

# German War Journalist REVEALS Realities in Ukraine | Patrik Baab

Today I'm talking to Patrik Baab, one of Germany's best and most critical international journalists. Mr. Baab is the author of the German-language bestselling book "On Both Sides of the Front," in which he shares his experiences traveling to the Donbas. He also worked for many years as an editor for the North German Broadcasting Company (NDR) and he used to work as a lecturer at two universities. Patrik Baab's publications can be found here: <https://patrikbaab.de/> <https://www.buchkomplizen.de/buecher/politik/geopolitik/auf-beiden-seiten-der-front.html> <https://www.buchkomplizen.de/buecher/hintergrund-verlag/propaganda-presse.html> <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/archiv/2025/nr-4-4-maerz-2025/fuenf-kriege-in-einem> <https://www.buchkomplizen.de/buecher/medien/recherchieren.html> <https://www.buchkomplizen.de/buecher/politik/im-spinnennetz-der-geheimdienste.html> <https://www.buchkomplizen.de/mediensystem-und-oeffentliche-sphaere-in-der-krise.html> <https://shop.tredition.com/booktitle/Staatsfeind/W-662-481-128>

## #M3

In 2022, I met representatives of the Kremlin for a secret talk in Moscow. And they asked me this question. They asked how to deal with crazy politicians who have lost touch with reality, who have no idea what really happens on the ground. And I answered, you cannot deal with this kind of people. It's impossible. They have to be kicked out of the business. We need a new elite. And this is a project for 20, 25, 30 years.

## #M2

Hello everybody, this is Pascal from Neutrality Studies, and today I'm talking once again to Patrik Baab, one of Germany's best and most critical international journalists. Mr. Baab is the author of the German-language bestselling book On Both Sides of the Front. It's appeared only in German, but that would be the translated title. In this book, he shares his experiences traveling to the Donbass. He also worked for many years as an editor for the North German Broadcasting Company, NDR, and he used to work as a lecturer at two different universities. Patrik, welcome back.

## #M3

Hello, Pascal, and thank you for inviting me to your channel. It's a great honor for me.

## #M2

It's great having you, and it's great having you in English. The last talk we did was in German and then it was translated, but this time we said we'd do it the other way around. We said we want to focus a bit on the Donbass and the local level within this conflict because, as we talked about via email, my interpretation is that we have at least three different conflicts going on, right? On one level, we have a large structural war between the USA, NATO, and Russia. Then we have a bilateral hot shooting war between Russia and Ukraine. But then, on the third level, we also have a civil war or had a civil war inside Ukraine in these Donbass regions, right? That was going on for a long time. And you've been working a lot with the Donbass. You told me in the email exchange, though, that you see at least five conflicts. Could you tell me how you see these levels?

### **#M3**

Yes, Pascal, I think the regional level is extremely intertwined with the geopolitical level. And I see five different levels of conflict that are culminating in a historical collision in the Ukraine war. The war has now entered its fourth year, and I see five wars in one. Firstly, the Ukrainian civil war starting from 2013. Then the war between Ukraine and the separatist republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, and from 2022, involving the Russian Federation as well. Thirdly, the proxy war of the United States, NATO, and the European Union against Russia. The fourth point is the global economic war over the decline of the West.

For example, the unipolar world with the United States as a hegemon and the emerging BRIC states striving for a multipolar world. And fifthly, the war of the Western elites against their own people, the class war. Every war is a class war as well. If you want, I can explain that because the first point is very interesting. It is underestimated in Western propaganda media and Western politics. The civil war in Ukraine began at the latest with the coup on the Maidan. This coup was planned long in advance and orchestrated by the United States, by NATO, and the European Union. And this violates the UN Charter's ban on intervention. The rest was in cahoots with Ukrainian ultra-nationalists and fascists.

These Galician ultra-nationalists and fascists brought militant demonstrators and thousands of weapons to the Maidan. Previously, arms depots and police stations in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil had been looted. According to their own statements, they wanted to start a civil war if the Maidan failed, as Nikolai Petru, who you know very well, found out. The Right Sector was responsible for the murders on the Maidan. Around 100 people were killed. This is because the snipers were in the buildings that the Right Sector had occupied. This is shown by the detailed investigations of Professor Ivan Katchanovski from the University of Ottawa.

Immediately after the coup, a wave of violence rolled through the whole country, particularly in eastern Ukraine, where people of Russian origin lived. There were violent attacks with many deaths in Odessa, Mariupol, Zaporizhzhia, and other cities. This led to the formation of self-defense militias in eastern Ukraine, which obtained weapons because the police and militia showed solidarity with

them, and armed units defected. The central government in Kiev relied on violence from the outset and launched the so-called anti-terror operation against the insurgents from April 6, 2014. This marked the beginning of a fight against the population in Donbas, in which at least 14,000 people, including 3,400 civilians, were killed.

