

Truth Revealed: USA Is Nr.1 Democracy Killer | Finian Cunningham

Journalist reveals what Washington tried to hide forever: The USA is the world's largest democracy killer with an unbroken track-record of foreign interventions. Finian Cunningham discusses regime change, media control, and Western imperialism with Pascal Lottaz. They cover Iran 1953, CIA influence on major media, Ukraine coverage, censorship, class politics, and the return of open imperialism. Cunningham also explains why his book *Killing Democracy* argues that media manipulation has been central to Western power since World War II. Links: Strategic Culture Foundation: <https://strategic-culture.su/> Finian Cunningham on RT: <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/authors/Finian-Cunningham/> Sputnik International: <https://sputnikglobe.com/> 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.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction and Killing Democracy 00:03:45 Iran 1953 and Media Narratives 00:13:25 CIA Control of Western Media 00:20:05 Uprisings, Ukraine, and Selective Coverage 00:25:55 Propaganda and Alternative Media 00:30:09 Censorship, Free Speech, and Class War 00:35:26 Imperialism Then and Now 00:39:00 Selling War to the Public 00:44:28 Western Leaders and Irish Media 00:53:00 Media Bubbles and Final Thoughts

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies, today with the Irish writer and editor Finian Cunningham, who is also the author of the wonderful book **Killing Democracy: Western Imperialism's Legacy of Regime Change and Media Manipulation.** Finian, welcome. Welcome.

#Finian Cunningham

Thanks, Pascal. Great to be on your show.

#Pascal

Great having you. And thank you so much for writing that book together with a couple of your colleagues. I mean, there are also other writers in there. And you really put together quite a strong case to basically pick up the West when it says, "We are here to defend democracy," and all the times when they did the exact opposite. What was your motivation for writing this book? And in doing so, what's your most important insight?

#Finian Cunningham

So we wrote **Killing Democracy** over the last year. Four other colleagues — Daniel Kovalik, Jeremy Kuzmarov, Ron Ridenour, and K.J. Noh — all very respected journalists, writers, and authors in their own fields. So we wanted to look at the whole history of covert regime change operations after the Second World War, after the establishment of the UN Charter that completely forbade, prohibited explicitly, any kind of violation of the sovereign affairs of foreign countries. And the signatories to the UN Charter were all signed up to it. You know, it was quite a big, explicit public commitment to these principles. But very quickly, the Western powers, of necessity, had to then innovate as a stealth form of violating the UN Charter.

I mean, these powers were imperialist powers. They just didn't stop being imperialist just because they'd signed up to a very noble document and proclaimed democracy and international law. So they, by necessity, had to innovate a covert way of continuing business — stealth imperialism. And that then inaugurated the whole era of covert operations to obtain their imperialist objectives of controlling other countries. What we found, and I think what we brought to the table in a new way, was how the media were very much co-opted in this endeavor. I mean, the history of regime change operations has been well covered by people like William Blum, the late William Blum.

You know, many others — Stephen Kinzer and David Vine and many great authors out there. What we wanted to look at in particular, Pascal, was the role of the media in this enterprise — that the media was crucial to conducting this work, this new policy of regime change operations. And in the first few years after the CIA was set up in 1947, their first priority — as we call it, the priority covert operation — was to gain systematic control of the media within the United States and in Europe. That would then enable and facilitate all these other covert operations of regime change. So media control is absolutely fundamental, absolutely vital to this whole endeavor of regime change operations.

#Pascal

You start off with the case of Allende in Chile and how Kissinger had basically zero, zero respect for the democratic wishes of an entire South American nation. And that's just one example of many, one of many, in which a democratically elected leader was overthrown. The first one, probably of the modern CIA, where kind of the MI6 handed over to the CIA, was, of course, Iran in '53. But what is it that you found that these people then were saying about, you know, the fact that they overthrew democratically elected governments? I mean, the very thing that they said they stand against in the entire Cold War business — '53 or '74, I mean, doesn't matter — they've always emphasized that they're here to defend liberty, right, and freedom. How do they justify that to themselves, and how does the media usually launder this business?

#Finian Cunningham

Yes. Well, I mean, they didn't admit to the first regime change operation, as you pointed out there, Pascal, was in 1953 in Iran, where they determined — the United States and Britain determined —

that the elected Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammad Mossadegh, had to go because of his policy of nationalizing the oil industry. That was depriving Britain of its colonial-era, you know, huge profits from the Persian oil fields. And so they determined that Mossadegh had to go. Now, it was all very covert. I mean, they didn't admit to this until decades later. Now it's known that the CIA and MI6 were involved in toppling Prime Minister Mossadegh's government. And so that was decades later.

