

# Professor EXPOSES the Transatlantic Epstein Class (Formation) | Prof. Kees v.d. Pijl

If it seems to you as if Western countries are ruled by a bunch of WEF globalist elites that have more in common with each other than with the vast majority of people in their countries, then that is because it's indeed the case. The phenomenon is called "Class Formation" and it's a sociological force. Today I speak with Dr. Kees van der Pijl, emeritus professor of international relations at Sussex, and one of the worlds leading experts on Class formation. We also discuss, Marxism, finance, tech, intelligence, Zionism, and the shift from nation states to transnational power networks. We discuss Europe's decline, war, BRICS, social collapse, collective values, migration, and the limits of resistance against a violent Western-led order. Links: Kees van der Pijl on Academia.edu: <https://independent.academia.edu/KeesVanderPijl> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Atlantic ruling class 00:08:25 Marxism and class power 00:11:43 Zionism tech and elite networks 00:18:54 Globalism Europe and nation states 00:40:44 Resistance and collective values 00:47:27 Violence migration and world order 00:54:44 Russia China Iran and restraint 01:01:54 Guest links and closing

## #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. I am Pascal Lottaz, and I am joined today by Dr. Kees van der Pijl, an Emeritus Professor of International Relations at Sussex University and the author of many books, among them *\*The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class\** and *\*Global Rivalries from the Cold War to Iraq.\** Kees, welcome. Thank you, Pascal. Thank you very much for making time today. You have researched this topic of transnational class formation, among others, and you're trying to take kind of a bird's-eye perspective of how it is that these groups form and then project political power. Can we maybe start a little bit with the first book that I introduced, *\*The Atlantic Ruling Class\**? What do people need to know about it?

## #Kees v.d. Pijl

Well, this is really an idea of how we must imagine that the ruling class rules. The capitalist ruling class is not an economic formation which then imposes itself politically, but it is a social formation which operates on several fronts at the same time. So the capitalist class, and that's the argument of the book, of course, the capitalist class always restructures itself depending on the most successful

formats of how it operates. So, very simply put, capitalism emerged from trade and early manufacture. And in the time when it did so, the forces associated with these particular forms of capitalist activity were also leading the entire property class.

So all different elements in the capitalist class looked to this particular group because they identified it with success—not just economic success in the sense of appropriating a large share of the mass of profits, which is more important than the rate of profit, but also politically, its ability, for instance, to manage foreign relations, its ability to manage social issues and keep society together. Because ultimately, the problem facing every ruling class is how to convince the majority to be governed by a minority. And the book *\*The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class\** actually discusses the period of the 20th century from, well, the late 19th century to the 1980s, when it was published. And the basic transition that we see in that period is actually the shift from intensive manufacturing—you know, the manufacturing of durable consumer goods like cars, mainly—to finance.

And when finance appropriates the largest share of the mass of profits, but also is able, by its ideological activity, to imbue society with the idea that we are heading in the right direction if we follow the notion of the self-regulating market—the idea that you only live to make more money, and so on and so forth—once society shifts to embracing that idea generally, even if it's against the interests of most of the people who are not helped by a society entirely dependent on individual economic activity, once it succeeds in convincing the rest of society to go in that direction, a new cohesion, a new consistency of society falls into place. And that happened roughly in the 1970s. Before that time, society was held together by the notion that ultimately you might have a car; you were living in a disciplined society, very much standardized.

You know, the whole idea of Fordism, named after Henry Ford, a carmaker, was that not only were there cars, but also society was standardized. People led lives that, well, Gramsci compared to the life of peasants—you had to rise early. You know, you couldn't be dancing all night if the next day you had to appear in your mass production factory and be precise where you put your little screws and so on. Now, at the same time, that was the period of the Cold War. Now, I'm drifting a little bit, but I hope you see the idea is never that there is an economic process which translates itself into politics, but that there is a process of class formation, which means that a particular group within the larger capitalist class moves forward on the basis of what we in Amsterdam at the time called a comprehensive concept of control.

It means that you have a vision of society which, on the one hand, is associated with the economic system—so-called capital fractions—which appropriate the largest share of the mass of profits. But on the other hand, it's associated with ideas that are embraced by many people. Like today, for instance, we have the young generation growing up with the Internet. You don't have to explain to them, "Listen, before you embrace the Internet, please realize that Silicon Valley is appropriating the largest share of the mass of profits." They wouldn't understand what you're talking about.

