

# Brave Researcher EXPOSES NATO Targeting EU Citizen's Brains | Dr. Jonas Tögel

The War-Hysteria in Europe is not accidental. It has been prepared and seeded in the continent's population for a long time through war narratives, propoaganda and actual cognitive warfare plans. Today I speak with Dr. Jonas Tögel, a German propoaganda researcher and author. We discuss war messaging in Europe, German military outreach in schools, youth resistance, NATO narratives, the role of the US and EU, the collapse of antiwar politics, and the way propoaganda, fear, and media overload shape public opinion. They also discuss public resistance, self-care, and keeping a peace movement alive. Links: Dr. Jonas Tögel YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@DrJonasToegel> 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 Introduction 00:01:40 Germany war mood and rearmament 00:10:53 Resistance youth and public fear 00:19:25 NATO pressure and Europe 00:26:34 Gaza Iran and empire violence 00:35:32 Peace movement and war messaging 00:43:04 Propaganda tactics and counterstrategy 00:51:10 Self-care and final thoughts

## #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies tonight with my friend and colleague, Dr. Jonas Tögel, an Americanist and propoaganda researcher at the University of Regensburg in Germany. Jonas, welcome back.

## #Jonas Togel

Hello, Pascal.

## #Pascal

It's great seeing you again. You've been on the channel before, but for anyone who missed that one, you are not only an academic, you also have your own YouTube channel in the German language. If you understand German, then please check Jonas out. He is one of the few German academics who is actually also trying to breach this kind of breakout of the little box that we are in and actually offer his analysis on his channel, where he mainly tries to dissect the various ways in which currently, in German and European mainstream media, the propoaganda is being used.

And he doesn't just rant about it. He actually has a lot of background on it. He wrote several books, one of them being this one here. It's also a German title. It translates to "Cognitive Warfare," in

which Jonas actually analyzed—and we talked about that in one of our last discussions—how NATO itself is actually using and preparing to use cognitive warfare, not just against the enemy abroad, but also against its own population from within, which is the scariest part. And he's written about propaganda for quite a while now. And I'm very happy to have you back.

## **#Jonas Togel**

I'm glad to be back too. It's always a pleasure to be on your channel, Pascal.

## **#Pascal**

So let's talk a little bit about what's actually happening in Europe, because, you know, I've had a lot of messages or a lot of talks recently about how this war euphoria, especially in Germany, is getting worse and how the media narrative about an upcoming war with Russia is getting worse and worse. And what's even worse is that I just had a discussion with Stanislav Krapivnik saying that the Russians now believe the Germans, and they're getting ready for war too. So we are headed toward a self-fulfilling prophecy. Can you maybe tell us a little bit where we are in Germany with this relentless drive toward war?

## **#Jonas Togel**

Well, we are at the point where I think it's becoming more and more difficult to sort of find an off-ramp, because the narrative that has been built over the past few years, and the narrative that supports this war, is very simple and it is very dangerous. Because it is basically a narrative that says Russia is a big threat. And then you have studies—I mean, this is a very simple narrative—but it is: Russia is going to attack Europe and Germany in the next couple of years. And you might ask yourself, OK, why do they know that Russia is going to do this? And if Russia is so strong, then why are they waiting for us to prepare a couple of years? And then, when we're ready, then the Russians come.

So it's not a very intelligent narrative, I might add. But it is being pushed on all channels. Not all channels—like YouTube channels like yours, of course—are a very valuable exception to that. And there's good alternative information, but that is not for the majority of the people. So we have this narrative being built up that we have to defend. And now what we can see is that the militarization that you've just mentioned sort of penetrates all aspects of society in a way that is a little bit like COVID-19, where you say, OK, we need to fight this virus now. Schools have to fight it. It has to be fought at home. It has to be fought at work. The whole society basically has to shut down, has to get ready for this fight against COVID now.

It's similar. It's like an all-out societal change that is taking place. And that is not me saying this, but when you read the papers of the military analyzing the situation, what has to be done, they talk about a whole-of-society approach. So if we talk about cognitive warfare, if you talk about this mind

shift that has to take place, this is a whole-of-society approach. And then it goes into all venues. So we have schools where, you know, I have people when I give talks and there are like hundreds of people, and there's always a couple of parents there who say that they are very worried because now the German army, the Bundeswehr, is coming to the schools.

And they are recruiting young people, you know, young schoolchildren, 14, 15, 16 years old, because they tell them the story. You know, this is kind of cool if you go to the Bundeswehr, and we have these cool tanks and you can visit them. You know, they have open-door days where you can go to the Bundeswehr, you can sit in those tanks and planes or whatever. And it's sort of like Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts—let's have fun. And people, you know, they enlist. So this is what's taking place in schools right now. You have the narrative that's being pushed in schools that whatever sort of conflicts with the official narrative is branded as a conspiracy theory and should be rejected.