At the time, it was all very covert and, you know, unspoken. But in order to justify kind of involvement in Iran to destabilize the government, the media played a very significant, a vital role in enabling that policy. So, you know, the CIA and the British infiltrated Iran with millions of dollars, huge amounts of money at that time in 1953, leading up to the coup, and, you know, kind of inciting various, you know, actors in the country to go on the rampage to destabilize the social order. I mean, as we're seeing 73 years later with the disturbances at the beginning of this year, the exact same formula — you know, instigating agents and various proxies to cause social mayhem in the country.

#Pascal

What happened in January in Iran, right, when there was this protest and the West supported that by bringing in all of the Starlink panels and supporting the groups and trying to tank the economy, and Mr. Scott Besant being super proud of it, even boasting about it — “Ha ha ha, we did that. Ha ha ha. Now you go, people of Iran, and overthrow your government.” That kind of mentality, right?

#Finian Cunningham

And Mossad and the CIA openly, and Trump even said there a few weeks ago that they had infiltrated weapons into Iran to arm these various groups. So the idea that it was a pro-democracy, peaceful protest — I mean, it may have started out as some genuine kind of protest over economic conditions, but it was very quickly hijacked, very deliberately orchestrated by the CIA and Mossad.

#Pascal

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#Finian Cunningham

The Western media, in the recent disturbances, portrayed it as a pro-democracy uprising and that the Iranian government and the security forces were viciously cracking down, killing. You know, the Western media would claim 30,000, 40,000 protesters. I mean, the Iranian figures, you know, and

independent researchers have confirmed this — the death toll was something like 3,000. And a lot of those 3,000 that were killed were police officers who were shot, you know, violently, you know, with firearms. So hundreds of buildings were torched, arson attacks.

Now, the Western media, of course, play this role of, you know, trying to sanitize all that and to distort it as some kind of merciless crackdown by the regime — this tyrannical regime that they would claim. So they very much play that role, recently towards Iran. But 73 years before that, in 1952–53, the Western media again played a very similar role in portraying the situation in Iran in a way that favored the Western agenda — the CIA's agenda, the MI6 agenda — to overthrow the government. I mean, they portrayed the Mossadegh government as just losing control, that he was, you know, kind of a bit of a lunatic, that he was crazy.

He was deranged, he was unstable, that he was kind of losing control of society. Then they also portrayed that this was allowing Iran to become, you know, kind of vulnerable to Soviet rule, the Soviet Union's infiltration or takeover of Iran, which wasn't true at all. So the media played this very crucial role in setting up the kind of context that would enable, you know, all sorts of covert violation or infiltration of Iranian society. And the two incidents, in 1953 and earlier this year, 2026, were very similar — exactly the same modus operandi of the media movement portraying events to suit the policy of regime change.

I'll have to say, Pascal, I mean, one very telling thing — if you look back on the media coverage of Iran in 1951–52, the American media actually at that time were quite favorable towards Mossadegh. I mean, he was seen and reported as a nationalist who had a legitimate claim to nationalize the oil industry. And there was a kind of a — when he came to the United Nations in September or October '51 — the Western, the American media were actually quite favorable towards Mossadegh and what his cause was all about. And they were quite contemptuous of the British, the old colonial power, and what their agenda was. Now, when Eisenhower became president in '52 — he was elected in '52 — going into '53 would be his first year in office.

Churchill, who was the prime minister in Britain at the time, very, very cleverly, you know, used all sorts of, like, you know, kind of claims about the Soviet Union and Cold War fears. He very much played on those fears. Now, he had willing, receptive ears within the Eisenhower administration. The Dulles brothers — Allen Dulles, who was the director of the CIA, and his brother, John Foster Dulles, who was the Secretary of State, effectively the Foreign Secretary. Both were very, very ideologically Cold Warrior-type interventionists, neo-imperialists. So they were quite receptive to Churchill's appeal that “we've got to do something about this Mossadegh government in Iran.”

But at that time, Pascal, and this is really significant, the United States media flipped like a switch from their favorable coverage of Mossadegh in '51–'52. Then, when the Eisenhower administration decided, right, we will go into a regime change operation with our British colleagues, the media from then on immediately started to smear Mossadegh and make all sorts of outlandish claims about his government. Now, that alone would tell you that there's a very systematic and institutionalized

control of the media, in that the whole media—from the New York Times to Newsweek to Time-Life magazine, all the newspapers, all the media in the United States—overnight changed their position towards Mossadegh and became very hostile. And that is indicative of institutionalized control.

