

# The “Bürgenstock summit” can be successful ... but only without Zelensky (and Cassis)

by Guy Mettan,\* Geneva



Guy Mettan  
(Picture ma)

The bush of the Bürgenstock hides the devastated forest of Swiss diplomacy. Forgive me for this hackneyed metaphor, but it is unfortunately the sad reality. Since *Ignazio Cassis* took office in 2017, which was aggravated by the arrival of *Viola Amherd* at the head of the Defence Department in

2018 – both fierce advocates of a realignment towards NATO and the USA – Swiss foreign policy has taken a turn for the worse. And in the wrong direction.

Several executives at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs make no secret of this: “The doctrine and alliances have suddenly changed. As a result, networks that we had built up over twenty years in some cases, with Russia, with certain countries in the South or in the Middle East, were destroyed within a few months.” By adapting to Western countries and slavishly passing on their hatred and enthusiasm, “Switzerland’s voice, the little music we were able to make ourselves heard on the international stage, has completely disappeared. We have drowned in the mass of the Western world”.

This is particularly evident in the UN Security Council and in the area of collective security. The Federal Council is trampling on its earlier commitments to peace and dialogue and, for example, is stubbornly refusing to ratify the treaty banning nuclear weapons for fear of upsetting NATO (of which we are not a member!). In mid-May, Switzerland was the only country to abstain from voting on a Security Council resolution to prevent the arms race in space, which was rejec-



The invitation to the Bürgenstock calls into question Switzerland's credibility as a neutral state. (Picture ma)

ted by the US, the UK, France and four other countries loyal to them.

Worse still, Switzerland is in the process of denying the humanitarian law and international law that it has championed in recent decades. Driven into a corner by its pro-Israeli, anti-UNWRA and anti-Hamas positions – an absurdity given that it championed the Geneva peace process in 2003 and has in the past been in favour of talking to all parties to the conflict – it has never condemned the Israeli army’s abuses in Gaza and has still not responded to the International Criminal Court’s call for the Israeli and Hamas leadership to be charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity.

It is the only country in Europe that has remained silent, although Spain, Ireland and Norway, which are very active in Palestine, have on the contrary just recognised the Palestinian state.

Bern, which had loudly rejoiced at the request to bring charges against *Putin*, therefore has nothing to say when the public prosecutor of the same court is examining a complaint of the same kind against leading politicians who have obviously been overstepping all the boundaries of what is permissible for months.

What an outrageous loss of credibility! How can Switzerland be believed if it wants to defend the Geneva Conventions and denounce future human rights violations?

Against this background, the attempt to polish up the reputation of our diplomacy with the so-called peace summit on the Bürgenstock in mid-

\* *Guy Mettan* (1956) is a political scientist, freelance journalist, and book author. He began his journalistic career in 1980 at the “Tribune de Genève” and was its director and editor-in-chief from 1992 to 1998. From 1997 to 2020, he was director of the “Club Suisse de la Presse” in Geneva. Guy Mettan has been a member of the Geneva Cantonal Parliament for 20 years.

June this year has every chance of ending in a fiasco or at least not leading to any results.

Leaving aside the traditional 50 countries that are lining up behind the West, it is clear that the success of the conference will depend on the participation of the countries of the global South. After Russia was not invited and China, Brazil and South Africa abstained, only India has confirmed its participation, without saying at what level. Nothing is known about the others. The game remains open in that they have not yet declined to participate. They will probably send mid-level and non-decision-making participants so as not to be accused of being “against peace” or “boycotting the West”.

This means that the Bürgenstock conference will not be a summit and will definitely not be a peace summit. Russia’s deliberate rejection is now turning against the organisers. Aware of this problem, the official Swiss narrative is now trying to argue that Russia does not want to participate and that its absence is solely due to Russia. This is wrong and will not mislead anyone outside the collective West.

Why should the countries of the South participate in a summit that is no longer a summit, that is not centred on peace because of Russia’s absence and that is certain to be a failure? The weakest or most skilful will be content to attend without any enthusiasm, while the others will avoid wasting their time and money in vain.

Second problem: it can be assumed that President *Zelensky* has become the main obstacle to peace negotiations. Firstly, since 21 May, he has no longer been the legitimate president of the country as his electoral mandate ended on 20 May. Since then, he has only been the unelected and therefore illegitimate president of the country. So, there can be no question of democracy.

It should also not be forgotten that he signed an ukase (proclamation) banning any peace negotiations in Ukraine and presented an alleged peace plan that is not a peace plan, as it merely calls for Russia’s capitulation. After the assassination of supporters of peace in Ukraine, including at least one of the negotiators from March 2022, he can no longer act as a peacemaker, as he would otherwise lose his power. He therefore has no interest in negotiating anything. If he comes to Switzerland, it is only to get support from his Western supporters and to demand more aid for the war. Not for peace.

The first prerequisite for starting real peace talks is therefore to remove Zelensky and replace him with a more realistic and open-minded leader, perhaps *Zalushny*.

Finally, the West is now at an impasse. It still has no strategy for overcoming the crisis in Ukraine and has nothing to offer apart from blind and unconditional support for Zelensky’s regime. It does not know what, how or with whom it should negotiate, as it is boycotting Putin. It is therefore content to follow the belligerent elites in Eastern Europe, the Baltic states, Poland and Washington, while at the same time there is no agreement on what peace should and could be. There is virtually no chance that this will change before the US elections in November.

After that date, regardless of who the newly elected president is, the game could become more open as the failure due to this lack of strategy and the resulting attrition in all areas – military, economic, financial and political – will become more apparent.

After the election, it would then be time to consider a change of the incumbent in the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

*(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)*