You know, this is... we could go into depth now, but this is what's called inoculation. So you want people to block conflicting information, and you want them to be set straight on this NATO narrative. Then we have, of course, the media, where we have targets. We have all kinds of media channels that keep pushing this narrative of the great Russian threat and that we have to rearm. And of course, we have, and let's not forget about the economics. We all know it's about the economics, stupid. That's what, you know, was said in the 90s already. So, the economy is going downhill, obviously.

Europe and Germany are on a suicide mission. They're shutting themselves off from the cheap energy that has sustained the economy for decades. And now they somehow need an economy to survive. And what do you do? You switch—you have the lines that produce automobiles, and you can easily switch them to produce tanks. And that is what's happening right now. So it's wherever you look, it's what you said—wherever you look, it is threatening, it's dangerous, and it is scary to see what is happening. And I've just recently looked at the—it's called Bevölkerungsbefragung—so you have like a survey.

Yeah, for the whole of Germany, from the German army, from the Bundeswehr. And they found out—well, first of all, they know, and they know very well, and they write this very clearly—that we need this perception of the Russian threat. So that is at the heart of this whole change that is going on. We need people to believe that Russia is a big threat. They write that, yeah. And they have, you know, items. They send people—thousands. There's a lot of money behind it. Thousands and thousands of people go to homes in Germany, and they lead interviews on that. You know, what do you think of the Bundeswehr? What do you think of Vladimir Putin?

What do you think of the German military? Do you think that we should rearm? Is defense spending a good idea? Roughly 300 questions are being asked, and the results are presented in a paper. And they found out basically that the mind shift is working. So you have roughly 80%—80%? Eight out of ten people in Germany think that the Bundeswehr is a very valuable and respected institution. And you have roughly two-thirds think about that—that's between 60 and 70% of the people in

Germany. They are fully convinced that there is this great Russian threat out there against which we have to rearm, prepare, defend, and sort of change our society to not be overwhelmed by Russia.

And as you have pointed out, if you look at this from sort of the ego perspective and you try to take all different sides into account, that's what you've just said. For the Russians personally, this remilitarization of Germany and of Europe is, of course, perceived as a threat, because you cannot rearm just defensively. The other side is always going to think, and with good reason, I might add, that, you know, this looks kind of offensive to us, and that you have these steps that the other side is preparing as well. I know that you've talked about it, and we could go on forever. You have Ukraine being allowed to target Russian energy, and if you push Russia towards, you know, 80 feet—what's the largest nuclear power in the world going to do? So wherever you look, it's madness.

## **#Pascal**

I mean, even worse, like Stanislav Kropivkin just made that point. It's not just that Ukraine is allowed to strike Russian oil. It's that Ukraine is enabled to do so, right? And Ukraine uses all of this NATO data and infrastructure in order to target these things. And the drones that are being thrown at Russia are basically made in Europe. And Europe is very proud of that, that they're helping Ukraine and that Rheinmetall is helping Ukraine to produce this weaponry. And the Russians are saying, like, well, how long are we still going to take this from countries that are saying that they're preparing for a big war with us? Anyway, it's getting worse and worse.

The Russians are now at the point where they think of what to strike in Europe, and you know, Europe is going to get its Russian first strikes because the Russians are now ready to do that. I mean, this is now at the point of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's, um, I don't know, it's quite—it's super frightening. And I was hoping that you would tell me that what Matthias Desmet calls a mass formation, that we are not that far downhill, but apparently even schools and so on. And Ulrike Gerold told me that the evangelical churches are getting ready for war in Germany. So the drive, the drumbeat, seems to be overwhelming, huh?

## **#Jonas Togel**

Yes, it is true. But I would stress the fact that it's always the people who are the decisive factor in the end. And the hearts and minds of the people, and this is what the military knows, is the new battleground of the future. That is why we have cognitive warfare. That is why we have fifth-generation warfare in the U.S. These are all similar programs that focus on changing people's perceptions of reality. All of it is becoming AI-based and fueled at this point, where you have sort of automatic narratives being generated, content being pushed out, flooded into social media and all that. But let's not forget that at the heart—and this is my view—people don't want war. The majority has never benefited from wars.

The majority is not going to benefit from this war. That is, you know, as we have said, it is not yet there. So something that is not yet there can be stopped. And it can be stopped with people saying, we want this to stop. And this is where, you know, everybody comes in. So it's for us to say, is this really a good idea to go to war with the biggest, greatest nuclear power that we have? Is this really a good idea if we look at the U.S. plans and have looked at them in detail that have said for decades that, you know, you should separate Europe and especially Germany and Russia because together they would be the biggest threat to the American empire? It is time that we start talking about the American empire. Come to think of that.

