# Journalist Exposes EU "Hybrid War" Lies | Thomas Fazi

They are lying to you about the Russia's supposed "Hybrid War". The question is why are they lying? To transform the entire EU into the next mega Ukraine? To back save their own power? To create mass-hysteria? Or all of the above? Thomas Fazi joins Pascal to debunk claims of Russian hybrid warfare in Europe. Drawing on his recent investigation, Fazi questions the evidence behind prominent sabotage allegations, drone scares and media coverage. They discuss the Leipzig airport case, political incentives, defence industry interests and the distinction between propaganda and collective fear. The conversation also explores censorship, civil liberties and historical parallels, while warning that escalating threat narratives could contribute to a real confrontation between NATO and Russia, with dangerous consequences. Thomas's Links: Substack: https://www.thomasfazi.com/ The Russian hybrid war narrative — full article: https://www.thomasfazi.com/p/the-russian-hybrid-war-narrative Responsible Statecraft — shorter article: https://responsiblestatecraft.org/hybrid-warfare-russia/ X: https://twitter.com/battleforeurope Die Brüsseler Tyrannei — German book: https://westendverlag.de/Die-Bruesseler-Tyrannei/2495 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 Examining the Russian hybrid war narrative 06:18 From allegations to specific incidents 11:18 Drone scares and the evidence 20:51 Leipzig airport and demands for proof 31:28 Media incentives and threat inflation 37:26 Cognitive warfare and collective fear 45:07 Rearmament and defence industry interests 50:21 Civil liberties and the risk of escalation

### #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today we have an update with our brilliant Italian colleague, author, writer, and journalist Thomas Fazi, who recently wrote a beautiful piece on his Substack called “Russian Hybrid War Narrative: A New NATO Strategy of Tension.” Thomas, welcome.

### #Thomas Fazi

Hi, Pascal. Thanks a lot for having me. It's always a pleasure.

### #Pascal

Thank you for coming back, and thank you for writing this. I've wanted to do an episode on this whole hybrid warfare narrative of the NATO crowd for a while. And then you wrote basically everything into your article. Can we start taking this apart? Where do you think we need to begin in

order to wrap our minds around what hybrid war now actually means to the Europeans and the transatlanticists?

## #Thomas Fazi

Right. Well, I mean, the reason I wrote this article was precisely because I realized that there was no comprehensive critical analysis or debunking of this Russian hybrid war narrative that we've been hearing now for several years, basically since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And of course, many individual incidents and claims have been debunked. In fact, as we'll see over the course of our talk, virtually every claim of Russian hybrid warfare has been debunked in one way or another. But the problem is that you can debunk an individual case, but by the time you've debunked that one claim, they've already thrown another ten claims at you.

And of course, you know, it ebbs and flows, this narrative, right? So these days, we don't hear that much about it. But a couple of months ago, and in fact even more recently, almost not a day went by without some claim of Russian hybrid warfare being spun in the media, be it a drone scare, a fire, a blackout, you know, a defense factory in Europe catching fire, a drone hybrid attack. Of course, cyberattacks. Everything that goes wrong, you know, every time a computer fails in Europe, it's a Russian cyberattack, right? And so it ebbs and flows, but when they start ramping up the narrative, it's almost impossible to catch up, right?

And so at some point, I realized that, okay, we need a comprehensive debunking, not just of those individual cases. I wanted to look at almost every individual claim and see how much truth, if any, there was to all these claims, right? So essentially, I wanted to compile a database of these claims and their debunkings. And I felt this was really necessary because I think the way that propaganda operates these days—and I think this is pretty clear when it comes to these claims of Russian hybrid warfare—is not that they make up one big, elaborate lie, right? They make up thousands of tiny lies, which aren't even that elaborate, right?

And in fact, in most cases, they're very easily shown to be false, or there's no evidence of Russia being behind them. But that doesn't really matter because whenever these claims are eventually proven to be untrue, the retraction gets a fraction of the coverage of the initial claim. So that doesn't really matter. You know, you just need to keep putting out claims on a daily basis, and it creates this kind of background noise, you know, "Russian hybrid warfare, Russian hybrid warfare" in the background, you know, and most people won't even get to read or see the retractions.

