

Strategic Defeat: Iran & Russia Destroying Western Hegemony | Baud

The civilizational battle is raging, and the West is losing bigly. I'm joined today by former Swiss intelligence officer and military analyst Colonel Jacques Baud for a discussion on EU sanctions, the Israel Iran war, the move from Cold War logic to civilizational conflict, and the deeper crisis in Western leadership and strategy. Links: Jacques Baud books on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B001K7ETPE/allbooks> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:08 EU sanctions and legal battle 00:15:15 Israel Iran war and Western limits 00:23:17 Cold War logic vs civilizational clash 00:32:16 Russophobia Iran and Western blind spots 00:44:04 Victory death and asymmetric warfare 00:49:08 Western leadership and strategic dead end 00:59:13 Books and closing

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. My name is Pascal Lottaz, and I am joined again today by my countryman, Colonel Jacques Beau. Jacques, welcome back.

#Jacques Baud

Hello. Thank you very much for inviting me again to your show. Hello to everybody.

#Pascal

Well, I'm very grateful that you are speaking to us again because you're, of course, one of the few European citizens who is sanctioned by the European Union. For everybody who doesn't know, Jacques Beau was put on the Russia sanctions list last December, I think December 15th, if I remember correctly. And then you spent a very, very unpleasant Christmas under sanctions, and you don't have access to your bank account. You don't have access to any kind of possibilities to do contracts or even to leave the country. You are located in Belgium. It is today, Monday, April the 20th, as we speak, more than four months under sanctions. I mean, what happened in the meantime to you?

#Jacques Baud

Well, in the meantime, we applied to be removed from the sanctions list. We did that in early March. We haven't received any answer yet. So we applied to the European Court of Justice, reminding

people that the decision to put me on the sanctions list was not a judicial decision but a political one, meaning that we don't have a regular appeal process as we have in a normal judicial procedure. We are attacking a political decision through judicial institutions. So this is something quite special because the decision to put me under sanctions was extrajudicial, meaning that I absolutely didn't breach any law.

I didn't breach any regulation wherever they are. I just exercised my right to express myself. And the sanctions haven't been decided by any judge or any court, basically. So now we have to attack a political decision through a judicial process, and that's what we are doing. I don't know exactly where things stand because the document is now being examined by the European Court of Justice. In the meantime, at the request of my attorneys, I received a so-called humanitarian exemption that allows me limited access to my bank account in Europe, because I live in Belgium, so I can buy food and basic needs.

That's the purpose of this limited access to my bank account. In Switzerland, normally, Switzerland doesn't adopt the sanction package on this because it's a sanction against my freedom of opinion and freedom of speech. And therefore, Switzerland has not adopted this sanction package. However, the Swiss bank and institutions such as Swisscard, for instance, for American Express, they just canceled my contract, although normally I should have full access to my bank accounts. My bank also has frozen my bank account in Switzerland, and that was partly re-established through action from my attorney because this was not what the Swiss government decided.

So we see that the situation, because those financial institutions are afraid of secondary sanctions and afraid of possible repercussions, they take their own sanctions, if you want. And that's extremely worrisome, by the way, because that means that, as an example, Swisscard doesn't respect, in fact, free speech. That's exactly what we can say, that they condemn me unilaterally, because I haven't infringed any laws, regulations, or the contracts that I had with them for my credit card, for instance. On the contrary, I was quite a good customer of theirs. So that shows that this whole issue of sanctions is, in fact, much more perverse than it is supposed to be.

And in Europe, no, I live more or less normally. I cannot travel. I'm still banned from traveling to my country. I cannot go back to Switzerland, my own home country. I'm still Swiss. I don't have Belgian citizenship. I'm only Swiss. And if I would escape, which would probably be technically possible, I couldn't come back to my home, my actual home, my apartment, or things like that. So that's the situation. So I'm more or less in prison. I'm under house arrest, if you want, in Belgium. That's what we can say. And again, I'm banned from any credit card and things like this, so very limited ability to live. But my basic needs are covered. That's the situation.

#Pascal

It's very sad, though. You know, what you're describing is called overcompliance, and it is one of the unintended consequences, because it is quite well understood that sanctions lead institutions to

overcomply, including institutions that are in Switzerland. But because they want to deal with the European Union, they need to deal with the European Union, right? You have exchange agreements and whatnot, and so on and so forth, right? No Swiss bank can operate without also operating inside the European Union.

