

# Malta's Former Top Diplomat on the BRICS-NAM Quiet Revolution

Today I'm talking again to Evarist Bartolo, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta. Since 2025 is the 70th anniversary of the Bandung conference which later gave birth to the nonaligned movement, and Malta used to be part of that we thought its a great time to talk about the lasting impact of Bandung. Links: Goods Shop: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com>

**#M3**

There is something in the civilization of the West which makes it feel superior and makes it want to translate that superiority into domination and using military force, you know, to make you do what I want. Whereas from the Chinese civilization, it was, "We've come here to trade. We want to do business." I think, on the whole, that is still the difference between the different civilizations.

**#M2**

Hello, everybody. This is Pascal Lottaz from Neutrality Studies, and today I'm talking again to Evarist Bartolo, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta. Since 2025 is the 70th anniversary of the Bandung Conference, which later gave birth to the Non-Aligned Movement, and Malta used to be part of that club, I thought this is a great time to actually discuss this history and its contemporary relevance with somebody who's been working in that environment. So, Minister Bartolo, welcome back. Thank you very much.

**#M3**

My pleasure to be here discussing this with you.

**#M2**

Well, it was your idea, actually, which is a fantastic idea, I must say, because Bandung and the Non-Aligned Movement have, in my view, been much underrated in the history not only of the Cold War, but also of our world today. Could you maybe explain to us a little bit how Malta came to be part of the Non-Aligned Movement and what kind of importance you see in this entire 70-year history?

**#M3**

Malta was part of the Non-Aligned Movement because, again, it wasn't an ideological choice of saying, "Let us be non-aligned." As a small country on the periphery of Southern Europe and facing

North Africa, we had, over our more than 8,000 years of history—especially when navigation advanced and ships could start crossing the Mediterranean, not just hugging the coast but going through the central Mediterranean—Malta became a very strategic location. If you wanted to control the central Mediterranean and the relationship between Southern Europe and Northern Africa, it was important to control Malta. Why not the other islands?

Because Malta happens to have a very deep natural harbor which you can use year-round. So that's why it was Malta and not Lampedusa or Pantelleria. For 8,000 years, we were contested by the powers of the Mediterranean. Things got much more complicated for us in the 19th century when Britain entered the Mediterranean and, as you know, it was actually called the lifeline of the empire—going from London to India and passing through Gibraltar, Malta, and the Suez Canal. So it was very important to control Malta from that point of view, especially when ships couldn't travel very far because of the technology of the day. They needed to stop somewhere, take coal, take water.

So that's why Malta became very important, because at first Britain was not really interested in controlling Malta. They didn't see any value in it until the admirals came to Malta—the people of the fleet. The people who were sitting in an office in London did not see Malta as important, but the people of the fleet saw Malta as very important and said, "Listen, we must control it and never let it go." Actually, the first time that the word "neutrality" was mentioned regarding Malta was in 1802, in the Treaty of Amiens, because they said, "We'll give Malta back to the Order of the Knights, but make sure that it remains neutral regarding Europe if there is a war."

But then, obviously, that was very conveniently forgotten when Britain saw that Malta was very important to keep. And even when we were given independence in 1964—so I'm making now a leap of 164 years—they wanted to make sure that while they were letting go of Malta politically, militarily, Malta would still be embedded in the NATO bloc. In fact, without asking the government of Malta, they let in NATO. They let in NATO, they let the American Sixth Fleet, the fighter jets, land in Malta, and Malta became the southern headquarters of NATO without, obviously, asking the Maltese people or the Maltese government to endorse such a decision. So they wanted to make sure that Malta would be kept like this.

But this was the basic difference between the two main political parties: you had the Nationalist Party, which wanted NATO to remain here, and the Labour Party, which saw that if we remained a base, this would negatively impact our economic development. Because basically, having a base in such a small country as Malta means the whole country is a base. So if you want to develop tourism, manufacturing, if you want to develop a civil economy where 60% of the workforce does not depend on the military base but has other job opportunities, the choice was either having a job at the dockyard, with the military services, or basically emigrating.