So if we realize that the U.S. is not this democratic nation that has nothing but our freedom at its heart and that is interested in nothing more than a free Europe, if we start making this mind shift—and I think this is very closely linked to the war narrative that we are defending democracy, the U.S. is defending democracy because they are this big free democratic country—if you make this mind shift collectively and understand that, no, we need to move away from “free democratic society” to “ruthless empire.” And this is what I say: we need to understand that we're dealing with a very brutal empire, which the U.S. is and has been for the past decades. That plan, by the way—and this is what I looked at in my book *\*War Games\**—planned to sacrifice Germany without even blinking. They had millions and millions of people being dead in these war plans in a war against Russia.

## **#Pascal**

So this is what's going... Those are the real war games, the war plans that NATO is putting out and that they're doing as exercises, right, in their little planning groups. That's what you're talking about. Not something that is hidden or something, but these are the actual kinds of stuff that they then also publish. Oh, this is what came out in this war game, and so on. And the sacrifice, sacrificing millions of people in Germany, that's just one of the games, right?

## **#Jonas Togel**

Exactly. I mean, you need to look at the military documents. That's where we can find it. It doesn't work to just switch on the German news, like the Tagesschau, which is the most popular news channel and coverage that we have. Fifteen minutes of Tagesschau won't give you that information. We need to look a little bit further. We need to start reading. And then we discover all sorts of very interesting information that, okay, for us, apparently, this is a war where we are being led to slaughter like a little lamb. And this has been the case for decades, the plans for decades. And not only is our economy being sacrificed, but probably, and most likely, millions of lives are going to be sacrificed. And I think that if that truth—and that is, I see that emerging slowly.

And if that becomes sort of common consciousness, global consciousness, if people realize that, then we have a good chance of stopping this. And this is why your work and the work of many other people is so important. We need to—and this is where Desmond is right. I think I don't agree with

him on everything that he says, but this speaking out. And this is also what Hannah Arendt said, and Rosa Luxemburg, that the most revolutionary deed that can be done is to speak truth. And this is what we have to do. You can say, OK, I don't have that much energy at this point. A lot of people, they are tired, they are worn out. But we can still speak out. And if you speak out the simple truth of what's going on, then this can only, you know, promote peace. And that's what we've got to do. And that's where I can still see a lot of hope.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, I'm OK. OK, I'm glad. I mean, you're one of the optimists. I don't run into many of those these days. But I share that, actually, because we need to figure out how to stop it, because it can't be that we are doing it for the third time in 100 years. But I wanted to go somewhere with this one. Yes, there is some resistance, right? Also on Twitter, also actually by school activists. In Germany, there are quite a couple of students who are protesting this thing, like, "Go die yourself, Mr. Merz." And actually, some of them have been arrested or have been reprimanded by their schools. Can you tell us a little bit about the youth? I mean, where do you see people between 16 and 20, basically, in the public discourse, especially also in alternative media, where maybe a little bit more of this is surfacing than in the Tagesschau?

## **#Jonas Togel**

Yeah, that's a good question. From what I hear, we have a youth that is sort of unwilling to enlist and to join this hooray-for-war that is obviously being promoted.

## **#Pascal**

They're being criticized by news anchors that all the youth don't want to go to the Bundeswehr. What's happening with them? Why are they so selfish? That's kind of what's in the media, right?

## **#Jonas Togel**

Absolutely. I just heard that, well, you know, when you're 18 and you're a boy in Germany, you have to give your data to the Bundeswehr. So you have to fill out some kind of form and, you know, give your information. And it's not like enlisting, but you're sort of saying who you are and what your interests are and whatever. And from what I've heard, at least one third—there were reports just last week—that one third, my God, has not filled out this form. So that's very, I think it's very encouraging to hear that people are not all out for war, as you might think, especially the young generation. I'm not sure if this is due to, you know, being a little bit too lazy to fill this out, or if it is just pure heart conviction that people don't want to join the army. But I'm leaning towards the latter.

And I say that, well, this is positive and this is what we have to encourage. And I mean, it's common sense. It is common sense to say that. Do I want to be sacrificed? And wars are always for very few

people, very few rich people getting richer, and millions of others are dying. And you have Ursula von der Leyen, for example, who is pushing this war with billions and billions of money that she's promising, although she doesn't even have the right to. And you got to know that Ursula von der Leyen, she has seven children, right? She has seven children. And a couple of years ago, she was asked if her children are in the military, and it was a German interview, it was on German television.