Because of that, they then take the safe route, which is to just cancel all of your accounts and everything you have, because they want to make sure that they always stay on the good side. Their legal department will tell them, out of due diligence, that it's safer to do that than to face any potential risk in the future. And this is actually what happened with a lot of people under sanctions, also with Iran sanctions, with countries under sanctions. Overcompliance is part and parcel of the entire package you get. And it's...

#Jacques Baud

You're right, although it's an over-overcompliance in the sense that, in my case, I'm not talking about Iran sanctions, but as regards my case, when Switzerland protested against the EU on the 9th of January, Switzerland issued a protest, a demarche, basically, to the European Union, protesting my sanctions because of the lack of due process, point one, and point two, because it was a breach of my freedom of speech. And in that sense, the Swiss bank and the Swiss cards for American Express are, in fact, even breaching the Swiss decision. So that must also be said. That is extremely worrisome, to see these institutions, without any legal basis, basically, take action. And they even took assets that I had. Basically, I don't want to go into the specifics, but this also nullified the credits that I had towards them.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but to my mailing list on Substack. That's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video. No, it's a horrible situation. Actually, if I'm not wrong, then actually in Switzerland we have, if not a law, then at least a regulation that forbids Swiss institutions from taking over foreign sanctions in Switzerland. But I'm not sure; I would have to look that one up again. So it's not just against the decision of the Federal Council or of our government, but it is actually even partially illegal under Swiss law. But the problem that these institutions have is that their lawyers, their in-house lawyers, they look at risk and then they're like, oh no, what do we do?

Better cancel the contract, because they don't have to have a contract with you. But it's, of course, a whole can of worms. And you being exposed to that, that's, of course, part of the idea—to inconvenience you to the extreme. But has the European Union actually ever talked to you and told you what it would like you to do in order for them to lift the sanctions? Because officially, the sanctions are not a punishment, right? They are an educational measure to teach you how to correct your illegal behavior. There's illegal behavior you're doing, and they don't want to see that, so they

teach you how not to do the one that they don't like. Did they ever actually communicate with you what you would have to do in order to be removed?

#Jacques Baud

No, I haven't received any official communication whatsoever, neither from Switzerland, nor from the European Union, nor from the Belgian government. I never received anything written, any message, any phone call. I mean, from Switzerland, yes, I had a couple of phone calls. But from the rest—the European Union, the Belgian government—absolutely nothing. There is only this approval for the basic needs, this exemption that I explained before, but that was a result of the request of my attorneys, and they talked to my attorneys. But for me, they never addressed me in any way. So.

#Pascal

It's a very dystopian situation because what's happening to you can, of course, potentially happen to anyone living inside or outside the European Union. Anyone. Nobody is safe because the European Council, which is the one that adopted the sanctions, is under the legal right to put that on anyone they choose, at their pleasure, which is really—I mean, this should not be possible in a democratic society. But unfortunately, it is.

#Jacques Baud

Well, this is it. And, you know, this is just today we are talking about Russia or things like that. But tomorrow it could be about Palestine, or it could be about anything. That's what people should understand, because a lot of people say, well, you know, he's pro-Russian. Which, by the way, I never said that I was pro-Russian. That's a very important point. And I never expressed in any way that I was pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian, by the way. I claim a neutral posture regarding the conflict, in my Swiss tradition, if you want. But beyond this, you know, today people say, well, OK, being pro-Russian is not very popular.

But tomorrow it could be about anything else. That's what people don't realize. And as you rightly said, it can be that in the future anyone can be sanctioned internally. It's not considered a punishment. Therefore, they can bypass any legal framework because it's a political decision. And that's why it's called extrajudicial. Extrajudicial means that it's outside of the judicial system that we have. So all the laws we have, human rights and all that, are bypassed by a political decision. That's the fascinating thing. And that means that the Council of the European Union, which decided on the sanctions, basically didn't even know why I was sanctioned.

It's interesting that you had on three occasions, two or three occasions, the German government during the question and answer session, a journalist asked about my specific case in Germany. And it showed that the Germans didn't even know who I was and didn't even know what I did, but they still approved the decision. And when they said that they approved it, I mean, they were just

convinced it was right. That's the expression. But they said, now it will scare others. That's what was said by the representative of the Foreign Ministry of Germany. So the idea is about making people afraid of having dissenting opinions. So it's management by terror. Nothing else. Yep. It's...

