

Rubio Drops the Mask on Western Empire | Stanislav Krapivnik

Munich sounded like empire talk again: last gasp or full return? Sanctions as speech control, financial warfare aimed at China, and an oil shock hanging over Europe all come up fast. Today I'm joined by my friend Stanislav Krapivnik to take this apart, line by line. Links: Stanislav Krapivnik on X: <https://x.com/StasKrapivnik> Stanislav Krapivnik on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@MrSlavikman> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch & Donations: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:31 Rubio speech and empire nostalgia 00:03:19 Family history and empire mindset 00:11:10 US roots revolt and expansion 00:15:12 Empire comeback framing in Europe 00:24:35 Sanctions and speech discipline at home 00:26:46 Protect Taiwan Act and financial coercion 00:36:19 Economic power shift and bloc formation 00:50:06 Cuba tankers Iran flashpoint Hormuz shock

#Pascal

Welcome everybody back to Neutrality Studies. My name is Pascal Lottaz. I'm an associate professor at Kyoto University, and I'm joined today again by my friend Stanislav Krapivnik. We just witnessed the Munich Security Conference, and Stas, I really, really want to discuss this with you. So, welcome to the show.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

You know, sometimes the script just writes itself—I mean, the dark comedy script.

#Pascal

Munich was really—well, it was quite a thing. And, you know, our friend Marco Rubio was quite a thing too. I think we really have to start with this insane part of his speech where he starts praising colonialism. Just so everybody knows what we're talking about, I want to share this. So, let's try to listen to the speech for a moment—it's about a minute and a half, maybe two minutes long. Just give me a sec.

#Rubio

Before the end of the Second World War, the West had been expanding—its missionaries, its pilgrims, its soldiers, its explorers pouring out from its shores to cross oceans, settle new continents, and build vast empires stretching across the globe. But in 1945, for the first time since the age of

Columbus, it was contracting. Europe was in ruins. Half of it lived behind an Iron Curtain, and the rest looked like it would soon follow. The great Western empires had entered terminal decline, accelerated by godless communist revolutions and by anti-colonial uprisings that would transform the world and drape the red hammer and sickle across vast swaths of the map in the years to come.

Against that backdrop, then as now, many came to believe that the West's age of dominance had come to an end, and that our future was destined to be a faint and feeble echo of our past. But together, our predecessors recognized that decline was a choice—and it was a choice they refused to make. This is what we did together once before, and this is what President Trump and the United States want to do again now, together with you. And this is why we do not want our allies to be weak—because that makes us weaker. We want allies who can defend themselves so that no adversary will ever be tempted to test our collective strength.

#Pascal

And on and on he goes, you know, telling the Europeans to please gear up and get stronger again, because we must once more defend against the Reds, the communists, and against colonial uprisings. You know how he laments that the West lost its empires. I mean, I just never thought I'd hear a sitting U.S. secretary of state say something like this.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Okay, before I take apart what he actually said—because there's so much that doesn't work—how many hours do we have? We could make this a multi-part series with this lunacy. Let's start with the part of the speech that nobody listened to, and with part of Rubio's background. Do you know who Rubio's ancestors were?

#Pascal

In the speech, he said they were Spanish, but we all know his family was from Cuba—and, as you explained to me before, not from the glorious part.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

He is—well, they are Spanish. They're not... I don't know how much admixture they have with the locals, but they are Spaniards. But there's a key point here: they're Spanish nobility—mid to lower-ranked nobility, I don't know. And as someone who comes from the nobility—on my mother's side; my father's side were unteroffizieren and farmers and so on—my mother's side is old, old Russian nobility from the time of Ivan Grozny, Ivan IV, otherwise known as “the Terrible,” but a proper private person.

#Pascal

Proper translations to fear?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

British propaganda. Since, you know, the mid-1500s—earlier, actually—my family has been, my mother's family has been, nobility. And you get that passed on. You know who your ancestors were. Maybe we lost a lot during the NKVD raids and things like that. My great-grandmother just... somewhere buried an entire chest full of the family tree, gold coins, everything, because they were getting raided. But my mother had seen it, and this goes beyond our jurisdiction. You know your ancestors, you know the glory they had, and it's just something that's ingrained in any kind of family like that. He knows his. His family, just so people understand, were the viceroy class in the Spanish Empire.

They were the nobles who were sent out to be the imperial governors over the dirty, nasty little peasants—the non-Spanish peasants somewhere in the empire. They were the guys who lived in the big house, smacked around the locals as they wanted to, because they were the final word. That's what he wants. That's his family history. Like it or not, that's what it is. Now, whether his father was—what inclination his father had—I don't know. But his family did run away from Cuba four years before Castro came in. And Castro himself was not a real hard socialist; it's just that was the only place he could go for help when the CIA said, “Ah, you got rid of Batista. Now you're ours.” “No, I'm not.” “Oh yes, you are, if you want to live.” Well, let's see—what's the other alternative?

#Pascal

Oh, there's the Soviet Union.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Okay, bye-bye. We're now going to the hard socialist camp from the medium socialist camp—or the light socialist camp. Let's see if they overplayed their hand, because they got used to owning whoever ruled Cuba and a lot of the Latin American countries—owning them lock, stock, and barrel, regardless of what their views were. But the fact is, his family fled four years before. So were they fleeing from Batista? I mean, they were refugees, so obviously they were fleeing from something. So he may have daddy issues while we're at it too. But he wants the viceroy. I mean, he comes from this viceroy class. You know, the difference between Western empires and the Russian Empire was very, very stark.

