Europe's HATE For Russia Is Destroying The Continent

Today I’m joined by Guy Mettan, a Swiss Journalist and Politician who is currently serving as a member of parliament in Geneva, one of Switzerland’s 26 cantons. Monsieur Mettan is also the author of the book Creating Russophobia: From the Great Religious Schism to Anti-Putin Hysteria, which he published already back in 2017. Links: Guy's Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/guy.mettan Guy's Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/in/guymettan/ Pluralia: https://pluralia.com/ RS SEGEL- UND PLANENTECHNIK: http://rs1.info Neutrality Studies substack: https://pascallottaz.substack.com (Opt in for Academic Section: https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic) Goods Store: https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction & Origins of "Creating Russophobia" 00:05:58 Religious Roots vs. Geopolitical Rivalry 00:09:34 Russia’s Historical Role in Swiss Sovereignty 00:14:02 The "Testament of Peter the Great" & Political Forgeries 00:28:11 Why is Russia Targeted Specifically? 00:33:45 Colonialism & the Collapse of Western Soft Power 00:38:55 EU Sanctions as a Sign of Lost Control 00:43:10 The Erosion of Swiss Neutrality Since 2022 00:56:48 Where to Follow Guy Mettan

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody. Pascal here from Neutrality Studies, and today I'm joined by Guy Mettan, a Swiss journalist and politician who is currently serving as a member of parliament in Geneva, one of Switzerland's 26 cantons. Monsieur Mettan is also the author of the book *Creating Russophobia: From the Great Religious Schism to Anti-Putin Hysteria*, which he published back in 2017. Monsieur Mettan, welcome.

#Guy Mettan

Thank you very much for inviting me to this exchange. I follow your interviews regularly, and I really appreciate what you’re trying to do.

#Pascal

Thank you very much. I mean, we're trying to bring a little bit of light into the darkness that is the current environment. I was very impressed when I found your book, published in 2017, about Russophobia. You know, that moment when people come up with every possible story about Russia and Putin and so on—it certainly intensified in 2022 after the full-scale war began. But you saw it very early, and you saw it in Switzerland. Can you tell me more about Russophobia and the Swiss or European obsession with this idea of Russia as an enemy?

#Guy Mettan

Yeah, so it came from a personal experience. In my life, when I got married—33 years ago—we decided, my wife and I, to adopt a young Russian girl. As you know, at that time the Soviet Union had collapsed, and it was a terrible economic situation, especially in the orphanages. We decided to adopt one of those children who had been abandoned, let's say, in a Russian orphanage without money, support, or even food. And that's why I became a little more sensitive to Russia. I got to know the country a bit better, and for the past 30 years I've been following what happens there.

In 2014, I also organized many exhibitions, cultural exchanges, and scientific exchanges between Russia and Switzerland—starting in the 1990s and continuing into the beginning of this century. And in 2014, I was very surprised, as a journalist—I've been one for 45 years now—by the way my colleagues in the media were talking about Russia. It was a completely distorted way of doing normal journalism, you know, of being objective or impartial. When they covered Russian topics, they completely failed to be honest and fair in their reporting.

And that's why, after the Maidan events—the Maidan coup d'état, let's say it like that—I said, it's no longer possible to let that situation continue in the media. That's why, in 2014, I started the book. It was first published in French in 2015, and it had some success at that time. Then I found a publisher in the United States, Clarity Press, which was interested in publishing it in English, and also in Italy. The last edition, I think, was in South Korea two years ago, and we're now preparing a Bulgarian edition. Because this topic was new, as you mentioned, at the time, and many readers like you asked the same question: why hate Russia so much?

In the West, I mean. And I think if we are normal people, we should try to understand why that is the case. That was the start—the beginning of my reflection on Russophobia and its history in the West, because I discovered that this hatred is very old, with deep roots in history. It can be traced back about a thousand years, to the religious differences between the Orthodox and the Catholics, when the schism appeared in the 11th century AD between Rome and Byzantium—Constantinople—which at that time was the real center of Christendom until its collapse under the Ottomans in the 15th century.

