

Foreign Minister Reveals Shocking US-EU Truths | Evarist Bartolo

All the talk about the "unbreakable" transatlantic bond between the USA and Europe is nothing but smoke and mirrors. In reality, the USA has been using Europe the way a pimp uses his mistresses. The greatest victim of US contempt is of course Ukraine who is now even asked to pay for its gang-rape in precious minerals. But the rest of the continent is not far behind. When will EU leaders wake up? The good news is, a few Europeans see right through the dirty game. First among them is Malta. Today I'm talking to Evarist Bartolo, a labor politician of the beautiful island state of Malta. Mr. Bartolo was a member of Malta's parliament for 30 years, and he served as Minister of European and Foreign Affairs, between 2020 and 2022. Since Malta is an EU member with a neutrality clause in its constitution and Mr. Bartolo was in office right around the time when the Russia-Ukraine-NATO conflict came to its horrible boil, I thought we should talk about Malta's experience of that.

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#M3

When you talk to some of the American diplomats, the contempt that they have for the Europeans is total. It's total. They're making fun of Macron's idea of strategic autonomy. You know, what strategic autonomy? Well, they cannot even organize a party together, let alone have strategic autonomy. You know, the kind of contempt that Victoria Nuland is famous for. That is not exceptional. I mean, that is normal, you know.

#M2

Hello everybody, this is Pascal from Neutrality Studies, and today I'm talking to Evarist Bartolo, a Labour politician from the beautiful island state of Malta. Mr. Bartolo was a member of Malta's parliament for 30 years, and he served as Minister of European and Foreign Affairs between 2020 and 2022. Since Malta is an EU member with a neutrality clause in its constitution, and Mr. Bartolo was in office right around the time when the Russia-Ukraine-NATO conflict came to its horrible boil, I thought we should talk about Malta's experience of all of that. So, Minister Bartolo, welcome.

#M3

Thank you very much.

#M2

Well, thank you very much. And I must say, you contacted me because we are connected. You read an article that I wrote, and I really appreciate that you reacted to it.

#M3

But I must tell you, I first discovered you through following Neutrality Studies on YouTube, and I am a consistent follower. I really like it because you provide another voice, which is very important.

#M2

Well, thank you for that. And you have an experience that we really have to share here on this channel. You were a foreign minister for over two years in Malta. On the one hand, Malta is a small member of the European Union, but it is a full member of the European Union. You also told me that there was considerable pressure put on you to actually follow what the other EU states were doing.

Can you maybe give us a sense of what you were thinking about what was happening between Russia and Ukraine in 2021 and 2022? And then, politically, how did that play out on the EU level?

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Well, I must tell you, I was not surprised. I mean, although I became Minister for Foreign Affairs in the last two years of my political career, I had been following international affairs since I was a young man. I had been given some assignments to visit on behalf of the Labour Party and to meet different people, and so on. The first speech, Pascal, that I gave to the diplomats who are based in Malta when I became Minister for Foreign Affairs was, "Listen, I'm coming from the education ministry. One of our biggest challenges was bullying. You know, there is bullying in the playground."

There's bullying in the classrooms. I suspect that I'm going to find quite a bit of bullying now that I've moved to a bigger playground. And I think some of them got the message and came up to me and told me, so you want respect? And I said, of course we want respect. We do not want to be bullied. Now, the kind of bullying that takes place in the European Union, and not just in the European Union, in the relations between different states, usually comes from the usual suspects, I must say. It's from those who have had a colonial experience. So if you take the European Union, very few of the countries in the European Union have not had empires. Few of us have only had the historical experience of being colonized. Now, that gives us a different mindset.

It makes us, you know, more sensitive to what we call the global south. In our case, as we are in the Mediterranean, we are very sensitive to what is going on in Africa, what is going on in North Africa and beyond. But especially, I think since 2004, when the Baltics and the Eastern European states joined the European Union, the epicenter has changed in the European Union. It has forgotten its southern neighborhood. Africa does not exist. Africa does not exist. If you were to analyze what goes on the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council, it's the eastern neighborhood and

what is happening in the Pacific and what is happening with China, and a big continent next to you, which is a neighbor, where there are three Africans for every European. And we're moving to a point with Europe's demographic suicide.

We're moving to a point where there will be five children and young Africans to one middle-aged and elderly European. I cannot understand this strategic, not autonomy, but strategic short-sightedness. So when the Ukraine story started developing, it was taken for granted that everyone was going to be, you know, just on board and just say, you know, this is an unprovoked invasion that shows Putin has imperial ambitions. Let's not even discuss what brought it on. Let's not even discuss why this happened and what we are going to do about it. No, everyone was expecting Secretary of State Antony Blinken to turn up and say, listen, now we must be together.

We've had, you know, fractures between the US and the EU, between NATO and even within NATO. Now this is the time for us to be together, at least. I remember distinctly this: at least let's keep the invasion from not succeeding for the first two days. So at first, there was this impression that this was going to be a very short campaign on the part of Russia. Then I think it was decided, let's turn this into a good opportunity, not necessarily to defeat Russia, although some people had this illusion. But the most important thing is to keep Russia bogged down there and bleed it economically and bleed it militarily. I am struck even today, now after three years that I'm not in the Foreign Affairs Council anymore, that inbuilt, it's a very superficial forum for discussion.