The Russian Empire worked as the Roman Empire lite, because Russia, by the way, considers itself the inheritor of the Byzantine Empire—which, by the way, the Byzantines never called themselves Byzantines. They called themselves Romans; they were the Eastern Romans. “Byzantine” was something other people called them, just like the Hungarians are called Hungarians. So when the Roman Empire took over territories, they had revolts in those territories by the locals—not to be

free, but to become Roman citizens. In fact, they had an entire war up and down the Italian peninsula. All these vassal states said, "Look, if we're going to be part of this, we want to be full Roman citizens."

Screw this second-class tyranny. So they incorporated, and the foreigners became as much Romans as the Romans. I mean, one of the emperors, Hadrian, was a Spaniard, for God's sake. We're looking at this—well, this is the same way the Russian Empire expanded. Any territory it took, the locals weren't exterminated, they weren't exploited; they were brought up to the same level as the rest of the citizenry. You had the same rights, you were on the same level. People intermarried. The Russian Empire poured resources into those areas—not just to mine the resources and leave, or to get rid of the locals and build the bare minimum, like what happened in a lot of these Western European empires.

But they built cities, they built universities. They thought, if the locals couldn't read and write—because you had all kinds of different peoples—they taught them how to read and write. They even created a written language for their language, plus Russian. And they converted them to Orthodoxy by having the church go in, convert a few locals, send them to seminary, and then those people came back to convert their own communities. It's easier that way—it always is. But the point being—back to Rubio—it's a big difference right there. The way Russia did it, with 180 ethnic groups outside of the Slavs making up the other 18% of the population, versus the Spanish Empire, the French Empire, and so on, that just exploited the locals.

You exploited the locals, and you brought in your own people as the upper class in the area. You brought in the viceroys, who were the upper, upper class there. So this is what's on his mind. Sorry, I know I went off on a bit of a tangent. But everybody's somewhat familiar with how the Western empires worked. They're not familiar with how other empires worked. It's empire, but it's not empire. So that's part of his background for making this speech. So yes, the man basically said that 500 years of Western civilization can all be boiled down to one achievement: empire. Never mind the art, never mind the literature, never mind anything—it's empire, baby. That's the only thing that counts.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this could happen again at any time. So please consider subscribing not only here, but also to my mailing list on Substack. That's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Yeah, but he actually adds that.

#Pascal

He says, right, we brought art and culture and science to the world. And then the biggest, the worst thing that happened after '45 is that we stopped doing that—that the West contracted, right? This idea that no other part of the world is able to produce something on the level or standards of the West, that the West needs to go and bring it. Right? This is, I mean, this is 19th-century colonial speech. It's just quite good.

Until now—at least since the 1950s, up to 2025—even when the West did that, they at least said, “Oh no, we're doing it for humanitarian reasons, for human rights. We're doing it for the good of the planet. We're all equal, everybody's family, right?” But sometimes the family needs a little bit of punishing to make sure we all stay together. You know, everything together. Now it's just like—no—flipping the table. “We're going back to bringing you what's good for us, and we demand that you give us what belongs to us, with hard power. And by the way, Europe, you've got to do your part for us.”

#Stanislav Krapivnik

And here's the interesting thing, too. I expect Rubio to know this. The interesting thing about America—the founding of America—is that, first, it was a revolt against empire. It took a very large chunk of the British Empire and said, “Bye-bye.” No, this is the beginning. I'm not talking about when America turned into an empire; that came a bit later. And second, if you read the Founding Fathers, if you read the Federalist Papers, if you read any of the documents, they said they were the anti-Europe.

#Pascal

Yes, yes, yes and no. You have these two wings—the Federalists, yes—but you always had the Jeffersonians, right? Who, on the other hand, said, no, no, no, we are basically, you know, this proto-liberalism of “we are the French Revolution of the Americas.” So we need to revolt together with the French against what's wrong and bring, I mean, enlightenment. And that's this prototype of the neoliberal mindset—of “we bring salvation to the world.”

#Stanislav Krapivnik

There's that moment, too—but they were against what the French establishment was, and against the French power that broke it. By the way, the French Revolution was the fault of the Americans—not because the Americans wanted the French to be free or anything like that, but because the Americans betrayed the French. This is something that's not taught in American schools, but if you look into the French Revolution—by, uh, not Thomas Jefferson, right? Yeah, Benjamin Franklin. Yeah, Benjamin Franklin was the ambassador to the French court.

He convinced Louis to go into massive debt to supply the Americans, and then they got exclusive trade rights with the U.S. By the second or third battle, Washington had lost all his cannons. The Continental Army—I'm not going to say the U.S., because there was no U.S. at that point—was running out of gunpowder. The Continental Congress was even talking about mass-producing longbows. They would just stand there and shoot arrows at the British. By the end of the American Revolution, the entire American fleet, all the gunpowder, all the cannons, and half the soldiers were French in American uniforms.

Well, Yorktown falls, the Americans rush to make peace with the British, sign a separate deal, and give the British exclusive rights—leaving the French out in the cold, still at war with Britain. So they get the raw end of the deal. Add a few bad harvests, and... you get the Revolution. And the Americans—there was even what was called the “false war,” because the French were demanding repayment and the Americans said, “No, we’re not going to.” They started seizing each other’s ships. The French were winning that fight, but then the French Revolution happened. So, yeah, that’s what they don’t teach in American schools: betrayal.

