

Data on War Mentality in Europe. Why Swiss Reject Strict Neutrality

Europe is falling deeper and deeper into a Russophobic war mentality. Switzerland (of all places) just delivered the latest proof for that, rejecting strict neutrality in a public referendum. And this is about more than just the Swiss. The outcome is a function of the current propaganda environment all over Europe and the general anxiety about Russia. In this analysis Pascal examines Switzerland's rejection of the neutrality initiative and what it may reveal about Europe's political mood. Drawing on his experience campaigning for the proposal, he discusses sanctions, media framing, direct democracy and the limits of electoral change. He argues that opposition to current Russia policies remains weaker than many observers assume, while acknowledging uncertainty about extrapolating Swiss results. The commentary also considers voter turnout, political polarization, the United Nations and the dangers of escalating confrontation across the continent. Pascal's Links: Swiss referendum results (BFS): <https://votations.admin.ch/details/2026-09-27> Neutrality initiative (Federal Council): <https://www.admin.ch/en/neutrality-initiative> SRF report discussed: <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/nein-zu-neutralitaetsinitiative-svp-zeigt-sich-kaempferisch-sp-will-klare-kante-zeigen> SP statement on the initiative: <https://www.sp-ps.ch/artikel/die-neutralitaetsinitiative-ist-eine-pro-putin-initiative/> UN day against unilateral coercive measures: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/day-against-unilateral-coercive-measures> UN Security Council voting system: <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/voting-system> Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Support Neutrality Studies: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Neutrality Studies shop: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Time Stamps 00:00 Switzerland rejects the neutrality initiative 05:12 Sanctions and the framing of the campaign 12:18 How the initiative reached the ballot 18:18 Direct democracy and the limits of elections 24:36 Sanctions, the United Nations and veto power 29:59 Blocher, Putin and political polarization 38:06 What election victories do—and do not—tell us 44:59 Turnout, non-voters and the European outlook

#Pascal Lottaz

Switzerland just rejected a neutrality referendum, and it rejected it with quite an overwhelming majority, with more than 70%, 70.15% to be precise. People who bothered to go to the ballot box said no to an initiative which I personally supported very much since about four years ago. And although Switzerland doesn't matter very much for international politics, and I don't want to bother you that much with the kind of internal political affairs of the Swiss, I would like to make the claim that the way that this referendum was held, the question that it dealt with, and the kind of connection it had to the Ukraine war and to Switzerland's relationship with Russia, actually makes this a useful case to kind of understand and gauge where the general European attitude toward war and peace with Russia actually stands.

So let me give you the main argument at the very beginning here, which is that in our world, in our online YouTube bubble of, you know, I would say, people who oppose this kind of European NATO drive of Russophobia and of opposing the multipolar world order and the warmongering of the Americans, in this bubble right now, there's a kind of discourse coming up which has to do with a couple of election results in other European states, especially in Germany, right? Where in Saxony, but also in other states and now most recently in Berlin, we saw the rise of parties that are very skeptical about the Ukraine war and that have publicly been speaking about the necessity of a kind of peace arrangement and security arrangement with the Russians.

Now, because these parties, especially in Saxony, the AfD, because that right-wing party won so heavily with over 40%, there is this general attitude now to argue that the tide might be turning and that the general population in Europe is not on board anymore with this elite project, which I think it is. The war in Ukraine is an elite project. It's mainly a U.S. and CIA project in order to fight Russia and bleed Russia dry and hopefully, optimally, break Russia into little pieces. And the Europeans, the vassalized Europeans, have been signed up for that project. But they've been signed up to it through the European elites, right?

Through Mr. Friedrich Merz, who is a former chief executive, a former high-ranking BlackRock official, and the other Europeans, including Boris Johnson, including the Starmers of Europe and Meloni and, well, Meloni maybe a little bit less, but still, I mean, she's on board by now. Macron, right, who's clearly an elite figure, a former investment banker, and that all of these people who are very loyal to the Euro-Atlantic project, that they are basically the reason why this war is not winding down, and that now the general population is starting to understand that this war is highly destructive and they're starting to voice their opposition. I think that narrative overall is not wrong.