So what will get stuck in their heads is the initial claim about Russia. And of course, they preface many of these claims with "allegedly." Russia is allegedly behind this incident, is allegedly behind this sabotage, is allegedly behind this fire. But of course, what remains stuck in the public's head is, you know, okay, Russia allegedly did a million things. But if they're allegedly carrying out a million

different acts of sabotage across Europe, then that must be serious, right? So I wanted to compile a kind of counter-database because, of course, we have several databases of these supposed acts of Russian sabotage.

So I guess my article is a kind of counter-database, an antidote to the noise, because it's important to realize that the noise is the propaganda these days, right? It's this background noise that is almost sort of, you know, permanently present. And so hopefully, thanks to my article, whenever people hear the latest claim of Russian sabotage, they can go to the article and see how this fits a pattern that we've seen throughout the past few years. And hopefully this will help them sort of, you know, drown out the noise, right?

Because I think that's really what needs to be done, and no one had done it. And that's why the original article, which I published on my Substack, is like 15 pages long, because I really felt the need to go through almost every one of these claims. And then I published a shorter version on Responsible Statecraft, which is the Quincy Institute's publication. So viewers, if they want the short version, they can read the one on Responsible Statecraft. But if they want the deep dive, they can find that on my Substack.

## #Pascal

Okay, and now let's unpack this a little bit—the hybrid war and the instances that you chronicled. And after that, I'll ask you more about the context, right? Because this is not the first time that we're seeing the NATO crowd using this type of very elusive terminology in order to scare people. But we'll do that in the second part. What is the first instance that you started with, where you said, like, okay, this is where they discovered “hybrid warfare” as a term and as something to put out there?

## #Thomas Fazi

Right. Well, I mean, virtually since the moment Russia invaded, we've been seeing this escalating narrative.

## #Pascal

In 2022, basically.

## #Thomas Fazi

This is really when the narrative starts to seriously ramp up. But it really kind of picks up around 2024, 2025. I think in 2024, it really kind of explodes. And we start hearing sort of two versions of this hybrid warfare. So we're told, for one, that Russia is engaging in various forms of physical interference within Europe, within NATO territory. And we start hearing about several incidents that are then blamed on Russia. Hey, just a very quick note.

## #Pascal

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## #Thomas Fazi

So, for example, in 2024, widespread coverage was given to these undersea cables that had been damaged in the Baltic Sea. And almost immediately, there was speculation that Russia was behind it. The media and the political establishment, in many cases, openly attributed these incidents to Russia. In fact, an investigation later revealed that those cables had most likely been damaged by accident by Chinese- and Hong Kong-flagged ships. So no Russian vessel was involved. The Russians were not involved in damaging these cables. But of course, again, how many people know that the initial claim has been debunked?

## #Thomas Fazi

And then we start hearing more and more about these incidents. I think it was also in late 2024 that a DHL plane crashed in Lithuania. This was a cargo plane. And many politicians sort of implied or openly said that this was a hybrid incident. I think, you know, Annalena Baerbock, Germany's ambassador and former foreign minister, openly said that this was a hybrid incident and that most likely Russia was behind it. And other politicians made similar claims. In fact, it was later revealed in an investigation that the crash was due to pilot error and had nothing to do with any state's interference, let alone Russia's. There was quite a widely publicized incident in the UK. This was in early 2025, when Heathrow Airport was closed down due to an electrical substation catching fire.

And even back then, in the British media, many intelligence experts went on to claim that this was something straight out of Russia's military intelligence playbook and that most likely Russia was behind it. In fact, it was then revealed that this was simply a case of a private company not properly maintaining the installation, which is why the fire broke out. And you see a similar pattern in so many of these cases. But I think it really kind of explodes in the autumn of 2025, when we have the Russian drone hysteria, right? That's when I initially started assembling notes for this article, which I then had to put aside because life kind of took over.

I mean, I'm sure viewers will remember that in late 2025, for several months, hardly a day went by without reported sightings of suspicious drones, usually near airports or military installations. This was very intense in Scandinavia, especially Denmark and Norway, with several cases in the Baltic countries. Several airports temporarily shut down because of this drone panic, including in Germany. Frankfurt Airport was shut down for a while. And there were wild claims. European politicians openly

claimed that these were Russian drones and that this was part of Russia's escalating hybrid warfare against Europe. Merz in Germany openly said, "We suspect Russia is behind most of these drone flights." And then there were even wilder claims.

