French Observer EXPOSES Western Lies on Minsk, Shelling & War

Today I’m talking to Benoît Paré, a French army reserve officer and former defense ministry analyst. Most importantly, Mr. Paré worked for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as part of the seize-fire monitoring mission in Eastern Ukraine. He also wrote a book about this experiences in the Donbas with the title “What I saw in Ukraine: 2015-2022, Diary of an international Observer”. That’s what we want to discuss today. Links: "What I saw in Ukraine" Book: https://www.amazon.com/what-saw-ukraine-2015-2022-international/dp/295986011x Neutrality Studies Goods Shop: https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com

#M3

When Russia decided to launch its special military operation, it was like an eight-day process. And during this eight-day process beforehand, you see the ceasefire violations go up. Initially, I thought, well, maybe it's the Russians preparing their own offensive. But then, when I actually looked deeper into the official reports of the OSCE, I concluded that it was most likely the Ukrainians who were at that moment provoking. I got this from two different sources who were present in the Lugansk oblast when the thing started. And then, when you look at the statistics, the only thing that is 100% reliable is the data from the cameras at night. Based on the locations of the cameras, I knew who was shelling whom. Every time we had that conversation—night camera observations—it was mostly Ukrainian lines shelling separatist lines. So, the conclusion was that it was the Ukrainian military who most likely organized this provocation, as if they wanted Russia to attack.

#M2

Hello everybody, this is Pascal Lottaz from Neutrality Studies, and today I'm talking to Benoît Paré, a French army reserve officer and former defense ministry analyst. Most importantly, Mr. Paré worked for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—that's the OSCE—as part of the ceasefire monitoring mission in eastern Ukraine. He also wrote a book about his experiences in the Donbas, titled What I Saw in Ukraine, 2015 to 2022: Diary of an International Observer. That's what we want to discuss today. So, Mr. Paré, welcome.

#M3

Thank you for your invitation.

#M2

Thank you very much for saying yes, because I've been wondering about the OSCE mission and the people who worked there on the ground for a long time, since there were quite a lot of you. There was OSCE personnel on both sides of the front line before 2022, before the all-out warfare that we are seeing now. We often forget that between 2014 and 2022, there was already a lot of firing and shelling going on, and around 14,000 people—one four, 14,000—died in that period, which we now often forget. Could you maybe start by telling us what the structure of your mission was, when you went, where you were stationed, and what your motivation was for doing this?

#M3

Right. So basically, this mission was called the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. It was created on the 21st of March 2014, right after the takeover of Crimea by, well, allegedly Russian troops—or let's say, just after the massive demonstrations that took place in Ukraine following what was presented at that time as a revolution in Ukraine, but which many people now see as a coup d'état, which occurred in February 2014. So this coup d'état created a chain reaction with massive demonstrations in mostly Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine, which also led to the Crimea crisis.

Crimea decided to basically get its independence from Ukraine, with the help of, we believe, Russia. And so the OSCE members—which, basically, the OSCE is an organization that comprises all the countries of the Northern Hemisphere, roughly speaking, meaning all the Western bloc plus the countries from the former Soviet Union. And Japan is actually some kind of associate member—not a full member, but an associate member. So anyway, these countries decided to launch an observation mission on the ground. Our mandate initially was to foster peace by encouraging dialogue on the ground, reporting on security events, and monitoring the human rights situation. This was the initial mandate.

#M2

May I just add, legally speaking, that what the OSCE was supposed to do was to monitor what was agreed upon in the Minsk Accords, right? You have the Minsk Agreements.

#M3

The Minsk Accords were signed afterwards. Initially, the OSCE mission had nothing to do with the Minsk Accords because it had a mandate of its own. For people who would buy my book, in the annex, I actually copied the mandate of the OSCE mission. Actually, it's important to specify this because when I joined the mission myself, I joined a specific unit called the Human Dimension Unit. The Human Dimension Unit was not specifically in charge of monitoring the Minsk Agreements. We were mostly in charge of monitoring human rights violations, which was part of the initial mandate from March 2014.

#M3

I joined this mission myself in July 2015, but once the mission was created in March 2014, the situation on the ground quickly evolved into a military conflict. But the OSCE mission initially was not supposed to be a military observation mission; it was supposed to be a purely civilian mission. But when travel started in the Donbas from April—the first observers from the OSCE who were sent over there—some of them were taken hostage. They were arrested by different groups, mostly in the Luhansk Oblast, because the Luhansk Oblast was, to be frank, very much a bit of a mess at that moment. There were many groups that were, you know, what we call in Ukraine, Cossacks—Cossack groups. And the Cossacks, which I found out later, are very independent from any power.

They only recognize a supreme power—God—because the Cossacks are usually affiliated with a specific church. As a Cossack member explained to me once when I worked in Luhansk, "We recognize only two bosses: God and the head of our unit." But also, each of these Cossack units has its own church, so the main priest of that church is also a leader for them. This is how they operate. So, anyway, they are very decentralized. At the beginning, some of these groups didn't know who these OSCE people were, so they decided to arrest them and see later. At that moment, the OSCE mission decided to freeze its own recruitment for a few months. Then the military situation on the ground evolved into a full-scale war.

First, the separatists actually managed to take control of most of the Donetsk Oblast and most of the southern part of the Luhansk Oblast. But from the moment the Ukrainian military sent its forces, fighting occurred. And from the middle of July—or you could even say mid-June—the Ukrainian army started to actually recapture some territories, like Mariupol, for instance, on the 13th of June. Then the separatists were more on the defensive. It is believed that at this moment, all of a sudden, the situation mysteriously evolved during the summer of 2014 in favor of the separatists again. Many people believe, even though it was not recognized officially by Russia, that Russian forces gave a hand to the separatists so that they could overturn a situation that had become worrying for them.

But this was just enough for them to control a territory of minimum size to survive. And then, very quickly, because the Ukrainian military at that moment was not well prepared and was in a bad situation, they agreed to sign the Minsk One Agreement. So we're talking about September 2014, right? As part of the Minsk Agreement, the OSCE mission—my mission—was specifically tasked with monitoring some aspects of the Minsk Agreement, and those aspects were the monitoring of ceasefire violations and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. These were the two aspects our mission was designated to follow in the Minsk Agreement.