I think the number of people that are starting to see through the charade that is this proxy war in Ukraine is rising, but it's rising very slowly. And it's not probably on the levels that we would expect yet. So there are, especially in Germany, other reasons for people to vote for the AfD. And actually, my friend and colleague Ulrike Guérot just made a very beautiful video about that on her German-language channel. I will try to somehow share that with you in a written-out form, also in English, if that is of interest. But the point here being is that the war in Ukraine is not the only topic that leads to the success of, let's say, conservative right-wing parties that are anti-war and, well, pro-social welfare, actually, in their own countries.

And my claim now is that the Swiss referendum actually gives us a very good indicator to gauge what the actual kind of opinion on the ground in Europe is about the war in Ukraine. Because what the opponents of the referendum did very successfully is that they linked it intimately to this war. So that instead of discussing the pros and cons of a strict interpretation of Swiss neutrality, what we in Switzerland did over the last two and a half or three months was actually to discuss whether or not Switzerland should put sanctions on Russia, because that was one of the important provisions that this referendum proposed, that was in the referendum text.

And that, while to me that was only one of the several aspects—not an unimportant one, but only one—the no side that opposed this, they successfully reframed the entire question around this, up to the point where my own political party, in which I am a paying member of—I'm a paying member of the Social Democrats of Switzerland—that this party decided to categorically reject the referendum and to categorically claim that it is not a neutrality referendum, but a pro-Putin referendum. They completely reframed the entire affair and did so successfully to argue that the people who are in favor of this initiative, that they actually just are all Putin lovers and they want to do dirty business with the Russians.

And that would be a big mistake. Switzerland should always be on the side of international law, and international law demands that you put sanctions on the breakers of international law, right, on the outlaw states. And that is a duty under international law. And therefore, their claim was that this neutrality referendum is actually about supporting Vladimir Putin. I completely, utterly, totally disagree. This is outrageous. It is a completely dumb claim, but it was a successful one. What this now allows us, though, is to kind of look at how the discourse happened within Switzerland. And then my claim, of course, is that while probably not perfect in order to map it onto other societies, it kind of does reflect a general European distribution of opinions about the proxy war.

So the short result is that only 29.8% of the people who bothered to go to vote in Switzerland, which was less than 50%, but only 30%, actually said, yes, we would like to have this stricter definition of neutrality, which would actually mandate that Switzerland does not only restrict arms exports and keeps to the laws of neutrality as defined in the Hague Conventions, but that also the economic sphere is included and that Switzerland should not put sanctions on anyone, like no sanctions allowed by default, unless there was a Security Council mandate from the United Nations or measures in order to prevent the circumvention of sanctions of other states.

So while during the campaign, I always argued that this actually means that nothing will change dramatically because Switzerland, even with that new part of the text—I mean, had it been accepted, that referendum text would have become part of the Swiss Constitution. That's just how Swiss referendums work. It's just, it's always—referendums are always about constitutional amendments or changes to the Constitution. So that text would have become part of the Swiss Constitution. And my argument during the campaign was always that it wouldn't change dramatically a lot because almost all of the measures that Switzerland took at the moment, all of the sanctions it put on Russia, it could have continued putting there under the argument that it's just continuing, that it's now just making sure that the sanctions of the European Union are not being circumvented by Switzerland.

But this depth of argument was already way too much for Switzerland's media environment, which honestly is very, very propagandistic at the moment. I mean, the same thing that we are seeing in, well, in the US and even much more so in Europe, in Germany, in France, in the way in which the big newspapers and the big publishing houses are all very, very strongly in line with what is coming from the imperial center, from the New York Times and the Washington Post, and even further over

and beyond that, support the pro-war policies of the NATO alliance. The same thing is true in Switzerland. Our large German-speaking and French-speaking newspapers, from the NZZ to Le Temps, most of them are in line with the general approach of Europe needing to help Ukraine to win a just war, right?

And this idea of just and lasting war—we need to win a just peace, of course, sorry—and need to achieve a just peace and a lasting peace and sustainable peace and accountable peace, right, with which they actually mean that Ukraine must defeat Russia. All of the territories need to return to Ukraine, including Crimea, and Vladimir Putin must be put in front of a war criminal tribunal in The Hague. I mean, let's not kid ourselves. That's what the core of the demand is, and especially from the German side, the French side, the British side, what their goal is. Even though right now, as we speak, at the end of September 2026, of course, the war is not going well, and currently the Europeans and the Americans are aiming for a ceasefire. It is well understood that that ceasefire would serve nothing else but gaining time again to rearm Europe.