## **#M3**

By 2022, before the Russian attack, this violates the UN Charter's prohibition of the use of force and makes it possible to speak of an attempted genocide. The insurgents responded by proclaiming the republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, and these secessions were confirmed by two referendums in May 2014. Such a secession of a part of a country is also possible under international law against the will of the central government. The West had also accepted this in Kosovo. The establishment of the independent republics of Donetsk and Lugansk marks the end of the civil war process.

The second stage began at the end of April 2014, the phase of the war between Ukraine as a warring party on one side and the republics of Lugansk and Donetsk, which were supported economically, politically, and indirectly, also militarily by the Russian Federation. Former NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also confirmed this to the European Parliament on September 7, 2023. Contrary to what Stoltenberg said, no Russian troops were involved until February 2022. There were volunteers around Igor Girkin, for example, with the nickname Strelkov. There were Wagner mercenaries, but no regular units.

The Minsk Agreement was an attempt to give Ukraine some breathing space because Ukrainian units were encircled by insurgents near Debaltseve in the winter of 2014 to 2015. And to give Kiev time to rearm, as former German Chancellor Merkel and former French President Hollande explained, it was never honored by the Ukrainian side. In February 2022, Russia also abandoned the Minsk Agreement and intervened directly by invading Ukraine. This marked the beginning of the second part of the war between Ukraine on the one hand and the republics of Donetsk and Lugansk and the Russian Federation on the other side. The third level is the proxy war between the United States, NATO, and the EU, and Russia.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Trump's special envoy Keith Kellogg now speak of a proxy war, as did former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Economists Jeffrey Sachs and many other historians, such as Richard Sakwa, Nikolai Petro, and Keith Van der Pijl, confirm that the United States has been trying to pull Ukraine into the Western economic orbit and to arm it militarily as a bulwark against Russia since its independence in '91. The aim was to exploit Ukraine's natural resources and to encircle Russia. This was intended to consolidate the United States' hegemonic position because, in a unipolar world, there can only be one leading power: Washington.

The leading power sets the rules. Everybody else has to submit. The United States has lost this battle. In February 2025, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio acknowledged that we live in a multipolar world. Negotiations are now taking place in Riyadh, not just for peace in Ukraine alone,

but rather claims are being staked out worldwide. The fourth level is the global economic war waged by the West against the BRICS states, which are led by Russia and China. The West has also lost this battle. The 15 sanctions packages to date, with a total of 30,000 sanctions, were aimed at isolating Russia. But they proved to be a boomerang. Without cheap Russian oil and gas, the German economy in particular is no longer competitive.

With the blowing up of the Nord Stream pipeline, for which the journalist Seymour Hersh blames his own country, the United States, the energy trap has snapped shut for Germany. The sanctions are having no effect. The Russian economy is surprisingly robust. And the 193 nations in the United Nations General Assembly, only 40 have joined the sanctions, while 153 continue to cooperate with Russia. It is not Russia that is isolated. It is the West. The European Council on Foreign Relations wrote, "United West divided from the rest." Meanwhile, Russia is expanding its economic relations with Asia. New nuclear-powered icebreakers are being built in St. Petersburg. I saw that, to make the northern passage navigable for tankers all year round.

New pipelines are being built to China. New railroad lines are being built between the Caspian and the Black Seas. On a global scale, economic power is gradually shifting away from Europe and the United States to Southeast Asia. More than 3 billion people live there. The United States and Europe's share of value creation is declining, while China, in particular, is becoming even stronger economically. The United States is trying to stabilize its economy at the expense of the Europeans. As a result, Europe is becoming a backyard of Washington, but also the backyard of Russia, which will not be able to reverse its turn towards Asia. The fifth level affects the taxpayers in NATO countries, especially in Europe, employers, employees, pensioners, and the middle class as a whole.

The European Union, the United States, and Germany have financed the war in Ukraine with hundreds of billions. The reconstruction will cost hundreds of billions as well, and more and more money is being spent on armaments. This money is missing from consumption, social security, pensions, education, and infrastructure. This is not military Keynesianism because John Maynard Keynes' ideas were aimed at strengthening the population's demand. As you can see, the war in Ukraine is also a war waged by governments and corporations against their own people. The war is a raid against the middle class and the poor, and it deprives them of billions and feeds the military-industrial complex in the United States. It's a class war. These are the five levels of war I see in Ukraine.