#Pascal

How do you think that happened? Because Chomsky and Herman's *Manufacturing Consent* didn't come out for another 25 or so years. He did his analysis back in the '70s and then the '80s about how the system selects those who are most obedient and those who go along with narratives and so on and so forth. But the media environment in the 1950s in the United States is something that I generally don't know about. I mean, did you find proof that there were systematic influence campaigns by the government in the different newspapers and outlets and so on to report what should be reported?

#Finian Cunningham

Very much so, Pascal. I mean, we covered this in, I think it's chapter seven. The priority covert operation was to gain control of the US and European media after the CIA was formed in 1947. You had people like Frank Wisner, who was an aide to Allen Dulles, the director. Frank Wisner was the... A lot of these guys were, you know, all from the Second World War, working for military intelligence. They had studied Nazi propaganda, propaganda techniques. And so they carried on after the Second World War to develop these kinds of techniques of media narrative control, propaganda control. Frank Wisner was the top CIA figure involved in media relations. And the CIA very deliberately, very methodically set about a policy to co-opt all the top media executives in the United States.

Now, the other thing, Pascal, was that these media executives were also—quite a lot of them were also old executives from the Second World War. They'd worked in military intelligence, people like William Paley of CBS, Charles Douglas of Time Life magazine. They were old comrades or colleagues of Wisner and Dulles from the military, the OSS time, the Office of Strategic Services that was the forerunner of the CIA. So they were all very experienced, chummy, and had a very collegial kind of relationship. They went to the same dinner parties. There was a group called the Georgetown Set, a suburb of Washington, D.C., called Georgetown, where a lot of these diplomats and intelligence people and media people lived and went to the same dinner parties and had similar debates. So they had a very similar ideological view of the world. And the media people saw it as a patriotic duty to do as their government requested.

So it wasn't like as if there was a conflict of ethical interest. Oh, well, you know, supposedly we are independent journalists, we are the watchdog of government abuse, and we have to stay independent from the intelligence arms or whatever. There wasn't that, in my research. You could tell that there wasn't any sort of hesitation or, you know, reservation about becoming effectively tools of the CIA. They were wittingly involved in this endeavor to control the news media, the information that the public would receive. And quite a lot of researchers have coined this policy

Operation Mockingbird, where the CIA would deliberately infiltrate the media through their executive friends.

They would also recruit key journalists in the newspapers or the radio and television stations—foreign correspondents, opinion writers, reporters working abroad. So there was, you know, a very deliberate policy of recruiting people, and they would be paid, you know, they'd be given a sort of stipend from the CIA in addition to their media salary. Now, it's almost kind of a bit absurd, but people like William Paley at CBS had a direct line to Allen Dulles at the CIA. CBS, Columbia Broadcasting System, is comparable to, say, ARD in Germany or the BBC in Britain—I mean, the major news broadcaster, CBS. Now, Allen Dulles, the CIA director, had a direct line to William Paley at CBS and his, you know, successors.

Also, people like, you know, Arthur Sulzberger, the New York Times owner, were very close friends with Allen Dulles, and the Sulzberger family continued to own the New York Times. So there was this very chummy, you know, close, intimate, ideological relationship with these people and the CIA. And so when it would be requested of the media to, you know, follow the narrative of what, you know, the intelligence wanted—a certain narrative portrayed about Iran or Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz, who was overthrown a year after Iran in 1954—you know, the CIA and the State Department would, you know, co-opt the media to, okay, this is the storyline we want you to portray about these people: that they're stooges, that they're unreliable, that they're, you know, crazy or whatever. And the media obeyed very willingly to do that.

And that then set up a kind of public acceptance or manufacturing of consent, to use Chomsky and Ed Herman's term—a public acceptance or acquiescence to policies of infiltration and destabilization. Now, as I said, Pascal, it wasn't overtly admitted, "Oh, we are infiltrating these countries." That came out years later. But the mere involvement in these countries, even on a kind of covert level, was enabled by the media's compliant reporting.

#Pascal

So is it fair to say that whenever in public media one of these uprisings happened, it was portrayed as something generally positive? And then, you know, this is a people's liberation, whatever it is—what the Shah was supposedly doing or what Pinochet was doing, right? Getting rid of the communists and so on. That was covered positively, right? Because then, obviously, the interest was to have a close relationship with whatever successor there is. But when you have genuine uprisings that result in a geopolitically adverse situation, like the next Iranian revolution in '79, well, then all hell breaks loose about that uprising, right? So is that like the rule of thumb that we can use here in order to say which ones of these moments of uprising were manufactured and which ones actually, you know, were genuine from the ground?