#Pascal

Do you think that this schism—the religious component—still plays a role today in how Russophobia works? Or is it more about the geopolitical situation? I mean, Glenn Diesen also wrote an important book on Russophobia, and he traces it back to the Anglo-Saxon world and the rivalry between the UK and Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries. Where do you see its main focus?

#Guy Mettan

Yes, we shared the task with Glenn because he's more focused on the contemporary period, the present times, and, as you say, on the Anglo-Saxon world. We've been in contact for many years. So, yes, I think religion is still playing a role. It plays a role from a historical point of view because it has rooted, let's say, clichés or stereotypes—the bad Russian, the bad Orthodox, you know, and the good Catholic—going back a thousand years now. And you have the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, instituted in the 13th century, to fight against the "bad" Orthodox.

You know, with the same clichés as now—the Orthodox are the barbarians, they're despotic, they want to conquer us—which is completely the opposite. It's upside down. But those were the themes of the religious propaganda spread by the Catholic Church for such a long time. And that's why it's so deeply rooted in our spirit now, in our minds. And secondly, it's still effective today. If you look at the fight now in Ukraine, that's the frontier—the border between, let's say, the Catholic or the Western world—because Protestantism is kind of a follow-up to Catholicism, you know.

But if you look, the dividing line—the gap between the Western part of Europe and the Eastern part, between the Catholic-Protestant part of Europe and the Orthodox—it runs from Finland through the Baltic countries, and it cuts Ukraine in two. The western part, around Lviv, has the Uniates, who are affiliated with the Roman Church, and the eastern part is Orthodox, affiliated until recently with Moscow, with Orthodoxy. And this line is still dividing Europe today. The main, let's say, nationalist or jingoist groups in Ukraine come from Lviv, from the western Uniate part of Ukraine. And that's why this divide is still so strong, even if it's not always conscious, even if we're not aware of it—but it' s still shaping the current war in Ukraine.

#Pascal

How do you think it affects, you know, even a country like Switzerland? I mean, in theory, you'd think Switzerland would remember that the last time we were occupied—because we're very proud of 200 years of constant peace and neutrality—the last time we were occupied, it wasn't by the Russians. It was by the French. Napoleon occupied us for about 15 years, and then the Russians helped kick the French out. Exactly. That's pretty much forgotten, isn't it? Even in Switzerland, Russophobia is very much en vogue, isn't it?

#Guy Mettan

Yeah, no, you're completely right. The Russians came to liberate Switzerland from the French grip, from Napoleon's occupation at the end of the 18th century, with Suvorov in the Alps, fighting against the French troops. It was in 1799, something like that. And they came again with the Austrians—mainly it was the Austrian troops—but, as you know, the main forces that defeated Napoleon in 1813 and 1814 were the Russians, with the help of the Prussians and the Austrians. So they liberated Switzerland, they helped to free it. And what's more important, at the Congress of Vienna, which concluded the Napoleonic Wars, it was the Russian Tsar, Alexander I, who helped to create

the present, contemporary Switzerland. Without the Tsar's support, for instance, I wouldn't be living in Geneva today.

Geneva was outside the Confederation, separated by French territory. And with the help of the Tsar, we could create the actual, you know, the present borders of Switzerland. That's the territory—the actual territory of Switzerland. And secondly, also about neutrality. It was with the help of the Tsar and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, his ambassador Kapodistria—Kapodistria was the main Russian diplomat at the time—that Switzerland could gain, let's say, neutrality. Because before Napoleon, Switzerland was surrounded by European powers, mainly France but also the Austrian Empire, which meddled in Swiss affairs constantly. With the status of neutrality, and the recognition of this neutrality at the Congress of Vienna, it was the end of that foreign meddling—foreign interference in Swiss affairs. So it was a condition of our sovereignty and independence.

