the simple reason that... well, that's hopeful.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Elon Musk is going to do what with his money when there's no America left and no Europe left? What good is that? I mean, you've got Macron, for example—there was a report, at government expense of course—he was building a luxury bunker, about 1,500 square meters. So he's going to have servants down there. Well, here's the interesting thing: why would they serve you? Sure, you can get people to serve you with the threat of, "If you don't, we won't let you in the bunker." But once the nuclear war goes off and they're in the bunker, you're a parasite. They take over, kill you, and run the bunker. That's the point. You're no longer needed as the billionaire who's no longer a billionaire, because all your wealth has just evaporated in a nuclear holocaust.

You're not needed for anything at that point. And a lot of these people—maybe they do understand that. If there's a nuclear war, that's it. Their money, their wealth, it's gone. And that's probably the only thing they value. Because if you're a religious person, they obviously don't value their souls for the things they do. But, I mean, if you're looking at it from that point of view... The thing is, if Russia doesn't punch the bully's teeth back in, sooner or later they'll cross a point where Russia has to seriously move up the scale—probably to nuclear weapons. It feels like that. It's better to take the bully out when he's just starting than when he's in full rage mode. It's much easier to calm them down at that point. As for Iran, Iran is the next essential crisis for Russia, just a little lower than Ukraine.

Iran goes, the Caucasus goes, Central Asia goes—and the U.S. flat out is saying this. They're going to go right up into Russia's belly and try to let out Russia's intestines through Kazakhstan, through Georgia. Those will be revolution after revolution. So, no way in hell is Russia going to let Iran fall. Sure, Israel could nuke Iran—but then there would no longer be an Israel, because Iran has enough heavy ballistic missiles to wipe out everything in that sliver of land. And by the way, they'd also take out the nuclear power plant sitting in the middle of Israel, which would contaminate most of the country out of existence. Israel would die. Iran may not have nuclear weapons, but it has enough conventional weapons to assure mutual destruction.

#Pascal

Do you think they—because, like, Bibi Netanyahu was in the U.S. just before the New Year, over the New Year—and it seems sure enough that that's what they've been discussing: how to do it. And they're certainly going to do another sneak attack, right? They're going to try to amass everything, pretend they want to negotiate. The second they say, "OK, here we are," that's the moment they're going to strike. They'll try to take out everything, including activating all the internal assets they still have in Iran, in order to, you know, pull a mega-Syria and combine it with a mega-Iran.

Venezuela—where they managed to disable the entire Venezuelan military defense system, everything, through bribery and whatnot. But the fact of the matter is, not a single one of the troops who took out Maduro died. No casualties at all. It was a massive success. If that could be repeated in Iran, then, well, I mean, at least from the megalomaniac perspective of the Trump administration, I'd believe they'd think they could do it.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

You're right. You know, the sequel is rarely as good as the original. To put it crudely, they blew their load when they did what they did. They killed a lot of people. Yeah, yeah. A lot of those liberals are right. Look, first of all, from the Russian standpoint—because there was a lot of this, "Oh, Russia didn't support Iran." Well, Russia attempted to sign with Iran a treaty giving it the same status as North Korea: mutual defense, military defense. The liberals were in power in Iran then—the pro-Western liberals. They watered down the wording instead, to something like, "We will"—I think it's Chapter, Section Five, the first paragraph, if I remember correctly; it's been a while since I read that document—"We will struggle against mutual regional threats," whatever that means.

That doesn't mean anything. And while Russia signed the document and it was approved by the Duma, the Iranians wanted to be loved by the West—and they got really loved by the West. They signed that document the day after they were being attacked. So there was no mutual aid between Russia and Iran. There is now. S-300 and S-400 systems are in. I don't know what the Chinese have brought in, but they're bringing in equipment. Russia—and this has been published, it's not any big

news—has Iranian pilots for Su-35s training in Russia. Russia is moving Su-35 interceptors into Iran. These are Generation 4+++, something that Europe can't build, period. Europe is incapable of building at this level, let alone a Generation 5. Europe is well behind on any of this.

But Russia, the U.S., and China are all working on sixth-generation fighters. Europe can't build a fifth-generation fighter or anything close to it—they can't even get a working model. So this is already more than enough to match the F-35s, which are flying junk for the most part. The point is, Iran's defenses are being rebuilt, and Iran has increased production. I don't know if this is true or not, but I was reading a report a month or so ago that they were upping their missile production—all ranges—to about 3,000 a month, both ballistic and cruise missiles. That's more than enough to overwhelm anything the U.S., Britain, or Israel has in terms of anti-aircraft missiles to try to shoot them down.