Ukraine, the Russians understand it clearly, clearly in those terms. The Russians, they said so, that they were misled with Minsk 1 and Minsk 2 to allow for enough time for Ukraine to arm itself, and that they would not do this, and that the Russians are willing to negotiate with Ukraine and the West in general, but not under the precondition of a ceasefire. So that's where we are at the moment. And within that context, you know, this Swiss referendum was formed, and it came into being around the end of 2022. Around November, it was clear that a group formed. I was not part of that group directly. I was only connected to a couple of people who were in there.

And that group then proposed this referendum and wrote that proposal for this constitutional amendment. And it took some time until enough signatures were gathered, but it passed with success, quite a high number, not just, you know, in order for a referendum to pass and to become—sorry, for an initiative, in order for an initiative to become a mandatory referendum, you need to gather 100,000 signatures within 18 months. And the committee that was responsible for that actually managed to gather 130,000 signatures. And, you know, I'm speaking here, I'm talking about physical signatures on a physical sheet of paper. So it's not just enough to send around mass emails.

You must go to the streets and talk to people and get them to put their signature on a registry to say that they are really in support of this. So 130,000 people actually support it, which was really good at the time in 2023 and early 2024. And then it took two years until now we got to the actual voting stage, which is also nothing special. Everything just takes a long time in Switzerland because the proposal, the initiative, was then actually handed to the government and then to both chambers of parliament, which bounced them around and talked about them for quite a while until they all took a position on it. All three of them, government and both chambers of parliament, decided to not support that initiative and to recommend its rejection.

And then in the end, yesterday on Sunday, the 27th of September, we had that vote. And again, like, the public debate on it, there were some discussions in the media for, I would say, I mean, the

last two or three years about it. From the very start, it was framed in mainstream media as an initiative that was launched by our right-wing party, our Conservative Party, that is also, by the way, the largest party in Parliament. It has around 30% of support in the voting population. I mean, the last 20 years or so, every time, every four years, they gain around, roughly, 30—sometimes a little bit less, sometimes a little bit more—percent of the votes.

And that makes them the biggest party, because Switzerland has a multi-party system. The second-largest party is usually my party, the Social Democrats, somewhere around 20 to 25 percent, in that range, and then the others. And that together then makes up the parliamentary composition. And the interesting thing is then that the referendum itself was from the very beginning framed as something belonging only to that party, although the committee itself that proposed this was an independent committee, and it also had people who do identify as centrist or even leftist, left-wing thinkers.

And the interesting thing also is that during the last two years, on my side, on the left side, I have been campaigning quite strongly as an official supporter of that initiative from the left, since I'm a paying member of the Social Democrats. I use that in order to signal that there are good arguments also on the left side, on the kind of—I don't want to call it progressive—but on the left, you know, the socialist side of things, to support the initiative. And over the last two years, we actually managed to gather quite a couple of voices on the left side of the political spectrum to come out in support of the initiative.

Most importantly, actually, our Communist Party of Switzerland supported it. The Workers' Party of Basel and the Workers' Party of Bern, which are both also basically communist parties, or were communist parties, split off and then did the worker party thing. They're not large parties, but they are local political forces, and they all came out in support of the Neutrality Initiative because they understood this initiative for what it actually was, which is an attempt at taming the Atlanticist and imperial ambitions of the current Swiss government and the Swiss political elite, the Swiss political class. I must say, though, what this shows also, especially the result now, is that 70% of the Swiss population actually support that current trajectory of Swiss foreign policy.

And this is what makes the referendum actually interesting, and I think also interesting beyond just Switzerland, that here we have now a concrete example of a geopolitical question that was asked to a population. And this is not just an opinion poll. That's very important, right? This referendum is not just representative, but it's legally binding. And it gave every single person with a Swiss passport in the world the option to participate, voice their opinion with a yes and a no. So, you know, one of the things that is frustrating to me about European politics and North American politics too is that the understanding of democracy over there is parliamentary democracy. It's like, who do you vote for?

And the whole understanding of what democracy is, is that once every four years, you cast a ballot with a couple of names on it into a box, and then that's it. And the people you vote for, the names that you elect, those are then the people who will make decisions on your behalf. Of course, in

theory, the idea is that these people are beholden to you, and that they will roughly, largely live up to their campaign promises, because if they don't, they will be voted out of office again four years down the road, and that is the theory. In practice, what we are seeing, especially in democracies like the United States, but also increasingly, and for a long time actually, in places like Germany and France, Britain too, is that the choice that people are given are different flavors of the same kind of policies.

