

Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility, and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

Yes to Gripen on 18 May – “Do not delegate our own security to other countries”

thk. To date the public debate, dominated by the opponents of the procurement of a new military aviator, has especially focused on the Gripen as an airplane, its technical skills, its costs, and similar details. These all are questions which of course have to be discussed too and which demand clear answers, but these answers have been given long since. An essential aspect must not be concealed: How can the Swiss army fulfil the constitutional mandate and, how can neutrality and sovereignty be ensured in

future, if we constantly reduce the army and do not replace essential elements of the army?

The recently formulated proposal of SP National Councillor Evi Allemann, countries of the NATO war alliance could help us in the event of a crisis and so we might easily do without the Gripen, makes us take notice and shows where the journey is supposed to go.

Switzerland is to submit to the imperial war alliance, and in the most im-

portant question, namely the one of war and peace, renounce its sovereignty. We must not let it come to that. In the following interview two representatives of different parties take position on the question of the Gripen “procurement that is to partly replace the Tiger”. They are Councillor Karin Keller-Sutter, FDP St. Gallen, and the former Ambassador Walter Suter, a member of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland.

“We are willing to assert our independence, sovereignty and neutrality in the future, as well”

Interview with Karin Keller-Sutter, Councillor of State



Current Concerns: Mrs Sutter, in a fortnight we are going to vote on the new military aircraft Gripen. The air force is an important part of our army. What is our army's significance for our country?

Councillor of State Karin Keller-Sutter: In accordance with the Federal Council's *Security Report 2010*, Switzerland knows various security instruments. They include for example our development cooperation. The army is a key instrument of security policy. It serves de-

“It is unacceptable that we oblige the young Swiss to do military service and then send them to their deployment – without protection from the air – as an easy prey.”

fense and is deployed, as well subsidiarily, e.g. to support the police.

How far is there a constitutional obligation for Switzerland to have an operational army?

This obligation exists in accordance with our Constitution. There it is laid down that Switzerland has an army. And an army has of course various branches which include the air force, as well. There is no

army in the world that hasn't got an air protection, that is an air force.

After the vote “Yes to the militia” what are the implications for politics?

I fought for draft service last fall, and the people said yes with 73% to compulsory military service and thus to the militia. If we oblige our young men to do military

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“Barefoot doctor”-model does not fit for Switzerland

More than 200,000 citizens have signed the peoples' initiative “Yes to family medicine” in order to secure sufficient numbers of family doctors for the future. The initiators, however, have now withdrawn the initiative in favour of the counter-proposal, conceivably because they were offered higher salaries for general practitioners – to be financed by cuts in the specialist doctors' salaries, a deal the patients will not necessarily benefit from. As a result, the direct counter-proposal to the initiative “Yes to family medicine”, which will be decided about in the vote on 18 May does no longer reflect the ideas of the signees. The counter-proposal is a bluff package, meant to strengthen “basic health care” rather than the fam-

ily doctors. According to the new concept, the family doctor will cease to be the first care giver for the treatment of diseases and accidents, as it used to be the case and 200,000 citizens expected to remain true when they signed the original initiative “Yes to family medicine”. This concept of “Basic Health Care” happens to be an old WHO model that had been propagated for developing countries in the 1970ies (known as “Barefoot doctors”-model). It rules that the patient should be “treated” mainly by cheap health care providers such as specialist nurses, nutritionists, podologists etc. instead of trained medical doctors. Moreover, the counter-proposal entails the risk of centralistic interference with the cantonal sover-

eignty in health matters, since cantonal competencies might be transferred to the federal level. Understandably, because of the Gripen fighter jets and the minimum wage initiative, the SVP cannot run an “active” No campaign. Still the counter-proposal has to be fought against with all means, since it would lead to a massive deterioration of our health system as we know it, and also challenges cantonal sovereignty. Actually, the centralistic counter-proposal is unnecessary to begin with, because the cantons can very well support their family doctors on their own.

Peter Aebersold, Zürich

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“As an armed *neutral* and *non-aligned* state, we do provide an efficient air force ourselves”

Interview with former Ambassador Walter Suter



Walter Suter
(picture thk)

“As a neutral state, we must be able to demonstrate credibly to all other states that we have the will and the ability in the event of an armed conflict to protect and defend our territory – including the airspace – with military means.”

Current Concerns:
Mr former Ambassador, why does our country need an army?

Walter Suter: We need an independent defense army – as a “last resort” – to guarantee the security and independence of our country in the event of an imminent armed conflict or attack. As a *neutral* state, we cannot delegate this constitutional mandate to foreign armed forces or military alliances.

Why does our country need an independent air force?

The air force is an essential and integral part of the army. It has the special task to protect and defend our airspace. Nei-

ther can this task be transferred to foreign armed forces. Provided that the army and thus the air force is able to fulfill its mission, it must have sufficient, technologically advanced and up-to-date equipment.

What are the obligations arising from the perpetual armed neutrality?

As a neutral state, we must be able to credibly demonstrate to all other states that we are willing and able in case of an armed conflict to protect and defend our territory – including the airspace – by military means. This objective requires maintaining an army that is convincing with respect to operational readiness of troops and material. Only this way do we gain the opportunity to achieve a certain effect of dissuasion. This again helps to reduce

the probability of a military defense mission – which is certainly not desired by anyone.

What is your opinion about the argument that Switzerland is “surrounded by friends” and does therefore not need a new plane?

As an armed *neutral* and *non-aligned* state, we do provide an efficient air force ourselves. We have decided and are obliged to re-arm our forces without the help and/or support of foreign armies. This also applies to so-called “friends”. Given the historical experience of Europe in the 20th century, the renewed dangerous tensions in Eastern Europe as well as recent but significant pres-

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“We are willing to assert ...”

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service, protecting them is also our responsibility. Or in other words: the army which is deployed on the ground must be protected by their own air force in the Swiss airspace. It is unacceptable that we oblige the young Swiss to do military service and send them to their deployment without protection from the air – as an easy prey.

What obligations arise from our permanent armed neutrality?

This is a clear commitment to defend ourselves and to non-interference in armed conflicts of other states. Neutrality in the air-space, however, can be enforced only if we make the appropriate resources available. The question of how to assert our neutrality arises ever and again. Would Switzerland have given the Americans the fly over rights if they had attacked Syria last year? Or would we agree that NATO fighter jets flew over Switzerland in the direction of Ukraine? From the point of view of neutrality, it is impossible. However, if you refuse, you must be able to assert your “no”.

How do you judge the argument that Switzerland is “surrounded by friends” and therefore needs no new plane?

I am pleased that the surrounding states are our friends. Nevertheless, we must be able to defend ourselves and to control our airspace and to protect it effectively.

We cannot delegate our own safety to foreign countries. Nowadays the menace can change quickly. There is a need for an air traffic control also in peacetime, for example for the protection of international conferences or a natural disaster or failure of the infrastructure. The purchase of 22 *Gripen* is nothing but replacement for the outdated *Tiger-5*-fighter aircraft. It is therefore not a new task.

What are our air force’s significance and tasks?

The air force informs and protects. That means the air force obtains information that is necessary for the army. In addition, it serves as the air police. Thus, the air force is a kind of police patrol in the air which ensures that those unauthorized do not enter the Swiss air space or must leave it. Unidentified aircraft are intercepted.

Why do you support the purchase of the Gripen and not another aircraft?

The selection of the type was and is not the task of the Parliament. But one may say that the price-performance ratio of the Gripen is okay for Switzerland. The task of the Parliament is to ensure that the army receives the funding needed to carry out their tasks based on the findings in the security and the army report. The Gripen is a replacement. You cannot emphasize this enough. The 54 *Tiger* will be discarded in 2016 because they are at the end of their service. The *Tiger* can be used only when visibility and weather are

good. From mid 2016 on, the air force would have only the 32 *F/A-18* without the *Gripen*. They would not be able to ensure security in extraordinary situations.

Is the funding secured?

Yes. The financing happens within the framework of the annual army budget and is not at the expense of other Federal Government tasks. A fund is formed from the ordinary budget of the army and annual instalments of about 300 million francs will be. This is absolutely reasonable and feasible. The entire budget of the army is equivalent about 7% of the total federal spending. In comparison, we spend 33% for the social works.

Summary: What are the most important political arguments?

“Switzerland shall have armed forces ... they defend the country and its population.” This is the job that the Federal Constitution gives us. An army without an air force does not exist. The air force protects our neutrality and sovereignty in tense situations. 22 *Gripen* are to replace 54 obsolete *F-5 Tiger*. Thus, the message of Switzerland is clear: we are willing to assert our independence, sovereignty and neutrality in the future, as well.

Mrs Keller-Sutter, thank you very much for the interview.

(Interview Thomas Kaiser)

Army-eliminators in cahoots together with transatlanticists

Do individual exponents of the SP together with the GSoA want to lead Switzerland into NATO?

thk. The opposition against the replacement of a part of the discarded Tiger is composed mainly of the “Group for a Switzerland without an Army” (GSoA), the SPS and the Greens. In order to make it not too obvious for the Swiss population that the whole affair is about the abolition of the army and in the long run about the transfer of our increasingly weakened army into NATO, the GSoA was to hold back this time in the voting campaign and leave the public relations to the SP. This is grotesque, because also the SP in its party program has defined the abolition of the army as one of its policy objectives. Nevertheless, it gives itself the nimbus of an army critical, but by no means an army abolishing party. One of the chameleon-like SP-exponents in this voting campaign is *Evi Allemann*. The National Councillor is a member of the Security Policy Commission and is especially courted by the Swiss radio and television. She was misleadingly labeled a moderate army critic, who basically advocates the Swiss Army, but precisely not the Gripen. But the fact is that she has worked for 8 years closely with *Jo Lang* in security matters, the founder of the GSoA and top Army-eliminator of Switzerland, according to radio SRF. Already in the discussion program “Arena” of the Swiss television of 21 December 2013 on the procurement of the Gripen Evi Allemann let the cat out of the bag and called for closer military cooperation with the neighboring countries to protect Switzerland’s airspace. All neighboring countries are members of EU and NATO, with the exception of Austria, which with its only 15 Euro-fighters is not even in a position to protect its own country in special situations. In other words, she held a plea, to closer join the

“The SP is committed to the abolition of the army. Until this goal is reached, the Swiss Army is to be massively downgraded and remodeled.”

