

NATO Threatens Kaliningrad: Worst Mistake Yet | Stas Krapivnik

NATO has found a new way to test Russia and introduce their escalation strategy: publicly threaten Kaliningrad with perfect deniability. But this won't fly. Stanislav Krapivnik joins Pascal Lottaz to discuss Kaliningrad, NATO planning, and the danger of a wider European war. Krapivnik assesses Russian warnings following Valdai and argues that escalation could extend far beyond Ukraine. They examine American interests, European threat narratives, strikes on Ukrainian bridges, and possible military pressure on Kyiv and southern Ukraine. Their conversation also considers forced mobilization, political instability, historical comparisons, and the human costs of continuing the conflict rather than finding a path toward a negotiated settlement. Stas's Links: YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@MrSlavikman> X: <https://x.com/STANISKRAPIVNIK> Substack: <https://zmeigarinich.substack.com> Telegram (English): <https://t.me/staswasthereenglish2> Telegram (Russian): <https://t.me/stastydaibratno> Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Support Neutrality Studies: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Neutrality Studies shop: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Time Stamps 00:00 Introduction and Valdai 02:15 Kaliningrad and the Baltic flashpoint 11:41 The danger of a wider European war 16:50 NATO troops and Russia's red lines 21:34 American interests and European threat narratives 26:13 Bridge strikes and pressure on Kyiv 37:01 Southern Ukraine and competing military fronts 42:28 Mobilization, endurance and the human cost

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies, today again with our friend and colleague Stanislav Krapivnik. Stas, welcome back.

#Stas Krapivnik

Thank you. Thank you. Always a pleasure. And by the way, our bear attacks have gone up quite a bit this year.

#Pascal

Yeah, we're still competing on who gets more bear attacks, like Russia or Japan. But I think Russia will win again.

#Stas Krapivnik

This year we've had 21 people killed by bears. It is very high for Russia.

#Pascal

What's up with these bears? Because even Japan has more bear attacks. I don't think 21, but the country is also smaller. But bears are—I don't know what it is with them. But let's go back to the real issue, which is humans, because we still manage to kill much more humans than any animal ever can even attempt. Before we get into Ukraine, you recently met our colleagues Ian Proud and Glenn Diesen and a couple of others, actually, right?

#Stas Krapivnik

Lorenzo Pacini.

#Pascal

How was the mood up there in Valdai and the discussions? And what did you observe? I mean, you didn't participate yourself, but you observed, certainly, also the answers that Vladimir Putin gave to some of the questions. What is the mood in Russia now after Valdai?

#Stas Krapivnik

I think the mood—look, things have been, as they say in Russian, every T's been crossed, every—well, we don't have I's anymore. We used to have the letter I. Soviets replaced that. But, you know, every I's been dotted. Putin's flat-out said what's coming down the road, and if the West decides to escalate. This is an interesting thing. You read some of these articles that are now coming out from the insane West. Yeah, Putin is now threatening nuclear war from Kaliningrad. No, Putin is just explaining up to what point Russia will go to defend Kaliningrad that you are threatening to constantly attack. So it's the abuser turning it around when the abused threat is, well, I'll get the gun if you hit me again.

#Pascal

And may I just add here, like, the whole Kaliningrad story is so bizarre because basically what happened is that the West found a new tool of threatening, engaging Russia by actually putting threats into a TV show. I mean, the Brits hosted a TV show with real politicians, former politicians, including our friend Stoltenberg, that crazy nut. And in that TV show, they basically simulated an attack on Kaliningrad, right? And then that's basically what got everything rolling.

#Stas Krapivnik

I would just suggest that, and wholeheartedly to the leadership in the European countries, particularly the military leadership, when you pull the trigger, when the balloon goes up and you attack Kaliningrad, don't stick around in your headquarters. There won't be a headquarters. There

won't be ministries of defense. There will probably no longer be an EU Parliament. But definitely there won't be a NATO headquarters. They will get an Oreshnik present at 4,000 degrees Celsius, rods of God coming down. You know, just if you want to survive the next 20, 30 minutes after that conflict starts, find your driver and run.

#Pascal

How— I mean, the way that this came up, like, surprised me too, like out of nowhere, that, okay, Russia is watching these TV shows and is actually understanding this as a real, as a real threat. I mean, this is what these war planners— and I think the TV show is actually called War Game or something like that. Russia understands precisely that this is the collective West signaling to Russia. It's, well, what it literally is gaming out.

#Stas Krapivnik

Yeah, you know, this is almost—well, I mean, Kaliningrad is an obvious target, like it or not, but it is an obvious target. It has been prepared for years to hold out on a siege. Now, from Belarus to Kaliningrad, I think it's like an 80-kilometer, 90-kilometer break, the one valley that Russia will assault. The moment Kaliningrad goes, both the countries are now in game, I mean, fully in game. And considering that countries like Estonia are about 40% Russian population, Latvia is about 30-something percent Russian population, those areas are going to get liberated.