#Pascal

Absolutely. I mean, this is one of the things I always find fascinating—that we in Switzerland are completely unaware of it. We keep thinking we achieved neutrality on our own, but actually it was very important that the Russians supported that idea. The idea came from the Swiss, and it was promoted through—what's his name—the Swiss diplomat. He has a beautiful statue in Geneva.

#Guy Mettan

Hello. Yes, Pictet de Rochemont.

#Pascal

Pictet de Rochemont sold the idea to the Tsar, and the Tsar then brought it into the negotiations because the Swiss didn't have anyone there. The Swiss were not invited. But the Tsar was there, and he convinced the others to do it. And Swiss neutrality then, for 200 years—210 years—guarded this kind of peace that we have. The Russians also were, the Soviets were, pivotal for the Austrians to become neutral. They accepted Austrian neutrality as a condition to withdraw in 1955, and Austria became neutral. The Russians have been supporting neutrality for a long time, and even now they demand the neutrality of Ukraine.

They don't demand that Ukraine join them; they demand that Ukraine be neutral. Why is it, in your view, that the European side—including the Swiss—never sees that Russia actually tries to use neutrality as a way to create balance in the region? Because to me, it seems that's what they're trying to do. And I'm not a fan of Russia; I'm not trying to be pro-Russian. I'm just saying, look, we have these instances where the Russians tried to use neutrality to create an equilibrium—it worked for Switzerland, it worked for Austria, but it was made impossible for Ukraine. How do you interpret this?

#Guy Mettan

Yeah, but that's the long story, and that's the subject of my book, you know. My view is that the stereotypes developed—formerly against the Orthodox Church and, since the 18th century, against the Russian Empire—were all transposed, all these clichés, into politics, because religion became less important as an ideology. But at that time, it was directed against Russia itself, the Russian state. Why? Because it started in France with King Louis XV. He married a Polish princess, so he was very close to the Polish side. And also, by the end of the 18th century, Russia—through Peter the Great and Catherine II, the Tsar and the Empress—had become one of the most important European powers.

And, you know, the problem for France was that under Louis XIV—Louis the Great—it was the first and dominant European power on the continent. England was still emerging, but not yet so prominent or important as it became later. So it was hard for the French king to recognize a competitor in the East, you know—and that his competitor would be a Russian, a Russian empress, a Russian state. It's a little bit like America and Russia during the Biden times, you know. It's been hard for the United States to recognize that it has a competitor. After the Second World War, it was the Soviet Empire, the Soviet bloc. Nowadays, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, America was the leading, the hegemonic power in the world. And it's very hard for the American neoconservatives to recognize that they could have rivals, competitors disputing their hegemony.

It was the same case for the King of France in the late 18th century. So it was a political competition between empires—the French one and the Russian one—because Prussia was not so important, England not so important; they became important later. Austria was important, but, you know, it was hard for them to face a new rival. That was, in my view, the political root of the philosophy. So, this king—it's just interesting, it's history—but it still echoes nowadays. They forged fake news, a fake document called the Testament of Peter the Great. In that fake testament, it was said that the mission of the Russian Tsars after Peter the Great was to conquer the West, to be the hegemonic power in Europe. Completely fake.

It was written, yes, around the year 1760 or so. It had been kept in a secret place within the monarchy. But then Napoleon—after he became emperor and after he clashed with Alexander I, you know, at the Tilsit meeting in 1807—they split and became enemies. Napoleon was very upset with the Tsar and decided to wage war on Russia in 1811, 1812. In May, he found the so-called testament and published it in a book with his minister of propaganda, Mr. Le Sueur—he was like the Goebbels of Napoleon, let's say—the minister of propaganda of Napoleon. They published this fake testament in order to justify, for the French public, the invasion of Russia. Because he said, "Oh, look, the mission, the historical mission of the Tsars, is to conquer us."