#Pascal

It's just a very repressive mechanism, and an incredible one at that, by the way, coming from the people who will tell you at the top of their lungs that they are in office in order to protect the democratic system. But, well, we know by now the duplicity of these people, and some of them are actually not intelligent enough to understand what they're doing. But that leaves me just wishing you more luck in your legal struggle, trying to bring this back into the legal realm, right, and trying to fight back for your rights. Let's maybe shift gears a little bit now, because I'm also very curious, since you are one of Switzerland's, and actually Europe's, top minds on legal and conflict analysis.

I really wonder how you're reading, actually, the situation of the U.S.-Israel-Iran war. Today, Monday the 20th, we are still under some form of ceasefire that was agreed upon for like 10 days. It will probably end. We are in a situation in which the United States has blockaded Iran and has also extended the blockade, saying that it will intervene against Iranian civilian shipping anywhere in the world. And it's basically forbidding Iran from having any kind of commercial intercourse on the high seas, which the United States says it controls. Therefore, it belongs to it. And I'm pretty sure this will be challenged by a lot of states—it is already being challenged. But how are you reading the situation right now?

#Jacques Baud

Well, we are entering a very dangerous phase because we have people who have, let's say, exaggerated expectations, especially Donald Trump, who started this war without anticipating that it would last longer than expected. He counted on very quick results. And in fact, he wants quick results. That's the problem. We have seen that with the various so-called negotiations he carried on in different conflicts. He solved them within days, you know, and we know that those conflicts, in fact, would require negotiation for weeks or months, probably even years, to have a long-term and durable solution. But he wants quick results because he just wants to show how good he is.

The problem is that in that case with Iran, he wanted to impose a solution, and basically that's what we witnessed in Islamabad, where, in fact, he just said, well, we want this. And if you don't want to do this, then we resume the war. So the art of negotiation of Donald Trump is more like blackmail than actual diplomatic negotiation. And this problem is accentuated by the fact that because he understands that he has put his finger into something he doesn't control, he is now afraid of the consequences. And he's, to some extent, cornered. And because he's cornered, as everyone who is in a cornered situation, he can react very wildly.

And that is unpredictable by nature. But in such a situation, Trump might be even more unpredictable and even more dangerous. And we have a very similar situation in Israel because Israel has another problem, because they obviously lied to the U.S. in order to suggest to the U.S. that it would be a very good time to attack Iran, that Iran was institutionally weak, and that a quick operation against the regime would destabilize Iran and make a quick win, if you want. And so now the relations between Israel and the U.S. are very much discussed within the U.S. especially. People really question the nature of this relationship, whether Israel is a toxic relationship or not.

And Israel, in addition to that, well, since Iran cannot reach the U.S., or only in a limited way through all the bases that are scattered across the Middle East, of course, Iran can reach Israel. And Iran has demonstrated—and it's not the first time, by the way, because we have seen that in 2024 and 2025—that Iran was able, in fact, not to bypass, but to pass through those air defenses, including the Iron Dome, Arrow system, David's Sling, and other air defense systems. And Iran has the technical ability to go through these air defenses and therefore to make it as if Israel were naked against those attacks, meaning that the technological supremacy of Israel, which was kind of mythical in the Middle East, has completely collapsed.

And therefore, Israel is suffering now from a lack of credibility towards the outside world, a lack of credibility between Israel and the U.S., and a lack of military credibility as well, because so far everybody feared Israel because they thought—and that was the way Israel portrayed itself—as invulnerable. But everybody sees that Israel is not invulnerable. In addition to that, we have a lack of credibility of the U.S. towards its allies because we have seen that despite the number of U.S. bases across the Middle East, despite the number of air defense and early warning systems and all that, the U.S. was not able to defend either Israel or its Arab friends.

Therefore, we see that the whole Western narrative—and in the Western I include Israel, because I don't think that Israel, in fact, has a culture that integrates into the Middle East. It's by nature a European culture, not a Middle Eastern culture. In any case, the whole Western narrative is collapsing with that. And we see that Iran is, in fact, a much stronger country. We see that Iran is not isolated. We see exactly the same thing we have seen with China and Russia, in fact, that these countries are not alone. They are, of course, militarily on their own, but they are strongly supported by other, we could say, BRIC actors, if you want.

