

Current Concerns

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Look to China for wisdom on dealing with Russia

by Kishore Mahbubani*

Niall Ferguson is half-right. There has been a geopolitical taper but not of the kind he meant. Instead, there has been a tapering of western geopolitical wisdom.

Has anyone noticed the string of western geopolitical failures over a decade? Despite massive military and financial interventions, Iraq and Afghanistan are failing. Three years ago the US announced: "For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President *Assad* to step aside." He remains in office. And now the west is on the verge of handing China a geopolitical gift by alienating Russia.

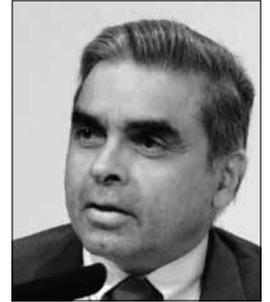
What explains these failures? It is surprisingly simple. After two centuries of success, the region's leaders assume their role is to sustain the expansion of western power. Not one of them has wrapped their heads around the new undeniable reality: the real challenge of the west is to manage decline.

A simple statement by *Barack Obama* captures this flawed mindset. The US

president announced that Russia was on "the wrong side of history", implying that the west was on the right side of history. But is this so? Over the next few decades, some trends will prove irreversible. The western share of global population, economic weight and, inevitably, political and military power are going to decline. The recent setbacks in emerging markets have given rise to wishful thinking that the west is back. Yes, maybe for a year or two. But the logic of long-term trends of decline will continue after this blip.

So how should the west manage its decline? Three simple steps could make a big difference. First, end the ideological crusade of promoting democracy. Indeed, the Ukraine fiasco is a direct result of the west encouraging street protests instead of encouraging political compromise between the two camps. This reckless geopolitical behaviour was a direct result of the belief – to borrow the phrase used by Soviet leader *Nikita Khrushchev* – that "history

is on our side". Actually, as the realist American secretary of state *Henry Kissinger* wisely and subtly pointed out recently, it would be unwise to ignore vital Russian interests in Ukraine.



Kishore Mahbubani
(picture Wikipedia)

Will democracy stop expanding if the west stops pushing it? Of course not. It will emerge organically and, as a result, be naturally sustainable. Just look at Indonesia, the world's most populous Islamic country. In 1999 it was almost a failed state. Fifteen years later it is on the verge of electing *Joko Widodo*, widely known as *Jokowi*, who is one of the most competent

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The fight for the Crimea as a problem of constitutional and international law

by Professor Dr Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider, Berlin



Karl Albrecht
Schachtschneider
(picture ma)

In the fight for the Crimea, the West accuses Russia and its President *Vladimir Putin* of having violated international law by deploying soldiers, openly or covertly. Even the German Chancellor said that Russia had annexed the Crimea. This is unconvincing. She is ill-advised. The allegations appear to be a justification or at least a legitimization for the sanctions, if not the "indirect" aggression

of the Western alliances, i.e. NATO and the European Union (EU), against the *Commonwealth of Independent States* (CIS), especially against the Russian Federation. The public knows only a distorted representation of the facts. I, myself am as well dependent on the publicly available information. But those who comment the conflict must try to distinguish facts from propaganda about the events in Ukraine that is spread by most German media. In order to do so, the assessment of interests and the knowledge of the legal situation may be helpful.

NATO wants to expand eastward up to the borders of Russia

NATO, headed by the United States of America (USA), wants to expand eastward up to the borders of Russia. This is the central goal behind the steady expansion of the EU, the economic and political basis of the

European part of NATO. The EU as a union of states – if not a federal state, dominated by a few leaders – can be more easily obliged by the USA and their services to exercise a shared policy than many individual states. The fact that not all EU member states are members of NATO, as is the case with Austria, Sweden and Finland, does not make any difference, particularly due to their fragile, if not obsolete neutrality. If Ukraine belonged to NATO, a goal the US has sought and will probably continue to strive for, it will become or in any case be able to become a site of weapons directed against Russia and the CIS. The revolution in Ukraine has already succeeded in breaking the country out of the CIS. That contradicts the security interests of the Russian Federation and the CIS. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia con-

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leaders in the world. How did this happen? Benign western neglect is one answer. Mr Obama let down Indonesia, his childhood home, by calling off his visit three times. Yet the country continued to move in a positive direction.

Second, embrace Russia and do so meaningfully. The western media have unleashed a cascade of abuse on President *Vladimir Putin* and Russia. Yet few have pointed out that the west painted Mr Putin into a corner and gave him no way out. Western leaders repeatedly assured Soviet leader *Mikhail Gorbachev* that NATO would not expand into the east. These assurances were violated. Today, can any Russian leader believe any western assurance that no NATO naval base will be set up in Crimea if Russia withdraws?

Unwise western expansion of NATO has not enhanced western security. It has only alienated Russia. Yet when the west finally wakes up to deal with a rising China, Russia would provide just the sort of geopolitical heft needed to balance Beijing's power. Today, in direct violation of its own long-term geopolitical interests, the west is driving Russia towards China. It cannot stop itself imposing sanctions on Russia. This compulsion to act against its own interests perfectly illustrates declining western geopolitical wisdom.

It is not too late to compromise. But the west will have to get off its moral high horse. One simple observation might help it do so. Has anyone in the region noticed that few back its crusade in Ukraine? Indeed, can anyone name a major non-western country that supports it? The world's largest democracy is India. The Indians, like many in the rest of the world, look to the west with incredulity and ask how it could be so destructive of its own interests.

Third, the west should study and learn from China. Beijing has pulled off a near geopolitical miracle by emerging as the number two power without shaking the world order. How did it achieve this? It practiced strategic restraint. Despite a few near mishaps in the South China Sea, East China Sea and at the Indian border, China has remained at peace. More miraculously, it has quietly defused one of the world's biggest flashpoints, the Taiwan Straits.

Ironically, it is declining powers, not expanding powers that have a greater need to exercise strategic restraint. If the west could emulate China's strategic restraint, it might finally end its decade of geopolitical failures.

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ceded to the expansion of NATO to the East, and even the membership of a united Germany in NATO. That meant a change in world politics. The West did not keep its promise not to enlarge NATO further east, which was, however, not contractually guaranteed.

Russia cannot do without the Crimea

Ukraine was part of Russia and the Soviet Union. As a member of the CIS it continued to be under Russia's influence, but it increasingly turned toward the West and now wants to or is to become an EU member as soon as possible. The Crimea is in a special situation. A large majority of its people have voted for secession from Ukraine and for inclusion into the Russian Federation. This was accepted. Russia could and cannot do without the Crimea for historical and even more so for geo-strategic and military reasons. The hereditary port of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, Sevastopol, belongs to the Crimea. The Black Sea is Russia's access to the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus. Everyone knows that Russia cannot hand control of Crimea over, if it wants to be a superpower and remain one. That is why Russia tried to secure its rights to use this port for the coming decades by contract, apparently a vague basis of Russia's existential interests. The West and the Ukraine do not accept these interests and the situation created by the inclusion of the Crimea into the Russian Federation. Ukraine, however, does not have the ability to change the new situation. The West's critique does not raise the result of the referendum to question. A military intervention would not only violate international law, but would mean the end of world peace and the risk of destroying large parts of Europe. For the sake of further development the West intends to fix positions by means of its criticism and its pin-pricks called sanctions.

The West promoted the Ukraine coup

The West supported, if not conducted the coup in Ukraine. These were serious violations of the Ukraine's internal and external sovereignty. It is obvious that the "Maidan" did not basically happen by the Ukraine citizens' own power and drive. The West used the "well-proven" method of political turnover, i.e. the allegedly somehow dyed, "revolution", a method used in a similar way by other powers as well, especially by the Soviet Union in earlier times. and still in use today. The ethnic differences between Russians and Ukrainians but also the apparently corrupt administrative system was useful for overthrow. There is little doubt that the West intervened "subversively", as it is named in international law, in order to have a convenient government that is willing to lead Ukraine into the EU

and eventually also into NATO. The failed mission of the Foreign Ministers of France, Poland and Germany, which was to attain a peaceful overthrow of the elected president of Ukraine as well as the election of a new president and the return to the 2004 Constitution, was in any case incompatible with the existing Constitution of Ukraine and the country's sovereignty; and this was certainly true for the breach of this agreement of 21 February 2014 by the insurgent forces and their violent seizure of power. The separation of the country was reckoned with, even by the Western mediators.

The West's policy for Ukraine is a threat for Russia

The West's policy for Ukraine is a threat for Russia, despite all Ukrainian sovereignty. The West has not at all respected the sovereignty of Ukraine. The actions of Russia to protect its lawful naval base were required by its existential interests against the increasingly aggressive West. They were proportionate and have served and are still serving the Russian Federation's defense, but also the Russian citizens and the ethnic Russian Ukrainians. They do not represent an offense against international law, which is certainly true for an annexation of the Crimea, as well. They are justified by the law of self-defense, which in any case includes the preventive self-defense, if it uses mild means and is desired by the inhabitants of the protected area since they obviously want to join the state, which supports their secession. The cry for help of the elected, though deposed President of Ukraine and the Crimea's declared will to secede, supported by the great majority of its population, is of substantial significance with regard to international law. It is of even greater significance that the transitional government of Ukraine, whose leadership has no legality in itself, was supported by the subversive Parliament of Ukraine and the West and declared the secession referendum in Crimea illegal, wanted to stop it, if necessary by force (mobilization) and does not accept it. This strengthens the legality of Russian protective efforts for an undisturbed referendum.

States are entitled to protect their citizens

According to the prevailing view of international law experts, states are entitled to protect their citizens from threats to life and limb by means of limited intervention, if necessary by force. This right is constantly practiced and continues to be recognized by customary law within the limits of proportionality. The forces that carried out the revolution in Ukraine, but also the violent perpetrators who murdered on the Maidan, undoubtedly represented a threat to Russians in the Crimea and all inhabitants of the

Source: *The Financial Times* of 21 March 2014

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Mrs Merkel, say no to a war against Russia!

by Willy Wimmer, former Parliamentary Secretary of State in the German Ministry of Defense



Willy Wimmer
(picture ma)

There are a bad mood and tension in the air. When was the last time that a German chancellor has been invited to Washington under such humiliating circumstances and had to obey the invitation by the American president? When the German Chancellor is to meet US President *Obama* in Washington on 2 May 2014, interested and hence attentive people will ask themselves if this visit addresses the issue to what extent the German Chancellor will say in Washington what the NSA surveillance troops and other US cohorts have previously recorded and reported. These days, many historical comparisons are put forward. We may however ask whether a similar situation has occurred before in recent history and how such circumstances are commonly referred to. It takes a lot of self-denial for the German chancellor to look into the eyes of the President who is responsible for the surveillance program.

