

Revealed: EX-OSCE Observer DESTROYS Ukraine War Lies | Benoit Pare

Former OSCE observer Benoît Paré returns to discuss his second book, Ukraine: The Great Manipulation. He explains why western mainstream media reporting on Mariupol, Bucha, Kramatorsk, Nord Stream, and the 2022 Istanbul talks left out key facts. Benoit and Pascal discuss war propaganda, calls for independent investigations, and the risks of media narratives driving further escalation. Links: [Book] What I Saw in Ukraine: 2015–2022 – Diary of an International Observer <https://www.amazon.com/dp/295986011X> [Book] Ukraine: The Great Manipulation <https://www.amazon.com/dp/2959860144> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00 Introduction and Benoît Paré's new book 00:00:51 Why Paré wrote a second book 00:07:34 US strategy and Ukraine's role 00:15:05 The Mariupol maternity hospital 00:19:32 Questions around the Mariupol theater 00:32:04 The Bucha timeline and competing claims 00:58:36 Kramatorsk and the Istanbul talks 01:03:41 Independent investigations and war narratives 01:06:17 How propaganda shapes the conflict 01:12:16 Where to find Benoît Paré

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies, today with an update by our friend and colleague Benoit Paré, a former OSCE observer on both sides of the front in Ukraine. Benoit, welcome back.

#Benoit Pare

Thank you, Pascal. I'm glad to be here.

#Pascal

I'm glad having you again, because you actually published a second book. Your first book, of course, is the one that we see to your left, What I Saw in Ukraine, where you report about your time as an observer for the OSCE, where you had to work in various capacities, detailing all of the explosions and so on, and the breaches of ceasefire that were evident at the time in the Donbas area. And now you came out with a book called Ukraine, The Great Manipulation, on the right side behind you in French, but it's also out in English, The Great Manipulation. Benoit, tell us a little bit about it. Why did you write a second book, and what is the focus of The Great Manipulation?

#Benoit Pare

Yes, thank you for that introduction. Indeed, after I finished my contract with the OSCE, which was at the end of May 2022, I had a chance, actually, to work as a journalist, officially hired by a French online media called France-Soir. France-Soir used to be a big newspaper back in the '50s and '60s, but with time, it just evolved into a website. But, you know, the name is quite famous in France. So when I started to work for this online newspaper under a pseudonym, because I was not willing yet to speak openly, because I had not yet made the decision to actually stop any activity linked to my previous life, working for governments, basically, or international organizations.

I proposed to my new boss to make a series of articles about the allegations of war crimes committed by Russian forces in Ukraine since the start of what the Russians call the special military operation and what the West calls the invasion of Ukraine. And this I worked on pretty fast during the summer. And the thing is, by then, I wanted to focus on a series of events, starting with the bombing of the maternity hospital in Mariupol, you know, which happened on March 9th, 2022. And then we had the bombing of the theater in Mariupol, just like a week later.

And furthermore, we had the big thing, the Bucha events, the so-called Bucha massacre, which was a turning point in the war, in the new war in Ukraine. Because we know from then on, you know, the negotiations that were being held in Istanbul were basically stopped. I will come back to that. And parallel to that, there was another hot topic, which were the allegations of mass rapes committed by Russian troops in Ukraine. It went somehow parallel to the Bucha narrative, and it lasted for months. And very close to the Bucha event, there was another dramatic event, which has more or less been forgotten by now because, strangely enough, it has been little talked about ever since.

It was the bombing of the Kramatorsk train station, which occurred on April 8, 2022. And lastly, to finish the sequence, I actually focused on the so-called mass graves in Iziurm, which occurred actually a bit later, in September 2022. Now, so these six articles that I wrote are what I consider to be the most important part of my book, because it basically constructed the narrative of Russian hate, which was key in convincing the audiences around the world, and especially in the West, that Russia was a barbaric country, guilty of a series of war crimes, and with which you could not morally negotiate, right? So this was built in a way, the narrative was built in a way to prevent any will of negotiation to end the conflict. This is my conclusion. And beyond these six articles about these allegations of war crimes, I also published other articles on a day-to-day basis about the events that were unfolding in Ukraine in those days, some of which many people have forgotten, even myself.

And when I read all these articles for the purpose of the book, I realized, oh, it's true. This and this happened as well. I had forgotten about it. And each time, actually, there were, like, different stories making headlines about the war in Ukraine. You realize that there's always the same recipe at work, which is always like, as soon as something happens, maximalist accusations against the Russians,

systematically, without any investigation being done. And when you start to dig into the matter, then you realize, well, it's not exactly what the Western or Ukrainian press would describe. You systematically find out that there is more to it that is carefully hidden from public view.

So I was doing systematically this work of offering, summarizing the Western view of every event, and then trying to find out what is the Russian viewpoint about the same events. And for this, you had to dig into social networks, usually like Telegram or Twitter in those days, because in most cases, the Russian viewpoint was, like, ignored, right? So you had to search for it. And I thought, you know, it's a basic work of a journalist or a researcher. When anything happened, you have to offer different versions of events because you know that in times of war, the first thing that dies is truth.

Truth is the first victim of every conflict. And I've been, you know, working in this field for long enough to know how true this is. I discovered this reality since I was, like, a young observer in Bosnia-Herzegovina just after the civil war there. Actually, we were more than observers when I was working there. We were, like, actors. But yeah, I know this reality, you know. I've known this reality for the last 30 years. And this reality has been pushed to its extreme logic in the case of the war in Ukraine, which is so obvious to me when you start to work on digging information about it.

#Benoit Pare

And last but not least, I also published at least one article, which was one of the most important articles I ever wrote. It was called "How Ukraine Became an American Pawn." That was a reference to this famous book by Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Grand Chessboard," which he wrote in 1997. And when you read this book, you actually understand the logic, the rationale of the American deep state and the long-term objectives they had since the '90s to actually prevent the resurgence of any rival power. And, you know, after the fall of the USSR, they thought that America was in a position of hegemony that was unrivaled.

