

# Russophobia Made War Inevitable

Guy Mettan is a Swiss journalist, politician and author. We discuss his book "Russophobia". Creating Russophobia: From the Great Religious Schism to Anti-Putin Hysteria: <https://www.amazon.com/Creating-Russophobia-Religious-Anti-Putin-Hysteria/dp/0997896523> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: [https://x.com/Glenn\\_Diesen](https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen) Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: [buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng](https://buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng) Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

## #Glenn

Welcome back. We're here today with Guy Mettan, a journalist, a member of parliament, and also the author of books such as \*Creating Russophobia: From the Great Religious Schisms to Anti-Putin Hysteria.\* Thank you very much for coming back on—or for the first time—but it's good to see you again, at least.

## #Guy Mettan

Yes, thank you. Thank you, Glenn. As you know, we've had meetings in past years, and it's a pleasure to be with you again today, and also to share this wonderful podcast you've been doing for many months now, with great success. That's a good thing, yeah.

## #Glenn

Thank you, I appreciate that. Well, I was thinking, before we get into the current hatred of Russia—or the current affairs, which are also very deeply irrational, one could argue, especially because of how it so clearly undermines our own national interests—I thought it might be interesting to delve into the historical origins, as you see them, of Russophobia. You argue that this hostility, this irrational hostility toward Russia, is centuries old. I often make a distinction, because when you talk about a phobia, it usually means an irrational fear or hatred. I always point out that there are rational reasons to fear Russia, but "phobia" refers to the irrational aspect. So, where do you locate the true historical starting point of Russophobia?

## #Guy Mettan

Yeah, you know, about ten years ago, when I tried to understand why the phobia of Russia was so strong among Western elites, I found it very surprising to see how it worked. I had this impression not only for the past ten years, but maybe for twenty—since the beginning of this century. Just to

mention one incident that gave me this feeling of irrational phobia: if you remember, the Überlingen plane crash in 2002. That year, a Russian airline collided with a DHL plane near the Swiss border, killing seventy-five people—mostly Russian children. It happened at night, in midair.

And in the minutes following the crash, all the news agencies said, “Oh, there was a crash around midnight between the Russian and the Belgian DHL planes.” But then they added, “We think maybe the Russian pilots didn’t understand English very well, so they didn’t interpret the orders correctly.” And after that, “Oh, maybe they were drunk,” you know. So that’s how it went for a whole day—14, 24 hours. Then, after the investigation, we discovered it was actually a failure of the Swiss air traffic controllers who were responsible for the disaster. Nothing to do with Russia, nothing to do with the Russian plane or the Russian pilots. But it was the clichés, the stereotypes against Russians that shaped those first explanations—the usual bad representation of Russians.

So all the press in Switzerland, but also in Europe, accused the Russians of being the cause of this crash without any proof or evidence—just based on stereotypes. That was very disturbing for me as a Swiss citizen, and also as someone close to journalism, to discover that. After that, I tried to ask, what happened? Why is it so irrational? And that’s why I started to dig deeper. I discovered that the roots of this kind of phobia—even the modern version of it—were based on very old religious roots, the schism between the Orthodox and Catholic faiths in the 11th century. And even now, we can see that this religious gap is still present in contemporary Europe.

## **#Glenn**

But how do you see it evolving over the centuries, though? Because it became a very big topic, especially in Britain about 200 years ago. And it kind of goes back to what you said as well. It almost becomes like a loyalty test — everyone has to embrace these stereotypes and keep repeating them. What people often seem to think is, you know, if you repeat it, then you’re with us; if you contest it, then you should be met with suspicion. But another consistent thing is that it always tends to undermine our own interests. Because if some hostile policies were based on rational assessment, that would be one thing. But if they’re not rational, then by definition they lead to very poor policies — and poor policies, of course, don’t serve our own interests.

## **#Guy Mettan**

Yeah, no, that’s right. And that’s why these religious origins are so important, because we can say religion can be part of reason, but it’s not only rational — it’s something more than pure reason. And just to come back to these religious origins, you know, it started with Charles the Great, a former emperor, even in the 9th century. So it’s very old. But it became more obvious after the 10th century and up to the schism in the 11th. It was in the year 1054 — the official divide between the Western Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox. I don’t mention the religious causes because they’re too complicated for us and not our focus today.

