

Patrik Baab: Europe's New Iron Curtain - Freedom of Speech Dies

Patrik Baab is a German journalist and best-selling author who reported on both sides of the frontline in Ukraine. Baab outlines how the freedom of speech is destroyed by a failing political elite. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: [buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng](https://www.buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng) Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back to the program. Today we're joined by Patrick Bob, a German journalist and author, to discuss the massive pressure there currently is on freedom of expression in Europe, and how various governments are working very hard to reduce this freedom. Thank you very much for coming back on the program.

#Patrik Baab

Always my pleasure, Glenn.

#Glenn

Well, we can go into some specific examples, because it's really quite hard to believe the extent to which freedom of speech is being snuffed out across Europe. But I thought a good place to start would be how you see freedom of expression, and in what ways it's coming under pressure. Can you describe the main mechanisms, both formal and informal, that are reducing freedom of speech in Europe?

#Patrik Baab

So there is no freedom of speech in the European Union anymore. This is not just my personal opinion; it's the result of a 160-page report from the U.S. Congress published in early February. According to this report, the EU Commission has, in recent years, established a system of complete censorship across the European Union. And the result—let me read that—the result of this congressional report is—just a moment—the EU regime pressured internet platforms to suppress lawful speech, including speech that was true, simply because it was politically inconvenient. This is one of the findings of the House Judiciary Committee report, chaired by Jim Jordan. It's very clear

that the European Commission is transforming itself into a censorship authority, acting against democracy and in opposition to all democratic constitutions across the European Union.

#Glenn

There's a person we both know, Colonel Jacques Baud, who—again—was a colonel in the Swiss intelligence services. He's retired now and is very well known for his sharp analysis. He also worked with NATO as a Swiss intelligence officer. Apparently, the EU didn't like his analysis. He reached the conclusion that the war in Ukraine had been provoked. Now, one can agree or disagree—I happen to agree with his analysis—but he never had a day in court or anything. One day he just woke up and found himself on the EU sanctions list. Not because he said anything false, or because it was proven he'd received payments from anywhere, but simply because his conclusion or analysis was seen as accepting or repeating a Kremlin talking point, which was then viewed as advancing the Kremlin narrative. And for that, he was punished with sanctions. What exactly does this situation look like?

#Patrik Baab

Well, I know Colonel Jacques Baud personally, and I visited him in Brussels. He's okay so far, but he's also really nervous because he's a Swiss citizen living in Belgium. He can't travel to his homeland—it's not allowed. His bank accounts are completely frozen, and all his property has been confiscated. The only thing the Belgian state allows is for him to take 500 euros a month to buy food. And I heard that the neighbors are cooking for him.

So this is just a way to censor and pressure people who don't align with NATO or EU propaganda. And this is completely extralegal. The EU ministers have created a tool to put people under pressure and silence them through sanctions, which is completely illegal—completely illegal—and goes against all democratic constitutions in the EU. So the only conclusion I can draw, and it's the same conclusion reached by the US Congress, is that European political elites are destroying democracy to stay in power.

#Glenn

What's so shocking, though, with Colonel Jacques Baud is that no laws have been broken, and he's not even in a position to defend his argument. He can't defend himself in court. There's no legal recourse. It's just, "Now you're not allowed to travel. All your assets are frozen. You're not allowed to receive help from anyone." And again, as you said, there are no laws for this. It's illegal—this is illegal. It's just sanctioning citizens who have committed no crimes. It's quite shocking. So for anyone who argues that this U.S. paper is hyperbolic or exaggerating, it's very hard to justify what's actually been done to him, and to others for that matter.

And this is propaganda. This is when governments aren't able to defend their position anymore. Anyone challenging the official truth comes under this kind of attack by the government. It's the

death of freedom. But you've argued that the media has become much more propagandistic. Do you see this as simply a transitional issue, because we're pretty much fighting a direct war against Russia now? Or do you think this is permanent? Because it's very hard to go back to normal, to the way things were, after we see European governments doing these kinds of things against their own citizens.