#Finian Cunningham

Yeah, I think very much so. I think it's a very close correlation. I mean, we had just, for example—let's put this in a contemporary context—like the Kyiv administration, government of Volodymyr Zelensky. I mean, he's canceled elections two years ago. He's an indefinite president, a so-called president. I mean, but his regime—I would call it a regime—are just so, you know, embedded with corruption. It's just rampant corruption involving his, you know, his close aides and supporters. Quite obviously, he must be involved himself whenever you've got his chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, who will be arrested and being charged with corruption. I mean, massive, hundreds of millions of dollars or euros worth of corruption.

But yet the media, the Western media, would portray Zelensky as some kind of brave, you know, defender of democracy and European security, and totally whitewash his, you know, rampant corruption. And, you know, it's a case in point that, you know, the Western media are very much trying to, you know, kind of make the regime in Kyiv and their people acceptable or plausible to the Western public so that then it justifies continuing sending hundreds of billions of dollars, euros, to this regime to prop it up. I mean, the recent atrocity in Starobelsk in the Lugansk region, where the college was attacked by something like 16 drones, killed 21 students, most of them teenage girls in this college in the Russian territory of Lugansk, which was, you know, joined Russia, what was it, four years ago or two years ago, in a referendum.

Anyway, the Western media have given negligible coverage to that atrocity. That must have been, you know, from the various circumstances, I think it's very plausible to say that this was a deliberate atrocity—16 drones attacking in three waves of a college dormitory that resulted in 21 deaths, mainly teenage girls. Now, the Western media have given zero, zero coverage to that. In fact, any little bit of coverage they did give to it was to portray or to emphasize the Kyiv, the Ukrainian side's claim that, oh, we weren't targeting a college, we were targeting Russian military centers, which there's no evidence for whatsoever. So the media, again, you know, plays this vital role in sanitizing the crimes of the clients, the regimes that the West wants, and then conversely, you know, blowing up alleged crimes of enemies. So the media plays this role all the time.

#Pascal

It's just fascinating that it works all the time. I mean, the Western narrative of Mr. Zelensky claimed, of course, that that school was actually an educational facility for drone pilots, right? The people who then learn how to fly drones, first-person view drones into space, into Ukraine. And then you just wonder, like, when you then read that this happened in Lugansk, which is basically at this point still a frontline area, right, of where the war is, how dumb would the Russians have to be in order to put an educational facility for drone pilots right within the easiest range of the Ukrainians to hit it? It's just the level of stupidity also that's then involved in these narratives is quite striking to me.

However, they still work. They worked back in the day, and they keep working now. Whereas when we compare it with the way that Soviet propaganda worked, I mean, the one thing about it is that a large part of the population, probably 80, 90 percent, understood that it's propaganda. They

understood that this is the party line and reality probably looks different. But in the West, the success really is that you are completely able to portray the propaganda as reality, and a good part of the population just swallows it whole.

#Finian Cunningham

Yeah, it's really astounding, Pascal, and very sinister, this kind of control of public perception and mind control, brainwashing. And the Western system is very sophisticated in that it has got the illusion of free choice or independence. I mean, they have done a very good job at, you know, developing a brainwashing system, a propaganda system that doesn't appear to be a propaganda system. You know, you have to kind of go into very close detail to uncover it. It's a very deceptive kind of system. But I think despite that sophistry, there is a growing awareness among the Western public of the failure — you know, the media is a propaganda system — and thanks to the emergence of what I would call, or what other people would call, the alternative media out there. I mean, like your own channel is a perfect example. I mean, you've got a massive following, something like 500,000 subscribers, and so many other people.

#Pascal

300,000, but we have the big translation too, and Glenn Diesen has 500,000, and we are growing, we are growing.

#Finian Cunningham

Yeah, there's a plethora of great sources of information, alternative sources of information, you know, critical sources of information. Glenn Diesen, yourself, Judge Napolitano in the US, Rachel Blevins has a great show, and a friend of mine, a friend of yours, Stas Krapivnik, is putting out a great podcast almost every day. So there is this growing awareness, and that's only a fraction of the myriad of independent organizations, critical media sources out there. And that's a huge development, a significant development in recent years that is informing the Western public in a proper way, and that is enabling a more critical perspective on the propaganda system.

I think for decades the Western media enjoyed a total monopoly of the narrative. There was a kind of inherent public assumption that, well, whatever the BBC or the New York Times says is the gospel truth. That's all changed now. And, you know, the subscriber numbers reflect that. I mean, the so-called traditional Western media, the establishment Western media, the propaganda system, is hemorrhaging numbers in terms of people who read or listen to it on a regular basis. And that reflects a complete collapse in their authority, their legitimacy, their perceived integrity.