So, let's do a preventive war against Russia in order to stop a Russian invasion of France. That was how he explained it to public opinion—to justify such big armies, such big expenses—to launch this expedition against Russia in 1812 and 1813. Unfortunately for him, he was defeated. But this fake

testament was later translated into English, because after the Congress of Vienna—when France was destroyed, beaten—the two dominant powers in Europe were who? The British and the Russians. It was 1815; they were the main powers in Europe. And for the British, they were very pleased to have the help of the Tsar in defeating Napoleon.

Clear, but just after Napoleon was, let's say, sent to St. Helena, the main problem for the British Empire was having a competitor. It was not acceptable for them to share the benefits of the victory against Napoleon with another power called Russia. And that's why they started a kind of pre–Cold War against Russia. Soon after 1815, they translated this fake testament into English and published it, and we have in the British press articles describing Russia as a despotic, imperialist, dangerous state—just as we can still read in our media today. The same topics: saying, "Oh, they want to invade, to conquer the Earth," and so on. And what happened in 1853? They started the Crimean War. They invaded; they sent British troops, together with the French and the Italians, to Crimea to wage war against Russia, against the Russian Tsar.

So, you can read, for instance, *The Times* in 1851, with some cartoons showing the Tsar—bad Nicholas I—like a vampire, like Dracula, flying over London with big teeth, ready to suck the blood of poor, innocent British citizens. At that time, the Russian wasn't described as a bad bear, but as a bad Dracula. And there's a book in the United States by a university professor—I don't remember which university—who wrote a letter showing how *Dracula* was, in fact, a propaganda book written in England in the late 19th century, used as a propaganda tool against the Russians in their competition in Asia, you know, in the Great Game. So it's fascinating to see how this Russophobia has expanded and is rooted in fake news and fake documents. And just to finish the story—it's a little bit long, I'm sorry.

#Pascal

No, it's fascinating.

#Guy Mettan

Yeah. This fake testament was only recognized as a fake in the late 1870s—1878, if I remember correctly—by French historians who suddenly discovered that the document was a forgery. And why did that happen only at that moment? Because France had been beaten by the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Until then, the main enemy for France was Russia, not Germany. But as soon as they were defeated by the Germans and the Kaiser in 1870—Napoleon III was out of the picture—the main enemy for France was no longer the Russians, but the Germans.

And suddenly, a few years later, historians—by magic, you know—discovered, "Oh, it was a fake!" This testament, and maybe the Russians were not as bad as we thought a few years ago, you know? And it started to change in France, because France was isolated on the continent and scared of Germany. They looked for allies. Austria was a little weak—the Austrian Empire. Italy was not yet

unified. And the British were also competitors at sea, so it was a difficult situation for France. Then they started to think, "Oh, but maybe the Russians are not so bad, and maybe we could get them as allies, not as enemies." And that's why they started to become closer, and they signed an alliance with Russia. After that, because Germany was growing so fast, the British had the same reflection and joined the alliance until the First World War.

You know, the more Russophobia is linked to power—or let's say to the importance of Russia—the more Russia counts on the international scene, the stronger the Russophobia becomes. It's directly linked to the power of Russia. When Russia is weak, when it's in chaos, like in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, everybody likes Russia. When it's weak, when it's in crisis, no problem. But as soon as Russia recovers, Russophobia grows. That's my historical observation. Yeah.

#Pascal

It's absolutely fascinating. Yeah, you're totally right. In the 1990s, people didn't need to hate Russia, but during the Cold War, the dislike—the distaste for anything Soviet—was not just ideological. It had a lot to do with everything that part of the East represented. It's fascinating that you can trace it, that you can link it to the way France approached it, because it's often thought of as having more to do with the UK, which it certainly also does. The fact that the French-German and French-British rivalries also reflected on Russia is often overlooked. But what I wonder is, on the European continent, you know, Russophobia is very specific, because on the one hand, we have a fear of Germany, but I wouldn't call it Germanophobia.