#M2

Let me just ask: so before and after the Minsk agreements, the OSCE had a mandate, which also means that you had the OK from the people on the ground, right? Because for the OSCE to become

active, you need to actually be invited. And also, under the Minsk Agreement, you were invited by Ukraine, and you were invited by Donetsk and Luhansk—even though you don't recognize them, or something like that. There was an agreement that, OK, you guys are fine, you can come and...

#M3

So we were officially invited by the Ukrainian government, which was the only legal government at that moment. But when you read the Minsk Agreement itself, you can see that it is countersigned below by the then heads of the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic.

#M2

Which, in your book, you say you always needed to write in quotation marks. You were not allowed to... Quotation marks, always.

#M3

Otherwise, it was considered some kind of formal recognition, right? But they actually signed, and it's also in the annex of my book—there are two documents in the annex: this mandate of the OSCE mission and the Minsk Agreement. But I think, actually, there are different documents when you talk about the Minsk Agreements, because there's more than one. There were two agreements signed in September, and then there was a third one signed in February 2015. That was the most detailed document. It's called the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements. That's the only document I put in the annex of my book, because that's the last document and that's the most precise one. It basically takes into account all the previous documents, but pushes them further in terms of precision.

So that's why I didn't think there was a need to put all the different Minsk Agreements together in a row. Because for us, the only one that really mattered was the last one. It was like a Bible when we were on the ground. Whenever we had a doubt about something, this is the document we would look at. So then the OSCE monitoring mission, which was initially a totally civilian mission, once it was mandated by the Minsk Agreement to monitor some military aspects, started to shift in its recruitment. It began to recruit people with a military or police background much more than people with a civilian background. In the end, in our mission, about 80% of the people who were hired—the observers—either had a military, police, or security background. Only about 20% of people had a civilian background.

So the change of reality on the ground made the OSCE mission change its recruitment policy. But even for myself, I had a mixed status because I had both a civilian background from previous OSCE missions and also a military background, as I served for five years in the French military, although in different periods because I was a reserve officer. I was deployed in ex-Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Lebanon in the military. But while I was working for the military, I was also dealing with the civilian

world. Usually, I was a liaison officer with NGOs or international organizations—things like that. Most of the time, this was the kind of job I was doing for the military. So this environment of international organizations and countries at war was something I was very familiar with.

So for the OSCE, I was an interesting person because I could basically be hired either as a regular guy with a military background or as a guy with a more, what they call, human dimension background. But because there was a shortage at some point of people with a human dimension background, as soon as I arrived, I was put in that human dimension unit, which actually was much more interesting, I would say, than working as a regular observer, only dealing with ceasefire violations and withdrawal of heavy weapons. Although I also had to do that, because we all had to do these main tasks, which are directly linked to the Minsk Agreement. So, I also had experience in monitoring that, but most of my time was spent working on much more confidential and sensitive issues.

And these issues were, for instance, checking and verifying all allegations of civilian casualties of the conflict, either killed or wounded. From the year 2016, we had a systematic checking of all these allegations on both sides. So it took a lot of time and manpower to do that because we had to verify information from three different sources. One had to be medical, one had to be from an authority on the ground, and one had to be from either the victim himself or herself, or a family member or a neighbor who had direct knowledge of the incident. So that was a pretty heavy procedure for us to check all the allegations. But in the end, you could somehow consider that the end result was reliable—highly reliable.

#M2

So, using these three sources, that's the protocol you need to follow to fulfill the checklist in order for a case to be considered properly investigated or properly resolved.

#M3

And then, once we had these three sources corroborating the allegation, we, the OSCE, would consider this case officially entered into the database of confirmed cases. Otherwise, it stayed in the category of unconfirmed. And unconfirmed cases were not something we would report on. But sometimes we only had two sources and were missing the last one for whatever reason. And sometimes, even without the third source, you could consider, "Okay, there's no doubt about this case," but because the people at headquarters were adamant that we had to thoroughly follow our procedures, we wouldn't count these cases. Just to give you one example, I remember there was one guy in the Luhansk school blast.

He, according to medical sources—which were usually the most reliable, because on the medical side, they were not supposed to be politically motivated and had all the information you needed—could tell you the type of injury, what caused it, the date when the person was hospitalized, and

they could give you the name, address, and phone number of the victim. All of this you have just with a medical source. But in this case, we had all this information. However, the information was that the guy, once he got wounded, decided to join the LPR, which is the Luhansk People's Republic militia.

And then he moved out from his place, so his neighbors didn't know where he was because he had joined the military. We could not trace him afterwards. At some point, I even asked my colleagues who were dealing with the LPR militia for years, "Can you try to locate this guy?" But, you know, they had many other priorities than just locating somebody for us. So I never got confirmation about this case, but I had little doubt that this guy existed. Just to give you one example—this guy was never officially counted in our statistics.

#M2

Sorry, just for my understanding: the statistics—the 14,000 dead that we know about, that the OSCE counted—are those just the confirmed deaths with all of these three sources, or is that a separate thing that we're talking about?

#M3

The figure of 14,000 plus is not a figure that the OSCE compiled, because we only started systematically verifying victims from 1st January 2016. But in the initial two years of the war—2014 and 2015—there were many casualties because it was open warfare. Sometimes, because we were not on the ground, we did not verify those casualties. We only started to do that systematically from 1st January 2016, once we were better organized on the ground. But otherwise, the figure of 14,000 is mostly a figure that UN people estimated based on their own assumptions. You can actually find this on Wikipedia, and they even split this number into how many civilians died, how many separatist combatants died, and how many Ukrainian soldiers died.

And I also mentioned this in the epilogue of my book at the very end, because it's the only kind of neutral statistics we have about the conflict, even though the UN themselves would say that they are not absolutely precise about these figures. But that's the most accurate figure we have. And from recollection, basically you had around 4,000 Ukrainian soldiers dead, about 6,000 separatist combatants dead—so that means 50% more, right? And the rest are civilians. So from recollection, it's around 3,500 civilian dead during this period. And this doesn't take into account the wounded, because wounded are usually four times more, right? When you count dead people in a military conflict, you need to multiply by three or four to get the number of wounded people.

#M2

Yeah. The conflict was pretty bad. And even when you were there, you witnessed these breaches of the ceasefire. I mean, in your book, you also write about how even on the day you arrived at your

first hotel, you heard that there was obviously a breach, but nobody investigated. Can you tell us a little bit—because you were stationed then in the Donbass, so you were on the other side, not on the Ukrainian-controlled side, but on the side of the separatists. I mean, stationed there, but as an OSCE officer, of course, you were neutral. You were just observing, and that was your mission. Can you tell us a little bit about those experiences and what went on there?