And the priority of the strategic thinkers was to make sure it would stay that way, that they wouldn't have to face, at some point, a resumption of a rebirth of a Russian hegemony. So they had to kill that before it could happen. And Brzezinski explained that the best way, in his view, to do so was to separate Ukraine from Russia. That was the plan. And everything the U.S. administrations did from then on, including under the Republicans or under the Democrats, it's the same. It's always the same logic. It's the uniparty basically unfolding its own agenda, regardless of who is in power. And so during the Orange Revolution, for instance, in 2004, it was the Bush administration, but the goal was to actually control Ukraine.

So they supported as much as they could their pro-Western candidate, Yushchenko, at that time, whose wife was actually a U.S. diplomat, amazingly, right? So they had the means to control what was going on in Ukraine through the wife of the president. That was so obvious. She had worked for the U.S. government all her life. And some people even suspect her of having worked for the CIA.

Anyways, that was one of the episodes. And then afterwards, there was Maidan, of course, as we know. And there was one actor that you see all the time during those years. It's Victoria Nuland. You know, she was actually working under the Bush administration, and then she worked under the Obama administration, and then under the Biden administration.

And she was the key, actually, the key person under all U.S. administrations to actually define U.S. policy towards Ukraine. And, you know, she's married to Robert Kagan, who is a famous neoconservative. And she has an extremist ideology and basically was pushing the agenda as much as she could, very successfully, you know, as a matter of fact. So I was explaining all this story about the background of the war in this article, "How Ukraine Became a U.S. Pawn." So in some ways, I was, like, trying to focus on the day-to-day news coming from the front, showing how much manipulation there was. And at the same time, I was recalling why they do that.

They do that because they have strategic objectives, which is to weaken Russia and to separate it from Ukraine. And beyond that, the objective was to prevent any rapprochement between Russia and Germany, or Russia and the European Union, because they knew that the cooperation of the two could be a threat to America and Germany. So this has to be prevented at any cost. So the logic of separating Ukraine from Russia ended up also being a logic of separating the European Union from Russia. And this is very obvious, notably when you think about the Nord Stream pipeline, which, you know, not only Obama, but also President Trump during his first term said that it was a strategic objective to make sure this pipeline would never work.

And they managed to achieve that objective. And yet, at the same time, going back to manipulation, they managed to spread the message in the mainstream media that this was actually the Russians who did it, which is, you know, incredible and showing, you know, that they were not afraid of coming up with narratives. You know, we have a saying in French, which is, you know, the bigger the lie, the more people will believe it, which is, like, you know, sounds counterintuitive, but reality shows that it is efficient. I even had a former German colleague, whom I thought was an intelligent man, working with me in Donbass. And when we discussed the issue of Nord Stream once, he actually believed that it was the Russians who did it. And I said, well, how can you believe that?

And he said, "Haven't you heard about Seymour's first investigation?" And he had never heard about it. He didn't know who Seymour Hersh was. He didn't know he had made this article on Substack, which basically was a much more convincing scenario to explain what had happened. That was basically a secret operation organized by the CIA. And he had never heard about it. And in the end, he said, "Well, you know what? It doesn't matter because we should not buy gas from Russia, period." And then I realized that there was another thing he was convinced of. It was that Russians were barbarians. And this goes back to what I was talking about at the beginning of my intervention here. All these allegations of war crimes against Russians had an immense impact on people.

He convinced even intelligent people who should have known better that Russians were so barbaric that it should have been impossible for Europeans to even trade with them, even if that ended up

with the economic suicide of Europe. Because right now, Europe mainly still buys gas from Russia, in spite of, you know, the narrative and the statements that, you know, Russia is bad and we should not trade with them. But the European economy still needs gas from Russia. So, you know, behind—I mean, not under the spotlight—you know, this continues. But according to EU sanctions, we should stop by next year, I think. By next year, EU regulations should make it impossible for the EU to buy Russian gas. So by then, we would actually feel the full impact, if it doesn't change, of the suicidal policy of Europe.

And once again, they managed to convince the audience that this sacrifice was necessary, that they had no choice because of a moral perspective, which was fabricated by lies and manipulations. Now, going back to these events, which basically helped to construct the narrative, it started with, as I said, Mariupol Maternity Hospital. The thing is, since I've been working in Mariupol for two years and four months, I'm quite familiar with the city. And then I could collect some information, some of which was actually available in mainstream media at that time. And there were two important elements about the maternity hospital story. One was a statement of a woman from Donbass, who had actually been photographed by the Ukrainian journalist from Associated Press. And, you know, you see her face with, you know, a bit of blood on her face and her hair a bit messy.

And behind her, you see destruction. And she became the face of Russian barbarism against the civilian population of Donbass. Her picture was used around the world in the Western press to show how barbaric Russians were. And that woman actually later on basically explained that the maternity hospital where she had just delivered her baby was actually partially occupied by Ukrainian forces. Which, you know, when you are familiar with humanitarian law, actually, like I was, because I was trained about it when I was deployed in Ukraine—I was trained about it by the ICRC, you know, the International Committee of the Red Cross, who had special, actually, lessons about it.

And, you know, normally a hospital or a school is a protected object under humanitarian law. However, when this object becomes occupied by a military force, it loses its status as a protected object. So in this case, you can argue that actually, from the moment the Ukrainian military started to occupy these premises, it became a legitimate target for the Russians, unfortunately. And why did the Ukrainian military decide to occupy the premises? Because in those days, there was no more electricity in the city. But the hospital had solar panels on the roof, which made it a very strategic building to occupy. So according to that witness, the Ukrainian military basically reorganized everything inside the maternity hospital.