The Internet itself has a certain magic, and that magic can be compared to the magic of money, can be compared to the magic of having a private car with four seats in it. These were things that at the time were as intoxicating as the Internet is today. And so when we talk about class formation, we talk about groups that move forward in the economic process but at the same time have the ability to spread ideas that have a magical quality, that inspire young generations, that people associate with the good life, that people associate with, well, sometimes with peace, sometimes with dominating other people.

## **#Pascal**

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but to my mailing list on Substack. That's [pascallottaz.substack.com](https://pascallottaz.substack.com). The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video. It's quite fascinating because what you're saying here is what other people would then, you know, frame as the output, right? The output of what the system generates, and the output is something that pushes society forward. Therefore, we get mass adoption. But you're kind of doing the other thing.

You're saying like, no, no, no. It is the coming together of the class that then constantly tries to justify its own existence by producing new things. And it's... Can I ask you, how does your analysis differ from the closest one that this sounds like to me, which is Marxism? Marxism then says it is the underlying structure of the economy that creates these elites that then abuse, and out of the system's logic have to abuse and further grow and whatnot, and cannibalize on the weaker, and so on. If I understand you correctly, you actually put the class first and not the system, right?

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I also think that has to do with how you interpret, you know, Marx. He's a bit like Einstein in physics, you know, in the sense that if Einstein had been isolated for a whole century from academic life, you and I would know Einsteinists and anti-Einsteinists, and so on and so forth. And now it's the same with Marx, because he was so politically too explosive, he was excluded from academic life, and that made people Marxist, or academia basically anti-Marxist. Now, I've always felt, and I was lucky in that, being part of that generation, that Marx was simply the Einstein, or if you will, the Marx-blank of social science, maybe of all science, following on Hegel. And so the idea that anyone would be different from Marx and yet be an advanced social scientist is, for me, hard to take.

That does not mean that there are not, in the anti-Marxist tradition, very important thinkers like Karl Polanyi, for instance, in the 1940s with his book *\*The Great Transformation\**, and others who nevertheless made progress. But they made progress in a separate lane, you know. Many aspects of Marxist thinking have still not been fully assimilated in general academic thought, in general social

theory. And that is because of this long exclusion and the association with profound political changes—an association that in the 20th century went sour—which added to the unattractiveness of the idea of Marxism to the average academic. You know, if the Soviet Union would still exist and it would be flourishing, it would be a different matter. But the fact that it went down also harmed the status of all critical thinking, but especially, of course, of Marxism.

## **#Pascal**

It did, it did. But, you know, the Marxist critique or analysis still stands very tall and strong as a framework to understand the development of societies as a whole, and especially of these kind of transnational ones that we're looking at. I mean, we try to understand this, right? How is it that you then have whole large groups moving in one direction or another? And you work on this in terms also of ruling classes. You actually also look at Zionism as a political ideology that then is part of how this ruling class at the moment is working or has developed over time. Can you maybe speak about that, and just in general, how these classes that then are not so much interested in the good of their particular country but of their class—how do they work?

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

Well, as I said, at every juncture in social development, there is a sector of the capitalist system, or what we call a capital fraction, which leads the process by projecting, on the one hand, a particular type of society that is seen at the time as particularly attractive, and on the other hand, it's backed up by the fact that it appropriates the largest share in the mass of profits. Now, in the 1990s, the spearhead of capitalist development was embodied in a triangle, you might say, of IT industries—so, let's say, Silicon Valley—and the media, which in the 1990s were consolidated into a handful of very large groups, conglomerates.

Especially in the United States, right? Yeah, but some of the largest US conglomerates in the media were also foreign. Like, for instance, Bertelsmann in Germany is a very powerful firm, or concern, but also Murdoch, who of course originally comes from Australia before he set up Fox in the US, and so on. Now, the third of the triangle is the intelligence services. And people often forget that in the 1990s, the intelligence services also became a player on many chessboards. Like, for instance, the CIA set up, basically jointly with the Israeli service Unit 8200, which is the signals intelligence body of the Israeli intelligence world—they set up In-Q-Tel.

And In-Q-Tel is an investment firm run by the CIA, which aims at securing the most innovative technology techniques for the American system, and basically through the CIA. So basically, what you now have through Palantir—the ability to survey the entire world population, almost—is something that came out of this In-Q-Tel process, and, you know, total information awareness, these sorts of concepts. Now, this triangle, on the one hand, as in other cases, appropriates the largest share of the mass of profits worldwide, displacing, to some extent, the financial sector, which went for a very bumpy ride in 2008. Right.