And first she said that, well, you know, if my children were in the military, I would suffer the same fate that all the other mothers suffer. And I would, you know, be scared for them and I would care for them. And if they went into battle, I would be so, you know, so scared and whatever. And then the next question was, well, you have seven children. Are they in the military? And then she just said, no, and she laughed. And I think this sums it up nicely, that they are not sending their kids. It's for the poorer ones to send their kids. And I say it's for the poorer ones to realize that this is not in their best interest. And yeah, let's stop this.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, yeah, no, we've got to somehow, because where do you see the main drive for this coming from? Because you looked actually at NATO planning. I mean, in my perception, it is actually, again, Germany that's kind of in the most, in this grip of this mass formation, in the sense of, you know, how then people get very worked up about things. And we have the whole of Europe worked up, yes, but at different levels and different degrees. Maybe it also has to do with just the language barrier. I mean, I do speak French, but I don't watch that much French media, so I just see less coming from France. I see belligerence coming from the UK and mean words. But when it comes to like really trying to foster a war spirit, I perceive it most from Germany. Or where do you see it coming from? And what's the role of Brussels, of the EU center and the NATO center? Yeah.

## **#Jonas Togel**

Again, this is a very good question. I often hear people say that in this or that country it is worse. And it could be that German media and society in Germany are the worst when it comes to warmongering. But I would disagree that it is only Germany. I think, and the way I see it and the way I perceive it, cognitive warfare and the analyses that I read say, okay, we have different propaganda strategies that we need to modify for different countries, for different ethnic groups, for different cultures. And not all propaganda is the same, so they're localizing the propaganda. In marketing, you call it localizing. Absolutely, like propaganda. I mean, they know what they're doing. They know that maybe to someone from Switzerland, you have to speak a different language than to someone from Italy, from France, from Germany, and from Austria.

For example, for the Austrians and for the people in Switzerland, you have to tell them that, you know, we keep neutrality because that is important for them. Yeah, which is, of course, your area of expertise. But I think that we can agree on the fact that even in these countries, neutrality might be the label that is being put on the politics, but it's not what is happening now. For example, in

Austria, we know that we have lots and lots of trains full of weaponry that are going towards Ukraine because Austria is a very important country for transit, for the transit of weapons. So that is clearly not neutral. And for Switzerland, I know that we have some support for the war as well. I don't know if you agree or not, but Switzerland is not 100% neutral when it comes to Russia.

And so we have the coalition of the willing, which is France, Germany, Great Britain, and they also are sort of together. So I wouldn't say that it is only Germany. I think that this is a European problem. If we have, you know, Kaja Kallas, I know you've talked about her a lot. We have Ursula von der Leyen. We have these leaders who are constantly pushing for war, who are promising billions and billions of euros. And you might ask yourself, where does that money come from? So I don't see that, you know, you can say we have peace-loving countries in Europe and we have countries that are pushing war. So unfortunately, I don't see that. I would say that the Europeans are in this together. They are being, you know, pushed by the Americans who say that, you guys, it's your war. This is the new story of Donald Trump.

You started it, and now you're going to finish it, and we don't want to pay for this anymore. And the Europeans, surprisingly, are more than willing to step in. Of course, Germany, you could say, is one of the leading countries giving the most money they can. They have lots of support for Ukrainian refugees, for the Ukrainian military, and so on. In Germany, in Wiesbaden, you have these US military bases that, as you said, provide the intel for the drone strikes, etc. But I'd say we're in this together, and we should, as Europeans, realize that this is not in our best interest at all. It would be in our best interest to have peace with Russia. And maybe on one side note, because as a scientist, I try to look at different research disciplines and the answers that they provide.

And I wanted to know from peace research, which is, in my opinion, one of the most important areas of research at this point, what do they suggest? And then you have to keep in mind that we have, for example, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann. She's a German politician who said that, you know, Vladimir Putin—she said that on Austrian television—is someone who murdered hundreds of millions of people. She said that. And she said that Ukraine is supporting and providing food to 70 billion people all around the planet. This is quite an achievement, where you have Ukraine, 8.5 billion people in the world, to support 70 billion people with food. So you have all these—you have Kaja Kallas, you have Ursula von der Leyen, etc.

You have all these female politicians in Germany. We used to have Annalena Baerbock, and now she's up at the UN level. So, you look at peace research and you ask yourself, okay, what is the answer that they provide? What do we need at this point? And I kid you not, they write, we need more people, feminist foreign policy in order to solve this problem. And you read this and you ask yourself, what? Is that really the solution? So it's very hard, even from science, to get the right answers at this point. And I think the right answer can only be that we say, it's got to be the people. It's got to be the hearts and minds of all those people who are going to suffer, who say, no, stop this. We don't want this.

## **#Pascal**

But that's exactly what's being targeted. And for anyone in the English-speaking world who's never seen Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, just imagine a warhawk grandma. Yeah, that's absolutely right. Yeah, even her face, it screams like, I want war now, with her. Yeah. I don't know. And these people are the ones that, then, they're on at least once a day on some show, right, in one of the mainstream German media outlets. And they're also being quoted all the time. So it's like, you know, how the system washes itself and keeps itself clean.