And meanwhile, you've got this, you know, exciting, significant development of burgeoning independent, critical media like your own channel. So I think that's significant. That's a sea change. Now, it's not enough. There's still this propaganda control that's out there that's, you know, very

toxic and sinister in its impact on public perception. There is still a lot of control in the Western so-called establishment. We've still got a lot of control. That's to be admitted, recognized. But I think it's not as vast as it was. They're losing their ability to control the narrative.

#Pascal

I would hope so. I mean, that, or let me put it this way, that is the only hope. On the other hand, because the imperial system—and here we need to get back to the other part that you wrote about, about this being, of course, part of the way that the West has been working as an empire—the imperial system must crack down on this. This channel, the other channels, the way that at the moment social media is still relatively free, that must be contained if the system wants to survive. Hence, it must go that route. That's also why I'm expecting to be, over the next couple of years, maybe months, deleted at some point, because it must happen.

And the weird thing is that when it happens in the US and Europe, probably more or less at the same time, when it comes, at the moment, it's not the Europeans who stand in the way of it. It's the Americans. It's the First Amendment in the US that stands in the way, and the belief in, you know, the absolute freedom of expression. But once that dam breaks, you know, freedom of expression, unfortunately, also has not a lot of friends in Russia or in China either, right? There's like... that's something that will just roll over this society or the collective West. And unfortunately, it might just go down. Although that's maybe the moment when a couple of others will also realize that something has significantly changed. Because this part of democracy, freedom of expression, is probably one of the most visible parts, isn't it?

#Finian Cunningham

Yeah. Well, it's, you know, we are entering a very dangerous and sinister time, Pascal, where your channel could be shut down and lots of other channels could be shut down because of all this. It's the decisive role that you're playing in informing people, making people critical, undermining the establishment, the corrupt establishment media, and the political powers. It's to be expected that there will be some kind of form of repression and a very determined effort to close down a threat to the system. And you encountered that only a few weeks ago. I saw your channel was put off the air by YouTube for a while, and then you managed to get it reestablished. But it just shows you the contingent nature of this free speech, that it can be shut down at a whim by the people who control the system.

So it's a battle. We're in a very dangerous battle. I also think, Pascal, it's not just about, you know, media and expression and free information. I mean, that is a vital part of it. But I think also, I mean, it's to do with, you know, the class system. I mean, workers are being totally pulverized in their conditions. I mean, I see there in the US, the auto workers are on wages that, you know, are much less than what they were earning before, 15 years ago. I mean, there is a class war going on here to kind of oppress workers and to kind of then siphon off our public money, our taxes, to shore up

regimes like the neo-Nazi regime in Kiev and the Israeli regime and what have you. So there is a class war going on.

At home and also expressed abroad. And so the fight back will not be just about us, you know, claiming ethical principles of free speech. And, you know, there is going to be a clash of opinions — workers against the capitalist system. I mean, that has to be part of the whole transformation, that the system itself will have to be attacked, will have to be challenged by workers out of necessity for their material conditions. So that will be part of the system clash, this confrontation that's looming. It's not just about closing down media outlets; it's the very living conditions for the vast majority of people within our societies, working people who depend on their wages to have a life.

#Pascal

It's getting worse and worse for them, all over Europe and the United States too. I just published a talk with a podcaster in the United States, a black man who said, look, black America actually isn't benefiting at all from all of this imperial overstretch. If these people at least brought home some of it and distributed some of what they get — but they don't. I mean, there's so little regard for the little guy here and in Iran and everywhere that really, I mean, at this point, the question is how long it will take for this class solidarity across borders to really start picking up. But it seems that that's also one of the ways it must go. But then let me ask you about this term "imperialism." Why are you using imperialism as a prism to view the regime change operations? And in your view, where within Western imperialism do we stand today, or the development of imperialism?

#Finian Cunningham

Oh, good question, Pascal. Well, I think you could argue that imperialism never stopped. It's kind of just gone from classical imperialism, you know, through a period of like some kind of, you know, apparent democracy. And, you know, the UN Charter after the Second World War — the UN Charter was set up with all these beautiful, noble principles of equality between nations and non-interference, and explicitly forbidding aggression. And we then entered that period of stealth imperialism, a phrase coined by the American historian Chalmers Johnson, I believe. So that was from 1945 over the next few decades — it was a period of stealth imperialism, imperialism covert.

But I think what we're reaching now, especially under the Trump administration, is just kind of neo-imperialism, just outright imperialism. There's no need to sugarcoat this or to, you know, camouflage the imperialist ideas, the imperialist motives. It's just going back to open imperialist conduct where you can threaten nations at will now, as Trump was doing towards Cuba, you know, and, you know, Greenland and anyone else who gets in his way. And, you know, I mean, just bombing Iran, kind of totally unprovoked. I mean, so we have gone back to a kind of barbarism of, you know, the classical imperialist age where it was just might is right, open contempt for international law or any kind of, like, you know, abiding by rules or international principles.