For the German people, whose welfare the Chancellor has taken an oath on, there is more at stake than media eyeing for facial expressions at the meeting. It is the question of our national dignity

and whether, under these circumstances, a visit that deserves its name should be made at all. *Konrad Adenauer*, the Rhenish Fox, has ventured under incomparably more difficult circumstances to step on the carpet that the High Commissioners wanted to deny him. Today things are different, but the presumption is likely to produce an irreparable rift in relations between the United States and Germany – at a time that could not afford such situation.

The extent of astonishment at our transatlantic partner – commonly designated as an ally – has already augmented exorbitantly during his recent visit to Europe. According to President *Obama* the inclusion of the Crimea into the Russian Federation is worse than the war waged by the US and especially by England, that vulgar war of aggression against Iraq, which had claimed hundreds of thousands of deaths. How should we judge these words of someone who has lost sight of any proportion? Should we not advise him to remove the bar from his own eyes before he thinks that he sees a chip in the Russians eyes? But what else than bars in the western eye have been the wars of aggression violating international law that started with the war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. If in the last 15 years, more and more emphasis has been placed on a coalition of the willing in order to wage wars violating international law, with *Tony Blair* as a spearhead, it is now time for a West-

ern alliance of the unwilling, as the British House has provided impressive evidence.

It can already be said by now that on her next visit to Washington the German Chancellor, once she presents her concerns, will be given a presentation of the core area of the willing. These are the States of the Echelon Alliance, which form the core of Anglo-Saxon global dominance, and which do not grab each other by the throat to the same extent as they are to alleged partners and to the actual or adjudged enemies. “No spy – only for New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, Canada and the US.” However, the peoples of these countries do not benefit because they are spied out across borders. Talking about a community of values under these circumstances can only cause mental sickness and will make things no better. Perhaps those in charge in Washington should raise the question, what they actually want to find on the west end of the transatlantic counter coast: Affiliated communities and partnerships or colonial movement options? The German Chancellor should wait until Washington has made up its mind in that matter and only then pay a visit.

This decision is also paramount for the NATO summit in September 2014. After the vote for independence in and for Scotland, another part of the British Isles is made to understand what occupation is about. Wales stands for all of us. •
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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Crimea, who wanted to become Russians again by the referendum. The President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, referred to this duty of protection. Western countries constantly pretend to practice this duty, often based on faked prerequisites.

Budapest Memorandum not affected

The *Budapest Memorandum* of 1994, in which the United States, Russia and Great Britain promised Ukraine to respect the sovereignty and the existing borders as well as its political and economic independence in return for their renouncing nuclear weapons, and in which they promised to induce the UN Security Council’s immediate measures in case of a nuclear attack on the country, is not affected by the secession of the Crimea and its inclusion in the Russian

Federation, let alone violated. The right to self-determination of the Crimean citizens is not repealed by this Memorandum. It can also not be repealed by international treaties, because it is the freedom right of the citizens which is inherent to the people and is not at the politicians’ disposal.

In the categories of a metropolitan policy of the world powers Russia has parried with mild means an intrusion of the US in its traditional sphere of influence, though only limited, namely by the incorporation of Crimea into the EU and later on into NATO. EU’s reckless enlargement policy and the very accurately designed geo-strategy of the United States have provoked a threat of war. The US act on the assumption of military superiority and without regard to the risk for the central and western parts of Europe, especially Germany, threatened by a nuclear power. The EU applies itself to Atlantic subordination with an incomprehensible naivety of its political

class. One thinks of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, in which *John F. Kennedy* inhibited the stationing of Soviet missiles in Cuba with a military naval blockade. No one in the West has ever criticized this inhibition as a violation of international law. In any case, Germany should strive for the best possible relationship with Russia for geo-strategic, economic and, above all, for historical reasons.

Only citizens are the sovereign

When it comes to the policy of the Crimeans to make themselves independent from Ukraine and to become a member of the Russian Federation, the core of Western criticism is the doctrine that the secession of a part of a state was “illegal”. The conclusion that it was illegal under international law, that Russia supported the Crimea in

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its policy of independence, is mostly based on this doctrine.

The prohibition of secession is the predominant opinion among all those German constitutional law experts who have forgotten about freedom and it is the opinion which German political leaders have adopted. This doctrine is wrong. It presents the state as an untouchable political entity, which may be and must be maintained by any means of the state, even by intervention of other states. The history of states up to the present developments contradicts this state doctrine.

Not the states are sovereign, as the German constitutional positivism of the 19th century taught and practiced and as it is still predominantly maintained with disastrous consequences, but the people as citizens. The states are organizations of the citizenry, through which they try to realize their common good. Central figures of politics are the people whose fundamental right is their political freedom, the core of their dignity. The right to self-determination of peoples emerges from there. It is, as *Rousseau* said, the *Contract Social* that forms a nation. New peoples can evolve, bigger ones by the formation of a state, also federal states, and smaller ones by parts of peoples separating into new states. This is part of the peoples' right to self-determination, which is the core of the *Charter of the United Nations*. This law protects the freedom of the people, not specifically the existence of states.

Founding of a state is an act of freedom

Not even a constitutional law, such as the one in Ukraine that constitutes a unitary state and does not regulate a secession or even provide for it may prohibit the secession of a part of the people. The founding of a state is an act of freedom and thus an act of sovereignty of the people who live together. It is not the states that are sovereign, but the people. States contribute to the realization of freedom, both to the outside and to the inside. There are no eternal states, and there is no right of states and certainly not a right of state authorities to assert their existence against the people and the citizens, or against the law, let alone by force of arms. Rather, there is a duty of the people to live together under the rule of law and to secure the lawfulness by an organization, the state, i.e. the right to a civil constitution. The Free State of Bavaria is also authorized to secede from the Federal Republic of Germany, at least in a situation of existential threat, and either to live as a single state or to unite with the Swiss Confederation and even Austria in a federal state.

Constitutional positivism has dogmatized the state as a legal entity like a human being, if not deified with *Hegel*. Its existence was considered untouchable. This is hardly compatible with the law, confirmed by Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, with which man is born. The state is nothing more than an organization of persons and citizens, by whose means they realize their common weal, and this is above all their legal system. People have the freedom to create an organization called state, which suits their interests best, provided that it does no harm to other people, i.e. that it realizes the right best. However, you live together with other people, many people. That is why in order to shape the common life everyone has to unite with the people that belong together in a special way. The territorial unit must be the basic principle. It is for this unit that peace must be safeguarded. Not violence can lawfully establish and maintain states, but only the morality of the people, their practical reason. However, this reason is mandatory. Since we cannot expect the consensus of all, the majority rule prevails. The liberal logic is the self-determination not of a nation's people but of the people who live together and want to live together in a certain area. Hence, people can always constitute anew; because they are communities of citizens, citizenhoods.

The Crimea has the right to go its own way – the referendum is the right procedure

Such policies must of course satisfy the legal principle. It dictates that a peaceful and free living together of people is ensured internally and also externally. For instance, a special, but cohering area must pursue secession because no two states can exert competitive state authority in the same area. The special feature may result from particular causes, such as religious, ethnic, historical, linguistic, or economic causes. A substantial majority of the separating region must vote for secession, lest a not sufficiently relevant part of concerned citizens can force the other one into an unwanted statehood. On the other hand, there is no right of the minority to force the majority into a state in which the majority does not or no longer want to live. This is a question of self-determination, of freedom. The dissenting minority shall have the right either to remain in the separated state or leave it, the *ius emigrandi*, to continue to live together with the citizens who remain in the rest of the state. Due to the right to self-determination of nations the old state is obliged to handle the secession process peacefully. It may not seek to stop it, certainly not by force of arms. A referendum of the citizens of the affected part of a state is indispensable.

It is self-evident that such a far-reaching process leads to tensions and disagree-

ments, especially if it is connected with existential major political or geopolitical interests, including those of third states.

The Crimea, an autonomous republic which is mainly inhabited by ethnic Russians and has been Russian for centuries, had and has every right to follow its own path and to secede from the Ukraine. In 1954, the Ukrainian *Nikita Khrushchev* allocated the Crimea to the Ukraine assuming that the Soviet Union was going to exist eternally. In 1993, the Russian parliament declared Sevastopol a Russian city on foreign territory, like a kind of enclave. The agreements between Russia and Ukraine in 1997 and 2010 have changed the status, not in order to diminish the Russian influence. It was only the new policy of Ukraine under Western influence that tried to make Sevastopol the territory of the Ukraine in full Ukrainian sovereignty.

The referendum is the right procedure to determine the status of Crimea. The free formation of will of the Crimean citizens must be guaranteed. There has been no doubt about that so far. The legality of the referendum does not depend in any way on the observation of the OSCE as peace-making as it might be.

The secession of the Crimea ensures peace in the region

The secession of the Crimea ensures peace in the region, if Ukraine turns to the West and seeks membership in the EU whose contract regulations include the common security and defense policy, regardless of the NATO membership. Each EU member state is involved in this defense community, regardless of whether it calls itself neutral or not.

Economic sanctions against the Russian Federation would not only be unjustified, because the assistance of Russia during the Crimean secession process was not illegal, such sanctions would also be unproductive. They would not only be detrimental to Russia, but also to the EU and in particular to Germany. In particular, they would damage the hard-won post Cold War mutual trust.