So, 2008, the financial collapse basically ended the high tide of finance, but that also ended the notion of Hayek—you know, Friedrich von Hayek—with the self-regulating market, the anti-Keynesian perspective. And that gave way to a new sense that society is best off being tightly controlled, having the ability to live online. The idea of artificial intelligence today, which is in many ways a very frightening prospect, yet enjoys enormous appeal. So again, you see the same process.

Several chessboards. One is the economic one, where the mass of profits is being appropriated. Another is the spread of ideas that inspire entire new generations and the occasional older one. Now, the people who bring that together are talented politicians or ideologues who rise above their academic status. So in that sense, we are always talking about a complex entity, which is not necessarily cohesive at the start, but very slowly begins to blend into a single social force, which, let us say—but that's just a meaningless figure—let's say for 20 years rules the roost. Do you see what I mean? Twenty years, what? Well, for 20 years, it remains on top. So there are no real challenges.

Only when the normal workings of the capitalist system lead to erosion of its profitability, to the loss of it, do people begin to see more of the shadows that are caused by a particular way of life, and so on and so forth. Something else may come up, if it comes up at all, because I think one of the most frightening things today is that we are really living through the end of the entire economic order and political-economic order that we have lived through for the last 200 years. Capitalism is really coming apart at the seams. Normal standard processes, but also social cohesion, are really in what I can only see as a terminal crisis. It's not a pleasant idea.

## **#Pascal**

At least in the West, where the system has been working like what you're describing. But this is quite, very, very interesting. There are these trends that people are seeing and actually perceiving as kind of going together. And they are obviously... some people take it too far and think they're centrally controlled. I think they are just like social mechanisms. But it's something, a phenomenon that right now some people describe as globalism.

As you know, when you see how the World Economic Forum and how that one works, how it works with some of the think tanks in the United States, how there are the Atlantic Bridge in Germany and all of these transatlantic networks, and then NATO and the EU, and how the same people jump between them back and forth, and how this all then goes together with the IT sector in the United States, with Elon Musk being not only the richest person but also having X under him and Tesla and so on. And together with the idea of transhumanism that some of these exponents actually put out there and say, like, this is where we should go, and we almost strive toward that. And you have Mr. Klaus Schwab who then says, like, yeah, you will own nothing and be happy with it. Is it that kind of phenomenon that the class, like this thing, kind of comes together and imposes its structure on the rest? Yeah.

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

Now, imposing suggests a little bit too much, as if there's somebody somewhere, sort of a Klaus Schwab-like figure who decides all this. These are quasi-natural. This is a natural science of social development. Society can't take a vacation; it has to be constantly dealing with the problems of the day. And it is in that process that certain groups succeed in championing very attractive formulas, which are both economically attractive and socially inspiring, you know, projecting something which is embraced by a number of people. And that is completely unintentional. You can't say in advance that this triangle of intelligence, IT, and media that I just suggested, that that was planned. It fell into place, especially once the Soviet alternative collapsed.

Many people forget that the 1990s were the period when this idea of the Atlantic ruling class and everything that went with it, you know, the intensive Euro-American, North American discussions and things like the Bilderberg Conference, the Trilateral Commission — these are the places where the ruling party really meets. And you can say, well, if you were there, you have at least something to do. Either you are one of the powerful people who run the show, or you are what Gramsci called an organic intellectual. That means your type of thinking is particularly appropriate for the sort of people that are gathering there. So in that sense, throughout the larger part of the 20th century, there was an Atlantic ruling class with a strong European component.

The moment that the Soviet Union, and communism with it, collapsed, it lost its remaining appeal after a long period of decline and ossification. A new space opened up. And in that space, I would say the Zionist element — the element in the social structure, in the upper layers, that considers the fate of Israel more important than the fate of, say, the United States, and certainly of Europe — took its place. It asserted itself. And in my new book, *\*Israel and 9/11\**, I actually document how in the 1990s not only Silicon Valley and the new media conglomerates that consolidated in the 1990s, but also the intelligence services under people like Alvin Krongard, who was a key figure in the American Zionist lineup.