So it's kind of just an open imperialism and neo-imperialism. Well, I mean, imperialism, Pascal, I'm sure you well know, is a vital part of Western capitalist economies. I mean, to get control of resources, of supply chains, to control markets, control labor forces. I mean, it's all part of the capitalist system to enable control over resources. And, you know, as long as we have the capitalist system operating for the benefit of, you know, a few, there will always have to be a kind of military force aspect to it, i.e. imperialist control to enable this very powerful, kind of unacceptable economic system. So that's going to be always there as long as we have a world where a few try to dominate the majority for their economic interests.

#Pascal

It's interesting because the way that imperialism goes, it always has to sell itself, right? It has to sell itself to its own population, right? Why is this good? Before the Second World War, for the first—late 19th century, early 20th—it was the idea of the white man's burden, right? Let's go and civilize the world. What a noble ideal. Then came, of course, the World War periods, which were all about who gets most say where. And then we're done. And then suddenly everything is cloaked in the jargon of the Cold War, right? I mean, Mossadegh, but also then Allende and then Guatemala and all the others. They were all done under the framework of, no, no, no, we are defending democracy and freedom and whatnot.

And we are fighting communism, because what more glorious goal could there be than fighting the evil communists? And once that was done, there was this famous speech by Reagan, who, on his way out—on his way out—once you could already see the thawing and the end of the Cold War, which was being negotiated, right? On his way out, he said the future of the U.S. military will be one in which the iron fist of the United States will be covered in a velvet glove of humanitarianism. And it turned out to be exactly like that. All of the big regime changes of the future, including, of course, the breaking up of Yugoslavia, including all of the interventions and the Arab Spring, all cloaked in the jargon of humanitarianism.

But that, too, is now ending. I mean, the Ukraine war and so on, the Iran war, the intervention in Venezuela — they are not done anymore under the humanitarian script, right? Also, responsibility to protect and all that stuff is basically out the window, right? They gave it up. So what is it at the moment that you think, in our current period — which is, of course, very difficult to judge because it's ongoing — what is it that still somehow sells this idea to the general public? Why are people in Germany, in the UK, in the US not just all on the streets saying, like, stop it? There is still something that keeps this going.

#Finian Cunningham

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Good question, Pascal. Yeah, I mean, I'll just try to kind of marshal my thoughts to address the point here. But, you know, just to go back a little bit, yes, you're right. I mean, I think we've already said this, that we've got to a phase now where it's just outright imperialism. You

know, there's no need to pretend or to kind of give pretext. That was the period that we covered in that book, **Killing Democracy**, from 1945 up till recently. It was the stealth imperialism — covert operations had to be done with all sorts of, like, you know, sophisticated lies and pretexts that the media enabled.

Now we've reached the stage where it's just outright open aggression towards any nation that, you know, principally the United States and its Western kind of accomplices, European accomplices, decide to target. Why has it gone so openly? Well, I suppose, you know, like years or decades of impunity have conferred a sort of arrogance and a complete, you know, delusional kind of feeling or belief that they could just get away with murder. I mean, it's kind of the recidivist conduct of a repeat offender. I mean, they've just developed this feeling of impunity over decades — all these violations that the media certainly enabled and covered for — and that bestowed a kind of attitude of impunity.

That's part of it, I think. Another part is that I think the Western economic powers are under pressure from the multipolar world, the rise of China and other centers of power. Their own economic systems, the Western capitalist systems, I think objectively you can kind of conclude that they are failing. You know, the vast debt levels of these countries, the vast inequality, you know, the systems are failing to provide any sort of decent social conditions for their populations. And in that situation, I think there's then a desperation to try to preserve some sort of hegemonic dominance in the world.

And so the thing that they've still got some strength in is their military force, the United States in particular. And I think it's just kind of a case of desperation to shore up, to try to reverse the decline in their power. They are just using military force in a desperate way to try to reshape the world that they want through brute force. And therefore, we're in a situation where it's quite open aggression and use of military violence and mass murder, you know, complete lawlessness, rogue state behavior reflecting the desperate situation, the times that we're in. I think that's how I would put it.

#Pascal

How is the media currently, also in your part of the world, like in Ireland and, well, Northern Europe, how is it covering all of this? Because I do remember a time when, you know, the media tried to portray the politicians as the grown-ups, right? Also in a quite boring fashion, you know, the people who know what's good, but everything's complicated. And Milosevic bad, and the negotiations difficult and whatnot. But it was the grown-ups and so on. Yeah. Donald Trump did away with that, didn't he? It's like no sane person on earth can still look at him as a grown-up. How do you think this is changing the perception of politics, the way that the current Western leadership is behaving?