But you said something interesting earlier, which is that we have to create this kind of mind—you called it a mind shift, or just a reframing of what the United States is, what is believed to be about freedom, democracy, liberty, and so on, all of the nice, lovely things that we were fed for all of these decades—toward what it actually is: an empire that is not willing to let go, right? And rather pushes everybody into the bayonets of those it wants to oppose, rather than figuring out a way to actually share the planet and live together. Now, we've also seen recently things that are shocking beyond belief—the Gaza genocide—which at this point in Germany you still cannot call a genocide, or you will be immediately attacked.

But we've seen that, and that's been on the TVs. We also saw how the United States and Israel jointly attacked Iran. And nobody, not even in Germany, is questioning whether that is a breach of international law or not. The only thing that I've seen in Germany that's being discussed is whether Iran has the right to hide behind international law. I've seen that kind of discourse. But isn't reality at this point—the reality just also about the violence, the utter violence of the empire and the extended empire—isn't that starting to sink in? Or how is that being shaped and retwisted within Europe?

## **#Jonas Togel**

Well, I absolutely share that feeling that at this point the violence is so obvious that you would and should think that now people should wake up. I mean, we have an American president who, together with Israel, starts to bomb another country—totally unprovoked, totally illegal. And you don't even have, like, months and months of preparation or propaganda ahead of the war to legitimize it. You don't have that at this point. You just bomb it, and afterwards you say, well, we think this was because of nuclear enrichment capabilities. And anyway, they have a brutal dictatorship that we've got to get rid of. And maybe it's about Israel, and right now it's about reopening the Strait of Hormuz that was open before the war.

So this is—sorry—but this is idiotic. I mean, these narratives, they don't make sense. They are made up as they go after the war. And this is so brutal. You have a U.S. president who threatens the whole civilization of Iran with extinction. So, yeah, you would think that people should wake up. But from what I see—and this sort of leaves me in a state of confusion—and I think that what you've said may be a spectator's view as well. You think, why is this still possible? Like, why can we wage

these wars? If you think of 2003, we bombed—not we, but, you know, the U.S. and the coalition of the willing—they bombed Iraq. But for that to be able to happen, you had several months of preparation. You had this constant link.

That was not true, but they tried to link Saddam Hussein to 9/11. They tried to make up this weapons of mass destruction story. So you had a lot of preparation to get the people ready. And even then, it was clear that this was an illegal war of aggression, that the U.S. had no right to bomb Iraq, just as the U.S. and Israel have no right to bomb Iran. And let's not forget about Lebanon. And in 2003, you had millions and millions of protesters all around the world on the streets saying, we want peace. They held up signs that, you know, Bush has to resign, a war criminal, and whatever. And at this point right now, there are not millions and millions of people on the streets in Germany or elsewhere saying—you have these protests where people say, no kings, apparently, or no king.

So there are some anti-Trump protests in the US. But you have no protests that say no war, no illegal wars of aggression. And I'm trying to figure out at this point why this is possible and why there is not the outrage and the outcry from the people that should be there. And I try to read as much as I can to find out why this is possible, when it's so blatantly obvious that we have this brutal American empire sort of raging and running wild because they are losing global hegemony. And I think that one of the reasons is that people are exhausted. So this is what we have to take into account, that we have studies that show that, for example, the Edelman Trust study that comes out every year sort of observes what people all around the world think and feel and what the state of mind of the population is.

And they found out that people are so exhausted that at this point they are just withdrawing into, you know, their little private space. They sit in front of the computer most of the time, they spend time with a few people. People are very lonely at this point. So people are exhausted. We have had so many crises. We have had COVID, which has left people devastated. We have had Ukraine directly after. Now we have Iran. We have the oil crisis. We have rising unemployment. We have the refugee crisis. We have so much going on—money losing its value and so on. So I think that people are being overwhelmed. And this is not a good starting point for a loud and strong peace movement.

So I think that as a peace movement and as people who care deeply about peace in this world, we need to take good care of ourselves. We need to make sure that we don't put more workload on ourselves than we can actually manage. We need to spend time with people who are friendly, with our loved ones. And we need to pick our fights carefully in order not to exhaust ourselves. So that is, at this point, exhaustion is a huge problem. And I think this is one of the reasons why we are flooded with information every day, completely exhausted by what's happening. And that means that the most insane things can happen. And I think we agree that the most insane things are happening at this point, whether it is Ukraine, whether it is Iran. And they are not met with as much resistance as you might think would arise.

**#Pascal**

No, you're right. I mean, that's a very good observation. And you know, Desmond again also pins it down actually quite a lot on anxiety, on free-floating anxiety, on an object, on something, an undefinable thing that makes you feel anxious and afraid, and that this thing can be channeled and is usually channeled then against the enemy at the right point. And the enemy can be a virus, the enemy can of course be, you know, somebody in another country. But the other thing then, this being overwhelmed, and actually that self-care and stopping to consume a bit of media can help you reboot and maybe regain a bit of perspective as well. That's a very good point. We're constantly, currently just drowned in news, and a lot of this news is very negative.