## **#M2**

Thank you very much for this comprehensive and also very well-prepared overview that you're giving us. I know I said we're going to talk about the Donbass mostly, but because of what you just said, I just need to ask you. One of the things that really flabbergasts me now is that after all of this failed sanctioning of Russia, and after all this bloodbath that we have seen, and Europe being willing and ready to ruin itself in the process, we are now at a point where the United States also tries to scavenge and exploit Europe even more, right?

Putting tariffs also on the Europeans who already lost their energy lifeline to Russia. And, of course, the mineral deal with Ukraine, which is the most cruel and most neocolonial enterprise that I have seen in my life put on a European state, right? We've seen it with the Europeans doing it to Africa and doing it to Asia. I cannot remember that somebody tried to do something like this, kind of forcing a state to give up all of its wealth in perpetuity to a great power in Europe. It seems to me that this war was not just directed against Russia; it's also directed against Europe, at least from the US side. How do you see it?

### **#M3**

This is absolutely correct. The ones responsible in Europe are transatlantic corrupted elites. They made their careers by serving the United States more than serving their own countries, and they were promoted by the government of the United States. For example, Annalena Baerbock had to show up in Washington at a think tank, and they had to provide their political position, to explain their political position. Then she was sent back to become foreign minister in Germany. So all the political elites in Europe are part of a global political elite, which are far from serving their own countries.

### **#M2**

Is this a result of the way that Europe, basically the European Union, kind of developed, you know, and the way that European countries started developing these supranational organizations like the EU and international organizations like NATO, where suddenly positions become available, where individuals can be more powerful or more important, and the elites can be more important inside the institutions than inside their own countries? Just as it would be impossible for any kind of Estonian former prime minister to suddenly take a major role in European affairs if it wasn't for the EU. And these institutions, though, are all tethered to the United States and controlled, of course, ultimately with power lying in Washington.

### **#M3**

Yes, I think so. This is one level. And the other level is American soft power. A lot of German elites and European elites as well were educated at transatlantic organizations and foundations, like the German Marshall Fund, Young Global Leaders, or the foundations of the billionaire Soros, such as the Renaissance Foundation. And there are hundreds of foundations of that kind. They were not forced. They get offers. They receive transatlantic invitations to scientific meetings, research journeys, and all that. They were promoted to jobs in Atlantik-Brücke.

And these organizations are aligned with state interests, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations that are financed indirectly by the government. This forms a huge ideological apparatus at all levels, not only the EU level or the state level. Under the state level, you have a lot

of non-governmental organizations. And those non-governmental organizations that are paid by the states are providing jobs for young academics. And that's the whole secret. It's open to your eyes. You just have to see it.

## **#M2**

It's ideological colonialism and fostering for 40, 50 years, you know, these generations, right? And just distribute the money, but make sure that they ideologically remain aligned. And if people jump out, like Ulrike Guérot and so on, they, of course, will never be seen again within these structures, right?

## **#M3**

Yes, my friend, Ulrike was part of this ideological apparatus. But one day she began to doubt. And from one day to the next, she became an outsider. She had no friends anymore.

## **#M2**

And she used to be on all of these talk shows in Germany, right? The biggest ones, the most important ones. And now, those times are gone because she's not aligned anymore. Ideologically, therefore, you're dropped like a hot potato.

## **#M3**

And that's an interesting point because the propaganda media, the mainstream media, are completely aligning with NATO propaganda and the narratives of the security apparatus. This is what media science shows, and you can see it everywhere. Ulrike is just one very good example. The crucial point, from my point of view, was the Second Iraq War in 2003, when the then-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the French President Chirac, and the Russian President Putin refused to align with the United States and attack Iraq. Then Washington spoke of the old Europe and the new Europe. This was a warning signal for the American elites. They wanted to re-educate the European elites. This shouldn't happen again.

## **#M2**

That was the main part. I mean, all of this plays together. It just means that there's no easy cure for it because this ideological colonialism is, of course, now deep in the bones of Europe. But that also explains why Europe is now so shaken, why all of these people do not understand what happened to them. But maybe, look, we should focus a little bit on the Donbass because you actually spent a lot of time there, right? And you went there many, many times. And I really want to know more about your experiences, how the Donbass was living before, how the Donbass is doing now. And when were you there for the last time?