I think a Danish politician compared the situation to 9/11. There were incredibly wild claims. But it was really something. I mean, I remember that's when I decided, no, I really have to take a deep look at all these claims. But, you know, as I said earlier, I was struggling to catch up. So I started looking into one sighting, and then the next day there were another four sightings. So at some point it was like, okay, I need to put this aside. I haven't got enough time to really look at every single case. But luckily, others did that at the time. There was one very good investigation by a Dutch newspaper, Trouw. I don't know if I'm pronouncing that right. But anyway, they looked at around 60 drone incidents around that time. And what they found was that there was a lot of panic and hardly any evidence of Russian involvement.

Essentially, what they found was that virtually every one of these sightings turned out to be a plane, a helicopter, a satellite, or, in some cases, even a star. And no evidence whatsoever was found linking Russia in any way to these sightings. So in many cases, they weren't even drones. In several cases, it turned out that, yes, a drone had been flying around. I think, for example, in the case of the Frankfurt Airport shutdown, it turned out that it was just a hobby drone being flown by a German citizen who was basically just trying out his drone. And there were several other cases where a drone was identified, but it simply turned out to be a guy—or, in some cases, kids—playing with drones, basically.

And so you can see that there's a pattern here: wild claims are made in the media, most of which are eventually found to be completely unfounded. But as I said earlier, those findings get a fraction of the media coverage. And so what most people are left with is that initial claim. That is what remains lodged in their brain. And this year, we've also had several more claims, some of which are particularly, I would say, amusing. I don't remember if it was late last year or earlier this year, but it was claimed that the plane von der Leyen was traveling on had its GPS jammed while it was over Bulgaria and was forced to make an emergency landing.

And we even read reports of the poor pilots having to use paper maps to navigate their way to the airport because their GPS had been disabled, almost certainly by Russian jamming. This was the claim. But within hours, that claim was debunked, in this case by the mainstream media itself, with Politico reporting that the plane's signal was never even lost. So the GPS was functioning throughout the entire flight. And so you wonder, how did that claim even come about? As always, massive coverage of the initial claim, barely any coverage of the claim's refutation. And then we've had other stories. We heard one story—where was it? Was it Bulgaria again?

We heard that Zelensky's plane had almost been hit by a Russian drone. I think this was over Moldova. Yes. So Zelensky was traveling on a plane over Moldova, and we were told that the plane was almost hit by this Russian drone, which would be quite a serious affair. You know, at least from

reading those reports, you would conclude that, okay, here's Russia literally trying to kill Zelensky, to bring down his plane over Europe. In fact, it was soon shown that the drone in question, according to Moldovan authorities, was a Russian drone that had entered Moldovan territory.

But in fact, the drone crashed 160 kilometers away from the airport where Zelensky's plane was. So it didn't even come anywhere close to Zelensky's plane. But still, the European media establishment unanimously reported that an attempt on Zelensky's life was made in Moldova. Again, completely, completely fake. And so, you know, really, once you start lining up all these cases, you start to realize, wait a minute, like, virtually none of these claims have proven to be true. Out of hundreds or thousands of claims, in virtually no case has any evidence been provided that an incident even occurred in the first place. As I've said, in many cases, these incidents didn't even occur. They were completely made up.

And even where there was some evidence that something had happened, there's been no evidence effectively tracing that back to Russia. It's really quite extraordinary. So this whole Russian hybrid warfare narrative rests on claims usually made by, you know, intelligence or security officials to the media. That's most of what we're talking about. In many cases, these are anonymous sources making these claims to the media, which are then amplified by the media. In many cases, it's political leaders, high-profile political leaders, making these allegations without providing any evidence.

And when those allegations are proven to be false, there is no apology. There is no public retraction. They simply move on to the next claim. And of course, there is one exception where the authorities, in this case the German authorities, have claimed to have really hard evidence that Russia was behind the incident in question. And this is the alleged failed drone attack at Leipzig Airport, which occurred this summer. So in most cases, the public authorities don't even try to build a serious case. They make these allegations, and then they simply forget about them and move on to the next claim.

This was something different because what happened in this case was that, for the first time, the German authorities formally attributed this attempted drone attack on Leipzig Airport to Russia—to figures directly linked to the Russian state. This is what they claim. They said a drone was found on the tarmac at Leipzig Airport carrying explosives. Luckily, the attack failed. The bomb didn't go off, so they simply found the drone lying there on the tarmac. But allegedly, the target was a plane or some other target. Leipzig Airport is, of course, a crucial hub for NATO operations as well. Many, many, many planes carrying military equipment to Ukraine do take off from Leipzig Airport.