They decided to occupy some floors, and they relocated the women in a different branch. And the husbands also were relocated in a different branch in the basement, as I recall. But still, they were occupying a part of it. Now, when the bombing occurs, nobody told you that the building was partially occupied by the military. Now, then there was another testimony by a policeman who was also interviewed by Associated Press in those days. And then I did some research, and I found

further interviews from this guy in different media. And he actually explained that when he arrived on the spot, there were already soldiers at the maternity hospital and more policemen. And he doesn't explain why they were there before he arrived.

And then in a subsequent interview, he says that when actually the Russian military version four soldiers actually arrived on location two days later, the people who were fighting from inside the maternity hospital were soldiers from Azov. Right. So showing that they were again using the premises for military purposes two days afterwards. So it's not difficult to make the links here. So it somehow would confirm that they were already there two days before. So it all makes sense. But that part of the story was, of course, carefully avoided by the mainstream media. They never covered it. And in the meantime, the documentary made by the Associated Press became an Oscar-winning film that was shown worldwide to show how barbaric Russians were. So this is how it all started.

Now, it's important also to mention that at this stage, I don't think the Ukrainian side actually wanted to organize a false flag operation. The elements I gathered, I do believe there was—I mean, there's a huge crater like 50 meters away from the maternity hospital. So something exploded there. And most likely it was a real bomb, because artillery doesn't make craters so big, from experience. And I've seen so many craters. None of them creates something so big. Anyways, but I think this gave them some idea: "Oh, see how we can use information for our information war against Russia to gather support in the West."

And one week later, about one week later, we had another explosion in the theater, the Theater of Mariupol. Now, I'm very familiar with this theater. I then went there myself to see a concert when I was working there. It was like the nicest building in Mariupol. It was an iconic building. And it was known that it was used as a place for displaced persons before they were evacuated. Now, it made no sense for Russians to destroy this building. Yet, we were told to believe that they did so. And we were even told to believe that not only did they do so, but they actually killed—the first figure given was 300 civilians who had taken refuge inside.

And the second information was 600. And where does that come from? 300 civilian casualties came from the mayor of a city who was exiled in Zaporizhzhia at that moment. So he had no clue. You know, he just gave a figure, you know, based on his own assessment, which was not based on observation. And then the figure of 600 was again given by the same journalist from Associated Press, based on interviews he had made with displaced persons from Mariupol who had arrived in Kyiv by then. So he talked to them in Kyiv, and they told him, oh, you know, in the building there were, you know, so many people. And so he based his evaluation of how many victims there were on the testimonies by the people.

And these figures, 300 and 600, were shared worldwide to show, look, basically, Russians, the Russian military, is killing civilians by the hundreds for no reason, just because they want to kill them, right? That was, like, the narrative that was spread worldwide. But actually, afterwards, there

was an investigation done by Amnesty International about this. And the fact that I wrote four months after the facts actually helped to have a different point of view about what happened, because this report by Amnesty International came out, as I recall, in July, three months afterwards. And I read it entirely. Now, it's very interesting, this reporting, for various reasons. But it has to be said that, again, they did not have a chance to be on the spot.

So they had also to make an evaluation from a distance, again by interviewing people who allegedly were on the spot when the event occurred, like Associated Press did. And according to Amnesty International, even though they interviewed about 20 people, only a couple of them, two or three, mentioned that they heard or saw a Russian fighter jet actually bomb the theater. Only a couple out of the 20 people they interviewed, from recollection. And by then, I said, okay, it would be really interesting, actually, to talk to these witnesses. And by then, I was a journalist, as I mentioned, officially, from, you know, media that was not so popular in my days.

But the name, at least, you know, is famous. So I wrote an email officially with my email address from France, because I had one, asking whether it would be possible to interview these witnesses, of course making sure they would remain anonymous, you know, not betraying their security or whatever. This kind of thing I would do when I was working for AC, for instance. You know, you are used to that. Like, you know, it's very important to respect the do no harm principle when you talk to witnesses. So, you know, I tried to give them, you know, the maximum amount of information—how can I say—arguments so that I would not endanger the witnesses.

And I never had any answer about that. Now, okay, you may wonder if they decided not to answer because already the newspaper I was working for had an image as a conspiracy theorist newspaper because of the line it had followed during the COVID period. So they may have decided, oh, it's not worth talking to these people. Who cares? We only talk to mainstream press. That's one possibility. Or the other possibility is that actually, well, that's actually the hypothesis I had: maybe these people lied or they don't exist. Because if we can't access them, then I can have a legitimate doubt about whether these people exist.

And we haven't seen the pictures at all. So are they real? So you wonder. So I was left in a bit of limbo about this specific issue, about whether these testimonies were real. And one month later, something very interesting happened because Amnesty International released another report about the fact that actually the Ukrainian military was occupying schools on a massive scale when it was fighting its war, which, as I said earlier, occupying schools is supposed to be sort of a war crime, you know, because it's supposed to be a protected object. But actually, they were doing that before, during the war in Donbass.

We actually, with the OSCE mission in Ukraine, we were monitoring the situation. And I can confirm to you that there were maybe a dozen schools occupied in those days, mainly by the Ukrainian forces. A couple were occupied also by the separatists, but most of them were occupied by the Ukrainian military, and nobody cared in those days. And now it was Amnesty International revealing

it. And then this made a scandal in Ukraine, but not only in Ukraine, also in the Western world, because it was the first time that a Western NGO actually dared to criticize, even in a limited way, the Ukrainian military that back then had the status of heroic warriors.

And the argument was that, how dare you criticize heroic warriors who defend democracy against barbarism? And even the head of Amnesty International in Ukraine actually challenged that report from her own NGO, to the point that she actually resigned publicly, and she published her letter of resignation on her Facebook page. And according to her, all the staff from Amnesty International in Ukraine resigned as a sign of protest. Not because they challenged the facts, but because they said, as Ukrainians, we cannot accept that our organization criticizes our military. You cannot accept that because you don't know what it is to fight for survival, or whatever. This is the kind of line of defense. But okay, I understand that emotionally it was challenging for them, but it doesn't mean it was factually wrong, right?