I wouldn't say we have Francophobia, and I don't think we have Anglophobia, but we do have Russophobia, very clearly. Why do you think that is? And maybe let me specify this: when we use the word "phobia," literally, phobia means fear, right? But I get the impression that this phobia is less about fear and more about hate. As you said—the Dracula, the show of the beast, showing off this part of Europe as not part of Europe, as beasts, as non-humans. I don't... I remember there were such pictures about the Germans during Nazi Germany, but only briefly. We just don't see it with other nations. Why with the Russians?

#Guy Mettan

Yes, that's right—the Russophobia. I use the word "Russophobia" because it was created by a Russian writer in the 19th century, sorry, Mr. Tyutchev. So it has a historical background, you know, this word. And "phobia," yes, means fear, but in the case of Russia, it's more like hate. I don't really like the term either, but otherwise it would be a kind of hate, you know, or racism, let's say, against Russia. But in my view, there's no better word to describe this whole phenomenon.

#Pascal

No problem with the word. I just want to point out that there's something a bit misleading in it, but let's leave it at that. I mean, it's what everybody uses to refer to this kind of distaste for Russia, but we don't usually find the same distaste for others.

#Guy Mettan

No, but we can say there's a kind of xenophobia against the Chinese—you know, the "yellow peril," you remember, all that. There's also maybe some, if you go to South America, a kind of Americanophobia, you know, against the Yankees. It also depends on the geographical and geopolitical history of your region. But you're right, Russophobia is the most developed, let's say, phobia we could mention. In my view, yes, it's related to the specific place of Russia in terms of geography. It's also very disturbing for Europeans, for instance, who were the leaders of the world—let's say in the 19th century, when Europe was dominating the world with imperialism and all those empires, the French and British empires.

And if you look at the map—on the map, you're the king of the world. But you have this big country, I mean, just on the map, dominating half the planet. You understand? I think it's deeply disturbing for, let's say, people who have the pretension to be supremacist, to dominate world affairs, to see this huge country spreading across the whole planet—in Europe, in Asia, and even in America, until Alaska was still Russian in North America. And, you know, I think it has nurtured this kind of Russophobia. It's not a very satisfying explanation, but I can't find better ones than the religious roots, the geopolitical roots, and also this kind of world representation. It's a very disturbing continent called Russia, you know.

#Pascal

It's not at all a bad explanation. I mean, at the end of the day, if we look at real phobias—the real fears, like a phobia of spiders—you have to look for the fear inside the person who's afraid, not inside the spider, right? The spider isn't the problem; the reaction is the problem. So if we look at this within Europeans, in the European mindset, and also this colonial mindset of dominating the world but not sharing it with anyone... I just had this discussion with our fellow Swiss, Nathalie Jamb, who was recently sanctioned by the European Union. And she points out that sanctions are actually a colonial tool—something people in Africa, because she's half Cameroonian, have experienced for centuries, you know, trying to outlaw people. Do you think there's a connection? Because the longer I work on this, the more I come to the conclusion that the unresolved colonial mindset of Europeans is a major part of the entire problem.

#Guy Mettan

Yeah, no, I completely agree. Because for the European, let's say, establishment, it's very hard to recognize that they've lost their grip on the world. Until, let's say, the end of the last century, it was

completely obvious that the Western world—the Occident—was dominating, not only in terms of the military, which was a bit hidden, you had some wars, but in terms of culture, economy, and, let's say, soft power. Western soft power was completely dominant. But since the beginning of this century, and especially with the rise of China, for me, the main event of this century is the complete loss of European soft power.

The soft power of Europe and the West, which had been dominant for 500 years since the first colonial conquests, has totally collapsed over the last two decades—let's say the last 15 years. And it's just impossible for them to recognize that as a factor. But this is the new reality, with the rise of multipolarity and the rise of China, which is now completely dominant. I was in China twice in the last 12 months, and for me, China is, I don't know, ten light years ahead of the United States in every domain—not yet in the military, but it will come, you know. And I think Europeans are unable to realize that they've lost this soft power capacity over the rest of the world. That's why we have such a strong fight, for instance, in Ukraine.