That once used to be different, but especially when it comes to foreign policy at the moment, all major parties in Europe and also in the United States actually agree on core issues. Hence, whoever you vote for, you will get the same outcome. We saw that now also with Donald Trump. Even when there is a considerable number of people opposing certain foreign policy issues, like the proxy war with Russia, Donald Trump said all the right things, right, when he was running for the presidency. But then once in office, he's, of course, at liberty to do as he pleases, to implement the kind of policies he wants.

And we've seen how he turned around from saying that the United States will be a force for peace and that he will make peace with Ukraine, and that he said explicitly in his inauguration speech, and I will never forget that, that this administration will be remembered not only for the wars we ended, but also for the wars we never started, which was a beautiful thing to say. And then that's, of course, the very president that ends up attacking Iran for really no good reason other than U.S. and Israeli hegemonic inclinations. It's the president who invaded Venezuela and kidnapped the president of Venezuela. It's the president who goes around warmongering left and right. But that's just another example of how the system, the political system in the United States, on the one hand, really reduces the scope of choices available.

And even those available are not—there's nothing that will force them to actually keep their word of what they promised. And this happens time and time again, also in other European states. Just think about how, at the moment, we've seen changes of government, for instance, in the UK, from Keir Starmer, who was the leader of the Labour Party, to Mr. Burnham, now, who is the leader of the Conservatives. But really, the foreign policy and the pro-war policy toward Russia is the same. So you get a change at the head of the party, in the head of these governments, but you do not see changes in policy. We saw in Germany how Olaf Scholz, a Social Democrat, was replaced by Friedrich Merz from the CDU, but their policies on Ukraine are, I mean, they're indistinguishable from each other.

There was no change in terms of a drive to try to go to diplomacy with the Russians, or to even just de-escalate. No, the escalation spiral kept going and going and going. And this kind of change of political party, change of political faces, politicians' faces, but maintenance of a political line, this kind of what in social sciences is called path dependence, that thing is real. And that thing is particularly real and kind of ingrained in the system in parliamentary democracies. We see it very, very often. Rarely that really one party gets voted out and a new one comes in, and the new one is then able to dramatically change the course of the political trajectory. Of course, we do see some changes.

I mean, look at Hungary, right, and how the success of Viktor Orbán is now dismantling basically the entire opposition—I mean, Viktor Orbán's party in Hungary. However, when it comes to oil and interactions with Russia, yes, they are now more in line with the pro-war course, but when it comes to oil, they still need some energy links with Russia. So, I mean, a radical, complete change, we don't see that often. What we see is gradual change. A direct democratic system actually allows for relatively drastic change through these kinds of questions, which are not about who do you want, who is the person that should be in power, but what policy do you want? Here's a concrete policy for you.

Do you want that policy? Yes or no. And in this sense, the Swiss referendum gives us a better way to gauge, really, this question of foreign policy of a European state toward Russia, because that's how the mass media and the opposition forces all framed it. And we in the yes camp, who wanted this referendum and supported it, we kind of lost out, and we were not able to guide the discourse toward the places that we thought were important, toward the discussion about the illegality of sanctions, right? This is one of the arguments we made quite a lot, that the United Nations itself has an official day against what is called unilateral coercive measures, a.k.a. sanctions.

The United Nations itself says sanctions should only be used or applied with the consent of the United Nations and with the Security Council, which is the only body in the entire world that can mandate binding international resolutions on other states by virtue of the Charter of the United Nations, right? The Charter of the UN, which every member of the UN, or every state that wants to become a member, needs to sign—that charter mandates that individual states do not wage war against each other. They do not use force, or the threat of the use of force. Both are forbidden, not just using force, but also threatening it. The Charter says we don't do that anymore, and if somebody does it anyhow, then the Security Council is the competent agency able to mandate coercive measures, so sanctions, or mandate even military intervention.

Those are the powers of the Security Council. The General Assembly doesn't have that power. The General Assembly can also adopt resolutions, but its resolutions are non-binding. They are recommendations. Now, of course, we all understand and know that the five permanent members of the Security Council have veto power in that Security Council, and that hence the United States, Russia, China, France, or Britain on their own can sink a vote, even if all the other members—and, you know, the Security Council has non-permanent members. In total, there are 15 members—that even if all the others agree, if just one of the permanent members doesn't agree, then there will not be a resolution.