Half the population of Malta had to emigrate in the '60s. This was the era of independence. So, if you want to make sure that people remain involved and have a decent life there, we had not to allow ourselves to have an economy dominated by military presence. And that is why the Labour

Party, through the leadership of Dom Mintoff, chose to be non-aligned. Way back in the '50s, at the same time as Bandung—we're talking 1955—Mintoff had written a very interesting article published by the New Statesman in London, "A New Future for Malta," which argued that Malta should be neutral and should not let its economy be completely dominated by a military presence, a naval military presence.

And this makes Malta quite unique because when you see who met at Bandung, mostly they were African and Asian countries. Malta was the only European country then, after Mintoff met Nasser in Cairo. And Nasser told him—this was 1955, 1956—"Why don't you join APSO, which is the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, because we would support your candidacy to become independent?" Malta had not been mentioned as a likely candidate for national independence. Britain did not want to let Malta go. Though reluctantly, it knew it could not afford to keep the empire it had before. While the United States was pushing for Britain to let go of its colonies, I think not for any noble ideological reason, but because they wanted Britain to dismantle what was called the imperial preference.

Imperial preference was that the British colonies among themselves would trade with very low tariffs, but then there would be high tariffs toward external countries, including the United States. And the United States, which was very worried after the Second World War that its surplus production would be too much for the American market, wanted to have global markets and viewed the former colonies of Britain as good places to have markets. So that is why the US pushed for the dissolution of the British Empire. So, we chose to be non-aligned because it also made economic sense for us. When Mintoff became prime minister in 1971, within 24 hours, he told NATO to leave. He told the admiral, Gino Berendelli, the Italian, to leave.

He could do it also because there was no agreement, no treaty, no written agreement. So, the way they were brought in informally, they were told, "Pack up, pack up and leave." And in the meantime, he negotiated a new agreement with Britain so that by 1979, Malta would have no military bases. And, in its constitution in 1986, it would state that Malta would not join any military alliances, which was one of the principles of Bandung: no military alliances and no naval or military bases from which to attack other countries—another important principle from Bandung. Then fast forward to 2004, when we joined the European Union. The European Union said, "You cannot be part of a bloc. You cannot be part of the Non-Aligned Movement if you're going to join the European Union. We will respect your neutrality," and I hope that will remain constant.

I hope it will remain constant. But you cannot be part of another bloc. And so, since then, we are not part of the Non-Aligned Movement. But we are still, at least nominally, neutral. So that is our story. The position of Malta is interesting because it's part of Europe, but at the same time, it's in the Mediterranean. So it's a Euro-Mediterranean country, which means its position has to be very sensitive towards Africa, because obviously we are very much aware that Africa is such a close neighbor of Europe. But also, we have been educated by history that Malta is an intersection of Europe, Africa, and Asia. We tend to forget that. We tend to think that Asia is far away. So it is our

geographic reality and our history that made us aware of a wider world beyond the Mediterranean, including Africa, Europe, obviously, and Asia.

## **#M2**

Yeah, you know, I keep saying the Europeans keep forgetting that Europe is really just the western peninsula of the Eurasian continent. I mean, it's one single landmass—they are connected. But what you're referring to is, of course, the West Asian part of the Middle East, right? To which Malta connects.

## **#M3**

Obviously, we have to go back to history to understand why Europe has developed such a Eurocentric, self-important perception in the world—to the extent that even when we make our maps, we decide that Europe is actually bigger than it really is, to put it center stage on the maps, and to put it on top, with Africa and quite a lot of other countries below Europe. So even the way maps have been constructed in the last 500 or 600 years is an ideological construction, you know, but it reinforces the idea that you are very important, that you have ruled the world, and that you still want to continue to rule the world.