It is ridiculous when Germany warns the Russian bear and even threatens the highly armed nuclear power. Germany should not rely on the protection by the United States, if things get existential. The way to a good cooperation with Russia would be the inclusion of this European country in the European integration. That would change the EU fundamentally just as laid down in the German "Grundgesetz" (Basic Law). The united Europe could be an association of sovereign states, safeguarding the freedom of the citizen through democracy and the rule of law, a *L'Europe des Etats* (Europe of states). A Crimean War would then be virtually impossible. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“The majority of Germans do not wish a confrontation with the Russian Federation”

An open letter to Vladimir Putin

km. On 7 April, *The Wall Street Journal* showed great concern in a longer article: In Germany there is wide-spread resistance against the role the USA intends Germany to play in the aggressive proceedings against Russia. Not only that three former Chancellors – Helmut Schmidt (SPD), Helmut Kohl (CDU) and Gerhard Schröder (SPD), who after all ruled the Federal Republic for 30 years altogether – expressed serious objections to the “Western” policy towards Russia. In an early April poll commissioned by the ARD, the majority of surveyed German citizens were opposed to the expansion of NATO’s engagement in Eastern Europe and advocated keeping more distance to the policy of the United States. In East Germany this was the opinion of even more than 60 percent of respondents, and also the Deputy Chairman of the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag Rolf Mützenich recalled: “The gratitude of many East Germans to Russia is due to Gorbachev’s policy of Perestroika, which allowed the German unification in the first place. The Russians at that time were much more open to the reunion than many Western countries. The people haven’t forgotten that.” The following open letter to the Russian President Vladimir Putin, which was co-signed by approximately 200 well-known people from Germany, takes up such historical experience and proves that many Germans with good arguments are seeking a different and better relationship to Russia than the one dictated by the USA. A Germany pursuing such a path is a blessing for peace in Europe.

Honourable Mr President!

In your speech before the state duma, you requested understanding from the Germans.

We are German citizens, of whom the majority spent the post-war period in West Germany. As the Cold War ended in 1990 and our country was reunited, a breath of relief went through the world, because it seemed that the imminent danger of a military nuclear war had been stopped, a war that would have involved the entire earth. Germany would have been annihilated.

The Soviet Union, among uncountable victims, had made the decisive contribution to Europe’s liberation from National Socialism. In 1990 she was ready as well to support the German re-unification, to dissolve the *Warsaw Treaty* in 1991 and to accept the NATO membership of the whole of Germany. This was not honoured

by the West. Jack Matlock, the former US diplomat in Moscow (1987–1991), had confirmed a few days earlier in the “Washington Post” that President *Bush* agreed to not abuse the generosity of President *Gorbachev*. The expansion of NATO up to the former Soviet republic, the construction of military bases in the former member countries of the Warsaw Treaty and the construction of a rocket defence shield in Eastern Europe while at the same time announcing an ABM Treaty on the part of the US are not just explosive pieces of words. These measures can be understood by us only as the projection of power by the western leading power, which is aimed against the state and economic consolidation of your country after your assignment to the Presidency in the year 2000. In their article “The Rise of US Nuclear Primacy” in *Foreign Affairs*, 2006, *Keir A. Lieber* and *Daryl G. Press* convincingly portrayed that the rocket defence shield was to serve the first nuclear strike by enabling the neutralisation of Russia.

This prehistory in brief depicts the background against which we have been judging the events in the Ukraine since November 2013. In the mean time it has been documented many times that the US indeed exploited the protests of the Ukrainian people for their own purposes. The pattern is well-known from other countries: Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine 2004, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Venezuela ...

The disturbing factors manifested by the *European Union* and the *OSCE* were promptly eliminated with the help of fascistic powers within twelve hours after the agreement upon a peaceful change of power by the foreign ministers of the Weimar Triangle. Whoever stands behind the current putsch government in Kiev, is shown by their partners on the website of the *Open Ukraine Foundation* of the officiating President.

The Soviet Union made, with incomparable victims, the decisive contribution to Europe’s liberation from the Nazis. With respect to the development in Europe since 1990, the dislocation of about 1,000 US military bases world-wide, the US control of the ocean’s straits and the violent criminals of the Maidan bringing danger for the Russian Black Sea navy, we see the seceding of the Krim as a defensive measure with a simultaneous message: so far and no further! The decisive difference between this event and Kosovo’s declaration of independence, is that the latter was prepared by NATO’s air war despite the violation of human rights – and unfortunately

with Germany’s participation – which created the precondition in the first place.

Dear honourable Mr President, you have made a case for a business community from Lisbon to Vladivostok more than four years ago. It would have been the economic foundation for the “Common House of Europe”. The Ukraine could assume the function of an ideal bridge for taking on the future cooperation between your target Eurasian Union and the European Union, not only in cultural aspects. We are convinced that the massive influence of the US aims at shutting off this bridge function. In the EU Commission those powers have succeeded, who support the US politics against Russia. The 14 March 2014 speech of the business leader General Secretary of the European exterior mission, *Pierre Vimont*, is clear in this respect (*EurActiv*: “EU shunned from US-Russia meeting on Ukraine”).

Dear honourable Mr President, we are counting on the fact that your historical speech in the German Parliament in the year 2001 will be the future basis for your negotiations with the EU and Germany. The current polls show that the majority of Germans do not wish for any confrontation with the Russian republic and do understand the Russian reaction to the events in the Ukraine. We do not misjudge the difficulties, to which German politics since being member of the EU and NATO in relation to Russia is exposed, they are also known to you. At the very least, we expect however, that the government will negotiate according to old Roman legal principles *audiatur et altera pars*. This, in conjunction with the neighbourhood politics of the EU with regard to the Ukraine was omitted.

Because of World War II, Russia lost 27 million people of its people.

Even during the Cold War, Russia had not politically exploited the fact against Germany that 27 million of its people were killed in World War II. This inner magnitude alone deserves a higher grade of relationship between our countries. The people of Germany have a fine feeling for this: When the “Group of Soviet military in Germany” bid their farewell with an appearance of its music corps in front of the National Art Museum in Bonn, moving scenes took place between the countless people in the audience and the musicians. In this respect, the actual news coverage and commenting of the German media can only be attributed with one appropriate English adjective: disgusting.

Dear honourable Mr President, with our limited means as simple citizens we

Staged riots in Venezuela following the Ukrainian formula

Yet Latin American countries are closing ranks against the United States

Interview with former Ambassador Walter Suter*, Switzerland



Walter Suter
(picture thk)

thk. Lately our media have repeatedly reported that there is some resistance against the government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela which is expressed in protests directed against his policy. The allegations range from "inability to handle economic policy" to "undemocratic approach". The Western press complies by using these keywords and thus justifies the predominantly violent protests. Seen from the outside, these representations in the media remind of the reports on Kiev and the Maidan, in which especially the opposition receives a hearing. Since much of the media reports hardly corresponds to reality, Current Concerns asked the former Swiss Ambassador

* In 1964 Walter Suter entered the service of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. During his long career as a diplomat, he worked in many countries, especially in Latin America. Venezuela was the country in which he acted as an ambassador to Switzerland until his retirement in 2007. Walter Suter is a member of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland.

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will contribute to stop the intended division of Europe and rather revive the ideas of *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*. We are convinced: if the states and people of the Eurasian double continent manage their affairs peacefully, respectfully, cooperatively, based on justice and without the involvement of outsiders, it would have a positive effect on the rest of the world. We consider you to be an ally in this sense.

For your current and hopefully your next term of office, we wish you strength, stamina, cleverness and skill.

With highest esteem, yours faithfully,
Jochen Scholz,
former Lieutenant Colonel in the
German armed forces

This open letter was signed by around 200 German personalities. The names of the signatories can be found at www.sputnik-travel-berlin.de/Mitteilungen/Offener_brief_2014.pdf

(Translation Current Concerns)

to Venezuela, Walter Suter, who has maintained close ties to Latin America to this day, about the development in Venezuela and the current events.

Current Concerns: The world seems in turmoil. We have riots in various countries, which actually all seem to follow the same formula, whether in Syria or currently in the Ukraine, but also in Latin America, in Venezuela. How do you judge the development there?

*Former Ambassador Walter Suter: The whole development in Venezuela has to do with the death of Hugo Chávez. He was re-elected in October 2012 by a large majority, but died shortly after. According to the Constitution a new president had to be elected. Nicolás Maduro won this election with a narrow lead. The opposition probably had the impression that the new president, who in their view was weakened, could be put under pressure. This resulted in non-acknowledgement of the result, even though it was close. The Electoral Council, who had been working well for many years and who had confirmed the oppositional *Henrique Capriles* in the gubernatorial elections a few months before with the same composition of the election office, was suddenly no longer trustworthy. This is completely irrational, but with the tragic result that young followers of Capriles took to the streets. There was a total of 12 deaths, all of them followers of Maduro, i.e. the Bolivarian government. In our media these facts were not reported. It triggered*

a genuine crisis; although the government got control of it, it is far from being over.

Why not?

The opposition was waiting for the next opportunity to put the weakened president, as they called him, again under pressure. The aim was an impeachment. Again, this is nothing new. The aim of the opposition has always been rather limited: Chávez out, Maduro out. A definite political program did not exist.

That is not a democratic process. After the end of Maduro's term of office regular elections have to be held. This also means that Capriles would have the legal, democratic opportunity to win the elections and then to take over the government.

... It goes even further. The Venezuelan Constitution provides the opportunity to collect signatures for a so-called recall referendum after half of the term of office of all elected officials. That would be possible after 3 years and not only after 6 years when the next election is coming up. If the opposition could collect the necessary signatures, they would have the opportunity of launching new elections after 3 years.

There is another way towards a change of power. At the end of 2015, parliamentary elections are on the agenda. If the opposition presents a reasonable alternative program, they might have a chance to win the election next time. This path is open to them. They

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Alba

thk. Alba is an economic and political alliance of nine Latin American States and states situated in the Carribean. The affiliation is called in Spanish: Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América-Tratado de Comercio de los Pueblos, ALBA-TCP. This alliance represents an alternative to

the free-trade area for the whole of America that was planned by the USA. The member states are: Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, St. Lucia, Dominican Republic, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. There are other countries in the region with observer status.

Celac

Celac is an affiliation of all American and Carribean States except for the USA and Canada. This constitutes an alternative for the OAS which was founded by the USA in 1948, who at that time pursued

the plan to prevent an extension of Soviet influence in Central and Southern America. Recently the member states of Celac have proclaimed their region to be an area dedicated to peace.

"Staged riots in Venezuela ..."

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should prepare for it, and if they win, they will probably participate in the government in a "co-habitation" with the President. Venezuela is a constitutional state, which is well organized and working well. The election results are always reliable, which is confirmed internationally. If the opposition wins the election, the Electoral Council which is functioning as an independent state authority, but also the Supreme Court and the President will acknowledge the result and will not cast doubt on its lawfulness.