So, I mean, it would make sense as a target. It would be a legitimate target. So it's not impossible to believe that Russia, at some point, has decided to actually start escalating or waging some kind of kinetic hybrid warfare against Europe, and that it would choose that airport as a target. I'm not claiming it's impossible. I'm not ruling out that Russia might actually have decided to escalate,

especially in the face of NATO's escalating attacks on Russia. The problem is that even in this case, we have a formal attribution of responsibility, so this is a very serious claim. Here you have the German government officially accusing Russia of an attempted terrorist attack in Germany.

A very, very serious claim for which, again—and that's the problem—no evidence has really been provided to the public. I mean, I'm not saying that the German government doesn't have this very hard evidence. They haven't provided any of this evidence to the public. We're simply expected to take their word for it. And I think, given, you know, the track record of the EU and NATO establishment when it comes to these claims of Russian hybrid warfare, some skepticism is in order. So it would really be good to see this evidence, or people might conclude that even in this case, as in previous cases, there really isn't much evidence to go on.

## #Pascal

This was the most fascinating case to me, not only because of the circumstances under which it happened: there was just a drone hovering around, and somebody found it. Again, nothing exploded, nothing was damaged, nothing happened. And that happened on August 4th, if I remember correctly, this year. The German government came out with this as a huge scandal on August 23rd, 24th, or 25th, like three weeks later. Three weeks later, suddenly, on a daily basis, we heard for about a whole week that this was a hybrid attack and a serious attack. And this was, I think, the context in which Der Spiegel, or one of these German news magazines, even had an article saying, "This is our 9/11 attack. This should be the moment when everybody should be shocked," you know? But nothing actually happened. And again, as you said, the audacity of these people saying, "Our intelligence service has concluded without doubt that it is Russian, but we cannot show you any evidence."

## #Thomas Fazi

If we showed you the evidence, then the Russians would know how we reached that conclusion.

## #Pascal

Because apparently this must be really, really, really clever, and only the smartest people on Earth can figure out that it was the Russians. Therefore, we cannot share that.

## #Thomas Fazi

It's a ridiculous approach to propaganda. And the timing, as you rightly say, the timing itself was kind of suspicious in the sense that it came, what, a few days before the state elections in Saxony, right before the state elections in Saxony, where the AfD was projected to win a massive majority, which it then did. Again, the AfD is regularly accused of being in bed with Russia. AfD politicians are regularly accused of being Russian agents, Russian stooges, Russian assets.

You know, it's not, I think, so far-fetched to think that maybe some elements of the German establishment hoped that by accusing Russia of this attempted terrorist attack just a few days before an election, they might dampen public support for the AfD. In fact, many AfD politicians openly came out and said that this was what was happening. What's interesting is that it's not just independent analysts or journalists like me who have been asking the government to provide a bit more evidence for its claims. Even the AfD itself, which is the number one party in Germany today in the polls, basically said the same thing.

They said, okay, show us the evidence. At least show us, as a party, the evidence in private, right? I mean, if you don't want to make it public, can you please show us, you know, behind closed doors, some evidence? Sahra Wagenknecht's party, the BSW, also raised serious questions about the claims made by the German government. So there are a lot of people asking questions about this incident, even inside Germany itself. And yes, I mean, the timing is interesting, not just in this case. Even if we go back and look at when these claims ramp up, they always seem to ramp up more or less around a time when a big decision has to be made, for example, in terms of reiterating European support or NATO support for Ukraine.

So the big drone hysteria in late 2025 came right before a big EU-NATO meeting where European governments were expected to provide more and more support for Ukraine. And again, you know, I think it's legitimate to ask questions even about the timing of these big, media-boosted claims, which always seem to happen around a time when, you know, more money has to be thrown at the wall, basically. And there's also a very clear pattern in this case. So I think there are many reasons to ask questions. I think there's no doubt that the narrative itself is unfounded. There's no evidence of systematic Russian hybrid warfare being waged against Europe.