#M3

So the mission in Donbass was deployed on both sides, right? Yeah. And we had two—we called them teams. There was one team in the Donetsk Oblast and one team in the Luhansk Oblast. Each team had different offices. In the Donetsk Oblast, we had three main bases—we called them hubs. One was in Mariupol, another one was in Kramatorsk, and the third one was in Donetsk. So Mariupol and Kramatorsk at that moment were on Ukrainian-controlled territory, and Donetsk was, of course, in separatist territory. In the other oblast, which is Luhansk, we had two main bases or hubs. One was in Luhansk, meaning on separatist territory, and the other one was in Severodonetsk, which was the part of Luhansk Oblast that was controlled by the Ukrainian government.

So it's very important to specify that we were actually equally dispersed on both sides. Now, as far as I was concerned, I was one of the few people, few observers, who had a chance not only to work on both sides of the line of contact, but also to work in both Donbass teams. I worked both in the Donetsk team and then in the Luhansk team, which gave me a pretty wide overview of what was going on. And very few observers had that opportunity, I have to say. And then, even when I was part of the Donetsk team, I worked first in Kramatorsk and then in Mariupol on the government-controlled side. But I also had occasions to work on the other side, because from Mariupol, we could actually monitor the southern part of the DPR, which is the Donetsk People's Republic.

And we were going there on a regular basis, and I also made several trips to Donetsk City for various reasons. So that gave me quite an overview. Then, when I joined the Luhansk team, I was based in Luhansk city, so on the separatist side. Once in a while, I did travel to Severodonetsk on the other side. I could see the patrol reports because I was actually in a position where I was compiling weekly reports for the human dimension unit. So not only did I have my own firsthand experience of dealing with the issues through my own meetings, but by function, I was supposed to read all reports from my colleagues in my base—those that actually had a link with the human dimension.

It was a huge amount of data that I was exposed to. Actually, the most interesting and sensitive data that I was exposed to dealt with trials. But that was when I was in Donetsk Oblast, in both Kramatorsk and Mariupol—conflict-related trials. We, in the human dimension, were following those to make sure that basic human rights were respected, the right to have a fair trial. A fair trial is one of the things we were monitoring. But when we were actually monitoring all these trials, it would give you an insight into something that nobody was talking about at that moment, which was how the system of state repression of the Ukrainian government worked.

And it was scary. It was a descent into hell. Because from the testimonies of all the people who were arrested—about half of them, from the moment they were arrested or just afterwards—they were all beaten up. I mean, 50% of people claimed they were beaten up, and sometimes this was corroborated by medical certificates. Of course, there was never an investigation by the Ukrainian authorities that could ever confirm that, because it was the SBU doing most of the arrests. The SBU was the supreme body leading all the investigations, and nobody was monitoring the SBU. There was no Ukrainian administration above the SBU. The SBU was the supreme master.

#M2

Basically, it stayed in the state. It was able to move on its own, the way it wanted.

#M3

It was a state within the state. The SBU was really in charge. And by the way, what was called the military operation in Donbas at that time—from the moment it was created in April 2014—was called the anti-terrorist operation. And who was the head of that anti-terrorist operation? It was a general of the SBU. It was not the military. So the SBU was in charge of the whole thing until 2018, when the Ukrainian government decided to transfer responsibility for the ATO, as we call it, to the military. But before then, it was just a police operation run by the SBU. And actually, some of the SBU staff were equipped like the military, right? And they were actually giving orders to the National Guard, for instance.

The National Guard is basically made up of military units, but they do not fall under the Ministry of Defense; they fall under the Ministry of Interior. And the SBU had power over them. They even had the authority to give orders to the local military brigades also deployed in Donbas. They had huge power. They also had the power to arrest whomever they wanted. Through our trials, we discovered that they were monitoring the phone conversations of everyone. Many people who were arrested and then put on trial were detained because of phone calls they made with friends or family members on the other side. During these phone conversations, sometimes they would talk about the Ukrainian military that was based in their own village.

So people would say, "Oh, you know what? Now in our village, at the school, there is actually a Ukrainian military unit that took over." "Oh, really?" And then SBU monitors would hear that: "Oh, you revealed the position of the Ukrainian military. This is treason." So they would arrest people. And then these people would be tried and risk years in prison. And then they would say, "Well, I was just talking to a friend about my neighborhood. And my friend is not, like, an agent of the DPR—he's just my friend." But no, no, no, you passed information on military positions of the Ukrainian military to somebody living on the other side, and everybody living on the other side was considered a traitor, right? So you passed information to the enemy, and that was it.

And these people were tried. And whenever these people were tried, there was no way they could end up being acquitted—all these trials but one. There were only two cases that I know of, out of hundreds of cases, hundreds of trials that we followed. And these figures were given to me because I asked the general prosecutors of the Donetsk Oblast and the general prosecutor of the Lugansk Oblast—I asked to meet these people and I asked them to give the statistics about the conviction rate for all the criminal court articles that they used to arrest people as part of the Donbas conflict. So there were different articles they would use, but mostly they would use the article on terrorism.

So, in all, as I said, the conviction rate was 99.9%. And for the one case that was missed in both oblasts, both general prosecutors told me, "Oh, yeah, no, we lost in a first instance court about these cases. But it's because the local prosecutor didn't do their job correctly, right? But of course, we will win on appeal." And they were proud to actually state that to me, because for them, it was proof that they were doing their job as they were supposed to. But then, in one of those trials, I met a member of the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada. And this trial was not about separatists; it was about some NCO, some sergeant that was arrested for—this is another part of what was going on there, very weird.

He was accused of having killed some Ukrainian investigators who were investigating crimes committed by Ukrainian soldiers—a crime of smuggling in this case. There was smuggling going on with the LPR militia, right? The Lugansk People's Republic. And so this is another dimension of the conflict, but it's a different story. Anyway, the guy was arrested even though there was proof that his general was involved in smuggling, but they didn't arrest the general. They arrested a small guy, a sergeant. And the deputy was telling me, "You know what, there's a problem in Ukraine because all so-called democratic countries, like those from the West..."

When you look at the conviction rate at criminal trials in their countries, it's between 80% to 85%. And he even told me about France—France is 85%. He knew that figure. So I said, okay, I didn't even know myself; he just told me. And then I double-checked that. But then he said, in Ukraine, it's 99.9%. So this is not a rate worthy of a democracy. So we do have a problem with our justice system. Even a member of the Verkhovna Rada knew it. And he was not actually a member of the pro-Russian party; he was a member of the party that was supporting the government at that moment.