#Pascal

I know. I'm glad you're bringing that up. But, you know, the whole story you're describing—this is well known—but it's also an intercolonial war, right? This was not *the* war, because the other side of the war, the war against the Indigenous population, was something else entirely. Later on, the United States also decisively won that one by basically exterminating the Indigenous population and dismantling all the political structures that used to exist on the continent. But that's not the War of Independence, right? The War of Independence is basically about who gets to decide what happens in the thirteen colonies.

And, well, it was the descendants of the Brits, basically, who then won against those guys, forged some foreign policy, and managed to massively, massively expand their empire—which really started relatively small—all the way to the Pacific, all the way to incorporating Hawaii, against Hawaii’s will, if Hawaii was even OK with that. And, you know, it’s just a massive, massive history of expansion. And then in '45, I mean, all of that language got changed. My question is, do you think it’s being changed back for good? Or is this kind of the last gasp of that empire? Let me just, one second, also show you this one here—how some of the Western press is actually reporting about this.

So, you know, The Atlantic runs the headline “Marco Rubio’s impressive speech.” The Secretary of State sought not only to reassure but to rally Europe, and the BBC says Rubio’s speech signals that U. S.–Europe relations are bruised but still friendly. And one must say, you know, the Europeans gave him a standing ovation basically because most parts of his speech were about how he wants the U. S. and Europe to walk in lockstep. But, well, Europe locks itself behind the U.S., right? Because you’ve got to do your part. And they applauded this. So, are we back—out of pure stupidity—into the 19th-century world, or is this the last gasp of empire?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

I would say Europe is actually going to walk in lockstep—or maybe even three or four steps ahead of America—because that's the sacrificial lamb being pushed forward.

#Pascal

Yeah, that's where the bullets come in. Yeah, right—right.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Two things to add to this real quick before I go on. One, you said this is common knowledge. Believe me, for most Americans, this is not common knowledge. They don't know. This is not taught in American schools. What's taught in American schools as history is one part history, ten parts myth. It's blown out of proportion. Or, if they're not lying to you outright, they're just cutting out all the extraneous details that go against the theme they want to spread. You learn all of this only if you start digging yourself. The vast majority of Americans have no idea what the real history is.

In fact, nobody wants to talk about the Indian genocides either, because that's just not good PR. Or the fact that the forced sterilization of Indian women only stopped in 1979, when their representative went to the UN and laid it all out. 1979. You know, it's not even the beginning of the 1900s—it's the friggin' end of the 1900s. So that's one. Two, the interesting thing is, it's not just the Soviet Union that helped decolonize the European empires. The U.S. was extremely active in destroying the European empires, particularly the French and the British. They sponsored a lot of these movements themselves.

They don't want to talk about it now because it's not convenient, but it was the U.S. that was probably doing more than the Soviet Union in a lot of this—trying to weaken the Western Europeans as much as possible, to bring them down into something manageable. Manageable by destroying their economies, their capabilities, limiting them just to Europe. Operation Gladio was in full swing since 1948, if not earlier. So, anybody who doesn't know what Operation Gladio is—like I said, I've written several articles on this—it's the CIA's stay-behind armies. I interviewed Colonel Towner; she's retired Air Force, and she's a real expert on it.

So what I knew, and then what she knew—and you talk about this—the duplicity that the U.S. enforced on Europe up to 1991 was incredible, while raising this class of subservient politicians. Now, what's Rubio talking about? You know, the U.S. is not going to go fight Russia; it needs Europe to do its part. He's smart in that he's taking populist points for the right-wing or center parties, and he's pushing those popular buttons: your countries are now degrading this and that and that—which is true. And the answer to that is, get ready for war with Russia, because that'll build your nations back up to where they were.

#Pascal

Of course, if not, it'll destroy them. War with Russia has always worked to rebuild Europe, right?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

After it's all razed to the ground. It did. It did. And this is the next point—thank you for mentioning that. The first time I read an article of this type... Okay, first of all, do you know what the Americans called World War II? The Great War. No, no, no—World War II was the Great War. Why? Not because it was huge, but because it lifted the United States out of the Great Depression and made it the premier economic power in the world.

#Pascal

Sorry, the expression “the Great War”—I thought that was reserved for the First World War.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

It was, in most of Europe and everywhere else, but a lot of American commentators call World War II the Great War—from an economic standpoint, not because they were fighting Hitler or anything like that. Economically, the U.S. came out of World War II producing something like 50% of the world's GDP, actually a little higher. Uh, it was—uh—everybody had whacked each other, depending on whose war started when. You know, Barbarossa with the Soviet Union was '41; the Western front, or Poland, was '39; for the Chinese it was '36 or '37, I think, possibly even earlier. Depending on where you want to start—if you start with the Koreans, it was even earlier than that, with Japanese aggression coming in. So you get this whole stretch of time where everybody pretty much destroyed each other in a big war.

The U.S. comes out as the power of democracy, the power of its own economics. That's where the American dream really was born—the modern American dream. It was the reality through the fifties and sixties. And that started sliding down because everybody else was rebuilding and catching up, or even bypassing—or surpassing, in the case of China in the 2010s. So, from this point, the first article I read—it was in **Forbes** in 1999—was on this theme of “we need another great European war.” Because the U.S. would be able to write off its debt, become a creditor, and rebuild Europe again. So, we need another big war in Europe. 1999. If this is getting into **Forbes**, you kind of figure they'd been talking about this for a while by that point.