#Pascal

Yeah, as long as they're well enough distributed and can't be disabled quickly enough, right? Because that's the—oh, they are, right.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

And we saw that during the 12-day war—Israel was screaming and whining for the U.S. to do something because they were being hammered into the ground. And Iran didn't even fire off half of what it had. Iran was actually pretty conservative in what it was sending back into Israel. Israel was firing from airframes at a distance, and the missiles from those planes—air platforms—are relatively small. They don't do that much damage. They're not the 2,000-pound bombs that Israel drops on buildings in Lebanon or Gaza, because there was still enough air defense working in Iran at that point that they were afraid to really fly in; they would've lost planes.

That air defense system has been rebuilt, reinforced, and upgraded. And now Russia and Iran have a very close relationship because most of those liberals lost power. Iran arrested the people who were responsible—many of them have been executed. They also drove out the Afghan and Pakistani refugees who were the primary source of American, British, and Israeli fifth-column activity. Now, Iran does have issues right now. I mean, Iran's not a monolithic society—no big society is. And we've seen that there are terror acts being carried out inside Iran at the moment.

There was a video that just came out from one of the towns in Bakiristan—I think that was the name of the province—where the police chief was assassinated by Islamic jihadist gunmen, who are usually Sunnis, in this case operating in Shiite Iran. So there are issues, and Israel has been sponsoring those terrorist groups for decades. And so has the U.S., while we're at it. So yes, there are issues, but they're not going to topple the government. In fact, even the liberals got behind the government, because when you're being indiscriminately bombed, you suddenly realize who your real enemies are.

#Pascal

Yeah, but still, there are very significant protests at the moment, right? Street protests. There are, there are. Even if they're supported by Western NGOs and whatnot, they still represent a portion of the population that's angry enough to go out into the streets, right? And this is in the middle of being threatened by Israel and the United States. Anyhow, I'm sorry to be pessimistic—it's just that the new year started really poorly. But Stas... Yes, it did. It is, after all, Christmas in Russia—Orthodox Christmas—yesterday, right? The 7th. Yesterday was Christmas Day.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Merry Christmas, by the way. Sorry I didn't say that earlier.

#Pascal

Yeah, Merry Christmas to you too. I should've started with that, but Merry Christmas, after all. Stas, for people who want to find you, they should go to your YouTube channel, right? Yep.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Mr. Slavic Man—Slavic with a K—and two Telegram channels: "Stas Segodnya," which is the Russian channel, and "Stas Was There," the English-language channel. And also on X, Stanislav Krapivnik.

#Pascal

Okay, and I'll try to link all of those in the description box below. Stas, despite the depressing topics, thank you very much for the update.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Pascal, it'll all be good. I was just in Mariupol, and if you want to see the future, I put out a video you can link from my YouTube channel. Ninety-eight percent of residential buildings have been rebuilt. Lots of greenfield projects have gone up—a giant children's hospital, for example. About seventy percent of other buildings have been rebuilt. The downtown is like... grab a box of candy—it looks better than it has in probably the last sixty, seventy, maybe eighty years. Even the private single-family houses are about a third rebuilt or in the process of being rebuilt. Those are private, so they get funding. The problem is, a lot of families were killed—particularly by the Ukrainian side shooting directly into their houses.

But the city's alive. It has huge new sports centers. One of the directors of the main contractor rebuilding the city told me he even had a complaint—they have new problems now. It's called traffic jams, because people are returning en masse. So there is hope. And in Avdeevka, under daily drone

attacks—I was there. We had drones flying overhead, one was shot down on the next street over. Then there were airplane-style drones coming in. There was a firefight that lasted about fifteen minutes while they were being taken down. And even with all that destruction, I counted six rebuilt buildings.

They were damaged, but not critically—so they bricked up the holes, rebuilt the interiors, and people moved back in. The other three or four buildings are under reconstruction. This is why there are daily flights. And there's a new building they just started from the foundation—a brand-new, hundred-meter-long, six-story building. They're finishing the windows and balconies on the left side, the rest is ready to go, and they're working on the interior. That's why the daily drone attacks keep happening. But there's hope. There's hope—it's all going to be rebuilt.

#Pascal

There must be peace after war. I hope we can get to it directly, without the war in between. Much peace, and Merry Christmas.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Merry Christmas.