But essentially, we are now in some way in the scheme of the clash of civilizations somehow, meaning that we are no longer in a clash between political systems as we had during the Cold War, but we are in a clash between different understandings of the world. You have, on the one hand, people who see a more multipolar world where everybody has something to bring to the community, and a Western world that still sticks to its old tenets of hegemony. Some could call that imperialistic. I don't know if the term is still valid today, but that's the term we can use. But this is basically this old vision of the West toward the rest of the world. So we are now in this real clash of civilizations, in fact. Would...

#Pascal

The civilization issue, like, I find that very interesting because the question is really how should we properly understand the turmoil that we are currently in, in 2026, right? Understanding great power changes and shifts post facto, 20–25 years later, is much easier, right? Because you can look back and you have knowledge of what followed. But while in the turmoil, it's very, very difficult. We have people who claim that this is already part of a third world war system where everything breaks down and the rules are very anarchic. We have people who are calling it a second Cold War. We have the framework of the clash of civilizations.

I wonder if civilization is the right way of framing it, or if we should call it a clash of cultures, because we also see how the fighting, you know, the way that the wars are fought, is different. Like, the Russians fight differently from the Europeans or the American Europeans, the Russians—let's call them the political West, as Richard Sakwa usually does—this group that just belongs together and is an extension of one another. And the Iranians are also fighting very differently, right? The Iranians, for instance, they don't do the savagery that the political West is implementing through Israel in terms of genocide in Palestine, genocidal attacks on Lebanon, and so on. Why is it that you think the term civilization captures this moment best?

#Jacques Baud

Well, you know, I am a Cold Warrior. I was in the Italians during the Cold War. During the Cold War, we were fighting a system. We didn't want, let's say, to make it very simple, we didn't want to have the communist system in our countries. And the Warsaw Pact and the communist world didn't want to have an imperialist type of society. We were fighting systems. And during the Cold War, we fought the Soviet Union, not Soviet people. Today, we fight Russians. Right. You see, that is the difference. We have sanctions on citizens of Russia.

We sanction Russian journalists and things like that. We have, for instance, just as a hint, when you have this famous painting in the National Gallery in London, "The Russian Dancers," or I don't know how to say it in English, it was re-baptized "The Ukrainian Dancers." And here you see that we are no longer in a political struggle. We are in something different. When in France, for instance, a bank can deny a bank account or even close a bank account if your name sounds Russian. If your name sounds Russian.

#Pascal

They did that. They closed bank accounts if the name sounded Russian.

#Jacques Baud

That was reported in Le Figaro, in Le Monde. It's not something that you can find... I mean, I reported that in my book. I believe you, I believe you. Meaning that we are no longer in a political struggle. We are not fighting against a system. It's not because we are afraid that the Russians would impose some kind of political system in Europe. No, it's just because we don't want, we don't like Russians, and all the sanctions against individuals. And that shows exactly the shift in the mentality, in the way we understand the conflicts. Basically, Russia has the same economic system as we do, basically, essentially. There are probably some differences, but essentially, we're not talking about different systems. It's not that we have a planned economy versus a liberal economy and things like this. So it's not against the system that we are fighting.

We are just fighting. And we can even go further. If you listen to commentators, we fight against Putin, so against an individual. During the Cold War, we were not fighting against Brezhnev or against Andropov or whoever. We were fighting against, again, a system. And that is the reason why. We can play with words. You can talk about culture. We can talk about civilization. There are different ways to understand these words, probably. And I will not make a religion of that. But the fact is that the fundamentals of the conflict have changed. We are fighting against individuals, even against Iran, if you look closely. What exactly are we fighting against? Sometimes people say it's a system that we don't like because of the situation of the women in Iran. But what about the situation of women in South Korea or Saudi Arabia?

#Pascal

And we are perfectly happy with it, as UNICEF came out two days ago with the numbers. We're perfectly happy with Israel killing an average of 47 women per day.

#Jacques Baud

Exactly. Per day, in Gaza.

#Pascal

That's perfectly fine. That's called self-defense. That's okay. But if any kind of stereotype about what women's life is like in Iran, proven or not, that is not okay. That must be eliminated.

#Jacques Baud

Exactly. This is exactly the problem. We don't know exactly what we are fighting against. And you have all these rationales. Sometimes we fight because of the nuclear capabilities of Iran, although we know that it was very, I would say, confirmed by the US intelligence that Iran was not looking to have a nuclear bomb. So they're not working on that. They don't want it. They are still, and so far, if you look at the reports of the IAEA, you see that Iran has been consistently working on the civilian

range of the nuclear issue. So what exactly do we want? Now we want to remove the ballistic missiles, but on the other hand, who threatens and who has actually attacked Iran so far?