And now, since 1909—that's 27 years, or 26 going on 27 years—they've been stacking the cards toward this. And now we're there. Now, Europe, get up. Get your empire going, do your part. Go east. Go east, young man. That's the whole Marco Rubio thing. But he pushed the right buttons to get people who otherwise would go, “Oh, he wants us to be proud again. He wants us to be strong again.” He wants you to die again, en masse, to the east. That part is written between the lines. But

they gave him a standing ovation. And even the people who destroyed their own countries through woke liberalism—extreme woke liberalism—gave him a standing ovation. The people, by the way, who destroyed their countries through mass migration, by destroying their energy infrastructure, and so on, gave him a standing ovation. So I don't know what to say. They're just idiots.

#Pascal

I do. No, but you can listen to such a speech and the reassurance that's coming from the United States—that they're not being given up. This is so powerful to the Europeans at the moment. It's like, "Oh, yeah." And put it into the words of Margarita, right? Daddy isn't leaving, right? Daddy isn't divorcing. He stays at home. He beats us, he hits us, he abuses Mommy—but he stays at home. Oh, yay. I mean, it's okay, I know. I'm sorry, this is not a very academic discussion here. This is a bit of, well, this is polemics, obviously. But the funny thing is that they use these terms, right? And even Donald Trump is now latching on, and the Europeans are latching on to those terms. So we're not the only ones who use these frameworks. I think you want... and I've used this too.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Exactly what you're saying. But let's take it one step further. When the US is leaving—it's like that daddy, the abusive daddy, as Farley said, who says, "I'm out of this marriage." And the abused wife, who's used to being abused, is so desperate he doesn't leave. She goes, "Well, if you leave, I'm going to throw myself against our neighbor, who's going to shoot me because I'm going to attack him. And then you're going to have to come save me, or at least hold my dying body. It's going to be on your head, and it's going to be on your soul, America, when Europe dies against Russia. So you have to come down, fight with me, and we'll all go fight the neighbor together." I think these people are really that insane.

#Pascal

I mean, it's really, really hard once you're inside an ideological framework, right? Once you have a very clear understanding of the world—and you believe you have the correct, clear understanding of the world—it's almost impossible to get out of that, or even to penetrate it. And you see it in the way the discussion in Europe also gets very, very nasty. This brings me to the point of the sanctions regime they're using, and are now starting to use, against their own citizens and Swiss citizens, in order to stifle debate and make sure that, you know, that ideological coherence remains.

Just this morning on Twitter, I saw that yesterday—or maybe the day before, yeah, probably yesterday—the spokesperson for the German Foreign Ministry actually told one of the journalists there, "You know, it's good that you guys talk about the sanctions, because everybody who is trying to abuse freedom of speech and freedom of the press must know what's going to come for them." He said that, and so they have a very clear understanding of what they want. I love that—yeah, you're exercising your freedoms, and we agree you have freedoms too, but we don't like them, so that's

an abuse. Yeah, we're gonna abuse you, because it's actually Russia, right? Russia is using people to use their speech, which is hybrid warfare, which will be punished. It's pretty sick.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

You know, it's a modern version of excommunication. But the difference with excommunication in the Middle Ages was, I excommunicate you from this village—if you leave tomorrow, we're all happy. Just leave. Here, we excommunicate you from society, and we're not going to let you leave either. You're going to have to sit there and starve to death as the epitome of what happens if you don't think the right way, even though you're supposedly allowed to think any way you want.

#Pascal

You can do it, but we're just going to punish you for it. It's a way of exercising power both outward and inward, right? Yeah. So what makes me think about this now is that we have the proof—the hard proof—that these people think in terms of a colonial empire. Probably that's always been there, but they didn't say so. Now we have proof that this is on their mind. So what are the instruments of a colonial empire that they want to use? I think sanctions are one. The other thing is, of course, using structural power. And here, I'll just bring another example and then listen to your interpretation. The United States, about seven or eight days ago, introduced this thing called the Protect Taiwan Act. This is not yet legislation.

This is currently going through the House. What's being proposed is that the bill would require certain federal entities to try to exclude China from six international financial organizations if the president informs Congress that Chinese actions threaten Taiwan and pose a danger to U.S. interests—interests, not the United States as a country, but its interests. Then they list the six international groups: the Group of 20, the Bank for International Settlements, the Financial Stability Board, the Basel Committee on Banking... We could do a separate episode on how stupid that is, because these six are actually not under central control by the United States, and so on.

But the point is that the U.S. is now instructing its entities to seek China's exclusion, right? To do whatever they can to somehow prevent China from participating if U.S. interests are threatened. And you know, the amazing thing is, this bill was read in the House—I don't know if I have it here—but it was accepted in the House by something like 395 to 2. It's really insane; I mean, just everybody agrees with it in the House. It's not finished yet, but the support is overwhelming. So what do you think about this—how the empire is now trying to use these tools of colonialism again, the way it's being constructed?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, the tools of colonialism are, first, sanctions and corruption. They love corruption. They love dictatorship. They love dictators—not monarchs and not republics. Those tend to look at their

property and say, "Ah, that's our national interest." Dictators tend to think, "Everybody hates me here because I'm stealing everything for you—partly for me. Please don't leave. I'll give you anything not to leave, because if you leave, I'm done." That's the point of dictators. You can raise them up from the common people—which is where most dictators come from—set them on the throne, and then you go, "There you go." And you've got your puppet, because that's what most dictators become.