There's simply no evidence for it. We're expected to believe that this is a massive war that Russia is waging against Europe, which no one can really see. This in itself is kind of fishy. So I think once you go through the claims, you cannot help but reach the conclusion that most of these claims are simply pure, unfounded speculation. There have been a few cases of proven physical sabotage—you know, an IKEA that was set on fire, I think in Lithuania, some other arson attacks here and there, some buses set on fire. But we're really talking about a handful of cases where the courts claim to have established some connection between the actual physical culprits and elements of the Russian state. These tend to be very low-level operatives, usually contacted through Telegram.

So it's not impossible that some sabotage has happened in the context of protracted proxy warfare between NATO and Russia, but nothing even remotely comparable to the systematic hybrid warfare that we are told is being waged. And so, of course, then the question becomes: Is this just a case of European politicians believing their own lies, becoming victims of their own paranoia? And then these claims are amplified by a media system that, of course, runs on clickbait headlines and is increasingly reliant on clicks. Obviously, this is the perfect story, you know, for any media outlet that wants to increase its clicks, right? This idea that Europe is the target of a systematic hybrid war waged by Russia.

I mean, this is something that, of course, the media is going to love. So is this just a case of, you know, a mixture of paranoia and media-amplified clickbaiting, with no bigger strategy behind it—which is a possibility—or is it part of a strategy, right? Is it part of a deliberate strategy of threat inflation, where the European political and media establishment is knowingly amplifying and attributing to Russia, you know, incidents that in many cases they know Russia is not behind, because they expect to obtain some political and economic benefits from this? And I think there's quite a lot of evidence pointing, in fact, to the latter case.

This is more than just European politicians running their mouths and then the media amplifying these claims. This is, in fact, part of a much more coordinated attempt to convince Europeans that Russia is waging war on us, because there are many very powerful interests that would benefit, and that do benefit, from this narrative. And before we maybe get into a bit more detail about that, what I find interesting, and what leads me to believe that, is that this narrative of the ever-present Russian threat goes beyond simply, you know, a headline. Anyone can write up a headline, right? That doesn't require much coordination, thinking, or strategy.

But then you look at the fact that this year you've got two high-profile, feature-length productions coming out in two different European countries. You have one in the UK, which is this big kind of war game, right? They have actual politicians who aren't in government play the roles of government, intelligence, and military officials who have to deal with a real-world scenario of, essentially, Russia attacking the UK. This was produced by Sky, and it received widespread coverage in the UK. And that is something that requires quite a bit of planning and effort and funding and resources. This is not something that's done on the spur of the moment. But even in France, we have a very big film that's coming out, I think, next week.

Jupiter. Have you heard of this? Have you heard of Jupiter? Oh, really interesting. You should check it out. You can Google the trailer. Jupiter is a very big feature-length production. It's going to be coming out in cinemas. I think the plot is that there's an attempt by the Ukrainians on Putin's life, and therefore Putin makes a very explicit nuclear threat against Ukraine, following which the French government has to come together and decide whether they're going to launch a first strike against Russia in order to defend Ukraine. This is the plot of the story, basically. A Hollywood-like production whose only aim, clearly, is to normalize this idea that Russia represents an existential threat to Europe.

So I think when you put all the pieces together, there are a lot of elements that would lead me, at least, to conclude that this is a much more concerted effort. And that, in fact, to the extent that we are witnessing some form of hybrid warfare being waged against the Europeans, the ones waging this hybrid warfare, in the form of this relentless psychological and cognitive warfare, are the EU-NATO establishment itself. To me, if I had to identify an actual hybrid war going on against the

Europeans, it is precisely this inflation of the threat of Russian hybrid warfare. So the claims of Russian hybrid warfare are, I would say, to some extent, themselves part of EU-NATO hybrid warfare being waged against Europeans.

## #Pascal

I would use another term because NATO actually has papers out about this, and they use the term "cognitive warfare." And part of cognitive warfare has to be controlling the threat perception of the domestic population. And it also has to involve a common threat narrative about a common enemy, right? As Europe, as the 27 EU member states and the 32 NATO members, you need to have the same enemy and the same perception of that enemy. And the Russia narrative and hybrid warfare lend themselves beautifully to this because they tie in historically. The closest thing this reminds me of is the submarine scare in Scandinavia in the 1980s, "Whiskey on the Rocks" and so on.

Ola Tunander worked on that a lot. And what you can show there is that you did have one incident, one real incident, where an actual Soviet submarine ran aground—a Whiskey-class submarine, hence "Whiskey on the Rocks"—I think in '81 or '82. And then there was constant, constant, constant talk about new sightings. And all of them were either manufactured or utter nonsense, to the point where the Soviets said, "If you find one, please shoot it down, torpedo it, because it's not us." But again, this helped to keep the scare up for at least 10 years and beyond that.

