Thomas Fazi: NATO's Hybrid Warfare - Deception & Permanent War

Thomas Fazi is an Italian journalist and author focusing on economics and geopolitics. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: https://glenndiesen.substack.com/ X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@GDiesen1 Support the research: PayPal: https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: https://gofund.me/09ea012f Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL 00:00 Thomas Fazi on European politics and hybrid warfare 02:18 Why Fazi calls hybrid warfare a dangerously vague concept 05:05 A counter-database of disputed Russian-war claims 08:26 Baltic cables, a Lithuania plane crash, and Heathrow 12:15 The drone-sighting wave and what investigations found 16:05 Stray drones, the von der Leyen claim, and evidence 18:02 Nord Stream and the consequences of misattribution 23:24 Threat narratives, domestic politics, and rearmament 28:06 Information warfare, censorship, and Romania’s election 30:01 Gladio and the danger of manufactured threats 35:58 RussiaGate and the persistence of disputed claims 42:09 Public opinion, propaganda, and rising repression risks

#Glenn

Welcome back, everyone. Joining us again on this program is Thomas Fazi. He's an Italian journalist, an author, and also an expert on European politics. And today, more specifically, we're going to discuss his work on hybrid warfare. So thank you for coming back on the program.

#Thomas Fazi

Yeah, thank you, Glenn. I'm a huge fan, as you can imagine. So it's a real pleasure to be here discussing this very important topic with you.

#Glenn

We've met several times in person. I think this is the first time online, at least. But I find your work very interesting, especially this concept of hybrid warfare, because what makes hybrid warfare interesting, at least in my opinion, is that it's a very vague concept. It's unclear what it entails. It's unclear how you observe and measure it, which means that it can very easily be used in propaganda. And I think a great case of this would be the Gerasimov doctrine. Western politicians, media, and academics continue to speak about the Gerasimov doctrine, which is allegedly a Russian doctrine for hybrid warfare. And I see military leaders across the West referring to this as an

established fact, even though the one who coined the concept, Mark Galeotti, actually wrote a piece in Foreign Policy with the title, "I'm Sorry for Creating the Gerasimov Doctrine," because it was just made up.

Essentially, it was based on a speech by Gerasimov where he described what he believed Western countries were doing against Russia. And then this had been used to suggest, you know, maybe the Russians will do it. And that became the Gerasimov doctrine. And people now across the West—practitioners, academics, journalists—everyone speaks of this as if it were a real thing, that the Russians have a doctrine of hybrid warfare, which kind of is my point. It's a very vague concept, which allows it to be used to describe anything. But anyways, I did want to ask, before I step all over your points: What is the evidence of Russia waging a hybrid war against Europe? And what do you read into this concept overall of hybrid warfare?

#Thomas Fazi

Right. Well, yes, I mean, I completely agree with you. I think it is an incredibly vague concept. It's a deliberately vague concept. And I think it's a very dangerous one because, effectively, it completely blurs the boundary between peace and war. International relations can only function if you have a clear distinction between peace and war. If you're not bombing each other, you're at peace, and if you're bombing each other, you're at war. You need a pretty clear distinction in order to navigate international relations. Of course, we know that even in peacetime, countries, especially superpowers, will try to influence each other. This has been happening since the dawn of modern international relations.

We know that states spy on each other, and states will, to some degree or another, try to influence each other in their own interest. No one does this more extensively and more ubiquitously than the United States itself. So, of course, you know, the idea that states try to influence each other is nothing new. Think of the Cold War. Of course, the two blocs were constantly trying to, you know, influence each other, often in covert ways. You know, there was some pretty funny stuff going on, I mean, from both sides. But you didn't even hear Western leaders say, you know, "We're in a hybrid war with the Soviet Union," right? In fact, you tried to keep these things hush-hush.

You didn't want your public to know that the Soviets were up to some fishy stuff in your own territory, even though it was, of course, happening, and vice versa. In fact, I would say it was happening to a much greater degree in Soviet territory, coming from the NATO bloc. But what we see today is, in fact, the opposite of that. We see a relentless use of this hybrid war narrative in the absence of any serious evidence that this is happening, even on a level that is comparable to what was going on during the Cold War. In fact, I started putting together this article that I published a few weeks ago on my Substack. I published a very long version on my Substack and then a shorter version in Responsible Statecraft.