Just as you have outlined by now, all democratic elements are present, so the people could obtain a new government in a completely legal way.

We have had resistance against the Chávez government for 15 years. It emerged immediately after his election. The new constitution, the Bolivarian Constitution, his social constitutional state with direct democratic elements, have been battled from the beginning. Those who had previously ruled the country for 40 years did not accept the Constitution. It had been a two-party system; they just alternated all the time, just like in the United States they shared the cake among them. About 20 to 25 percent of the population benefitted and the rest was excluded. The fact that they now had to abandon their privileges, which they had always regarded as legitimate, such as paying no taxes without being punished etc., has certainly caused them some trouble. The greed was so great that they were already fully convinced that they possess everything and Chávez had taken it away from them. The Constitution had a strong aspect of redistribution. Those excluded should also be able to enjoy some of the country's wealth and participate in the political process. This was not accepted by those who had the power at that time. That was the reason for the coup against Chávez and the subsequent oil strike that brought Venezuela a loss of 10-15 billion dollars in 2002. It was a heavy burden for the young government, of course. The democratic options were never accepted, although elections are something completely civic. Resistance beyond democratic legitimacy continues as recent events show.

A few years ago, people made use of the recall referendum, didn't they?

Yes, after the above-mentioned two unsuccessful unconstitutional actions the opposition remembered the constitutional character of the recall referendum in 2004 – although having fought it before – and collected the necessary signatures. The referendum was achieved at a narrow margin; he subsequent ballot was lost, however. The majority of

the people confirmed Chávez in office with 60% of votes. But the opposition did not accept that and withdrew from the 2005 parliamentary elections. Thus, they withdrew from Parliament. Up to this time they had held more than 40 percent of all seats in parliament. This was not just a minority. They could have won a similar number of seats in these elections. Leaving the political sphere just like that is irrational. Probably they wanted to demonstrate that the government was illegal. They withdrew in the face of two major electoral observer missions, namely those of the EU and the OAS. I was there at the time. The opposition assured the President of the EU Election Observation Mission they would take part in the election; three days later they withdrew. They have actually lied to the Mission. That is the kind of attitude these people have.

What were the consequences?

For five years they were not present in the political sphere and the government party could implement its programs without any resistance. This is the background. In the 2006 elections, Chávez won the presidential election again. In 2012, Capriles competed and lost the elections clearly. After Chávez's death they hoped to take the helm, however, they made a big mistake. This is why the opposition's rage is so great because they do not get anywhere in electoral or political terms. The opposition whipped up hostile feelings against the government. Moreover, the economic situation actually deteriorated, inflation and scarcity of goods prevail, which has certainly partly to do with the attitude of the opposition. Of course there are also the government's faults. This is of what they always accused the government.

Did they not have another opportunity to change course?

In December last year they greatly announced that the municipal elections would be a plebiscite against the president. They did not succeed. The ruling party had a 10 percent advantage on average. In the elections of the individual communes they represented about 70 percent of the mayors and councilors. Only two years from now they will have the opportunity to change the balance of power in the parliamentary elections. That is a long time in which the ruling party has an opportunity to improve the difficult economic and security situation and to consolidate. It will then be even more difficult for the opposition to succeed in the parliamentary elections. For this reason, they will continue to try to disrupt the political and economic development in Venezuela. That is what they have been trying over and over again, but so far they have not been successful.

How did the government respond?

The government held back so far until a few weeks ago they decided that the barri-

ades should now be cleared. After some oppositional mayors had not restored order, the government intervened and cleared the roadblocks that had indeed affected public life. And now everything is quiet. The government is legitimate, it was elected by the majority of the people, and they do not allow a minority to provoke. The whole thing has not put the current government off balance. On the contrary, they were able to handle the attacks. What is certain is that the opposition has received support from the US. The world's media have reported on human rights violations – the fact is that the majority of the 35 people who were killed in the course of these five-week demonstrations were supporters of the government.

Were not snipers at work?

Yes, so-called mercenaries whose mission is to kill. They intentionally shoot at the opposition first, but also at the security forces to really liven things up. This also happened in 2002. But neither did they succeed then.

The population seems to be on the government's side?

In 19 elections and referendums the ruling party won 18 times. Those are impressive numbers. The social reforms, the participation of the excluded, the introduction of direct democratic elements –

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ws. A group of parliamentarians was founded in Switzerland last year in September called "Solidarity with the Alba States" (see box!) and with the Bolivarian revolution. 33 parliamentarians entered this group. They are particularly interested in cooperation and they think that what has developed in these states is altogether an interesting project. They have adopted a statement of support for the government – against the use of violence. That is important for Venezuela's government. And what is also important is to communicate that this group of Swiss parliamentarians exists. It is the first concrete action performed by this group of friends in favour of the States of Alba to proclaim their solidarity with this group of states, with the governments and the peoples. Alba is a socialist project that was able to prevent the USA from establishing a free-trade zone in Latin America.

"Staged riots in Venezuela ..."

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the people can counsel and decide in the communities and in the neighborhoods – the population knows who they owe it to. This Cultural Revolution after 500 years broke up verticality and authoritarianism by means of the people's direct participation. The West often underestimates what it means for the people. It has already taken root today. Despite all media campaigns we have to consider the fact that Chávez had been working for an integration in Latin America which now unfolds its effects.

How shall we imagine this integration in practice?

They get support from the region, from Alba [see box], and Unasur which embraces all South American States, but also from those states that are ideologically on the other side. This includes Celac [see box] which has an even broader range. But most important has been Unasur, because here, some structures are already working well.

How did Unasur react?

Whenever such movements emerged – we had them in Bolivia, Ecuador and now again in Venezuela after the election of Maduro – Unasur immediately closed ranks, and they did so beyond all state borders and ideological boundaries. They support the democratically elected governments and condemn violent riots. This international support has been very important, especially as a counterweight against the tenor in most media, especially in the right-wing private media in Latin America. The governments in Latin America, the non-socialist ones included, know that in the long term stability for the region is important, especially as a zone of peace and that there is no room for such violent illegitimate riots. This means a huge moral support for the government. A commission of foreign ministers of all Unasur countries has been invited, and they want to meet with the Government of Venezuela. The OAS wanted that too, but without consulting the government before. The Unasur has first contacted Caracas and announced that they would like to send someone.

What is the role of Panama, which has suddenly raised claims against Venezuela? Since the United States or Canada wanted to stay on the sidelines, they sent small Panama, a country dependent on the US, to the front. Panama then argued that a commission had to be installed because of human rights violations.

What was Venezuela's response?

The Maduro administration informed them that nobody was coming without being asked. They rejected this foray and placed diplomatic relations with Panama on ice. There was a vote on this request in the OAS and 29 out of 32 states rejected the approach. That meant a significant defeat for the United States. It was a support for the government in Caracas. This international regional support strengthens the government enormously. They also did it because they know that Venezuela has a democratically legitimized government and that their countries might face the same problems.

The Celac declared Latin America a Zone of Peace. Doesn't that have something to do with it?

Yes, at its recent summit Celac decided to explicitly declare their sphere a Zone of Peace and definitely not to allow such unrest in this region any more. Unrest is not in the interest of a peaceful coexistence and peaceful development. Everyone knows that, even those who are more to the right than to the left. Thanks to the support by a true majority of the people, by the government and international support, the radical right-wing extremists of Venezuela and their instigators in Washington had to cancel the exercise for the time being. The US will, however, not give up. They continue to have a strong interest in Venezuela because the country has the largest certified oil reserves worldwide. Thus, it is of course a very interesting field for the United States.

Especially since the US are primarily withdrawing from the Middle East. Could there be a connection?

... Yes, the US will indeed interfere worldwide and exert influence wherever possible, either in Europe, in Eastern Europe, or in Asia. They will of course do so especially where their interests are closest. We have to assume that and, of course, the government in Caracas does so as well.

What is the position of the Member States of Alba, Unasur and Celac?

In Latin America this is quite clear. It intends the creation of a Zone of Peace. The integration is based on the sovereignty of individual nation-states, but their cooperation is to be complementary and in solidarity. This is the idea of Alba and Unasur: We support where we can, but this is always voluntarily, on the basis of a clear national sovereignty. There is a Defense Council in Unasur; but the individual forces are still autonomous. However, the states would like to have a cooperation. They agree that the tasks of the states and their governments are to maintain peace. This is a defense organization, but not with coordinated missions and troop contingents. They also have no high command. It is a De-

fense Council which is mainly political and deals with defense issues. There are regular meetings and pro tempore presidency, all of which change every six months. These forms of organizations, having started with Alba in the narrower circle, extended to Unasur and expanded again with Celac, are three integration projects, which are due to the initiative of Hugo Chávez. When he launched them, I was ambassador in Caracas. The purpose of these associations is not the domination over other countries; their aim is the opposite: equipped with equal rights, acting in solidarity and in a complementary manner, because they have different economies, with whom they want to work together complementarily. We can already observe that, even if the North continues to set them under pressure, they have had their baptism of fire. Even though no one in the West likes to see that.

Maduro has expelled US diplomats from the country. What were the reasons?

The accusation was that they caught embassy staff having regular contacts with the violent ringleaders of the opposition, who were responsible for the violent clashes. It is well known that NGOs, which should promote democracy, do instead interfere in these processes, controlled by the *National Endowment for Democracy*. Ultimately, funds are granted via the CIA and used in groups who want to undermine state authority. They were caught doing so and therefore they were expelled. These people were called by name, and they could be held accountable for this.

A few weeks ago in Geneva there was a meeting of the International Parliamentarians' Association UIP, among whose members is Venezuela. What is their attitude towards the development in Venezuela?

Within the UIP, there are various groups such as Latin America and the Caribbean, today's GRULAC. There was a resolution by those states in which they supported the government in Venezuela fully and condemned the violent clashes committed by the opposition. This draft was also introduced in the plenum of the UIP. The GRULAC has done something very important. Here you can see that Venezuela is fully integrated into the Latin American association of states.

This new and enhanced integration in Latin America and the mutual support of their governments will prevent the spreading of such attempts at overthrowing a government.

Mr Suter, thanks for the interview.