So this was the proof that there is something really wrong with the justice system in Ukraine, as I experienced. So a big part of my book is devoted to that because it basically shows that Ukraine, based on that criterion, is not a democracy. It is an authoritarian state. You could say, maybe, well, it was a country that got invaded, so if it did not respect human rights, it can be tolerated because the country was invaded—so-called invaded. This is not the point of view of people whose mandate is to verify the respect of human rights. There may be other ways than just violating people's rights and beating them up and torturing them.

#M2

And you saw this at a relatively early point, right? And you said you could see how things would be getting worse. And we must expect that things became much worse later on. And without being an observer on the ground, seeing people in Ukraine being dragged off the street and shoved into vans in order to do involuntary military service, seeing that the opposition parties are forbidden, seeing that opposition media is forbidden, seeing all of the reports of journalists who died, even an American journalist, in Ukrainian prisons—I mean, at some point it must become quite obvious that there are huge, huge problems in the way Ukraine is administered. And you were there in order to observe this, but on all sides. Can you tell us, though, in Donetsk and Luhansk, in the rebel-held territories, did you ever see similar things occur?

#M3

Um... When I was on the other side, well, actually, we were supposed to monitor as well. I mean, we wanted to monitor trials because there were trials in the separatist territories. But this is one of the contradictions of our mission, because we did not recognize any authority in the LPR and DPR. As I said, we had to put them in quotation marks.

#M2

You weren't allowed to.

#M3

You were not given... Actually, at some point in 2018, we were supposed to do a report called "Access to Justice in Ukraine." Right. And so we were supposed to talk to judges, lawyers, prosecutors, and people who were using the justice system in every oblast of Ukraine. We did this investigation that included the separatist territories, you know. I even experienced that myself. I tried to visit some local judges, because there were judges in the separatist territories. They actually did try to recreate a legal system, even though they were missing staff, but they were trying to put something together.

So I asked to talk to two judges personally, and I had the same response twice: "Well, I cannot talk to you unless I am authorized by the Supreme Judge of the DPR." So actually, everybody who was in my position got the same answer. So I reported it to my coordinator in Donetsk. And at some point, she actually arranged a meeting with the Supreme Judge of the DPR. She said, "Oh, I have arranged a meeting, so hopefully we'll be authorized to talk to all these judges." Because it was a very centralized system, the DPR. Both the DPR and LPR were very centralized. And normally, they did not trust people like us because they saw us as spies. That's why they were relying on authority from the top.

So anyway, my colleague, the coordinator in Donetsk, was actually happy that she had arranged a meeting with the Supreme Judge. So she called our boss in Kiev to tell him the good news. She said,

"Oh, good news, I have just arranged a meeting with the Supreme Judge." And the guy said, "What?" "Yeah, like this afternoon or tomorrow, the meeting is scheduled." And he said, "Well, wait." Then the guy called her back 10 minutes later—meaning, in the meantime, he had talked to some people—and then he said, "You will not go to that meeting." "What do you mean? We just arranged it." He said, "No, you will not go to that meeting."

I'm telling you. And then she said, "But we will look ridiculous. It's like we call them to arrange a meeting, and then an hour later, we just call them back to say, 'Hey, actually, we cannot come.' So we will ruin our reputation." And the answer from my boss—our boss—was, "Well, you don't care. You don't need to care because you will never see him again." Because these people in Kyiv had decided that we should never meet people representing the so-called institutions of the DPR or LPR, which meant we prevented ourselves from monitoring what they were doing.

At some point, there was a case where one of our patrols—and I saw the report as the coordinator for Mariupol—one of our patrols in the southern part of the DPR went into a village, and one guy in the village said, "Hey, my son had an argument with a DPR soldier, and the DPR soldier shot him. But now this DPR soldier will go on trial for shooting my son." And he said, "But I would like you, OSCE, can you go there?" He even told us which court it was. "Can you please go there to monitor that the trial will be fair? I would like OSCE to do that." So then I took this report and sent it to my boss in Kiev.

I said, look, this is what people want us to do. They want us to monitor, to see how these DPR people actually handle human rights violations and serious human rights violations. So shouldn't we actually go and attend? And the answer was the same as usual: no, we don't recognize these courts, so you will not go, you will not attend. Yeah. This is one of the... the absurdities of the whole thing. We prevented ourselves from implementing our own mandate for these stupid issues of principle. And, you know, again, our mandate was to develop dialogue on the ground and to monitor violations. And we didn't do either in this case.

#M2

This is one of the problems that many organizations have, including the Red Cross and others who are working on both sides. Because if the other side—if the Kiev side—started thinking that you're recognizing these institutions or that it would be bad PR for them, then they would remove the mandate on their side and pull the rug out. So these people in Kiev must have been very careful not to anger their patrons and thereby impose restrictions on you, which is bad for what you wanted to do. But it's one of these problems when you rely on both authorities.

#M3

Well, this is one possible aspect. But talk about the UN. The UN was also deployed in Donbass with far fewer people than we had. But they had a human rights monitoring mission. And, for instance,

because we didn't recognize the authorities, we would not meet them officially, and we would never write to them. Sometimes, when you visited the local administration, you would ask for a meeting with whoever was dealing with the administration, and they would say, "Okay, can you please send us an official letter requesting a meeting? Otherwise, we won't accept the meeting."

But we would never write an official letter because we would not recognize them. But the UN did something different. They would actually issue these letters, but they would send them to specific individuals, not to institutions. And because they followed that way of doing things, they could actually get much more information from the separatist parties than we could. They could have really established a dialogue. Then the only people who would actually talk to the separatists in our case were the senior staff from our mission in Kyiv, through a very specific channel, which I learned about afterwards.

There was a secret email address through which they would actually send messages to organize meetings, but it was only for the number two of the mission whenever he was visiting. Even the heads of the teams that we had in both Donetsk and Lugansk were not supposed to arrange meetings on their own with the authorities over there. They had to request permission from headquarters each time. So the limitations we had were incredible. And once again, the UN was much more pragmatic. But when I proposed to do things the way the UN was doing it, it was always rejected. No, they didn't want to hear it. And the UN was not kicked out of Ukraine.