## **#M2**

No, absolutely. But, you know, the story you just told me—or us—about Malta, how Malta became independent again, reminds me so much of what's happening right now in the Indian Ocean with Diego Garcia, right? The UK is finally being forced to give back a couple of islands, but keeping the largest one for another 49 years, right? And also leasing it to the United States and making sure that even on the other islands, Mauritius will not be allowed to make agreements with any other power within 26 nautical miles of the islands. I mean, this is coming from the United Kingdom, which accuses other states—Russia and China—of being imperial, of having imperial ambitions, while they themselves still possess all of these outposts. We don't even need to speak of Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands. Can you explain this imperial mindset, while being so afraid of everybody else being imperial?

## **#M3**

Well, again, let's go a bit back into history. So in the 1830s and 1840s, in Malta, they were asking for the liberty of the press. It had just started developing in Britain itself. And in Malta, they said, "Listen, we need to have the liberty of the press as well." Britain had promised that it would respect national sovereignty and that the kind of local government that Malta had before the Knights would be revived. That didn't happen. When they asked for liberty of the press, there was a big discussion in the Houses of Parliament and even in the House of Lords about whether Malta should be granted liberty of the press.

And there is a famous speech by the Duke of Wellington, who stood up and said, "Listen, are you crazy? Do we give liberty of the press to our ships? Do we give liberty of the press to barracks? Malta is a harbor, is a port, and nothing else. So the Maltese do not count. What's important is that there is a harbor, which is very important for our strategic control of the Mediterranean and as a gateway to other continents." And this has shaped the attitude of Britain towards Malta and towards other colonies, especially those islands which were given importance because they were part of the imperial network. I mean, small islands like Malta did not make commercial sense.

They did not want our resources. They did not want our markets because we don't have them. But strategic location, yes. And not just Malta, but even other places that you have mentioned—Gibraltar, the Indian Ocean. And they made sure that the issue of sovereignty and democracy was always, always subordinated to the imperial strategic needs. So this was very interesting because, on one hand, they used their soft power to send bright people from Malta to study in British universities, you know, at Oxford and other universities. These leaders—if we take, for example, Don Minto—he was a Rhodes Scholar.

Cecil Rhodes, one of the big colonizers—his name was used for a scholarship to educate the best and brightest leaders from the colonies, to come and study in Britain. These people met others and studied about sovereignty, about liberty, about democratic values. But when they went back to their countries and wanted to put into practice what they had studied, what they had reflected on, and what they had seen in Britain, they were told, "No, no, no. We have to be careful, because your sovereignty and your democracy cannot jeopardize or threaten our imperial interests in the Mediterranean or elsewhere."

So this is the contradiction that Bandung helped to bring to the fore. Because in Bandung, for the first time—probably for the first time in human history, as far as we know—former colonized peoples met to discuss what they were going to do about their future. Before, we used to have meetings of colonizers. For example, if you take the Berlin Conference in 1885, where the powers of the day met to actually decide what to do with Africa: "I'll take this part, you take that part," wiping out any respect for the people who lived on that continent. In this case, it was the other way around. It was the people who had been kept suppressed and oppressed coming together to say, "Listen, now our destiny—we must do all we can to control it ourselves."

And it's interesting that even in Bandung, in the famous opening speech of Sukarno, the Indonesian leader—one of the fathers of Bandung and of the non-aligned movement—he quoted the American Constitution of 1776 and the Revolution, the American Declaration of Independence. I mean, it is so ironic that one of the first countries to shake off its colonialism was the United States. And consistently, we find not just Sukarno in 1955 quoting, you know, "all men are born equal," and that the people should be governed by consent and not by foreign powers who decide for them what to do. But it's interesting that even—imagine—Ho Chi Minh in 1945, when he was celebrating Vietnam getting rid of French colonialism, also quoted the American Declaration of Independence.

So you had America at that time shedding off its colonialism and using an anti-colonial line and rhetoric. Even the famous Fourteen Points of Woodrow Wilson—the Wilson declarations—where in 1918 he spoke about the consent of the governed, that people should not be governed by foreign powers against their will. And leaders in these countries like India, Indonesia, and Vietnam reached out to President Wilson: "Oh, we are so happy that you said this." But he didn't do anything about it, because obviously—he tried, to be fair, he tried. And when they were discussing the Treaty of Versailles, he tried to use the same principles of sovereignty. But Italy, France, and England pushed back because they did not want to lose their colonies.