I mean, of course, we can talk about the different attacks we've had since 2024, as I mentioned before. But we could also have mentioned all the attacks that have been carried out by the Israeli secret service against Iranian scientists in the past decades, or even what the US and the French especially have done to promote terrorism within Iran in the last 40 years, by helping and arming and training, you can say, terrorist revolutionary movements, whoever, whatever, in Iran. So Iran has been under permanent attack, with variations of intensity, of course, in the last 40, 47 years. And of course, they try to have a deterrent capability. They renounced nuclear weapons as a deterrent, but they used instead conventional ballistic missiles when they developed that technology. And of course, the Strait of Hormuz, which they have always said, well, if you attack us, we block the Strait of Hormuz — that's their own variation of the nuclear bomb, if you want.

#Pascal

So it's something that radiates beyond the immediate confinements of the country. But let me ask you two questions, because they're on my mind now. One is about this issue of, you know, what motivates us, as in the political West. When it comes to Russia, we have this word Russophobia, but I think it's not a good word because phobia implies fear. And I don't see the fear. I see hate. I see hate for everything Russian, despise for anything Russian, and the drive to eradicate it. And the same with Iran, like eradicate Iran, right? And anything that, I mean, of course, it's attributed to the system, to the political regime, as they usually call it. They never call it a government. They always call it a regime.

But hate for that and the urge to eliminate it, that's maybe the first point. The second one I wanted to ask you is about why this works, because what I see is what I call the solipsistic nature of the Euro-Americans. And the nuclear issue is so wonderful. So Iran has been saying for ages, we don't want the bomb. We have a fatwa on the bomb. We don't want nuclear weapons because they're unholy, they're ungodly. We don't produce them, we don't want them. But we want the right for a civil nuclear program. At the same time, the Euro-Americans have been saying forever, you guys want it, we know it, and we will keep you from doing it. Although they signed the JCPOA and it was working and whatnot, and it was, by the IAEA, confirmed that it was working and that the Iranians were not working on it.

But Euro-Americans, and especially the Americans, keep pretending that, no, this is what they want. And then we read these articles in the New York Times saying, oh, our approach is working because of all the states that seek nuclear weapons. Iran has taken the longest time to develop one, and they still haven't developed one. And then they give the example of Israel, of Pakistan, and of India, and of North Korea, which illegally developed nuclear weapons, right, in contravention of the NPT.

And therefore, it has been working, what we are doing. It's like you're talking to somebody who has never actually spoken to somebody from the other side. And then this is how they convince themselves that they are right. Sorry, these are two separate questions, but what are your thoughts?

#Jacques Baud

Well, the two questions relate at some point. That means we have been brainwashed about these countries, both Russia and Iran. For a lot of people, Iran is the most terrible way, I mean, the most terrible face of Islam. Whereas if you look closely, you would see that Shia Islam is much more liberal than Sunni Islam, in fact. And the Iranian society is much more open than the Sunni societies, I mean, where Islam is applied very rigorously, such as on the Arabian Peninsula. So there is no real objective view on what Iran is. We have been brainwashed because the Americans had, during the whole Cold War, I mean, most of the Cold War, they had Iran as an enemy. Then we adopted the American enemies. We have done exactly the same with Russia. Obviously, Russia is a competitor of the U.S., and the U.S. sees that as a competitor or adversary, a rival.

#Pascal

But it's not a rival of Europe, basically.

#Jacques Baud

On the contrary, it's complementary to Europe. And therefore, we could have developed harmonious discussions, relationships. The problem is that in Europe, and I experienced that personally when I was in NATO and discussing with other officers, other colonels of the so-called old Europe — I mean, France, Italy, Spain, you know, what Donald Rumsfeld called the old Europe — all of them had the same impression that NATO was giving more space to the new Europe. I mean, the Baltic states, Poland, and so on, those who joined NATO the latest, and who, in fact, were more tied to the U.S. And remember, Donald Rumsfeld made this difference between old and new Europe as it was the discussion for the Iraq war, the war in Iraq.

And those who supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq were precisely the new Europe. I mean, the first contingents were Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic states, Lithuania in particular. They all joined this attack on Iraq enthusiastically, while the others were more reluctant, especially Germany and France. The others tried to do something, but also very reluctantly. In any case, we see that the influence of the new Europe in European international institutions, such as NATO and the EU, has increased because they were pro-U.S. And therefore, the U.S. encouraged this because that was their Trojan horse into those organizations.