But it was after that schism that Catholic propaganda started to develop stereotypes against, at that time, the Greek Orthodox in Byzantium — you know, in Constantinople. And they said, “Oh, we cannot trust the Orthodox because they are the schismatics. It’s not us, the Catholics, it’s them. They caused the division.” But that was completely wrong, because it was the Catholic side that separated from the Orthodox — not the Orthodox leaving the Church. That was the first lie. The second thing was, “Oh, but they are barbarian peoples. They’re despotic and barbarian. The emperor of Byzantium is a tyrant, a despot, an authoritarian leader.”

And also, you know, they wanted to conquer us. So they built this wording, this narrative against the Orthodox — which is exactly the same narrative used against Russians nowadays. And that’s very, very astonishing. After the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in the 15th century, when they lost the war against the Ottomans, against the Turks, all these stereotypes were thrown onto the Russians. Because Russia, at the time — with the Tsar, but also with the Orthodox Church — said, “Oh, as Byzantium no longer exists, we are the heirs. We will take the heritage, the religious heritage of the Orthodox Church that collapsed at that time.” And that’s why all this propaganda turned against the Russians then.

Let’s say the Renaissance came after 1453. And the modern one — the modern Russophobia — was born in France in the late 18th century, when the king of France, Louis XV, who had married a Polish princess, turned against the Russians. And why did he do that? Because at that time, in the 18th century, Russia had become a European power. With the reforms of Peter the Great, and later with the expansion and development brought by Empress Catherine II, Russia became a very large empire. So for the king of France, who was the main power at the time, it was hard to accept that a distant Eastern empress was asking to share power on the European continent.

It was very disturbing for the King of France to have this rival, this new competitor. And that’s why he developed his propaganda apparatus — you know, at the time it was called the Black Cabinet. They forged a fake document called the Testament of Peter the Great. In this testament, Peter the Great was supposed to tell his successors that the holy goal of the Russian Empire was to conquer the West, to invade Western Europe, and to become the sole hegemonic power on the continent. Completely fake — but that was the beginning of the irrational, let’s say, phobia against the Russians.

Napoleon used that in 1812. He published this fake document for the first time to justify his preemptive war against the Russian Tsar, Alexander I. He said, “Oh, but you know, since the goal of the Russians is to conquer us, we have to attack first in order to prevent his invasion. That’s why we have to mobilize and send our armies to Moscow.” Then the British, after that, translated this fake document after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. And even the United States, in the modern 20th century, used the same document — adapted and changed, but with the same stereotypes against the modern Russian people.

**#Glenn**

The old testament is quite fascinating, though, because, as you said, it was used so many times — but it's also about how it was used. In the late 18th century, it was used by the Poles to argue that the security of France was intrinsically linked to that of Poland, because the whole premise was that the Russians would always move forward. So if you couldn't stop them in Poland, they would just march on and all of Europe would fall. This is also how it was cited when Napoleon invaded Ukraine. And later, when the French and British invaded Crimea, it was used again. Exactly the same thing happened with Hitler during World War II, and Harry Truman used it in the early stages of the Cold War. It's interesting because it really has two functions.

One, all our security depends on what happens on the front lines of Russia's borders. But also, as you said, if we don't attack them, then they'll eventually come for us. So we always have to—like now, the Europeans are saying—well, it's more or less the same thing: whatever happens in Ukraine will affect us. Because once the Russians have taken Ukraine, they'll come for us, regardless of the whole premise that Ukraine would never be attacked if it were part of NATO. But this is kind of the main idea. And it's interesting that this is something that persists. Now, of course, it's very—see, we need more weapons because we have to prepare for war, otherwise Russia will attack us. So war now seems unavoidable. It's very fascinating how it was used.

## **#Guy Mettan**

And it's funny, too. I think it's ridiculous, because if we look at history, the Russians never attacked the rest of Europe, in fact. If you look at the historical facts—not, you know, the wrong narratives—Russia was attacked first by the Teutonic Knights in the 13th century, in the East, around what's now Poland, Russia, and Kaliningrad, and so on. That was the first attack. The second one was the Mongols, the Golden Horde, also in the 13th century. And after that, you have the Poles. The Poles forget—they just forget that they attacked Russia, invaded Moscow, and occupied it in the 16th and 17th centuries, around 1613. They never mention that.