(Interview Thomas Kaiser)

The Federal Council's health policy has to be re-adjusted towards the will of the people

No to the bluff-package on 18 May

by Dr Henriette Hanke Güttinger

On 18 May the people will vote on the "Federal Decret on primary health care". It actually is a real bluff-package. When examining the health policy of the federal government more closely, one is alarmed that it is no longer orientated towards the will of the people. Instead, the federal government allows the Organization for Economic Affairs and Development (OECD) and the World Health Organization (WHO) – organizations in which certain economic interests set the tone – to dictate their tasks and priorities to our health politicians. We must put a stop to such a process.

An excellent health care system ...

In January 2013, the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) published the "Health Policy Priorities of the Federal Council" by the year 2020, in "Health 2020".¹ This report is one big contradiction: on the one hand it contains the highest praise for our health system and on the other hand it is a plan for its total reconstruction.

Thus, the FDHA rejoices: "Switzerland has a very good health system." (p. 24) Its "high quality" enables "the people who live in this country to enjoy a high quality of life and a life expectancy far above average." (p. 4) The population is "very satisfied [...] with the performance of our health care system. Its strengths include guaranteed access to health care, a broad spectrum of services covered by compulsory health insurance and a high quality

of medical care." Because of the huge satisfaction with our health care system "the Swiss people re-affirmed [...] in several referendums that it does not want any radical changes." (p. 4) A good health system all through, indeed.

... is to be thrown over?

The Federal Council and FDHA respectively the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) are aware of the high quality of our health care system and they know exactly what the people want. Nevertheless, their health policy is not orientated towards the will of the people. The exact opposite is the case: Against all odds, the FOPH propagates a total transformation of our health care system.² The "26 recommendations of the OECD- WHO" serve as a blueprint.³ The Federal Council's arguments for the conversion are also copied from the OECD-WHO.

The conversion is already in full swing. Some bills are in preparation, some in the parliamentary debate, some shortly before the parliamentary vote, like the "counter-proposal against the initiative 'Yes to family medicine'", or some already valid acts (Revised Epidemic Act).

Serving OECD-WHO ...

So, if Federal Chancellor *Berset* respectively the FOPH don't act as "servants of the people", whom do they serve then? *Stefan Spycher*, deputy director of the FOPH, states it quite openly: "The Federal Council adopted its Health Strategy

The globalization company named OECD

hhg. The Organization for Economy and Development OECD describes its own role as follows: "The richest countries of the world have the responsibility to help other countries to benefit from the advantages of globalization. They can do this within the framework of the OECD."¹ The stated objective is really pure cynicism if one takes into account the worldwide disaster caused by the globalization. In reality, however, "international groups, foundations, associations, and lobby groups" use the OECD to impose their own interests on nation-states.

The OECD has every reason to orientate itself towards Switzerland with her DEZA. The DEZA is a model of how to give relessless help for self-help to third world countries.

¹ OECD. *Control Globalization, 2004, p.7*

² *Jochen Krautz. Ware Bildung, Schule und Universität unter dem Diktat der Ökonomie. Munich 2009, p. 201*

last June. [...] It is striking that the Federal Council's strategy is completely contained in the recommendations of the OECD-WHO. [...] This second OECD-WHO report⁴ is helpful. It describes the current situation in Switzerland in detail and gives useful suggestions for further reform policy. The most important finding is that the Federal Council's strategy is almost completely in line with the recommendations of the international organizations and that Switzerland – if Parliament will implement the proposals of the Federal Council – is well on track."⁵

... disempower the cantons ...

Without any deeper understanding of Swiss federalism, both OECD and WHO assess its performance capability completely inappropriate. "They have some doubts about whether *Switzerland will be able to master these challenges with the existing governance structures that connect federalism with direct democratic instruments.*" [accentuation by the author] In addition, they suggest "larger care regions instead of the cantons" – so the deputy director of the FOPH.

OECD-WHO thus recommends an "improvement of strategic management

The vice-director of the FOPH, a "Trojan horse" at the service of globalization?

hhg. In the "Directory of Bodies of the OECD" OECD of 2012, *Stefan Spycher*, vice-director of the BAG, is enlisted as one of six "Bureau Members" in the list of the "Health Committee" (cf. p. 353) in July 2012. The committee has the following mandate:

"[...] c) Ensure that the views and expertise of non-government institutions are drawn upon in the performance of OECD's health work, utilising, inter alia, the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC), the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) and contacts with relevant non-governmental organisations, including organisations representing patients and health professionals and outside experts." [...] (p.355)

A mouse click calling up BIAC on the internet brings to light a global econom-

ic network (trade association), characterizing itself as "The Voice of Business at the OECD".¹

In fact the vice-director of the FOPH is an employee in the service of the Federal Government with the task to implement the people's will. If he fulfills foreign dictations (OECD-WHO, BIAC) instead, he has to resign and leave his post to a person with integrity, that is willing to implement the will of population.

¹www.biac.org

²BIAC: *This Committee brings together the employers and the business associations of the OECD member countries. TUAC coordinates and represents the position of the trade union movement in the industrialized countries.*

(Translation Current Concerns)

Yes to Gripen – no to successive abolition of the army

Without its air force Switzerland as a neutral country becomes dependent on NATO

by Dr Franz Betschon and Dr Judith Barben

I. Introduction

Overwhelmingly the Swiss people voted yes to the mandatory military service in autumn 2013.¹ Nobody would have expected such a clear commitment to the militia. It is noteworthy that the citizens' approval of the army has increased significantly in recent years.² Obviously, the majority of the people is aware that the security of our country is of utmost importance. Without security there is no freedom, no peace, no stability and no prosperity!

On 18 May 2014, we will again vote on a key security issue: about obtaining 22 combat aircraft of the type "Saab Gripen E". The procurement of these aircraft is urgently needed, because our 54 almost forty-year-old "F5 Tiger" are obsolete and are no longer fully suitable for use. They need to be replaced.³ Both the Federal Council and Parliament have agreed on the submission ("Gripen Fund Act") and recommend its approval to the people.

II. Gripen for a secure air space

Significance of the air force

The significance of the air force cannot be estimated highly enough. Aircraft are the only means of combat which can fend off unexpected and rapidly developing external threats from the air, due to their technical characteristics. In addition the air force is – figuratively speaking – the roof over the head of the army and hence over Switzerland. Only if this

roof works, the army may also fulfil its mission on the ground and ensure our security.

As a sovereign and neutral country Switzerland has the obligation to defend both its territory and its airspace militarily.⁴ Under no circumstances this state's monopoly on the use of force may be handed over to third parties. A functional air force is therefore essential.

Why we urgently need the Gripen

Today, our air force has 32 fully operational fighter jets "F/A18" as well as the aforementioned 54 obsolete "F5 Tiger", which need to be replaced. With the 32 "F/A18" alone our combat jet fleet is too small and needs to be supplemented urgently. Otherwise, the air force would lose its power and know-how which would mean a dramatic loss. Therefore the procurement of the 22 fighter jets "Gripen E" must immediately be initiated if our army and our country are to have a "roof over their heads".

Test pilots for Gripen

When selecting a new fighter jet for Switzerland there were three aircraft to choose from: the Swedish "Saab Gripen", the French "Dassault Rafale" and the "Eurofighter" built by an international consortium. Switzerland has received offers from these three manufacturers.

All three aircraft have been subjected to a comprehensive evaluation with

countless individual tests. The test pilots and other experts concluded after evaluation and comparison of all individual tests that the three planes are very similar to each other. Thus there were mainly economic and political reasons that decided for the "Gripen".

The most important economic reason in favour of the "Gripen" is the fact that it is by far the most cost-effective of the three aircraft and has the best cost-benefit ratio. Another reason for the Swedish fighter jet is the fact that Saab is one of the most experienced manufacturers of fighter jets in Europe and also that our contract partner in this aircraft procurement will be the Swedish State. Both ensure a high level of security. The fact that Sweden is neutral like Switzerland and has always treated us with respect is a political perspective in favour of the "Gripen".⁶ Traditionally Switzerland and Sweden have a good relationship. Taking into account all these factors it is understandable that the test pilots, experts and ultimately the Federal Council opted for the "Gripen".

III. Attack on our sovereignty

The opponents' true aim

The previously presented facts show that the need to obtain a new fighter jet is given and that the decision for the "Gripen" is based on sound and transparent investigations. Therefore, yes to the "Gripen".

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"The Federal Council's health policy ..."

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(governance)" of our health care system. The first measure is to "develop a comprehensive framework law on health at a federal level".⁶ This is now done - without declaring it openly to the people! – by the "counter-proposal against the initiative 'Say yes to family medicine'" by the use of which "basic health care" shall be newly implemented at the federal level with Article 117a.

Instead of offering recommendations from outside, OECD and WHO should first of all get an exact picture, why our health care, "belongs to the best as compared to international standards" as they have found out themselves in their reports. Indeed, it is no secret: The reasons are direct democracy, federal structure, responsibility of the cantons for health-

care associated with a responsible financial resource management and a health-conscious population. From there OECD and WHO could derive recommendations which would be very interesting for other countries because they are in fact useful, successful and sustainable.

... internationalizing and leading closer to EU? – definitely not!

Federal Council and FOPH want to link our health policy closer to the international community. They complain about "the lack of integration in the health policy developments in the EU" which creates "problems that can be solved by concluding and implementing a health agreement".

As a result one can only say: Not this way! No, thank you. The experience with the bilateral agreements and in particular with the agreement on the free movement

of persons clearly show what one has to expect, when putting components of state sovereignty under the control of the ladies and gentlemen in Brussels. •

¹ Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA), Health 2020. *The health priorities of the Federal Council*, January 2013. Already on 22 June 2011, the Federal Council announced a strategy which is also the basis of "Health 2020": *The strategy of the Federal Council in health policy*.

² See Figure 1 Health Strategy of the Federal Council, in: Stefan Spycher, OECD-WHO analysis of the Swiss health care system: Old wine in new bottles? *Die Volkswirtschaft. Das Magazin für Wirtschaftspolitik* 3-2012.

³ 26 reform recommendations of OECD-WHO for the Swiss health care system, cit.: Stefan Spycher, reference as above.

⁴ The former Federal Councillor Couchepin then had ordered the "OECD-WHO report 2011" on the Swiss health care system.

⁵ Stefan Spycher, reference as above

⁶ *ibid*

"Yes to Gripen – ..."

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en" is synonymous with a yes to the army and to the protection of our country and population.