Party program adopted by the SP-Congress in Lausanne, 30/31 October 2010, and Lugano, 8 September 2012, p. 45

NATO countries. What this means, you can imagine if you have consciously lived through the last few years: They want us to become dependent on a war alliance, which as an imperial instrument primarily serves the enforcement of US power interests and does not shrink away, even without UN mandate and thus illegally under international law, from waging wars all around the world: in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, in Afghanistan in 2001, in Iraq in 2003, not as a NATO organization, but with the “alliance of the willing”, all of which are NATO countries except for Ukraine (!) in Libya in 2011, where they discretionarily abused the UN resolution, which had allowed a no-fly zone in Libya. They waged a brutal war of aggression against the country, which only ended with the fall of *Muammar al Gaddafi*. Today terrible chaos violence and destruction prevails. According to Evi Allemann countries of this war troops should therefore defend the freedom of Switzerland, which we must never, ever let happen.

In the radio emission “Echo der Zeit” of 25 April Mrs Allemann advertises for closer international cooperation to enable the protection of our country’s airspace. It is, however, not about saving money or to acquire a better aircraft, which would also be more expensive, but obviously – as with the initiative to abolish the mili-

tia army – about leading Switzerland into an international military alliance – that is either Nato or the EU’s Rapid Reaction Force.

The reasoning of the SP is not a product of serious democratic debate, but the product of a German security expert, the political scientist *Lutz Unterseher* who created a security advisory regarding the purchase of a new fighter plane for Switzerland on behalf of the SP, reported by “Rundschau” of Swiss television on 16 April. The arguments presented by Evi Allemann to the public mostly come from this report. Again, the reference to NATO is a clear option in case Switzerland unexpectedly and in distant future would nevertheless be pulled into a larger military conflict. Unterseher is aware of the fact that he would never succeed with this proposal with those who assume exactly such a scenario. So you have to downplay the threat, to at least come nearer to the goal of a weak air defense. In the long run, the country could be led into NATO this way, and Evi Allemann plays the role of the stirrup holder. It is a sinister plan to weaken the army to such an extent that it is an easy game for other countries to conquer the land, to occupy it or to deprive it of its sovereignty, by subjecting it to the more powerful. Should this be the future of our country? With the new Gripen we can prevent this. •

“As an armed neutral and ...”

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sure tests of powerful “friendly” states on Switzerland with respect to fiscal policy I consider it as “starry-eyed” and naive to believe that the ever-lasting peace has come about. Fair-weather periods are not permanent. In the course of the past four or five years rather dark clouds have gathered on the economic and socio-political skies of Europe. While the difficulties within countries increase, for every government charity very quickly begins at home, and former friendship and mutual assistance protestations rapidly lose priority. Very soon you are

alone – and woes betide anyone who has not made provision for their protection in that case. “The most pious cannot live in peace if the evil neighbors do not leave him alone ...”

The proposal that NATO could take on Switzerland’s protection in the event of war can never be an option.

From the above-mentioned neutrality-political reasons, NATO is not an option for Switzerland. All the more so as NATO has revealed a more offensive than defensive nature since the war in Yugoslavia. Therefore, in my opinion, the procurement of a fighter plane, which comes from another neutral country like Sweden, is an advantage.

In summary: What are the most important national policy arguments?

With last year’s rejection of the popular initiative “Yes to the abolition of compulsory military service” the majority of the Swiss population re-inforced its will to keep the militia army. Thus, it also expressed that it trusts this army with regard to the protection and defense of freedom and independence of our country. This attitude of the majority of the sovereign should be acknowledged.

Mr Suter, thank you for the interview. •

(Interview Thomas Kaiser)

Consequences of a Gripen zero-decision – we lose the capability of defending Switzerland!

by Konrad Alder, former aviation editor “Schweizer Soldat”

“No government can long function when the enemy operates freely above it.”

(John A. Warden III. in: “The Air Campaign”)

A refusal of the Gripen acquisition would have drastic, negative consequences for our air force, our “Sicherheitsverbund Schweiz für Schutz, Rettung und Verteidigung” (“Security Alliance Switzerland for Protection, Rescue and Defence”) as well as for our country as a sovereign state. The consequences would not be noticeable immediately. At first they would become apparent only gradually, however, they would affect us in an existential way in a military conflict – conceivable again in Europe even to the SP party president after the incidents in Ukraine (!).¹ Looking at the future the following effects must primarily be called severe:

We rapidly damage our good reputation worldwide as a secure and stable country with a firm will to independence and self-defence!

No state to be taken serious in this world would voluntarily relinquish its air force. They all know that they cannot guarantee the security of their territory and along with it the successful advancement of their politics, economy and society without effective air defence. A Gripen renouncement would convey a disastrous sign of weakness and self-abandonment internally and in relation to foreign countries. Such a step would have serious negative consequences for our success model Switzerland. The Swiss public in general with little foreign contact is not aware how many different actors all over the world pursue and analyze the processes which are taking place in our country and draw conclusions for their decisions from their insights which we will feel sooner or later. This is valid for a tourist as well as for an investor. The latter, for example, renounces to create jobs in Switzerland, since it does not accomplish its security-political tasks and does no longer demonstrate its commitment in this respect. In that case we would be lacking such jobs and would weaken the efficiency of our economy as well as the welfare state financed by it.

From 2025 on we lose our air force completely and with it the ability to control our airspace and to defend our sovereignty!

A more intensive use of the F/A-18, above all after introduction of a 24h-QRA-alarm-organization, will lead to the fact that from 2025 on we will no longer dispose of the necessary instruments of intervention for the control of our airspace. Along with that we will lose our aerial shield completely. Once given up, in the light of complexity, required duration and investments for small Switzerland, rebuilding the latter is an illusion. This is also valid with a politically nevertheless rather unlikely, quick start of the next evaluation. The situation is still aggravated by the fact that with certainty this would result in the same decision for the type.

We lose our defensive capability!

If one turns off the “oxygen tap of renewal” to our air force, one indirectly initiates the dismantling of our army as the next step. Since without efficient air force there is no effective deployment of ground troops with lasting effect, as all military conflicts of the younger history have demonstrated impressively. Our “Sicherheitsverbund Schweiz für Schutz, Rettung und Verteidigung” consisting of civil and military elements, so successful for generations, would have arrived at the start leading to the end and people within the SP who intend to abolish the army, the “Gruppe für eine Schweiz ohne Armee” (GSoA), and the Greens would have achieved their goal to render our country unprotected and defenseless.

For these reasons there is no sound reason to refuse the renewal long overdue to our air force for any citizen who feels responsible for the security and future of Switzerland and who does not consume the latter it as a self-evident fact. With this vote we are not talking about politicians or political parties, these are – if necessary or desired to be voted out of office by the next renewal elections – but only about the acquisition of 22 Gripen-E as well as, in the end, about the quite easy question:

Do we want a secure Switzerland capable of defense, or do we accept insecur-

ity and indirectly abolish the army at the same time?

Neither should we forget the following: As everybody knows, the Swiss takes counsel with himself only after action, and it is therefore important to note that one cannot order the necessary fire engine to fight the fires when the “house Switzerland” is already burning! •

¹ original quote *Levrat*: “For the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall we have again a real danger of war between the East and West, the OSCE headed by Federal Councillor *Burkhalter* tries to make a contribution to peace.” In: *NZZ am Sonntag* of 23 March 2014

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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No to federal proposal “Basic Health Care”

mw. Unlike the “Gripen” or the minimal wage initiative, the Constitutional Act on Basic Health Care, which the electorate will also vote on in the May 18th referendum, almost completely escapes media attention and is rarely discussed. *Current Concerns* is one of the few newspapers who inform their readers in detail about the decisive and alarming interference of this proposal with our well-known excellent health care system, basic patients’ rights and last not least the constitutional – and sensible! – cantonal responsibility for health care issues (see *Current Concerns* No. 7 and No. 8/2014). Ac-

ordingly, the reactions of our readers who rightfully are dissatisfied by the incomplete information in the mainstream media and the misleading comments in the official commentaries by the Federal Council, are enormous. In these commentaries there is the false claim for instance that the proposal was dealing with the shortage of family doctors and a legal foundation of optimal development of health care in Switzerland. “Who would oppose that?” a reader asks in a letter and protests against such trivializing manipulation. Moreover, the commentaries claim that with the new proposal the re-

sponsibilities of the federal and cantonal agencies would stay “more or less” the same. However, as another reader correctly points out, the implementation of the proposal would not only mean a radical change and massive deterioration of our well-proven health care system, but also a dangerous attack on cantonal sovereignty.

In the following we print some of the letters to the editor regarding this federal proposal. Every member of the electorate, who offers an oral or written contribution to the opinion formation process, will make a difference!

The family medicine initiative had a different goal – therefore No to “Basic Health Care”

The family doctor is in a crucial, indispensable position. For every patient and every family he is the first one to contact.

Because everybody knows this situation: he or she is plagued by symptoms of a disease and wants to get well again. The old remedies from the domestic pharmacy don’t do the trick. What next? Let’s see the family doctor.