But the Polish people attacked Russia centuries before modern Russia ever came into Poland. And after that, you had Napoleon—the French—who invaded Sweden. The Swedes, your neighbors from Norway, those countries were also occupying parts of Russia in the 17th and 18th centuries, until they were beaten by Peter the Great at the Battle of Poltava, you know. And after the Swedes, you had the French. After that, you had the Germans. And also, the British and the French fought Russia in the first Crimean War. So you have constant invasions coming from the West—one from the East, the Mongols—but six invasions from the West, and nothing from Russia. Russia came to Paris once, but that was after Napoleon, because Russia had been attacked by Napoleon. It was a reaction, not their decision to come.

Same with Stalin in 1945. They say, OK, there was Soviet occupation in Eastern Europe. But who attacked? It was Hitler. Without Hitler's attack, there would be no Russians in Eastern Europe, no Soviet occupation. So it's completely, you know, turned the wrong way. And this document—just to finish about this—it's fascinating. After the Congress of Vienna, you had two main winners in Europe:

the British, with their navy—Nelson, Trafalgar, and so on—and the Russians. The main winner against Napoleon was not the British Empire; it was the Russian Empire. It was the Russian armies that defeated Napoleon. So, two big winners, with the main one being Russia. And in 1805, unfortunately for the British, they discovered, “Oh, that’s good, we’ve put Napoleon aside, he’s no longer a danger for us. But, oh, look—unfortunately, we have to share the victory with these Russian guys.”

And so they started, just after the Napoleonic Wars, to fight against the Russians, because they couldn’t accept sharing, let’s say, the world with them. They took the fake testament, translated it into English, and published it in books and newspapers. And for decades—the first decades of the 19th century—you had a growing Russophobia in London, in the elite circles, the leadership circles, and the media. As I mention in my book, there were cartoons of the time published in newspapers showing a vampire, with teeth like that, flying over London with the head of Tsar Nicholas I, trying to suck the blood of poor innocent British citizens. Because they represented the bad Russian—not as nowadays with the bad bear or the angry bear—but at that time, it was the vampire, the Dracula.

And \*Dracula\* was written—the novel was written by Bram Stoker, you know, a British imperialist writer—in order to discredit the Russians, because at the time, that part of Romania was occupied by the Russian Empire. So it’s describing Dracula as a symbol of the Russian aristocrats, you know, trying to suck the blood of the people. It’s fascinating to see how propaganda used any tool, with the same, let’s say, stereotypes that are still valid today.

## **#Glenn**

But it often seems to me that the Russians have always served this perfect role—playing the part of our opposite other, the bad guy to our good guy. I think this runs very deep in human nature, that we always divide ourselves into who’s in the group versus who’s out. Human beings often find solidarity within our group based on who our adversaries are. And the Russians have always had this perfect role as the adversary because, if we’re the West, they represented the East. We were the Europeans; they were the Asiatics. When we said we represented civilization, we said the Russians represented the barbarians.

And it tended to be, I think, historically very ethnically focused. You even saw this at the end of the Second World War. In 1946, for example, Konrad Adenauer wrote that Asia stands on the Elbe—so right here, Asia. And you even had the U.S. General Patton, who, again, every American would know. He wrote that we have to understand the Russians, that we have to realize they’re not European—they’re Asiatic—and therefore they don’t think like we do. So if you want to understand a Russian, you can’t understand him any more than you understand a Chinese or a Japanese. And the only thing we have to learn about them, he said, is how much lead or iron it takes to kill them.

This is what he actually wrote. But my point is that after World War II, because of the Cold War and the ideological aspect, we shifted more into a natural division—us versus them—based on ideology.

So we said, you know, capitalist versus communist, democracies versus autocracies, Christians versus atheists. But in the post–Cold War era, when there aren't really that many ideological differences, it seems as if the real division of Europe now has to be cast as liberal democracy versus authoritarianism. That's the new placeholder for good guys versus bad guys.

But did you see, I guess, ethnicity making a comeback? Because I've seen those comments about Russian DNA. I think it was the Washington Post that said, oh, now that Russia's looking east, they're embracing their inner Mongolian from the Golden Horde. This is how people talked even at the end of World War II, and it's kind of making a bit of a comeback. And of course, I think the war in Ukraine contributed to this, because in the Ukrainian nationalist narrative, the difference between Ukrainians and Russians is that the Russians lived under the Mongols for two and a half centuries. And that's why they're supposedly not real Europeans, unlike the Ukrainians. So it kind of pushed the ethnic propaganda back into the mix again.