It's like, to a certain extent, it's like the catwalk in a fashion parade. You just come out, talk for three minutes, and go in again. No discussion. At most, if you say something which is not liked, you are simply ignored. So there is no discussion. There's no discussion at all. For example, when we were discussing sanctions, no one, not even from the Commission, would say, but is the world only the EU, G7, and the United States? Now, what happens if we squeeze Russia? Are we going to kill Russia because we're not going to trade with Russia? We're going to sanction Russia on our terms. But doesn't the 86% of the rest of the world exist? Is there a possibility that what we take away from Russia, Russia will look for in China, in India, in Indonesia, in other places? Not even a discussion like that.

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Just let me ask this. On the EU level, when you meet all the other foreign ministers and you're supposed to have a discussion, right? Because on paper, the EU is an international organization, right? I mean, the sovereign power still rests within the member states. At least that's how it's supposed to be. But even then, there's no real back and forth. There's no kind of process of trying to find a common position. So where does the position then come from? And where did this idea that EU equals the world, Europe plus America equals the world, where does that come from? I mean, people cannot be that blind that they just take that for granted.

#M3

You'll be surprised. I think they are culturally blind. I think 500 years of colonialism has definitely spoiled the Europeans who had empires because the attitude is taken for granted so much that they are not even aware of it. For example, I remember telling a friend, you know, even Borrell, who I consider a friend and who I consider was trying to be decent in very difficult circumstances, because I know what he really believes in and what he sometimes had to say were very different.

I remember how he was literally sort of boycotted and sort of punished when he decided to travel to Moscow to meet Minister Lavrov. You know, people were, especially the Baltic countries and some of the Eastern European countries like Poland, really angry at him for even just meeting Lavrov, because they said we shouldn't meet people. So then what happens? For example, I was saying, why don't you go down to Tunisia, to Libya, to meet those people? Because we're not meeting them.

We're not meeting them. And they used to tell me, but what do we go and tell them? And I said, listen, for the first time, can you please not tell them anything and just listen? Because we concoct these programs like the Global Gateway or the Southern Neighborhood Program or the Memorandum of Understanding with different Mediterranean countries. And there is no decency of sitting down with them to discuss a common program. It's just what the EU needs out of those countries. And then they are surprised. Then they are surprised when you tell them, do you know that the Chinese work in a different way? Yes, yes. What do the Chinese do? They say, well, as far as I know, the Chinese sit down with the ministers when they meet them in Africa, for example, and ask them, what can we do for you?

What are the infrastructure projects that you feel we should invest in here in this country? So it's the other way around. Can you imagine on the Global Gateway, where the European Union prides itself on having thought of an answer for the Belt and Road Initiative? Because basically, that's what it is. On the implementation committee of the initiatives to be taken in Africa, there is no African city. It is just a one-sided affair. It's just what I want out of you. And when you tell them, this is very short-sighted, I mean, how do you expect migration not to happen from Africa when we are depriving young Africans of the opportunities to create wealth and to have a more diversified economy in Africa itself? Because all we need out of Africa are the raw materials and energy products.

And we do not let them produce the things that we need so that they can create jobs. How are they going to create jobs? And then it's no wonder that they turn towards Turkey, they turn towards Russia, they turn towards China for investment, because those are more equitable in how they deal with debt. It's not that they are angels and Europeans are devils. I'm not talking about that. It's just a completely different attitude on how to deal with debt in other non-European countries.

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Is it fair to say that Europe, at this point in the 2020s, has utterly and completely unlearned how to do diplomacy as the art of reciprocal negotiations with equals?

Pascal, completely, completely. You're not even meant to sleep with the enemy, not to talk to the enemy. You know, not to talk. For example, I can tell you, when we used to have conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean, you'd have Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt. Usually in the summer, the tension used to go up. And then I would realize, ah, so it's time for France to sell fighters to Greece. Or it's time to sell something that has to do with armaments to Greece. So now it's important that we create tension. So all of a sudden, the tension goes up. Once the contract is signed, there is calm again in the Eastern Mediterranean. I'm saying this factually. I'm not just being cynical, you know. Especially, I was told to check where the French foreign minister, who I consider a friend, Jean-Yves Le Drian, check where his constituency is.

It's where the military-industrial complex of France is. He is considered a very capable arms dealer. He is the one who, when he sits down with other foreign ministers, is not going to discuss diplomatic issues. He says, you know, what are we going to sell you? Basically, it's like what happens at the Munich Security Conference. When I attended, I was struck that the first row is the defense ministers. This is the protocol. The first row is the defense ministers, and the second row is the foreign and finance ministers. Now, I'm not saying that I wanted the first row, but I think it's very symbolic. I think it's very clear that now it's the armaments which are important, not diplomacy.

So yes, imagine saying, I've been invited to, for example, the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Turkey. And the Cypriot foreign minister, my colleague, is very offended that I'm going to go. Just to go, not to say, listen, I'm going to go there and say that Turkey should take over Cyprus. Now, in that case, I would understand. But imagine, I told him, I'm going to go to Antalya, I'm going to talk about the Cyprus question and say, firmly to Turkey, please do not change the reality on the ground to make the UN resolutions on Cyprus totally irrelevant. If you want a different arrangement for Cyprus, go through the process of changing the UN resolutions. Do not force the issue. But even something like that, just meeting, that's why I agree totally with you. The art of diplomacy is lost.