#Patrik Baab

I think this is a complete transformation of democracy at the European level into a kind of, yeah, anti-democratic and warmongering despotism. And this is the goal. According to the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, the EU has decided to wage a war against Russia in the coming years. So warmongering, new wars, propaganda, and censorship are, on the other hand, two sides of the same medal. They want to close off the public debate space to make it easier to bring their own citizens into a new war. And this is very dangerous, because the Russian Federation has announced that this won't be a war in the Ukrainian style—a low-level war. The Russian Federation made it very clear that this would become a nuclear war at once. So it's very, very dangerous. But the background of all this warmongering and censorship is that they've lost control over their investments.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, who was Prime Minister of the Netherlands in 2013, signed a contract with the Ukrainian government and the company Shell to explore the gas industry—the minerals and gas in eastern Ukraine. So it was an investment of billions. But now all these territories are in Russian hands, so they miscalculated their investments. And now European citizens should die for their profits. That's the background. People are sleeping on the edge of the abyss. They don't go to the streets, and they don't fight for peace in the European Union. That's the result of permanent propaganda and permanent censorship in the EU. And I don't believe the political elites will stop that. They'll just go on and on to stay in power.

#Glenn

That's my concern. All these lies that have been told, the lack of accountability—because it's very easy to expose many of the lies they've been telling. I mean, this is, to a large extent, what Colonel Jacques Baud was doing as well. He was using Western sources to show that the narratives they're spinning don't make any sense. But the problem now, of course, is that if you win the war, you can write the story afterwards. But we are losing this war, and our political elites are not going to be in a position to write the story afterwards. Indeed, it's going to be proven that everything they've essentially said has been a lie.

And it's quite dramatic because we're talking about a legitimacy crisis when governments overstep their democratic mandate in this way. As these governments become more unpopular, they seem to be immune to the ballot box. Irrespective of what one thinks about the opposition parties across Europe, it's concerning that the most popular party in Germany now, according to the polls, is the

AfD. Again, it doesn't matter whether people support it or not—they're being criminalized. They're openly talking about banning it. In France, they arrested Le Pen. And in Romania, the election result was essentially ignored and canceled—"let's do it over again."

We saw how the Moldovan election was manipulated. And if you mention these things, the governments in Europe essentially come after you. It's quite scary—the way all this talk about our democracy and our values is just sitting on eggshells, essentially. But how significant do you think the role of self-censorship is as well? Because now we're talking about direct censorship—the way people are punished, the way election results are reversed, opposition parties are banned. Citizens are not just smeared, censored, and canceled, but also sanctioned. So, in terms of self-censorship, how do you see this changing among journalists or academics?

#Patrik Baab

Well, let me start with my personal experiences as a journalist, book author, and manager of a news and analysis channel on YouTube. I'm receiving thousands of letters, and most people tell me, "You have the courage to say what I can't say anymore. I don't have free speech; I can't express my personal views or arguments to my colleagues because it's too dangerous." So self-censorship follows censorship. And this is the situation in Germany today, and in other countries as well. A member of the European Parliament, Michael von der Schulenburg, tried to establish a board of people to help Jabot.

And he asked professors for justice and all that, but most people refused to join the board because they're living in fear. What we see right now all over the EU is government by fear and suppression. And this is not democracy; this is an Orwellian dystopia. We have a lot of instruments to reach this goal. First of all, it's proven by a report of the U.S. Congress that the European Union manipulated eight elections across the EU—the most well-known case being Romania, but also in Slovakia, France, and other countries. You can download this report on the internet. The next level is internet censorship.

The EU Commission invited Meta, Google, TikTok, X, Amazon, Microsoft, Apple, Rumble, Reddit, and OpenAI, and explained very clearly that they have to manage content in line with the EU's expectations. If not, they'll face heavy sanctions and have to pay a lot of money. And this, too, is not democracy. Then there are the extra-legal sanctions against Jacques Vaux and 58 other people, not only in the EU but partly within it—and everybody knows that. On the other hand, the mainstream media, or as I call them, the so-called propaganda media, don't cover it. They don't report on it. And that means the mainstream media are part of NATO's propaganda system.

#Glenn

How do you see the attack, though, on reputations? Because when you say people are afraid to speak up, it's the attack on reputation that affects not just professional life but also private life. That'

s a key aspect of it. So, you know, like in this country, I've noticed this even against myself. We have governments that sometimes go indirectly—they finance NGOs, they call them human rights NGOs—but you see them writing all these smears on social media. They write articles denouncing people, calling me a propagandist for Russia. They write letters to my university, questioning whether I should be allowed to work there. They even put pictures of my house on social media after I had removed my address from the public record.