## **#Guy Mettan**

Yeah, no, no, you're completely right. That's why the religious origins are so important—because in religion you think in terms of good and bad, you know? So if you can say, "I am the representative of the good, my God is the good one, and the gods of the other people are the bad ones," that's why these religious origins are still so important today. And it's also funny to see how this religious divide is still relevant, still functioning today. For instance, you have this line between the Western religions—Protestant and Catholic—coming from Finland and the Baltic countries, and cutting Ukraine into two parts.

We have the western part, the Uniates, who are linked with the Catholic Pope, and the eastern part linked to Moscow, to Russian Orthodoxy, and through Romania. So that's still active today. And this way of thinking—good and bad—that's the same thing. Now we call it liberal democracy, human rights; it's no longer a religious concept or ideology, but a new one based on the same type of division. And all the arguments—authoritarian, democratic, imperial, conqueror, free markets, free expansion, free economy—you know, it's the same argument, the same topic. And that's quite fascinating. And why is Russophobia so effective? Because it's a superposition of concepts from religion—all religions—and from, let's say, laicist or political, profound ideology.

And also, you have, for instance, the "yellow peril," developed in Europe at the end of the 19th century. The yellow peril was meant to show how the Asians were bad—how the Chinese and also the Japanese were threatening European culture and civilization. So the yellow peril, which is a kind of xenophobia, Asiaphobia—when you add this yellow peril, this xenophobia, and the rejection of Russians into the "bad Asian" camp, that's another way to add more fuel to Russophobia. That's why it's so effective in Western propaganda. Because, yeah, that's what we could mention when trying to explain it—but it's so stupid if you look at the results of this racial phobia now for European countries, you know, with all the economic and industrial losses and so on. That's why it's so irrational—because rationally, you can't really explain it.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, but this is why it's so powerful as well—because if people buy into the premise that this is just us fighting bad guys, then essentially anything becomes permitted. And I know you're Swiss, so any... You know, they sanctioned one of your citizens—a colonel, yeah. A colonel in Swiss intelligence who actually used to work with NATO. And because he reached the wrong conclusions, I hear now that they might also put on the sanctions list the Swiss journalist Roger Köppel as well. So it's just—it's so destructive. But again, anyone who might say something that would favor the Russians is then seen as taking the side of the enemy.

For me, the whole war in Ukraine really demonstrates this, because there's so much that's indisputable—you can't contest it in terms of facts. For example, the involvement of NATO countries in toppling the government in Ukraine, both in 2004 and 2014, wasn't about promoting democracy; it had geopolitical purposes. That's well proven. We know that the U.S. seized control over almost all levers of government in Ukraine—also well documented. We know that from the first day, the U.S. began developing Ukraine's intelligence service from scratch to make it a proxy. They helped rebuild the army there, trained it, and armed it.

They took control over the media and civil society. They supported purging the Russian language, political parties, and media. I mean, everything is there, but it's not even possible to discuss it, because anyone who brings it up would be seen as almost supporting evil. And no one questions whether or not—well, to what extent does this help our security? Because you can make a very strong argument that all of this ensured Ukraine would be destroyed, and that we might walk into a nuclear exchange with Russia. But we don't talk about this. Everyone just has to march along the line. I mean, you couldn't pull this off with any other country, I think. So it's quite a powerful instrument. Sorry.

## **#Guy Mettan**

No, just an anecdote, you know. The last time I visited Kyiv was in 2001, just two months before the events—February 22nd. When I came back, I was invited to a TV show with an American scholar, a good friend of mine. I said, "Oh, I just came back from Kyiv," and he told me, "You know, two years ago, just after the first election—the election of Zelensky in 2019—I was also visiting Kyiv. I was invited to give a lecture, and I entered a very big, quite new building."

And I was very surprised because it was the CIA building in Kyiv, you know, with two or three hundred CIA agents working in Ukraine—yes, for changing the government, for toppling, you know, or trying to develop a Western agenda. And I said to him, "Yeah, okay, good. Tell that on TV. Why don't you mention that you were in Kyiv at the time, in the building where 200 or 300 CIA agents were staying?" He said, "Oh no, no, I can't. I cannot mention that." But it's just to illustrate what you said, you know. That's the reality, but it's forbidden to mention it.