And that is veto power. Now, in Switzerland, this led to a very prevalent argument that the way that the system is shaped is just in favor of Russia. And of course, Russia will prevent any kind of sanctions against it, which it did. That is true. And hence, it is very important that peace-loving and international law-loving states are able on their own to put sanctions on peacebreakers and on lawbreakers. And hence, Switzerland must have the freedom to also do so and join the international

community in putting sanctions on Russia. Of course, this argument is very, very flawed because first it equates the international community basically with Europe and North America.

Fifty states, European-like white states of the world, together with Australia and New Zealand, probably, and then a few and far, far between others that actually did put sanctions and that decided to follow the dictate from Washington. It conflates that group with the entire world, which the Europeans classically do all the time, since they only look at themselves and believe that they themselves and the collective of themselves, that is the world, since for 500 years they basically occupied the rest of the world. And even after 1945, when a large number of states got their independence, the Europeans are masters in ignoring all and anything that comes from them because they don't matter to them. And to Switzerland, the same is true in Switzerland. The Swiss are part and parcel of that kind of European mentality.

Although, of course, Switzerland is not part of the European Union, but it is part and parcel of the European continent and the system in which the European continent works, including the economic system, the freedom of movement, and all of the political debates that are happening inside other states also happen, of course, in Switzerland. We're highly influenced, highly dependent on what the surrounding European countries are doing and the discourses that are happening there. They always, historically, always also happen in one way or another inside Switzerland. Now again, this time, the entire storyline that was discussed in the large newspapers was about how strict neutrality of Switzerland would benefit Vladimir Putin. And really, the personalization of that question was astounding. It was the people opposing the initiative, the referendum, they single-mindedly focused on Vladimir Putin.

There were really only just two people that were constantly, constantly named again and again and again: Vladimir Putin, and the other one is our local Swiss oligarch, Christoph Blocher, who is one of the former leaders of our right-wing party, the People's Party. He's now more or less out of politics. This is probably his last kind of big political engagement because he came, of course, publicly out as one of the big supporters, including with money, of the initiative. So it was pinned on him, and he's a very decisive figure that really divides Switzerland quite a lot. People in the People's Party, they love him very much, and his opponents hate him very much.

I mean, he's looked at a little bit like Berlusconi is remembered in Italy, or in France, how currently Marine Le Pen is looked at, right? That type of right-wing figure. But again, like for me and other colleagues on the left side of the political spectrum, we didn't care that he was one of the supporters. Actually, we thank him for that because we actually evaluated that this is an important initiative in and of itself. The opposition, of course, said because it comes from this kind of person, it must be opposed, which is a way of thinking that I cannot support at all. Just because somebody who in the past said things that you don't agree with doesn't mean that the current thing they're saying is also wrong.

But we are currently in such a polarized political environment all over Europe that the personalization of politics just keeps playing out time and again. And so he was one, and the other one was Vladimir Putin, really. There were so many, incredibly a lot of memes on the internet—not memes, but on Twitter and in the entire blogosphere—about Vladimir Putin in the Swiss Alps offering with one hand a dove to a Swiss girl, and in the other hand, behind his back, he holds a knife. Really kind of incredible imagery. I mean, all of course supported by the fact that AI now can create those kind of realistic-looking pictures, which actually makes things much more interesting because people are able to put their thoughts in these kind of polemic ways and polemic pictures.

And there was just a massive amount of it. And that was again part and parcel then also of the way in which the big newspapers wrote about this initiative actually only helping Vladimir Putin, and the media—the mainstream media—really coming out in massive support of the no committee, right, and massively fighting against this with a veracity that I just thought surprising, because at least there, I would expect that there would be some proper debates between yes and no sides of this entire initiative. But none of that happened. It was really—yes voices that were in favor were few and far between in public media.

There were some. Every once in a while, they were given a spot and a page or even two in one of the larger newspapers. But the ratio is about one to ten. For every one article that you could see that was speaking favorably about the initiative, you would have nine or ten that would be very, very negative and would again make these accusations and claims that the initiative would only help Vladimir Putin. What is interesting, of course, is also that we were unable to kind of steer the discourse toward a more general discussion on, well, what about beyond Vladimir Putin?