So it's interesting that we see that even from the West—which hadn't yet become the "collective West" of today—there was a discussion. America was rising and saw the other empires as a constraint on its future path, whereas the existing empires saw America as a threat to their imperial interests. Then came the Second World War, which obviously changed the situation dramatically, especially after Japan lost its colonies in Southeast Asia and those countries became independent. That is why it's not a coincidence that Bandung was held in Bandung, because the first independent countries were in Asia—India, Indonesia, Vietnam at that time, and China, because of its war of liberation.

So they came together, and for the first time they discussed what was to be done. I think it's interesting because you see their sort of optimism—that now it's a new page. But at the same time, they were realistic enough to know that it wasn't going to be easy to break out of colonialism and build a decent life for their people. That is why I think Bandung is still very relevant when looking at what has happened in the last 70 years. There is no doubt that in the last 70 years, the people of these countries—in probably all cases—are living better than 70 years ago, but there are still big, big issues. One of the issues, ironically, is inequality. Prosperity has increased in these countries, but so has inequality.

So when they came to discuss at Bandung, it's interesting that if you listen to the speeches of Zhou Enlai, Sukarno, Nasser, Nehru, they are not discussing international affairs. They are discussing how to improve the lives of their people who are living in abject poverty. Because one of the big lies of colonialism is that "we have come to civilize you, we have come to give you a better life, we have come to give you our values. We want you to be like us, but not equal to us." That's very important. "We are superior, you are inferior." So this is the contradiction of colonialism: to bring you in touch with a higher civilization, to make you yearn for it, but you are not allowed to benefit equally from it, because then the logic of colonialism breaks down and you start saying, "Listen, the resources that we have here—why should you take them?"

Why should you give us only 10% of what our resources are? Why shouldn't it be more equal? Why shouldn't we be sovereign rulers of our own resources? So in Bandung, you see a wave forward towards independence, towards sovereignty, towards economic development. But then the empires started pushing back. And after Bandung, we have a series of coups d'état, assassinations, to make sure that the route that started being traced in Bandung would not happen. And you have a number

of coups afterward where the leaders were removed, some of them even assassinated, because their crime was that they wanted a better life for their people. That's all.

## **#M2**

And this movement to get rid of leaders who have a national agenda of making sure that their nations get some benefit out of this free trade, which is, of course, then the other shackle—one shackle being military, like being constantly under threat. And we've got a lot—it's also South American countries, right? With Chile and then the dictatorship of Pinochet. We have Indonesia itself, which got couped, and then Sukarno was replaced with an anti-communist supporter of the United States. We have them all over the place. And the latest version of that was probably the ouster of Muammar Gaddafi. We have, of course, the toppling of Saddam Hussein and replacing those. Even today, Iraq is still being—Iraq's oil is still controlled by the United States.

After 20 years, the U.S. has that money in an account, and if it feels like it, it gives the Iraqi government access to a little bit of that money—if it feels like it. The direct levels of control are still insane. But something that has changed in the last 70 years is that today, the global share of GDP of the Non-Aligned Movement, especially when it was at its largest, is actually much higher than the GDP even of the G7, right? The global balance of economic power has completely shifted. What does this do to the world now, as you see it, in terms of what these states can do? And, you know, the Non-Aligned Movement is not very active anymore, but now we have the BRICS. And in a sense, we have a similar movement around the BRICS to what used to be the NAM movement. Can you maybe speak to that a little bit?

## **#M3**

Now, I think this is very important, Pascal, because one of the points also that Sukarno made in 1955 was: we do not have the atom bomb, we do not have a strong military, but we have a strong moral force. They believed—I mean, it's lovely to listen to those speeches—but they had the illusion that when you had two superpowers confronting each other, the Soviet Union and the United States, and they didn't want to join either one or the other because they said, "We have just gotten liberated from one form of domination. We don't want to go to another domination." Apart from the fact that the people at Bandung—the different countries at Bandung—some of them were communists, some of them were anti-communists, some were monarchists, some were democracies.