So whoever wants the summed-up version can go and look for the article in Responsible Statecraft. But I actually started working on this piece back in late 2025, at the height of the Russian drone hysteria. Back then, I was like, OK, you know, I really want to see what evidence there is for each one of these supposed cases of Russian drones entering NATO territory. People remember that, at the time, it was almost a daily occurrence, right? Drones were sighted all over Europe, and blame was readily placed on Russia for almost every one of these sightings. So I started really going through each one of those cases.

But I couldn't keep up. You know, before I could debunk one case, there had already been, like, five other claims in the media of supposed Russian drones being sighted. So, in the end, I had to put that article aside because I just didn't have enough time to work on it, and I realized that the propaganda was way ahead of me. You know, I just couldn't keep up. But it did make me realize how propaganda works these days, or at least one of the ways in which it works: it doesn't come up with one big, elaborate lie, but it comes up with thousands of small lies.

And that's very effective because you can debunk one or two, but they've already got another, you know, 50 lined up, right? And so they're always ahead of you. And in fact, you know, as we'll discuss, a lot of these individual claims have been debunked. But most people don't know about it because the retractions of the original claims get a fraction of the media coverage. So, you know, even if a supposed incident of Russian hybrid warfare ends up being completely debunked, even by the mainstream media, most people don't hear about it because the debunking receives almost no coverage. But more importantly, I felt that what was needed was a comprehensive analysis of all the major cases.

So, really, putting together an analysis that's sort of a counter-database. They have all these databases of supposed cases of Russian hybrid warfare. I wanted to make a counter-database. So now, you know, the original article is very long. It's 15 pages because I really wanted to go through almost every single claim. And really, what's astonishing is that virtually all of these claims of alleged Russian hybrid warfare end up collapsing upon scrutiny—in some cases, basic scrutiny. In virtually all of these cases, there's no evidence that Russia was behind these incidents. And in some cases, the incident itself didn't really happen in the first place.

So, you know, complete fabrications. And it's really quite astonishing, you know, once you start going through all the claims. And this is really something that started kind of ramping up in 2024. Of course, the concept has been around for some time, and the notion of Russian interference obviously has been around forever, at least since Russiagate. But the specific concept of this hybrid war really starts emerging in public discourse in a significant way in 2024. So one of the first major claims of Russia bringing the war to Europe was that undersea cables in the Baltic Sea had been damaged, sabotaged, right?

And this was in late 2024, November 2024. At the time, there was widespread speculation that Russia was behind the damage to these cables, that it was using one of its so-called shadow fleet ships to damage them. In fact, it eventually turned out that the cables had been damaged by Hong Kong- and China-flagged vessels. No Russian ship was involved. And in fact, it was established that the damage was mostly caused by accident by these ships. So no Russian involvement whatsoever, but huge coverage of that. And I still see people online who will refer back to the damaged cables, claiming that that's a clear case of Russian sabotage, even though that claim has been completely debunked.

Clearly, a lot of people still think that Russia was behind the damage to those cables, precisely because how much coverage did those retractions get? A fraction of the coverage of the original claim, which was echoed throughout the media. And this really sort of sets the pattern for all the subsequent claims. You know, shortly after that, there was a DHL cargo plane that crashed in Lithuania. And again, it was implied, suggested, or outright stated by people like Annalena Baerbock, you know, who was Germany's foreign minister at the time, that Russia was most likely behind that incident.

And in any case, this was a "hybrid incident," I think Baerbock said, whatever that means. And anyway, you know, there was an investigation which revealed that, in fact, the crash had been caused by pilot error. Then, you know, in early 2025, we had a fire at Heathrow Airport. Again, several intelligence-linked figures took to the British press to claim that, you know, Russia was most likely behind it: "This is something out of Russia's playbook." And in fact, there was an investigation, and it emerged that that was simply a case of lack of maintenance. The company that was supposed to maintain this electricity station had failed to do so, hence the fire. And you see this pattern repeat over and over again, with these absolutely wild claims of Russia being behind all these incidents.