They become puppets for empire—somebody else's exploitation or raw power, wherever you can get it. The problem with raw power is that, outside of Papua New Guinea, most locals aren't armed with spears and living in small towns or huts anymore. They're living in large cities with full Internet integration—and they have missiles, especially the more important locals, like, say, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, even Japan, for that matter. At one point, America opened Japan up for trade by bombing its ports. People kind of forget about Admiral Perry's little expedition there—fun fact—by threatening its sea lanes of communication.

#Pascal

The Japanese weren't that afraid of the cities being under threat—it was a problem, sure—but the Americans made it clear they would shut down all of their internal sea lanes, the sea lanes of communication. And in a country where you'd banned wheels for transporting goods, you had to move food by sea. So it was actually pretty bad. They threatened a maritime blockade—an internal one—and it worked.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Exactly, exactly. So the Japanese went, "Well, we can become like China and get divided up, or we can become like these guys." You know, Russia's been invaded by the West since 1012 A.D.—by Yusuf Krabri, the Crown Prince of Krakow, and his Holy Roman Empire allies. So this is the Empire—except for Russia, everybody else has been, at one point or another, under the heel of one of these empires. Russia is the only one they couldn't fully—God, they hate us so much, by the way.

#Pascal

We just keep fighting back. The Thais are very proud that they were never colonized. But let's—okay, that's great.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

That's true. The Ethiopians—but we helped the Ethiopians. When there was a Cossack expedition to Ethiopia for a geological survey, there was one squadron of Cossacks as guards—about a hundred men—and a lieutenant colonel in the Cossack forces, plus a scientist who went deep into the jungles to find the source of the White Nile. Well, the emperor of Ethiopia bought a lot of Western weapons,

but they didn't know how to fight. The Italian army was on its way to conquer Ethiopia, planning to use hit-and-run tactics. And the Russian Cossacks were like, "Wait, let us teach you how to fight properly."

And they wiped out the Italian army completely. I mean, that was just—when Mussolini took Ethiopia later, much later, obviously, he did it with gas weapons. He just gassed the Ethiopian workforce. They couldn't take him on the ground. So there are a few—okay, right—Russia isn't the only one. You're absolutely right. There's Thailand, there's Ethiopia, there's Russia, and a couple of other countries. But these are a very small number of—well, a small amount of land outside of Russia. Everybody else got to feel the direct rulership of empire.

#Pascal

And even if you weren't ruled by an empire, you still felt its effects, because it tried to take you over at one point or another.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

So Marco Rubio just told the entire Global South—which isn't really south, it's the rest of humanity, the other seventy-plus percent of humanity—"We're coming for you, baby. We want you back under our heel, and we're gonna come stomp all over you." And what do the Europeans do? The message to everyone else is, "They're coming with you." Great. Those bastards are going to come back. We don't want these bastards back. So that puts everybody on notice, at least to some degree, that these guys are coming for us. And what happens in global politics, always, is if you get one guy who says, "Let's use force, we're going to beat everybody up," then everybody else starts to kind of ally themselves together to counterbalance it. And considering the state of the European economy—and the U.S. economy, for that matter—how long can you take the counterbalance from the actual economic superpowers?

I mean, look, if you want to unify India and China on a subject better than anything else—colonialism, baby. They both know what British colonialism is. They both suffered through the Opium Wars, direct rulership by East India companies. You know, that's a common foundation. You can pretty much unify most of the rest of the world right there. And they just said, "Yeah, we're going to bring the good old days back to you. And we're going to bring it to you by our forced corruption and sanctions." They're idiots in their own way. At least, you know, there are things you say behind closed doors that you don't say out in the open like that.

#Pascal

No, but, you know, even idiots can do tremendous harm, right? And let's just—let's just think again about this bill here that was just shown, right? It says, okay, if it is determined that China—what does it say?—seeks to exclude... no, if the president informs Congress that China's actions threaten

Taiwan or pose a danger to U.S. interests, right? It's that "interests" part again. And then they're instructed to do something. The bill was also introduced by a Democrat, actually—by Lucas Frank. Passed by a huge, huge margin in the House. And then, you know, this idea—the Bank for International Settlements is the only institution on this list that I know quite well, because I studied it for a paper I wrote about it.

And, you know, the Bank for International Settlements—the United States is a member of it, but it's not part of the U.S. executive branch. It's not the White House, it's not the legislature. It's the Fed. The Fed is part of it. The chairperson of the Fed sits on the board of the Bank for International Settlements. And the Fed itself, within the U.S. Constitution, is quite shielded from influence by the other branches. The Bank for International Settlements is domiciled in Switzerland, but the territory it's on is extraterritorial—it's not actually part of Switzerland.