So it was very much, in fact, their slogan was "unity in diversity." And that is why they developed the concept and the doctrine of non-interference in each other's affairs and peaceful coexistence: that I will allow you to be yourself, even if you are very different from me. But do not interfere in my affairs, and I will not interfere in your life. But they believed that, at least if they didn't have economic development—their share of GDP was very, very low. We're talking about countries where

the rate of poverty was 80%, 85%. Whereas today, even if you look at India—apart, obviously, from China, where the rate of poverty is considered to be 0.1%, and at that time it was over 60%—India, which today by its own measurement has a poverty rate of 5%, whereas then it was 85%.

So that has moved, has definitely moved forward. So they believed that they could speak morally from the high moral ground and tell the other countries, "Let us develop." It didn't happen like that. Unfortunately, hard power prevailed, and that is why there were these series of coups. We did not mention Iran with Mossadegh, who already, way back in the '50s, started on the path to parliamentary democracy, to human rights, because let us also keep this in mind: at Bandung, human rights was the first principle that they mentioned. Human rights was the first principle that they mentioned because they—and I agree with that position—and today we still have a big deficit when it comes to describing democracy not as a periodic exercise in voting.

That is a very, very, very reduced definition of what democracy is about. If it's simply voting every four years or five years, that is a very reduced idea of democracy. Democracy should be political, yes, but also social and economic. You know, you need to be, as the Charter of the United Nations says, free from fear and free from want. So you need to be free and fed, not unfree and fed, or unfed and free. You know, free and fed. And Bandung makes that point. So today, the fact that those countries have overtaken—basically, they've overtaken Europe and the United States when you put them together in terms of their economic development, but even their technological development. And also, militarily, they cannot be pushed around quite easily.

And this is also, I think, the hypocrisy when it comes to nuclear deterrence. I am completely, completely in favor of denuclearizing the world and, as much as possible, getting rid of nuclear armaments. But unfortunately, the message that the West has passed to these countries through how it has behaved is: if you have a nuclear deterrent, we will not attack you. So, do not have any nuclear deterrent. So what happened with Gaddafi? When Gaddafi did not press, like North Korea, to have a nuclear deterrent and gave up on it and told the West, "Come in, make sure, verify that we are not going to develop chemical weapons, we're not going to develop nuclear weapons," then they got rid of it in 2011. And the country is still in a terrible state. You know, one of the wealthiest countries in the Mediterranean.

And people are still living in very difficult, very difficult conditions. And there again, they removed Gaddafi not for the sake of the Libyan people, because the minute they removed him, they lost interest in what happened to the Libyan people. And that could also have been prevented. I remember four years ago having a chat with Romano Prodi, the former European Commission president, in Bologna. And he was telling me that on the eve of the NATO attacks on Libya, the tribal leaders of Libya got in touch with him and told him, "Please talk to the NATO people. Talk to your prime minister in Italy. Talk to the British prime minister and tell them we will manage to negotiate a good outcome with Gaddafi to stop the repression, to stop the attacks on the civilian population."



We will do it. But we need to make sure that we are not attacked. And Prodi got the answer: no, we're not interested. We're going to attack Libya. We're going to attack Gaddafi. We're going to remove Gaddafi. For them, the most important thing is that countries that participated in Bandung and those who became sovereign countries—if you cannot control them, destroy them. I mean, it is as cynical as that. Make them dysfunctional. And we don't care whether the countries remain, you know, failed states, whether they are in a state of civil war, whether people, you know, cannot live better than before, cannot live a decent life. They don't care. It still falls as part of the imperial mindset that you spoke about before, Pascal.

## **#M2**

But, you know, what strikes me is that what enabled 2011 was the fact that there was a UN Security Council resolution that allowed for a no-fly zone, that allowed for NATO to implement a no-fly zone. And this happened because Russia and China abstained. I think they abstained; they didn't vote in favor.