#Finian Cunningham

Trump's behavior, in other words?

#Pascal

Trump's behavior, but also what we see from Europe, like Ursula von der Leyen, Kallas. And, you know, there's a lot of dumb things coming out. I mean, the former German foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, I mean, she was a national disgrace for all the stupid things she said. And there are so many of these now in these elite circles. I mean, it's really, I mean, they're rotting from the inside as well, right? The whole imperial—how should we call it—the human resources of the imperial system. It's like they don't have competent people anymore. I mean, that thing must come down with this kind of leadership, unless it's some wicked plan to actually fool us all, and they're secretly brilliant. But somehow I doubt that. Yeah.

#Finian Cunningham

Oh, I mean, yeah. I see what you're getting at, Pascal. I mean, yes, the kind of... the caliber of political leadership is just appalling across Europe, you know, the United States. I mean, you know, von der Leyen and Kaja Kallas, I mean, the so-called EU's top diplomat who recently came out with, you know, this idea that to engage in diplomacy with Russia is a Kremlin trap. You know, it's mind-boggling, just the kind of absolute degeneration of any sort of political leadership or quality of political thinking. I mean, when you think back on people like Gerhard Schröder, the German chancellor, I mean, these people were, you know, like giants compared with what we've got at the minute.

How do you explain that phenomenal kind of decline in political standards? That's, I don't know. You know, you could say, well, are these people all blackmailed? You know, the whole Epstein thing, phenomenon, scandal. What has the intelligence, the deep state, got on these people that they're so compliant, that they're so, you know, servile? You know, is it some sort of blackmail system? Very plausibly could be. You know, I mean, a lot of these politicians are no doubt very compromised. Also, you know, I think just ideological training. I mean, a lot of these politicians have been groomed up through kind of the deep state agencies and institutions and, you know, fora.

I mean, they have just become, you know, imbued with the sort of propaganda concepts and can't think any other way with regard to, say, for example, Russia — just this deep Russophobia, this, you know, inability to think of Russia in any other way, of its history, and just in any objective way. So the kind of ideological training or background of these people would suggest that they're very much, you know, brainwashed by the system. You know, and there does not seem to be any, you know, optimistic kind of alternative politicians within the political system that are coming forward with any kind of critical independence, as far as I can tell.

The media, the establishment media, Pascal, across Europe, Ireland in particular, is just deplorable. It's absolutely deplorable. I mean, they are completely non-independent. I mean, the Irish media would just regurgitate what they get from the New York Times or CNN or the BBC. You know, the Irish official media, state media, completely propagandized with regard to Ukraine, with regard to

Iran. I mean, their coverage of the protests in Iran — the Irish media, that is — over the protests in Iran was the narrative that the Iranian regime, as they would call it, had carried out mass repression, vicious mass murder, killing 30,000 protesters without any kind of verification of that.

But that's just repeating, you know, the narrative from the New York Times. So there's a system, I think, in the media all just... and derivative, you know. So the top outlets like the New York Times and the BBC, The Guardian, they would kind of, you know, lead off with the narrative. And that's how our book goes into that — how the CIA and MI6 and these people very much concentrated on the key players in the media, those media outlets that would then spread, you know, form the storyline, the narrative for all the other lower-down media in the food chain.

And you can see that with the Irish media. They will just take what the New York Times, what CNN, what the Washington Post, what the BBC are saying, and they'll just regurgitate it with an Irish accent. But it's pathetic, the level of conformity with the propaganda. And so, as a result, the Irish media coverage is very much, you know, repeating the American propaganda with regard to Iran and then the Irish government propaganda. They sanctioned the Iranian embassy here in Dublin, you know, made the Iranian ambassador persona non grata. You know, I mean, it's pathetic. It's just pathetic.

But the hopeful thing is, Pascal, that a lot of people, as far as I can tell, ordinary citizens, civilians, would see that and are cognizant of this pathetic Irish media conformity with the propaganda system. People are aware, you know, in significant numbers, that the media is a system of lies, of distortion, and is pathetic, and would have contempt for the Irish state media and papers like the Irish Times, which is the so-called paper of record in Ireland, comparable to the New York Times in the United States or the London Times in the UK. But the Irish Times is just a clone of, you know, just an echo chamber for the propaganda that's coming out of the US or Britain.