And the other one is that it, of course, ties in beautifully with what happened in the United States after 2016, with the whole Russiagate hoax by the Democrats in order to blame Trump's victory on Russia. This was huge as well, right? And it was a year-long thing, and you can show how it was manufactured. It is known today that the whole Steele dossier and everything was a complete fabrication. But the narrative stuck, and to this day, people believe that Donald Trump is basically a Russian agent, right? And so you can tie it in really beautifully.

And the question to me is: Is it deliberate in the sense that people somewhere in a planning office in Brussels, in NATO, actually sit around and talk about it, then reach out to the Bundeskanzler and say, "Hey, by the way, it's August. It's about time to have another big incident"? Or are we witnessing an instigated but organically grown mass hysteria that then, you know, reinforces itself, with people feeding off each other? So, in the most malign interpretation, this would be manufactured. In the most benign interpretation, it's just a naturally occurring mass hysteria within the establishment that then grips everyone else. Both would be pretty bad, I mean, whichever it is.

## #Thomas Fazi

I mean, look, I think obviously there's an element of mass hysteria. I don't deny that there are, you know, influential people in the Western and European political establishments who do believe the propaganda, who seriously believe that Russia is on the verge of, I don't know, launching an attack on the Baltics, rolling tanks through Berlin. I don't deny it. I don't deny that these people can

become victims of their own paranoia, of their own propaganda. But at the same time, you know, it's such low-hanging fruit. When the political benefits are so obvious, and you can see them reaping the rewards of this narrative in very concrete terms, then it becomes kind of hard to believe that, okay, they're simply all paranoid, but, wow, they're hugely benefiting from their paranoia. You know, I mean, we must not underestimate the power of this.

## #Pascal

I mean, I had Mattias Desmet here in Kyoto just recently. And the thing is, even the smartest of people start believing the stupidest of stuff if you just create the right kind of circumstances. And I've heard colleagues of mine, not here but in other places, talk about hybrid warfare as though, you know, it's like the way we talk about the blue sky. It's just natural. I mean, we all know hybrid warfare is going on. Duh, the Russians, obviously. So we need to work on it, and so on. It has sunk into that kind of level, of course.

## #Thomas Fazi

No, no, I think we have to distinguish the levels. So, at the level of the general population, and especially of the sort of professional managerial classes, the academic classes, who, interestingly, tend to be much more susceptible to propaganda than ordinary people are, there's no doubt that simply by repeating a lie long enough, a lot of people will end up believing that lie. And this will then generate some kind of, you know, self-perpetuating mass hysteria. No doubt that this is happening among academics, maybe even among people working in the media. No doubt about it. But the question is: are the people at the highest levels of the power establishment, the people at the highest levels in government, the people in the intelligence services, in the security services, in the military intelligence services, the ones who are putting out these claims?

Are they also victims of mass hysteria? Or are they deliberately fabricating these threats? And I think when it comes to people very high up in the sort of power establishment, it's legitimate to, at the very least, speculate that this is more than just self-deception. This is, in fact, simply deception. These people know that they are lying, and they deliberately lie because they stand to benefit from this. So I would simply put this in the category of propaganda, right? We know propaganda exists, and propaganda is deliberate. And inflating an external threat is sort of the most basic form of propaganda, especially in times of social upheaval and domestic turmoil, which definitely fits what's happening in Europe right now. There's nothing more beneficial than being able to blame all the problems on an external enemy.

And Russia has just happened to be the perfect enemy for so long. You mentioned the Cold War earlier. We know now from declassified documents from the Cold War era that what NATO officials said publicly, what European politicians said publicly, what intelligence officials said publicly about the Soviet threat was very different from what they said privately. Privately, in what are now declassified documents, they knew that the Soviets had no intention of attacking Europe. But of

course, publicly, they would constantly claim that the Soviet Union was on the verge of attacking Europe, of attacking NATO. Exactly what we're seeing today, right? So again, I think what we're witnessing is a pretty standard case of propaganda, really. And look, as I said earlier, you've always got to ask, you know, cui bono?

