

Russia–Ukraine: Green light for Switzerland

by Guy Mettan*, Geneva



Guy Mettan.
(Picture ma)

As the war in Ukraine drags on, a small diplomatic window seems to be opening. With its tradition of neutrality and mediation, Switzerland could seize this opportunity to build on its historical role and contribute to reviving the momentum for peace.

A trip to Moscow in early February convinced us: no, Russia is not on its last legs, as the European media would have us believe. In 2025, the erosion of the Ukrainian front in Donbass continued slowly but surely. The economy continued to grow (at the same pace as in France), and life went on as usual. At the beginning of this year, it is hardly affected by heavy snowfall and a cold spell of rare intensity.

The mood of the Russian people, on the other hand, has changed. Not because they have become anti-Putin, as we claim, but because they are increasingly disappointed with Europe. The censorship of Russian culture shocked them in 2022, but they thought it would only be temporary. Since then, the rift has deepened. They feel that Europe treats them like subhumans, without anyone objecting. Added to this is the fact that people in the West apparently do not know what they want and seem content to be led by politicians who constantly contradict their words with their actions and vice versa. This does not exactly help to strengthen trust.

Stalled negotiations

This unease is also reflected in the stalled negotiations on Ukraine. It is questionable whether the meeting in Geneva will achieve much. As soon as a breakthrough is achieved, as was the case in

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“Broken Chair” in Geneva. Switzerland’s neutrality is an advantage for international negotiations between conflicting parties. (Picture ma)

the summer at the summit in Anchorage and in the autumn with the *28-point plan*, this progress is immediately reversed under pressure from the Ukrainians and the EU. They call everything into question again. The US, which seems determined one day, appears hesitant the next.

This has led to a complete loss of trust. The risk of a large-scale military conflict between Russia and NATO is increasing. The collapse of the international system and the multilateral world order that has existed since 1945 is accelerating. Above all, the carnage continues on both sides of the front line. Even a ceasefire along the current demarcation line, which Kiev and Brussels continue to insist on as a precondition, would by no means eliminate the danger of a long-term global conflict.

This is where Switzerland could come into play. In this stalemate, it could regain the initiative it lost in 2022 when it sided with Ukraine and adopted Western sanctions against Russia (not confirmed by the UN), disregarding its neutrality.

Ignazio Cassis in Moscow

The Russians, who have always supported Switzerland and its neutrality since 1815, were very embittered by this. The Bürgenstock Conference finally angered them. But recently, Moscow has sent encouraging signals.

Following the successful visit of the Russian parliamentary delegation to Geneva at the end of

July last year, Russia welcomed *Ignazio Cassis* to Moscow on 6 February and agreed to the Geneva negotiations taking place this week. These went smoothly. Although they did not lead to any significant progress, it was the first time since 2022 that they had taken place on Swiss soil. Perhaps a sign that the EU, stuck on its war course, is slowly moving.

If Switzerland had the courage to seize the opportunity and provide concrete evidence of its commitment to a balanced peace plan – for ex-

ample, by suspending some sanctions and lifting discriminatory measures against Russian citizens, assets or aircraft – it could implement the attempt and regain its historic role as mediator. And it could do so with the consent of all parties, including the US, even if the media and the most militant parties would initially react strongly.

An opportunity presents itself. Let us have the courage to seize it.

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")