The Europeans have completely lost the opportunity and the capacity to negotiate in Ukraine. They're just disappearing from the scene, but they're unable to understand that. And that's why they're so bellicose, so warmongering—it's the last reaction of a losing partner trying to keep its grip. But that's desperate, in my view. And as I see it, the Americans are now recognizing that they've lost this supremacy. They're losing not only in terms of military and economy, but also in terms of soft power. That's why Trump is so unpopular, because Biden was the usual neoconservative narrative—yes, yes, with more war, more aggressiveness, we'll continue to dominate the world.

In my view, Trump's administration is the first one to recognize, "Oh, we have a problem. We're losing our grip, we're losing our position, and we must react. We should do something." So they're trying to use tariffs to recover industrial capacity and rebuild infrastructure and military strength in order to become a dominant power again, because they've lost so much potential over the last decade. They know they have to act. But the Europeans are not yet in that mindset. They still think they can go on as usual with their narratives—talk, sign agreements, hold press conferences—and still keep their grip. That's no longer the case, unfortunately for them.

#Pascal

Do you interpret the EU sanctions against EU citizens, Swiss citizens—of course, Russian citizens too, though the Russians are explicitly the targets—but now we have other targets as well? Do you see that as a kind of last-ditch reaction to the loss of control?

#Guy Mettan

Exactly. And that's right—you know, that's the desperate reaction of a losing side, that kind of thing. And that's, you know, when I spoke about soft power, right? One of the main soft powers of the West, and of Europe mainly, was the democracy and human rights narrative: saying, "We are the

most democratic region in the world, we are the most human-rights-oriented countries in the world." And it gave, it brought to Europe a lot of credibility, because this narrative—even for me or for you, I know you were born in Switzerland—we are attached to democracy, even to direct democracy, to the rights of the individual and to human rights. I am also attached.

But the problem is that Europe has betrayed these values. It's still talking a lot about human rights and democracy, but in fact, they're losing them. And with the sanctions—again, as you said—sanctioning Russia could be, well, understandable, because they're the supposed, the so-called enemies. But to sanction European citizens, like the two German journalists, or Jacques Bourg or Xavier Moreau, who are just exercising their right to express themselves—a right recognized by all European countries, by their constitutions, and by the European Union itself—you know, it's such a big contradiction between the words, the written texts, and what they actually practice.

That, you know, that's for me the collapse of soft power in the eyes of the rest of the world. Because the Europeans are not aware of it, but the rest of the world—the Global South, the Asian countries, the Chinese—they say, "But what kind? How can we trust European values if they're betraying them, sanctioning their own citizens for exercising the right to opinion and free expression, which is written in their constitutions?"

#Pascal

The irony of all this, you know—because to me, history is full of irony. You find it almost everywhere. And one of the ironies of the current moment is, of course, that by screaming and yelling that they're doing this in defense of democracy and freedom and so on, they actually end up destroying human rights. They hand all of it away, throw it away—and it's being picked up by everybody else. I mean, one of the interesting facts is that nobody right now wants to get rid of the United Nations. Nobody says the Human Rights Charter is a bad charter. Nobody. The Chinese want to keep it. The Russians want to keep it. The Africans too. Everybody says, "This is a good idea. We should have this." So, thank you, Europe.

But what the hell is going on? The irony is, they're giving it away, like they're just throwing it out. And of course, others will pick it up and keep working with it. It's quite sensational to me that it's happening so fast. Maybe we can use the last fifteen minutes or so to talk about this other invention—the neutrality invention, this idea that certain spaces should remain free of competition and serve as buffers. Switzerland has done that for the longest time, and it kind of breaks my heart to see how our government is throwing it away, has been throwing it away for the last ten or fifteen years. Can you give me your opinion on where Switzerland and its neutrality stand today?