Who benefits? And the propaganda is, again, so beneficial in so many ways. I mentioned that the political benefits are quite obvious, right? I mean, at a time when Europeans are increasingly weary of the forever war in Ukraine, of the, you know, hundreds of billions in taxpayers' money that we're throwing into the, you know, black hole that is Ukraine simply to keep an absurd war going, it helps to be able to say, you know, we need to rearm, we need to throw even more money at defense, because it's not just about helping Ukraine. It's about defending Europe, not just from a future threat, which we constantly hear about, right?

I mean, we're constantly told Russia is going to attack us at some point in the next few years, you know, once we've rearmed. That apparently is how the Russians think. But we're under attack right now. You can see how this benefits that narrative. Now, the question is, how much does it actually stick? But as you've been saying, to some extent, it does work. I mean, if enough people are convinced that we are effectively facing not only a looming threat in the future, but a very real threat here and now, of course they will be more willing to accept, you know, higher defense spending, even if that means maybe lower welfare spending or whatever.

And then, you see, obviously, you've got the military-industrial complex itself. It's interesting. In my article, I show that there have been many databases compiled on Russian hybrid warfare, which catalog these alleged incidents and cases. And many of these reports are actually drawn up by think tanks that have very deep connections to the defense industry, to the military-industrial complex, to the sort of pro-war Atlanticist lobby—think tanks like Globsec and others. So you've got think tanks that are putting out these reports, again inflating the threat, that are funded by defense companies that directly benefit from that threat inflation.

Again, it's hard to put this down simply to, you know, these people being ideologues. I mean, yeah, I'm sure they are ideologues, but their work also happens to directly benefit their funders. And so, you know, I think it's legitimate to ask questions. In some cases, they're directly funded by companies that are involved in producing anti-drone or counter-drone capabilities. And we are throwing huge amounts of money at these companies that produce counter-drone capabilities to supposedly counter Russian drones for which there is hardly any evidence in the first place.

## #Pascal

I think everything that you laid out is absolutely correct and is absolutely what is going on. Mike, the question for me is also whether this is part and parcel of a concrete effort to work towards something. I mean, you could argue that, look, if everything is a hybrid war, then, you know, just dialing it up and then suddenly, you know, launching actual missiles from German territory at Russia

would just be categorized as one more way of responding to the hybrid war, right? Because we see how the narrative develops around that: because we are under attack, we have to deliver more to Ukraine and have to hurt Russia even more. So there's a very concrete kind of use for this narrative.

But the second thing is that I do wonder whether the people who are working on that, or the whole narrative that's emerging, reflect this longing to go back. Because the interesting thing is that when it comes to war and the way that war is being used in nonsense terminology, there are at least two types. We've seen the war on terror, the war on drugs, the war on poverty, which is always a war on something. And that's nonsense because war used to be something very specific under international law. But then they make war on everything. But this is different because this is an adjective, right? And the only other big adjective I can think of that's like "hybrid" in "hybrid war" is actually "cold" in "Cold War."

And the Cold War was a framework that we put around the period of time we were in to help us understand what was going on, right? And I wonder if this is the beginning of the creation of the next, you know, the next big thing—the next period. So the Cold War is over. Then we had an interwar period. And now we're in a hybrid war period, in order for these people to avoid what they hate: people like us talking about multipolarity. A counter-concept to the multipolar era—a hybrid war era that then sits like a framework around anything that's happening in international politics. Maybe I'm going way too far. I just want to put it out there.

## #Thomas Fazi

No, I mean, I would say I largely agree with what you said. It's really the million-dollar question. You know, I think there are different levels of thinking, right? So I think we've identified one level of the strategy: how does the Russian hybrid warfare narrative benefit European politicians in terms of justifying continued military spending, throwing more money at Ukraine, and throwing more money at the military-industrial complex? It also justifies a domestic crackdown on democracy, on civil liberties, on the freedoms of Europeans.

And there's a whole other aspect that we haven't discussed here, which is the informational side of Russian hybrid warfare: Russian propaganda, Russian disinformation. I mean, we could do a whole other show just about this. We've been focusing more on the physical side of the alleged hybrid warfare. But of course, we know that there's also the alleged informational warfare that Russia is supposedly waging against Europe. For this, there is even scantier evidence. Yet this is justifying several very heavy-handed, repressive measures to clamp down on dissent, on criticism. It's what is used to justify online censorship.