## #M3

Well, the last time I was there was last year in October 2023. And at the moment, I'm writing a book on that. I've been in the Donbass several times and in Ukraine several times. I've been in Russia countless times since 1998. My book, "Both Sides of a Front," is based on two of these trips. Well, this is a long story. I've been working for North German public broadcasters since 1997. There was a magazine for events around the Baltic Sea, the so-called Baltic Report. For this program, the editor-in-chief sent me to Russia, among other places, the Baltic, and Scandinavia. It was actually a touristic program, but I made films about Russian neo-Nazis, illegal oil transports, the illegal trade in EU passports, the sinking of the Kursk, and all that.

And that gave me context with Russian colleagues and many people in Russia and Ukraine. So I learned to research in Russia and to find sources of my own. This made my work in Donbass possible. That's why I also knew that the way the Western media portray the war in Ukraine is essentially NATO propaganda. We have to keep in mind that this war is taking place on three levels. The first level is the military conflict on the ground. The second is the economic warfare against Russia. The third point is the propaganda war. The media are not neutral in this propaganda war but are a party to the war. That's an important point. My main impressions are completely different from what the media provide in terms of disinformation, I have to say. They don't inform properly.

## #M2

But they did a very good job at doing their propaganda. Because, you know, Soviet propaganda in the Soviet times was easy to pinpoint for Soviet citizens, at least as far as I know from the readings about those times, and also the jokes that went around and so on. But Western propaganda is almost... There's not a lot of people that identify it. I mean, anyone watching this program... Anyone watching some of the other programs does. But I would say that probably around 70% to 80% in Europe believe that the general framework of what you get in ARD, ZDF, all of the German broadcasting companies, more or less, is accurate with some issues. They do not comprehend how deep the misguiding went or the narrative control went. How does the Donbass, for instance—can you give us a few examples of how the Donbass was portrayed in the West versus what is actually reality there?

## #M3

Yes, 80% of the German population want to believe. That's the point. And this is far from reality. I can explain that in detail. The propaganda media omit the prehistory of the war and the actual reasons for the war by ignoring the coup of the Maidan and the responsibility of NATO and the United States. They do not look at the social situation of the population in Ukraine. They misrepresent the military situation and behave amorally because their warmongering is responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths. They misjudge the mood of the population in Ukraine and in

Donbass. They conceal the cultural genocide, the reprisals against the Orthodox Church, the book burnings, the destruction of monuments of Russian poets, and the pronounced cult of Bandera and fascism.

They do not provide information about the boomerang effect of the sanctions and the economic war against Russia, which the West is in danger of losing. They do not provide information about the geopolitical interests of the United States, which has been dividing the European region, the Eurasian region, for more than a hundred years and wants to prevent close cooperation between Russia and Germany. In particular, the attempt by the U.S. neocons and the Biden administration to preserve the unipolar world order with the United States as a hegemon and therefore to weaken Russia through a war in Ukraine in order to then turn to China as the main opponent. It played down the danger of nuclear conflict. They share the apocalypse blindness of our politicians.

The mainstream media in all NATO countries align themselves with NATO propaganda like metal filings with a magnet. They share the neocolonial perspective of the security state and spread anti-Russian and racist warmongering. All media research shows this. They don't inform. They misinform. They disinform. Damn poor job. And my experiences on the ground are completely different. Well, for me, it was not the first time I was in a war zone. From '99, I was in the Balkans, in Kosovo, and I worked in Afghanistan. And I learned how to deal with danger. For example, in a region where there is a risk of mines, you are never allowed to pee in the ditch. You have to go behind the car. Because in the ditch, there can be mines. But this war is much tougher than anything I've seen before.

Drones, computer-controlled artillery, and artificial intelligence have totally changed the war. The average survival time of an infantryman on the front line, as soldiers report, was only four hours in Bakhmut. Only four hours. Jesus. I saw Mariupol in September 2022. The city was destroyed by, I estimate, 80%. Many people were living in basements. Nevertheless, Russia is not waging a war against the civilian population. The figures show that. No one is alive from body count. But the United Nations has registered around 20,000 civilian victims so far. I think there are many more. Many are not identified so far. But this is the lowest number of civilian casualties compared to all major wars since 1914. Whatever Russia wants to achieve with this war, it does not intend to annihilate the Ukrainian population.

## **#M2**

One just needs to compare the death count of civilians that you just gave in Ukraine and Russia as well, and in the Kursk region, and compare that to the deaths in Gaza. I mean, that one to me is as obviously genocidal as it gets. And the crazy thing is that the Europeans keep saying, "Oh no, there's no genocide going on in Gaza," and the ICJ case by South Africa against Israel is ludicrous, is what they're saying. And on the other hand, they are supporting a genocide case at the ICJ by Ukraine against Russia. This is, yeah, it's another level of trying to make reality what you want it to be. But I agree with you. I mean, Russia is first and foremost fighting the military of Ukraine, the armed forces, these different groups that were integrated.