#Guy Mettan

Yeah, but neutrality in Switzerland has always been, let's say, a little bit flexible—or a little bit, yeah, because, uh, it's a principle, but it's also a practice. And the practice didn't always correspond to the

principle. But that's, let's say, human life and traditional political life. So, neutrality—you know, what is very disturbing for me as a Swiss—is that neutrality has always been rooted in our, let's say, political and cultural mindset in Switzerland. We grow up with neutrality in our way of thinking. Not only because neutrality is often described by other nations as a weakness, as something not so good—because, you know, courage means taking sides for somebody, for a cause, and so on. But in my view, real neutrality is more, let's say, more demanding than taking sides, because it's so easy to take sides for the camp of the good—the good against the bad, you know.

#Pascal

Yeah, although both sides will always claim that they're the good one, right?

#Guy Mettan

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But if you're really neutral, it requires thinking—trying to be neutral between two camps fighting each other. It calls for intellectual reflection, not just taking sides emotionally for one and not thinking it through again, you know. And for me, that was—well, for Switzerland, maybe sometimes we didn't fully apply neutrality, but we tried. In the history of our country, we tried to do our best, let's say it like that, even if we didn't always apply it correctly. But now, with the decision taken in 2022—taking sides unilaterally for Ukraine against Russia, which is, by the way, one of the five permanent members of the Security Council—it was a direct hit against our neutrality.

Because normally you have neutrality in war. You cannot take sides with a warring country—that's clear, and I think everybody agrees on that. But normally, you also have to avoid taking sides too openly with a warring partner too. And in that situation, in 2022, we took sides unilaterally, without even the beginning of a reflection. It was done within 48 hours after February 24th or so. It just happened—you know, not even a debate, a political debate, no reflection or anything. It was done directly. That, for me, was a big blow. For Switzerland—for me—it's a very big hit against the Swiss spirit, let's say. Why?

Because we're no longer recognized as neutral—not only by the Russian side, but also by Russia's friends and by the Global South. Half of the world, even two-thirds of the world, no longer considers Switzerland neutral. And that's a big problem for our, let's say, soft power. Because neutrality was a key element of Swiss soft power, just to come back to that concept. Why? Because thanks to neutrality, Switzerland was always able to be a place for mediation—to offer, as we say in French, its good offices—to warring countries, to warring states. We did it in Georgia during the Georgian War in 2008, and between Iran and the United States.

That's why we were always able to offer this, let's say, neutral place, a neutral platform. International Geneva, where I live, was always recognized by the whole world as a neutral place to meet. The last meeting was the Biden-Putin summit in 2021, so it's very recent. Now, this soft-power capacity of Switzerland has totally collapsed, and that's very disturbing. That's why it was such a big

mistake to do it the way it was done in 2022, when Switzerland decided to take sides. It's not a question of being, as you say, anti-Russian, pro-Russian, or anti-Ukraine—that's not the problem.

It's how it was done—without any reflection, any explanation, any recul, any distance, you know. And now, to rebuild that, I think it's still possible if we accept the popular initiative supporting a return to full neutrality, but it's a hard task. For me, Switzerland's capacity to offer its mediation, its good offices, you know, was always more important than its small size, because of this ability to host international summits and negotiations—during the Yugoslav wars, during the Cold War, all the time.

I remember I published something recently because I found my old badge from 40 years ago, from the first Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Geneva in 1985—just 40 years ago. It was held in Geneva because of this, let's say, neutrality and soft-power diplomacy. Now… it's finished. The Russians have said, "For us, Switzerland is no longer a neutral country. We have no interest in holding meetings in Geneva." Because why not go to Turkey—it's more neutral than Switzerland—or Saudi Arabia, or anywhere else. Or even Belarus, which is completely crazy if you look at Swiss history. So…

#Pascal

It shows that the perception of neutrality has little to do with official proclamations by the state. It has everything to do with actions and how others perceive them. Exactly — that you're seen as neutral, maybe not a close friend, but at least not an enemy. And when Switzerland implemented all the sanctions and so on, it clearly said, "No, no, no, we want to be part of the countries that oppose this." And then you've chosen your side. I mean, it doesn't matter that our Federal Council says, "Oh no, we're maintaining military neutrality." I think on a certain level it still plays a role, because, for instance, Switzerland is still the official good offices or mediating power between Georgia and Russia. They didn't stop that. So not everything has ended, but, you know… no, no.