And recently we even had the defense minister of Norway come out. He was giving a speech warning that Norwegians are exposed to Putin's propaganda. I thought this was strange because Norwegian media only allows one narrative—that everything is unprovoked, that the Russians are just the new Hitler who wants to restore the Soviet Union. So when he was asked, "Where do they get Putin's propaganda?" he mentioned my name—only my name. And that's a problem, because a journalist essentially shouldn't talk to me; that would mean they're giving me a platform. And the great crime, according to him, was that I said NATO had contributed to provoking the war. I mean, if we had open discourse, if people were allowed to discuss what's actually happening in Ukraine, if you wanted to solve it, it would be very easy. There's an abundance of evidence to prove this.

What I find fascinating is that they don't look at the evidence directly as a way to solve a crisis. They see it as almost treasonous—that you've picked the side of the enemy—just by suggesting that perhaps we contributed to this, so maybe there's a political solution. It's quite scary to see how... I mean, this is essentially the executive branch saying, "These are the official truths the government has the right to promote," and anyone who goes against them will be smeared and attacked by the government. It's such a far cry from anything that could be considered democratic. Of course, it's not even in the same ballpark as what happened to Colonel Jacques Baud, but nonetheless—sorry, I got off point there. I was going to ask, in terms of this reputational pressure, how are you assessing it?

#Patrik Baab

I had the same experience as you in Germany. If you read Wikipedia or Google, according to the mainstream press in Germany, I was supposedly a poll watcher for Mr. Putin during the referendum in the Donbass in the fall of 2022—which I was not. I took this to court, and the court made it very clear in its decision that I was not a poll watcher, that I was there as a journalist. But they keep repeating the same thing over and over. Among those responsible is a government- and EU-financed so-called non-governmental organization called Fake Observers. And I was not a fake observer—absolutely not. So we've arrived at a state of completely fake news. Jacques Baud recently wrote and published a book about this, **Government by Fake News**. And this is the world we're living in.

They are betraying and lying to people all over the EU, because the reality on the ground—on the battlefield—is completely different from what the press reports. It's completely different from what the news shows say. They're not on the ground; it's just fantasy, just propaganda. And all the ideological apparatuses are supporting this propaganda system—the schools, the universities, the

so-called non-governmental organizations, the think tanks, the government institutions, and so on, and even the churches. They're all spreading and publishing the same propaganda, and that's the problem. So the only way to get out of this propaganda system is for citizens to do their own investigations and choose other sources—possibly the new media—and that would be best. But by destroying the space for democratic debate, this is how the established parties stay in power.

#Glenn

What's interesting about these sanctions is that they come from the EU. That allows national governments to shift responsibility to the EU instead. But how do you see this in Germany? Which of these sanctions and pressures come directly from the EU, and where does the German government come in? We mentioned the Swiss colonel in Belgium, but there have also been a lot of sanctions against German citizens—some who apparently aren't even able to return to their own country. We went through an entire Cold War without doing anything like this. It doesn't really inspire much confidence in governments when they resort to such dramatic and authoritarian measures. But yes, back to my question: what is the German government doing, if you contrast it with the European Union?

#Patrik Baab

So we can identify the actors on different levels. The head of the EU Commission is a German, Ursula von der Leyen, and she's personally responsible for EU censorship, because she approved the campaign on COVID-19 in June 2020. She started the COVID-19 disinformation monitoring program and forced internet platforms to report, delete, and manipulate content. The second one is Věra Jourová, the Vice President for Values and Transparency and former head of the EU Commission for Justice. She managed the whole thing—the discussions with TikTok, Meta, Google, and other platforms. And the third one is Thierry Breton, a former commissioner for the internal market. He wrote to Elon Musk on August 12, 2024, saying, "We will not hesitate to make full use of our toolbox."