In contrast, those circles hostile to military neither want an army nor any new fighter jets. In order to prevent the procurement of "Gripen" they have taken the referendum. The anti-"Gripen"-alliance includes the "Group for a Switzerland without an Army" (GSoA), but also parts of the Social Democrats, the Green Party and Green Liberals.

Its name, "Group for a Switzerland without an Army", already implies that the "GSoA" wants to abolish the army. The Social Democrats define as their aim in the party program: "The Social Democratic party is committed to the abolition of the army."⁷ Also the Greens: "The Greens want that Switzerland [...] renounces the army." Only the Green Liberals keep themselves covered in the army issue. In their party guidelines they take no position on this issue at all and do not even mention the word "army".⁹ But they take a fierce position against the "Gripen". Why this contradiction? Do the Green Liberals avoid the basic topic of the "army" in order to avoid "annoying" discussions and not to compromise their civic image?

Attack on our sovereignty

In addition to the mentioned army opponents, there are certain army representatives that surprisingly belong to the anti-"Gripen"-alliance. Their rejection of the "Gripen" is based either on unawareness or on the fact that they stick to outdated positions which want to abandon the autonomous defense capability of Switzerland in favour of an EU/NATO-integration:

"Autonomous national defense neither makes sense nor is it affordable." It must give way to a "role specialization and pooling of national military resources in the European network". This requires a "conscious renunciation of military capabilities for the benefit of other countries".¹¹

The anti-"Gripen" position can only be understood from this abstruse point of view. Such positions, meaning a renunciation of national sovereignty and a subordination of the Swiss army under foreign armed forces, were actually represented in army circles and still circulate in some minds. They are very close to the objectives of the red-green army opponents but violate clearly the will of the people and the Constitution. It determines: "Switzerland shall have armed forces. [...] they defend the country and its population."

Successive abolition of the army

The referendum against the "Gripen" is not the first attempt of army opponents to weaken the air force and to withdraw their funds. Already in 1992, the "Group for a Switzerland without an Army" (GSoA) wanted to prevent the procurement of 34 "F/A18" by means of an initiative. The reasoning was that the "F/A18" were too expensive and not necessary. But the majority of the voters recognized the "GSoA" initiative as an attempt to abolish the army step by step. "Army abolition in installments" it was therefore called. The "GSoA" initiative was rejected by the majority of the voters and the 34 "F/A18" were procured in accordance with the will of people. Thus, this attack on the Swiss defense capability and sovereignty was stopped.

Even today the red-green "Gripen"-opponents are not really concerned about the plane. In fact they want to abolish the army and the air force "in installments" by making use of the "Gripen" referendum. Yet they do not openly say so but conceal their goal. So the Social-Democratic National Councillor *Evi Allemann* being accused of her hostile attitude towards the army in an "Arena" broadcast on TV, rejected the reproach with mock outrage – as if she had not read her own party programme.¹³

Manipulation rather than factual arguments

The fact that citizens have different opinions, is not a problem in a direct democracy. In Switzerland, however, it is common use to fairly argue them out with honest arguments. In the anti-"Gripen"-campaign little of this is to be recognized. Instead, the "Gripen"-opponents proceed with manipulation and propaganda.¹⁴ So they tried, contrary to the facts, to feign a "consensus" against the "Gripen" to the public. To this end they sent forward Green Liberals (former Greens¹⁵), who should drag bourgeois parliamentarians with the help of their bourgeois image into the anti-"Gripen"-camp¹⁶. Unsuccessfully, however. "The Green Liberals hardly found prominence for their anti-Gripen-fight" said "The Bund". Almost without exception the bourgeois parliamentarians voted in favour of the "Gripen"¹⁸.

A propaganda ploy

Another propaganda trick in the anti-"Gripen"-fight is the not particularly original slogan of the Greens: "Crèches instead of Gripen" (a wordplay)¹⁹. Rhymes always have a hypnotic effect, because of their repetition they linger in the memory and thus memorize unconsciously. The above slogan is to "emotionalize" the discussion and to distract from the factual level. The word "crèches" evokes the idea of favouring chil-

dren and families so that the "Gripen" automatically appears as hostile to children and families by the artificial contrast to "crèches" and is seen in a negative light. This contrast is, of course, nonsense on the factual level. An operational Air Force serves the common weal as well as the provision of sufficient childcare places. That the army opponents resort to the cheap ploy of emotionalism shows that they have no factual arguments.

Ridiculing – a psycho-technique

Ridiculing is a manipulative psycho-technique that serves to obscure the facts²⁰. So the army opponents ridicule the "Gripen" as "paper airplane" and absurdly claim that it exists "only on paper"²¹.

In fact, the Swedish fighter jet was presented in autumn 2012 in an excellent and precise presentation that was satisfactory in every respect²². The "Gripen" showed itself as a compelling feat of engineering with an excellent price-performance ratio. In addition, it is an extremely versatile aircraft whose already built in software in the on-board computer enables it to change roles (reconnaissance, hunting, ground attack support).

Equally important in this demonstration was also the reference to the "F/A18" presentation in which a different version was tested than was later delivered successfully. This fact then made no one refer to the aircraft as a "paper airplane". In reality, such proceedings for aircrafts of this type are common because over the time of their use – and therefore also during their procurement – they constantly undergo upgrades (improvements). Therefore, the "Gripen" will correspond to the latest state of technology at the time of delivery.

Pretended expertise

Another public ploy of the army opponents is bustling around with technical terms and technical details without any previous factual knowledge. Here they can rely on the fact that the majority of the audience understands as little about aircrafts as they do themselves. So the SP-politician *Evi Allemann* interposed during an "Arena"-broadcast in an obviously trained tirade: "And it has only one engine!" Triumphantly she looked around the house²³. However, that the "Gripen" has only one engine is no problem at all for Switzerland. Only Navy aircrafts must have two engines, because over the sea other emergency scenarios apply. However, air force aircrafts usually have only one engine. Thus, the half engine equipment of the "Gripen" is not a disadvantage for Switzerland but an ad-

On 18 May the worldwide perception of Switzerland is at stake

by Gotthard Frick

“Making fun of the Swiss is so easy that it’s almost unsporing. [...] Every newspaper in the world has run a derisive story on how to invade Switzerland. [...] F-18s and F-5s and pilots don’t grow on trees, you know.”

Source: Business Standard India 21 Feb 2014 (<http://www.vimentis.ch/d/dialog/readarticle/fremde-kampfflieger---die-schweiz-wird-verspottet/>)

“But fortress Switzerland’s reputation for impregnability took a blow this week”.

Source: Press of Atlantic City, USA 23 Feb. 2014 (http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/opinion/commentary/joshua-keating-psst-want-to-attack-switzerland-by-air/article_5f202402-5e9b-5f72-9d20-e922a2a0e04d.html?mode=qjm)

“Any rising megalomaniac European dictator hoping to conquer the continent will certainly know when to land unhindered with his entire air force in Switzerland.”

Source: *zerohedge.com*, a platform of international finance experts, 24.2.2014. 2013 clicked on one billion times.

Only few citizens are probably aware that Switzerland until not so long ago has been perceived, even in China, as a strictly neutral and most peace-loving country which is also most able to defend itself and that therefore Switzerland was highly estimated and considered as an example. Even fewer people are aware that the incident with the hijacked airliner equally led to a total change of perception of our country. Lengthy articles partly spitefully and sarcastically or disbelievingly reported that Switzerland which formerly had been considered as a secure stronghold in the Alps could not survey its own air space for budgetary reasons not even in times of utmost peace. On 8 February 2014 “South China Morning Post” pointed at the fact that the air forces from other countries had had to contribute controlling our air space already at the *World Economic Forum* and at the European Football Championship in 2008.

Shortly after the incident the author was invited for dinner by a Chinese cadre member from the entourage of the CEO

of one of the biggest enterprises in China. After a long talk on this and that the host suddenly put on an air of mockery and told the history that is worldwide spread about the best method to occupy Switzerland. Then he added: “It is just the richest country in the world that has got no money for its army. That is no good at all for Switzerland.”

As to security policy this change of perception is a catastrophe. Nearly all media reported that the government and the parliament wanted to remove that weakness by buying the Gripen, that the plan could also fail in a popular vote if the opinion polls got right. The result of the referendum on Gripen will be observed worldwide and if the business is rejected people will come to the conclusion that we are no longer ready to defend our country. Do we want to be perceived like that? On 18 May we will give the answer. •

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vantage, because it contributes to the relatively low price of the aircraft. Another advantage of the “Gripen”-engine is the fact that it is practically identical to the F/A18-engine that has already been used in Switzerland – a major logistic advantage.

Similarly unfounded is the reproach of the fighter jet having only one seat. This is also no problem with a fighter plane. A fighter jet usually only needs two seats for educational purposes. With the “Pilatus PC21” we already have a revolutionary training system on which the jet pilots can be trained by merely adjusting the software until they directly change over to their single-seat warplane. Having only one seat is therefore tailored for Switzerland and also reduces the price of the aircraft.

Deliberate confusion with numbers

The reproach that the “Gripen” was too expensive is pure propaganda. In reality, it is not only the most cost effective of the three aircrafts, but the funding is also done via a “Gripen”-fund, fed by the regular army budget for ten years. Thus the taxpayers incur no additional cost.

To prevent the “Partial Tiger Replacement” the “Gripen”-opponents even spread invented numbers and go as far as to allege that the aircraft does not cost the official 3.126 billion francs, but 10 billion.²⁴ They calculate this dizzying sum by simply adding the cost for the operating and maintenance for thirty (!) years to the cost for procurement. However, even army opponents know that this is no fair calculation. Their confusion with numbers serves the only purpose to play mind games with the voters. However, it is assumed that the majority of the Swiss has enough grip on reality to not fall for such cheap number tricks.

Unholy Alliance

No one knows quite exactly from where the rumor comes, that corruption was in the game during the selection of the “Gripen”.²⁵ The only thing that is certain is an anonymous letter which was leaked to the media a few months ago containing hints in this regard. It was written in French and some German Swiss names were misspelled suggesting a French authorship. Security politicians suspect the French company Dassault behind that, which wanted to sell us their “Rafale”.²⁶ The impression arises that an “unholy alliance” of left-green army opponents and

international financial- and business circles feed each other lines in the background.

Who is pulling the strings in the background?