Not only were they already of Zionist inspiration, but there was also a wave of investments coming from Israel, mainly IT companies like Comverse, and I can't give you all these names, but they crossed the Atlantic and were listed on the New York Stock Exchange, and the combined capital value of these companies was larger than the combined value of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange taken together. So in the 1990s, there is a bolstering of the Zionist profile of the categories that I just mentioned. IT, you know, Silicon Valley is mostly already people of Zionist inspiration. Don't forget that several of these companies actually assisted the Israeli army when they were razing Gaza.

## **#Pascal**

Yes.

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

By providing information, a company like Palantir concluded a formal agreement with the Israeli army to provide data for their operations. So we're talking not always about a happy family, you know, capitalism moving in this or that festive direction. No, it can also be a war, just as the Second World War was a key moment in the mass production saga of the 1940s era.

## **#Pascal**

This is, you know, this is very, very important because, like, especially in international relations, we have this very, very strong bias towards thinking in the categories of the nation-state. And that's why, like, everybody in international relations, we always go back to 1648, because that's kind of the date when we say, like, well, that's really when nation-states started, and, you know, the sovereign and the king and blah, blah, blah, and the queen and so on. But in a sense, that was itself, I suppose, in your conception, just one stage of how the ruling class organized itself.

I mean, you know, the Mearsheimer realism is currently going through a profound crisis. Every single time John Mearsheimer is forced to say anything, it's irrational. It makes no sense. It's crazy. It's actually the moment when he has to say, like, according to realism, this shouldn't happen. I mean, these people are not behaving according to how we would predict that politicians who are interested in the good of the nation-state behave. But in your sense, it's like, it's not that. It's that they behave according to what is best for the class, which is not bounded by national geographic borders, are they?

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

No, that's true. Although I have to grant, not only am I an admirer of the political stance of John Mearsheimer, but I must also grant him some credit here because I also wrote a trilogy which was called *\*Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy\**. And that is about the idea that international relations, so interstate relations, is one historical form of dealing with foreigners. You know, from the earliest days, humanity has existed in small groups and encountered others. And there are patterns like discovery, intermarriage, exchange, what we call trade or finance or whatever.

And what I've done in this trilogy, in the first book *\*Nomads, Empires, States\**, is actually to describe how, through different forms, the way of dealing with foreign communities has evolved and interstate relations evolved. So sovereign equality is one of them, and the one that also left the major tracks in academic thinking on the topic, because it continues to evolve towards elements like global governance and so on. At some point, this sovereign equality mode becomes a brake on further understanding of what is actually happening.

And transnational classes is, if you think about it, a bit of a clumsy way of indicating that from the era of sovereign equality, so all these sovereign states that are formally each other's equals, emerges a new era in which the main social forces that used to be directing these separate states actually rise to a higher plane and on that higher plane begin to organize themselves in the way that

I just described, as transnational classes. Yeah, I'm throwing a whole bucket of things that people are not used to hearing, but we are in such a deep crisis that if we don't understand what the driving forces are and where we must look for the decisive forces at each juncture, we are looking on helplessly at things that may very well end with the collapse of...

## **#Pascal**

You're absolutely right. You know, that's why I think this is actually a very, very crucial way. What we are currently all looking for, as we look at the obvious disaster that international politics at the moment is, is how to wrap our minds most productively around democracy—what is currently going on, right? Because we only have so and so much capacity. So we need good metaphors. We need good theories, but, you know, theories that allow us to actually grasp what the process is that we are in. And of course, in mainstream media, we have really, really, really dumb things like, oh, it is the evil Russians and the evil Chinese who want to build a new empire, and we just need to be heroic and defend humanity and Israel, right?

That's the stupid thing. But it's trying to do the same thing, right? It's trying to provide a mode of understanding what is happening. Now, the... And don't get me wrong, I admire John Mearsheimer as well, absolutely brilliant. And also, his type of realism is a very, very useful realism. But still, it runs against a couple of walls at the moment that have to do with what you're talking about — that we now have people who take decisions that we think should be good for the nation, but they're obviously not, especially in Europe right now. We have this problem that a lot of leaders seem to be taking decisions that are good for NATO, good for the EU, or good for the transatlantic relationship, but that are objectively bad for Germany, bad for France.

We just had this incident 10 days ago where the Israelis raided a boat of 170 activists that tried to do humanitarian aid, and Greece participates in it. And the Europeans are participating in it, with the notable exception of Spain. And basically, they let it happen. You know, they open the sea, they open all of the maritime apparatus that they built in order to let the Israelis in and just raid and pirate this stuff. So the question is, what leads to that? How come? And I think transnational class formation probably might explain why these people take such decisions.