## **#M3**

No, no, abstained. They abstained. They abstained under the impression that it would be a very controlled operation. And then you just have to read a book that was published during COVID by Ian Martin, who was the UN's top person in Libya. And he said the mandate was completely broken, and they just went in and did whatever they wanted, including killing parts of the civilian population and destroying the civilian infrastructure of Libya, which was not in the mandate of the United Nations. That was a very restricted mandate.

## **#M2**

Yeah, and the story you just told me, that just means it was premeditated. This was not just, "Oh, unfortunately, it happened like that." No, no, no. And all the others were informed: "No, this is what we're going to do. We're going to bomb, we're going to get rid of Gaddafi, and he will go." And so this was a plan from the UN.

## **#M3**

Yes, yes. But recently, I heard something very shocking from American sources: part of the military operation was also conducted by young Norwegian pilots who were sent to bomb Libya as an exercise, as exercises. So they were actually saying, you know, "We really enjoyed bombing Libya because it was a real, a real live-fire exercise. It wasn't just training, you know, pretending that we are attacking somewhere." I mean, it is frightening because this is, again, part of the colonial mindset—you dehumanize the Libyans, or the Africans, or the Haitians, or whoever.

## **#M2**

Palestinians.

## **#M3**

Iraqis, Palestinians—they are not people. So if you bomb them, if you kill them, you know... We are superior.

## **#M2**

This raises the question for me—not only the hypocrisy of it all, like yelling about human rights while bombing people, that's one part—but it also raises the question: how is the rest of the world supposed to deal with Europe and North America if we now understand, not just through the Gaza genocide (I think the Gaza genocide is just the latest manifestation of that colonial mindset and disdain for everybody else), but we have all the other examples? We have Libya, we have Iraq, we have Syria, and so on and so forth. There are so many. With all this knowledge of how the West acts, how is everybody else—like the new BRICS movement, and everyone else—supposed to deal with Europe and North America if you know you cannot trust them? What would be your advice on how to deal with the Europeans and the Americans?

## **#M3**

In fact, I think what is happening now is—see how China responds. This is very interesting. China was very patient. I wanted to mention something to you about China, which is not very well known, but which I think is very interesting. So again, jump back about 500 years, when Columbus left to, quote-unquote, "discover" the new lands. They didn't need to be discovered—they were there. I mean, the arrogance of saying that you're discovering countries. But he went there, and the Europeans went to these countries with the idea of empire and conquest. It's interesting to compare this to the Chinese explorer Zheng He, 80 years before Columbus, going to India, going to Africa—not to conquer, but for trade and diplomacy.

So there is something in the civilization of the West which makes it feel superior, and makes it want to translate that superiority into domination and using military force to make you do what it wants. Whereas from the Chinese civilization, it was: we've come here to trade, we want to do business. I think, on the whole, that is still the difference between the different civilizations. Now, see how China reacted to Trump about the tariffs: "We will not let you bully us." China, I think, has also learned from how Europe and the United States have treated Russia in terms of NATO enlargement and in terms of what happens with the Russian Ukrainians and other minorities within Ukraine. They gave their word that they would not expand NATO. They gave their word that the minority rights of the Russian Ukrainians within Ukraine would be safeguarded through the agreement in Minsk.

All those promises were broken. So from the point of view of China, they know that they cannot take Europe and the United States seriously. That is why they have reacted very fiercely regarding Taiwan and regarding the tariffs. They make sure to say, "Listen, we will not be duped by you because we cannot trust you. You give your word that you're going to treat us as equals, but we know that you don't." Reagan, when he was dealing with the Soviet Union regarding nuclear missiles, used to say that the Russians have a proverb—which, unfortunately, they have not exercised themselves when dealing with Europe and America: "Trust, but verify. Trust, but verify." The Chinese do it. They will not trust blindly. And I think now the rest of the world is learning that you cannot trust America and you cannot trust Europe.

## **#M2**

No, I think trusting Europe and trusting America would be the greatest mistake that will land you in the next wars. But we have a moment, actually, just to be a little bit positive here: in the 1980s, the Soviet Union and the United States were able to create very important missile treaties, and they were built around verification mechanisms. So they worked well for as long as the balance was kept. So you can build verification methods, of course.