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Because you told me just before we started that you also had an experience where some people told you not to meet Mr. Lavrov and Wang Yi of China during your tenure. Right? Can you maybe recall that story?

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But I mean, can you believe it that, you know, from the American embassy, you would have pressure on your prime minister on the eve of going to Moscow or on the eve of going to Chengdu? Why is your foreign minister going to Lavrov? As if I was going to visit some kind of leper colony from 200 or 300 years ago, and I would bring back infection, not just to Malta, but to Europe. But not even meeting, you know?

#M2

And that was the ambassador of the United States to Malta who told you, "You should not go and meet Russia and China."

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In that case, we didn't have the ambassador. It was the Chargé d'Affaires. So she was the top diplomat. Yes, and she objected to me. Can you imagine? You know, I mean... not even meeting. And I remember, I want to make this clear. I'm not saying that all the diplomats, all the European diplomats behaved like that. No, I'm not saying that. But in this case, I'm being very specific. Yes, there was pressure to not even meet Lavrov, you know. And why are you so friendly with Wang Yi? Imagine at one point there were words being said like, "That's why Malta has been graylisted by the FATF, because your foreign minister has this illusion of carrying out an independent foreign policy. You know, why does he want to meet, you know, with these people?" So even meeting, you know, I mean, after all, during the Biden administration, there are contacts between, well, with China, they were continued, but the meetings with Russia were discontinued, and they expected all the rest of the world to do the same. So what is diplomacy for?

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And how does this pressure work? Because also on the EU level, in theory, in order to come up with an EU position, you need the OK of all the member states, right? So let's say the sanction packages. If smaller states like Malta or Hungary object, what happens?

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Listen, first of all, the EU is like an old-fashioned train: first class, second class, and third class. First class, you'd have France and Germany. Second class, you would have Spain, you'd have Italy, and not even Poland, not even Poland, but possibly, possibly. And then the rest are in the third class. We travel third class, and we are expected simply to follow what the engine room has decided. This talk of being equal and we're all a happy family where everyone is treated the same—no, reality is not like that.

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For Malta, I don't think you would consider exiting the EU, but what is the attraction of being part of a club that just gives you orders?

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Now, that's why I think it would be a tragedy for Malta if we lose our veto. I am totally against a federal union where everyone becomes one United States of Europe. If nation-states lose their say, the little say that they have now, then it will be lost. We will be a colony again. Instead of being run

from London, we would be run from Brussels. So this idea of having co-decision making, and that you are there to participate in the decisions that affect you. And here we're not talking simply now about diplomacy and good relations.

In the case of Malta, for example, where there are small islands, we need maritime connections and we need, you know, flights because we are not part of the continent. So anything that hits us, for example, putting a tax on airplanes so that we, you know, lessen the climate change effect of aviation, or putting charges on ships coming to Malta with merchandise—these are all things that affect us if we do not participate in them. And if you're simply told, you know, behave, follow this, and my interest is more important than yours.

So that's why I think, in our case, if the EU is going to have a future, it cannot be a one-size-fits-all. I think if those who want a one-size-fits-all and those who want a United States of Europe prevail, the EU will have huge problems containing all the different contradictions. And the process that has started of renationalizing decisions that had been taken over and transferred to Brussels, I think, will continue even more.

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Were you shocked when, on the eve of 2022, right when these special military operations started and the war really blew up the way that we know it now, there was this decision by the EU Commission that European airspace, EU airspace, would be closed to Russia? Airspace is, of course, not the prerogative of the EU; it's the prerogative of the member states. But that was announced, and it was just accepted. Were you surprised that this happened?

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Yes, yes. Surprised, but at the same time... The atmosphere was so charged. It's as if this has given us an opportunity to show that we still count. And I think, especially coordinating totally with the Biden and Blinken administration, the EU completely became a vessel. I could tell how their behavior was, for example, on the day after the US pulled out of Bagram in Afghanistan. The ministers, who most of them attend the NATO meetings as well, because their countries are member states of NATO, were completely, completely—not surprised, I would say—shocked.

I'm not saying that they were not consulted. They were not even informed. They got to know from the news, like all the others who are not ministers or those who are not NATO members. So this kind of relationship, very subordinate, very much like a vessel, you know, and the relationship was such that we don't even discuss or give any feedback. You just simply follow what comes from Washington. This was so strong. I was amazed that even not small countries, because we've been used to seeing how we have to learn how to survive as very small countries, but to see countries like Germany behaving like that—I couldn't believe it.

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The vassalage of Europe at the moment has reached a point where I cannot really fathom it anymore, and I just recall that moment when Joe Biden, before the war, before 2022, announced next to Olaf Scholz that the US would end Nord Stream if Russia attacked. Right, and he just stood there and took it. I mean, he didn't even say anything. It's like this is—and you probably remember—the politicians of the 90s and earlier, you know, there were people, even people like Kohl and so on, the Germans, they were way more imposing and actually putting their weight onto the world stage. What happened to the Europeans?