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

And in the case of Europe in particular, we must realize that again, after 1991, after the collapse of communism — not just the Soviet Union, but communism as an alternative also working within Western societies — after that time, Europe was relegated to secondary status. And you can see that in the quality of the leaders. I mean, the last time that Europe really raised its voice as an independent force in international relations was the American invasion of Iraq, when people like Chirac and Schröder joined Russia, China, Brazil, and others in rejecting this whole idea, in rejecting the notion of the breakdown of the international order.

The international order broke down because, in a way, there was no international order left. We are now in a fluid situation where force again rules, and the whole legal side, the international law, will have to wait for a period after which a whole series of major issues in the international balance of forces have been settled. Only then can that be translated into a new set of international rules again. Now we are in a situation without rules because the forces that cross borders are much more vicious and powerful than the forces that want to uphold the borders and the order of states defending their borders.

## **#Pascal**

It's a little bit in a different vein, but I actually do see how it is at the moment — China, Russia, Iran — that are trying to reimpose this order. I mean, just today, the Chinese came out with a four-point plan as a basis for peace between the U.S. and Iran. Iran accepted it, and basically, they're just reinstating the very traditional notion of international law as we had it — an international law that needs to be followed according to the U.N. Charter. Because if that's the case, then all of these infringements will not happen, and, you know, the United States would be obliged to pay reparations and, of course, lift the blockade and lift the sanctions and allow Iran, under NPT rules, to have access to nuclear material and research and so on and so forth. So, in a sense, we do see how the Global South at the moment is trying to assert these rules of old, which are there actually because they create some kind of equality among the sovereigns.

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

Yeah, although basically it's, of course, a conservative reaction. I mean, it's very laudable, and we should be happy with that. At least there are major states in the world that still adhere to this old set of stabilizing rules. But what I also fear is that once war has been unleashed, the counter-revolutionary effects of the waging of the war also work through in the countries resisting it. So Russia is not going through a very happy phase. Once it was provoked into a NATO-organized war in Ukraine, Russia too paid a heavy price. China, of all the countries that are involved, has the greatest degree of freedom for the simple reason that it is not yet under bombardment in the way that Russia and Iran are.

So once the fighting starts, you enter a fluid situation in which social structures that contribute to stabilization fall away and decline or collapse, in some cases harden into very conservative and regressive conditions. I don't personally think that the idea of the BRICS, which is a very heterogeneous group anyway, and which doesn't have itself this set of transnational forces which keep it together as a single social formation — China, Russia, India, and Brazil are of course completely different societies — and there is mutual trade and there are mutual conversations and this and that, but there's nothing like what lies at the basis of the liberal West as it existed from, let's say, the 18th century to today.

And that is this single class which moves within, using a single language as a lingua franca — the English of Europe. Also, a single set of legal concepts centering on the notion of private property and the freedom of contract. I mean, these are things that have built together the Atlantic ruling class to begin with. And that are not displaced by the fact that Europe now is losing its previous privileged status as the interlocutor of the United States, that it's losing that to Israel. And Israel is claiming, yeah, we always think Israel is a very small state, you know, there are nine million people and so on, a small strip of land.

They may be expansionists, but even then... don't forget that Israel is a sort of cosmopolis, like the medieval Catholic Church. We don't judge the Catholic Church by the size of Vatican City either. In that sense, Israel represents something completely unique, which is deeply transnational and cosmopolitan in its own right. Otherwise, it wouldn't be possible that Silicon Valley and American media, and to some extent the CIA and the other intelligence services, already have a Zionist profile.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, so in this sense, Israel, the way we talk about it or think about it as a country, is really just the visible outcome or representation — the form and shape and representation — of the underlying operating system, which is Zionism. And Zionism is, of course, much larger than Judaism. In the estimates, there are somewhere around 50 million Christian Zionists that then also build upon a network around it of people who are maybe not Zionists, but they're in general supportive. So you could say the operating system upon which Israel is built is probably something around 100–150 million strong, in terms of people who within that network generally agree. And then, yeah...

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

And of course, you have to be very careful because you don't want to be caught peddling the idea of a Jewish world conspiracy or something. That's not how it works. It's an objective. We didn't speak of a European world conspiracy either when, for almost 100 years, there was this Atlantic bond in which...