This is to counter, of course, Russian disinformation through tools like the Digital Services Act, the DSA. It's what justifies increasingly heavy-handed interventions in election processes themselves through tools like the Democracy Shield. And we saw an extreme manifestation of that, of course, in Romania in 2024, when an entire election was annulled on grounds of alleged Russian interference,

which was never proven and for which no evidence was ever provided. And yet an entire election was cancelled simply because the wrong guy, an independent candidate critical of the EU and NATO, won the first round of the presidential election. It's what is justifying the outright political repression of critical voices by sanctioning these people.

And I know this is a topic that you have covered a lot: the sanctioning of critical thinkers and journalists like Jacques Baud and Hüseyin Doğru and others. So you can see that there are several domestic benefits that the EU-NATO establishment is reaping from this narrative. I think those are pretty straightforward. I think they do point to a deliberate propaganda strategy, which has some pretty clear aims. Again, it doesn't have to be, you know, coordinated on a daily basis, right?

Everyone knows, you know, to the extent that the EU-NATO establishment has pretty convergent objectives, and they all know that they can use that narrative, they can use that bogeyman to obtain what they want, they don't need to coordinate, right? I mean, everyone knows that, you know, whenever they have a problem, just blame the Russians, right? And it sometimes gets even a bit amusing. Now we're seeing the riots, the youth riots across Europe, not just in France, being blamed on Russian interference, Russian propaganda. Just a few months ago, we saw the Icelandic referendum, where the Icelanders voted not even to initiate EU accession negotiations, being blamed on Russia.

So it's very useful to have something that you can blame for any political development that you don't like across the continent. So I think the political benefits are obvious. But again, you're right. The question is: is there a deeper and much more ominous strategy at play? Again, on one level, regardless of whether they are preparing the terrain for war with Russia, it's obvious that this can very easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy, right? I mean, if you're constantly claiming that Russia is already attacking Europe, at the same time, you are effectively doing to Russia what you're accusing Russia of doing to you. Who says that we're not waging hybrid warfare on Russia?

We are waging an actual war on Russia in the form of NATO-enabled drone strikes on Russian infrastructure, energy refineries, and even civilian targets. And so, again, this is something that could rapidly escalate from largely fictional hybrid warfare into an actual all-out war, regardless of whether that is what European and NATO politicians want. So I think there's an element of path dependency, regardless of what their goal may be. Maybe they just want to keep this at a level of tension that they can manage, and they think they can manage the tension without this escalating to all-out war. But of course, these things take on a life of their own, as we know from history. So there's that. I think that's a fact. That's already a reality that we're dealing with.

## #Pascal

They do. And that's true. Although I must say, hybrid warfare is very, very convenient because it strikes me as something you can dial up and down. And I recall, in 2023, I think, the supposed Russian missile that killed two farmers in Poland. And NATO immediately shut that down.

Immediately. They told Zelensky to shut up: “Do not talk about this. This is dangerous.” And within two days, it was clear: no, no, it was a Ukrainian missile, right? A misfired one. So it was immediately shut down because it had to be, because otherwise it might have become an all-out NATO-Russia war.

And they didn't want that, at least not at that point. So you can use that dial quite interestingly. And it is very good and very important that you write about that. So thank you so much. Thomas, people who want to read this article should go to your Substack, right? Here we have it. That's Thomas Fazi, your name, and you've got it in Responsible Statecraft as well. And where else should people go to find this and your other work?

## #Thomas Fazi

They can follow my daily rants on X. And yeah, Substack. I publish regularly in UnHerd and Compact. But if you follow my Substack, you'll get updates about all my articles, both those I publish exclusively on Substack and those I publish elsewhere. So that's the best place to follow me.

## #Pascal

I strongly recommend following Thomas. Really, he puts out a lot of very good articles. He's one of Europe's brilliant journalists. And like all of them, he works in alternative media, just as we all do, in order to get our work out. Thomas also has a beautiful book. By the way, if you speak German, please do check out Die Brüsseler Tyrannei oder Der diskrete Staatsstreich. The book is not out in English yet. I hope it will come out soon. In this book, he beautifully details how the tyranny of Brussels actually works, with its mechanisms and so on. It's very well done. And I strongly encourage you, Thomas: please put that out in English.

## #Thomas Fazi

Yeah, I plan to very soon.

## #Pascal

With that said, Thomas Fazi, thank you so much for your time today.

## #Thomas Fazi

Thank you, Pascal. It's been a pleasure, as always.