I mean, especially the EU. NATO is basically a U.S. organization, so there is no need to have another Trojan horse there. But it supports also because all the decisions are taken by consensus. And therefore, the more people you have with you, the better. So we have here an increasing influence

from those countries who are the most averse to Russia. And they are so averse that they're even ready to harm their own economies in order to fulfill their hate, so to say. We have seen that with electricity, for instance, for years. The Baltic states, as an example, as former parts of the Soviet Union, had very cheap electricity. They were linked to the Russian electricity network.

And last year they just changed, and they connected to a European electricity network that cost hundreds of millions of euros, by the way. And now they pay for electricity two or three times the price they paid to the Russians. So you don't really understand what the need was, because the Russians have never threatened those countries to cut them off from electricity. This is exactly the same thing we have with gas, liquefied gas. So we are here in a kind of hate that goes beyond rationality. It goes beyond economic rationality. And today, with this conflict and the problem in Hormuz and all that, we see that all this comes to a very harsh reality.

And even now, you have in the EU people thinking about resuming some contacts with Russia in order to buy energy, because energy has become extremely expensive in Europe and affects, of course, the competitiveness of European industries on the world market. So we see that we are beyond rational here, and in both conflicts. So we have this, well, whether or not Russophobia is the right word, but I think we understand what we mean by that. And obviously, what we are talking about is something which is beyond rational. And the same applies to Iran. The problem we have today in Europe is that we don't like Trump, and therefore, I don't know if we hate Iran or Trump more. And that's the reason why we question the attack.

But imagine Obama would have launched this attack. You would have total support from the Europeans for any attack. So we are here, and that shows how decision-making in Europe has become totally irrational. It's short-term oriented. We don't see the long-term implications of our decisions. We see that the decisions are not even based on intelligence. And as I explained before, when it comes to nuclear, and we have repeatedly, if you listen to the French foreign minister, for instance, he comes again and again with this issue of the nuclear issue about Iran. Although the U.S. intelligence has said they have no bomb. They don't want a bomb. Exactly. We know that. If we had a rational decision-making process involving intelligence assessment and all that, we'd say, okay, so nuclear is not a problem.

We may have other problems, but those are the problems. Let's assume we have a problem with the system, with the regime, because women should have a veil on. Well, then, first of all, we should probably address the same issue with Saudi Arabia or elsewhere. But assuming it's a problem, is it a problem that can be solved through war? Probably not. I mean, that can probably be solved with other means. And I'm convinced, by the way, that if you would have a more open policy, foreign policy towards Iran, if we would... Because Iran has made many signs, especially in the last, and in particular after the JCPOA, by the way, where the Europeans had the opportunity to lift the sanctions because Iran was complying with the JCPOA, but the Europeans didn't even try this.

Had we tried this, had we lifted sanctions, had we improved our relationship with Iran, this would have helped the whole system. The whole regime, so-called regime, would probably have softened. But today we are in a mood in Iran, as we have in Russia, by the way, because they feel threatened. They feel that they have an existential threat against them, meaning that this has reinforced the so-called regime. This has reinforced the willingness to fight against the West. This has reinforced, and even those who—and we have documents, we see that in Iran, even on social networks—that those women who protested in January are today completely with the government.

Because beyond their own political struggle, there is a more important struggle that has come. It's the existential struggle against the Americans. And so we are consistently making the same mistakes when we try to address problems in the so-called West of the world. We assume that people react as we would react. And in fact, these are completely different cultures with different ways of understanding people—the meaning of war, the meaning of peace, the meaning of negotiation, the meaning of life, the meaning of death. All that has another meaning. And that then comes when we start to impose our culture on them. Well, all that leads to a confrontation.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, these are very important observations. I had a former student of mine who recently asked me, why is it that the Iranians seem not defeated by their supreme leader being killed by the Americans? Why is this not an Adolf Hitler kind of moment, you know, when he shoots himself in the bunker and then it's basically over? And the answer here is, no, that's not how the system works. This is Iran—people are willing to die. It's a very good question. It's a very good question here.

#Jacques Baud

And that's fundamental, by the way. The idea of victory in the Muslim world is completely different from the notion of victory in the West. In the West, you have victory when you destroy your enemy. In the Muslim world, you have victory when you don't give up. So victory for a Muslim is a victory over oneself, not over the enemy. It's not the number of people you destroy that makes you a winner or not. Victory is defined by the fact that you don't give up. And that's extremely important. It's also important for the Palestinian struggle, for instance. That's why they are not afraid of dying.