And liberated, I'll tell you, because the Russians there are not even second-class citizens, not even apartheid. They're non-citizens. Even though they're living on land—Narva is a prime example—there's been Russian settlement there since the 9th century, unbroken Russian settlement there since the 9th century. They're treated on the land that their ancestors have lived on for 1,300 years as not even second-class citizens. They are given a gray passport, a residency, just because the communists drew nice little new lines and nice little borders when they were creating these internal republics.

#Pascal

How did we get here? Because to my mind, Kaliningrad was always this dangerous point, right? Because it would be the easiest place in Russia to attack, because it is surrounded basically by NATO territory. But since we haven't heard about that, and we haven't heard actually German revanchism in the sense that they want Königsberg back, like nobody actually talks about Königsberg. But of course, it's now becoming again a focal point. How is that now happening, that that type of escalation is possible now in 2026?

#Stas Krapivnik

Well, first of all, they do talk about it. Not so much the Germans as the Poles. The Poles talk about they want that territory back because at one point they had grabbed it, and they lost it when Poland—those were Teutonic Knights that built Königsberg, the original fortress of Königsberg. The Teutonic Knights were located up north of the Polish kingdoms. When the Polish kingdom unified, eventually they started—first, they were equals, then they were vassals. Then they were fighting with them, and then they eventually annexed them. And then when the Rzeczpospolita collapsed and it was partitioned, even on the first partition, Prussia took East Prussia back. So that became East Prussia. By the way, the original Prussians weren't Germans. The original Prussians were a Baltic Slavic nationality that was exterminated by the Crusading Knights, a.k.a. the Teutonic Knights.

#Pascal

And then they started getting called the Prussians because they lived in former Prussian land.

#Stas Krapivnik

Interestingly enough, a little bit of history there on that. The original Prussians are no more and haven't been for probably almost a thousand years. But it's more the Poles than anybody else who are now revanchist. "Oh, we want this land back from when we conquered the Teutonics in this area." At first, what they tried to do for two decades, they tried to get Kaliningrad to secede from Russia. There was all kinds of things. Oh, yeah, yeah. There was a lot of secession attempts to convince the people, "See, from Russia, you'll become part of the European Union," this and that. And they tried the bribery. And when that didn't work, now they're going to this point. From a military standpoint, they have to take Kaliningrad.

#Pascal

Yeah.

#Stas Krapivnik

Because Kaliningrad is the thorn in the side of all the NATO logistics against Russia. From Kaliningrad, Iskander missiles can cover any bridges, tunnels—or they're not really tunnels for the most part in that area—any bridges, any key industrial points, key energy infrastructure, massing points, depots, and so on in both Poland and in Germany. So they have to take Kaliningrad.

#Pascal

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#Stas Krapivnik

And Russia quite well understands that they're going to have to try to take Kaliningrad. And they may take Kaliningrad. All I've got to say is there's going to be a lot fewer Poles left alive after they take Kaliningrad. Kaliningrad is a fortress, and it's being fortified. It has a division that's permanently stationed there, and it's constantly being fortified. Plus, from Belarus, for Russian forces to break the blockade, it's a narrow valley. So, like I said, it's about 80 kilometers long. I may be off a bit. I need to look up the exact distance. But there is that issue.

But the thing is, is when Russian forces are breaking into this area, there's not going to be any help for the Baltic countries coming in by ship. Any ships coming in are going to be destroyed by drones and by missiles and by submarines. And the Baltics instantly come into play. And there's several Russian divisions there, partially because also the Baltics, especially Estonia, are housing several batteries of—good Lord, I can't think of the name for a second—the missile systems, the American missile systems. Patriot? No, no, no, the platforms, not the MRS, the wheels.

#Pascal

PAC-2?

#Stas Krapivnik

No, the American multi-launch rocket systems that they're using up and down in Ukraine. I can't believe it just slipped out of my head.

#Pascal

I wish I knew these systems. I actually hear the names, and I just imagine, like, flying candles, and I have no idea what they actually look like.

#Stas Krapivnik

One second, one second. I cannot believe it just slipped out of my head. HIMARS. HIMARS. It finally came through. HIMARS. There are several batteries of HIMARS with attack missiles stationed in Estonia that can reach St. Petersburg. So right off the bat, just from that point of view, that territory has to be neutralized. And it will be neutralized. So if they're fast enough to take Leningrad, they may be able to take it. Otherwise, it will be opened up from the north.

#Pascal

Yeah, but this is why it is so crazy to have that whole talk. Of course, if Kaliningrad gets in any way, shape, or form attacked or something else, besieged by NATO, then obviously the Baltics would be

next from the Russian side, and actually Finland. I mean, what else would happen with these kind of frontline states? How are you interpreting this further saber-rattling from the West?