However, like the... the other side of this, isn't it also that the last 20 years, and I must say in 2003, you know, one thing that was positive in 2003 is that Germany said no, Germany didn't join. They said, we are not part of this. No, this is wrong. The war on Iraq is wrong. And they opposed it. And I think the United States never really forgave Germany for that act of insubmission. Right now, Germany is at a completely different point, right? I mean, basically, you can criticize Donald Trump as much as you want, also in Switzerland, by the way, but you cannot really criticize the US foreign policy when it comes to war-making. And I mean, the way that Europe is basically defending the right of the United States and Israel to attack Iran.

I mean, it's quite mind-boggling. For a country that has been, for a place that has been screaming at the top of their lungs, "unprovoked attack, unprovoked attack" when it comes to Ukraine, they're just not able. They're just not able to put the same kind of measure on other places. And together with that, maybe also as a propaganda researcher, this successful link NATO made between peace and bombs or weapons. And, you know, peace this time, you know, we defend peace through weapons because Hitler, as we all know, sits in the Kremlin this time, right? So if you want to look for peace, then you actually need to do what the Allied powers did in the last Great War and arm against the new Hitler. Can you maybe speak a little bit to that aspect of how the peace movement got undermined?

## **#Jonas Togel**

I mean, this is sort of what Harold Lasswell, one of the oldest and most influential propaganda analysts, already said — that you cannot say that you want war, because if you want to wage a war, you always have to say we're only defending ourselves against an evil enemy that is just about to attack us. So you have to sell every war that has been fought for the past hundreds of years, maybe even thousands of years, as a war of defense against a ruthless and brutal enemy. And you have these very, very simple stories that are being told. For example, if we go back to World War I, you can see how similar the stories are to the stories now.

We had, in the U.S., for example, this Committee on Public Information, which was sort of the huge propaganda effort to get the Americans ready after 1917 for the war. You had stories that were told about German soldiers, and the stories went like this: well, the Germans had just invaded Belgium,

and the Germans, they cut the breasts off women. So they cut off one breast and then waited so that she didn't bleed out, and then the second breast. Or that the Germans, they took the kids in Belgium and cut off their hands. So the German soldiers cut the hands off the little children in Belgium.

And you had stories that, you know, German soldiers, they would give a group of Belgian kids a hand grenade, and they would pull the pin before handing over the hand grenade, and then they would wait till... So I'm going to stop now, but these were the kinds of stories that were being circulated all around the U.S. to get the American population ready for war in the First World War. And afterwards, it turned out that all of these had been lies. There were no Belgian women who had their breasts cut off, just none. There were no Belgian kids who had their hands cut off. They were not there. And there was a huge effort made by troubled American housewives with a lot of money who sent their emissaries through Belgium to find out about the poor kids.

And then they were sort of startled because they couldn't find them. And the story with the children and the hand grenade, it was so stupid that it almost would have blown the cover on these lies. But, you know, yet the media front was sort of in line, and they kept repeating these lies. And you see very, very similar stories at this point. And this is also something, it's just what we've discussed before. We are at a point where you might think, okay, we have the internet, and we have basically all kinds of information that are being accessible right now. You can watch Pascal Lottaz's Neutrality Studies. You can go on YouTube. You can watch my channel if you want to, and lots of other channels that are out there.

And you can get all kinds of very valuable information and perspectives. But for that, you need time, and you need to know that these channels exist, and you need your attention to focus. And what we see is that we are being flooded with information every day, with all kinds of conflicting narratives that intend to spark our emotions. So we have a lot of narratives that either incite our fears or they incite our anger or disgust or whatever it might be—these shock messages. And if you receive 10, 20, 50 shock messages every day, you sort of keep scrolling through your Telegram account, and at the end of the day, you don't need anything anymore.

And that's where we're at right now, supported by AI, of course, that people are so flooded with all kinds of information, which goes back to what we said before. Why is it possible that the U.S. and Israel, they did bomb a sovereign country, and we don't have that narrative about this being an illegal war of aggression? Because it doesn't matter. Facts don't matter anymore. We have this flood of information. And I can show, and I know the papers that say "flood the zone." So "flood the zone" is a strategy, and the zone being social media and all the information that's out there. So you put so much garbage out there that people are overwhelmed. And then what sticks—and this is very important to understand—is the most basic, simple narratives possible: who is good, who is evil.

Who do we have to bomb next for our freedom and because we are so oppressed? And if I might add, you can watch this, for example, to see how efficient this very simple propaganda strategy is,

by these Iranian Lego movies that are being circulated. They have their own very clever way—they have these Lego videos that are always connected to some kind of rap song, and they make fun of Donald Trump and so on. They're very effective, and I think that they have found a good way to bring forth their message, and we might agree with it or we might not agree with it. Often I find myself partly even agreeing with what they say, but the thing is, these videos are not intellectually challenging, okay? They are very short. They have a few rhymes that are being repeated over and over again.