And it showed that when people are too emotionally involved in a conflict, they are not able to have an objective description of what's going on. And then I thought, well, who actually interviewed the alleged witnesses about the Mariupol theater? Most probably the same people at Amnesty International in Ukraine. Same people who say that you're not allowed to report facts that actually put the Ukrainian military in a bad light. And then the idea came to my mind, well, how can we trust these people about what they wrote about the Mariupol theater? And then this actually, in my view, emphasized the suspicions that I had about whether the witnesses they quoted in their report about the Mariupol theater, whether these people were real or not, or whether the testimonies were properly actually reported.

You have legitimate doubts, in my view, about it. And as long as they never answer my question, these doubts remain. And now the other explanation to explain what happened with the theater, I was like, okay, if it's not the Russians, who had actually no interest in doing so, again, even from a separatist point of view, it would be like, you know, the French military deciding to bomb the Eiffel Tower when Paris was liberated in 1944 to blame it on the Germans. I mean, why would you bomb the most iconic building in your city just to blame the opponents? You know, nobody would make such a sacrifice, right? And anyways, we were told to believe it was the case that the Russians did it, when it didn't make any sense for them.

And then we found out, talking about the figures, that when the prosecutor of the Donetsk People's Republic actually published their reports about the investigation about the Mariupol Theater, once they had actually cleaned the location, they said they found 14 bodies below the rubble. And actually, 14 bodies is close to the number of civilian casualties identified by Amnesty International. Amnesty International only identified 12 victims. They said there's probably more, but they only could identify 12 victims. So far away from 300 or 600, right? And Amnesty International explained that. That's one actually honest part in their report. They explained that the building had actually been evacuated two days before, massively.

Because by that moment, two days before, both Ukrainians and Russians had agreed to open green corridors so that the people could evacuate in massive numbers. So there were only a few dozen people remaining in the building, maybe less. And so that's, you know, just to correct the figures about the facts. But nobody in the Western press ever, from my knowledge, ever actually brought this information put forward by Amnesty International, that they could only identify 12 victims. No, we prefer the people to believe that 600 people died because that actually helps the narrative that Russians are barbarians. And last point: so if it's not the Russians, who else? Well, there comes the option of the false flag operation.

So it is actually the option that the people in the People's Republic of Donetsk think is the most likely explanation. That is the statement, for instance, of a woman who is in charge of the ombudsperson for the Donetsk People's Republic, who actually saw all the issues with the victims of war, actually confessed that it is an intimate conviction that this was an operation done by the Ukrainian side, and most probably by Azov, who was, as we know, occupying many buildings in the city, as a way to start a massive propaganda campaign against the Russians. That's the story that nobody actually has explained to us yet, which I actually wrote down in detail in my book. And this is how the whole propaganda machine started against the Russians.

And then, next step was Bucha. Now, Bucha is a bit more complex because it's not a single event. We're basically talking about civilian casualties that occurred over a period of about three weeks, almost a month. People who died under different circumstances in different parts of the city. And evidence suggests that some of them, at least some of them, were probably killed by the Russian military. Whether that was a war crime or not is subject to discussion. There's a famous video, for instance, where you see a Russian armored vehicle actually firing at one guy who is just riding a bicycle. And he just happens to appear at the corner. And at that moment, you know that the Russian military is just, like, on the very front line, and they probably think that everything that moves is a potential threat.

And in those cases, what militaries around the world tend to do is that when they perceive a potential threat, they shoot first. The American military does that systematically. And I know it for a fact because I worked with them in Afghanistan. As soon as the U.S. military perceives a threat, they have authorization to shoot before checking whether it's a legitimate threat or not, you know. And so the Russians did the same. But when the Russians do it, immediately they're accused of war crimes. Anyways, this is complex, what happened in Bucha, because then there were other events. At some point there was a video that was, like, publicized worldwide, including by the New York Times, or actually pictures of, like, eight guys, eight men dressed in civilian clothes that are escorted by the Russian military.

And then it seems that you see the same people shot dead behind the building that we're told was occupied by the Russian military. So it looks like these people were executed. We're also told they were actually not really civilians, but they were members of a territorial defense. And the territorial defense was a unit actually organized by Ukrainian authorities just a few weeks before the start of

the special military operation. Now, I was familiar with it because I had interviewed a Ukrainian colonel who was in charge of this territorial defense organization for the southern region, the oblast in the south. And I interviewed him, like, one week before the start of the special military operation. And I knew how they were operating.

And he said they were in the process of recruiting hundreds, thousands of people, but they had not yet had time to recruit them, nor to give them equipment. And then what happened, we see these people without military clothes; they just had time to give them weapons. So for an invading force, there could probably be, like, an ambiguity as to who are these people dressed in civilian clothes who have weapons. Anyways, that's one aspect. Then there are other aspects. I believe most people died because of shelling, artillery shelling, and both sides shelled the city. You know, all these armed vehicles that were seen and lined up in the street, this Reuters video that was seen worldwide, showing all the bodies, dead bodies in the street near these, actually... I mean, armed vehicles. These armed vehicles belonged to the Russians.

It was the Ukrainian military that destroyed them because they were shelled heavily. So then you could imagine that some of the victims may be collateral victims done by the Ukrainian shelling. But nobody would tell you that, right? No, you were told to believe that all the victims were done by the Russians. And then there are so many stories, I may not be able to cover every single detail about this whole narrative about Bucha, because it's so many different little stories, but I'll try to sum up the main events. Like it was seen, I could check on pictures, like at least four people had a white armband, civilians whose bodies were in the street.