## **#M3**

The figures show that. And this is really a special military operation against the Ukrainian government and against NATO on the ground of Ukraine. That's the point. And I have to say, although German tanks are rolling in the Donbass again today, I have not experienced any hostility towards Germans. Quite the opposite. The people make clear distinctions between the people and their governments, according to the motto, governments come and go, people will remain. But at the checkpoints in the war zone, this is completely different. I've been checked several times at gunpoint and arrested several times. I was detained. My German passport identifies me to the soldiers as a member of an enemy state. Then I was filtered, so-called filtered. That means I was detained and questioned for many hours.

## **#M2**

By Russians in Russia.

## **#M3**

Yes, absolutely. By Russians, by Russian troops. And, well, in front of the guns. And so far, this all went well. But in a war zone where thousands have died, a human life is no longer worth much. Then I had to realize that the majority of the people in Donbas do not feel occupied by the Russian army, but liberated. Some of the soldiers were welcomed with open arms. It is hard to imagine in the West and contradicts NATO propaganda, but it is explainable. In Donetsk and Luhansk, the population has been shelled by the Ukrainian army since April 2014. I've experienced this many times.

After more than 10 years of shelling by Ukrainian artillery, it should come as no surprise that people see their future on the Russian side. Wages are three times higher in Russia. There is a higher standard of living. In cities such as Mariupol or Zaporizhzhia, fascist units such as the Azov Battalion have been harassing, beating, threatening, and arresting the civilian population since 2014. Eyewitnesses have told me that many times. Because the civilian population was subjected to reprisals, they welcomed the Russian army as liberators. That's easy to explain.

## **#M2**

Can I ask you about something here? Because the Donbas is, of course, one of the essential building blocks of this horrible war, or one of the things that kept the escalation spiral turning. But something that our media also always forgets and never mentions is that for eight years between 2014, when Donetsk and Luhansk, these two regions or oblasts, first said, "We want to be independent," until 2022, until like three or four days before the special military operation, the whole strategy of Russia was to keep them in there.

Russia did not recognize these regions' declarations of independence. They said, like, no, the final goal, as stated in the Minsk agreements, is to keep you inside Ukraine, federalize Ukraine, and make sure that Ukraine without Crimea remains as it is. That was the whole strategy, which is a smart strategy from Russia. And you've visited the place before that, before 2022, and then after it. Can you tell me if something changed on the ground regarding how people thought about their future and themselves, you know, as people of Luhansk, people of Donetsk, and what they were aiming for?

**#M3**

So I think nothing changed. The outcome of the Ukrainian shelling by the Ukrainian army for years, over eight years as a whole, drew the people in Donbas closer to the Russian side. The general opinion I heard is that the Kremlin came too late; they had to help us in 2014 and not in 2022. We waited too long. Putin came too late. This was a mistake.

**#M2**

That's what you're hearing about the feeling in the Donbas.

**#M3**

Many times, yes, many times. Because people say we see our children die, and the only possible help can come from Russia. The living standard in Russia is much higher than in Ukraine, and there is no language difference. Many people in Russia have relatives in Donbas because this was an important industrial region in the Soviet Union. Many people in the Donbas have relatives in Russia, in St. Petersburg, in Kazan, in Moscow, in Rostov-on-Don. So the relationships are very close, and they know each other; they know how they live on both sides of the border. You have to understand, all the regions eastward from the Dnieper came to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic in 1922 because the central government of the Bolsheviks in Moscow wanted to create a unique zone of administration for making the Dnieper navigable and for building a great hydraulic power plant near Zaporizhzhia, which worked up from 1932. And this was the background. So these were Russian people, not Ukrainians.

**#M2**

But when you were there before 2022, did you ever ask them whether they felt Ukrainian or Russian, or whether they felt both? And did that change also through the war? I suppose it must have.

**#M3**

No, it changed long before the war. In the time after the Maidan coup, it changed step by step in the years 2014, 2015, and 2016. A woman told me, "We were Ukrainians as well. Why didn't they shoot us? Why shoot us?"

**#M3**

Why did they shoot us and our children? Now, I hope for peace with Russia, aligning with Russia. That's the point.

**#M2**

Yeah, if you use that much violence against the local population, you cannot hope to win their hearts. Exactly. The same thing is unfortunately true in reverse. I mean, there's no way that Russia can hope that the Galicians and the Western Ukrainians will ever love them because, well... Yes.