What about the other? Me, in my naive kind of approach, I thought that the war against Iran, the unprovoked attack of the United States and Israel against Iran, would help us massively because it would be an unignorable showcase that it's not just the Russians who invade other countries, but that the United States does so all the time, constantly in coordination with its allies, and really for no good reason. And Venezuela too, right? So the cases this year of Venezuela and then Iran, I thought, would help us massively because it's unignorable. Well, I was wrong. It was so ignorable. It was impossible to actually force the other side to discuss, well, what do we do about the Americans?

What do we do about Israel? What do we do about the invasion of Venezuela? Look, a lot of states behave illegally, and we don't put sanctions on the United States, the Swiss. We don't put sanctions on Israel, not at all. We didn't even threaten the United States with any kind of consequences for kidnapping Mr. Maduro, or no consequences even just implied for invading Iran in those instances. You know, the committee that fought against the initiative just ignored that. They just didn't talk about it. They just constantly said, "Yeah, well, but it's just about you wanting to support Russia. You just love Russia." They immediately managed to go back. It was completely ignorable.

When every once in a while I had a discussion with somebody on the no side, and they actually went so far as to say, like, "Yeah, fine, but look, Iran is incomparable with Ukraine, right? Because it is such a terrible regime, and the mullahs, and the thousands of deaths in January, you know, it's—just because we don't put sanctions on the United States or Israel doesn't mean that we shouldn't put sanctions on other criminal states," right? Because, funnily enough, a lot of Swiss actually agree that the United States is acting criminally and illegally because they don't like Donald Trump, because they think Trump is kind of a dictator himself.

But then they wouldn't make the—they wouldn't go as far as to say that that is a reason why we should try to treat all of these states, all of these international law-breaking states, equally. No, no, to the contrary. Actually, the argument then is that just because we don't do it there doesn't mean we shouldn't do it with the others, where we can and should and must and have a moral and legal obligation to do so. Although there is no legal obligation, there's also no moral obligation to do so. There's only the obligation of the state to look after its own citizens.

But, well, that is how the discourse went. So the entire war in Iran, the entire situation and chaos in the international oil markets and so on did not break through, were not able to kind of open the debate to a place beyond the Russia question and how the Swiss should deal with the Russians. And that's why this referendum is actually, must be also, in my view, interpreted as a referendum on Switzerland's Russia policy. And it is, of course, a resounding yes toward the Russia policy. And that's what I talked about in the beginning, right? That it dovetails with what we are seeing also in other European countries.

And we should not over-interpret the victory of right-wing conservative parties, be it the AfD in Germany or maybe, you know, in the future Marine Le Pen's party in France, also Meloni's party in Italy, right? We shouldn't over-interpret their victories as meaning that a big chunk of their constituency actually wants a more peaceful relationship with Russia. A good part does. Don't get me wrong. And I think, again, the Swiss example shows that roughly around 30% of the population want that. But at least for now, it seems to me it stops there. And anything over and beyond 30%, if we go up to 40%, 45%, and maybe even 50%, are people who vote for these parties for other reasons.

And that then is also one of the points why within these parties you still have people who then use pro-war messaging, right? And it's also the reason why people like Meloni can get away with flipping 180 degrees on the Russia question, right? She came into power, what was that now, two years, three years ago, with a very clear peace message, as in, we need peace with Russia, and flipped on that completely. The EU Commission very quickly actually turned her around, and it didn't have these fatal consequences for her own political career, nor for her party, because there are a good number of people, even within these parties, that are largely supportive of the overall war drive. And now this is, of course, highly concerning.

This is a problem because the only place that the no-war-with-Russia kind of voices in Europe at the moment have to go seem to be in these right-wing sectors. I must say there tend to be also lefties, Mélenchon in France. There is the BSW party in Germany. They also have a no-war-with-Russia attitude, but they tend to be even smaller. So just in general, what we're seeing at the moment in Europe is that the part of the population that is in favor of turning around foreign policy with Russia is still a minority, and that minority is even split significantly up into at least two, if not more, political camps. Hence, they really at the moment cannot make their policy preferences heard very much.