And it was known that the white armband was a sign of recognition that the Russian military was using. The Ukrainian military was using yellow or blue armbands because that was the only way for them to differentiate each other, because they more or less had the same type of uniform otherwise. And so civilians who would walk around carrying white armbands would be like a sign that they were friendly to Russian forces and didn't want to be shot by them, you know? And then when we see the images spread worldwide, again, at least four of them had white armbands. I never saw any comment about that in the mainstream press. But you would only see in the alternative press the idea that this was very strange because it looked like it was pro-Russian people killed.

So why would the Russians kill pro-Russian people? You know, it doesn't make sense. There's even one more story that makes even less sense. There was the only victim identified by name, as far as I can tell, among these 400 victims, identified by name and whose name was released publicly, at least. This was a former member of the Ukrainian parliament living in Bucha, who was known to be pro-Russian. And actually, the Russian side, even as I recall, published information about the fact that they had ties with him, and that before retreating, they had proposed him to come with them because they were afraid of reprisals against him.

And so the Russian side says, "We proposed him to come with us because he cooperated with us openly, and most likely he would be in trouble, you know, if... you know, he wouldn't leave." And

that person was found dead. According to the Ukrainian version of events, he was killed by the Russian soldiers before they left because they were drunk. And then that goes back with the idea, you know, the narrative constructed against Russians was so, like, caricatural and so absurd. They said, "Oh no, Russians, you know, drink all the time, so it's normal that Russian soldiers get drunk and fire at anyone at will just because they are drunk, including their closest allies."

And they tried to sell this story to the public, and people who hate Russians, they want to believe it. Of course, you know, Russians are such subhuman people. They would do such things, and they wouldn't look beyond. But actually, this part of the story is so absurd that I haven't seen it much covered in Western press. It was mostly for the Ukrainian audience when I saw this development being used. Anyways, what we know, which is very important to know about Bucha beyond that, is that on the 31st of March, that's a fact, the mayor of the city filmed himself in the street with a big smile on his face, saying, "Russian soldiers have left. Now we are free."

And actually, from what we know, Russian military left on March 30th. And based on the decision taken on March 29th by President Putin, which was meant to be a sign of goodwill towards the Ukrainian side in the framework of the negotiations that were being held in Istanbul. Because in those days, this we learned months afterwards. We didn't know at that time. But the negotiations in Istanbul actually had reached a point when the Russians were ready to actually withdraw from all the positions they had taken since the start of the special military operation, with the possible exception of Donbass, where it was said it would be treated separately and the status of Donbass would be dealt with years later.

Same as Crimea. So they tried to avoid, like, settling once and for all the status of Donbass and Crimea, but they said they were ready to withdraw anywhere else in exchange for Ukraine recognizing—I mean, making commitments never to join NATO. This was the number one reason why Russia went to war, you know. And every serious person who knows a thing or two about this war knows this fact. It had been known for decades before that. Even myself, when I was working at the French Ministry of Defense in 2007, I knew that this was a fact, that Ukraine joining NATO would be a red line for Moscow, and a red line in diplomatic language means ready to go to war for it. In 2007, I knew that for a fact.

It was written by the French ambassador in Moscow. I read the telegram because of my functions at that time, so I knew this. But, you know, then it was somehow put aside and ignored as if this never happened, and that the attack came out of the blue just because Russia wanted to conquer more territory. Anyways, so the Istanbul Accords were almost ready to be signed. There was just one piece that they had not agreed upon, which was, like, what the size of the Ukrainian military should be. And according to what we read afterwards, this last bit was supposed to be discussed at the level of a presidency between Zelensky and Putin directly.

But otherwise, and this was confirmed, by the way, by Arestovich and Arakhamia, who were both, like, senior strategic advisor to Zelensky and the head of the Servant of the People caucus in the

Ukrainian parliament, which is basically Zelensky's party. Both confirmed that this was the state of negotiations back then. So, you know, it's not like conspiracy theory or false information to make these claims. So, in this context, because this promise was so unbelievable, even from an outside observer, that Putin really means it when he says, "We're ready to withdraw our forces." So he said, "Okay, well, I'm going to show you."

And he decided to withdraw all the forces from the north of Ukraine, not only from Bucha, but all the way back to the border as a sign of goodwill. And they used that, in my opinion, as a way actually to build a narrative against Russia. So what was meant as goodwill from their side ended up being an opportunity to build a narrative showing them as even more barbaric than before. It was like one more layer of accusations after the Mariupol events. And this one was meant to be a turning point. That's, I believe, what happened, how it happened. As I said, March 31st, the mayor says Russian troops are gone. He doesn't mention any actual existence of dead bodies in the street.

#Pascal

And if I remember correctly, he was actually in that street, right, that was later claimed where these bodies were lying. He was very near to this place.

#Benoit Pare

Well, I remember him filming himself, like, kind of close up. So I don't remember exactly where he was. So that would need to be double-checked. But I'm not entirely sure about that, so that will need to be checked. But anyways, the following day, April 1st, you have officials from the Bucha municipality, one of them wearing a uniform, who actually mentioned that they want people not to go out because there will be clearing operations done by the Ukrainian security forces looking for Russian saboteurs left behind. And initially, for my book, I had used, for the article which I used in the book, I had used a video statement. When I checked, this video statement was no longer available. It was gone.

So I made some further research and I found out that the same statement could be found in a Ukrainian online newspaper, even with the names of the two people who spoke on April 1st. So it's a fact. Ukrainian officials warned that there would be cleaning operations done by Ukrainian security forces from April 1st. And then, April 2nd, you see a video. It was published in the evening, according to the source. A video of a man called—actually, I forgot his real name, but his nickname, war name, was Botsman. And this Botsman guy, according to Ukrainian sources themselves, was a neo-Nazi with a criminal background, accused of having executed people, but somehow never sentenced because he always managed to, you know, escape.