Again, you know, it's always implied. It's always "allegedly." You can almost tell when they're lying, when even in the headlines, you know, it's always "Russia allegedly did this" or "Russia purportedly did that." And if they're already prefacing the claim with "allegedly," you know that even they have serious doubts about what they say. So, of course, they're just trying to cover their ass for when that claim is eventually debunked. And then, you know, you see a real ramping up, a dialing up of the hybrid war narrative in late 2025 with the sort of drone hysteria, which I already mentioned. You know, people will remember.

Not a day went by without some drone being sighted near an airport or a military installation. Several airports were, in fact, even temporarily closed at the time. And again, by this point, European leaders were really openly accusing Russia of being behind them. I think Merz said that Russia is behind most of these drone flights, right? So at this point, we've come to very, very specific accusations that not only are European airports being swarmed with drones, but, in fact, Russia is behind most of these drones. And we saw wild claims by other European leaders.

I think a Danish politician compared it to, you know, “This is our own 9/11.” So we have wild claims of what's actually happening. And then, in fact, you know, there were several independent investigations done, both by police and by independent outlets. I think it was one Dutch outlet that looked at 60 cases of alleged Russian drone sightings and found virtually no evidence that Russia was behind any of them. In fact, in many cases, what people were seeing weren't even drones. They cataloged cases of people mistaking helicopters and planes, and in some cases even stars, for drones.

I think there was a recent case where, you know, I think a Lithuanian jet was scrambled to shoot down an alleged drone, which turned out to be a flock of birds. So, you know, there's virtually no evidence that this massive drone campaign ever happened, and even less evidence that Russia was behind it. And this is the pattern. This is the pattern that you see across virtually all these claims. You know, ultimately, I've looked at pretty much all of these claims in great detail. But I mean, I didn't have to actually do much of the investigation myself because most of these claims have already been individually debunked, as I say.

I simply cataloged, you know, all the cases where the initial claim of Russian interference, hybrid warfare or whatever, was eventually debunked. And I think, at the very least, you know, this should be grounds for a certain skepticism when it comes to future claims that Russia did this or Russia was behind that, because the EU and NATO establishment doesn't have a very good track record when it comes to these hybrid warfare claims. And there have been others. I think we all remember the GPS on Ursula von der Leyen's plane being jammed over—what was it? Bulgaria, I think.

#Glenn

Bulgaria, yeah.

#Thomas Fazi

Bulgaria. And then, within hours, this story was effectively revealed to be a complete fabrication, in the sense that I think Politico itself revealed that, in fact, the plane never even lost its signal. So it didn't lose the GPS signal. The pilots didn't have to use paper maps to land the plane, which is what the papers reported. None of that ever happened. Similarly, I think over Moldova, not too long ago, it was claimed that a Russian drone tried to down a plane that Zelensky was on. And then the Moldovan authorities said, yes, a Russian drone did stray into our territory, but that was 160 kilometers away from where Zelensky's plane was. So you don't always have to fabricate a story from zero. Russian drones do stray into NATO territory. There's no reason to deny that. That's a fact.

But most of these airspace violations happen very near the Ukrainian border, and they happen in countries that border Ukraine. And in most cases, it seems pretty clear that this is the unintended consequence of Russian drone strikes on Ukraine. Some of these drones simply veer into NATO territory. And in fact, even several Western politicians have said, you know, when these cases have

occurred, that yes, this wasn't targeted, this wasn't deliberate. So most of these stray drones are, in fact, drones that were headed for Ukraine but ended up straying into NATO territory. So, yeah, it's really quite astonishing, you know, to see how little evidence there is for something that is claimed to be a fact by the entire EU-NATO political and media establishment on an almost daily basis.

#Glenn

This is what's fascinating, though: all these narratives, even after they've been proven to be false, remain. They stay. And you can ask, you know, is this paranoia or deliberate lies? And what I'm thinking is, you know, in the cases you described—that is, the sightings of drones near airports—later on, they open cases, the police investigate, and they find out, oh, it was a tourist here, it was locals. So they find out, okay, there were no Russians involved. But still, we keep talking about it, even though we know it's not true. And you mentioned the case of Russia allegedly jamming the GPS navigation of our glorious leader, Ursula von der Leyen. I mean, yes, you can say maybe there was a misunderstanding. They read the flight data incorrectly or something.