## **#Glenn**

Well, that's a strange thing. When Europeans—whether the public or politicians—refer to the United States, they're often condescending toward it, seeing it as aggressive or sometimes deceptive. And you can criticize the United States—rightly, but also sometimes wrongly—because they're kind of "the other." We're Europeans. But as soon as the Russians enter the mix, once we talk about Russia and you say, "Well, perhaps American strategy doesn't revolve around developing democracy in Ukraine. Maybe this is geopolitical," everything changes.

Not maybe—we can very easily prove that the U.S. intelligence services are there to develop Ukraine as a proxy against the Russians. Suddenly it becomes almost a conspiracy theory, because now the Americans are part of the West. They're part of us. By questioning the U.S., or even their moral righteousness, you're essentially making excuses for Russia. It's a fascinating dynamic, because otherwise, if Russia's not part of the conversation, you can criticize the United States—most people do. But as soon as Russia's there, all of America's objectives become holy and virtuous, and anything else is called a conspiracy, I think.

## **#Guy Mettan**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, no. So it's fascinating to see how Russia is kind of taboo, you know, in all senses of the word, in the Western narrative and explanation—even in academia. What's surprising is that even in academia, you're a professor at a university, I'm in the media, but it's a complete taboo, both in universities and in the media, to try to tell the truth. When you explain, for example, that Victoria Nuland mentioned the five billion dollars invested—she said this in December 2013, just three months before the Maidan coup d'état—you can find it in the Congressional archives. She said, "We invested five billion dollars. Now we're waiting to be paid back for this investment."

That's just official declarations, but you can't mention them in any media. And just to come back to Jacques Bourg and the sanctions against Xavier Moreau, Jacques Bourg, and Nathalie Young—another Swiss activist, a woman from Cameroon and Switzerland—she's dual national. She was also sanctioned by the same type of measure in May or June this year. There were also two German journalists, very important ones, who were sanctioned last year in the first round of sanctions. So I just wanted to mention these colleagues too, not to forget them, by the way. But what's interesting now is that, yes, on one side—well, just four days ago, Thierry Breton, the former French commissioner, was forbidden to go to the United States. And you know it.

And all the media in France and abroad said, "Oh, that's incredible—the United States is sanctioning Thierry Breton! It's a new mechanism. Freedom of expression is no longer permitted, and the USA is now prohibiting free speech because they're sanctioning Thierry Breton." So it's completely contradictory. It was just one week after the European Union decided to sanction Jacques Bourg, Xavier Moreau, and others for freedom of expression. There's a total contradiction, you know, in the same light, just a few days apart. That's the first point. And the second one—just to mention the



United States—what’s interesting to me is that in the U.S. you actually have more freedom of opinion, more freedom of expression than in Europe, because of the First Amendment to the Constitution.

And I think even if the political and ideological fight is very strong in the USA, you still have this kind of freedom that’s recognized by all sides, let’s say. But in Europe, that’s no longer the case, as we saw with the sanctions against Jacques Bourq, Xavier Moreau, and other Russian academics. I mean, we can understand sanctions against Russian military figures or secret services—that can be understandable—but not against academics, against scholars, regular scholars who are just trying to understand and explain the world. So this growing European authoritarianism is very worrying.

## **#Glenn**

You know, I’ve spoken to many academics or Russian scholars across Europe, and they always say the same thing. That is, they recognize it’s impossible to discuss, for example, the war in Ukraine without talking about NATO expansion. But everyone knows very well that if you bring that up, it’s something the Kremlin has said—so then you’d be repeating Kremlin talking points, they say—and your career is over. If you manage to keep your job, you’ll be so smeared that it’ll be the last job you have. So it’s, uh, quite efficient.

## **#Guy Mettan**

It’s the same taboo as with the woke language, you know. If you use some non-woke language on American campuses, your career is completely broken. It’s the same kind of, let’s say, political correctness prohibition—a ban on real words, on truth. With Russia, it’s exactly the same behavior. And yes, your academic or media career as a journalist will be destroyed in a minute if you do it. That’s a sign of true censorship, just like in the old days with the Catholic Church and the Inquisition trying to condemn people.

Even the Inquisition was fairer, more correct than the current Church censorship. Because during the Inquisition, you had the right to due process, to a proper trial. You had a judge, a defender—you couldn’t be condemned without judgment. But now, with this type of sanctions, you’re condemned without any judgment. You don’t even know which law you’re breaking when you’re hit with sanctions. And that’s a big difference. I think our situation in Europe is actually worse than in the old inquisitorial times.