So absolutely, you know, no credibility whatsoever, even though they've got the aura of, you know, the Irish Times. And I actually used to write for them years back, but I would never contemplate writing an article for them now because they would, you know, it would be inconceivable that I could even—not that I would be even interested in writing for them, because I've just got so little respect for them. But there would be no way that they would be open to a perspective that I would have. And that's why we've got the growth of alternative independent media.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, this is definitely something. Like also the siloing in. The question to me really is, and I can't answer it, how big the bubble is that we are in. My best guess is that we've got a global bubble here on YouTube of something between 10 to 15 million potential, you know, people—people who would share this and then who would naturally also click and watch the next one. Because once you leave the bubble, you reach the people who will automatically say, I don't want to watch this conspiratorial BS. Go away, go away. I want to watch my BBC Trusted Sources. So the question is,

how big is this bubble, and if the bubble is actually growing or not? Because the threat is, of course, that it is an echo chamber that just sits there, right, while the mainstream still remains the mainstream. I mean, that echo chamber can then float out in the open, in the ether, the digital ether, forever.

It doesn't really politically impact. But if the thing is growing, then there's a chance. And that's something actually that I don't even know how to methodologically approach in order to research that, whether it's growing or not, because it's difficult to say, like, okay, who receives this? It's much easier with the mainstream media, with the classical newspapers and so on, because you actually know how many people turn on the TV or have a newspaper subscription, right? Therefore, you know how far it goes. With YouTube and with our, especially our bubble within YouTube and so on, it's difficult to have a grasp over that. Anyhow, maybe last point. Is there something that we didn't touch upon that, in terms of killing democracy, is really important to keep in mind, that you worked out in the book and that you would like to quickly display?

#Finian Cunningham

I think we've covered everything, Pascal. Thanks very much for having me on. I hope I've made some points that were of interest to your listeners. While on a book tour recently, somebody did make a good point. He said, how can you kill something that doesn't exist? Meaning, was there ever a democracy? And it's a fair point. I mean, it does... you know, actually, that's what the book tries to convey, that the imperialist era that existed for centuries supposedly evolved into some sort of democratic kind of arrangement internationally. And we were all, it was a happy ending, but it was really just a kind of transitory period of going from open imperialism through to stealth imperialism, which is now going back to a sort of open form of it.

So Killing Democracy is, it's kind of debatable, well, you know, how can you kill something that didn't exist? Maybe I should have—a more accurate way would be killing the illusion of democracy—might be a more accurate way of putting it. But I mean, there were democratic forms, okay, you know, there were forms of democracy, democratic forms that are inarguable, that existed. But I think we're just still dealing with the monster of imperialism. That's what the big challenge is facing the world—how to somehow defeat and abolish this imperialist system that's causing mayhem around the world.

#Pascal

Yeah, yeah. No, and how to shine a spotlight on it. And I think you're doing a brilliant job actually writing about it. And I wouldn't be completely a denialist about democracy. I mean, there are objective differences between the way the political systems of North Korea, Russia, Switzerland, and Ireland work. They work differently. They have different ways in which the interaction between the different parts works.

And we need some way of talking about that, and I think the word democracy can describe one side of the spectrum, in all of its imperfections. And of course also the fact, you know, that democracy—a lot of people think it's about the voting—but just to speak apart, is of course the division of powers, right? To make sure that power is not too centralized. But anyhow, people who want to follow your work, they should, of course, go and buy your book, **Killing Democracy: Western Imperialism's Legacy of Regime Change and Media Manipulation.** And you also regularly still write on several online outlets, right? Where can people find your work?

#Finian Cunningham

Well, I still continue to write for the Strategic Culture Foundation. It's based in Russia. But if you're living in the EU, you will not be able to access it because the EU has censored all Russian-based media. You have to use a proxy server to get around that. So, you know, on the point of are we living in countries of free speech and respect for free information, that's a case in point that we are not.

The EU, you cannot—if I send you, Pascal, if you're back in Germany and I send you a link to an article on Strategic Culture Foundation or RT or Sputnik or any other Russian media—you will not be able to read that. You will click on it and you'll receive a message that says, you know, "Not able to access." And so, information is cut off. But anyway, I was working for RT and Sputnik, but with EU sanctions after the Ukraine conflict blew up in 2022, EU sanctions stopped that work because I couldn't do work and get any sort of payment for it. So my livelihood has been restricted through EU censorship. But I continue to research and work.

#Pascal

No, it's quite pathetic. The good news is, if you're living in Switzerland, you can still access this. And I'm living, of course, in Japan, and I accessed Strategic Culture this morning. So in Japan, it also still works. There are certain pockets of the West that have a little bit more self-respect about professing what they preach. But for anybody else, use a VPN and go to Strategic Culture and find Finian Cunningham. Finian, thank you so much for your time today.

#Finian Cunningham

Pascal, thank you.