But that wasn't the only mistake, though. They claimed that she had to circle above the airport for an hour. But that was disproven. That never happened. So they make stories up on purpose. They're faking a hybrid war, essentially. And this makes me a bit concerned, because if you're arguing that Russia has done something, that implies you have to respond. And it almost sounds like you're building a case for war. And I was wondering how you saw the Nord Stream case, because this followed the same pattern. It was claimed, "Oh, this was obviously Russia—straight out of the Russian playbook. They blow up their own pipeline." Yeah. And the way we responded was to militarize the Baltic Sea, put pressure on Kaliningrad, and escalate the Ukraine war. Then later on, we're told, "Okay, it wasn't Russia after all."

And as the U.S., which I believe was behind this, began to try to shift blame from itself to Ukraine, the claim in the reports was that, well, the CIA knew that Ukrainians were planning to do this. They were going to try to stop it, but they were too late. Which is also an interesting, you know, fake admission, I think, because then they're at least saying, "We knew in advance that it wasn't Russia." So why then did they use this event to militarize the Baltics, to put pressure on Kaliningrad, to escalate the war in Ukraine? I mean, they admitted then that this was fake information, that they lied to their own public in order to escalate the war against the world's largest nuclear power. And yet, there's no accountability. I mean, how is this not building a case for war?

#Thomas Fazi

Yeah, absolutely. I think, you know, the Nord Stream case really stands out as perhaps the most absurd element of this whole story. Because we are constantly told that Russia is waging this hybrid war on Europe's infrastructure. We hear that a lot, you know. Russia is attacking Europe's infrastructure. It's never exactly clear what they mean by this. What is our infrastructure? What are these attacks exactly? How are they happening? And again, these claims are made in the absence of

essentially any evidence. But in fact, there was one very serious attack on Europe's infrastructure, and that, of course, was the Nord Stream attack.

In fact, one might say that's the only attack that Europe has suffered throughout the duration of the proxy war over the past four and a half years. That's really the only attack that we have suffered on our infrastructure. In fact, it's the most serious case of industrial terrorism that Europe has ever suffered. And yet we know that Russia wasn't behind it. But at least according to the official story, Ukraine did it. Now, of course, we know that it's very unlikely Ukraine did it by itself. It was most likely supported by the US and NATO, or at least parts thereof.

But it's interesting: even according to the official narrative, Ukraine did that, right? And, you know, even according to mainstream media reports, this went quite high up the Ukrainian chain of command. At the very least, even according to mainstream media reports, we know that Zelensky knew about it, but allegedly opposed it at some point, or supported it at some point and then maybe changed his mind. But anyway, I mean, it's not important. You're right to say that this is probably the biggest hole in this whole story and why we shouldn't take these claims seriously.

Because if our leaders were serious about attacks on our infrastructure, they would take the most serious attack that's ever occurred in European history seriously. And instead, we know that they're not only covering up the real perpetrators. In fact, most likely, they had foreknowledge, if not direct involvement—or at least important elements of the NATO establishment had direct involvement in that attack. So you're right. Ultimately, I think it's very hard to put this down just to a case of collective paranoia, a case of European leaders believing their own narratives, running their mouths ahead of the evidence. I'm sure that is happening.

I'm sure there are elements of the European establishment that really do believe that Russia is on the verge of attacking Europe. It's clear that among the general population, you see this kind of mass hysteria happening everywhere as a result of this relentless propaganda. And so I'm sure there are very serious, well-respected academics who are firmly convinced that this hybrid war is actually happening. But when you go up the food chain, up to the highest levels of military, intelligence, and political power in Europe and in NATO, I think it's hard to make the case that they're simply allowing their paranoia to get the best of them, right? I think it's pretty clear that they are making claims that they know to be false.

I mean, this is a case of, you know, old-fashioned propaganda, really. And it's the oldest trick in the propaganda playbook. When you're facing domestic crises, point the finger at an external enemy. This is literally the oldest trick in the book. And Russia has always proven to be the perfect candidate for that, going all the way back to the Soviet Union, to the Cold War. We know from declassified documents that while NATO leaders were claiming in public that the Soviets were bent on attacking Europe, in private they actually knew full well that the Soviet Union had no intention of attacking Europe. So you can see a very similar dynamic at play 50, 60, 70 years ago to what we see today.