The family doctor as a general practitioner or as a specialist in internal medicine has gone through a comprehensive and thorough training process. He knows the basics of health care, attends scientific meetings of further education regularly, is able to interpret his own X-ray scans, treat wounds, perform minor operations himself or apply a plaster cast. In many cases he will also treat children. In urgent situations he will see the patient at home. Quite often he will attend to several family members of all generations in a fam-

ily. Similar to the pastor or the teacher, the family doctor enjoys a high prestige. Swiss doctors even perform the assessment of driving abilities and co-operate closely with the Spitex and the nursing services such as the Samaritarians. Should more specialized diagnosis or treatment equipment be required, he will refer the patient to a specialist, whom he knows well and trusts, or to a hospital.

Apart from somatic illnesses, quite often the patient will first consult the family doctor for personal mischiefs or psychological problems, too, because a strong relationship of trust has been built over many years. From the first encounter it is the task of the doctor to accept the patient as a fellow human being. This will succeed if he inquires carefully what brought the patient to him, employing all of his professional knowledge and experience in that process.

When a patient is discharged from hospital he or she will always be asked to which family doctor the discharge letter is to be sent. This question means: which doctor do you trust to carry out your further treatment well?

You realize from the complex, responsible duties outlined above that the self-employed family doctor is a major stakeholder of the good, Swiss health care system which has always been organized in a federalist way.

The fact that the family doctor initiative had been signed by more than 200,000 people within only 6 months, illustrates the wish of the citizens that family medicine as it is practiced today should stay unchanged.

Dr med Andreas Bau, Schweizersholz

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Media representatives – compliant instruments of army opponents?

It was an alleged sensation when a couple of days ago, certain media representatives “exposed” – that the Swedish ambassador in Berne, together with Swiss representatives like VBS-head *Ueli Maurer* and FDP-member of the National Council and army advocate *Corina Eichenberger*, had reflected upon how to eliminate misunderstandings and scepticism among some Members of Parliament regarding the acquisition of the Gripen-Jet. The respective discussions took place with the assistance of two Swedish armaments experts, who possess the necessary technical knowledge about the jet and the purchase contracts. Also FDP-president *Philipp Müller*, known

and valued as an upright, factual and competent politician, was there. He asked questions and received answers. The arguments of the experts convinced him so that army advocate Müller conveyed the information to his party-colleagues and also convinced them of the Gripen’s acquisition. Similar discussions took place with other members of parliament. That subsequently a civil majority in Parliament voted for the Gripen does not surprise. It is obvious that a well-functioning army needs a well-functioning air force and modern material. When sensation-seeking journalists want to tout this procedure as “scandal” the question arises, where they stand themselves.

They would better put themselves out for a tenable militia than let themselves be turned into instruments for those who covertly want to abolish the army. It comes as a surprise that members of political parties who according to their party programme want to abolish the army allegedly changed wondrously to advocates for the army, overnight. At the same time the “Group for a Switzerland without army” (GSoA) which launched the referendum discreetly keeps in the background.

Dr phil Judith Barben, psychologist, publisher, scientific publicist, Thundorf

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Counter-proposal to the initiative “Yes to family medicine” is counter-productive!

Dear readers, let me start with many thanks to the editors who actually publish such letters. This kind of newspapers is crucial these days. Keep supporting them! Consider giving a subscription as a present to somebody, who might get a lot of pleasure from it for a long time. Thanks to its federalist structure the Swiss health care system is one of the best worldwide. OECD, WHO and Federal Health Department know that. But now changes are looming. The Swiss peoples' initiative “Yes to family medicine” gathered more than 200,000 signatures. Unfortunately, it was withdrawn and replaced by the current federal proposal.

The proposal, as it will be voted on, ignores the initial goals of the initiative. Adapting health care structures from the US and EU countries it would overthrow our top organization. Instead of supporting the doctors, completely new professions which are unheard of in this country are supposed to modify the health care system. Decreasing quality and higher costs would be inevitable that way.

There is something else we as free Swiss citizens cannot accept. With this law and several other camouflage amendments we

are put on a slippery slope into the authoritarian EU without noticing it. We have politicians who have been aware of this for some time. Unfortunately nobody dares to say something. A nature-loving forester like myself, however, has nothing to lose. I don't like to, but I have to do it.

In the evening of 26 April I was working at this letter to the editor. On Sunday morning (happened to be our 46th wedding anniversary) I suddenly had a “vision”. The real aim of this proposed constitutional amendment “basic health care” isn't actually a further development of our already quite advanced health care system, but rather the gradual integration of our nation into the “Moloch” EU!

Therefore “No” to this bluff package proposal! Readers' letters are supposed to be short. Anybody taking the vote seriously will get information not only from the federal commentary booklet. Watching the talk show “Arena” on television (watch and listen to proponents and adversaries carefully) and reading *Current Concerns* will help a lot.

Fritz Trachsel-Zürcher, Zell

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Where would it lead us if “specialist nurse personnel” were to decide who is allowed to see a doctor?

Thanks to the two authors for their precise and clear information on the Federal Council's bluff package about basic medical care, the counter-proposal against the popular initiative “Yes to family medicine”. The misinformed patient would love to support his or her trusted family doctor, and reckons the best way to do this is a Yes vote! But how come that even family doctors themselves act against their own interests and promote this Yes? Are they so ill-informed? Do they hope to get rid of “bobology” that way, or to reduce their work-load in the new model?

I still remember our family doctor quite vividly, when we were children. His pleasant voice when he climbed up the stairs to see me when I was sick. He was held in great esteem by the whole village, no call to see a patient at home had ever been inconvenient for him. And now Federal Councillor *Berset* opines that family doctors should be done away with and we citizens attended by APN-specialist

nurses who are to decide who is allowed to see a doctor! Where would that lead us?

This model reminds me, even if all comparisons limp, of the days when *Mao* pursued his cultural revolution. One of his crazy schemes was to force competent medical doctors into doing farm labour and surrender the patients to nursing personnel. How many have lost their lives because the qualified knowledge of the doctors was no longer wanted. But, to be sure, *Mao* himself always kept a private doctor for himself – one should never forget that – the best he could possibly find!

How will our federal personnel handle this dilemma in future? Will they also make sure they get the best opportunities to be seen by the most competent physicians without delay?

Christina Hassenstein, Berner Oberland

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Danish experiences demand a No

Switzerland has the best health care system worldwide. The people are right to have declined any centralization or economization measures so far, EU style or other. The cantons continue to be responsible for the well-proven health care system. Now a camouflage campaign is launched with phony phrases such as “Yes to basic health care”, “sustainable solutions” or “cost-effective medicine” in order to dismantle our established system. Even medical doctors have to spend a lot of time to actually comprehend the lengthy materials. Many citizens simply trust the official agencies and the media. Necessary principles such as honesty, trust and good faith, matter-of-fact information and diversity of opinions are crucial for our democracy. It is a fact, however, that information about this planned constitutional proposal and its potential far-reaching consequences is insufficient and that the entire health care system and its necessary doctor-patient-relationship, built on trust, is supposed to be dissolved step by step. In many areas “health personnel” is now supposed to replace the doctor. In Sweden and Denmark the easily accessible medical care they used to have has already been ruined for several years. We know the conditions there quite well. People have to travel long distances to get to one of the few big health care centres and they don't have constant doctor-patient relationships any longer. They are “referred” around to different places all the time. It has become a matter of luck to establish a good trustful doctor-patient-relationship. These important aspects are never mentioned but they are crucial. In order to increase the number of Swiss family doctors no law amendment is required, but a higher number of training positions, fair salaries and good working conditions in all parts of the country. That way the positive ethical attitude of the profession will be strengthened again. Therefore a clear “No” to these reckless camouflage tactics.

Urs and Lene Knoblauch, high school teacher, board-certified psychologist IAP, Fruttwilen/TG

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Aggressor – desperately searched for further action

by Willy Wimmer, former State Secretary in the German Ministry of Defence
and Vice President of the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly



Willy Wimmer.
(picture ma)

Putin hesitates and hesitates to step on the precarious aggressor-route, which the entire West – with some little variations – has laid out for him. There must prevail pure desperation in Washington while the German Chancellor, Dr An-

gela Merkel has been summoned. Slowly, but surely, the Kiev “Nuland-boys” in the Ukraine are becoming a busted flush. Billions of dollars have been invested, as Secretary of State Nuland keeps on repeating, but they cannot bring in the hoped-for harvest.

This becomes clear, above all due to the latest news coming from the German Federal Armed Forces. They state:

1. Sweden has closed its airspace for AWACS aircraft so that no reconnaissance flights – and no functions of flying command posts – can be performed from the Swedish airspace,
2. Finland noted that in Eastern Ukraine not only American mercenary troops, but also regular American troops are engaged,
3. the bulk of the Kiev Maidan fighters claim the payments for the mission in the Maidan square out of the “combat funds” promised by the United States for all remaining weeks, after the “combat funds” were allegedly paid for already for one week,
4. a train was stopped in the Ukraine on open line, whereupon all objects of value were taken away from all passengers with Russian passports.

If all this does not help to be able to seduce the Russian Federation to commit one error, which the West is so desperately waiting for, other approaches must be considered. According to media reports US Foreign Minister Kerry made clear the dimensions in a speech to the *Atlantic Council*. Any close cooperation of economic nature between the European Union and the Russian Federation threatens the hegemony of the global US-led block.

Thus, the policy of “unconditional surrender” is being set against the reflections on a “common House of Europe” and peaceful coexistence. And it would by no means come as a surprise if the German Chancellor would be asked by her tapping-friend Obama in Wash-

According to the “Bundeswehr” (German Federal Armed Forces):

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-

ington to impose a personal sanction on the Russian President in order to finally be able of convicting him as an aggressor.

So Putin could be ordered to no longer travel with his daily motorcade on the special lane of the Moscow arterial road that leads him to his house. Otherwise he would have to reckon with the famous “Level 3” of the sanction ladder – and thus the decisive blow – against his economy below the threshold to direct war. This prospect must make former SPD Chancellor candidate Steinbrück feel warm all over.