#Stas Krapivnik

You know, it seems like they're—you're right. They seem to be under this delusion that they can keep Russia from activating fully and going into a full war and just take on Kaliningrad. It's such an isolated enclave on the other side of the world, not like 80 kilometers away, that they can deal with Kaliningrad separately and Russia won't do anything. It'll just sit there and go, "Well, geez, guys, really? I mean, that's not fair. You shouldn't do that." And that will be about the most hand-wringing that Russia will do, as opposed to the Russian military mobilizing fully for war and starting rolling onto the Europeans the way they seem to really want it to happen. They're also delusional that the majority of the Russian military is in Ukraine. It's not. About a third, maybe two-fifths of the Russian military is in Ukraine. The majority is still being prepared for war with Europe because obviously Europe wants war. Everybody's heard Europe. Maybe the Europeans don't quite get this.

#Pascal

You'd think they would hear it. The Europeans keep saying, "The Russians are going to attack us. The Russians are going to attack us. We're going to be attacked by Russia." That's what they're drumming into the brains of every single European at the moment.

#Stas Krapivnik

Yeah, but you've got to look the next step over. The European tradition is, they'll attack me next year, so I have to attack them right now. That's the underlying read-between-the-lines statement in most European history. When they start telling you, "Oh, they're going to attack us in 2028," translation: "We're going to attack them in 2027." And the people in the Kremlin say they may have not wanted to believe it, but they've finally come around to believing it. And they very well know European history. And they know that's how European history normally runs.

Oh, we're going to—just like—I mean, you don't have to go that far. Barbarossa. The whole premise of Barbarossa, when Hitler went and got the rubber stamp. I mean, he did go to the Reichstag to get permission to go to war, because he was Chancellor. The Chancellor of the Reichstag going no was about zilch, a little less than zero, but he still went because that's the way it's done, and he laid out the reason for it because that's the way it's done, and the reason was Stalin is going to attack us, so we have to attack him first. And there was no aim from Stalin to attack into the new European order.

#Pascal

We have seen how even later after 1945, the Brits had this—what was it called?—Operation Unthinkable, where they were planning, you know, attacking now the Soviet Union as it is at its weakest. Luckily, they didn't do that. I mean, so that's kind of a war plan averted now. What do you think are the chances that this type of war games that are now clearly going on and that are clearly being thought about, of a Europeanization of the Ukraine war, how high are the chances that we can avert that? Because, I mean, as horrible as the Europeans right now are, they can't be that suicidal. It just seems so utterly dumb if they tried. Well...

#Stas Krapivnik

One, as we know, there's a mental psychosis called group formation that's well underway in Europe and gaining strength. Two, the majority of the European population still supports the warmongers. I mean, everybody's like, oh, look, you know, AfD is at 32%. It's at 35%. That's great. Now flip the math. 65% still supports the war party, because every other party is the war party. There's one war party. They may not quite agree on how they're going to run internal economics, but they don't really have to agree on anything. Internal economics is dying on the vine. All they have to agree on is how they're going to run the war effort. And it's the same thing in every country, unfortunately to say, across the majority of the European Union.

Not all of the European Union, but across the majority of them. Now, when the rubber hits the tarmac, as they say, or the balloon goes up, and it's time to go die, how many of these countries are going to go, "Oh, yeah, yeah, we're still with you all the way"? And how many of those countries are going to go, "Well, my sock drawer is kind of messed up. I'm going to be straightening my sock drawer. You guys have fun. We'll catch up a little bit later." Or how many of those people are going to go have a nice little revolution, like, for example, the Greeks, more likely, or the Bulgarians, before they actually go to war, and whose side? So we'll see. That's something to see.

#Pascal

I mean, one thing—one level of escalation that we could see that we haven't seen yet—is, you know, this kind of intermediary step between all-out European-Russian war to something, you know, Ukraine plus, in which NATO starts sending NATO troops into Ukraine to fight there. Do you think that that is something that we might see?

#Stas Krapivnik

Putin has, during Valdai's event, stated that not only will those troops be destroyed, because the moment they show up under their national flags, that means a declaration of war by that nation, and strikes will begin on that nation. So no, it'll start—well, at least from the threat that's been given—it'll start expanding instantly. Whether or not that happens, we'll live and see. But that's been drawn as a proverbial red line. The actual red lines from the Kremlin have been very, very few. Everybody's

assigned their own red lines: see how brave we are to cross this Kremlin red line. Well, was it a red line? The vast majority of these red lines were never a red line to begin with. They were maybe self-imposed red lines, but they were never red lines. Now, there's been only a few Kremlin red lines.