And this is very, very simple propaganda that goes back to, if you look at wallpapers that were being put up during World War I, this is a similar level. It was Donald Trump saying, you know, we need to bomb the mullahs. And what did he say? Short-term pain for long-term gain. This is just one short phrase that has been put forth by all the media. It doesn't make sense at all. But we are at this point. We are so overwhelmed that we keep sticking, and the narratives and the propaganda messages that stick are becoming more and more stupid. And you might think, why does this work? Yeah, because people are overwhelmed. They have too much information, and that's when they resort to the very simple emotional responses that are being triggered at this point very professionally, I might add, but also very stupidly. And that's where we're at. Yeah, but, you know,

## **#Pascal**

Realities must be first realized, as in analyzed and understood, and then accepted. So one of the things we, I guess, need to accept and just come to work with is that the propaganda on the other side, the propaganda by the people who want to go to war, it's really dumb. It's really dumb. It's really simplistic. But it works, which actually means that the counterpropaganda—and we make that mistake—we probably think, not a mistake, but I mean, our approach then is to counterpropaganda with, in German, Aufklärung, the illumination, right? You try to illuminate and say like, no, no, no, let's go on to an analysis and show how it works. And if we explain it and we've explained it well enough and we write a thick book about it, then people will wake up because they will understand.

But that's not how it works. That's just not how it works. I mean, because, again, the other side found this counter-strategy, which is like one guy on a big market square shouting, "This is propaganda!" That's a problem. But one guy in a sea of 100 guys all shouting different things—it doesn't matter anymore. You can let the guy shout because, I mean, come on, isn't he cute? And that's the place we're in. But then the Lego movies, they're doing the opposite. They're using the same kind of strategies in order to put out a counter-narrative. It's actually done artistically really quite well. And they do it with a good idea. I actually interviewed one of the guys who does it, like, two days ago. And they have quite a lot of thought that they pour into it.

But the idea is not to rip off the veil of propaganda and expose it. The idea is to use the same method, but from the other side, in order to break through, to crack open the nut, right? So to get to say like, hey, by the way, there's a different way of looking at this. How about thinking about it from this way? Yeah, it's quite interesting. It's a little bit depressing for people like us who use the

approach of like, no, no, no, let's deconstruct the veil, right? And let's show how it works. Because propaganda, actually, it's not just about what it does, but it's also this issue of repetition and so on, and breaking it down into little pieces of question. How much should we adapt that strategy if we realize that that's just how it is?

## **#Jonas Togel**

I understand your point. And I understand that for us as researchers, we spend a lot of time reading books, and we have these very long chains of information. And we try to convey these messages to people. And then you have someone just maybe shouting "conspiracy theory" or all these mere words like "fake news." And these two words, they are enough to sort of, at least for some people, destroy a careful, well-thought-out, long analysis. And, you know, the thought might arise, as you've just said, shouldn't we just resort to propaganda as well and, you know, put out these snippets of emotional content? And I would say, no, we shouldn't, because let's not forget one thing.

And this is also important in the context of propaganda, that emotions are very short-lived. So you might feel angry one minute, and this might last five minutes, but it doesn't stick. Emotions can be triggered, but in order for propaganda to work—and this is also what we see at this point—if you stay on the superficial level of emotions, then you need constant, everyday effort to keep these emotions up. So it's not enough to have, like, last month we had a story of how dangerous Putin is. No, you need every week, or maybe every two or three days, a story of Russian drones being found there, Russian agents uncovered here and there. You know, Putin is on the brink of, I don't know, failure.

And every day you need the repetition of these, I would say, psyops. I can't prove it, but we had Integrity Initiative and so on, which would be another topic. But you need constant repetition, and you need constant sparking of emotions. And let's not forget that information, and if you think things through, is another level in our psyche that exists. It is slower. You might argue that this is sort of the System 1, System 2, Kahneman distinction, which would be another topic right now. But just briefly to explain that, information lasts. And if you think things through, it lasts. And if I show you maybe an image of a kid and I say that Putin murdered this kid, you're going to say, wait a minute, where did this image come from?

And I think I know a little bit more about NATO expansion and so on, that I'm not going to be triggered by a message like "Putin killed the babies," which are being brought out, of course. Strzok-Zimmermann said that Putin, I think it was, stole 700,000 children from their parents and so on. So if you have information and it sticks, you can counter these emotional spikes. And this is why our work, I think, has its merit and is important as well. Not everyone is going to say, "I take the time," but I think they should. And this is why we've got to keep going as well, because in the end, you know, if you know a lot of things, the more you know, the harder it is to be pushed around by these emotional messages.