That was what he imagined, when he wanted to let the cavalry ride out against Switzerland. Such experience, however, is the business of the USA, whose policy towards their monitored friends calls to mind the grand ridings-out-of-the-fort, this time not against the Indian tribes but in the “European area”. We would hardly have imagined that the United States would one day have overexerted themselves to such an extent by illegal war campaigns that they would perceive a normal cooperation of economic nature between European neighbours as an existential threat to their self-appointed role as the “sole superpower.”

Almost everybody in Berlin now wants to be present when it comes to fight against the Russians, wherein the Russian president conveniently – and not only in the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” – is presented as a demon. We know these images, and it is not so long ago. Two people do what is reasonable and do not behave as nuts as most others. They talk with “the enemy”, to whom we

owe – more than anybody else – the German reunification.

Gerhard Schröder as the former chancellor and Philipp Missfelder are threatened with class bashing. You really cannot harm Schröder, even if in the ARD Mr Beckmann tries hard. Isn't it better if Mr Missfelder speaks with the Russian President Putin about the German officers that have been held back in the Russian-speaking part of eastern Ukraine? Even mayors may be immoderate, and it is always better to talk to someone in confidence instead – see the Chancellor – to call him on the telephone.

President Putin will probably still know how the Chancellor blackened his reputation when talking to President Obama – with the remark that he, Putin was living as if on another planet. One can say about the Russians a lot – as indeed about us Germans. However, one should remember some basic truths:

1. Even in the most horrible times the Russians were always scrupulously faithful to the contract in the core area of relations – the economic connections.
2. The US took part in two world wars, because they saw the opposite coasts at two oceans at risk with respect to their influence.
3. Since we particularly commemorate the anniversary of the outbreak of World War I this year, nobody observing the current US approach towards other states will believe what the Treaty of Versailles wanted to blame on Wilhelm II. •

(Translation Current Concerns)

The “West” and Russia

Are NATO countries already working on the question of war guilt?

by Karl Müller

The majority of the German population reject the campaign against Russia. However, this does not seem to worry those taking the decisions in the German mainstream media. On the contrary, the unbearable Russia-bashing and the campaign against the policies of its government continue unabated and are getting worse by the day.

What is the point of that? Obviously, the media people are convinced that persistent repetition of lies would eventually result in people believing them. The “experts” of “mass” manipulation have stuck to this mantra for nearly a hundred years now and document this way what they think of their fellow citizens – nothing at all. Are such people worth that we follow them?

Very obviously there are circles who want the situation in Ukraine and in Eastern Europe to escalate further and misuse the mainstream media for their purpose. You must not think twice about where they come from. For sure they reside in Washington, D.C.

The NATO countries and especially the US, are in decline, as *Kishore Mahbubani*¹, former United Nations Ambassador of Singapore, has emphasized. However, it seems that the “West” has so far not yet accepted a peaceful way of change in the world, instead it has chosen the path of aggression.

A great war makes “sense” only for the US – one is reluctant to use the word “sense” here as war is always insanity. The Americans believe: We have twice recovered economically by a world war – but what a sick kind of economic cure was that! And the interesting question still remains, who actually is that “we”?

Only after the First World War, the United States – before the war a rather insignificant power with imperial ambitions in Latin America and in the Pacific – developed into a world power whose financial and economic interests reached out to the whole world. The Second World War and its results increased these ambitions.

And today? The US faces an economic abyss. The only thing they still have is their intelligence service and their military power. The US still spend almost as much on their military as all the rest of the world together. The military potential of the United States is still devastatingly destructive and waiting for its deployment.

So much the better, according to a cynical and misanthropic mindset, since the war zone is far away. And what does it

matter if Europe will be a debris field afterwards like it was in 1918 and in 1945. The US made good money from it. And to this day US strategists demand from their government to make sure that the Eurasian states remain preoccupied with themselves and their conflicts to such a degree that they will not be able to put the world power of the United States at risk.²

What about Russia? Russia is in a difficult domestic situation. For nearly 15 years now the *Putin* government has been trying to rebuild the – mainly by the US – weakened, looted and destabilised country. This is not easy. But it is exactly what the Russian policies are focusing on. A big war could destroy all accomplished achievements. Russia has had these historical experiences several times.

Russia’s government has decided not to repeat the mistakes of the Soviet Union, wanting to keep up with the US in the arms race. Russia’s military efforts are directed at deterrence. The price for an attacker should be so high that he does not risk it. Best to let the figures speak: According to SIPRI (*Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*), the US officially spent \$ 640 billion for armament in 2013, Russia 87.8 billion dollar.³ Russia cannot be interested in a war against the United States.

But those who want a war also think about who is going to pay afterwards. Since the First World War this question has always been decided along with the question of war guilt. All warring parties were busy blaming their war opponents for having started the war.

Today we know: scientific research that has all the documents at hand has come to a different conclusion than the warring parties and their media mouthpieces. This will be no different in the present case. Nevertheless, the West is already working on the question of war guilt, and indeed it does so extremely ferociously. In a hurry, mental “facts” are being created. For example, questions about the actual events in Kiev in the crucial days from February 20 to 22, must not be asked or answered.⁴ There might be a risk a house of cards break down. Just as it is happening at present, piece by piece, with regard to the illegal NATO war of aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999, the illegality of which has been denied for 15 years. *Gerhard Schröder*, German Federal Chancellor at the time, has now taken the first step and admitted⁵ that international law had been violated.

It is obvious that the peoples of Europe do not want a war, neither then nor this time. Why should they. They know very well that they are the ones to pay the high price, that they are the ones to get killed.

Not even the media propaganda of the last weeks and months was successful in making the peoples change their mind. This upset the media, indeed. They sneer at their readers and arrogantly call them “Russia-understanders”. And now the question of war guilt is also openly discussed. The cover headline of the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” from April 26th read: “Russia wants to instigate World War III.” The newspaper quoted the Ukrainian politician *Yatsenyuk* who arrogates to be president of the country. Why does the newspaper do that? Why do they not write that *Yatsenyuk* has obviously lost his sense of reality? Does it prefer to follow *Victoria Nuland*, US Commissioner for European Affairs, whose favourite was exactly that *Yatsenyuk* – against the plans of the EU? Why does the newspaper place a comment that accuses the “West” of sleepiness – *mutatis mutandis*: “You make the same mistake today as the Western powers before the Second World War.” The message: Do not be so reticent in the confrontation with the Russians! Hit them hard! These are media war drums. Media experts know that this German newspaper likes to accept directives from Washington DC.

There is still time to do something. You have to pull off the monster’s mask. The evidence that the US has no interest to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict in Eastern Europe is obvious. The “Geneva Convention”, which offers a chance for a peaceful solution, was torpedoed from the outset. US Vice President *Biden* travelled to Kiev a few days after the signing of the Agreement and did not make any effort to moderate the political agitators in Kiev – on the contrary. The military operation of the Kievan rulers in the east of Ukraine and Odessa is a clear indication.

Europe needs to free itself from this US policy. Perish as a US vassal – is this a seductive prospect? Sanctions are the first step into war. Sanctions are a breach of international law already, because the Security Council has not declared them. No one knows how a war is going to develop and how it is going to end, once the arms have been taken up. The two world

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The “Strategy of Tension”

The coup in Kiev and resistance in eastern Ukraine

by Peter Bachmaier*



Dr Peter Bachmaier
(picture uk)

Ukraine in its present form and with its present name (“ukraina” means “borderland” and was originally not an ethnic term) was established as a state in the 20th century. The nation building was controversial. Kiev was the “Mother of Russian cities” because Prince Vladimir had established an independent polity there in the 10th century, the “Kievan Rus”, and in 988 he and all his people adopted Christianity in its East-Byzantine version. After long centuries of Polish-Lithuanian rule the Cossacks, i.e. free peasants and warriors on the steppe in the south of present-day Ukraine, founded a quasi-governmental federation, which conducted a struggle against the Polish nobility. In 1654 the Cossack hetman Bogdan Khmelnytsky asked the Russian Czar to be integrated into the Russian Empire. In the course of the Polish division in the late 18th century the majority of today’s Ukraine was integrated into the Russian Empire whereas Galicia and Bukovina came to Austria. Austria practiced the language and culture of the Ruthenians, as they were called at that time, while Russia made Russian the sole state language.

Ukraine as a child of the Soviet policy of nationalities

As part of the Soviet policy of nationalities, the *Ukrainian Soviet Republic* was founded in 1918 and existed until 1991. Although the Republic witnessed the horrors of the civil war, of collectivization and the ensuing famine, or of political purges and the Second

World War, it was, however, finally a center of advanced science and industry as well.

Ukraine: one country, two languages

The Dniepr River divides the country into two parts: the east and the south with Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk, Odessa and the Crimea where all speak Russian and are pro-Russian in their attitude, while the West’s language with Lviv is Ukrainian and has an anti-Russian and anti-Soviet attitude. Since 1991, the only official language has been Ukrainian.¹

In 2012, after a long struggle, Russian was again admitted by an Act of Parliament as a regional official language in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, however, it was abolished again by the new government in late February 2014.

The Crimean peninsula was occupied from the 16th to the 18th century by the Ottomans and, in 1762, it became part of Russia which built a naval port in Sevastopol. The population of the Crimea is mostly Russian. In 1954, the Crimea was allocated to Ukraine by *Nikita Khrushchev* in exchange for the Taganrog area. After 1991, the population of the Crimea decided to establish an autonomous republic with a president, a government and a parliament within Ukraine.

In December 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic declared the country’s independence after a popular vote, which was carried out after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1994, Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons and Russia, the US and the UK declared in the Memorandum of Budapest, that they wanted to protect the security of Ukraine.