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Yes, well, I think they've lost it. I think they've lost the plot completely. I mean, not to stand up for the interests of your country, to have someone telling you, "You know, I'm going to stop your pipeline, your lifeline, actually, not just a pipeline," and then blowing it up, and nothing happens.

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I mean, not only does nothing happen, but these states are then complicit in the cover-up and in making sure that we don't find out.

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Completely.

#M2

It's bizarre.

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Completely. And then what makes you very angry is that recently some cable in the Baltic Sea was damaged. And immediately, immediately it was said, this is Russia. This is Russia creating problems for us and the undersea cable. The Swedish investigator came out and said, no, no, this is not state aggression. This happened because of a storm and a ship simply ripped through the cable. And in fact, there are studies that show that in the undersea cables, so far, thank goodness, none of them have been disrupted because of any military or any terrorist attack. But most of the time, it's cruise liners or fishing or merchant ships. Immediately, they came out and said, this is a rogue act of Russia, even though it wasn't the case.

So it has become very, very sad because I remember when I met Lavrov, and I was struck. Can you imagine? After we finished our meetings and we were going away and saying goodbye to each

other, he told me, "Mr. Bartolo, you're a brave minister." And I said, "Why am I a brave minister? I'm a very soft-spoken, gentle person. Why do you consider me a brave person?" Because he said that in the press conference, the first thing you said was, "I pay tribute to the millions of Russians who saved us from Hitler." I said, "But what is so brave about that? It's just a simple historic fact." He told me, "Go and tell your colleagues that."

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And that was in 2020 or 2021?

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This must have been, yes, I think '21. I think the summer of '21. So, I think, honestly, these persons, people like Lavrov and people like Wang Yi, all they expect is not even agreement, but they do expect respect. You can't simply go around and treat them as if they are... I mean, I remember, and I felt that this was very interesting. When we were discussing with Lavrov, we were analyzing a bit the behavior of the European Union. I said, can you explain to me why there is such aggression and such animosity? And I said, well, unfortunately, we do have problems that leaders do not know their history. Leaders do not know their geography. There is no appreciation of culture and of respecting the cultures of others and to try and understand where they are coming from.

In classic diplomacy, these are the things that first you must learn to be able to sit down with someone and have a decent conversation. All that is lost. He said, I remember when President Prodi came to us to tell us that the Baltic states and the Eastern European countries are going to join, eight from that part of Europe, eight countries are going to join the European Union. Lavrov told him, good, so we're going to have another anti-Russian club. Prodi told him, no, no, no, Sergei, don't see it like that. The fact that they will be part of our organization, of our club, we will manage to calm them. I'm sure we will manage to calm them. Lavrov told him, I think the other way around is going to happen. They are going to make you anti-Russian. And I think this is what has happened.

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You know, it's quite fascinating to me because at the beginning of this discussion, you said that one of the reasons why Malta, and a couple of others—I think you're thinking also of Ireland—are more sensitive towards the Global South is because you had this experience of being colonies, right? You were colonized, and against your will, you were made part of the British Empire, right? And you were both colonized, ruled from London. And you can see today how Ireland is way more sympathetic to Palestine, right? And has way more, like you, like Malta, way more sympathies for what's happening there. But at the same time, the Baltic states keep yelling at the top of their lungs that they were colonized by Russia. They were colonies.

Therefore, they know what this feels like. And in order to not be a colony again, you must fight Russia, right? You must militarize and actually be an anti-Russian club. Why should these two experiences of being colonies be very similar, but obviously they're not? They've created completely different problems.

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Listen, I can understand. First of all, I think if we really want to understand the pathetic state that the European Union is in at the moment, it is to have Kallas as the High Representative and to be the face of the EU to the rest of the world. I can understand her as an Estonian Prime Minister, remembering the historic memory of Stalinism and the 20,000 Estonians who were carried away to Siberia. I can understand that.

#M2

But she was the daughter of a communist functionary. She was the daughter of the people who implemented that at home. Adding insult to injury.

#M3

Yes, yes. But to not manage to go beyond that and turn all of Europe into that, I think again shows the fact that she was chosen to be the High Representative after Borrell, which shows the terrible situation that the EU is in. Can the EU be against everyone else? Because now it's against the US because of Trump, against China, against Russia. So how can the EU build now in a very lost way? Because, I repeat, if you see what is happening technologically, there is an Australian strategic policy institute that tracks 64 technologies that are very essential for the 21st century. Out of 64, China is the first in 57 of them. India is in second place.

Not even the United States is in second place. Europe doesn't appear anywhere. Germany has in two technologies, the EU, because it's not together, doesn't appear anywhere, you know? So technologically and economically, you have serious issues, you have serious problems. At the same time, you still have this kind of superiority attitude to tell the rest of the world how it should behave and what it should do when you are in such a deep crisis. So instead, it reminds me of the famous poem of Cavafy, "Waiting for the Barbarians." You know, when you have your citizens who have lost trust in your leadership and in the institutions, it is important to invent an enemy at the gate. Now, what happens when in 2027, in 2029, in 2030, Russia does not invade?