And the hope, I think, that this is turning around—we should never give up hope—but if it changes, it only changes slowly. At the moment, the kind of pro-sanctions, next sanctions packages, you know, 21, 22 at the moment on the EU level, the more weapons to Ukraine, we stand with Ukraine, whatever it takes—actually, that kind of foreign policy attitude, I would assume now from the Swiss vote and from what we see in other European countries of the voting behavior, actually has something between 60% to 70% of support, unfortunately. And what we're witnessing, of course, now, especially in the last couple of months, is this very, very worrisome trend that apparently these 60 to 70 percent are now being whipped up even into supporting more aggressive policies and are also being whipped up into quite a frenzy of anxiety.

The drones, the drones are everywhere in Europe. And there's these constant claims of Russian hybrid warfare, which I think is very, very suspicious. I, of course, cannot rule out that there might be some form of Russia trying to somehow signal something with drones, but I find it highly unlikely. I find it highly unlikely that Russia would just send random drones over random airports in Europe just in order to scare off the Europeans, because what does this do? It creates just anxiety. It does exactly the opposite, right? It whips up the European population into supporting even more aggressive policies towards the Russians and into getting ready for war with the Russians.

I mean, the narrative inside Europe at the moment that the Russians are about to attack and that they're coming and that they will attack, that they will come for the European capitals, is huge. There's this entire war psychosis at the moment. And this is targeting, this is whipping up the 60 to 70% who are still overall supportive of the European way of approaching Russia. And that in and of itself is, of course, even more dangerous because it's, well, I mean, if they succeed in then actually getting a general agreement that, yes, war is what is needed, then all that you need is a false flag attack.

All that you need is a pretext in order for Germany, France, Poland to start sending missiles from their own territory into Russia, to which then Russia will react with missiles into their territories. And then we've got a general European war again. So this is highly dangerous, but it's playing on the perceptions of those 60 to 70% that are overall in agreement that the current trajectory and the European opposition to Russia is the right choice. Within that group, of course, you have different subsections. You have the diehard Russian haters, the Russophobes, who would pick up a gun tomorrow in order to fight the Russians and kill Russians in the East.

You have those. I cannot tell you exactly how many there are. I don't think they are a large group within it, but you have them there. And then you also just have a quite big layer of people that just in general think like, no, no, Russia needs to be taught a lesson, and we must uphold international law and international community and the rules-based order and blah, blah, blah, all of the spiel that we are hearing in mainstream media. And that is not too small a percentage. Now, the last observation, also from the Swiss case, is that only 47% of people bothered to vote.

So everything that I've been talking about here with the 30-70 split and the, you know, within that 70 split also having, like, sub-splits, all of that is actually based upon the policy preferences of those who bothered to go vote at the ballot box. Now, does that make things better or worse? Does that mean that there is a silent majority that opposes everything? And this is also something, I mean, that is dangerous for us who kind of oppose this warmongering: that we overestimate the policy preferences of the people who don't vote, right? That we then argue that overall the silent majority is against the war in Ukraine.

Well, I mean, the Swiss case just shows you had a concrete question. You had not only the right to vote, you also had it, like, everywhere in the media. I mean, it was difficult not to know about this referendum because both sides of the equation, the yes and the no camp, used millions of U.S. dollars in order to especially pay for posters. There were, especially on the yes side, because our local oligarch supported this so strongly, there were about between three and four million Swiss francs—millions of U.S. dollars, four to five million U.S. dollars—of money in order to put a lot of posters in all of the train stations of Switzerland.

So anyone—not just the train stations, also on the roadsides and so on—anyone who would leave their home and go even just a few kilometers would at some point see one of these posters. So it is hard to argue that people wouldn't know that this kind of referendum is coming. Plus, every citizen, of course, gets a letter to their home to tell them, look, this referendum is coming. Here's your voting bulletin, and here are the arguments and so on. I mean, you're served this kind of information. And unless you really neglect all of that, all of your physical mail, and you neglect everything that's going on outside, unless you've been living under a rock, you would have known that this referendum was coming up.

And it was also being discussed, of course, as I said, in the mainstream media. Now, that just means that more than 50% of Swiss didn't really think... I mean, they either missed it for one reason or another. It wasn't important enough in order to hand in the bulletin, the ballot. And, you know, you can do that either by going on Sunday direct to the ballot box and just drop it there, or from, like, two days until two days before, you can just make your choice, put it into an envelope, and send it to your local register, to your local commune, and there it would then be counted later. It would be put into the ballot box for you.