One of them that the Kremlin did not act upon was deep strikes in Russia. Well, it did, but only toward Ukraine. It hasn't toward the Europeans, at least not yet. We'll see how that goes. But that actually was—well, like I said from the very beginning—Russia, from the very beginning, should have struck Slovakia, should have struck Slovakia very hard. I'm talking about in '22, when Slovakia gave over tanks, because Slovakia was the test case. Why Slovakia? Because it's an insignificant small nation. That's the attitude for the Europeans and NATO in general. They pushed Slovakia to give it up, and they're all just sitting back and going, "If Slovakia gets hit, it's not us. It's those idiotic Slovaks. We don't want to do that." If Slovakia didn't get hit, they all look back and go, "Okay, cool. Gates are open. Everything goes." And unfortunately, that's how it went. And we are in a war right now.

#Pascal

Yeah, but I mean, the Russian side is actually... I don't think that has to do with the fact that Vladimir Putin is a lawyer. I mean, he goes out of his way to actually make sure that there is a logical chain of legal justification. Just to remind us of how this went down with Ukraine and with the Russian invasion, right? It's like the logical steps that were taken: bring the Donbass republics to Moscow, have Russia recognize them as independent nation-states, which they never did in the 80 years before, then have them send to Moscow, have them hand over a plea for help for collective self-defense against the onslaught of the Ukrainians, then the Russians accepting that, and then, under Article 51 of the UN, sending in troops in self-defense of the Donbass republics, right?

That's the logical chain that they built up. You might agree with them or not, but that's what they did in order to say, no, we are not doing anything illegal, which indicates to me that since it's still the same leadership, that would still be the modus operandi, right? Russia wants everything fair and square under the currently existing framework. So while the Europeans seem to be trying to bait Russia into attacking, because that's what they need for their propaganda game. They need the Russians to shoot the first shot. So... where are we here?

#Stas Krapivnik

Playing chicken. Except that this isn't chicken with two cars driving at each other. This is chicken with two cars driving toward the edge of a cliff. So this is where we're at. Will it end badly for Europe? Yes. Will Russia take a lot of damage? Probably. Will Europe, at least many of these European countries, die? Absolutely. I'm not talking about everybody dying in those countries, but the countries will die. No infrastructure, no government. Winter comes. I mean, it's like with Finland. You know, you speak with a lot of these Finns. They're so brainwashed. They're moronic. You're speaking with adults like little children.

#Pascal

I'm going to be the super sniper, and these Russians are going to come in here. I'm going to kill them all. Ha, ha, ha.

#Stas Krapivnik

This is not Call of Duty, and nobody's going to be charging into your garden waiting for you to snipe them. It's going to be, welcome to modern technology. We close the border, we take out the bases, and then we start destroying your infrastructure. And then winter comes in and finishes it off. That's how they work in a modern war.

#Pascal

What I don't get is that in all the scenarios that we're describing here, and I think this is getting more and more likely, you know, Russia badly hit because, I mean, it would cost a lot of lives in Russia too, European countries destroyed to the point of eradication, millions of people dead. You know, who at the end of the day is going to benefit from all of that kind of chaos on the Eurasian continent? I mean, Big Brother on the other side of the Atlantic, they're going to be sitting there and saying, like, well, we sold a lot of weapons. This is fine. We were the good guys. And then they're going to, you know, even have the evacuees like the Mertzes and the Zelenskys and so on sitting over there and congratulating themselves for fighting the good fight with millions of dead people. How is it that this is still to this day not something that the Russian political discourse has picked up on?

#Stas Krapivnik

It has, to a degree, and I've been doing my job to make sure they do it. I've been saying this from the very beginning. The number one aim, of course, is Europe—the destruction of Europe. The number two aim is to rebuild Europe at huge profits and take whatever's left of value out of Europe. And then the Europeans, they become vassals, the serfs on the black dirt farming for the owner class, which is across the sea. I mean, this is basically the colony coming back and destroying the metropolis and sucking it dry.

Except that the people in Europe are too arrogant—I'll just go and say they're stupid. They've been so dumbed down. So, uh, there's such a Stockholm syndrome in most European brains toward America, their god. Oh, America, do anything for you. America will sacrifice their children on your altar. This is the mentality at this point. They will believe any crap that they're being fed. I mean, come on, the Irish are being told that the Russian military is going to come swim to Ireland. Oh, the British are being told the same thing. Seriously?

#Pascal

No, no. The Irish are told that the Russians are going to swim to their island and cut the cables. The Irish discourse is all about undersea cables. I mean, it's crazy. But just as for the Swedes, it was all about the Soviet submarines back in the '80s. You know, you managed to strategically install some sort of mania. And for the Germans right now and the rest of Europe, it's the drones, right? These Russian drones that show up around the airports, and nobody can see them, but they're there, and nothing gets hit, but there's drones everywhere, and it's part of the psychological warfare of the Russians. The hybrid war of Russia, it's everywhere. You can't see it, you can't smell it, you can't touch it, but it's there. It's insanity, but the insanity works, and it unfortunately seems to have system problems.