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all of Europe and takes even, you know, not just Warsaw and Brussels and Paris, but even Lisbon. What happens when in five, six years' time, no invasion takes place and, in the meantime, you have

been telling people to get ready, have enough provisions for 72 hours because we might have a war? So instead, it's a bit like Trump, I feel. Instead of addressing your problems, blame others. In the case of Trump, mainly blaming China. In the case of the EU, blame Russia. And if we want to become strong again, let's have a shortcut. Let's have military campaigns. Let's borrow money and let's spend money on building our military-industrial complex.

We need to move away from welfare states to warfare states, and because we're going to build, instead of producing cars, we're going to have military tanks. We're going to solve all the problems, we're going to have employment, our economies are going to flourish again, we're going to become strong again. But this is a very dangerous illusion. It's very sad to see a country, you know, after country, with such cultural experience and wealth in this state, when most of the states are becoming ungovernable, and the European Union itself is becoming ungovernable, and you still have the arrogance to tell the rest of the world how it should behave and what it should do.

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This is what leaves me at a loss because there seems to be not just the arrogance, not just the "we know everything better and we will tell everybody else how they should behave." There's also a complete, at least from what I see, utter lack of a vision of what is a good process forward. The whole discussion at the moment in Europe seems to just revolve around security—how to be secure—but there's no vision of why to be secure. I mean, where to go? So, okay, fine, we don't have a war, so where do we go without a war once we are secure?

Because at the moment, it seems that really, you know, the expectation of a war seems to already create almost... We're not yet at euphoria, but we are at a point where people are kind of looking forward to it. You want that war. That's the explanation.

#M3

Yes, yes. Pascal, it reminds me a bit of Tennyson's poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade." They knew they were going to die, but he glorifies those soldiers. Ours is not to question why. Ours is to do and die. I mean, it's terrible. It's terrible. I mean, this is the year where we should have been celebrating 50 years of the Helsinki process. The OSCE, which was very interesting, from what I'm told, was also actually a Russian initiative, a Soviet initiative at that time, and managed to persuade others to go into it.

It's dead. It's dead. We killed it. I mean, it didn't die. It didn't die on its own. Once the Soviet Union had collapsed, once the Warsaw Pact finished, why the hell should we keep NATO? Why should we tell, you know, I feel strongly about this because the first commitment they made not to expand NATO eastward, it was made in Malta in December of 1989, when Bush and Gorbachev met to

discuss what was going to happen in the changes that were, you know, what will happen when the wall goes away, what will happen when Gorbachev told Bush, we are not going to force any government system on our Eastern European countries anymore.

And Bush told him, and Matlock, Ambassador Matlock, says this because he was there during the meeting. Bush told him, we are not going to take advantage of this. And then things changed. Now, this is something that both the Russians and the Chinese feel very sensitive about. They say, with whom can we negotiate? If one president tells you we will not move an inch forward towards you, the next president changes that policy and just goes along and does it. It's as if the decline of the West is also inbuilt in its system—very short-term, very short-term electoral cycles and no continuity. I think this is one of the reasons why there is so much disruption as well, you know, from the point of view even of the European Union.

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At this point, if I were Russia or China, I would only believe promises from Europe if they were actually, in the end, not only enshrined in a treaty but ratified by parliament. Before things are ratified by all member parliaments, you cannot be sure that this has at least a medium-term life. Alexander Trigona told me that the reason why they were fighting to enshrine Maltese neutrality in the constitution was precisely because of that—because you need to make sure that certain foreign policies do not change from one administration to the next. So you need to enshrine this stuff in the constitution, the most important things, and at least the next ones, you need to enshrine them in ratified treaties. Otherwise, they'll be ignored.

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That was very wise. Now, imagine, Pascal, to see how this is important. So it is in our Constitution. At the same time, when you read the integrated country report of the Blinken State Department, the relationship between Malta and the United States from the year 2022 to 2024, goal number one is to align Malta to Western interests. But can you imagine the sheer contempt? Even if you do it, do you have the cheek to actually declare that your first goal is to go against the Constitution of the other country, however small we are?

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There's a foreign policy paper in the United States by the State Department saying a goal of U.S. foreign policy is to undermine the Constitution of Malta. And it is not even hidden. It's in plain sight. Yes, it's in the public domain. They respect nobody. They don't even pretend.

#M3

And I can tell you, and I say this with total frankness, when you talk to some of the American diplomats, the contempt that they have for the Europeans is total. They make fun of Macron's idea of strategic autonomy. You know, what strategic autonomy? They cannot even organize a party together, let alone have strategic autonomy. The kind of contempt that Victoria Nuland is famous for is not exceptional; I mean, that is normal.

#M2

But this contempt, I mean, is very, very dangerous. You can see right now how the contempt for Ukrainian sovereignty that the Biden administration, and under Obama, blatantly portrayed, led to the use of Ukraine as the spear tip of the NATO dagger. Even worse, now the Trump administration demands the mineral wealth of Ukraine in perpetuity just because he wants it. He expects this to happen, and the negotiations are like, "This is what we want, and if you don't give it to us, then you're the bad guys and the bad actors." This is not a wish. This is not "we would like to." It's "we deserve this." "We gave you all of these weapons," which, by the way, is just like feeding the military-industrial complex and the economy of the United States, right? They fed their own economy and now are demanding even more, being fed even more and being applauded for that. Isn't it? And the Europeans are not saying anything. They support this.