But one aspect, though, that corresponds to what you just said is that when I talked to the first head of mission—he left in 2019, he was a Turkish ambassador—he told me face to face, "You know what? I was forbidden by the Ukrainian government to meet anyone in the separatist territories. The Ukrainian government told me, 'If you meet any of them, we will fire you. We will ask for you to go home.'" I mean, you see, so the Ukrainian government itself imposed drastic restrictions on our mission, which were going against the mandate, you could say. But they actually turned a blind eye to the fact that the number two of the mission would actually establish this contact. It was kind of discreet, right? So...

#M2

It makes sense because the greatest concern that governments have when they deal with separatists is to make sure that the separatists never, ever get any form of recognition, because they must not be an equal counterpart. They must remain the terrorists so that you... Actually, you don't even have to follow international humanitarian law if you do that, right? Because you want to portray it as a policing mission, so you don't need to implement the Geneva Conventions, for instance. And that's... that's just how the logic of it works, unfortunately.

But then you were on the ground, which was constrained, but you were still able to see things, right? In Donetsk and Luhansk. Can you maybe speak a little bit about how you observed these violations that were going on from both sides? I mean, the main question is, who is responsible for

the Minsk agreements not having worked? They were supposed to lead to a beneficial spiral and, you know, everything growing back together again. The Russians never wanted to take Luhansk and Donetsk away from Ukraine. They were supposed to stay inside. Why did it not work?

#M3

So my answer would be simple. The side that is most responsible for the Minsk agreement not being applied is Ukraine, just to be clear—by far. Because the Minsk agreement is not just about monitoring ceasefire violations and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. There are 13 different points in the package of measures. So the ones I just mentioned are just two points, right? But then there are many other points, political ones, which were for Ukraine to implement. Only Ukraine could implement them. And the first point was to actually give a status to the separatist territories of Donbas. This was perfectly clear in the agreement. Now, there was an attempt to do so in 2015, because initially, there was a one-year deadline to implement everything in the agreement.

But it's very interesting that nobody speaks about that anymore now. It's completely forgotten. But on the 31st of August 2015, the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, was supposed to adopt the special status for Donbas, which was the problem upon which everything else depended. If you don't solve the status of Donbas, then it means nothing is solved, right? And so you will have a lingering conflict, either frozen or otherwise, but the reasons for the conflict will remain. So that was really the source of everything else: to find a status for Donbas, which they had already agreed upon in writing, but then it was just a matter of implementing what was agreed upon.

So the parliament had to actually adopt two different laws in a row. First, a law that actually created the autonomy status for certain territories of Donbas—that was the way the separatist territories were referred to. And then, actually, because it changed the governance of the state, the status, you had to change the constitution as well. Now, the first text only needed a 50% plus one vote majority to be adopted. But the second text, because it's about amending the constitution, needed a three-fourths majority—75%. As I recall, it's two-thirds, 66%. As I recall, but maybe I'm wrong, but it's for sure more than 50% plus one.

#M2

It's called an absolute majority—either 66% or 75%, one of the two. But yes, an absolute majority.

#M3

So, I mean, what we call an absolute majority in France is 50% plus one. And then there's what's called a supermajority, maybe two-thirds—let's say two-thirds. A two-thirds majority of the parliament is needed to amend the constitution. But on the day it occurred, there was a massive

demonstration in front of the parliament. There were tens of thousands of nationalists surrounding the parliament to protest against the vote. And there was a police cordon around the parliament to prevent the demonstrators from disrupting the event.

But once the news that the first text was adopted came out, one of the nationalists threw a hand grenade at the police cordon, and there were four people killed—three policemen and one journalist, as I recall—and dozens of people wounded. This caused a big turmoil. When the news about this incident reached the parliament, three parties that were part of the coalition of Poroshenko at that time—including Yulia Tymoshenko's party—made statements that they would never adopt the constitutional change to allow for a status of autonomy for Donbas.

So from that moment, I understood, okay, the Minsk Agreement is dead, because there was no longer a majority in parliament to solve the main point, which is the status. This is the root of everything else, as I said. And the only hope you could actually adopt this was if there was a chance of a majority in the parliament, but the next elections were only planned for 2019, four years later. So between '15 and '19, nothing moved. And during this time, there were ceasefire violations here and there, violations of the withdrawal of weapons here and there. And each time, the Ukrainian authorities would accuse the separatists of being responsible for things. But according to our observations, in most cases, it was the Ukrainians who were actually violating the ceasefire.

But we did not necessarily have the means to prove it at that time. It's only when we started to make systematic statistics from the year 2017 up to 2020—and I myself made these statistics—that we realized, based on the data, that the Ukrainian military shelled way more than the separatists. For example, if you consider victims of shelling between 2016 and 2018, 72% of the civilian victims of shelling were on the separatist side, meaning they were caused by the Ukrainian military. And it was about 25 or 26% on the other side. But even when you look at the trend from year to year, it got worse, meaning that the separatists were causing fewer and fewer casualties, but the Ukrainian military was causing the same level of casualties.

They didn't change anything in the way they were waging war. And at some point, there was even the Minister of Interior, Arsen Avakov, who admitted in an interview in local Ukrainian media that the Ukrainian authorities were following what they called a "small steps" tactic, meaning they were not provoking large, troop-scale offensives because it would be too obvious. Instead, they were conducting small-scale offensives in specific regions, and he specifically mentioned Novoazovsk Rayon, which is east of Mariupol, and Horlivka city, which is north of the DPR. So they were attacking the DPR from both the north and the south.

And I know both areas really well because I worked in both areas, and the amount of civilian casualties we had on the separatist side was huge in both places. Huge. The imbalance was like 90 to 10, or even more. Which was one of the proofs that the Ukrainian military was on the offensive in both locations. But I only understood that much later, once I read the interview with Avakov. And I said, of course, it makes sense. It makes complete sense. But this interview was never actually

quoted anywhere, even though I wrote to my head of mission quoting this interview, but it changed nothing.

#M2

May I ask you some more about the connection between what was going on on the ground, the military developments, and the political non-developments? Again, because the Minsk agreement—had it worked the way it was supposed to—would have resolved the conflict. The Western narrative is, of course, that Russia didn't implement it and therefore it never worked. Vladimir Putin never wanted it to work; he just wanted time. But on the other hand, we also know that Angela Merkel, Hollande, and also Poroshenko all said the Minsk agreements were supposed to buy us time. The question is, can we believe that or not?