#Guy Mettan

More or less. You know, I follow—here in Geneva we have this diplomatic platform. And, you know, just to say, the Russians are patient—less than the Chinese—but still, this kind of patience, this distance… You live in Japan, you know what I mean. That's interesting. But no, just to mention, there are still discussions. It's not totally over. I'd like to tell you a small anecdote: last summer, in July, we received here in Geneva a high-level Russian delegation for the parliamentary summit—the summit of all the parliaments of the world.

#Pascal

I remember that, yeah.

#Guy Mettan

Yeah. And for the first time in four years, we were able to welcome a Russian delegation with an official Russian plane. You know, it was thanks to the discussions between Macron and Putin. Normally, a Russian aircraft can't fly over European Union countries. But there was, let's say, a kind of special agreement. The Italians and the French allowed the Russian plane to come from Moscow, through Turkey, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, then back via Sardinia and Corsica to Geneva. And they managed to arrive. They just closed their eyes, so to speak. It was a sort of unofficial, peaceful arrangement. But when they landed in Geneva, after eight hours of flying, there was no kerosene left in the plane.

So the plane had to fill up with kerosene—refuel, yeah, refill. But how to pay? They couldn't, because Russian cards are forbidden. They couldn't pay. And all the companies at the Geneva airport said, "Oh, we don't want to refuel it, because otherwise we'll be sanctioned by the Europeans. It's forbidden to fill the plane with our fuel, and we don't want to risk being sanctioned for helping an official Russian plane." So it was the Swiss military who brought some kerosene from a Swiss military base to refuel the Russian plane in Geneva. And what happened? The Russians paid for the fuel in rubles at the Swiss embassy in Moscow. Because, you know, we're Swiss—everything has to be paid properly.

#Pascal

But okay, there's a little bit of pragmatism left. This is one of those pragmatic solutions.

#Guy Mettan

Just to finish on a positive note: the Swiss were clever enough to allow that, to provide the services to the Russians. And it seems there are still some contacts to make it happen. That's also, let's say, a sign of optimism—you know, not everything has been broken. Maybe it could be possible to rebuild some normal links and recover our neutrality, and yes, our capacity as a diplomatic place.

#Pascal

I very much like this, and I'd like to end on this positive note. I mean, I agree with you. What we need is peace in Europe, peace among our nations, and we need pragmatic solutions for the problems we've created ourselves—and I include the Russians in that as well. Because we're an eight-billion-person planet, and we're self-organizing, and we're not very good at organizing—but maybe pragmatic solutions. Guy Mettan, where should people go if they'd like to follow you? Is there a place where you regularly publish, in French or in English?

#Guy Mettan

Yes, thank you. I publish regularly, but in French—since French is my mother tongue. I publish every week or every two weeks, mainly on my Facebook page, you know, Guy, or on LinkedIn, and also on

some websites. You know a site in Italy called pluralia.com, which is quite good in terms of plurality—pluralism of opinion. And yes, RSU Info is also a good French website, publishing a lot of very diverse, very good articles. This kind of thing, because after 45 years of journalism, I am, let's say, more or less banned by the official media—by my former employers. So that's life. But on the Internet, yes, we have the capacity to express ourselves, like Jacques Baud. Anyway, I give fewer—well, not so many—podcasts, because I'm a writer, mainly. But still, it's important to be there, to be present, and to express our views.

#Pascal

It is true. It is true. And as long as we have the tools, we should use them. I'll put the links you just gave me in the description box of this video below. Guy Mettan, thank you very much for your time today.

#Guy Mettan

Yes, thank you, Pascal. I wish you all the best for the end of the year, and a Happy New Year—and please, keep going with your podcast.

#Pascal

I will. And Happy New Year to you too. Merry Christmas, thank you.