#M3

No, this reminds me. Last June, I was in Shanghai for the Association of Friendship Societies, and I met a former U.S. senator. Now, I want to say this because it ties with what we were saying before. He was a very famous Californian senator, and his wife was still an ambassador at the time of Biden. He told me, "Do you know that before I came here, I was visited by the FBI to tell me, 'Why are you going to Shanghai? There's no need to go to Shanghai.' I said, 'As if I am coming to Shanghai to betray my country.'" You know what we were talking about before, about diplomatic relations and human relations. He said, "When are we going to learn that the world is not a Western cowboy film where we go in, shoot at everyone, and then not realize how many we've killed and how much blood we've shed?"

He said, "We have gone crazy. This is not the way." And he was a very close friend of Jimmy Carter, who, I can tell you, was a person who did respect even our sovereignty. I remember when he visited Malta—obviously, he was not a president anymore—and we had a private dinner together, even with the prime minister at the time. Carter was very respectful of our neutrality, and he could understand why a small country like us needs to safeguard our interests. We need to be friends with everyone because, basically, our neutrality is about trying to be friends with as many different countries as possible, as we are one of the most exposed countries in the world. In our case, globalization is not an ideological choice.

We import practically everything, and we export practically everything. So we need to have open borders. When you have a bully who tells you, "You're either with me or against me. If you speak to others without my permission, I will hurt you," I mean, this is... I mean, in our history, Pascal, we've been invaded 42 times. Forty-two times. Always for geopolitical reasons, not because we did something naughty, you know. It's because either they wanted us or they wanted to deprive others of us. So when we finally, 60 years ago, said, "You know, not only are we independent, we want to be independent and then move on, not to be a military base anymore," and then to move on and say, "We want to be a neutral and non-aligned country," not to threaten anyone else, but for our own sake.

Because we are so small that if you have the harbor used for warships, it means that you cannot bring in the cruise passenger liners because that would be a problem. So if we want to develop an economy that gives jobs and prosperity to our country, neutrality is a must. In our case, it's also a necessity, not just because we want peace and social progress, which we obviously want. But then to imagine, I repeat, to have the last document of the Biden-Blinken administration saying goal number one of our mission in Malta is to align Malta to Western interests is incredible. I mean, imagine if our embassy in Washington had such a document and said, number one is to make sure that we push forward Russian and Chinese interests in Washington to undermine American interests. I mean, it would be unbelievable.

#M2

That's why, you know, the one thing realists need to realize is that the world is unequal. It's horribly unequal. All of the liberal talk about everybody having the same say and, you know, everybody getting to choose their own alliances is obviously wrong. It's obviously window dressing. It's obviously a charade, a masquerade. So the question is, why do some states not understand that? Or let's say, why do some political processes, like in Ukraine, then dismantle neutrality? Ukraine had neutrality in its constitution as well for very good reasons, very self-evident, especially for the people in the 90s. And then the political process there dismantled it.

And when the choice came, push came to shove, Europeans, the EU, like Europe or Russia, they actually then picked a side, also because of the coup and so on. But in Malta, Malta succeeded in maintaining that position, maybe also because it was out of focus. There were no NGOs and no undermining, although Alexander Trigonas says there were NGOs and so on.

#M3

So, of course, of course. Yes, yes, yes, yes. And I remember even in the 80s, the so-called public diplomacy, having foundations, even German foundations and American foundations, organizing initiatives in Malta to undermine our neutrality. Yes, I mean, it was there. So how did Malta manage not to fall for that?

Or how did your political process, how did you manage to maintain your position? Well, I think the quality of leadership is important. I think in the case of small states, the quality of leadership is very important. What helped us also was the fact that strategically we had lost our importance compared to before because of transport, because of missile technology. Ships do not need, and planes do not need, to stop in Malta because 30 minutes away in Sicily, you have NATO bases there. So in our case, they did not need us anymore. And I think it's good to turn that into an advantage. But the new agenda, I repeat, the new agenda from the Blinken team was to turn Malta again into a NATO outpost.

I am very worried that in the last two years, we have started undermining our neutrality because now we are associate members in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. We have had delegations from NATO visiting our armed forces headquarters to discuss interoperability. And you know what those nice technical words are—interoperability. I do not believe that they need us as a base, but yes, as a logistic base, they do. Because if you were to see the size of the American embassy in Malta and the size of the Russian embassy in Malta, and the size of the Chinese embassy in Malta, it's out of all proportion to what they need to have in a small country like Malta. It is obvious that those are important in terms of what happens in Africa. And I know what I'm saying.

Things that go on in some North African countries from the central stations of the CIA and MI6 need Malta logically. I know what I'm saying. I know of ministers going to visit Tripoli or to visit Tunis, but they come and sleep in Malta and have their meetings in Malta. So from that point of view, we are still, I think, strategic. But I am worried that we will undermine our neutrality ourselves. And that is where I see the quality of leadership. We had a man of vision. Dom Mintoff was a man of vision, you know, and he was dreaming of our neutrality way back in the '50s. I don't know whether you know, he wrote a very interesting article about Malta being the Switzerland of the Mediterranean.