Hence when a hijacked Ethiopian airliner landed in Geneva the media reported with relish and wide that our air force was not operational. Some letters to the editor hastily drew the illogical conclusion that the procurement of “Gripen” will make no sense. In fact, the mentioned deficiency had already been known. Remedy is underway. Why do the media show interested in this only by now – three months before the “Gripen” vote? Who pulls the strings in the background here and determines what will be released and when? Why do the media not report in as much detail about the fact that well-founded proposals of professionals are available to restore the full defense capability of the army in realistic steps?²⁷ Herein the procurement of 22 “Gripen” is inevitable²⁸.

The role of intelligence

The “Basler Zeitung” even suspects that with the anti-“Gripen”-campaign intelligence is involved. With targeted “indis-

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cretions" they would try to "quake Sweden and Switzerland" and to thwart the procurement of the "Gripen"²⁹. Also the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" assumes that the "Gripen" opponents even provide more "stumbling blocks" to manipulate the vote negatively³⁰. It will be interesting to see what "revelations" they will still dish out to us. Is perhaps the – as well not new – message part of it that also in Sweden there are circles, which attack the autonomous defense capability and want to lead the country into NATO? But likewise in Sweden there is a growing body of opinion that such the people opposing plans will no longer be accepted³¹.

IV. The young generation adheres to Switzerland

Industrial counter-trades create jobs

The "Gripen" procurement will be a real benefit also to Swiss economy. Since between Switzerland and Sweden "industrial counter-trades" in the amount of 2.5 billion Swiss francs have been agreed upon.³² This implies that Swedish companies will enter orders to Swiss companies amounting to 2.5 billion Swiss francs. 518 such contracts with 125 Swiss companies have already been concluded.

The industrial counter-trades as a result of the "Gripen" procurement will create about an additional 10,000 man-year employments in Switzerland and generate cash flows like the inland revenue, value added taxes and OASI contributions. With a serious full costs accounting these cash-flows must be credited to the "Gripen" correctly.

Switzerland has wide experience with such industrial compensations. It has already effectuated them successfully with the help of "Swissmem" for several times.³³ A correct allocation of the orders to the cantons has always been respected.

Brazil decides in favour of the Gripen as well

Even self-confident Brazil has decided for "Saab Gripen E" and will soon purchase 36 pieces of this airplane. After an internal evaluation Brazilian air force specialists concluded that the "Gripen" did best, and moreover, had been the most economic airplane.³⁴ This decision is an indicator for the quality of the "Gripen". Brazil's reasoning for its decision was interesting. The social-democratic President of Brazil, *Dilma Rousseff*, said: "Brazil is a pacifistic country and, therefore, must be able to defend

itself adequately." Expressly, she mentioned the rich Brazilian offshore oil resources which could arouse foreign greediness.

Signs of the times

Brazil's argument, that as a pacifistic country it had to be able to defend itself adequately and, therefore, needed an efficient air force, is also valid for Switzerland. Switzerland, too, has to defend valuable resources like the Alpine crossings, the water, its sound finances and its high-quality industrial facilities.

The ability of a country to defend itself is especially important in the current international situation in which tensions increase daily. Thus the crisis in the Ukraine, a European country practically before our front door, currently intensifies at an alarming speed.

Experienced politicians like *Jean-Claude Juncker*, the former head of the euro-group, point out: "Those who think that the everlasting question of war and peace will never again arise in Europe, could be seriously mistaken. The demons have not gone. They are only sleeping." The long-serving Social Democratic politician *Egon Bahr* is also persuaded that there Europe could soon again face a new war. He likes to bring into consideration to the younger generation that in 1933 he himself did not believe in his father's word when he said that "Hitler means war". Today, as an old man, *Egon Bahr* sees, "that we live in a pre-war times".³⁶ From an economic point of view such voices increase as well. Thus the renowned American professor of economics and government adviser *Nouriel Roubini* said: "I'm not predicting World War III but seriously, if there was a global financial crisis after the first one, then we go into depression: the political and social instability in Europe and other advanced economies is going to become extremely severe."

New security awareness

This whole situation has also led to a shift in thinking in Switzerland. The security of both the country and its population is perceived again to be of great importance. This follows, for example, from the result of the referendum mentioned at the beginning. It appears as well in the fact that our parliament has settled the army budget again on five billion Swiss francs after years of budget shortenings and has decided the procurement of 22 warplanes of the type "Gripen".

In general, the interest in the army has increased. Books about the army are bestsellers. A new generation comes forward who says goodbye to the often much too frivolous thinking of the

1990s and adheres to the Swiss state model and to the Swiss institutions, in particular to the army. Therefore, the odds are in our favour that the voters will agree with the "Gripen" procurement on 18 May 2014. •

Franz Felix Betschon: Dr sc techn, graduate technical engineer ETH Zurich. Studies at Harvard Business School in Cambridge (USA). Colonel em. in the general staff, at last with the air force and in the intelligence service, from 1985 to 2005 member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. Industrial career and career in board of directors. Author of several books about security policy.

Judith Barben-Christoffel: Dr phil, psychologist and psychotherapist FSP. Scientific journalist and publisher. Former teacher at elementary and special schools. Studies of psychology at the university of Zurich. Practice for psychotherapy. Lectures and publications on issues of psychology, psychotherapy, educational theory and ethics as well as on the threats to direct democracy by manipulation and propaganda.

- ¹ 73.2 percent of the voters voted yes to the mandatory military service on 22nd Sept. 2013.
- ² 25 years ago (in 1989) only 64 percent of the voters opposed the initiative to abolish the army.
- ³ Therefore the proposal is called "partial Tiger replacement".
- ⁴ Hague Agreement, Articles 1 and 5.
- ⁵ The "F/A18" are indeed 20 years old, but can fulfil their service at least another 15 years.
- ⁶ This cannot be said of all countries. So we were insulted by a French MP as "wart" and absurdly blamed for the French government debt. Christian Democratic People's Party president *Christophe Darbellay* meant appropriately: "*Sarkozy* omits no opportunity to trash on Switzerland. [...] How can (he) believe that Switzerland buys him a battle aircraft?" (*Tages-Anzeiger* of 5 March, 2009 and 8 Feb. 2012) Also German officials disparaged us as "Tax haven" which had to be put on a "black list" and disciplined with a "whip" and the "cavalry". No one wishes for such contracting partners.
- ⁷ SP party programme adopted 2010 in Lausanne and Lugano 2012
- ⁸ www.gruene.ch
- ⁹ *Guidelines of the Green Liberal Party of Switzerland*. Decision of the Foundation board 2007
- ¹⁰ *Welti Philippe*. Cited in: *Zurlinden Urs*. *Adolf Ogis Nato-Truppe*. *Facts* 25/2000
- ¹¹ *Borchert Heiko, Eggenberger René*. *Selbstblockade oder Aufbruch? Die Gemeinsame Sicherheitspolitik der EU als Herausforderung für die Schweizer Armee*. *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, Jan/Feb 2002, p. 6 and 13f. *Borchert* was adviser of the DDPD (Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport) for the Army XXI. *René Eggenberger* was Colonel in the general staff and Chief of the Department of prospective planning in the DDPD.
- ¹² Swiss Federal Constitution, art. 58. These plans are incompatible with the will of the people, as you can see for example in the above cited vote of 22 Sept. 2013.

Two quaint natural wonders in Engadine

World's largest reptile and quirky wind

by Heini Hofmann

The Engadine as the largest and longest Alpine valley inhabited all year is regarded as the front-garden of paradise. Its natural beauties are world-renowned and omnipresent in the media. But in such cornucopia full of natural treasures two very special, unique if not incredible phenomena are almost forgotten: the Maloja snake and the Maloja wind.

The occurrence of dragons in the Alps has proved to be an erroneous assumption already centuries ago. Nevertheless, a mammoth reptile still exists in the Engadine, the largest *Boa constrictor* of the world, and amazingly, none of the many clever spa directors had the idea to apply for registration in the Guinness Book of records.

Maloja snake – no fabulous beast

We are talking here about the Maloja snake – besides the famous Maloja wind – a spectacular natural phenomenon in the Engadine cloud formation. It involves extremely elongated cloud banks in the form of an oversized, albinotic *Boa constrictor*, which stretches for miles and glides along the valley slopes in slow motion, or in case the condensation level is below the Maloja elevation – glides away along the valley bottom and out of the valley.

In contrast to the Maloja wind, which comes up in the warmer months and in fair weather conditions only, the Maloja snake can be observed in summer and winter, in beautiful and bad weather. Typical condition for snake-weather are



View from Muottas da Schlarigna: “La serp de Malögia”, the impressive Maloja snake, crawling through Upper Engadine. (picture from “Gesundheits-Mythos St. Moritz”)

large-scale areas of adverse weather with south-western winds. In the upper part of the valley, the Maloja snake is often seen in the evening when the Maloja wind blows.

Herpetological heresy

The locals know the Maloja snake very well. Yet it seems that they have to adjust their herpetological knowledge some-

what. The Engadine weather rule “La serp da Malögia porta plövgia” (“the Maloja snake brings rain”) may, but need not always apply, since we have seen that the giant Maloja reptile likes both rain and sun. The rule therefore assigns to the category of those folk sayings that can be subsumed

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¹³ “Arena” broadcast of *Swiss TV* about the “Gripen” of 8 Oct. 2013

¹⁴ cf. Barben, Judith. *Spin doctors im Bundeshaus. Gefährdungen der direkten Demokratie durch Manipulation und Propaganda*. Baden: Eikos 2010

¹⁵ Verena Diener and Martin Bäumle, leading Greens for many years, founded the “Grünliberale Partei” (green liberal party) in 2004 with other Greens

¹⁶ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19.9.2013

¹⁷ *Der Bund*, 06/11/2013

¹⁸ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19.9.2013

¹⁹ Young Greens Switzerland. Media conference in Bern on the “Gripen-Referendum” of 08.10.2013

²⁰ A systematic description of manipulative psychotechniques is to be found in: Barben Judith. *Spin doctors im Bundeshaus. Gefährdungen der direkten Demokratie durch Manipulation und Propaganda*. Baden: Eikos 2010, p. 45ff.

²¹ The Green politician *Joe Lang* used this manipulation in the “Arena”-broadcast of the *Schweizer Fernsehens SRF* of 20.12.2013. Lang is founding member of the Group for a Switzerland without an Army (GSoA) and at the same time Vice President of the Greens Switzerland.