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

People who were associated with the European ruling classes were very powerful in the United States.

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

So, in that sense, we have to choose our words carefully, and there are too many people of Jewish extraction who are deeply upset about what is happening in Israel and its neighboring areas, you know, and we can't let these people down. No, no, no.

## **#Pascal**

That's why it's really, really important to differentiate between Judaism as a religion and a religious creed, and Zionism as a political project. I mean, those two are just separate phenomena. Of course, they go on, even in Israel itself. Yeah. So the notion or the question then is, because you have a very organic understanding of this, right? Again, it's not top-down. It's not like the evil puppeteers then just play everything. It's the opposite. It's how it organically evolves from below and then just creates these outcomes as the visible representation. And that includes Israel, that includes Donald Trump, that includes Ursula von der Leyen and the EU. Those are the visible representations of the transatlantic, the transnational ruling class. Can it be influenced? Or can it be nudged to be less violent and be more humanistic?

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

Well, that depends on you and me and a lot of other people. But basically, it's important to see that the stabilizing role that Russia and China play today has, of course, a limiting effect. And I... yeah, there's no point in trying to organize an opposition movement which will do the 20th century all over again, but now on the basis of a grand plan and so on and so forth. That's not how it works. I think that you were speaking at some point with Matthias de Smet, the Belgian psychologist. Mm-hmm. And he made the right point that the only thing that you can do is to try to do your best, speaking honestly, expressing honestly what you think is the case and how we might steer clear of disaster. And I found that very convincing because it also reminds you of the fact that you should try and do your best in understanding what's happening.

It's not just something for... Let me... Trying to do that is in itself a form of struggle. It is already a struggle to begin to try and understand the world, but also to express yourself, to bring out what you think is happening can inspire other people, although I'm now old enough to understand that this will always be a very limited number of people because you are up against a vast array of forces, which I just explained—economic forces associated with profound cultural processes, organized at some point by groups trying to plan this more or less or to keep it under control. The only consolation that we have is that the ultimate basis on which the world order of today rests, the capitalist system, is itself objectively doomed to disintegrate. Now, disintegration is never an attractive prospect because the baker will also stop baking bread in that condition.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, but that's why I think these days our responsibility is that of the doctor who tries to first do an adequate diagnosis, then give a prognosis, but then also suggest treatment methods. If the treatment method is just like palliative care, then I wouldn't be very happy. I mean, you have to be in a terminal stage to get there. And if we suppose that we're not in a terminal stage, but that we can still treat the human body, these 8 billion people, the body that we are, then how would we formulate something that would help the decline of this capitalist system and the collapse of it form

or channel into something a little bit happier than what we've got now? So in a sense, you know, Karl Marx wrote all of these things, very important analyses, and it really caught on and became the basis of very important developments. Unfortunately, not all of them very happy, but still the analysis is still very, very important, right? So what would we need to have in order to get to some form of helpful treatment?

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

Well, one thing that we shouldn't do, should never try again, is to have the idea that humanity has to be remade into something completely different. That is exactly what the ruling class now is proposing. The World Economic Forum, with this figure of Yuval Harari, with his idea of transhumanism, that is a sort of post-Soviet variety of remaking humanity. Whereas I would rather settle for a more modest proposal, like Gramsci, in my view, is a very important thinker here. He said socialism is not everything turned around into its opposite and so on. Socialism is a society richer in collective values. Now, if you think of our, of my—you speak of a doctor—well, the doctors have lost some of their shine in the COVID episode, of course. But you might say having collective medical insurance for everyone, without restrictions and full access and so on and so forth, is a form of having something which is richer in collective values.

Same with education. Not everybody has to go to university. I would rather propose to reduce that a little bit. But everybody has a right to training and to education, to participation in culture. I remember visiting socialist Eastern Europe many, many years ago, and at some point we went to a concert, and it was, I think, 50 cents to sit and listen to some of the most beautiful music you can imagine. There are many forms of art that can be propagated much more, made more accessible for people who are now having to listen to or to look at absolute crap. So there are ways of enriching the social side of society and lifting the cultural level that I think can be done by anyone, even in the smallest community, which in the end limit the readiness of people to submit to murderous social systems.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah. You know, I keep thinking it's quite interesting where we came to by 2026, right? And if you think, if we compare the world now with the world, like, let's say, 500 years ago, the way that 500 years ago, even in the UK, right, in England or in Spain—Spain and the big empires, either the current ones or not—how they struggled with violence, internal violence. There was so much violence that these groups of people, unfortunately, we do produce violence among each other. But we came up with a couple of ideas and we put them into practice. I mean, the idea of a separation of power within the state—executive, judiciary, legislative—that's a really, really good idea.