Ukraine, as a victim of globalization

The Ukrainian nomenclature, that is the elite of the Soviet bureaucracy in Ukraine, wanted independence from Moscow and so turned to the West. In 1992, the Ukrainian government decided to join the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and in 2004, it joined the World Trade Organization (WTO). The prerequisites for this

step were the liberalization of prices and the exchange rate, the opening of borders to foreign capital, liberalization, privatization and deregulation. The entire economy of the country was auctioned. Fifty per cent of about 500,000 holdings were closed and others were acquired by foreign corporations and domestic oligarchs. The newly formed oligarchy played a determining role and became the main internal problem of Ukraine because it exerted an essential influence on politics and the media. The gap between the oligarchy and the mass of the population is the largest in Europe.

The result of the integration of the country in the process of globalization is disastrous: the *gross domestic product* (GDP) went down to 70% between 1991 and 2013, electricity production to 65%, steel production to 43% and the number of scientists in industrial research to 30%. The minimum wage is 200 euro according to official figures (in reality it is less), the minimum pension is at 160 euro (now 80 euro) per month, and 80% of the population live below the poverty line. The total population of Ukraine decreased from 52 to 46 million and if we subtract the people who are constantly living outside the country, it is at 38 million people. Other signs of decline are a low technology rate, the falling behind all originally less developed neighbors and the migration of a quarter of the country’s working population. The neo-liberal model, which currently shows its effects in Ukraine, pushes the economy towards the global periphery and transfers it into a semi-colonial status dependent on the West.

Ukraine is lagging far behind in the ranking of the world’s countries according to their economic development. According to the extent of its GDP, Ukraine (according to the CIA) ends up in the 140th place with 7,500 US dollars per capital today. The 141st place is held by today’s Iraq. British Honduras, Bosnia-Herzegovina,

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“Are NATO countries already ...”

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wars have taught Europe. In the summer of 1914, the soldiers wanted to be home again at Christmas. In the end the war lasted more than 4 years – with more than 16 million people killed.

How can the warmongers be stopped? Certainly not with fatalism! Every citizen

is required. It will not be of any help to leave things to those “up there” or to wait for a “power”ful halt. The creativity of reason, morality and humanity are without limits. •

¹ See *Kishore Mahbubani*: A view of China teaches wisdom in dealing with Russia. *Current Concerns*, No. 9, from 04.22.2014

² For example, very recently *George Friedman* of Stratfor, in his article on April 8, 2014: “US De-

fense Policy in the Wake of the Ukrainian Affair” (www.stratfor.com/weekly/us-defense-policy-wake-ukrainian-affair)

³ Sam Perlo – Freeman, Carina Solmirano: Trends in World Military Expenditure in 2013, SIPRI *Fact Sheet* April 2014

⁴ On April 10, the ARD magazine Monitor called into question the government’s claim in Kiev that the snipers who shot at demonstrators and policemen had fired on behalf of President Yanukovich. (www.wdr.de/tv/monitor/sendungen/2014/0410/maidan.php5)

⁵ Thus says the *St. Galler Tagblatt* of 1 May 2014

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Albania and Namibia, Algeria and El Salvador rank even before Ukraine.

The Orange Revolution in 2004

This development triggered a deep-seated and well-founded discontent among the population which led to the "Orange Revolution" in 2004. Via its aid organizations, in particular the Foundation "Widroschdennja" (rebirth) of *George Soros*, the United States funded a mass uprising, which was carried out along the lines of the American political scientist *Gene Sharp's* textbook "From Dictatorship to Democracy". The Orange Revolution was a new method of performing a coup, making use of "soft power" means with the help of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).² An organization that played a significant role in the planning and training of activists in the uprising, was the Serbian agency "Otpo" (resistance) in Belgrade, which is headed by *Srdja Popovi*.

In the TV show "Weltjournal", the Austrian channel ORF broadcast a detailed report on the background to this Orange Revolution on 1 May 2011. In an interview, the member of the Ukrainian movement "Pora", *Dmitro Potechin* said that the change that had happened in Egypt would also be possible "in our region": "I'm thinking of Belarus or a new

movement in Ukraine. And then it is Russia's turn!"

Viktor Yushchenko became President and in January 2005 he appointed the government, headed by *Yulia Tymoshenko*, who had become the richest woman in Ukraine during the transition period. In March 2007, *Yulia Tymoshenko* was in Washington where she offered the Americans to relinquish to them the natural gas pipeline leading through Ukraine.

Russia's encircling

Geopolitically, the goal of the 2004 revolution was to contain Russia and lead the country towards NATO. In his groundbreaking book "The Grand Chessboard" (1997) *Zbigniew Brzezinski* wrote: "Ukraine is the pivotal point. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire." In Malta, *Mikhail Gorbachev* had "renounced" Eastern Europe in 1989, however, with the proviso that NATO would not extend its scope to the east. In 1990, Secretary of State *James Baker* declared that NATO did not want an inch of Eastern European soil.

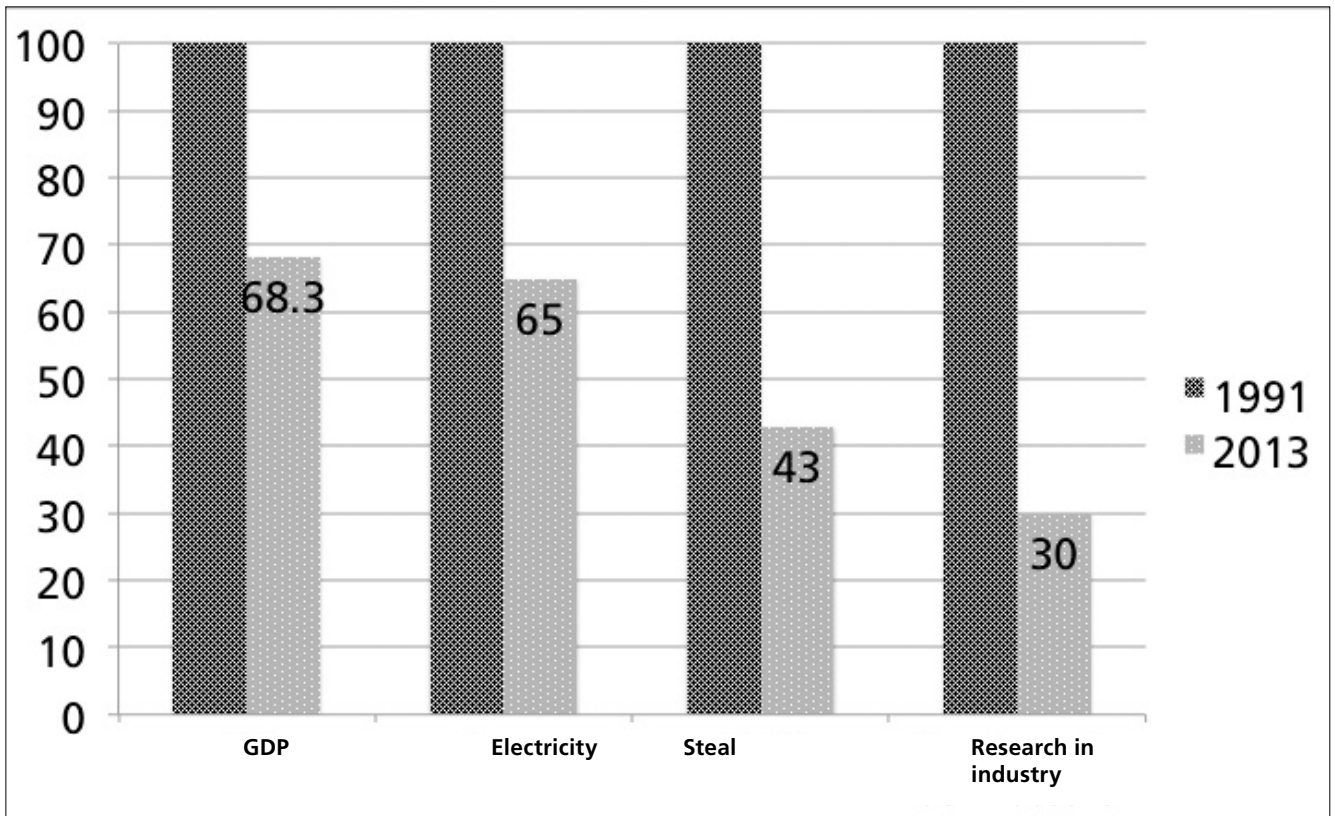
In 1997, however, the NATO-sponsored security alliance GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Moldova) was created, in 2004 the Central European countries, the Baltic States, Bulgaria and Romania joined NATO. The US built a number of other military bases in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and decided to build missile defense bases in Poland and Romania.

Since the beginning of its independence Ukraine maintained relations with NATO and joined the NATO Partnership for Peace in 1994. In 1999, the NATO opened a Liaison Office in Kyiv. Since 1997, Ukraine has regularly taken part in maneuvers that NATO conducted in the Black Sea. Ukrainian units also participated in NATO operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, where they operated side by side with Polish and Lithuanian military. Since 2007, Ukraine has been involved in NATO's operation *Active Endeavor*, which serves to control the Mediterranean.

On 20 May 2008, however, President *Viktor Yushchenko* signed a decree on the termination of the Russian-Ukrainian agreement on the stationing of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol by 2017. This decree was the beginning of a massive information and political campaign against the Russian Black Sea Fleet and simultaneously a campaign for the NATO membership of Ukraine. In 2008, Ukraine under President *Yushchenko* decided to join NATO as a member.

However, the Orange Revolution came to nothing and was a disappointment for the population. *Yushchenko* and *Tymoshenko* fell out with each other for personal reasons. In early 2010, the chairman of the "Party of Regions", *Viktor Yanukovich*, who was supported by the East Ukrainian oligarchy, was elected President. The party won a majority in Parliament. *Yanukovich*

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Decrease of real economy in Ukraine 1991–2013 (according to statements of the Ukrainian politician Natalja Witrenko on 28.2.2014 in the European Parliament).