#Stas Krapivnik

You know, I was watching a documentary once, and I mean, they're videotaping from a hidden camera. It's like, how many people does it take to convince everybody of something that isn't there? Yep. So you have one guy standing there. This was, I think, in London. He's standing there. He's looking at a tree. "Wow, look at that. Look at that." People are going, "What are you looking at?" "Did you see the giant constrictor snake up there?" There's no giant constrictor snake up there. "No, there's a giant constrictor snake." "Dude, you're insane." And people walk off. That's one person. They get up to three people. I mean, these obviously are all actors. "Look, look, there's a giant constrictor snake."

And then they come to, "Yeah, I see that giant constrictor snake." And you start making that mass. The next person comes up, and there's four people looking at a constrictor. There must be something up there. Four people wouldn't be looking up there. You're starting to create that critical mass. And now they've got a crowd of people, like 10 people standing there looking at this giant constrictor snake. And they turn around. It's like, "Stop, stop. This was a setup. There's a camera right over there. There's no constrictor." And you know what the crowd said? "The hell with you. I see the constrictor snake." You formed a self-fulfilling illusion at this point. It's very interesting to watch.

#Pascal

Yeah, you know, the thing is, on the other side of this equation, there's still Russia. And it seems to me, if there is a sober-minded place left, then it's probably Russia, which to me, I mean, constantly keeps looking at the Europeans. It's like, they can't be that insane. It can't be that crazy. But it's now coming around to the idea that probably it is that insane and crazy, which then again makes the whole thing even worse. But when it comes to Ukraine, which is still, I mean, the hot war going on, right? We see that Russia is sticking to its guns of, like, systematically and methodically taking apart the, well, all of the NATO infrastructure and everything. So at least for now, Russia hasn't changed track yet, right?

#Stas Krapivnik

No, no, it's accelerating. And, you know, from the Russian point of view, imagine your neighbor is insane. You feel sorry for him, but he's running at you with a knife, so you're going to have to shoot him anyways. You may feel sorry for having to shoot him, but, you know, at this point, the insane guy is running at you with a knife.

#Pascal

You're going to shoot him. I mean, this is basically also with Ukraine. You saw that Ukraine is being abused, and you feel sorry for it, but you still got to do something about the situation.

#Stas Krapivnik

So, Ukraine is even worse, because from a Russian point of view, Ukraine is a civil war, right? So this was even worse. And look, they finally started going after the bridges. As I've said from the beginning, this was strictly a political decision. From a military standpoint, all those bridges should have been down in the first week, maximum the first month. Okay, fine. You didn't want to make massive damage. You wanted to sign it. Fine. The moment they walked away from that, the bridges should have all come down. It was a political decision. Putin finally rolled the political decision back and told the generals, do what you need to do.

And the military has gone after the bridges. Yeah, you're not going to take those giant bridges down in one shot. But we've seen the damage where they've got holes that are about a meter wide going all the way through the bridge. You can make enough of those holes that nothing can travel up and down those bridges. Obviously, that was one drone, by the way. There's been news of some kind of cable-cutting drones, and maybe they can cut cables on telephone wires, things like that. But they're not going to cut cables on those bridges. I mean, my God, if anybody's never seen what a cable looks like on a bridge, you're not going to cut it.

You can blow it up and try to cut it that way, but some of these drones have what they call whiskers. So they get some kind of cables attached, and they can snap electric power cables that are just on the trusses from one wooden beam to another. Those cables are not that thick. They might be high voltage, but not that high voltage, and they're not that thick. So maybe they could do that. I still find it a little hard to believe, but maybe. I think it's more like just an experiment to see if something works. With a cable on a bridge, you cannot cut it. I mean, these cables are thicker than a man. I've intertwined wire cables, thinner wire cables that are all intertwined into this mass.

You're not going to cut that with a drill. Sorry, it just ain't going to happen. You can blow it up again and maybe cut it that way, but there's no drone with some kind of whiskers going to fly by and cut one of those cables. That's fantasy. That's for people who have never, I guess, been on a wire cable

bridge. But you can damage the bridge well enough, and it's been done on the northern and southern bridges. They're partially closed, and this is going to continue. Look, even if these bridges are built by USSR standards, they were built to survive a nuclear strike, that's great. Anything can be destroyed. It's just a matter of how much ordnance does it take to destroy it.

And if you can't take the whole bridge down, you can just put enough holes in there and nothing gets through. And this is a major, major logistics artery, set of arteries, or nine bridges, across the northern Dnieper River from Kiev on. So this is going to pose massive logistical problems for the Ukrainian military in Chernigov and in Kharkov. Because this is just, this is the main route. Two of those bridges are already basically at least temporarily closed pending any more attacks. So they're undergoing repairs, but there will be more attacks. And then they're talking about setting up some other routes, which will probably be pontoon bridges, which will be located and destroyed as well.