And I think you're right. To the extent that there is a hybrid war going on, this looks more like a hybrid war that is being waged by the EU-NATO establishment itself against its own populations, in the form of this cognitive or psychological warfare to get them to believe that Russia is on the verge of attacking us. And in fact, it's already attacking us. Not only is Russia thinking of attacking us, we are already at war with Russia, right? Because they're engaged in a hybrid war against us. So the claims of Russian hybrid warfare, I would say, are themselves a case of EU-NATO hybrid warfare, if I were to sum it up, basically. And again, you know, the political benefits of doing this are obvious, right?

I mean, we could spend the next two or three hours, you know, talking about the many ways in which they benefit from this. It's a way of maintaining tensions with Russia as high as possible. Obviously, it's a means of preventing any diplomatic process with Russia. How can you engage in a diplomatic process with a country that's literally attacking you and at war with you? All while, obviously, considering the fact that, you know, NATO is literally enabling actual attacks, actual bombing strikes on Russian territory as we speak, as we claim that they are the ones, you know, waging a hybrid war on us. So there's also this complete inversion of reality.

Right. So clearly, you know, it justifies the rearmament drive. Of course we need to rearm. We're not simply rearming to defend ourselves from a future threat, but we're defending ourselves from a current threat. So there are clear political benefits in this regard. There are obviously economic benefits for the military-industrial complex that wants this war to go on and that is specifically investing in, you know, counter-drone tools and capabilities. And we are investing more and more in this. You know, there's a massive sort of grift going on when it comes to these claims, in the sense that there are companies that are directly benefiting from these claims.

Another interesting sort of piece of trivia is that when you look at the main databases of Russian hybrid warfare, these are mostly compiled by think tanks that have direct ties to the defense establishment, to the arms industry, and, in many cases, to companies that are benefiting precisely from developing counter-drone capabilities. I mean, the conflict of interest is really pretty insane when you look at it. And let's not forget that there's also a whole informational dimension to this alleged hybrid warfare, right? The Russiagate claims, right? We've been living in one big Russiagate hoax for the past decade, basically. In the article, I focus more on claims of physical hybrid warfare. But we know that...

You know, we are also told that Russia is engaged in relentless disinformation and informational warfare against Europe. Again, the evidence for this is even scanter. And yet this is being used to justify all manner of assaults on people's civil liberties, human rights, and democracy itself, in the form of, you know, anti-disinformation censorship tools like the Digital Services Act, the DSA, election interference tools like the Democracy Shield, and, in fact, actual suspension of democratic processes, as we saw in Romania in 2024, where an entire election was cancelled on grounds of alleged Russian interference, which was never proven and for which no evidence has ever been provided. Right.

So you can see that, you know, there's also kind of an authoritarian dividend that EU and NATO governments get from this narrative. And so, you know, they stand to benefit from this on so many levels that I think you have to wonder: precisely because they stand to benefit so much from maintaining this kind of threat perception, will they simply limit themselves to largely making stories up? Or, at some point, will they actually try to fabricate a physical attack, right, and then blame it on Russia? I mean, this wouldn't be the first time that NATO engaged in these kinds of activities. We know that during the so-called strategy of tension in Italy, from the '60s to the '80s, a secret NATO paramilitary army called Gladio engaged in terrorist acts.

#Thomas Fazi

To scare the populace, basically, and to get them to, you know, vote for the establishment parties and drive them away from the democratic left. And in some cases, these attacks were blamed on, you know, far-left terrorist organizations, even though behind some of these terrorist attacks were the national, local, and American intelligence services under the aegis of NATO. And this has been proven even in the courts in Italy. I mean, so this wouldn't be the first time that NATO has literally engaged in terrorism to fabricate a threat.

And, you know, I think of this when I think, for example, of perhaps the most serious claim so far, which concerns the Leipzig Halle Airport incident, right? For the first time, Germany formally accused Russia—not just speculated—of attempting to conduct a terrorist attack in Germany, to blow up a plane or whatnot with a drone fitted with explosives. But the attempt failed, apparently. I mean, this is a very, very serious accusation, right? This is no longer speculation. Here are the German authorities officially putting it in black and white that, you know, Russia attempted a terrorist attack on German territory.