So even if you wanted to do something about it, the only ones who could actually intervene are the different central bank governors of the world. So this thing is simply not under control. But now we have a bill in the House which, if the president activates it, would mean that the United States must somehow seek to exclude China. So it's like you're starting to try to exert force over a body that, under no legal or even practical consideration, you have full power over. But now you create this tool that says you must try with everything you've got, which probably means some form of very, very illicit coercion. How do you look at that?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Pascal, let's look at it from an economic point of view. The U.S., basically with its Western European allies, is declaring a kind of pseudo-war against the world. By purchasing power parity, the biggest economy in the world in 2025 is China, at \$39.5 trillion. The U.S. is at \$30 trillion, so China is already almost 25% bigger than the U.S. The U.S. is in second place. Third place is India at \$17 trillion. Fourth place is Russia at \$7 trillion and growing. Everybody's growing except the U.S., which has a big bubble. Fifth place is Japan at \$6.8 trillion and floundering. Sixth place is Germany at \$6 trillion and collapsing. And then after that, seventh place is Indonesia.

Eighth place is Brazil. And you start to see that basically the second-largest economy in the world is declaring war on the next three biggest economies, including the largest one. Which, by the way, it can't live without, because it outsourced most of its industry over the past 30 years. Almost everything made in America has some amount of Chinese components, or at least parts from somewhere else. The U.S. can't survive like this. But instead of rebuilding its economy, it keeps saying, "Hey, the Dow is important—not Epstein's victims, by the way." If you watch the hearings with Bondi, it's all, "The Dow, damn it. Screw the victims."

It's the Dow. Well, the Dow isn't Wall Street. The Dow is the financial markets. I mean, it's Wall Street—it's the financial market. It's not Main Street, and it's not the industry that has to support an empire. For God's sake, if you want to build an empire, the British were able to do it because they

had a huge industrial base. They were the premier industrial power in the world at that time. It's a lot easier to do that than to say, hey, we want to take you over, but first, can you sell us some stuff so we can do that? Can you sell us some rare earth magnets so we can bomb you? I mean, seriously, we're almost out. Please, sir.

#Pascal

Was it Marx? No, no—was it Lenin? Lenin, who said the capitalists will sell us the rope on which we will hang them? I think we have to... it was either Marx or Lenin, but it was one of those two. Okay, Lenin. But we have to change that now. I mean, in the 21st century, we have to switch it around and say they will buy from us the rope on which they will hang themselves. It's amazing.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Yeah, exactly. It's insane. I mean, anybody with more than two synapses trying to strangle each other would have to take a step back and go, how much sense does this make? There was a great parody skit on YouTube about Australia. So the ministers in Australia are sitting there, and the defense minister is like, "Yeah, we've got to double our defense budget because we have to protect our trade lanes against incursion from Asia." And someone asks, "Well, what nation in Asia?" "Well, Asia." "What nation in Asia?" "Well, Asia." "Just give me a nation." "China." "Okay, so we have to double our defense budget to defend our trade lanes against incursion by China. Who are our trade partners?" "Well, Asia." "Who in Asia?" "Well, Asia."

Well... give me an A—China. So China is our main trade partner, but we have to double our defense budget against China because China may do incursions on the trade lanes with China. And this is the same logic. This is insane. Anybody—unless they're making money off this, which of course we know they are—anybody with any kind of common sense would go, why are we doing this again? Ah, so you can get kickbacks from the military-industrial complex. Got it. So Zelensky can continue laundering hundreds of billions of dollars back to the U.S. and Europe into pockets for certain corporations. Got it. I mean, that's the only way you can look at it and go, okay, that makes sense—unless they're purposely trying to destroy themselves.

#Pascal

But how do you... I mean, people—obviously, I believe Mr. Lavrov must have been listening to that speech, right? I mean, it's too important a speech not to listen to, even if you weren't invited. The Chinese were sitting in the room—I think Wang Yi spoke right after Rubio. But what do you think they're making of this? You know, when you suddenly have the biggest military power in the world using these terms and frameworks to rally support, how do you think they're hearing it, and how do you think it will inform their decision-making?

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, we can see it right now. Russia, China, and Iran have signed a joint defense—basically a mutual defense—agreement. Iran had separate agreements with Russia and China before, but now it's all three together. If we keep going like this, we'll end up in World War III, a hot war. We're seeing regional conflicts forming the same way World War II started. It began with small regional conflicts, and eventually sides lined up, and you wound up with a clear line of conflict. That's what we're starting to see now. We're seeing a synthesis of Russian anti-aircraft systems—S-300s, S-400s, maybe even some S-500s—in Iran, with a full umbrella, coupled with the state-of-the-art multi-array radar systems the Chinese have developed.

They're also based on satellites that can detect any stealth aircraft coming in from over 500 kilometers away from a zone of contact. And they're being integrated. In any rational mind, this would be a worst-case nightmare for Washington. You know, Washington's best-case scenario—what Nixon and Kissinger did—was genius. I mean, let's be honest. They had their reasons, but they did it in a brilliant way. They separated the Soviet Union from Communist China and made them rivals. They created this triangle. China was the weaker side of the triangle at that point, but they created it, and you could start balancing the other two against each other while they were balancing you and someone else. That worked for America, by the way, quite well.

But then, you know, like the saying goes, "the beatings will continue until morale improves." We're going to keep smacking Russia and China until they're absolutely close allies—because that's the worst thing we want. We don't want them to be allies, but we're going to do everything possible to make sure they become the closest bosom buddies. And eventually China and Russia are going, "Hey, actually, yeah, we've been on-and-off friends for the last 400 years. And, hey, this works out pretty well. Why were we fighting again? Oh, we had an Englishman spend the night in our house." You know, that's how it goes. So once alliances are formed, they're a lot harder to break apart. The best thing is not to allow them to form—especially when they're backed by economic alliances on top of that. Economic alliances, really?