"The 'Strategy of Tension'"

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ovych could however not change the situation principally.

On 21 November 2013, after years of negotiations with the European Union, the Ukrainian government announced that it would not sign the Association Agreement with the EU. Immediately afterwards protest rallies took place in Kiev and the major cities of western Ukraine, which were reminiscent of the Orange Revolution in 2004. Ukraine's retreat from the Association Agreement represented a serious setback for the Eastern Partnership with EU and for NATO. The Eastern Partnership had been established in 2009 at the initiative of Poland and Sweden and was intended to associate the former countries of the Soviet Union (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldavia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) with the EU. On 29 November 2013 at the EU summit in Vilnius, only Georgia and Moldova signed the Association Agreement.

The Ukrainian authorities based their step on the fact that they wanted to protect their "national security interests". In fact, the Association Agreement provided "a close military cooperation and involvement of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in tactical EU battle groups". Economically, the EU called for ending government price policy, rapid privatization of the remaining state assets, cuts in pensions and in the administration as well as the opening of the Ukrainian market for Western companies. In comparison, Ukrainian companies would be unable to compete in the West.

The EU, thus, cannot gain much from Ukraine in economic terms. Ukraine would be a burden on them. But an EU association would also be economically disastrous for Ukraine, and therefore the decision of the Ukrainian government not to sign the agreement was better for both sides. On the occasion of the meeting between Putin and Yanukovich on 17 December 2013 in Moscow, which was of "strategic nature", gas discounts and a billion loan were agreed upon. Russia offered to invest in Ukrainian government securities from the fund for national prosperity amounting to 15 billion dollars, and to reduce the price of gas by one third.

The influence of Western NGOs

From the beginning, the US did not agree with Yanukovich, who had relations with Moscow, moreover he opposed a membership with NATO and extended the agreement with Russia on the stationing of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol by 20 years, so they began to make provisions for a regime change.

The Foundation "Rebirth" organized a meeting of NGO heads of Ukraine in 2011, on the occasion of which the dou-

bling of the NGO budget was decided. In Ukraine 2,200 US and European NGOs are currently active. The *National Endowment for Democracy* ranges at the top, whose deputy chairman *Nadia Diuk* directed the activities of the opposition in 2013 and 2014 in Kiev. The coordination is made by the agency USAID, which is under the leadership of the American Embassy. The contacts with the opposition parties were activated in 2012.

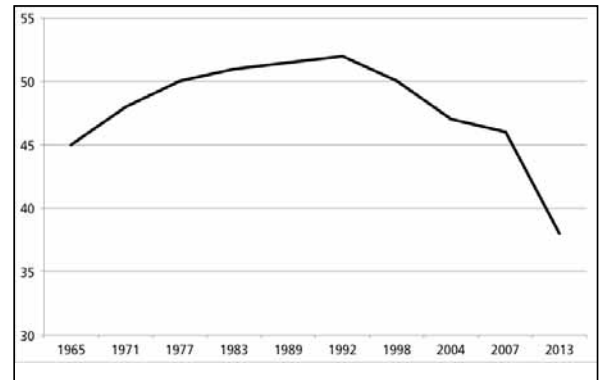
The *East European Democratic Centre* in Warsaw, funded by the *Charles Stewart Mott Foundation* and directed by *Zbigniew Brzezinski* plays a major role. With the help of NGOs the United States create so-called "fifth columns" and reshape the social awareness and culture, the way of thinking and traditional values.

Western media such as *Radio Liberty*, *Voice of America*, *BBC*, *Deutsche Welle* and social networks have been broadcasting in Ukrainian and Russian language from the West since the time of the Cold War. Media corporations like *Murdoch*, *Springer* and *Bertelsmann* set up their own media in Ukraine, serving cultural influence. Western universities established close relations with Ukrainian universities, funded research projects and distributed scholarships among Ukrainian students who wanted to study in the West.

In 2006, the "Art Arsenal", a huge museum and exhibition complex, was founded in Kiev on the initiative of President Yushchenko, whose aim was to make Ukraine appear to be part of European culture and to circulate contemporary Western art. In 2012, the International Biennial for Contemporary Art took place there, led by curator *David Elliott* and attended by around 100 artists from 30 countries. The Art Arsenal's task is to circulate contemporary Ukrainian art in the West. In April 2014, by mediation of the American art manager of Ukrainian descent *Konstantin Akinsha*, it organized an exhibition entitled "I'm just a drop in the ocean" about the art of revolution on the Maidan at the "Künstlerhaus" in Vienna. Thus, the events on the Maidan were to be presented from the perspective of pro-Western protesters through the "works of art" that were brought about by the revolution (for example, posters).

The coup was planned in Kiev

The dissatisfaction of the population with the miserable economic situation and with corruption within the government was quite understandable. The protest movement on the Maidan consisted of different forces, including those from leftist and an-



Population of Ukraine 1965–2013 in millions

archist groups. However, the driving force was the United States that controlled the protests against the failure to sign the Association Agreement with the EU after 21 November 2013.

Therefore, preparations had been made months before by the American embassy in Kiev through training activists as well as holding a conference on information strategies and influencing politicians. A number of American and pro-American politicians came to Ukraine and gave speeches on the Maidan, as for example *John McCain*, *Joseph Murphy*, *Victoria Nuland*, but also *Jaroslav Kaczynski*, *Mikhail Saakashvili*, *Guido Westerwelle*, *Elmar Brok* and many others. Poland also made a significant contribution to regime change, as the left Polish weekly newspaper *Nie* reported on 18 April 2014. At the expense of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 86 members of the "Right Sector" had been trained for the riots as long as during four weeks in a training center of police forces in the vicinity of Warsaw in September 2013.

On 16 January, the Ukrainian parliament issued repressive laws to limit the protests. Then, in the night from 19th to 20th January, there were violent protests by the opposition that erected barricades in the Grushevski street in the center and occupied the Ministry of Justice, the mayor's office and other government buildings. The center of Kiev was devastated. An extremist violent troop called "Right Sector" put itself at the forefront of the revolution. *Klitschko* and the leaders of the parliamentary opposition lost control of the demonstrators.

In 11 of the 24 local government authorities, the pro-Western opposition took over the power, dismissed the governors, did no longer accept the government in Kiev and took a number of decisions. The red and black flag of the Right Sector and the EU flag were declared the official symbols on their territory and the activities of the "Party of Regions" were prohibited as "against the people". At the Security Conference in Munich in February, US Secre-

"The 'Strategy of Tension'"

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tary of State *Kerry* said "Nowhere is the fight for a democratic, European future more important than in Ukraine!"

The violence escalated at the very moment when Yanukovich was willing to take on all claims of the parliamentary opposition. The actual escalation was caused by professional snipers who shot at both sides to incite the anger of the people and trigger a general chaos. As the doctor *Olga Bogomolez* testified, the shot protesters and the police had both the same injuries.

On 21 February 2014, a so-called EU mediation mission under the leadership of the German, French and Polish Foreign Ministers and with the participation of delegates from the Russian government achieved an agreement which provided that the old 2004 Constitution should be restored, a government of national unity be established, the police and the armed demonstrators were to be withdrawn and early elections be carried out. This would have meant that both sides could have saved their faces to a certain degree and safeguard their interest.

The Yatsenyuk government is not legitimate

One day after the signing of the compromise agreement everything was different, all of a sudden. On 22 February, a day after the agreement between Yanukovich and the parliamentary opposition, a coup was carried out in Kiev. The "Right Sector" occupied the parliament and took over control in Kiev. Some MPs were beaten, some were refused entry. President Yanukovich was dismissed by vote, although a three quarter majority of members would have been required by the Constitution. The MP *Turchinov* was elected new president, partly because the MPs present voted twice and because MPs from the "Party of Regions", paid by the oligarchs, changed sides and voted for the new power. The Parliament elected the Chairman of the "Fatherland Party", *Arseny Yatsenyuk*, who was the candidate of the US State Department, to be new Prime Minister. On the website of his foundation "Open Ukraine" – which has by now been deleted – the following partners were listed: *Church of Scientology, The German Marshall Fund, Chatham House – Royal Institute of Foreign Affairs, Rockefeller Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Foundation "Rebirth" – Renaissance Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy*. The new government is illegitimate because it did not come into power by way of general elections, but by a rigged vote in the *Verkhovna Rada*.

The old government and the officials of the ministries were dismissed. Yulia Tymoshenko was released from the prison hospital and came to Kiev, where she announced her return to power on the Maidan.

Among the governors appointed by Kiev there are familiar faces from the Ukrainian political circles, such as the third richest man in Ukraine, *Igor Kolomoiski*, now governor of Dnepropetrovsk, co-owner of the "Private Bank", the largest Ukrainian bank. Kolomoiski is a dual Ukrainian-Israeli citizen and is an ally of Yulia Tymoshenko. The new governor of the Donetsk region, *Sergei Taruta*, manages the largest mining company in Ukraine and is a companion of Viktor Yushchenko.

Ukraine is currently facing national bankruptcy, which could have been avoided with the help of the agreement with Russia drafted in December 2013. Now everything has become more difficult. Russia reintroduced the old system according to which Ukraine pays the world price for natural gas. The IMF offered a loan of 15 billion US dollars, but that is bound to the usual conditions: reduction of government spending, not subsidizing the currency, opening of borders and the abolition of restrictions on the sale of agricultural land. The EU prescribes the same conditions as the IMF. The EU loans will be paid by the taxpayers. In case the Association Agreement is signed, the EU will probably, as in the case of Greece, have to put together several "rescue packages".