Very, very serious claim. Again, though, no evidence whatsoever was provided to the public. I mean, again, I'm not claiming that they don't have the evidence, but when we're talking about such serious accusations, it would be good to actually see some of the evidence that the authorities claim they have. And in fact, you know, there are even anti-incumbent parties like the AfD and Sahra Wagenknecht's BSW in Germany that have raised serious questions about the whole incident. And so the whole thing is kind of fishy, to say the least.

So yes, I think we have to ask ourselves: will they at some point take this a step further, or have they already taken it a step further? I think this is a very serious question. And then the question is, what does this mean? I mean, where is this leading us? And the million-dollar question, to which none of us really has an answer, I think, is: are they doing this simply for domestic and economic reasons, thinking they can keep this at a level they can control without it spiraling out of control into an all-out war?

Or are they preparing the ground for all-out war? I mean, this is the question that none of us really, I think, can answer. What I think we can say with some degree of safety is that they are definitely using this narrative to justify our enabling of Ukrainian attacks on Russia. And in fact, I think it was the NATO chap, the Italian guy—I think, what's his name? Dragone—who said that, you know, I mean, given these escalating hybrid attacks, we might have to take preemptive action against Russia, right? Attack Russia before Russia escalates into conventional warfare.

So, you know, they're already making these arguments. They're already making the argument that we have to be prepared to escalate our attacks on Russia as a response to this hybrid warfare, for which, in fact, there is very little evidence. So, you know, best-case scenario, they're playing an incredibly dangerous game, which could completely slip out of their hands at any moment. Worst-case scenario, they are literally sort of preparing the ground for and psychologically conditioning people to accept an actual war with Russia. As crazy as that sounds, I don't think we can discount it at this point.

#Glenn

About NATO terrorism against its own citizens—I mean, for many people, this will sound like a conspiracy theory or be met with skepticism. But what is fascinating is that the European Parliament even passed a resolution in November of 1990 in which they condemned the U.S. intelligence services and NATO for conducting terrorist attacks against European citizens. So they knew this had been going on during the Cold War—that is, NATO had been carrying out terrorist attacks against its own people—and urged it to stop. So this is, you know, kind of an established fact. But again, it's almost drifted into obscurity because nobody wants to hear it. And we'd like to pretend as if that couldn't be.

But my question, though, is: you mentioned that this really started—or at least intensified—five years ago. But would you also trace its origins back a decade? Because for me, this was extraordinary. For years and years, you just had headlines every day with these crazy claims of Trump being this Manchurian candidate, you know, this Kremlin agent who was put in there by Putin. And, you know, all the claims turned out to be false. But even though they were false, the narrative stayed behind, it seemed. I mean, with every referendum and election that went the wrong way, you know, we saw some Russian hand behind it, even though it was never proven.

And you even have, you know, what can be referred to as Russiagate 2. That is, in 2020, when they were afraid that Trump might win a second term when he ran against Biden. And, you know, what did they do? This Biden laptop scandal threatened the Biden campaign, and they censored the whole thing. They said it was a Russian intelligence operation. And every medium was censored—Facebook, Twitter, everything. And it proved—well, I guess it wasn't Russia after all. I mean, for me,

this is extraordinary because it showed that the intelligence services interfered in American elections. And they did so by, again, pointing to Russian interference, which never happened, to interfere themselves.

And at the same time, I remember Afghanistan. They also said, "Oh, Russia has put bounties on the heads of American soldiers in Afghanistan." And, you know, you had top American officials condemning Trump for not retaliating against Russia. And was it Susan Rice who was saying, you know, "We should retaliate now. Trump must order the killing of Russian generals"? But it proved to be fake. It never happened. There was no evidence. And now we're talking about Russiagate and Brexit. For me, I don't know. How do you see Russiagate? Because for me, this was an amazing, ridiculous period of time. Wow.

#Thomas Fazi

I mean, you know, we'll always have very fond memories of Russiagate because that was the OG lie, right? That's where it all started. And you would have thought that once, you know, literally the FBI had to come out and say this was all fake, there was no evidence, they would change their tactics and be like, "Okay, you know, I think maybe this was a bit too much. I mean, we can't be exposed as lying so blatantly, you know, about something so big. We can't just return to that kind of stuff, you know. We need to get our act together and maybe, you know, come up with some more credible propaganda." But in fact, they did the exact opposite. I mean, they've been sort of spinning variations on Russiagate ever since, especially in Europe.