#Pascal

Although I would still argue that the Russian, Chinese, and Iranian version of an alliance is a much more independent and sovereignist version than what the West understands—because for the West, alliance means integration and interoperability and all that. For the Russians and the Chinese, I'd argue it means, you know, walking in a similar direction but maintaining a healthy dose of sovereignty in the process. And the Iranians too—I mean, they've been very, very reluctant, partly because of some memories.

And the appreciation—I mean, indigenous—we cannot switch indigenous capabilities for foreign assistance, even from those who really want to help us, because that's what the Europeans are doing. The Swiss buy F-35s from the United States, and, you know, everybody in Europe does, right? And thereby you immediately, you immediately basically hand over the keys to national

defense to, well, the greatest ally—the one that then, in Munich, says, “I’m here for you, and I want you to march ahead of me in this battle we’re going into.”

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, I would qualify what you're talking about with Russia, China, Iran, North Korea—and, well, maybe not Belarus. Belarus has a slightly different relationship with Russia, more of a unified state, which is something in between. But for the others, that's a classic alliance. What you're talking about is a classic alliance. What we see in the West is an alliance that's really vassal-lord. It's called an alliance, but it's vassalhood. We're the overlord, you're the bannerman, and you'll do what we tell you and come to fight when we tell you. We want to go to Afghanistan? God bless it—you're going to be in Afghanistan, dying for whatever reason.

And then we're going to insult you and tell you that you didn't do anything. And they're going to say, “Oh, but we died for you.” Yeah, but you died for what? You didn't die for your own interests; you died for somebody else's interests. You're going to be in Iraq because we said you're going to be in Iraq. That's vassalhood. You're the bannerman. You're going to stand up, or we're going to smack you down and replace your house lord with somebody else's house lord. I mean, this is feudalism in its own way—except feudalism on the scale of nation-states. It's incredible to watch. I mean, it's voluntary feudalism, voluntary vassalhood to a very large degree.

I mean, Germany is an occupied country. Let's talk reality—it still is. So was Italy, long ago. You know, you can have foreign bases in your country without being occupied, but they're occupied. I mean, their governments are occupied, their politics are occupied. And now, worst of all, you don't need Operation Gladio and the stay-behind armies, because they're occupied by sociopaths who are absolutely loyal to the overlord. And a lot of them—where do they go when they get out of power? They go have a new career somewhere in the U.S. You know, that's the standard. Or worst case—was it not Sikorski, the Foreign Minister of Poland?

#Pascal

Sikorski.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

You know, Mr. Applebaum—yeah, yeah, husband of the U.S. Army officer. So the Foreign Minister of Poland's son is serving in the U.S. Army. Is there a conflict of interest? I'd say so. This is the elites; it's a pseudo-feudal system they're quite happy with.

#Pascal

Let's stay realistic. Come on. The son of the vice president—and then president—of the United States sitting on the board of the largest oil company in Ukraine. I mean, it's normal. It's not feudalism. It's not bribery. It's not corruption. It's the normal business, the way the cookie crumbles, the way business works in the empire—for the good of the empire. The funny thing is that now we have it out in the open. They're saying, "No, that's what we want," and they're clapping for it. So it's getting more and more obvious, I would say—except for the people who are doing the clapping.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

The one thing you can thank Trump for, in his own crude way, is that he took the masks off. Yeah—on both sides. You know, this is the stuff. And I guarantee you, they've been talking about this for years, for a decade. They just did it behind closed doors. Yeah. This is the stuff the president should know about. And God forbid those foreign barbarians find out about it. Oh God, this is our garden, after all. But they didn't say things like that before. Now they're out in the open. Even Borrell—people like that—are just out in the open, blurting the unsaid part right in front of everyone.

So the people who want to put on the—what, rose-colored? No, it has to be blacked-out glasses these days—to see the fantasy they want instead of the reality. No rose-colored glasses are going to hide the muck. It's too much. But the people who've got their heads buried in whatever posterior parts they have, it's pretty hard to stay that way. But if they flat out tell you, "We're coming for you," read between the lines. Empire, baby. We're coming for you. We miss having you for dinner—like Dodge and Dinner—and your resources. It's ridiculous, but it's there, right there.

#Pascal

And the amazing part is, of course, they're doing it right in front of our eyes, right? I mean, the genocide in Gaza—the way Gaza was basically exterminated by the West. This wasn't just Israel; this was an entire Western approach, shielding and making sure it could happen. And now they're doing it to Cuba. Cuba is now under a neocolonial siege—no, not even neocolonial, a classic colonial siege and starvation policy of basically, you know, if it takes extermination, it takes extermination. But Cuba, you're on for it now. So it's already being practiced, this whole approach.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Cuba is going to be interesting to watch, because I wrote an article—I'm going to say they heard my article—that, you know, Russia has to save Cuba by sending tankers and a military escort. Russia is sending—this came out in the news yesterday or the day before—Russia is going to be sending tankers with fuel to Cuba. So I'm just going to claim that, you know, Putin read my article. Okay, I can't say he didn't, because nobody knows if he did or didn't. But, you know, I'll just take the blame

for that. Since, apparently, I told him that when we were having breakfast together—because apparently, according to Newsweek, I’m a very close ally of Putin. I don’t think the man knows I exist. But, you know, hey, there’s always hope. All right, all right.