#Pascal

So is this basically the beginning or the preparation for the battle for Kiev, like as in this is now officially designated as a goal? Because, I mean, Kiev has, of course, been hit until now with drones and so on, but not on that kind of militarily relevant scale and places and so on. Kiev has been left aside largely, right? It was always the military focal points, but Kiev is still relatively far away from the actual battle lines. How are you interpreting this change of heart, as it seems to me?

#Stas Krapivnik

It's early preparations. Look, Kiev is going to have to be taken. Then whether Kiev becomes part of Russia or stays as an independent city is a big question. And first of all, I'll tell you this: it's a big question for the citizens of Kiev itself. Because, look, a prime example of this is Vienna. Vienna was an imperial city, which was the capital of the Austro-Hungarian—first the Austrian, then after the Hungarian revolts, the Austro-Hungarian Empire—which was a very large nation-state in Europe that could afford an imperial capital. Imperial capitals are expensive. That's why they're imperial. What happens after World War I? Vienna is no longer an imperial capital.

It is a capital of a small, agrarian, relatively poor country called Austria. It can't support Vienna on the level that Vienna's used to living. Vienna's used to living the high life. It's used to having parties. It's used to having theater. It's used to having everything. And all of a sudden, you're looking at a tax base that can't support that. Vienna goes into decline. Of course it does. How else can you do it? Kiev was looking at the exact same thing. While the rest of Ukraine was dirt poor, Kiev was still living it up because it's an imperial capital. Now, with Ukraine being much, much reduced, even the money that was going to Kiev is going to be gone.

So just for the regular people in Kyiv, the question becomes one of economics. Do you want to be the big fish in a small puddle, or do you want to be the medium-sized fish in a big ocean? What's better for you? That's one side. The second side is Russia's preparing a possible battlefield. And the

question is how much you would have to go in by, A, separating Kyiv into two pieces. There's still a metro that runs underneath the river, but it's more limited. By dividing it into pieces and by making it very impossible for people to stay in Kyiv, particularly the government, you're destroying the base communications. You're destroying the logistics. You're destroying the food distribution.

It gets people to move, and people are leaving Kyiv. The same thing, by the way, they're doing in Kharkov and other areas. They're preparing the area to get rid of the—well, not to get rid of. That's probably a bad way to put it. To get the people to leave, the human shields that Zelensky's military uses. If Russia fought the way America does, they'd just level everything, and whoever survives, survives. Russia's not fighting that way, particularly against what Russia considers to be other Russians. They're trying to minimize casualties. So the best way to minimize casualties is to get the people to leave. And if they can't survive because there's no fuel, no food, they leave. They go west.

#Pascal

So what the West is portraying as Russia terrorizing the civilian population of Kyiv is actually the Russians saying, "Guys, it's time to get out," which they're actually literally saying, especially to the diplomats. It's like, "Everybody, you better leave now because this city is now designated as a place of war." I listened to Alexander Mercouris's podcast today, and he said, according to his sources, there is actually no subway connecting east and west of Kyiv, and that those train lines run also through the bridges. Do you know more? They may. They may.

#Stas Krapivnik

I need to look that up. I know there's rail bridges. I've been in Kyiv multiple times, but I do not remember. I never lived in Kyiv, and most of my relatives are outside of the Donbas area, and then you have the Dnipro area and those areas. So I never really stayed more than a tourist in Kyiv. Let me check.

#Pascal

Yeah. So, I mean, not that it makes that huge of a difference. It's just like one more thing. I mean, the level to which East from West can be decoupled from each other. But the thing that surprises me is that this kind of strike against Kyiv seems to be going on while, you know, the fate of Odesa is anything but decided yet. I mean, the front lines are still significantly far away from that. I mean, it always seemed to me that the south of Ukraine would be militarily more important to settle first if it has to be done. But now Russia seems to be preparing a multi-front advance.

#Stas Krapivnik

By the way, it's a two-story, a two-level bridge. It is a bridge that runs across, so it gets traffic to go either way. So there is a separate rail bridge for the metro. I was wrong. I'm curious if the context is

correct. Okay. This is the thing about leadership. First, you admit to yourself you're not the smartest man in the room, at least not on every subject, and don't expect that. Second of all, on a lot of subjects, you don't need to know everything, but you need to know the people that know those subjects. You need to know how to ask the right questions. You need to know enough to know what you don't know and ask the right person about that. That's the key to leadership. The people that can't admit that they're not the smartest people in the room—yeah, the EU—they promote other stupid people to make sure they are the smartest person in the room, as they do 360s.