**#M3**

And Russia doesn't want to conquer Western Ukraine. They don't want that. From my point of view, Ukraine will be divided into two, probably three parts. The regions eastward of the Dnieper will be Russian territory, and the rest will be a neutral country. There is a possibility that Poland will occupy Galicia because Galicia belonged to Poland between the Great Wars, from 1919 to 1939.

**#M2**

Although what we are recently hearing from Poland is that they are rather worried about the number of Ukrainians inside their current borders. So it seems that the current government is not keen on actually integrating even more Ukrainians into their nationalistic view of what Poland should be.

**#M3**

That's right, but there are strong relations between Poland and Western Ukraine, many friendships, but also historic hostilities because Ukrainian fascists killed up to 100,000 Poles in the years '43 and '44.

**#M3**

A very crucial way, so there are mixed feelings in Poland. I heard in Poland people say, "We are helping the Ukrainians. Yeah, they helped us as well; they helped us to die."

**#M2**

Nobody must underestimate the level of animosity within the European continent against each other. Which brings me to this question: the European Union, for all of its flaws and all of its mistakes, has done a miracle to bring France and Germany together, two states that historically loved killing each other. The European Union also solved quite a few problems. Let's not forget that. It basically helped solve the Northern Irish conflict and a couple of other conflicts. Just by Europeanizing the states, the conflicts went away. Now, in this case, it did the exact opposite. It made it worse. Can you explain to yourself why the European Union not only failed so miserably but actually did the opposite of being a peace project?

**#M3**

That's an interesting point.

**#M3**

I think the European Union is approaching this conflict, this war, incorrectly. They want to prolong the war and drive their own population even deeper into this war in Ukraine. And I think we are governed by gamblers who knowingly accept the risk of a nuclear war in Europe. And, well, you have to keep in mind, Russia is the strongest nuclear power in the world. And if Moscow caves under pressure, Russia will use the atomic bomb. As the New York Times reports, General Surovikin, the former Russian commander in the Kherson Oblast, was already considering this in 2023. We have already narrowly avoided a nuclear war, a nuclear inferno, several times in this Ukraine war. The reason for this warmongering among the political elites in the European Union, that was your question, is they want to distract from their own failures.

They have ruined their own countries, economically and politically, through the war and through the sanctions. They have maneuvered themselves into a dead end. This applies especially to Germany. Therefore, the propaganda is intended to shift the focus of aggression. That's the main point. The people's anger over the grievances in their own countries is being diverted onto an external enemy, Russia. This is how the Western political elites want to gain time to continue governing. That's the point. The European Union has completely failed as a peace project, as you mentioned, and has degenerated into a war machine. Decisions are being made in the European Parliament that Russia can only understand as a declaration of war.

This could actually lead to a nuclear catastrophe. We have now arrived in a kakistocracy, the rule of the worst. They are gradually abolishing democracy to secure the rule of the traditional party cartels. As for Donbas, it will not return to Ukraine. Russia won the war and now wants its demands met. Ukraine is being divided, I explained that. The longer the war lasts, the less of Ukraine will remain, and the more people will be killed. The cynicism of European politicians is also responsible for this.

The European Union could have and should have prevented this war, but neither Berlin nor the EU initiated a single peace initiative. This means that in addition to the military defeat and economic decline, there is also complete moral bankruptcy on the side of our politicians.

## **#M2**

Isn't it even worse? These people kept saying, we want peace. We will bring peace through weapons. Weapons are the way to peace. And they don't understand. They don't have the mental capacity to comprehend that what they're doing is making the war worse. Instead of using peaceful means to achieve peace, they want to use war means to achieve peace. And how do you deal with people who are that... ignorant? Because this is also a problem for military strategists, because if you assume that the other side is rational, then you can try to think yourself into their shoes. But if you have to understand that these people are complete morons, then how do you deal with that?

## **#M3**

In 2022, I met representatives of the Kremlin for a secret talk in Moscow, and they asked me this question. They asked how to deal with crazy politicians who have lost touch with reality, who have no idea what really happens on the ground. And I answered, you cannot deal with those kinds of people, with this kind of people. It's impossible. They have to be kicked out of the business. We need a new elite. And this is a project for 20, 25, 30 years. And if you have a look at the academic elites in Europe as a whole, especially in Germany, in the universities, in the schools, in the churches, in the political sphere, in the media, they all are thinking in the same way. So the complete academic elite in Western Europe has gone mad. That's the point. Well, in such a moment, I remember a sentence of William Shakespeare: "'Tis the time's plague when madmen lead the blind." And that's the political situation. And this is very dangerous.