He actually said that, you know, and he said that because we were taken for granted. Only recently, I was having a look at a historical document. We're now going back to Christmas Eve of 1953, imagine. At that time, we were a colony, and you had the British governor, who was the representative of the Queen. He went to knock on the door of the Prime Minister's private residence, and he didn't find him there. So he left him a note, and he told him, "Mr. Prime Minister, tomorrow I intend to convey a Christmas message to the people of Malta. Incidentally, I'm going to tell them that Malta is going to become the Mediterranean headquarters of NATO." Imagine, the Prime Minister, once he got this note—yes, yes, yes, this is 1953—the Prime Minister got back and found that note.

He got in touch with the governor and told him, yes, please convey your Christmas message to the people. But do not say that you are going to become the headquarters of NATO. You haven't even discussed it with us. You haven't even discussed it with the government. And the governor said, you are our colony. These are reserved matters. The Maltese have nothing to do with how their country is used in international strategic military affairs. And NATO moved to Malta without any agreement,

and even the 6th Fleet was given facilities by the British Imperial government in Malta without any agreement and without consulting or even bothering to tell the Maltese people what was happening.

In fact, one of the first actions that Dom Mintoff took in 1971 when he was returned to power was to tell NATO to leave. He said, you have no agreement. We have no written agreement with you. You came here, you know, because it was your initiative to do so, and you forced yourselves upon us. Now leave. And in fact, NATO left in 1971. I am worried that we can undermine this legacy, and not for folkloristic or nostalgic purposes, but I think in today's world, we need our neutrality more than ever before. Which, I repeat, means having as good relations as possible with the United States, with China, with Russia, with India, with Turkey, with Greece, with France, with Britain. You know, I'm not anti-American or anti-Western or whatever.

I mean, I've been educated in the UK and the US. I love their literature. I love their culture. But please treat me as you say we should treat each other—with respect and with dignity. It has nothing to do with geography and size.

#M2

You know, being friends with everybody as a definition of neutrality, do you know who the first one was that I found who said that? The first one in history. Who was it, Pascal? Thucydides. Who was it? Thucydides in the Melian Dialogue defines neutrality as being friends with all and foe to none. Yes, yes, yes. But this neutrality needs to be built in times of peace, and it needs to be made in times when you can build the institutions, right? Because the moment you become the focal point of geopolitical turmoil, then it's too late. So it needs to be built in times of peace or relaxation.

#M3

One of the nicest documents I've read about neutrality was American, from the time when the two superpowers were England and France, and the US was neutral.

#M2

The United States had a neutrality policy for 150 years, and it served it so well, so well. George Washington declared U.S. neutrality because the U.S. was a small, little ex-colony. It was very vulnerable. So, of course, being friends with everybody helped it grow to the size it is today.

#M3

Yeah. You know, and I repeat, we are people. We are, however small, not a pawn. We cannot accept being a pawn in the hands of others. Our people want prosperity, want peace. They don't want to threaten anyone. But please, do not come and tell us what to do, involve us in your conflicts, or take sides. Because we need to take the side of our people, you know.

#M2

Evarist, can we somehow take that mentality of Malta and install it in Brussels and make the EU a huge Malta? Can we do that?

#M3

Well, I think it's going to take a generational change because the present leadership is so lost that, unfortunately, they have to hit a wall, and people are going to get hurt. A lot of European citizens are going to get hurt. I mean, I remember when we had the financial crisis of 2008, and money was being pumped into the banks to save the banks and not to help the people who were losing their jobs. Now people are saying, ah, so when it comes to weapons, it's okay to borrow.

It's okay to break the fiscal rules for armaments, but for people, no. And people will resent this. People will resent this. I mean, I'm sure that there are surveys being carried out, which are not being published, you know, asking questions like, how ready are you to go to war? The last ones that were held in 2023 and 2024 showed that the majority of Europeans do not want war. They do not want to be taken over. They want to live in peace and dignity with others. But this idea of creating so much hate, so much phobia—even Tchaikovsky is to blame. Even, you know, don't play any Russian music.

Don't talk about Russian literature. I mean, this is moral bankruptcy, cultural bankruptcy. We are on the same continent. We are on the same Euro-Asian continent. If we are not to be totally irrelevant, we have to build decent relations with our neighbors. This was the dream of the OSCE, which worked so well. It is such a pity that now it has been reduced to what it is now. It is such a pity. It is such a pity.

#M2

It's a huge pity. 1975 was the high time of European and transatlantic, basically, not brotherhood, but at least an understanding. To me, 1975 was the beginning of the end of the Cold War because that's when we created the mechanisms to reach a common understanding of how politics should actually happen on the Eurasian continent, right?

#M3

But I remember discussing this with Charles Michel, the president of the Council of the EU, who had an idea of creating a mini conference, a kind of mini CSCE, bringing together Egypt, France, Turkey, and Cyprus to discuss the Eastern Mediterranean issue. You know, he was voted down. Because I remember discussing a very interesting concept with Michel. This has never been made public.