Already on 27 March, the *Verkhovna Rada* voted for the state budget dictated by the International Monetary Fund, something that will massively lower the standard of living of Ukrainians. Spending should be greatly reduced and taxes increased. The price of gas for households was increased by 50% and the currency unpegged. The government announced the plan to save 1.2 billion US dollars by freezing the minimum wage and reducing subsidies and social benefits. Also, mass layoffs are planned, including 80,000 police officers, all this despite the ongoing tensions in the streets.

The uprising in the Crimea and in eastern Ukraine

On 28 May 1997, Ukraine and Russia had signed an agreement which provided for a 20-year presence of the Russian fleet in the Crimea and the possibility of automatic extension. After the new government Yatsenyuk had envisaged the termination of the Agreement and the country's accession to NATO, the Parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea decided to reunite with Russia, which was confirmed by the referendum of 16 March 2014. The

1948 Charter of the United Nations recognizes the right to self-determination of peoples as the core of international law. Therefore, the secession of the Crimea can be regarded as legitimate, because there is no doubt that the vast majority of the population advocated the Crimea's reunification with Russia.

NATO has upgraded since then: combat aircraft were transferred to Poland and patrol over Poland, Romania and the Baltic countries. NATO carries out naval maneuvers in the Black Sea with American, Bulgarian and Romanian warships.

The uprising in eastern Ukraine consists of self-defense forces of the Russian-speaking population. The Russian government declared that they would not annex the territories of eastern Ukraine, but it supported the independence of a federalized Ukraine. At the talks in Geneva on 16 April it agreed with the disarmament of these forces, but under the condition that the armed groups such as the "Right Sector" in Kiev and in western Ukraine laid down their arms, as well.

The uprising in eastern Ukraine, which has developed since the coup in Kiev in February, has its roots not only in the cultural differences between East and West and the disregard of the interests of the East, but also in the general deterioration of the economic situation and the hopelessness of the population that must live with an inflation of about 50%. The population is putting up resistance to the illegitimate government in Kiev and the anti-Russian forces, belonging to the government, as well as to the encroachment by America. A real improvement of the situation can ultimately only be achieved by a withdrawal of the US who are endorsing this government. •

¹ Jörg Baberowski. *Zwischen den Imperien: Warum hat der Westen beim Konflikt mit Russland derartig versagt? Weil er nicht im Ansatz die Geschichte der Ukraine begreift.* (Between the empires: Why has the West totally failed in the conflict with Russia? Because it does not understand anything about the history of Ukraine). *Die Zeit*, No. 12, 13.3.2014

² Natalja Narotchnizkaja (ed.). *Oranschewye seti ot Belgrada do Bishkeka [The orange networks from Belgrade to Bishkek]*, St. Petersburg 2008

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“The central event of the last century – the awakening of Asia”

Multi-perspectival view of the world as a peace-building measure – Leipzig Book Fair Prize for the Indian author Pankaj Mishra

by Thomas Schaffner

The events in and around the Ukraine show once again: If conflicts on our planet are to be resolved peacefully and without war, a highly differentiated approach to processes and circumstances is necessary. In doing so, we must have the courage to think outside of the box. Constrictions of the view are to be avoided, any possible propaganda, from wherever it may come, is to be rejected. A multi-perspectival approach to better identify the true events is – not just here – the order of the day. With the contributions of Singapore’s diplomat Kishore Mahbubani and of various experts of international law, Current Concerns in recent numbers has tried to act in this direction and to contribute to peaceful resolutions of conflicts in accordance with the existing international law.

The following reflections on a recently published book aim at to serving this concern of peaceful coexistence through better mutual understanding. They are about an author from India, on whom this year’s “Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding” was bestowed. His name is Pankaj Mishra. The award-winning work is entitled “From the Ruins of Empire. The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia”. A challenging book, for us “Westerners” in many ways, and also a deeply shameful one. What we proudly carry into the world as Western values, has been conceived there for a long time now as naked interest-driven policies, sometimes as pure hypocrisy, not even barely covering up imperialistic and even racist ideas, that was the basic view of the Leipzig prize winner, who with his work is in line with the tradition of the already mentioned Kishore Mahbubani and others. However, it is not his purpose “to replace a Euro-centric or West-centric perspective with an equally problematic Asia-centric one” (Mishra, p.8). Instead, his concern and probably also one of the main reasons for the jury to award a non-European, is seeking to help avoid dangerous mistakes in the West through a multi-perspectival approach. It is therefore a high-quality peace project, an antidote against the ideology of an allegedly inevitable clash of civilizations.

Pankaj Mishra, born in Northern India in 1969, lives near the Himalaya and in London. He has been a visiting professor at Wellesley College and at the University College London. He writes for the “New

York Review of Books” and for the “New Yorker”.

His most recent book opens with a big-bang – a big-bang prima vista not for us “Westerners”, no, but for the Asian world: keyword Tshushima.

In May 1905 in that very city, a large part of the Russian fleet was defeated by a small Japanese fleet under the command of Admiral *Togo Heihachiro*. According to US President *Theodore Roosevelt*, “the greatest phenomenon the world has ever seen” (quoted in Mishra, p. 9). This battle, hardly known to us today’s Westerners, is the starting point of Pankaj Mishra’s statements. Thus, not only a European power had been defeated by a non-European country for the first time since the Middle Ages, in fact this “thunderbolt” (*Lord Curzon*, Viceroy of India) was recognized as a world-his orical turning point throughout all of Asia – even if in the 20th century the West was going to weigh the events quite differently, i.e. place the emphasis on the two world wars and the atomic stalemate of the Cold War.

Mishra’s main concern is to provide us Westerners with a different view of the world, a vision that mercilessly debunks the West’s Eurocentric remainders. More than once even a quite well-read contemporary must admit to have never really dealt with Asian perspectives in depth.

Or who would have mentioned the year 1905 and Tsushima as an important starting point for the decades of Asia’s process of renewal? Who would have been able to name grand Asian thinkers’ reactions to the Japanese victory? It was perceived all around, by *Mustafa Kemal*, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, *Sun Yat-sen*, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, *Rabindranath Tagore*, *Abdurreshid Ibrahim*, but also by Arabic, Persian, Vietnamese and Indonesian nationalists: “The Whites” were no longer invincible, or in the words of *Mohandas Gandhi*: “[...] so far and wide have the roots of Japanese victory spread that we cannot now visualize all the fruit it will put forth.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 1)

The roots of the Bandung Conference in 1955

Those who had orientation problems while reading the above list of great non-white personalities will read the book by Mishra with great profit. All the others too, and too often, far too often one becomes aware of one’s own projections on the Asian map, that means to become aware of a “tunnel view” clinging to West-



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ern tradition, recalling the *Goethe* quotation, when the earth spirit puts Faust in his place with the words, “Thou’rt like the spirit, thou dost comprehend, Not me!” (Faust, Part I, Night),

Need an example? Japan, “opened” by *Commodore Perry* in 1853 with the infamous gunboat diplomacy, proved to be an apt pupil of the West, militarized and became the imperial, genocidal power, stopped only by the United States, finally by the atomic bomb. Such is the interpretation of Western history books from this perspective, which, with few exceptions, for example the German japanologist *Florian Coulmas*, might also justify the nuclear strike relatively easily. Mishra does not conceal the ugly and murderous grimace of Japanese militarism, especially in the context of the Second World War, by any means, but he embeds it in the historical context. That after the victory of 1905 students from numerous Asian countries, from Turkey, China, India, Indonesia, etc. flocked to Japan, where they were enthusiastically supported, so that they could learn from Japan, is one thing, which we hardly noticed in the West. Another such thing is the fact that later, in the context of the Second World War, the Japanese soldiers were initially welcomed as liberators from the Dutch domination in many parts of In-

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donesia. That, with its “pan-Asianism”, the “Greater East Asia Congress” of 1943 in Tokyo, after Japan had declared the “liberation of Asia” a military target, was more than a Japanese fantasy, is even more difficult to swallow for us Westerners. That this Congress in Tokyo in 1943 had even “created the spirit that then went into the Bandung Conference of 1955”, as Burmese leader *Ba Maw* said, quoted by Mishra (Mishra, p. 250), that thus the Non-Aligned Movement had been created – as a Westerner you have to read that more than once: the militarist Japan, the ally of the Third Reich, as a spiritual co-ancestor of that loose confederation of states which wanted to go a “third way” between communism and capitalism, [i.e.] the Western colonial powers including the USA?

**Japan’s conquests
and their long-term effects ...**

Though not wanting to downplay the Japanese militarism and its atrocities, the newly crowned Leipzig laureate Mishra stressed several times that without Japan’s conquest of Asia decolonization would not have progressed so quickly: “Japan’s conquest of Asia had sapped British will to hold on to India” (Mishra, p. 252). Even *Mossadegh* in Iran, who did not survive the nationalization of the oil industry operated by the British long, pointed to the Asians’ freedom struggle. And in the 60s the long-time Prime Minister of Singapore *Lee Kuan Yew* gave the following, quite well Japan-critical summary: “My colleagues and I are of the generation of young men who went through the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation and emerged determined that no one – neither the Japanese nor the British – had the right to push and kick us around. We were determined that we could govern ourselves and bring up children in a country where we can be proud to be self-respecting people. When the war came to an end in 1945, there was never a chance of the old type of British colonial system ever being recreated. The scales had fallen from our eyes, and we saw for ourselves that the local could run the country.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 251)

**... a sweet fruit,
to pick only after the capitulation**

Also *Mustapha Hussain*, Malaysian nationalist, spoke, according to Mishra, for so many Asians when he wrote about Japan: “Although the Japanese occupation was described as one of severe hardship and brutality, it left something positive, a sweet fruit to be plucked and enjoyed only after the surrender.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 253) Imagine, Europe had given such a comment about the German Nazis in ret-

respect ... The imperialism and at times open racism of the West had led that far. This must always be kept in mind in such statements, if you do not want to encourage new anti-Asian resentment.