And that system works really, really well and reliably. I mean, there's no reason to kind of believe that there's anything fishy going on with that system. But the point I want to make is that the

chances to vote are really—the bars for voting are very, very low. And if then people don't vote, it just means that they generally don't care about that topic very much. We see that a lot, actually. Fifty percent not voting is more or less a Swiss average. So only about 50% of eligible voters do make their opinions heard in these ballots.

Now, of course, there's always people who are fatalistic about things and do think that their vote doesn't count anyhow. But in general, we can assume that the 50% who don't cast their vote, that they are just fine with how things are going. They just tag along, right? There's nothing that motivates them to actually do that little act of voting. So they're fine with that. So we must kind of assume that really the 30% of the 50% that said yes, that is, in general, the kind of people who bother enough to worry about the course of Switzerland's integration into NATO, into the European Union, and Switzerland's approach toward Russia, especially toward Russia. That is the part of the population.

And the others, not that they were automatically in support of the no, but that they're just not bothered enough in order to make a choice one way or another and basically give that decision-making power over to those who bother to vote. To me, this shows the inertia in the system is actually also quite large within Switzerland, but also within other European countries. The number of people who are probably just okay and they just go along and they lead their lives and they keep politics out and they just continue struggling the way they do is quite large. So this just reinforces my concern, my assessment, that overall the number of people inside Europe who wish for a rekindling of European foreign policy with Russia is not as high as we would want it to be.

That maybe the roughly 30%—I mean, we can assume that the 50% who didn't vote, that also within that group, we might have found around 30% who would probably have supported this, right? So part of the not voting is inertia, and part is that also within that group, it's reasonable to assume that the distribution would be somehow similar. Although, of course, there might be larger margins of support, you know, voting yes or no. But in general, we are somewhere—and I would argue this now also goes for many countries in Europe—we are somewhere around the 30-70 split on the continent of people who want to rekindle their relationship with Russia versus those who don't and think that the current course is the right one.

Yeah, this is not a very happy conclusion, and I wish I had better things to report, but reality doesn't care about our feelings. It is what it is. I also used up almost an hour now to talk about this with you. I do hope that it is somehow useful, just to get a feeling for where we stand in this Europe of 2026-2027 and how dangerous it actually is, because we still have 60 to 70% of people who are still largely okay and fine with antagonizing the Russians. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe the Swiss case is not representative of a large part of the European countries.

And most likely, this 30-70 split will change, would look differently in Romania and Bulgaria. But since it is such a relatively large gap to 50, what we just need to assume is that at least half of the population, if not even more, are overall fine with this. And that's what the European elite is working

with. That's what von der Leyen and Kaja Kallas and Friedrich Merz and Macron and so on—that's the kind of support or non-opposition to the foreign policy that they are using and that they're able to use and they're able to play with, and that they're also able to message to, that, you know, war with Russia might be coming and whatnot.

Even if Macron and Merz are on historical lows, they are on historical lows in their approval for other reasons too. We must not overestimate just how entrenched still this Russophobia within European society overall is. The opposition to Merz, Macron, Burnham, and so on doesn't necessarily come from opposition to the foreign policy. That's, I think, what I want to say. I think it is a mistake to break everything down to, or all the policy preferences to, just foreign policy. Local national policy is just as important. Social policy is just as important.

And overall, we are still, in all of Europe, in a very dangerous moment because this, what I think is a mass psychosis—and I will talk with Matthias Desmet again about this in the near future—the mass psychosis, this feeling of many Europeans that they're being threatened and that war with Russia is likely and maybe even inevitable, that kind of thinking is currently being massaged into the population. And it builds upon a good number of people who are already conditioned to think of the Russians as enemies. And how we get out of that, how we change that, how we get to a point where a majority of people again think of Russia as a friend and a country we can work with, even if we don't agree with their local politics or whatnot.

I don't know. I don't know. It's just, politically speaking, we're still in very dangerous waters. We're in a very dangerous place. I personally regret that the Swiss rejected this, that we Swiss rejected this referendum, because I think it could have helped to keep us out of the worst that might still come. Of course, I hope the worst will not come. I hope there will not be a general Russo-European, Russo-NATO war, but it's still on the cards. It's still a possibility. It scares me. It scares the hell out of me. It should scare the hell out of more people. Unfortunately, it doesn't. But again, reality doesn't care about our feelings. And with that, I wish you a very good day. Thank you.