Because there's a good argument to be made that, no, no, no, Merkel and Hollande wanted this to work. They were not interested in a protracted conflict. However, the fact of the matter is, it became one, and there was buying of time. And we know now that the CIA established its own bases as early as 2014, also working directly with the SBU, which makes total sense, listening to you, because those were the people who were in charge on the ground, right? Do you think that, or do you have any information about the blocking—the blocking of the political implementation of the Minsk agreements?

Whether this is an organic thing, you know, because these goddamn nationalists are just very, very violent—that's Nikolai Petro's thesis, saying, look, they're so violent, they're a tiny minority, but they basically deadlock the political process in Ukraine. But then there's another interpretation, saying, no, this is the interest of—including the U.S. embassy and so on—who wanted to keep this boiling and bubbling. And this is, of course, one of the things that a lot of people have suspicions about. But what is your sense of what caused this political deadlock between 2015 and, well, now?

#M3

Yeah, that's an interesting question. If you don't mind, I would like to come back to your previous question very briefly. Sure. Another major point of the Minsk Agreement that was never implemented—and only Ukraine was in charge of it—was the amnesty. There was a point about amnesty, but Ukraine actually never respected this point. The way they were going after everybody involved in the events in the Donbas, as I witnessed it, was proof that they had no will whatsoever to respect the amnesty.

And they even actually put forward a law, which was called the Law for the Reintegration of Donbas, which was passed in 2018. In the initial text of the law, they actually said that they would prosecute everyone who had worked with the occupation authorities, as it was stated in the text. They would prosecute everyone, which was a direct violation of the Minsk Agreement. Now, it was so blatant that they actually withdrew this paragraph from the text at the request of the West, but they didn't

actually—as one member of parliament told me—write anything about an amnesty, which gave them the possibility to do whatever they wanted. They still had the possibility to do whatever they wanted because there was no reference to the amnesty.

Then, access to justice. I told you we were doing this huge investigation around Ukraine. Some colleagues of ours did very thorough work, especially in Lugansk, about how the LPR—Lugansk People's Republic—judicial system was working, how it was organized. It was a 12-page report, which I read. You know what remained in the official report that the OSCE released? Two lines. The two lines said, since there are no legitimate authorities in the occupied territories, or non-government-controlled territories, there is no access to justice in those territories. Period. This was the conclusion of six months of work. Two lines. Okay. Now, going back to your question, Minsk Agreement.

At some point, we started to have meetings between French observers and the French embassy—once every four months, then once every six months. During those meetings, it was possible to actually say more than what was conveyed through our reports, because the diplomats were aware that maybe the official reports of the OSCE just gave you a limited idea of what was going on. And indeed, it was just a very limited idea of the reality on the ground, for various reasons. So they really appreciated these meetings we had, and it was a chance to tell them much more than what was in the reports. Then, even more governments started to organize their own meetings. All the main Western powers did the same.

So the Americans, the Brits, the Germans, the Polish, even the Russians held their own meetings. And then every nation organized its own meetings to have direct contact with its own observers. And it was accepted by the OSCE, by the head of mission, because they knew that with the system, nobody complained about it. They knew the reporting system was such that not everything could be written. Also, for instance, the Ukrainian government, as soon as something was published that did not present it in a favorable light, would usually protest vehemently. And the OSCE knew it. So that's why this back channel was considered a good idea for everyone.

Now, in spite of all the information that I could myself give to the French authorities directly about the fact that many violations were actually caused by Ukraine—most of them, including the civilian casualties, as I said, and the figures were very detailed—I didn't see, I never saw, any change in the official statements of Western governments. I never heard the smallest criticism of Ukraine publicly—never. So I thought maybe behind closed doors some messages are being passed, but I had no proof of that, no idea whether it was the case or not. And so I had my doubts. At some point in 2019, I remember I talked to one of the French diplomats. I said, "Well, I don't see any change in spite of all the information that you guys have. So how is it the case?"

And he told me, "Well, you know what? I don't know. I mean, the information that you and others give us, we send it to Paris, but we don't decide what they do with it. So whatever happens in Paris or Berlin, we don't know, right? We don't know what they do with it. It is beyond us." But I could

see on the ground that there was no change whatsoever from our own governments regarding the reality on the ground. So that brought doubts to my mind as to why it was the case. And then this culminated when, in 2021—you know, the Russians actually, in October or November 2021—decided to publish officially the diplomatic exchanges they had with both France and Germany, who were the godfathers of the Minsk Agreement, as you know.

These exchanges were about the fact that the Russian side wanted the French and the Germans to try to convince the Ukrainian side to actually establish direct dialogue with the separatists, which they never agreed to do from the very beginning. In Minsk, when there were discussions between the sides, they never talked to them directly. It was the OSCE that was acting as the intermediary in Minsk during the Minsk agreement. So the OSCE would have a meeting with the Ukrainian side and then have a different meeting with the separatist representatives, telling them, "This is what Ukraine says." Then the separatists would answer back, and so forth. It was this absurd system that was put in place.

And then the Russians were also part of this. The Russians, systematically throughout this time, were trying to push the Ukrainian government to talk directly to the separatists. The government would say, "No, we don't talk to puppets. You are the puppet masters, so we can talk directly to you, but we don't want to talk to these puppets." So that was the logic. But in 2021, I think Russia had well understood that the Minsk Agreement was dead because, as I said earlier, the only way it could be revived was through a change of majority in the Ukrainian parliament. And that change did occur in 2019 after Zelensky was elected. Zelensky dissolved the parliament, and once parliament was dissolved, he had an absolute majority with his own party alone, right?

50% plus one with Servant of the People had an absolute majority. And then if you added the votes of the so-called pro-Russian party, which was like Platform for Life—the party of Medvedchuk, Opposition Platform for Life, Opposition Bloc Platform for Life—they had, as I recall, a two-thirds majority to change the constitution and to finally adopt the status of Donbas as was planned in the Minsk Agreement. So I thought, at last, there's hope. There's renewed hope that this can work, but it never occurred. It never occurred. Why? Because both the nationalists told Zelensky, "If you apply the Minsk Agreement, you will end up hanged in the middle of Kyiv." And there was also another document that was revealed at some point. It was called the Red Line Memo, which was published just a few days after Zelensky took office.