## **#Glenn**

I guess the problem, though, is that there can’t be any laws because you can’t even compare actions. You can compare, of course, what Russia’s done with something the West has done. For example, when it comes to seizing assets and all that, you can point out that we didn’t seize a single McDonald’s after the U.S. invaded Iraq, or in any of the many, many wars over the past 30 years.

But you can't compare, because the assumption is, well, if we did it—this is our side—then maybe we did the wrong thing, but we did it for the right reasons. Russia, at best, could do the right thing, but they would do it for the wrong reasons. And it's because of what you alluded to: what ideological fundamentalism entails is that it's not about what you do, it's about who you are. It is democracy. It is freedom.

So if it censors people, it's because they undermine freedom. They undermine democracy. So if you advance your own power and your own position in the world, you're advancing freedom and democracy. That's the problem when you link an ideal to an entity of power. It becomes—yeah, absurd. But I did want to ask you, to what extent do you think journalists in the West now are aware that they're just reproducing this whole Russophobic framework? Or are they not aware of what they're doing? Because part of the problem is that you manipulate some of the underlying assumptions. You don't have to meet in a dark, smoke-filled room and agree on how to present Russia. If everyone already buys into the premise that this is a struggle between freedom and slavery, or democracy and autocracy, then the propaganda writes itself—and the stereotypes follow.

## **#Guy Mettan**

In my view, the journalists—well, I mean the journalists in international relations—are aware of what they're doing. They try to hide it, but deep down they know. They know they're linked with NATO, with the Atlanticist, neoconservative ideology. They're not crazy, if I can put it that way, and I've seen this in my own journalistic experience. But they've become so close to this way of thinking—let's say, the Atlanticist way of thinking—that they're not aware of it day by day, even though, in fact, they are. You know, there was, I think in 2014, a German journalist, Udo Ulfkotte, who published a book about corrupt journalists.

He explained and showed how NATO and the neoconservatives, step by step, were able to buy, you know, the journalists' consciousness—inviting them to seminars, to moderate workshops in Brussels or other NATO countries, visiting military camps, and so on. They'd invite them to good hotels and all that. And yes, step by step, little by little, they were able to do it, because it's very easy. You have maybe forty or fifty important media outlets in Europe, so you have maybe fifty people to convert to your ideas, to your ideals—or, let's say, to corrupt—in order to make them share your views. I mean, corrupt not by giving cash money, but through all these kinds of invitations, prestige, and so on.

And it's like it worked. Even when I was chief editor of my newspaper, I saw this kind of invitation so many times. I remember I was personally invited to Yugoslavia during the Yugoslav wars, in '93, in Sarajevo. We were invited—about fifteen or eighteen French chief editors, TV directors, stars of journalism. It was completely paid for, invited by NATO—it was officially the UN at the time, but let's say mainly NATO. Everything was covered: hotel, plane, everything. And for what? When I was there, I discovered it was a completely fake invitation, because we were supposed to tell the narrative of the time—the good Bosnian, or Bosniak, let's say Muslim Bosniak, against the bad Serb.

So the whole invitation was made and arranged to push this narrative and make us share it. When I realized that, after two or three days in Sarajevo, I came back—I took an Italian military airplane—because I didn't want to be just a tool in this narrative construction. It was thirty years ago, but it's the same now with Ukraine, with the war in Ukraine and what we're seeing today. And it's very, very effective. With the crisis in the press, with so many journalists affected, and with the competition between media outlets, it's even easier to do it now, because there are fewer journalists to, let's say, corrupt.

## **#Glenn**

I did this interview with U.S. Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson. He was chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell under the Bush administration. He said that during his time in the White House, they had these whiteboards listing European politicians—who they wanted to elevate and who they wanted to, well, let's say, send into early retirement, make sure their careers didn't prosper, or just get rid of them. Once they decided which ones would do Washington's bidding, interestingly, at the top of the list they put Jens Stoltenberg, a Norwegian politician who would later be picked, of course, as NATO Secretary General. Anyway, he then made the point that they would just activate their bid.