I mean, it's kind of embarrassing, really, how literally everything that happens these days, everything that the establishment doesn't like, is automatically blamed on Russia. I mean, how dumb do they think people are? You know what I mean? Honestly, I'm kind of embarrassed at how low the propaganda has stooped. You know, I mean, I remember when propaganda was actually pretty effective, pretty subtle, pretty good. But nowadays, you know, when you see them blaming the outcome of the Icelandic EU referendum on Russia, when you see them blaming riots in the streets of Europe on Russia, when you see them blaming virtually every electoral outcome they don't like on Russia, it's really quite astonishing.

And again, you know, no evidence whatsoever is ever provided. In some cases, these claims are completely debunked. One I love is the big El Mundo scoop that came out about a month ago. This journalist claimed that a source within the Latvian intelligence services had told him that there was a very, very confidential CIA report stating that Russia was loading armed drones onto its commercial ships in the Mediterranean so it could attack countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea or near it. And I think, you know, Italy and Spain were mentioned. I think even France was mentioned. And literally within a few hours, I remember, this claim was echoed throughout the entire propaganda establishment.

Within hours, both the Italian defense minister and Macron himself said, "We have seen no evidence of this report. No one has warned us that Russia is loading drones onto ships and is about to attack us." But somehow, some random journalist from El Mundo knows about this report that hasn't been shown to any of the NATO governments that supposedly would be the targets of this nefarious Russian plot. But again, no retraction, no apology. They just go on. And as I mentioned earlier, I think it's kind of a sloppy but, to some degree, effective form of propaganda, in the sense that you don't come up with one big elaborate lie.

Just come up with a million, you know, small, fairly poor lies, but this will create a background noise. It's almost, you know, "Russia, Russia, Russia." Russia is always in the background. So, of course, you know, I'm sure there are studies into this on a psychological level. I mean, if you're always hearing, you know, "Russia, Russia, Russia," then yes, you might not believe every single story, but ultimately you will take away that something must be happening if you're hearing about Russia doing nefarious stuff against us the whole time. Not to mention the fact that, obviously, ordinary people don't have the time to research this. You know, retractions aren't given any coverage.

I'm sure most people still think that Russiagate is a real thing. In fact, I still see serious journalists and commentators claiming that it wasn't debunked, that it actually did happen. So you can still, to this day, see people clinging to that narrative. But yeah, I mean, I think we also have to question the effectiveness. I mean, of course, we've been talking about how there are segments of the population—I would say especially the professional managerial classes, academics, you know, very serious people—who tend to believe this propaganda. But ordinary people, I think, tend to believe it less and less. So, you know, I think that's the positive takeaway from all this: it's not really working anymore.

You know, you look at the polls in Italy, and they've been the same pretty much since 2022. No one supports Italy getting dragged into a proxy war against Russia. Actually, our defense minister just the other day said that he acknowledges that a majority of Italians are against sending weapons to Ukraine. But he also said that when people are wrong, we have to do what's right anyway. So I guess this tells you a lot about their conception of democracy too, you know, in our wonderful liberal democratic West. So even by our own defense minister's admission, a majority of Italians oppose this proxy war, despite years of relentless propaganda.

No serious person in Italy believes that Russia is on the verge of attacking Italy or any other European country. So, you know, I guess maybe the fact that they're getting so sloppy with the propaganda is also sort of a sign of desperation and maybe of hope on one hand. But it also means that their interventions are becoming repressive, and I think will become increasingly so in the future, in the sense that when the propaganda starts to fail, then they have to bring out the big guns. And the big guns are, of course, increasingly widespread censorship, but also sanctions—so politically repressing critical voices, as is happening in Europe, you know, interfering in elections, banning parties.

#Glenn

What you described, though, is considered to be a key component of political propaganda: it takes advantage of a weakness in human nature. That is, just from the way we learn, human beings tend to confuse what sounds familiar with the truth. So again, if you tell a thousand small lies, it doesn't matter if they're all debunked. If you hear them enough, you're like, "Oh, they interfere with elections. They're attacking us. They're sending drones into our airports." If you just say it enough, it sounds familiar, and people nonetheless believe it. Anyway, Thomas, thank you so much for taking the time, and I hope you come back again. It's been excellent.