This Red Line Memo is quite an important document. I remember reading it at the time because it was published in the press. It was published by a collective of Ukrainian NGOs—about 70 different Ukrainian NGOs. I remember reading it, and it was basically telling Zelensky all the things he could not do. Essentially, it was saying, "You cannot change anything that Poroshenko, your predecessor, did." So it was like tying his hands. Who was it from? Well, it's in my book. I don't actually remember the name of the NGO that published this, but it's written in my book. This was somewhere in 2019, right? I was in Lugansk at that moment, so that's the part when I talk about Lugansk.

#M2

Yeah, so it's this memo that is talked about as being basically the standpoint of the—basically the US standpoint—of those who fund the NGOs, who then say, "No, we forbid you from actually implementing the process." But sorry, everybody listening, this is something we need to go and look up. So, yeah.

#M3

Yeah, but I realized this when I listened to the interview of a guy whose name I forget right now, but he's quoted in my book. And this guy actually used to work for the U.S. government. It was an interview by Tucker Carlson, as I recall, where he mentions this. He says, you know, this Red Line Memo is very important to keep in mind because it's basically the U.S. deep state telling Zelensky, "These are our red lines." And he said, "Look who's behind this NGO that published it." And then I double-checked. I typed the name of the NGO and I said, "Okay, who's funding that?" U.S. government, NATO, Soros organizations, all the usual suspects—USAID, you name it. All the U.S. agencies, Western agencies, are funding this NGO. So it was pretty clear—they would just obey their masters. And when you read this Red Line Memo in detail, and I read it again, it basically corresponds, line by line, to the objectives of the U.S. government at that time regarding Ukraine. It's pretty obvious.

#M2

Yeah. So we can say from this that we have these two levels. We have the political, international level, which told the Zelensky government, "Don't you dare." And then you also have the ultra-nationalists on the ground who, with their violence, kind of back that up. And this level says, you know, "If you don't do it, then we release the hounds."

#M3

And the U.S. deep state knew very well how to manipulate these nationalists. They have done this since the time of the CIA, back after World War II. It's been a very long history of this. The CIA was maintaining a radical movement of Ukrainian nationalists throughout the Cold War, and it didn't take much for them to revive this.

#M2

We know how much control the U.S. had. I mean, Joe Biden himself bragged on camera that as vice president, he managed to get the chief prosecutor of Ukraine fired, who was looking into his son's dealings. I mean, Ukraine became a fiefdom. And there were various levels of control. But, you know, because of time constraints, Benoît, can we... can we also move forward to those fateful days

in 2022, when the incidents increased? We have reports from the OSCE that the shelling increased right before the Russians decided to intervene. And if we combine that with your analysis—the political analysis—why did Russia invade, or launch a full-blown invasion into Ukraine, at the moment they did? What is your conclusion there?

#M3

Just briefly, because I did not finish this—sorry. In October and November 2021, when Russia revealed the exchanges they had with the Germans and the French, the Germans and the French said, "No, we will not push Ukraine to talk with the separatists." So for Russia, it was like a last attempt to revive the Minsk Agreement. And this answer from the French and German foreign ministries was like, "Okay, they don't want to push for the implementation." And they published it officially to show the world, "Listen, Germany and France do not seriously want the Minsk Agreement to be applied." So I think that was, for them, like making a statement: that's it, the Minsk Agreement is dead in the water. Right.

So, and then they tried to propose this agreement to the Americans in December, in which the Americans would basically make a commitment never to actually allow Ukraine to join NATO, because it was a clear red line for the Russians. And throughout 2021, this was regularly talked about: Ukraine will join NATO, it's just a matter of time, it's only natural that Ukraine will join NATO. At the same time, the US signed two—not one, but two—strategic agreements with Ukraine, one in September and another in November. And we learned afterwards that part of these strategic agreements was also giving weapons to Ukraine. It was admitted by Antony Blinken, because he said, "Oh, we knew Russia was going to attack." But you can see things differently and say, actually, they did everything to provoke Russia to attack.

Because not only did they sign these agreements, which in some secret part involved giving weapons, but since Biden was elected—since he took office, actually, in January 2021—when you look at all the decisions by Zelensky immediately afterwards, it's closing down three opposition channels on February 2, 2021. Then it's going after Medvedchuk, the head of the opposition, and his main deputy, accusing them of high treason, which I consider to be fake charges. And then in March, just one month afterwards, Zelensky signs a decree which basically deals with the reintegration of Crimea, like they did with the reintegration of Donbas before, and says that reintegration of Crimea will occur by any means, including military means.

So they basically gave them the right in writing to reconquer Crimea by military means, and Zelensky signed this. So, I mean, when you look at all the decisions they made in 2021, it’s everything they could do to provoke Russia, right? First. And then, okay, in December 2021—the U.S., actually, I think they answered in January, as I recall—when the U.S. rejected the proposal from Russia to not integrate Ukraine into NATO, I think this is probably the moment when Russia thought, okay, what

can we do? And I think probably at that moment, Putin must have thought, okay, well, maybe we should solve this militarily. And actually, I understood on 7 February 2022 that Russia not only had an interest to act first, but to do it as fast as possible.

I understood it during the press conference he gave after his meeting with Macron, which I watched live at the time, because I was in charge of political affairs in Odessa for the OSCE. So I forced myself to watch this. And when a French journalist asked him, "The question is not whether you are going to invade Ukraine, but when,"—because everybody was talking about it at that moment, right?—and then, when you carefully listen to Putin's answer, it was pretty clear to me that they considered Ukraine a threat, even an immediate threat. Because he says Ukraine clearly stated that they consider Crimea theirs, but we Russians do not agree. Now, what happens if Ukraine joins NATO and then Ukraine decides to invade Crimea because it considers it theirs? Then it means that the whole of NATO will be at war with Russia.

#M2

I remember that interview. I remember his reply, where he lays out the logic of why he cannot let that happen. Otherwise, Russia will be at war with NATO. Yeah.

#M3

And he says, ask your viewers or readers, is this what they want? Do NATO countries want to be directly at war with Russia? And you understand, because this is what is at stake. This is the risk. And then, once I understood that, I realized, okay, the Americans and NATO refused to rule out Ukraine joining NATO. So they can't wait. They tried everything they could. They see Ukraine is rearming. They signed specific agreements with the Americans. It's only a matter of time before American missiles are deployed in Ukraine. You could have guessed that at that moment. So I think they decided, okay, we have to act, and there's no better option.