## **#M3**

No, no, this is not inevitable. I think it's very important that whatever the historical situation is, it doesn't mean that it has to be like this, even when it comes to Europe and the relationship with Russia. Let's go back. I mean, this is 2025. Not only should we be celebrating Bandung and seeing what path has been walked and what lies ahead, but look at the CSCE in Helsinki. I mean, you had people from both sides of the political divide who said, "Listen, yes, we do not agree on what political, economic, and social system we should have. There's no need to be at war with each other. There's no need to be so full of blind hatred towards each other that we cannot trade with each other."

We can have cultural cooperation, you know, and we should look after each other's security. That is why the CSCE was born. That is why the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was born—on the basis of collective security: that I will care about my security without threatening yours. And those were human beings. When we talk about people like Brandt, Schmidt, Kekkonen, Palme—those were human beings. But if you compare them to today's leadership, it's a business. I mean, Europe is much better than this. Europe can do much better than this.

## **#M2**

You know, that's why in a lot of my talks I hear more and more the expression that Europe is being ruled by a kakistocracy—just by the worst, right? But it really begs the question: how does Europe get back to better leadership and humanistic leadership? And how does everybody else guard themselves against these empty promises? Because Europe is full of empty promises and doesn't live

up to even one if push comes to shove. So, in order to build a realistic, stable security environment, what we need is also the weight and the possibility of the Non-Aligned Movement, of BRICS, of other states—non-European states—to demand verifiable agreements. And if they're not being kept, then we need mechanisms, right?

And not just mechanisms, because we have some of them. You know, the World Trade Organization is smart because it has trade dispute resolution mechanisms, right? Unfortunately, the current mechanism is checkmated by the United States because it doesn't appoint people to the appellate body. But we would need that kind of mechanism in order for countries outside of Europe to be able to push the Europeans and push the Americans and demand that they live up to their promises, don't we?

### **#M3**

Yes, I think the way America and Europe have overstretched themselves in the last few years has contributed to the rest of the world saying, "We have to look after our own affairs." And that is why BRICS has come into being. Because if, for example, you take the policy of sanctions or the policy of using the institutions that were born after the Second World War as instruments of coercion, as instruments of domination—"We will not let you use the banking system. We will not let you use... you know, we will punish you. If we cannot do it militarily, we'll do it economically. We'll do it commercially."

And that is why now the rest of the world is saying, "We will look after our own affairs." So, for example, if you look at the relationships between Europe and Africa, Russia and Africa, China and Africa, Turkey and Africa, they say, "If you don't want to look after us and treat us as equals, and let us develop ourselves, we'll go to China. We'll bring in Russia. We'll work with Turkey." And this is what is happening. So the rest of the world has been educated enough to say, "We need to look after our own affairs, because unfortunately, when we do things with the United States and with Europe, they look after their own interests and not after ours."

Now, does it mean that the Chinese, the Russians, the Turks are angels—holy and sacred—and do not look after their own interests? Of course, they look after their interests, but at least they have the decency to sit down with these countries and say, "Listen, what can we do together?" And I repeat, Europe can do the same. Is it ready to do the same? I admire a lot, Pascal, Enrico Mattei, the Italian entrepreneur in the '50s and early '60s, because unfortunately he died in a plane crash, and it's not clear whether he died in a plane crash by coincidence or whether it was actually managed. He was European. He was Christian. He was somebody who was a business person.

So he was part of the mainstream of what we call European values. Because when today they talk about European values, I don't know exactly what they mean by that. But he showed the best. Why? Because he used to go to the Middle East, he used to go to North Africa, he used to go to Asia and tell them, "Listen, the oil that you have in your land belongs to you. Let us develop it together. Let's

have partnership agreements, 50-50. Let us have a profit-sharing agreement where, because the oil is yours and the know-how is ours, we'll give you 75% of the profit." That was the model. So that was possible. This was already being done in the '50s.

