

The slow decline of Swiss diplomacy

But all hope is not yet lost

by Guy Mettan,* Geneva



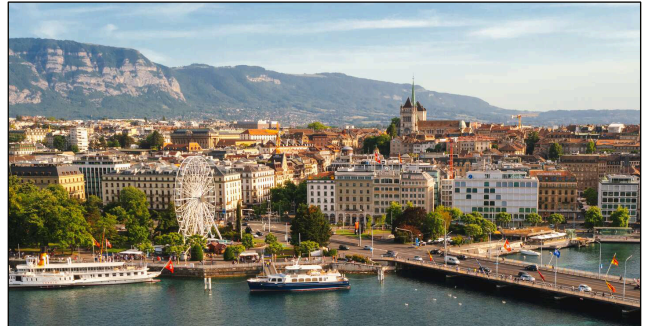
Guy Mettan
(Picture ma)

Having failed to reach a consensus, Switzerland had to give up organising the humanitarian summit on Palestine. When will it finally understand that international Geneva and Switzerland's role as a mediator cannot be saved by jumping around shouting "Multilateralism! Multilateralism!" and pulling a few million out of your pocket to save reckless NGOs?

The agitation in Europe over the demise of USAID, the sudden resumption of Russian-American dialogue and the statements made by Vice President J.D. Vance at the *Munich Security Conference* are only symptoms of deeper evils and a development of the international system that no one wants to admit to. As long as we are not willing to face the facts and correct our mistakes, all the attempts we make to repair a fundamentally ailing system will be in vain.

Like in the Mikado game, Bern squints but doesn't move. Federal Councillor Ms Keller-Sutter pretended to like J.D. Vance's speech, but immediately backtracked. Then she repeated the old tunes about Ukraine and Europe, where she moves like a cat on hot bricks about the conservative *Trump* revolution, the strengthening of the global South and the new world order, which abandons international law and returns to the confrontation of empires. Meanwhile, our so-called foreign minister remains silent.

This way, the focus remains on the past, namely on the UN, international organisations and traditional NGOs. Since *Kofi Annan* opened the United Nations to civil society in the late 1990s, the latter has continued to expand. They



City of Geneva with the Cathedral of Saint Pierre and the Mont Salève in the background. (Picture ma)

have become saturated with public subsidies and private donations. Many of them have sold their souls, either to the governments that sponsored them, as evidenced by the abstruse programmes that USAID ended up funding (queer operas in Colombia and transgender ballet in Bangladesh, while a few hundred metres away people starve), or to private "philanthropists" like *Bill Gates*, whose funds finance vaccination campaigns for the benefit of the companies of which they are shareholders.

The ICRC, which was also afflicted by hubris under the *Peter Maurer* era, experienced a similar mishap two years ago. Money comes in, the budget grows, so that fundraising ends up outweighing the mission and aid to victims. Until it crashes.

And they prefer to ignore true modernity, namely neutrality, which was the strength and originality of our country on the international stage. Neutrality is not this old-fashioned thing that should be thrown away, as some believe. It is an advantage of radiant modernity that countries like Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which strictly do not adapt to the great powers, have adopted to their greatest advantage. For three years, they have been pushing from all sides because they did not make the mistake of organising a peace summit on Ukraine without Russia or arbitrarily imposing sanctions on half the planet. How can we be outraged when *Donald Trump* organises peace talks with Russia without Europe, "after such one-sidedness"?

It is little known, but it was the Federal Council itself that took the initiative and invited NATO to

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open a representation in the “House of Peace” in Geneva. In return, it was demanded that Switzerland not ratify the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, although it had signed it! How can we still believe in our pacifism and neutrality after such an outrage?

Today, both Bern and Geneva refuse to see the damage caused in February 2022 by the de facto renunciation of neutrality, the imposition of unilateral sanctions and the rapprochement with NATO, that bellicose and criminal organisation that illegally bombed Serbia in 1999, massacring dozens of innocent civilians.

They continue to deny it. But it is enough to travel anywhere in the world – outside the West, of course – to Beijing, Brasilia, Africa or Jakarta to realise that the damage is immense and that our diplomatic reputation and the credibility of our banks have been severely damaged, with the latter having carried out real cleansing operations for fear of US sanctions.

Let us also remember that neutrality is a demanding discipline, which applies to both Ukraine and Palestine. The fact that Switzerland, the custodian of the *Geneva Conventions and international law*, claims to apply them in Ukraine but tramples on them in Palestine, tolerating the massacre of tens of thousands of women and children in Gaza and sanctioning UNRWA, has not gone unnoticed outside the West either.

The third problem is linked to the development of the international order, to the erosion of the United Nations system and of the collective security that *Roosevelt* wanted in 1945 and that was embodied by the Security Council with its five permanent members, two of which, France and the United Kingdom, have lost their legitimacy.

The emergence of the BRICS countries and the Global South, the rise of China and soon India, the emphasis on multipolarity by the entire non-Western world are now inevitable. In Munich, no one paid attention to the speeches of the Indian and Chinese ministers, although they were of crucial importance. It is an irreversible phenomenon, with or without Trump, who cannot change it. China, Russia, India, Indonesia, Brazil, to name only the largest, have taken their seats at the table of world politics and will not leave it.

The centre of gravity of the world economy has also shifted in their favour. Politics follows.

One can lament this. One can curse them, call them fascists, autocrats, communists. But one will have to come to terms with it.

The Americans are doing this in their own brutal and egocentric way. But we have other weapons.

It is time for Switzerland to refocus on its strengths, to rely on its fundamentals and to proactively work with the new emerging global powers. All is not yet lost.

(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)

General Guisan (1874–2024) and the Swiss people

In 2024, Switzerland celebrated the 150th birthday of *Henri Guisan* (1874–1960). In these forgetful, not to mention amnesiac, times, this book recalls what Henri Guisan embodied for the country during the war of 1939–1945 and the general mobilisation, namely, the *spirit of resistance* in various forms of a small neutral country, surrounded by a fearsome National Socialist dictatorship to the north and a fascist dictatorship to the south.

Furthermore, a country whose potential ally in the West, France, was defeated by the armies of the German dictatorship within a few weeks.

In his preface, author *Jean-Jacques Langendorf* shows how the world situation and thus also the situation in Switzerland has darkened in recent years and how necessary it is to return to the “spirit of Guisan”, which William I of Orange-Nassau summarises in his beautiful motto: ‘There is neither need for hope to act nor success to persist.’

This welcome book recalls this important period in Swiss history, portrays an extraordinary man (who was still the most popular Swiss personality in 2022) in a country on the brink of disaster – and asks an important question: what kind of Guisan do we have today, in the face of the challenges of our time?



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