That means he put X under pressure. The next one is Prabhat Agarwal, the head of Digital Services Act Enforcement. He's basically the manager of all these things. And the fifth one is Renate Nicolai, the Deputy Director General of DG Connect—the Directorate-General for Communications, Networks, Content, and Technology. She has to translate the Digital Services Act into action, into control of recommender systems. But we have to keep in mind that the national governments are playing a kickback game. So, for example, the EU Council of Ministers—made up of the different member states—is responsible for the sanctions. That means that on the EU level, the Commission just carries out what the national governments have already decided. That's the problem.

So it's a kickback game. The national governments decide to put someone on the sanctions list, and they kick it to Brussels, and then Brussels has to act. Then the ball gets kicked back to the national level, and also to the German level. The German Bundestag transformed the EU sanctions against

individuals into national law on January 15 and reinforced them. Any helper of a sanctioned person can be punished and can go to prison for ten years. And this is completely crazy. There's no legal ground for that—none. It's just illegal and completely voluntary. So we're not in a government defined by law; it's a government of despotism, nothing else. We've lost the ground of democracy in the European Union.

#Glenn

Is there any source of optimism coming from anywhere, though? Do you see any institutions, media, civil society, academia—anyone—pushing back against this, at least marginally successfully? Or, I guess, where does the hope come in here? Or should we rely on what we got from the U.S. National Security Strategy of December 2025—putting it in the hands of the United States to promote alternative governments in Europe? Because that doesn't seem like a very ideal outcome either.

#Patrik Baab

Yes, on the first level, I have to say Europe needs help from outside. And this is exactly what the U. S. Congress did. They published a report because U.S. citizens are affected by this. U.S. citizens traveling through the EU are subject to those rules, so the EU's regulations are working worldwide. The second level is that we both, Glenn—you and I—can just do our job and make public what they're doing, to create awareness about it. But in the end, people have to fight for their rights, and they're not doing that at the moment. If we look back at the history of democracy—let's say 300 years—throughout that time, people had to fight for their rights, and a lot of blood was shed. Now we're at a point where we have to look back to those people and fight for our rights again. People have to go into the streets and fight for their democratic rights against anti-democratic elites.

#Glenn

Why do you think this isn't happening yet, though? Do people not realize what's going on? Because, of course, the media isn't going to cover much of this. But also, they're not really exposed to any of it—I mean, to alternative perspectives. I find it shocking, because every form of dissent is simply pushed back as a kind of treason. Even key, important officials—people no one could accuse of having sympathies with Russia—who still argue that this was provoked, they'll simply never appear in the media. You have this very strict narrative control. Regardless of what the reality is, information is often judged by the extent to which it supports either the NATO narrative or the Russian narrative. It's a simple binary, and anything that doesn't support the NATO narrative is seen as, well, essentially propaganda. So how do you overcome that?

#Patrik Baab

I think EU citizens have to learn that the mainstream media are part of the propaganda system, and they have to look for alternative news sources. They have different options. They can use new

media—like your channel, or my channel, or in Germany, NachDenkSeiten, or in the United States, Consortium News, or in Canada, The Postil Magazine, or something else. Then they can evaluate the situation in a better way. They can trust their own eyes and ears. They have to stay in personal contact with each other and exchange their experiences. That helps. We are not alone.

We are not alone. But I think the majority of German citizens are actually living like zombies—in a kind of second reality. This feeling comes from the corona restrictions. I think most people in Germany are broken. They're frustrated, they're hopeless. And the background to this is the corona restrictions, which made it clear to everyone that the arm of the state is very long, and that people have only minor chances to stand up to these measures. Many believed in the corona restrictions, but it's very clear that they were politically initiated, not medically initiated.

So most people are part of this system of lies, and it's very hard to understand that I lost part of my life believing in—yeah, let me say—nonsense. And it's difficult to make that clear to myself because I'm losing face when I look in the mirror. That's the problem. And I think, well, the only hope is that people have to vote for other parties, not for the established party cartel anymore, because this is a warmongering party cartel, and it's a party cartel that is destroying democracy. This is very clear. They have to vote for other parties, and they have to fight for their rights. That's the only way I see it.

#Glenn

I'm wondering to what extent this actually matters—who you vote for—because in the UK now they see this radical alternative possibly coming to power, which would be Nigel Farage. And they think, oh, this is radically different. But then you turn on the telly, and when it's time to talk about something like the Epstein files, which delegitimize a lot of the British officials and elites mentioned in those documents, he says, well, you know, this might just be Russian propaganda—that they're behind the Epstein files, that he was an agent of the Russians. I mean, it's just the worst kind of Russiagate there is.