Because for them, it just shows that you have not abandoned the struggle. You are committed. You keep your head straight. You are not giving up in front of a stronger enemy. Regardless of the strength of the enemy, you should keep the willingness to fight. And that's, in essence, exactly the meaning of jihad. Jihad comes from the word jahada, which means to struggle, to resist. That's the meaning of jihad. And resist is not about the idea of destroying the enemy, but to resist the temptation to abandon the conflict, to give up. That's the meaning of jihad. Yeah.

#Pascal

And in this sense, you will never have a Vercingetorix moment where the other side will parade you around because you gave up, because you surrendered, right? And then you would be paraded around in Rome and executed in the main square. No, you will die like Yahya Sinwar did in Gaza.

#Jacques Baud

Exactly. If you want to have, as a Swiss, or the Swiss people know this example, it's Winkelried. That's the example — the one who sacrificed himself for a cause. And that's your victory. When you are up, you struggle for something, and you are committed to this up to the last moment. And that is the victory. That's the definition of victory. And these two different definitions of victory are just an example of how — and that's why I have written several books on asymmetric warfare — that's exactly the substance of asymmetry, when the logic of the two adversaries is completely different. And in fact, if you try to deter a terrorist by killing them, how can you deter someone by killing someone who is ready to die?

Yep. It loses all point. Yeah. Exactly. And that's exactly, that's the substance of asymmetric warfare. In symmetric warfare, the two actors have the same logic. They have the same rationale. They have the same kind of basic culture of war. When you are in asymmetric, it's a system where both work on different tenets, on different logic. And that's exactly what you have. That's the reason why, because the Israelis have never understood that. That's the reason why this is the only country, by the way, that still has what they call terrorism after more than 80 years. Because they have not been able to capture the fundamental logic of the Palestinian resistance. And that's the strength of the Palestinians, by the way. This is exactly that.

#Pascal

It leads to a lot of dying. It leads to terrible, terrible situations. The question to me is how to get out of it, right? And if at least part of the puzzle is that we in the political West do not act rationally anymore, but emotionally, then the question is, is the solution out of this stupidity that we are doing and going through actually emotional rehab? Do we need to think about how to treat these countries emotionally rather than rationally? And have you, in your career of dealing with warring parties, seen situations in which the path to a solution was not by talking it out, but by somehow impacting the emotions of one of the sides?

#Jacques Baud

Well, in my career, I was involved in many smaller conflicts in Africa, northern Africa, and so on. And I even had mediating activities and things like this. But fortunately, I had to cope with people with some rational approach to the conflict. When it comes to the West, I think that's where we have, especially since about the early 2000s, a very, very emotional approach to, first of all, terrorism and

all that. And this becomes extremely difficult because it has turned, and you see that in countries such as France, for instance, it has turned into some kind of domestic issue. People hate each other because every Muslim is a terrorist, and this kind of schematic approach.

I noticed that the Western mentality is less prone to rationality than others. We may talk about how rationality is approached in the rest of the world, in particular in the Muslim world, but they have a rationality. This is a rationality. While we have abandoned rationality, we don't know why we fight them. I mean, all the wars we have made and created in the whole Middle East, for a quarter of a century now, have completely destabilized the region. And further, because we have made life impossible in the Middle East, people come to Europe, and now people in Europe are struggling against immigration. So we created the conditions for that.

So we are in a kind of vicious circle that we created ourselves. And there is nobody, and I see really nobody in the West, especially in leadership positions. Probably in some parties, in some countries, you have people who realize this kind of vicious circle we are in. But in the leadership that we have currently in Europe and in European countries, people don't seem to understand that. They tend to escalate the conflict because if they don't find a solution—and that's where we are back to the situation we have in Iran—they don't find a solution to the situation they have created. And therefore, instead of backing off and saying, well, okay, we made a mistake.

We have to go back a little bit, take some distance, and start to talk. No, it's not their approach. They think that by escalating the conflict, they will prevail. And that's where I see the thing as extremely dangerous, because we have done exactly that. I mean, what we have witnessed in Palestine from October 2023 onwards is exactly that. In fact, we react exactly in the same way the Israelis have done. It's not exactly the same level of intensity. I mean, you can argue whether it's more or less, but in terms of human lives, it's certainly less than what happened in Palestine. But in any case, this is the same rationale. Instead of trying to find a solution for a situation that was predictable, we tend to overreact.