And all the people around him were basically neo-Nazis following the same ideology. Criminals and neo-Nazis. And this person filmed—I mean, actually published a video from his own, how do you call these cameras? I forgot how they're called. You know, the camera, a little bit camera, like a body

cam. I forgot, there's a special brand for it. But okay, he has a body cam, and he published a video from his body cam, which basically shows what he sees. And you can hear his voice on top of it. And you actually recognize that he actually walks in this very street with the destroyed armed vehicles. And he doesn't say anything about dead bodies. But you can hear a voice in the background, and this was confirmed by several sources.

One of the guys, we assume it's one of his guys, one of his soldiers, who says, "Hey, if we see a guy who doesn't wear the blue or yellow armband, do we have permission to shoot?" And his answer is, "Hell yeah." And, okay, he publishes that probably as a kind of a warning, you know, and probably also to say, okay, well, for people intelligent enough, you know, this is what we did, right? But, of course, this video was completely made invisible by Western media. Once I found, actually, on the alternative media, there was a guy who claimed to work for a Western intelligence service, but he testified anonymously because he said, "I cannot testify publicly."

And he mentioned the existence of this video, but he said, "But, you know, I know it exists because I've seen it, but nobody mentions it. So please, no report about it." But only alternative media did so. And I saw the same video, so I knew this guy was telling the truth. But the Swiss totally ignored this fact. So this is detailed in my book, once again. And actually, in the latest edition, I managed to add the link to the Ukrainian newspaper that announces that there will be a clearing of saboteurs from April 1st, alleged saboteurs. So, of course, if they saw somebody with a white armband, according to the video, they would have shot without asking questions. And then these are the bodies you see on the pictures. And nobody asked, why are they wearing white armbands, right? So this shows the extent of the manipulation. And then the whole story breaks out on April 3rd worldwide. I remember seeing a video shot in this famous street showing all the destroyed vehicles and then bodies littered across the street.

And there was one French guy, Adrien Boquet, who claimed to have accompanied the first Ukrainian troops entering Bucha and, according to his statement, they actually pulled bodies to basically put them in the street. But, okay, that's what he says. I have no proof that what he says is right, but that's what he said. But we have many, actually, elements of information that allow us to think it's probably what happened. Now, it's not to say that none of these victims were killed by Russians in the first place. It's very hard to tell who killed whom with hindsight. And later on, there was even a police investigation done by France. Actually, it was a gendarmerie investigation. The French government decided to send French gendarmes to investigate, you know, victims in Bucha.

And the thing is, I talked to Eric Donese, a guy who was, I would say, assassinated, even though it was portrayed as suicide. But for me, it's an assassination. This guy was assassinated afterwards, five days after he talked to me. And he told me, "I talked to a senior gendarmerie general who told me he was aware of the results of the French investigation in Bucha." And he said, "Well, they could not confirm that victims were killed by Russians. There was no way to confirm it. And among other reasons, because most victims were killed by shrapnel from artillery, and both militaries used the same weapons in those days. They used Soviet-style weapons, so it was the same model of artillery."

So God knows who killed whom in this context. And beyond that, a few people were probably executed."

I don't exclude that maybe some might have been executed by Russians, but I haven't seen hard evidence that it was the case. And you can also suspect that others were actually executed by Ukrainians, as I mentioned. Now, I've also seen another video which came out on April 2nd, very recently, because when I did a conference about my book in Paris, somebody mentioned that video to me. And then I did some research and I found it. The video is about a police unit of the Ukrainian government that also entered Bucha on the 2nd of April. And you see them—it's a seven-minute video, still available online—you see them interview people, several people in the street. I asked one of my friends who is, like, a Russian and Ukrainian speaker, I asked him, "Can you confirm to me what they say? Are they talking about bodies in the street?" And he said, "No, none of them."

They just say irrelevant stuff about where the Russian military was sleeping, where they were based, but that's it. No mention about people being killed, executed, nothing. And this video came out on April 2nd, and that police unit called Safari published a video the following day. No mention of dead bodies, no images of dead bodies. So, again, another very suspicious fact. And last but not least, I also followed, in those days when I was doing my own research, different accounts on Twitter back then, and not only Twitter, but what's the other one? Telegram, of course. And I saw actually an account, very interesting, done by—actually, the guy was called Adam Lawson, from memory. I guess he's American.

And this guy actually made his own investigation about the event at Bucha, collecting everything he could find over a month period about what happened there. And he found, at some point, a picture of two Russian soldiers whose bodies actually lie on a railway track. And you see their positions; it's very characteristic, and you recognize military uniforms. And the picture, when it was published—the legend below, it was published by Ukrainian journalists, as I recall—the legend was that it was bodies of dead Russian soldiers. And then you see a message which was put forward on X by a vice prime minister of Ukraine. I forgot his name because there were so many of them, but it's in my book. And also, I made a print of his post.

And I also made a print of the original picture of the same two guys so that people can see with their own eyes that it's the same bodies we're talking about here. And in the message sent by the Ukrainian vice prime minister, what he says is that the bodies that you see in the picture are Ukrainian civilians killed by Russians. So it is a complete reversal of accusation. And this time, we actually know for a fact, because we have proof, that this is a lie. For many things, we don't have proof. But in this case, we have proof that this was a lie. And this was meant to demonize the Russians when using the bodies of their own soldiers. Now, why did you not recognize them? Maybe I forgot to mention that. Because the bodies had been burnt.

The bodies had been burnt, so you couldn't see that they had military uniforms anymore. And if you recall, among the images that went worldwide, when even then Ursula von der Leyen showed up

with hundreds of journalists from around the world, they showed at some point a pile of five or six bodies that had been burnt just to shock the audience. And okay, so when you burn the bodies, it's a very convenient way to prevent easy identification of these people. Then you need forensics to identify who it is. And actually, the Russian side has always complained that the official results of the identification of the victims have never been made public. Never. They requested this information to the UN, OSCE, I believe. And OSCE said, no, we don't release such information to protect the victims.