#Pascal

Yeah. Yeah, you just make everybody else feel dumb, right? The dumbest people on Earth try to make everybody else feel even dumber than them. And if they're bullies enough, they succeed. I mean, look at the President of the United States. But besides the point, back to the front line and the push, because I always thought they would do Odessa and so on and then go north. But it seems now they want to move everything west.

#Stas Krapivnik

Well, what it's called is you put the enemy on the horns of a dilemma, the horns like the bull horns. Which of those horns is going to be the one that goes right through you? And that's the enemy. They don't know where the main attack is. They don't know what's the most critical factor. And a lot of times what happens is not only will they not just guess wrong, they won't guess anything. They'll just continue waiting, and they paralyze themselves, not being sure which way to go. But you really do want them to commit. You want them to commit in one direction or another direction because it makes it even easier. Sometimes paralysis is the best option. But either way, they're not making effective decisions. So do we commit to Kherson or something near Kherson and Nikolaev to defend, or is the attack coming toward Kyiv? Now, Kyiv has an underground, working underground.

I'm not talking about the tunnels. I'm talking about partisan underground. You remember, Kyiv, in its own time, in 2022, they gave out over a million assault rifles in those areas. They did. Look back in '22 when they thought the Russian army was about to invade, which it wasn't because, I mean, it wasn't even physically close to what you would need. The reason the Russian military came toward Kyiv, and there was about 40,000 troops, and Kyiv had about 120,000 troops in Kyiv—the whole point was to keep those 120,000 troops from going anywhere. You pin them down with a much smaller force by threatening, and they're in confusion. They don't know what to do, so they didn't move those troops when they needed to move those troops eastward, until Russia pulled back as a sign of trust-building—good intent. Well, is that a mistake? Anyways, hindsight in 2020.

#Pascal

It was the right decision at the time in order to get what you wanted to get, but then it got sabotaged. So what can you do?

#Stas Krapivnik

Yeah, yeah. So now the question is, is the threat going to come toward Kyiv? Is the threat going to come toward Kherson? It's going to have to be in place sooner or later. It still is to a degree. And then Nikolaev and then Odessa. But from Nikolaev, you open up all of central Ukraine. Which way is the threat, the main threat, going to come? Right now, they're throwing their strategic reserves into these mini counter-offensives north of the Donbas line, a.k.a. the area around Krasny Lyman. And it's not having that. It had the PR effect. And that's what it was, first and foremost, was a PR move.

And Zelensky was heading toward the U.N. He needed another PR move. And after that, you know, survive the best you can after that. We got the PR victory. After that, whatever. Survive if you can survive. And Zelensky, by the way, doesn't want him to survive, because the Third Corps that was thrown in is the Azov Corps. They're the nationalists. And those nationalists, by the way, have walked away from several attack orders because they want to preserve their own strength to grab power in Kyiv. What's going on here is it makes life very difficult for the Kyiv regime to survive in Kyiv. So what's next? Move to Lvov? Close to the Polish border?

#Pascal

Yeah, but that seems to be the push that Russia is now trying to create, right? Stand and fight or flee and show everybody that this is over. I mean, it's going to be a huge blow to morale. I mean, having even your capital attacked, let alone taken, that... I mean, that will be demoralizing over and beyond anything that I think that they would be willing to continue. Then again, the French had their capital basically taken, a collaborationist regime installed, and the French leader went to the UK and continued from there. So, I mean, there's precedent for that.

#Stas Krapivnik

Well, the Portuguese went to Brazil when Napoleon took Portugal. But then again, Brazil was a huge territory with a lot of resources. Lvov isn't. Lvov is also packed full of Nazis that want power. Like, Right Sector, for example, is headquartered in Lvov. It's also very close to the Poles, who don't particularly, as far as at least the people, don't like Zelensky, and the Ukrainians, even if some of the leadership is still kissing his posterior, hoping to get something out of it. And then what happens to Kiev? You're going to have different groups trying to vie for power in Kiev. You're going to have just plain chaos in Kiev.

Never forget those rifles that have been given out, those assault weapons, the grenades, everything else. They were just opening up crates. People were in lines just grabbing weapons. They didn't even sign for it. Just, here, have them, have them. The Russians are coming, have them. You've got to defend Kiev, have the rifles. And when the Russians are attacking Kiev, now you go, "Anybody want to give them back yet?" "Yeah, we'll take them back." Some people gave them back. They had

gun collections. There was maybe 1%, half a percent. They have no idea who has which rifles. Kiev was a powder keg.

#Pascal

How long do you think that Ukraine, like its modus operandi, can still continue? Because we see all of these horrible videos of the pacification, right? These poor guys being grabbed from the street. But we also see a lot of videos with other people then flocking around it and beating the hell out of the guys who are doing that. So, I mean, this indicates a lot and a lot of opposition to this type of mobilization, right?