It took a while, but it's kind of now common practice, or best practice, even in states that work differently, to have at least some form of separation of power, at least on the lower levels when you deal with bureaucracy and whatnot. But we somehow haven't had the brilliant idea yet. And we tried

twice with the idea of top-down government, first through the League of Nations and then the United Nations. Those were good ideas, but they failed ultimately because of sociological reasons. So what is the fundament that we need to create in order to curb the violent expression of the way groups deal with each other? Well, it's an easy question to answer.

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

No, no, no. Of course, very important. I mean, at the beginning, we are looking at a situation that is beautifully depicted in the film by Tarkovsky, Andrei Rublev, where everybody is constantly being murdered and raped, and, you know, this black-and-white masterpiece of cinema about the Russian medieval era. I don't think we are much less violent today, except we externalize our violence. So within our own society, we have these things. I don't believe a word of separation of powers, because once you begin to think of social classes, you understand. You know, the Montesquieu, the Enlightenment thinker from France who went to visit his friends in England, and he was told, we have separate judiciary, we have separate executive, and so on and so forth.

And in the evening, when he was sitting at dinner, they were all there. The judges were there, the politicians were there, they were happily conversing among each other because they were all part of the same class as Montesquieu himself, a nobleman. So he came back and said, listen, we have to have separation of power. Now, that's all great. These are great ideas. The monopoly of violence is very important, although these days you also hear people who say it's a basic right to own a gun. In many parts of the world, like the Middle East, for instance, it's normal that a family has an AK-47 in their cupboard. Ultimately, it depends on culture.

In the United States, they shoot each other from time to time in mass shootings. And once I said, in Canada, here it's great, you don't have this freedom of use of arms. And they told me, well, we have exactly the same legislation as in the United States and even the same amount of firearms, except it is a different culture. You don't pick up a weapon to shoot somebody of your own kin. Today, we are as violent as people have always been, but we have externalized it from our national societies. And that's also why people these days resist the coming of, well, the process of mass migration, basically uncontrolled mass migration, because they fear that this essential zone of peace is broken up completely. Very often, I mean, people are dismissed as extreme right and conservative and xenophobic, etc.

But I think it's a normal reaction that every community tries to externalize the potential of violence and to keep its internal society peaceful. Yeah, how we can do that, I would make a fool of myself if I tried to come up now with a grand plan, how we're going to organize it on a grand scale, bringing in 8 billion people. We're dealing with terrible consequences of a murderous economic system, of a murderous system of class rule which has shown itself capable of the most vile crimes on a mass scale, with the COVID episode as one of the last disasters, which they are now trying to revive through another fake virus, which already in a few days had, I saw, 100,000 newspaper articles dealing with this new virus, which is not even contagious.

So in that sense, we're dealing with a very dangerous and unstable system. And the ultimate, the only hope that we can have is that humanity itself has shown a capability of reviving the best instincts it stands for, the greatest cultural expressions, in spite of the deepest forms of degradation that have been brought upon it by the destructive forces which are not running the show, but in the strongest position. I believe very strongly that at least in the modern era, the last two, three hundred years, the English-speaking West has really been in the driver's seat of organizing the world and also in the process committing or making possible the greatest crimes that we have recorded in history.

So even Nazi Germany is something that cannot be reduced to something innate to the Germans, not even innate to the German socio-economic order, but has to be traced back to the directive capacity of the English-speaking West in organizing a world which, at its edges, produces these terrible expressions of violence. Like, think of Israel today, think of Ukraine today. These are the extremities of the English-speaking world with its separation of powers, which puts to the outside its ability to murder, rape, and destroy.

## **#Pascal**

I agree with you completely. So the question to me is, okay, we have this nuclear chainsaw-wielding lunatic in the room. And then we have the others in the room that are trying to figure out how to deal with the chainsaw-wielding lunatic. But now that we try to go inside the lunatic and try to understand how the lunatic works, it's like, what can we produce in terms of outcome to tell the others, look, Russia, China, Iran, Brazil, South Africa, look, unfortunately, this is the state of the art, and the chainsaw-wielding lunatic is the chainsaw-wielding lunatic. But you can approach him a little bit like this, and then how to approach that, because obviously we're not going to get rid of him. He's not going to jump out of the window, because there are no windows. So something needs to be done in order to make him put down the chainsaw and start getting a little bit rational about the environment he's in.