But what happened? The UK, the US, Holland, and France were very angry at him because they told him, "No, no, you're disrupting our model for, you know, BP, Shell. No, no, this is not the way to do things. Why should you treat these people as equals and, you know, have agreements of partnership if this is..." So if Europe wants to come out of the abysmal situation it is in now, it has to learn a bit of humility and treat these countries decently as partners. Now, I thought that one of the most important European values is equality—that I will treat you as equal. You know, be as different as you like from me, but let's treat each other as equals.

## **#M2**

Europe is so good at talking about this. They use such nice words, and then they create people like—what was his name? Not Parolo. The garden, the jungle, you know. Oh, yes, yes, Borrell. The very people who stand in front of you and claim human rights above everything. But unfortunately, Israel needs to kill all the Palestinians because that's only fair. I mean, they do that in the same breath. And they do not recognize that they contradict even themselves. It's basic logic—not just a moral failing, but a basic logic failing. And I'm at the end of my wits as to how to deal with that.

## **#M3**

But there are deep historical roots for that. Because if we go back to the 15th century, when the Pope told the Portuguese and the Spanish, "You go to these countries"—it was about Latin America—"as they are inhabited by non-Christians, you can do whatever you like with those people. You can even kill them, especially if they don't convert to Christianity." I mean, imagine Jesus Christ talking about brotherhood and we're all— we're all... I would have been shocked, having the cross used with the sword to enslave people. But this is it. The Pope at that time, who was a Spanish Aragonese, came out with the famous Doctrine of Discovery: if you go to these non-Christian, barbaric lands, you destroy them because they are not Christians. They are not European.

That has come down for 500 years. It is interesting, Pascal, that it was only Pope Francis, who came from that continent, who actually withdrew this doctrine. Previous popes had been asked by Indigenous people from all continents, going to the Vatican to tell John Paul II, to tell Pope Benedict, "Remove that doctrine of the 15th century. Why are you still having it?" You know, it was Pope Francis who—yes—who withdrew it. So, you know, you have the emergence of BRICS, militarily, economically, technologically overtaking the collective West. Fortunately, you also have it in the Catholic Church, where the new energies are coming from what Pope Francis used to call the peripheries—the peripheries who do not allow the center to dominate them as they used to before.

## **#M2**

The frustrating thing is that if you listen to the Europeans and the Americans, the Americans will tell you, "We were never colonial and never imperial. We freed ourselves from imperialism," right? And the Europeans will tell you, "Oh, that used to be the case, but we stopped a long time ago. Colonialism is like feudalism—it stopped a long time ago." The Europeans have no concept of just how much they are still colonial to the rest of the world. And you keep pointing out how Europe just completely forgets that Africa, as a continent, exists right at its borders. And that's just one of the symptoms of this amnesia. It's not amnesia; it is blindness, to me. Yes, yes.

### **#M3**

And how can the United States say it is not an empire when it has 700 to 800 military bases all around the world? While they were meeting in Bandung in the '50s, America was already expanding its military and naval bases into Southeast Asia. So while the leaders over there were talking about the importance of not belonging to military alliances and not letting their countries be used as naval bases against each other, America was going ahead and extending, obviously, its supremacy after the Second World War, when all the other countries were destroyed, to impose itself on the rest of the world. And today, it has a network of 800 naval and military bases around the world, which is the empire. You know, it is an empire. It's in decline, but there's still quite a lot of life in it.

### **#M2**

And this is where I believe a lot of the colonized parts of the world can learn a lot from Malta, because Malta made the very intelligent choice to throw away the last empire and replace it with neutrality. Don't replace it with another one. Replace it with a policy of self-reliance and actually taking yourself out of this grand game. Everest, if people want to read more from you, where should they go?

### **#M3**

Well, I'm still a bit old-fashioned, Pascal. I still have a website. I publish mainly locally, but I do publish articles in English, obviously. I have a website, which I have shared with you.

### **#M2**

I'll put the website in the description below. And Everest Bartolo, thank you very much for your time today.

### **#M3**

Thank you. Thank you, Pascal.