We tend to put more force, more brute force. We become more violent. We bring more destruction because we think that by escalating the conflict, we will prevail. But that's very European to some extent, or Western, because the US also has the same mentality. Our victory is always defined by the balance of force. And that's exactly where we have a problem here. We are unable to anticipate issues, to predict issues. We just act emotionally, irrationally. And then we cry because the situation gets out of hand and we need to escalate. And that's exactly what we have. That's exactly what we had in past times, exactly what we have in Lebanon and all that. All these situations were created by us. All of them.

#Pascal

It's a dead end. This approach only works if you actually, at the end of the day, do have the upper hand in conventional warfare. And we are not in that world anymore. This is a dead end. I mean,

the entire civilizational approach of the political West is right now inside a dead end. So the question is, we are not even in front of the wall. We hit the wall already. And that's kind of new, isn't it?

#Jacques Baud

Well, absolutely. And as I said, the problem lies with the leadership. That's why, in fact, I don't see any – I mean, we may find temporary solutions, and that's also the issue with Iran and Russia. They know that a temporary solution is only temporary. That means it will resume at some point. And for that reason, unless we change the leadership, because we will not change our mind, we need to change our leadership. I don't see any other solution.

#Pascal

The funny thing is, and I do not want anyone to construe what I'm about to say into something that I'm not going to say, the funny thing is that if the leadership is actually the problem, and if the other, the significant others—Russia, Iran, and Beijing—actually arrive at the same conclusion, then the funny thing is the West already charted out a way of changing leadership, didn't they? Well, nobody shall construe any meaning into this. It's just, again, like we are creating precedents. Yeah. Very, very, very dangerous precedents. And I do believe people in Washington and Brussels must start thinking about how those things should not become international norms because they've—well, it has been started.

#Jacques Baud

Well, you see, the problem is, are we able to do that? I mean, if you look at the leadership we have in the rest of the world—take Iran, take China, take Russia—we see that the leaders are much older, have much more experience. When we talk about foreign policy, for instance, when you talk about the diplomats of all these countries, we see people with extensive experience, a lot of life experience as well. They are able to take distance from the problems instead of being directly involved in the problem. They have the ability to have macro management, not micro management.

I mean, they can manage things from some height and not as tactical management. They think strategically and not tactically. While our leaders, they tend to be tactical leaders. They don't have much experience. They react very quickly to things. They make a lot of allegations, and their decisions are based on those allegations, by the way, and we see that constantly. They have a very poor culture. We also see that our leaders have a lack of understanding of history, a lack of understanding of foreign cultures. They haven't lived abroad. They don't have a lot of experience living with other civilizations.

While if you look at the elites of these other countries—Russia, China, Iran—those people have spent a lot of time abroad. They have an extensive culture. They know history. They understand other cultures much more than we know them. And that's their advantage. They know us better than we

know them. And this is, you know, there is absolutely no question about this. This was said by Sun Tzu 2,500 years ago. He said, well, if you don't understand your enemy, you have no chance to win. And that's exactly that. We don't understand them. We assume we understand them. And that's a problem. Barbarians at the gate, at the Western gates, my friend.

#Pascal

Yeah, exactly. Guard yourself from the barbarians from the West. Good. Jacques, thank you very much for all of this. This was a very, very fruitful exchange. People who want to follow you, your writing—where should I point them to?

#Jacques Baud

Well, since my book may be forbidden in some countries, although there is no decision in the EU on that, some may have overreacted and overcomplied with it. Anyway, Amazon is certainly the best source for people around the world to get my books. I wrote several books, and the last one is the one I have behind me. It exists in English to help peace in Ukraine. I have other books related to Iran, **Governing by Fake News**. That one deals with the Iranian conflict and the Al-Aqsa Flood operation—that means the Palestinian operation of the 7th of October, 2023. This book also explains the role of Iran and the whole issue of the Middle East, based essentially on the Palestinian issue. But you'll find that they are all in English. Some are translated into Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian. I mean, you'll find them in almost every language.

#Pascal

Yeah, everybody, go and find Colonel Jacques Baud's books on Amazon. Google his name, put him into Amazon, look at what he has to offer. He's a wealth of knowledge. It's really fantastic, and we will certainly have you back on soon again. Jacques Baud, thank you for your time today.

#Jacques Baud

Many thanks for the invitation. Thank you very much.