The journalists across Europe, the NGOs, their influence within governments, think tanks—how they use all these mechanisms to decide who should represent Europe, because it shouldn't be left to democracy. And this was also based on the idea that journalists, if they want to be relevant and seen as legitimate, have to go to the same events, be sponsored by the same people, and, you know, gravitate toward them. They do the same, of course, with NGOs and everything else. So there's a science behind this—a quite exact one—and it works, because they don't need a big army anymore, just control over what people hear.

## **#Guy Mettan**

And it's a few dozen people, you know. It's not thousands of people—just a few dozen, maybe a few hundred, let's say. But it's a very small group. And, you know, you can buy them very easily. You give them some grants to go to Harvard or the Columbia School of Journalism, or a three-month invitation to the United States to study journalism here and there. Or you give them scoops. I know a Swiss journalist who received, let's say, so-called scoops directly from a CIA agent at the U.S. embassy in Bern—like, "Oh, you should investigate this thing, maybe it's a Russian oligarch close to Putin doing something bad." And they give some official-looking documentation. So that's the start of an investigation.

But just to always look in the same direction, ignoring the other sides of reality. You know, in 2010, I was with some friends organizing the Congress of Investigative Journalists—the Consortium of International Investigative Journalists—in Geneva. Four or five hundred participants came, including

Samuel Hirsch. He was our guest star at the time, and there were also many big names—people like Glenn Greenwald and others. I was the treasurer of the organization, and I discovered that we had received money from Soros, from the Open Society, even without asking for it. At the time, I wasn't aware of it myself. It just seemed good to get some help from a foundation—and another one, also American—to organize the event.

And I said, oh, that's very friendly of them to give some support—very nice, I was happy. But after that, you know, a year later, I discovered that all these Soros companies, Open Society and others, were putting so much money into the consortium that it became completely corrupted. Why? Because with that money, it was good for the journalists, but they were able to orient the research, the investigations, in ways that just matched the NATO-Atlantist agenda—for instance, the targets were Russian, or in the Middle East, or Iranian, and so on. After two or three years, the whole organization was, in my view, lost. And Seymour Hersh and Glenn Greenwald left it.

In 2013, we were in Rio. It was the last year they came, because they were also aware that this money—seemingly good at first glance—was actually corrupting the whole system. And also, you talk about NGOs. An NGO like Bellingcat, for example. Bellingcat is supposed to be an NGO of journalists developing OSINT—open-source intelligence, open-source information. That's what OSINT means. And journalists, especially investigative journalists, like to use OSINT data. But it's completely biased. It's completely distorted.

Because with Bellingcat, it's very close to the British MI6, you know, to shape the narrative of the media. In England, you have this Government Communications Headquarters, GCHQ, with about 7,000 employees who collect data every day and also shape the narrative. After that, they release it to the news agencies, to the main media. And that's how it works, in fact. It's not just a single corrupted journalist—it's a whole system. And that's why it's so difficult to fight against: NGOs, academics, intelligence services, media, and also the owners.

I don't know the situation in your country, Norway, but in Switzerland, when I started in journalism, there were maybe a hundred daily papers, a little less than a hundred. Now there are only twenty or twenty-five, and these papers are actually owned by four people—four billionaires. Same in France: you have five, seven billionaires; in Italy, same thing. And all these billionaires are just sharing the same agenda, the same, let's say, neoconservative or Atlanticist agenda. So if you have all this environment, all this biotope, let's say, which surrounds us—surrounds the press—that's the explanation for what happens and why the mainstream media are so distorted and biased on the Ukrainian war, and, you know, about Russia and so on.

## **#Glenn**

There's this quote by George Orwell, who wrote about the Spanish Civil War, where he said that history stopped. He wrote, "I saw newspapers in London retailing these lies, and eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that never happened. I saw, in fact, history being

written not in terms of what happened, but of what ought to have happened according to various party lines." I often think about this, because you do see that—they're writing emotional histories, using emotional rhetoric, and the language is all skewed. And as long as you have, as Orwell wrote, those superstructures, people can have discussions, but they won't deviate from those main structures. Yeah. If I can ask one last question—since you wrote \*Russophobia\* almost a decade ago—if you were to update it today, what chapter do you think you'd add?