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

Yeah, well, there was a Swedish film in which there was a chainsaw-wielding nutcase who was allowed to behave the way he did for a very long time because people thought he was fashionable. It was the way to go about things. And that is where our modest role comes in. We have to challenge that the chainsaw-wielding madman is a normal form of behavior, because the leeway that he gets is dependent on the receptivity of people towards that sort of politician. You know, I wouldn't say we have to discuss Donald Trump in this light, because he's not on his own. He doesn't represent anything, if you ask me. The real—and that is thanks to people like Richard Medhurst and Brian Berletic—they have emphasized again and again, we're looking at systemic processes. You know, it's the think tanks, it's the corporations that finance the think tanks, and so on and so forth.

And that's also what I'm trying to do, the way you look at things as well, as far as I can see. What Putin is doing these days, for instance, his surprise announcements that the war in Ukraine is practically over. And he proposes Gerhard Schröder as a mediator, which I think has no chance of success at all, especially if you look at the ridiculous people running the other side. I mean, what to think of Rutte, our former national prime minister. What to think of somebody like Kaja Kallas, who's a caricature of what somebody in her position might be. But even so, I think Putin is being very reticent, very restrained in his responses to serious attacks on Russia, like blowing up all their refineries is something that is crippling the Russian economy and society.

And even so, he's very restrained because he is facing the chainsaw-wielding madman. And he's therefore not jumping into the role that people want him to play, and that is the aggressor who dreams of conquering Western Europe. So in that sense, you can look at an example, and the same goes for the Chinese leadership. They're trying to moderate. That's basically what they're doing. But they are also demonstrating that they have no power other than moderating. They cannot confront the United States frontally, and NATO with it, because simply the West—the English-speaking West and everything that was built around it—still today maintains the high ground when it comes to military and even ideological power.

## **#Pascal**

And confrontation is built into the system. If the Chinese or the Russians do attack or do something, then it only confirms what the West says about itself and then only leads to more escalation and more militarism within. So it's kind of counterproductive because it has that part already covered. So in a sense, what we need is something more creative, a little bit like what the Iranians are doing right now with the Lego movies and with the trolling on X. I mean, who would have thought that Iran, of all countries, is so skilled at breaking in through the cultural domain? Things like these that then crack up the nut job that the chainsaw-wielding...

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

That the Ayatollahs would be the ones using humor.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

They've always been, of course, a bit strangely dressed up by our standards, but they were always progressives. I mean, you know, one of the most inspiring events or developments of today is what's

happening in the Sahel countries—so Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali. And in Burkina, we now have Traoré, Captain Traoré, but his predecessor, Thomas Sankara, already tried in Burkina to bring about emancipation from French colonialism, neo-colonialism, and so on.

And to my surprise, I saw a young Ali Khamenei visiting Sankara, sitting with him in their respective dress—a completely different attire representing different worlds—but meeting each other and discussing things, the needs for progressive social development. So in that sense, the Iranian revolutionaries are theocrats, but ultimately they're revolutionaries. That is, they are thinking of different ways of dealing with each other, and that is why I'm not ashamed of saying that I'm on the side of them in their defense against the brutal attack that was launched against them illegally by Israel and the United States.

## **#Pascal**

And let's not forget, resistance is actually a right under the UN Charter against colonial oppression. And this was a fascinating talk, Kies. Thank you very much for this. At the end, I always ask, where should people go who would like to read more from you? There are all of your books, of course, but is there a place where you also publish your new thoughts and thinking?

## **#Kees v.d. Pijl**

Well, there's a new book, \*Israel and 9/11\*, coming out, which is a long history. It's not just what happened on that day. And on my Academia.edu site, I have a lot of papers. But as a friend of mine, Gabriel Kolko, sadly missed, said when he looked at my things, it will take time to sink in. And I'm afraid that's my fate.

## **#Pascal**

No, no, no, no, no. We will make sure it goes out. I will link to all of your books and links in the description box below. And then we will talk again in the very near future. Thank you very much for your time today. Many thanks, Pascal Lottaz.