And I understood that at that moment, and it even scared me. But I tried to push this to the back of my mind—oh, no, no, maybe it won't happen. You know, even if that's the logic, I hoped it wouldn't happen. And then, from the 16th of February, there was a surge of ceasefire violations. Now, if you remember, at that time, the Americans, strangely, had announced that Russia would attack on that day. So why did they make this announcement? It is still a bit of a mystery to me, even now, why the Americans decided to announce in advance the day when the Russians would actually invade Ukraine.

But on the 16th, there was no invasion, but there was an upsurge of ceasefire violations, which was actually monitored by the OSCE. But based on the statistics of the OSCE at that moment, I couldn't tell who was in charge, who was responsible. And then this increase in ceasefire violations continued the following day and so forth until the 24th, actually, when Russia decided to basically launch its "special military operation." But it's like an eight-day process. And during this eight-day process

beforehand, you see the ceasefire violations go up. And initially, I thought, well, maybe it's the Russians preparing their own offensive.

So my initial idea was that it was the Russians, most likely, who were preparing their offensive by shelling. But then, when I actually looked deeper into the official reports of the OSCE, which I later read thoroughly, and also from discussions I had with colleagues, I concluded differently. I concluded that it was most likely the Ukrainians who were at that moment provoking. And this I got from two different sources who were present in the Luhansk Oblast when the thing started in Popasna, the city of Popasna. We had a local base there. And from the testimony of a colleague I had, he said, "Ukrainians are shelling heavily from Popasna." And this is how it started. This was confirmed to me by somebody higher up the chain who said, yes, the Ukrainians organized a provocation from Popasna.

So I had two sources inside the OSCE who told me that. And then when you look at the statistics of the ceasefire violations—and I know very well how they are compiled, I know how it functions, and I know very well also where all the cameras of the OSCE were deployed, because we were monitoring a big part of the ceasefire violations with cameras. Now, during daytime, whenever you have our own observers, human observation saying, "Oh, I heard an explosion from that direction," you cannot say for sure whether it's outgoing or incoming. And whether you interpret it one way or the other, it completely changes how you interpret the information that you have, right? So this is not reliable. In other terms, it's not reliable. The only thing that is 100% reliable is the data from the cameras at night.

Because when people shell each other at night, in order to aim, they use flares, right? So some of the shells they use have flares, which means they can follow the trajectory in the sky. And so our cameras could perfectly locate that. And based on the locations of the cameras, when you knew them—which I did—and when you know, because we knew perfectly where the positions of both sides were, we had a map of this. I knew who was shelling whom. And as I said in the conclusion of my book, every time we had those night camera observations, it was mostly Ukrainian lines shelling separatist lines. So the conclusion was that it was the Ukrainian military who most likely organized this provocation, as if they wanted Russia to attack.

#M2

To define a provocation in order to make sure that they would cross—to make sure Russia would attack. And the moment these tanks crossed was the moment when, in Washington and Brussels, they opened the big champagne bottles. Because that's what you needed. That's the moment when you didn't think at all.

#M3

It's that they wanted it to happen. Because if you provoke Russia into attacking, then you present Ukraine as a victim in front of the eyes of the whole world. And people only see that. People who don't follow in detail only see, "Oh, Russia invades without reason. Its neighbor—it's horrible," right? And everybody's shocked, and everybody thinks Russia is wrong and that they are barbarians. And then there was the whole series of specific events, which in most cases, in my view, were organized by the Ukrainian system—organized provocations: Bucha, for instance, the Kramatorsk train station, which I will talk about in my next book. Because I also investigated these events, and I concluded that many such events are very suspicious in many ways and appear to me as provocations by the Ukrainian side to portray the Russians as barbarians with whom you could not negotiate.

I mean, take the timing of Bucha. Bucha just occurs when Ukrainians and Russians are close to an agreement in Istanbul. And as a sign of goodwill—initially, it was a sign of goodwill by Putin—he withdraws all his troops from the north of Ukraine, around Kyiv. They didn't have to do it, but they did. On the same day, all the forces left. According to the Russian side, it was a way to show the Ukrainian delegation that they really meant to respect the agreement, which was the best agreement Ukraine could have hoped for. Because they agreed to—I even had problems believing it when I read it—they had agreed to withdraw behind the line of 24 February 2022, which was amazing to me. But they were willing to do that in exchange for Ukraine committing never to join NATO and to downscale its own military.

#M2

To sign its neutrality agreement. And they were almost there. They were so close. They were almost there.

#M3

And then a few days later, Bucha occurs, and then Boris Johnson comes to visit Zelensky and says, "Oh, you cannot negotiate with the Russians. We will help you defend yourself with NATO weapons, and you will win this war." And there were many people, including now, who tell me, "Well, how can you negotiate with the Russians after Bucha?" So, you know, cui bono, as they say in Latin, right? Who benefits from the crime? And in this case, you can clearly see that Bucha benefited whom? People who didn't want a peace agreement to be signed with Russia. Those people benefited from Bucha. And again, when you look into it, there are many suspicious things in Bucha. I'm not saying that Russian troops did not do anything wrong. They might have committed some crimes over there, but not to the scale of what was alleged. And I think at least part of what happened in Bucha was largely a fabrication by Ukrainian authorities. And this, again, is a thing demonstrated in my next book.

#M2

And there's just so much to unpack still. And Benoît, I'm so grateful that you are actually giving us that account and that you wrote that book. It's your first book on your OSCE mission. It was originally in French, but it's now translated into English. We need to have a second discussion, that's for sure. But for people who want to read your book in English, where should they find it?

#M3

Right now, it's only available on Amazon.

#M2

On Amazon. Okay. I will put the Amazon link to the book in the description so people can find it. Also, if anyone wants to reach out to you, they can contact me and I will establish a connection, because I'm pretty sure there are a lot of people who are interested in this. We need to have another discussion. Also, what you witnessed connects directly with people who have tried to observe other parts of the political developments, including Mr. Kaczanowski on the Maidan, and Nikolai Petro on the overall development of what was politically going on. And it all links back to people who just don't want this conflict to end peacefully, and that's very sad. Is there anything you would like to add at this point?

#M3

Just to say that you mentioned Ivan Kachanovsky—I have the highest respect for his work because I actually read his whole thesis very early on, in 2016. I discovered his work in late 2015, and I read the entirety of it in 2016, and I have the highest respect for it. I see that you have interviewed him on your channel, and I was happy to see that.

#M2

People who are interested in the truth, in knowing what actually happened and why, will do good work. And Ivan Kachanovsky is one of them, and you're another one. Benoît Paré, thank you very much for your time today.

#M3

Thank you very much for your invitation.