I mean, once they are dead, how does that protect them, right? So it looks like, I mean, maybe if names were published, you could see actually these people who were dead. Many were not, like, pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian. You could actually maybe guess on which side they were standing and then realize that most probably they were killed by the Ukrainian side and not the Russian side. That information we will never get because it is withheld. So that's the summary to explain how we have enough information to conclude that this was a huge manipulation, what happened in Bucha. Last but not least, the role of the British government. And I verified this afterwards because I saw a statement from Scott Ritter, who is famous, you know, a former weapons inspector in Iraq, very critical of U.S. policy now.

And in one of his statements on his Telegram channel, he said, "Oh, it is MI6 that organized Bucha." And I wrote back and I said, "Well, how can you claim that? I mean, do you have evidence?" And actually, his assistant answered me. And she said, "Well, just look at the statements from the head of MI6 on that very day." So I actually checked, and it is very unusual of the head of a big intelligence agency to publish a public statement on the very day such an event occurs, when there hasn't been any time to verify the facts. You know, normally, an intelligence service worthy of its name is supposed to check facts before spreading propaganda. Well, you could say that now there are more propaganda agencies than anything else.

But ideally, they're not supposed to be propaganda agencies. They are supposed to check facts to inform their governments about what's going on, the reality on the ground. And before anybody could check anything, he published a statement accusing the Russians, which actually was a reaction to what his own Minister of Foreign Affairs, Liz Truss, at that time had published. Liz Truss was even more radical in immediately, from April 3rd, accusing the Russians of war crimes in Bucha, again, just when the bodies had been discovered, like, two hours before. Immediately she reacted, which is again very unusual and which shows that there was an intent to actually use this information as a way to build a narrative, to show how the Russians were barbarians.

And the British press also, on the very day or the following day, actually was as extreme. The titles I collected in my book were extreme, accusing the Russians of being worse than Nazis and so forth, which, for the British audience, speaks a lot because of what happened to Bucha. Immediately, there was a massive, maximalist campaign of accusations of massive war crimes against the Russians, immediately. This is the proof, in my view, that this was all coordinated and organized. There is no other explanation possible, because it all happened on the same day at the same time. And the fact that it was so extreme from the UK actually adds fuel to the idea that they had their own hand in it.

Now, I haven't seen hard evidence that it was the case, but we have enough evidence of what we can see, which basically tells us that this is highly probable, that they were involved in organizing this whole thing. And again, we know that a few days later, Boris Johnson comes to Kiev to convince Zelensky not to negotiate with the Russians, to give up on the Istanbul Accord. It was April the 9th. And what happens just before that, that's my last point, there was the bombing of the Kramatorsk train station on April the 8th. As if the Bucha narrative was not enough, they added another layer, because from what people say, on April 5th maybe Zelensky had not yet decided to stop negotiating with the Russians. But so then there's another layer: April 8th, 50 civilians are killed by a strike on the Kramatorsk train station.

On that day, there was a massive evacuation of civilians, which had been publicized. And, of course, the Russians are accused. But, you know, I found, like, the statement of Denis Pushilin, who was and still is the head of the Donetsk People's Republic, the separatists. And he said, well, these people who died are our people. Why would we want to kill our own people? We consider these people to be our own people. Why would we want to kill them? And he says, for him, it was obviously a manipulation by the Ukrainians to, again, once more, demonize the Russians and the separatists. And, you know, you have to remember that Kramatorsk was one of the first cities that the separatists occupied in April of 2014. And they had to withdraw under pressure of the Ukrainian military.

But they always had the will to come back because they considered it was theirs. And so it didn't make any sense for them to shell that place, first thing. But actually, Scott Ritter, him again, he actually made the point that the missile that was used, the Tochka-U, was a missile with submunitions, right? And the way it works is that when it's in flight, at some point the submunitions are released, and because of the laws of physics, they end up going further away than the tail of the missile that stays behind. But he says that when you actually draw a line between the explosive charge and the tail of a missile, if you draw this line, you can draw it all further back to the origin of fire. Actually, I did exactly as he suggested. And I did that on Google Earth.

And I found out that the line actually ended up exactly in the middle of the city of Dobropillia, which is now on the edge of being conquered by Russian troops. But that's another story. And it was exactly where, from the Ukrainian side, they shelled the place, according to the separatists, according to the Donetsk People's Republic. He says it was a Ukrainian unit, and they even gave the name of that unit. It was an artillery brigade, the only one in the Ukrainian military that had this Tochka-U, this specific missile. And they said, it's that unit. They were based in Lviv, and they did it. And the forensic analysis that I did, thanks to Scott Ritter, demonstrated exactly that. It could only have been fired from there. And this was totally ignored, again, by Western media.

The only attempts to actually debunk this were pathetic. I mean, you know, as a journalist, I try systematically to try to find counterarguments. Okay, this is one narrative. What about possible counterarguments? I haven't thought about it. And the only thing I found was really pathetic. Like,

people imagined that maybe the missile deviated by 90 degrees. It's just, like, absurd from the laws of physics. But that was the only way they could actually connect it to somehow the separatists having fired the missile. So it was absurd. But I believe that this story was not too much used for propaganda purposes afterwards because there was, for anyone who would dig, this major flaw in the narrative, which was easy to debunk. But nobody debunked it in the Western press because... they were all accomplices in the narrative.

We have to convince the audiences, both in Ukraine and in the West, that barbarians, Russians are barbarians, and we cannot negotiate with them. And on April 9th, to finish and conclude, Boris Johnson comes to see Zelensky, and he convinces him, don't negotiate. At least that's the information we had. And we will help you to win this war militarily. And now, down the line, four years down the line, we have, who knows, maybe millions of people died or were at least wounded, amputated. Both countries are heavily damaged. Ukraine will probably never recover from this disaster. But, you know, all was decided in these crucial days between March and April 2014—sorry, 2022. And this is the story of my second book: how we were conditioned to actually believe that Russians were barbarians and we could not morally agree, accept, and negotiate with them.