## **#M2**

This is extremely dangerous. But we won't get them out. I mean, you can see right now how this kakistocracy, how these people try to make sure that all potential opposition from within is being eliminated, right? In Romania, now recently in France, I've had a talk with a Polish journalist who told me in Poland too, you know, the opposition is basically being kept down also through traditional measures. And if this continues, then there's not much hope for Europe because it will ruin itself, obviously, but it will do so while remilitarizing, which is even more dangerous, isn't it?

## **#M3**

It is absolutely the case. Europe is ruining itself, and this will end badly because we are becoming the backyard of the United States and the Russian Federation as well. So we are falling behind in

international development. We have a great shift to Southeast Asia in economic power, a shift in economic power, and we are losing our ground. People don't see that. They have lost touch with reality in Western Europe.

## **#M2**

If you were 28, but you know what you know today, I mean, with all the experiences, would you stay in Germany and try to make a living there, or would you actually leave?

## **#M3**

No, I would leave the country. I would probably go to Switzerland, Singapore, or Hong Kong, or perhaps to the Russian Federation, to St. Petersburg. I would not stay in Europe because I see the decline in Europe—economically, politically, and in terms of liberties. We are losing the ground of democracy. Today, we are living in Germany in a kind of facade democracy, nothing else.

## **#M2**

Do you think that there are some mechanisms to repair this? I mean, in theory, democracies should be able to, once they really run in the wrong direction, you know, the population starts understanding that they're suffering, and they then elect opposition parties into power, and therefore you can then start correcting course. I mean, Germany has a large opposition party, which is the AfD, right? And they used to have in Parliament on the left side Ms. Wagenknecht, but they didn't manage to get in again. But there is opposition. Will this opposition grow?

## **#M3**

I think this opposition will grow, and there are two possibilities. In Germany, we have two parties that are oriented towards peace with Russia: the AfD and the BSW, the Sarah Wagenknecht party. From my point of view, those parties should closely cooperate to achieve peace with Russia. If they don't do that, the AfD will turn into a transatlantic political right-wing group, putting pressure on the people in Germany by gaining a government position to cut social security expenses and so on. This would be the wrong way, from my point of view. On the other hand, people have to demonstrate for peace. They have to bring their interest in peace onto the streets. But in Germany, people don't do that. Well, responsible for the catastrophe is not only the one who is causing it, but also the one who doesn't want to do something against this process.

## **#M2**

Can I ask you, and this is also quite difficult, but something that occupies me a lot at the moment mentally is this question about surrender or capitulation. I believe very strongly one of the things that saved Japan from suffering the same fate as Korea was because Japan was able to surrender. It

was able to do what was unthinkable only months before. Germany, of course, famously didn't surrender, and the Russians went all the way to the bunker, right? They took Berlin, and it destroyed the country and split it up into four and then two pieces for 40 years.

It was horrible, horrible. But after this experience in Germany, you were forced to surrender, and you were forced to turn around 180 degrees and accept that, no, the Nazi regime was an evil regime and it did the most horrible things. And today, Germany accepts that, right? Every German accepts that never ever again would they want that. But it is unthinkable that, again, surrender might be the way toward peace. Can you explain to yourself why that is, that surrender is not a concept in Europe at the moment in order to get to peace?

### **#M3**

Well, I agree with Professor Glenn Diesen of the University of South-Eastern Norway. He said the only way to bring peace to Ukraine is for the West, NATO, the United States, and Brussels to accept the Russian demands. Surrender. Because Russia is demanding surrender. Exactly. Because the Russians will continue to fight until Ukraine confirms that this country stays neutral. This is the main point. And the Western elites don't accept that because their own careers are very close to the warmongers in the United States, particularly within the Democratic Party. They don't follow Donald Trump. They want to hide themselves and survive in the basement until Trump is gone. And they hope the war will last until Trump is gone. And they won't destroy every peace solution. It is, on the one hand, a psychological problem. They are, in a narcissistic way, dysfunctional. It's dysfunctional thinking. They have lost the ground of reality, and they are living in a bubble of transatlantic ideology.

### **#M2**

Donald Trump is currently using a sledgehammer to destroy that bubble. I mean, this is gonna hurt. This is gonna hurt so bad. I mean, psychologically, to these people. Yes. Well, we didn't talk as much about Donbass as I wanted to, but this was very interesting, the way that we connected or you connected these different levels. Patrik, do you want to add something more?