## **#Guy Mettan**

Or you could add something every day—there are so many things to tell. Each day there's a new event that adds fuel to this, yes, this Russophobia, contemporary Russophobia. I think what would be interesting now is to show how it developed inside Ukraine and the Eastern European countries—from Finland, yes, Scandinavia, but also in Sweden and Poland, you know, Bulgaria, Romania. I was yesterday with a Romanian friend, also very active in the media, and he told me how, let's say, the coup d'état happened in Romania's election last year, with the eviction of Calin Georgescu and the choice of this new president, Nicosio Danu. He's been following Romanian affairs since Ceausescu, and he knows all the roots—he knows the people personally.

He's now 80 years old, and it was fascinating. How to say... to see that in Moldavia also. For me, it could be interesting to try to understand this. We have an apparent explanation, because there was the Soviet occupation, which was not very agreeable—tyrannical at the time—for more than 40, 45 years. And we can explain that. I think we can understand that the Soviet rule was not so agreeable, and there was some resentment against the Soviet people. But the Soviets, they've disappeared now. Now there is a new Russia. For about 10 years, from, let's say, 1990 to 2000—before Putin, if we don't like Putin, let's say before Putin—there were 10 years without Soviet rule, with democracy, or some kind of democracy, in Russia.

And why now, as the Soviets have disappeared, is there so much, let's say, resentment against the Russians—the modern Russians—who have nothing to do with the Soviet past? Maybe that's a new focus: to try to better understand it and find solutions, to develop this reflection on the feeling. I must also add, this Russophobia comes only from the West. You have no Russophobia in Africa, no Russophobia in Asia, no Russophobia in Latin America. So why? And these people are even more pro-... you know, if you ask them, they're actually more in favor of Russia than of Europe or the West. So this is new—completely new now. And that's why I'm optimistic, just to finish on an optimistic note.

When I speak with my colleagues from the South or from China and so on, for me it's very, let's say, heart-warming. It gives me some courage because sometimes we can feel very alone, very lonely, you know, in this fight. But when we go outside Europe and can share our views with other colleagues, it's very encouraging to see how they analyze, how they see the world from outside, with some distance. And they don't have at all the same vision of Russia that we have now in our European continent. That's also a good reason for optimism. And I think this hate of Russia—this

hatred—will one day turn against the haters. I don't know when, but I'm sure it will come, one day or another.

## **#Glenn**

This is probably one of the mistakes Europeans are making now, because when Europe prides itself on doing anything to stand up to Russia, they kind of assume that most of the world hates the Russians as much as they do. But most of the world is actually shocked, even appalled, by how the Europeans are acting. And as you said, many even sympathize with the Russian position—not necessarily the invasion of Ukraine, but the struggle they've had with NATO over the past 30 years. And, well, on this channel I once interviewed Václav Klaus, the former prime minister and president of the Czech Republic. He pretty much hates communism—and for good reason.

They did terrible things in his country. But he had a quote once, which I always thought was brilliant, linked to Russophobia. He said he knew many people in his country who hated communism so much that they'd say, "Oh, I hate communism so much, I can't even read Dostoevsky"—you know, who died in 1881. Yeah. But that's the point. If I were from Poland or the Czech Republic, I'd resent communism as well. You can even have post-communist hatred and historical grievances toward czarist Russia. But still, the whole point of that quote, and why I like it, is that it goes so far it shows the irrationality of it. And once you're not rational, you can't advance your own interests anymore.

## **#Guy Mettan**

And it's also interesting to note that the only European leader who's a heir of the Soviet times—I mean, Orbán in Hungary—the Hungarians also suffered under Soviet rule. You know, in 1956 they made a revolution; they tried to get rid of Soviet control. So they were very anti-Russian during the Soviet regime. But now they're not anymore. So it's a counterexample of how, let's say, a rational leader can act without Russophobia. Being a former anti-Soviet, it shows it's possible. I mean, now in Western Europe everybody dislikes Orbán, but in fact he's the only leader who acts rationally. He said, "That was the past. We didn't like them in the '50s, '60s, '70s—but now it's finished. That's the past. Let's deal with them as we do with others, with other nations, other countries." So maybe it's also a question of optimism—it could be possible to do it. You know, it is possible.

## **#Glenn**

I think Orbán has a rational approach. At least when he speaks, he makes sound arguments, not the same emotional rhetoric. Exactly—that's what we need now in Europe. But yeah, thank you so much. And I'll leave a link to your book, *\*Russophobia\**, in the description.

## **#Guy Mettan**

Sorry, my English is not perfect. I used to speak French, but I try to do my best, and I'm very happy to be with you, Daniel. Thanks, Sam.