#Stas Krapivnik

You know, I think the biggest number of press gangers killed is in Lvov. It was three people. Three of these thugs have been killed in Lvov, and not at one time. So it tells you that they're not really—I mean, there's opposition. Most of the mothers, grandmothers, and wives coming over there, and the teenagers will run in packs. When they try to bust the teenagers, they'll come in there as a group and just beat the crap out of them. So the teenagers are actually much more dangerous and well-organized than the average Ukrainian man, young adult, middle-aged, or old. They're all basically... There's a good documentary I watched with Nenets, the people that live up north and herd reindeer. Well, humans are carnivores, right?

So you have all these vegetarian herd animals being herded by carnivores. And they had their son come back from a boarding school, and they were giving him a good party. And the documentary is like, look, all the reindeer know the carnivores are looking to eat somebody. The whole herd is nervous. And then they grab one, they cut its throat, and they start eating it raw because that's how they get warm. That's the only time they eat something warm because they really don't have much to burn. It's, you know, far north. And the key was, and the herd relaxes. Maybe me one day, but not today. And this was the exact same mentality that you see in Ukraine. All these other men are going, "Oh," instead of running in there and helping get one of their buddies out, "Well, it's not me."

#Pascal

Yeah, but I mean, no, it is, but it is a horrible thing. I mean, especially if 30,000 people or so that you need to mobilize a month, according to—no, not Syrsky, what's the new guy's name?

#Stas Krapivnik

Budanov. Actually, Budanov said that.

#Pascal

And it's more than that that they need.

#Stas Krapivnik

He's lowballing it.

#Pascal

It seems to me that the longer this is going on, the more horrible the situation is going to get, of course, for ordinary Ukrainians on the ground. It's just like, when will this—when will this break on the inside? Because still, I mean, four and a half years. I mean, as much as the West is waiting for Russia to collapse, actually, I've always been thinking, like, Ukraine will at some point collapse, but it doesn't. The collapse on neither side is happening, also on the Ukrainian side, not.

#Stas Krapivnik

Well, Russia's never going to collapse. Let's just begin that. It was one thing when it was Afghanistan. Russia didn't collapse, but they did a good hit on the USSR. But Afghanistan was far enough away, even though it was just across the border from the Soviet Union. But for the majority of the population of the Soviet Union, it was on the other side of the world. Yeah, because it was across all the stands, Central Asia, and it never felt like an existential crisis to anybody. Yeah. It's just one more of those Cold War things that we don't get told everything about. This is totally different. This is absolutely totally different. Now, how far could this go? Are you familiar with the Paraguay War?

#Pascal

The war that killed 90% of the entire population?

#Stas Krapivnik

No, no, no, not the entire population. The entire population, much less—90% of the men.

#Pascal

You're right. You're right. 70% of the population, 90% of the men. Yes. Yeah.

#Stas Krapivnik

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, this is how far stupidity can go. When you've obviously lost and all three sides are saying, "Just surrender already."

#Pascal

You cannot win this. Just surrender.

#Stas Krapivnik

Then we're going to go to the jungle. We're going to drive you out through the jungle.

#Pascal

Okay.

#Stas Krapivnik

Fine. We'll keep doing this until there's none of you left. And when the 10% of men that are left are going, "I'm tired. I don't want to fight anymore. We're all dead anyways." But that's how far human stupidity can go sometimes. And they weren't being exterminated. That's the point. Brazil, Argentina—sorry, I'm going to interrupt. Let's just finish. Brazil and Argentina weren't coming in to exterminate Paraguay. They never meant, "We're going to wipe you all out." That was not a war of extermination, but they fought like idiots anyway. And what was obvious is they'd lost.

#Pascal

I mean, you're right in the sense that we have precedent for how far countries and groups of people are willing to go in order to not give up. That's the point—not surrender. But on the other hand, we also have the example of Japan, which was very much willing to surrender in order to survive as a nation, which actually functioned and worked. But with that said, thank you very much, Stas, for the useful update. People who want to follow you and find you, they should go to all of your platforms.

#Stas Krapivnik

I started posting on LinkedIn again. I hadn't been there forever, so I started posting some articles as a new place to post. On X, @Stanis Karpivnik. I couldn't fit the whole name. On YouTube, @MrSlavicMan, all one word, Slavic with a K. On Telegram, there's the Russian channel, there's the English channel, and where am I missing out? Is the Substack. Have some of our writings on there, not that much. Mostly use it as an archive right now for YouTube, because you just never know. Let's go. I want to apologize. I cut you off when you were trying to say something good when I was finishing. I thought I would apologize, not trying to be rude.

#Pascal

You're not rude. I'm the host. I'm supposed to let you speak, so I shouldn't have tried to interrupt. So thank you very much for that. And I have to run in order to get some very nice meat dinner myself because I'm a very proud carnivore as well. So thank you so much for your time today.

#Stas Krapivnik

Thank you.