We talk a lot about the common foreign and security policy. And I told Charles Michel, why do we need a common foreign and security policy? The EU should use its diversity, having neutral countries, NATO countries, countries that have good relations with the East but not with the West. Why should you let one bloc decide for everyone? We should be like a coalition government where the neutrals can talk to everybody. Spain can talk to Russia. If the Baltics don't want to talk to Russia, at least they can talk to the United States. Let's have this kind of rich, diversified approach. And Michel told me, this makes a lot of sense. This is what we should do. But he was a practicing politician.

He was a prime minister. He knew that in the real world, you talk to everyone and you deal with everyone. That is lost. That is lost. It's as if there's this kind of bunker mentality in Brussels, because it's a bunker, a besieged mentality. It's a bunker mentality, not just regarding Russia, but regarding the rest of the world, I would say. It's a bunker mentality, you know, and instead of discussing how to rebuild new relations, not inferior relations, but equal relations with the rest of the world. It's in the interest of this part of the continent, which is making itself more irrelevant than others.

I mean, I dread to think what the future is going to look like when, over the next years, the demographic effect is going to be felt much more. I think by the end of the century, we'll lose about 75 million people who should be in the workforce. How is the European economy going to work? Because at the same time, we don't want migrants. We don't want people to come in, not even to work in our countries, not even regular migrants, I'm talking about, but even regular ones. The discussion about migration and the discussion about diversity has become so toxic. Imagine, I was Minister for Employment for seven years, attending the Social Affairs Council in Brussels. Do you know we never discussed migration?

Do you know that migration was only discussed as a foreign affairs and security issue? We never discussed the demographic decline. How are we going to have enough people to work in our economies? It's a dysfunction.

#M2

You know, like sitting in our offices or being at home in Europe, you always have this idea that in Brussels and in the capitals, in the parliaments and in the government buildings, there are all these people in suits who went through so many years of school and are so smart. And at the end of the day, there's a system for everything, and things are taken care of. But it's not what it is. It's a bunker and a circus. It's a circus bunker. And people can completely lose sight of what is actually important if you don't have proper processes to assess the prosperity of the nation and what's needed in order to achieve it.

#M3

But also, what I observe is that there is a break between the elite and the people, in the sense that I am not a conspiracy theorist at all, because I find that to be a very lazy intellectual attitude, where instead of trying to understand, you blame someone. But I must say that a lot of these young ministers for foreign affairs, I would dare say, when they spend a few years in that role, are already thinking, "Now, which think tank am I going to be proposed to? Which post am I going to be proposed to in the EU itself?"

So instead of thinking with your mind and saying what you think and contributing to a discussion, you're also planning your career advancement. I think that's why in politics we need a mixture of generations. We need young people, we need middle-aged people, we need old people. If you only have young people and middle-aged people who are thinking of their personal careers, I do believe that affects the quality of the contribution that they give. And there are honeypots which you can offer both in Washington and in Brussels. Young politicians who are in their 30s and 40s and perhaps have done nothing except politics are also thinking, "What is the next step if I'm not a minister anymore, if my party is not in government anymore?"

What am I going to do with myself? And think tanks come in handy, and institutions come in handy, and special envoys come in handy. And that brings about, you know, control. That brings about groupthink, and brings about being part of an elite that takes care of itself. I think one needs to study this a bit to see how far it affects, you know.

#M2

And I would like to, at some point, understand the different psychologies of people, because it seems to me that the people who I perceive as real leaders are those who think of positions like a presidency or a ministership as a tool to use to implement what they want. And then there's another group of people who see these positions as an end goal. They want to be that person to get the money, the glory, and the appreciation instead of wanting it as a tool. It strikes me that a lot of kleptocrats in Europe are the second type.

#M3

I think that needs to be studied. I remember having a discussion with Romano Prodi about two years ago, and we were joking, and I said we used to talk of nanotechnology. I think, unfortunately, today we need to talk of nanopolitics. You know, there is a miniaturization of... It's sad. It's sad because this continent, this European continent, has produced, even in our lifetime, I mean, the Finnish president Kekkonen, you have Kreisky, you have Schmidt, you have Brandt, you have Mitterrand, you have Olof Palme.

These were all people who had a vision and who believed in their own country, but at the same time could understand that you don't have to be so narrowly nationalistic-minded. It's a zero-sum game. It is sad for our part of the world, but also sad for the world. But this will have an effect.

#M2

I am very glad that people like you, who were part of this process, actually also speak about it and that we can get firsthand information. So, Evarist, thank you very, very much for your time and for your insights. Do you publish somewhere? People would like to read more from you. Where can they go?

#M3

Yes. Well, I publish every fortnight in the Times of Malta, which is online and available. Every day, I also put up a Facebook post, which I think I'm going to start putting into English as well, not just Maltese. I use Maltese. It's a very interesting Semitic language, the only Semitic language in Europe. Very, very interesting. But I should start widening the audience.

#M2

Send me the links. I will put them in the description of this video, and I will also let everybody know.

#M3

Yes, thanks. I also have a website where I put my speeches and articles. Thank you very much. Keep up the good work. Thank you, like you do, talking to everyone.

#M2

You too, Evarist. We'll be in touch. Thank you for your time today.

#M3

Thank you. All the best.