### **#M3**

I can tell a bit more about Donbass and, well, how Donbass is doing today. And how are the political structures today? I learned on the ground, well, as far as the political structures are concerned, the Russian constitution applies now. According to this, the provincial governors in Donbass are appointed by the president himself and are directly responsible to him. This can also be seen on the ground, for example, with the head of the government of the Donetsk People's Republic, Denis Pushilin. As far as I can tell, he's toeing the Kremlin's general line, nothing else. In the meantime, other Russian regions have taken over sponsorships. They have taken over sponsorships for the four oblasts, which have been incorporated into the Russian Federation.

And this means that Russian regions are actively providing reconstruction assistance—militarily, politically, and economically. I was also told that President Putin is partly overseeing the reconstruction himself. He was in Mariupol as well and was informed about how the construction of new districts, new houses, and new housing estates was progressing. He's also sending representatives to monitor, for example, food prices. It is important to note that all four districts are still war zones. Martial law therefore applies, and the military commanders are ultimately in charge. This is also reflected, for example, in the curfew. At 10 p.m., you are no longer allowed to be on the streets without a special permit. Unlike in Russia, young men are still conscripted into the military.

And my overall impression is that Donbass is ruled from Moscow, but the central government has the support of regional officials and the local people, the population. However, this is an exception. Between 2014 and 2022, the CIA and the Ukrainian secret service SBU tried to set up a kind of stay-behind organization in the Melitopol area. This is a secret underground army that was supposed to start a guerrilla war in the event of a Russian attack. The city of Melitopol is strategically located between Russia and Crimea, halfway between the Dnieper and the Sea of Azov. And this stay-behind organization has secret weapons stores and explosive stores and still carries out attacks in the Melitopol area.

I spoke to a man who, as a civilian administrative manager, was the target of an attack. He lost a leg when a car bomb exploded. And I think that's interesting. But I have to add, when I was in the Donbass in the fall of '22, some of the towns and villages were completely destroyed. Mariupol, for example, was destroyed, I estimate, to 80%. Long queues everywhere for food distribution, stray children, homeless people, shuttered houses, burnt facades, and all that. In the meantime, the infrastructure is being rebuilt, the apartment houses are being renovated. New windows have been installed everywhere in the schools, or new schools have been built.

Reconstruction is creating new jobs in the Donbas. As a result, many people who fled the war are returning. Donbas is now a region of immigration. It is important to note that Russia has taken in the most refugees from Ukraine. The UN speaks of 2.8 million, but Russian authorities report up to 5 million refugees. It is difficult to determine the exact number as many people have been accommodated with relatives or have now taken Russian citizenship. Pensions have now been raised to the Russian level. I told you that this means pensioners have three times as much money in their pockets as before. This strengthens purchasing power and loyalty to the leadership as well.

And many people are completely traumatized by the war. I spoke to teachers in Mariupol who teach those kinds of children. They tell me when the bell rings at recess, some children crawl under the table because they think it's a bomb alert. And even if bilateral talks between Washington and Moscow have given rise to optimism that the war can be ended, the war in the minds of those children will never end. That's the point. I have not seen a difference in how the Russian-speaking people and the Ukrainian-speaking people are treated. Especially, the city of Melitopol was handed over to the Russian army without a fight.



**#M3**

That's why there is no destruction in the city. I was in an Armenian restaurant over there, and the owners—the family—is not politically inclined towards Russia but towards Ukraine. They have no recognizable disadvantages. They can continue to run their business. There's nothing.

**#M2**

You haven't seen any systematic disadvantage for the Ukrainian-speaking population in the now Russian-controlled Donbas?

**#M3**

No, because this is normal in Russia. It's a multi-ethnic country. All over Russia, it's the same thing: different ethnicities, different groups of people are living together, and this is a good sign. Yeah, this is a good sign. Even before the Russian invasion, everyone in Donbas spoke Russian with a Ukrainian accent. Russian is now the official language there. The school curricula have adapted to the Russian curricula, and teachers are trained in the Russian way accordingly. Some use the Ukrainian language in everyday life, but I couldn't say that this puts them at a disadvantage. I never saw that.

**#M2**

That's a very positive thing. And, you know, I'm sorry, but we are reaching the one-hour mark, so we do have to stop at this point. But if people want to follow you, also like the English-speaking audience, do you publish in English or mainly in German? Or is there an outlet to go to read from you?

**#M3**

Yeah, you can read some articles online that I've written in the Canadian magazine, the Post Hill magazine. Not so much, but some articles. Mostly, I'm publishing in the German language.

**#M2**

Okay. And I will put the links to your publishing in English and also in German into the description. Everybody go and read from Patrik. He really reports a lot and he thinks a lot. And I thank you very much for all the insights today.

**#M3**

Thanks very much. It was great talking to you.