After doing this whole Russiagate thing—Trump being a spy, an agent of the Kremlin—then you had the Biden laptop being called a Russian conspiracy. Now they're actually trying to Russiagate the Epstein files. And it's quite clever in one way, because... it doesn't make any sense. You don't need any evidence behind it, because anyone who questions it, saying, "Well, how does that make sense? There's no evidence," is then smeared as a Russian asset. So people just go along, it seems. It's quite frustrating. But do you see any alternatives? I mean, across Europe at least—who would take a radically different stance in defense of freedom of speech?

#Patrik Baab

Actually, no. The Epstein files show that Epstein was not an agent or a spy for Russia. He was linked to the Mossad and to Israel. That's one level—the first level. And the second level is that it's an

introspection of our elites. They do everything; well, it's complete moral hazard. They're doing whatever they want, and this frustrates citizens even more, because they learn from the Epstein case that they can do nothing about it. But that's the wrong lesson to take from the Epstein files. We should learn instead that our elites are so, um, decadent that we need new ones—we have to replace them. That's the only way. So the problem in Germany, and possibly in the UK and France, is that all this works in favor of right-wing populist parties like the AfD. And what we see right now in Germany is a transformation of the AfD from a peace-loving party to a transatlantic one.

So in the end, if the AfD comes into power after the next Bundestag elections in Germany, we'll have a new instrument for Washington to influence the German government. It's the same process we saw in Italy with Ms. Meloni, and Washington is trying to repeat it. This is part of the new American security strategy—they'll bring parties like the AfD and other right-wing populist parties into power as instruments of American influence.

#Glenn

Well, it doesn't give much room for optimism, I guess. But from my perspective, a key problem is that we've had this external fear for so long. Essentially, there's been a search for internal dissidents or enemies within us. This is something Carl Schmitt wrote about—that when human beings are faced with an external threat, there's a stronger instinct for group loyalty and solidarity, where people try to snuff out any dissent, anyone deviating from the group or the authorities' official narratives. It just seems we've spent a whole decade searching for internal enemies.

That is, first we had Russiagate, where anyone who voted for Brexit or for Trump—anyone—could essentially be a Russian agent. And then, of course, that was replaced by COVID, where we also looked for internal enemies to some extent. And then, of course, the Ukraine war happened. And now the public has to be sure they have the right opinion. It just seems that Europeans need a few years' break to normalize—to be allowed again to actually dissent from their governments. Because this is my main concern: it's been very much normalized. But given that war is now seen as a justification for restriction, just as a last question, do you think any of this can be restored to normalcy after the Ukraine war is over?

#Patrik Baab

Well, I'm not very optimistic, because we're facing a new century of wars and a century of the destruction of democracies. And this is exactly a result of your analysis, Glenn, as well. We see the decline of the West, of the unipolar world, and the rise of the multipolar world. In this process, the West will face more and more restrictions. The United States will keep the leash shorter for its vessels, and they're cutting ties with Russia and China. That means, in the domestic sphere, a loss of democracy. The only hope, from a global perspective, is the rise of the multipolar world and new

governments in Asia, China, and Africa. The European governments have made so many mistakes, from my point of view, that the game is over. We'll become the backyard of the United States—and the backyard of Russia as well.

My personal dystopia is the Hollywood movie *Mad Max*: criminal bandits cruising around Europe and terrorizing the population. And these terrorists are the governments—governing and running the state against their own people. They're exploiting their own citizens in favor of themselves and in favor of the United States. Because this war in Ukraine means the transfer of money from the EU as a whole to Ukraine and to the U.S. military-industrial complex. So the citizens of Europe will get poorer and poorer. And that's the situation: an increase in exploitation, an increase in the danger of nuclear war, and, well, a decline in social welfare. This is the new 21st century.

#Glenn

Well, thank you, not just for taking the time today, but also for the work you do—trying to restore some freedom of speech in Europe and taking up the case against Colonel Jacques Baud, because this is a horrible, horrible precedent being set. So thank you very much.

#Patrik Baab

Thank you for your work, Glenn Diesen. It's always a pleasure.