And this is why they have to, their value. And let's not—this is, I mean, people might disagree. There are different, you know, approaches to this problem of propaganda. I know that one of the godfathers, one of the founders of propaganda, Edward Bernays, the nephew of Sigmund Freud, he always had the idea that you should counter propaganda with more propaganda. And, for example, he was one who made propaganda for, I think, for cigarettes, yeah. And then he said that, well, after your dinner, you should smoke a cigarette because it cleans your mouth, it is very healthy, and it keeps you thinner than if you ate chocolate. That's how he sold cigarettes.

And then he was also employed by a company that sold chocolate, and they said, wait a minute, Mr. Bernays, we want you to sell our chocolate while you're telling people that they should smoke a cigarette after dinner and not eat chocolate. This is not good for our business. And then he said, right. So we have a propaganda war going on. We have the propaganda war, chocolate versus cigarettes—who's going to win? And so he always tried to promote more and more propaganda being brought forth. And I should say that we shouldn't do that. So this is sort of my understanding and one of the principles that I laid out for my work. I think that we should focus on information, on enlightenment, and we should focus on our stories that are very well-founded. In the end, I think that's what's going to stick, and that's what can keep us going.

## **#Pascal**

Thank you for a plaidoyer for integrity and intellectual integrity as well, for not selling out. I must say, though, I did learn how to make my thumbnails much more clickbaity, because everybody says they don't like clickbait, because you kind of feel infantilized and so on. And, you know, it's kind of—then on the other hand, it always works. It's just that. And I think we have to grapple with that also in what we do for a while. But maybe just to say that the right strategy—the question is how to form a right strategy to counter that propaganda through these different mechanisms. And it's maybe fair to say that, in your mind, has somebody figured that out? Is there a book that you could say, like, yes, that book figured it out, like in terms of a strategy, how to counter propaganda on the individual level, but also societally?

## **#Jonas Togel**

Well, there are a lot of books out there you can try. There's one that's called \*Free Your Mind\*. That is by two experts on nudging who, during COVID, became very disillusioned with the efforts that were being made to push people towards vaccines and so on. And they wrote this book of, you know, this is the strategy, this is how to counter it. I think that it depends on how you look at people, and I try to look at people as a whole. And this is why I have included this whole chapter on what should we do in a world filled with cognitive warfare, and how can we counter cognitive warfare. I wrote this chapter in my book where I say that we need to, you know, strengthen ourselves. We need to strengthen relationships.

We need to be aware of the fact that our hearts and minds are at the center of these very modern, very sophisticated psychological warfare techniques every day. And if we are very careful with our trust and we don't just blindly trust, but we want proof first, and we also, as we've just talked about, take care of ourselves and try not to exhaust ourselves—so, you know, relax, switch off the media. You can only be manipulated when you interact. So if you don't interact, you can't be manipulated. There's absolutely no way that a talk show or a newspaper article or whatever can reach you if you don't watch it. So that is very simple, but it is very effective. If you spend your time strolling through the woods with your family, with your dog, whatever, you have a good time. You feel better afterwards.

You do something for your body. You do something for your mind. And I think if we look at ourselves as these whole beings, then if we take care of ourselves, we are aware of manipulation. We try to avoid it as best as we can. I think these are very, very important steps. And then, with the energy that we have, very carefully select: where do I put my energy? What do I watch? What do I not watch? I recommend, for example, watching neutrality studies, because there's always very valuable information out there. So spend your time. And then if you feel like, okay, today I've got enough, I don't want any more, you switch it off. You spend time with your family, and so slowly sort of find a way out with good friends. Strength. Love is the most important one that we've got. Focus on love. Focus on the light. And so that's going to guide us out of this misery.

## **#Pascal**

I like that. Self-care, ladies and gentlemen, self-care as a form of resistance and as a form of strength in order to, well, counter parts of what society is currently throwing at us. Jonas, for people who want to read more from you, is there a place where you publish something in English every once in a while?

## **#Jonas Togel**

I'm trying to get an English channel going, so we'll see where that leads us. But at this point, I think a couple of my articles have been translated into English. But so far, I think it's mostly focusing on the DACH region, so Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

## **#Pascal**

Okay, so for anyone interested, also who can read German, please, I highly recommend—Jonas wrote two wonderful books, actually. He wrote more, but the two, like *\*Cognitive Warfare\** and the other one—sorry, what was the other one? The title? *\*War Games.\** *\*War Games\**, yeah, where you analyze all of the NATO shenanigans, what they actually play out and what they actually say out in

the open about what the vision of NATO is for how to fight war, which is very, very frightening. I highly recommend that. And we will have you back on the channel as well. Jonas Tögel, thank you so much for your time today.

**#Jonas Tögel**

Thank you, Pascal.