#Pascal

Thank you very much for this very, very detailed summary of something that is described in even more detail in your book. The bottom line also is that the propaganda war is at least as important as the actual shooting war. And the whole time you were telling us this story, it went through my mind that, until now, it is the Russian side that demands independent UN investigations of all of these events. It's the Russians that keep saying, like, we want the data, we want reports to be drawn up, and we want independent teams going there. Yeah, and it's the other side that is saying, like, no, we know what happened. It is known because we already put it all out there.

So this is the reason why we in our bubble here, like, discussing what actually happened and what the reasons for this war are, are so frustrated, because these things could be investigated. And these things, you could—we've had that in the past many, many times. You know how with the war in Georgia in 2008, the European Union actually asked the Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini to go and research what happened. She came up with a report which actually did put blame on basically all sides, but it very importantly uncovered that, no, the first shots were shot by the Saakashvili government, period. There's just no way around that. And this is a very important piece of information, but that's what now, 20 years later, it's not possible anymore.

You cannot have independent investigations anymore because they have too much influence over public perception, and this great manipulation is going on. And it is not a conspiracy theory that there are people who want to do that, because they even tell us so. NATO talks about and publishes about cognitive warfare and how important it is to control not only the narrative abroad but also the narrative at home. They officially do so. That's the insane part about it. But Benoit, just in closing, and maybe not more than two or three minutes, what is your distilled conclusion of how this war has

been fought on the propaganda front, on the manipulation front? And what should we be aware of when we listen again to the news coming out about warfare that the West is conducting?

#Benoit Pare

Yes, interesting question. Just very briefly, reacting to what you just said, when I was in Mariupol, you know, I had a chance to meet a senior official from OHCHR, you know, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which basically is the body that oversaw the investigation in Bucha. And he told me back then, he said, "You can't imagine how much pressure I have from my own government to actually orient our reports in a sense that suits them, in a direction that suits them." So he confessed that to me. So I know how it works. And I know that now it must be even worse than before.

So these people are under extreme pressure, for many of them, not to report certain facts that don't actually fit the mainstream narrative. That's a fact. Now, going back to your question, well, from the Western perspective, we see that there is no space for any alternative narrative in mainstream media. There's only one speech. And there's so many people, even in my own family, that I see that just believe it. They still believe that Zelensky is the defender of democracy and human rights against barbaric Russians. I even saw an interview from a famous French actor just before we started this interview, which basically said exactly that.

And because he's famous, then, you know, the people take his word for it. So it's really hard to fight against that. I'm trying to fight it because I care for truth with my own little means. And thank God you're here with others to spread the word. But it's going to be almost impossible to reverse this trend, I'm afraid. But we have to keep trying to maintain this little light of truth in this darkness, because it cannot lead anywhere good. Now, as for the Russians, I think they probably gave up by now trying to influence us. As Putin said to Tucker Carlson when Tucker Carlson interviewed him maybe one year or two years ago, he said, "Anyways, we cannot control the Western media."

We cannot control the narrative because you're stronger than us in this field. So I think they're not even trying. They just do their own war the way they see fit, and try to keep their objectives in mind. And the problem is that, as we see, we have the West, and especially Europeans right now, who try to escalate in terms of warfare, and that is worrying for the future. Thank God, so far, President Putin, who I believe is a very rational person, has not taken the bait, because it looks like he's been provoked in so many different ways. As if the Europeans say, "Oh, please shell us, please attack one of us so that we can afterwards basically declare a state of war throughout Europe."

And so that we can impose, you know, draconian laws to control free speech. And we will go after these last people who dare to counter the narrative. And we will be able to go after them once and for all, if you only attack us. Please do so. It seems like they are trying their best to make the Russians lose their temper and bomb some factory somewhere in Germany, or God knows where, to protest. Then they would have the chance to go into full war mode, which appears to be their

objective. Not necessarily to win the war, but to have a conflict that they can rely upon to maintain a totalitarian control of the populations. It's a bit of a 1984 scenario when you think about it. Very neat.

#Pascal

You don't even need to assume that these people are evil. You just need to assume that they feel very safe. They know that if things go wrong, they always have a job somewhere in New York, right? And that the Atlantic is always going to be the big bridge. And that, you know, you can be Churchill, right? And if worse comes to worse, you're Churchill who lost the war and is now a government in exile. And it's very, very sick. But if that's the mode you're in, then you will, you know, you will try whatever you can in order to finally fight the big fight, to be the Churchill, to have the opportunity to rise to the occasion because you live in this fiction world.

But you do believe that you are on the good side of history, and that fighting the Russians—not necessarily winning, but fighting them—is such an important thing, and that's why the good narrative needs to go out, that the right things need to be believed. And even if Bucha didn't happen the way that it was narrated, that's how it should have happened, and that's what should be believed because that's the good thing. And in my view, this is how the moral view of the world destroys the world. But you're absolutely right that we need to work on the actual facts in order to stop this kind of nonsense, because it's also a nonsense of the brain of certain people. The very last word goes to you. Benoit, where should people find you to follow your work?

#Benoit Pare

Well, my books are available on Amazon, I would assume, from any country as of now. And that's basically the only place where the English version is available: Amazon.

#Pascal

Good. Everybody, I will put the Amazon links to both of Benoit's books into the description box below, and we will certainly have him back. By the way, if you're listening to this in French, Benoit is now starting to do interviews in French with knowledgeable people, and we put that on the French channel. So please stay tuned for more from Benoit Paré. Benoit, thank you so much for your time today.

#Benoit Pare

Thank you so much as well.