#Pascal

I mean, go for it. Go for it. Although, please, please, please—if you do, can you tell him that he should say two plus two is four? Because it would destroy Western mathematics.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

But just—see, I would love that. I would love that. I would love that. You just wrote that not only women can give birth, others can give birth too.

#Pascal

I don't know. World politics is crazy enough for me. I'm not going to venture into that part of our social confusions. But, you know, as a gay man, I do defend certain things—but not the madness of it. Anyway, let's go ahead with Cuba.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Yeah, but that’s a breakdown of society when you have something as obvious as—yeah, it’s like saying two plus two is four. Well, is it four? By the way, there have been articles in the U.S. on this level of idiocy that claim “two plus two is four” is white, racist mathematics.

#Pascal

Yeah. I mean, this is... I would like to understand it. I’d like to understand the chain of thought that leads to this. But yes, I don’t think it’s productive for building a functioning society. But... let’s leave it aside. Let’s leave it there, and we’ll talk about it another time. Let’s go back to Cuba, because I think the argument isn’t done—how you think this will play out—because we stopped with you, with Putin reading your argument.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Yeah. Well, Russia says, you know, the proof is in the pudding when we see those tankers moving. The Russian government said they're going to send two, maybe multiple, tankers to save Cuba. So we'll see. Would the U.S. grab Russian tankers—not Russians, but the tankers themselves? You know, something that’s, quote, questionable—who owns it, where it’s been flagged, it’s been flagged twenty times—but actual Russian-owned tankers, that’s an act of war. If there’s Russian military on those tankers, if there’s a Russian naval escort with them, that’s an act of war. I don’t think Trump’s

going to go for that. He's just going to take a step back. But what we're going to see in Iran, I don't know. You know, that's... that's going to be the test of how much guts the empire really has. Because, as you notice, the Iranians in their negotiations—they're not taking a step back. They're willing to reinstate, quote, the moratorium with inspections on nuclear-grade uranium, but they're not building a nuclear bomb anyway.

#Pascal

So that's not exactly what they want. Yeah, exactly.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

You know, the smartest thing would be if Trump sent a frigate into the Strait of Hormuz and said, "See, it's open. They fear us. Let's go home." That would be the smartest thing he could do. It's probably not going to happen, unfortunately, because Trump definitely doesn't read what I write—that I guarantee 100%. You know, if tomorrow the fighting starts, Europe is over, because the Strait of Hormuz gets closed. Thirty-six, thirty-eight percent of the world's oil goes through the Strait of Hormuz. The U.S. has enough oil for itself, more or less—not necessarily all the grades it needs—but with Venezuela, it could still pull something out if it got desperate enough. Prices will go up unless the government steps in and enforces some kind of price ceiling or nationalizes the oil, which I'd see more as a price ceiling than any nationalization. But the problem is, when 38% of the world's oil gets cut from the market, you literally don't have enough oil for the world.

#Pascal

Yeah, although, you know, at this point, the thing is, trade always somehow finds a way. So what would happen is it would take different routes. It would get way more expensive. It would, again, hurt the most vulnerable economies in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and also Europe. But, I mean, they would do something—but it would hurt a lot of people. Oh, yeah.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Well, look at it, too. The number two supplier of LNG for Europe is Qatar. Qatar pushes LNG. You can't ship LNG—well, you could in trucks, but it would be insanely expensive by the time it got to Europe. And, by the way, just to show that God has a sense of humor—and a really good one—there was an American LNG tanker that got stuck in ice. The Germans sent their one icebreaker. It's stuck in ice. It's a diesel icebreaker; the nuclear icebreakers—yeah, those are sanctioned. They're Russian, they're sanctioned. So I guess they're waiting until the spring thaw, which, by the way, means you pay a penalty fee every day that ship can't move. You, as the owner of the cargo, pay the penalty fees if the ship breaks down.

Maritime law is very interesting. It's written to protect the owner of the ship. If you're transferring cargo and your ship breaks down, you don't pay for the repairs—the repair costs are split between the cargo owners. Whatever percentage of the cargo someone owns, that's the percentage they pay for the ship's repairs. It's insane if you think about it, but that's how it works. Like, hey, my bus broke down—okay, everybody on the bus, start giving me some money if you want it repaired. It's the same thing. So, in this case, Europe is going to be absolutely screwed, at least in the short term—say, a couple of months. But, I mean, imagine a couple of months in Europe without enough petrol or LNG.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, it's going to have a huge impact again. So I really hope it doesn't happen—mostly for the Iranians, who would, I mean, let's face it, be the ones suffering. It would be another war that targets civilians as much as possible. And they'd sell it to us as something good—well, maybe not even as “good,” but as a humanitarian intervention, because they don't have to justify it anymore, right? They can just say it's in our interest. But Stas, this was a very good talk. Thank you very much for your insights. People who want to find you should go to Slavic Man on Twitter—Mr. Slavic Man.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Mr. Slavic Man. Or, if you go to X, it's Stanislav Krapivnik—you can put the old name in, but it's too long. So, Stanislav Krapivnik, Stanislav on X. It also has my links there for everything else. Or, yeah, @MrSlavicMan—with “Slavic” spelled with a K—for YouTube.

#Pascal

Okay, wonderful. I'll put the links in the description box below. Stanislav Krapivnik, thank you very much for your time today.

#Stanislav Krapivnik

Thank you. Always a pleasure.