²² The presentation was carried out by Avia, the organisation of the Air Force Officers on 08/09 and 12/10/2012 at Zürich and Emmen.

²³ “Arena”-broadcast on the “Gripen”, *Schweizer Fernsehen SRF* of 20.12.2013

²⁴ “Arena”-broadcast, see above

²⁵ In Switzerland corruption is rather an exception and in the case of the “Gripen”-procurement especially unlikely, because here the Swedish State is our contractual partner. In other countries e.g. in France, corruption is notorious way up to the highest governmental levels. Remember e.g. the “Bettencourt bribery affair” of former President *Nicolas Sarkozy*. See *Spiegel Online*, 22.3.2013. The French investigating judge *Eva Joly* also reported on massive corruption in which highest governmental circles were involved. See *Joly Eva. Im Auge des Zyklons. Mein Kampf gegen internationalen Finanzbetrug*. Munich 2006

²⁶ Feuz, Patrick. Politiker durchleuchten den Gripen-Deal. *Basler Zeitung*, 25.1.2012

²⁷ Gruppe Giardino. *Mut zur Kursänderung*. Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik am Wendepunkt. Baden: Eikos 2013, p. 143–155

²⁸ Gruppe Giardino, see above p. 80/149

²⁹ Schwierige Kampagne für den Gripen. *Basler Zeitung*, 25.2.2014

³⁰ Vakuum über der Schweiz verhindern. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 1.3.2014

³¹ In Sweden there are especially the social Democrats that say No to Nato and demand to fully restore the autonomous defense capability of the country. See *Armee-Debatte in Schweden. Forderung nach Nato Beitritt. Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 6.3.2014

³² Also “industrial counter-trades” or “Offset business”

³³ The “Swissmem” is the branch association of the Swiss machines, electrical industry and metal industry (“MEM industry”) which is the biggest industrial employer of Switzerland with about 338,000 employees.

³⁴ Brasilien entscheidet sich für den Gripen. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 20.12.2013

³⁵ *Der Spiegel*, 10.3.2013

³⁶ Egon Bahr schockt die Schüler. *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, 27.12.2013

³⁷ <http://www.newsmax.com/StreetTalk/Roubini-Economic-Crises-War/2011/09/26/id/412217/> Source: © 2014 Eikos Verlag, CH 5401 Baden Eikos. eikós (in Greek): high credibility, high degree of trust (after Platon)

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under the principle of smile "The weather stays nice – except that it rains ...".

And there are – besides the very true ones – quite a few of them. For example, the weather rule "the more thunderstorms, the more fertile the year" hits the nail on its head, as thunderstorms bring the rain which is essential for plant growth. But to follow the popular saying, that in a thunderstorm one should "avoid oaks, but seek for beeches" could have evil consequences in case of a lightning.

This misleading idea is caused by the phenomenon, that the damage due to lightning strikes and their traces were less visible on trees with smooth tree trunks whilst the coarser bark of other trees was swept away in the lightning strike in large shreds. One concluded that beeches were less endangered than oaks. But this is not at all true. It is correct not to stay under free-standing trees during a thunderstorm at all. Therefore, beware of lightning and sky snakes (see box on the left)!

Maloja wind turning in the wrong direction

Typical for bigger alpine valleys are thermal winds on sunny days, blowing up and downhill, about which we learned in school: during the day they blow uphill, at night however downhill. The effect is driven by the sun depending on the time of the day. If the sun shines upon the valley sides, the heated air rises. Skyward leaving air masses in the form of slope winds are replaced by air horizontally flowing into the valley coming from the valley's exit. The valley wind restocks the air. At night it is the other way round. The cold valley air sinks and flows down the valley as a mountain wind.

This phenomenon is also called the breathing of the mountains – with one breath every day, inhaling during the day, exhaling at night. The change of direction between day and night wind usually happens a few hours after sunrise or after sunset. The valley wind active during daytime

Maloja snakes – stranglehold

HH. Giant snakes are known to be non-toxic, but incredibly powerful in their stranglehold. Thus in 1974 a Maloja snake managed to disturb sustainably the men's downhill of the World Ski Championship in St. Moritz and to checkmate the top-class organizing committee.

The observant reader realizes: natural phenomena, even those of a seemingly harmless kind, occasionally show the sorcerer's apprentice, i.e. man, his limits.

is rapidly increasing in strength and reaches its maximum in the early afternoon. The nocturnal mountain wind is significantly weaker and blowing less regularly than the valley wind.

However, no rule without exception! The weather phenomenon of the Upper Engadine, the Maloja wind, is such a magical trick of nature. It is not directed uphill like other valley winds, but blows out of the valley, blowing in the wrong direction, so to speak. (There are analogous nerds at the Bernina Pass, in the Davos Alpine Valley and at the Arlberg.) This exceptional feature of the Maloja wind resembles the Snail King, whose shell is not wound to the right like everyone else's but – as an exception among many thousand individuals – wound to the left, comparable to the Situs inversus among humans (those, for example, with their heart on the right side).

Celestial fair-weather child

Already in 1879, *Julius von Hann* noticed the different nature of the Maloja wind, one of the strongest local winds of the Alps. He realized that it "manifested itself quite differently from the ordinary behaviour". Even earlier, in 1877, the Engadin doctor *J.M. Ludwig* had noted that in summer "the so-called valley wind blows, a local wind which sometimes quite lively strokes in the direction of the river from Maloja towards Scansf. It is missing in the morning, blows strongest in the warm midday hours and gradually loses itself towards evening."

Even in the 18th century, the Zurich physician and natural scientist *Johann Jacob Scheuchzer* noticed, "when the North and West wind fight against each other, the Champ de bataille is at the mountain Maloja, on the borders of the Engadine and the Bregaglia valley". And he continues: "If the west wind grows stronger (meant was probably the southwest wind) the Engadine will be moistened."

Hence, even back then two south western winds were known, the one mentioned by Scheuchzer which, as a bad weather wind brings rain in summer and snow in winter. The other Maloja wind described by Ludwig appears as a fair weather child in the warm season. As anemometries in Sils have shown, the wind sets in around 10 a.m., reaches its maximum of 25 km/h in the afternoon to slow down in the course of the evening. Most of the time, the wind blowing up the valley at Sils sets in after midnight which is a considerably less strong headwind.

Three theories for one wind

The locals are familiar with these valley winds. This is why they give them names which refer to the geographical occurrence ("Maloja wind" in the Upper En-

Influence on bracing level ratings

HH. The climatic spas of Switzerland are divided into different bracing levels depending on the healing factors. Thereby stimulating factors such as altitude, sunlight and radiation, but also protecting factors such as relative stability of the weather or shelter from strong winds play a role. Therefore it is not surprising that the Maloja wind has an effect on the climatologic rating of the climatic spas.

Depending on the emphasis put on the two scales for stimulating and protecting factors, the climatic spas are classified into four bracing levels. Villages like St. Moritz, Silvaplana and Sils exposed to the Maloja wind are assigned to the highest level of stimulation, Pontresina, however, which is hardly affected by the Maloja wind, is found a stage below the stimulus maximum. Such differences may even be of an advantage because they provide the guests with a real choice.

gadine, "Vaudaire" in the lower Valais, "upper or lower wind" in the St. Gallen Rhine Valley). Or they refer to their regularity ("Zehnerli" in Bludenz and Feldkirch, "Ora" in the Adige Valley), or even their connection to fair weather ("clear" or "clear wind" in Vorarlberg). The most known and most individual, however, is the one from Maloja which at the same time is virtually the strongest local wind of the Alps.

Therefore, it kept legions of meteorologists from home and abroad busy in lining up the different theories. The oldest of them states that the air masses on the southern side are lifted beyond the top of the Maloja pass through warming and then pour down into the Engadine. The second theory sees the Maloja wind as the continuation of the Bregaglia valley wind which, due to a missing effective watershed, "overshoots the target" and paves the way through the Engadine.

The third more recent theory sees the emergence of the Maloja wind within the Engadine itself. The strong heating during the day lets the air ascend in slope winds which trigger a horizontal replenishment flow. Why this happens in the Engadine from the "wrong" direction is clear from the topography. The Bregaglia supply route is much shorter than it would be through the entire Inn Valley and which would have a decreasing suction effect through its buckling below Zernez.

Due to the absence of a valley border

The meteorologists agree upon one thing, however. The strange wind conditions correspond to the unusual structure of

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the terrain. Because the Upper Engadine lacks a valley border towards Bregaglia, the Engadine becomes a Schengen area with free admission for the wind from the south. Thus in 1879 Julius von Hann was already right when arguing that "there is no doubt about the fact that when the Upper Engadine was to have a regular valley border through higher mountains (or a higher pass), it would also have its ascending valley wind."

The theory of air suction from the "wrong" direction is confirmed by altitude wind measurements. They show that the Bregaglia valley wind has double layering, one with the maximum velocity close to the ground and another in the height matching the Maloja wind thus determined by the suction. Funny enough, the principle "no rule without exception" holds even within the exception. Apart from the abnormal valley wind, however, there is also a regular wind blowing from northeast, the "Brüscha", but more so in the Lower than in the Upper Engadine and only if a strong north-eastern flow dominates the Alps.

Free of charge grass-drying plant

The Maloja wind manifests itself mainly in the months of summer and au-

tumn. That is good. Already in 1933, the Spa physician *Paul Gut* wrote: "If the Maloja fair-weather summer wind – in the warm season being a desired cooling stimulus factor – were also active in winter, which it fortunately is not, one would have to forget the Upper Engadine as winter destination". Being the strongest valley wind of the Alps, it has strong influence on the climate during the warm season.

The wind is perceived as cool which is less due to the air temperature than to the wind's speed. Such cooling is welcome in the middle of the day. The Maloja wind is passionately loved by sailors. When on hot summer days there is no breeze in the lowlands, they have bulging sails on the Engadine lakes. Glider pilots, too, make use of the Maloja wind in the Engadine.

The farmers appreciate another positive feature of this regular fair-weather wind. Thanks to plenty of sunshine and little humidity, the grass cut in the morning has become dry hay by the evening. The Maloja wind so to speak is their biological grass-drying plant and above all free of charge. The "fly in the ointment" of the Maloja positive reports are certain growth deformations on trees that are attributed to the heavenly child.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)**Current Concerns**

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