Where we in the West quickly presume to make a clear distinction between black and white also in other regions of the world, Mishra designs differentiating shades of gray. That the mood towards Japan capsized understandably during the 20s and 30s in Asia, is not only shown by the opinion of Lee Kuan Yew, but also by countless quotations of leading personalities. Thereby their scourging of the western, white racism towards Asians always remains – Mishra does not even have to quote the racially-colored remarks of the US elite about the “Yellow Peril” and the “Japs”, as well-known in the West, or the peculiar facts that the United States in Second World War interned the “Japanese Americans” and the “Italian Americans” but not the “German Americans” – did it probably have to do with the keyword “nordicizing the white race” ...?

**The beacon of Tshushima
and the Japanese Constitution**

But where did the non-Japanese Asians see the secret of the Japanese’s strength around 1905? Not in a “militaristic gene”, as some US psychologists assumed about the Germans “Wotan gene” after the war, no, the secret of this strength was seen in the Japanese Constitution. And, according to Mishra, “armed by its example, political activists across Asia helped fuel a series of popular constitutional revolutions against ossified autocracies (defeated Russia itself lurched into one in 1905)” (Mishra, p. 4).

Who in the West knows or has so far been interested in the fact that the Persians created a National Assembly in 1906, against exactly this background? That the Young Turks forced the Sultan to restore the Constitution? That in the same year, and against this background the Egyptians rose against the British? Mishra sees the fall of the Empire in China in 1911 also in this “Tsushima-context”. Even at the time when Japan threatened China, *Mao Zedong* also could say a Japanese poem about the victory by heart in 1905.

Mishra does not conceal that the victory of Tshushima led to racist revenge desires in many Asian countries, it also led to Social Darwinist ideas of a war of the races and the struggle for survival – against the background of shame and humiliation that had been suffered from whites, who supposedly took upon themselves “the burden of the white man”. In China, for example, they predicated millions of people on opium and had signs installed with the words: “for foreigners only” and “dogs prohibited”, which according to *Amy Chua* and *Jed Rubenfeld*

in their latest book could only be understood as “access for Chinese and dogs not allowed” (Chua, Rubenfeld p. 279, footnote 27) quoted in our history books incorrectly, though analogous.

**Gandhi: Peoples of the East –
awakened from their lethargy**

However, Mishra says unmistakably: “One thing though that Tsushima was not immediately able to change, was the superiority of Western arms and Western economy; the latter had been forced upon Asia and Africa throughout most of the 19th century.” (Mishra, p. 15) Thus, under German leadership, the Chinese Boxers were brutally massacred, the US knocked down a rebellion in the Philippines, the British fought the Boers in South Africa with the help of Indian soldiers. In 1905 and the years thereafter, the West did not yet renounce the dominion over its colonies. “But Japan’s victory over Russia accelerated an irreversible process of intellectual and partly political decolonization.” (Mishra, p. 6)

The former prophecies of Sun Yat-sen and Gandhi were partly fulfilled in the 1950s according to Mishra: As stated by Sun Yat-sen, the victory of 1905 filled Asia with the hope, “of shaking off the yoke of European restriction and domination and regaining their own rightful position in Asia” (quoted in Mishra, p. 7) and as Gandhi put it: “the people of the East” were finally “waking up from their lethargy” (quoted in Mishra, p. 7). In the end, according to Mishra, Europeans and Americans would have had to recognize “that they had underestimated the Asian ability to assimilate modern ideas, techniques, and institutions - the ‘secrets’ of Western power - and then to turn them against the west itself.” (Mishra, p. 7) The West “had failed to notice the intense desire for equality and dignity among peoples whom Europe’s most influential thinkers, from *Hegel* and *Marx* to *John Stuart Mill*, had deemed unfit for self-rule.” (Mishra, p. 7)

**Polyperspective approach
is to help avoid errors**

Today it has become obvious that for most people in this world – the Singaporean diplomat and political scientist of the University of Singapore, *Kishore Mahbubani* usually speaks of the 88% non-Westerners, “the central event of the last century for the majority of the world’s population was the intellectual and political awakening of Asia and its emergence from the ruins of both Asian and European empires.” (Mishra, p. 8) And it was not the two world wars and the Cold War!

To acknowledge this fact also means to understand the continuing transformation

“To defend one’s own airspace sovereignly and independently”

Why the Gripen is a must for Switzerland

by Thomas Kaiser

The history of the Swiss Air Force is turbulent, and one can almost call it an irony of fate, that exactly a hundred years after its founding a public vote is pending, which will ultimately decide on the continuation of this important pillar of the army. With a special coin and two commemorative post-stamps we remember the foundation of the Swiss Air Force 100 years ago and the formation of the Swiss aerobatic squadron *Patrouille Suisse* (Swiss Patrol) 50 years ago. Below you’ll find a short historical outline of the origin, development, and the importance of the Swiss Air Force.

When in summer of 1914, during the so called July crisis, within a very short time signs of war came up, Switzerland had to expect to be drawn into the – at that time – European conflict. In 1914 our country was only inadequately prepared for this war. At that time, as today, a great number of politicians were of the misleading opinion that “eternal peace” had broken out in Europe, as there had not been any major military confrontational wars on our continent since the German-Prussian War in 1870/71. With the two Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913 the



Specially minted coin of Swissmint. (picture thk)

bloody war returned to Europe, but at that time the Balkans were still very far away.

Federal Council decreed “First Swiss Air Service”

At that time the Swiss army was only partly prepared for a great war which might as well have taken place on Swiss soil, because of the Franco-German enmity. In no way did there exist a power-

“The central event of the last ...”

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of the world, and to do so according to the ideas and objectives of the once subaltern peoples, and not according to the image of the West! In his texts (see his homepage: www.mahbubani.net) Kishore Mahbubani usually talks of a “major historical aberration”, an aberration of history when he speaks of the last 200 years, the period of Western hegemony and: the development, the reawakening of Asia, particularly China and India, which starting from the year 1 and lasting to the year 1820, had been the two largest economies. This rise of Asia and the decline of the West were irreversible – and it would be better the West seized the proffered hand of Asia to cooperate, for the benefit of a peaceful coexistence of all people on this planet, and not just for the benefit of the 12 per cent Westerners.

In his book, Mishra presents the most important thinkers and players during the long-term renewal process in Asia. He concedes Western readers to be confused with respect to the diverse perspectives taken by Asians. However, he does not mean “to replace a Euro-centric or West-centric per-

spective with an equally problematic Asia-centric one” (Mishra, p. 8). Rather, a poly-perspective approach is to help prevent dangerous mistakes in the West.

Al-Afghani, Liang Qichao – central thinkers of the 20th century

Who knows them, the main protagonist in Mishra’s book that have not even been mentioned so far? *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*, living from 1838 to 1897, Muslim, political admonisher and sharp-tongued journalist. And *Liang Qichao*, China’s intellectual centre of the early 20th century, who lived from 1873 to 1929. Mishra considers both personalities to be the central pivots in the development of nationalist and mass movements aiming at liberation.

Other personalities presented by Mishra are *Ho Chi Minh*, *Sun Yat-sen*, *Rabindranath Tagore*, *Ali Shariati*, *Sayyid Qutb*, *Mohandas* also known as *Mahatma Gandhi*.

Mishra deliberately chose personalities, less well-known in the West, to draw attention to the continuity: This way the ideas of Liang Qichao were central not only to Mao Zedong, but also to his successors in China,

Patrouille Suisse

thk. In 1964, in the middle of the Cold War, during the 50th jubilee year of the air force and on the occasion of the national Swiss Exhibition in Lausanne, it came to the foundation of the Swiss aerobatic squadron *Patrouille Suisse*. It was a display of Helvetic precision and readiness for defence and demonstrated determination towards every potential attacker inwardly as well as outwardly. The idea to show the aerobatic capabilities to a wide audience had emerged already in 1959. Two double patrols of British *Hunter* aircraft were supposed to train for demonstration purposes. They showed their skills at the national Swiss Exhibition, and this was the birth of the *Patrouille Suisse*, which was viewed only in its own country, under strict observance of the neutrality till 1978. In the course of time four aircraft became six, and instead of the *Hunter*, pilots flew and trained on the *Tiger* since 1995, which was faster and more agile.

ful air force at the beginning of the war. Although the Swiss were among the pio-

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al-Afghani, however, paved the way for *Ataturk*, *Nasser* and *Ayatollah Khomeini* and is today intensively discussed in the Islamic world. The ideas of the above mentioned personalities may not please us, so Mishra, but the knowledge of them gives us a better understanding of today’s world. A concern that a European obliged to the Enlightenment should be able to welcome. And he has more than earned a book price in Leipzig.

The central ideas of al-Afghani and Liang Qichao and others will be presented in subsequent articles because of their significance for the understanding of today’s world. •

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neers of flight – it is especially worth recalling *Oskar Bider* in this context (cf. *Current Concerns*, no. 15 of 21.4.2013) –, but the military benefits were not yet understood at that time. However, on 31 July 1914, the situation changed with the general mobilization of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, so to say over night. Major *Theodor Real*, pilot and instructor in the Cavalry, had to quickly set up an air force by order of the Federal Council. Already on 3 August, after the German Declaration of war against France, the Federal Council decreed the “First Swiss Air Service”. Major Real set up the first Swiss Air Force with eight aircraft and ten pilots. At that time, the majority of the planes were privately owned and the number of available machines was extremely humble. Initially during the first world war the air force played a minor role and did not exert a decisive influencing in this war, although the importance of the military air combat, aerial reconnaissance and assistance in attack increased over time. The air force became a major force in the course of time, besides the Army and Navy.

Establishment of an operational air defense force

In the 1930s the initially secret, but later increasingly open rearmament of Germany led to establishing a deployable air defense in Switzerland in addition to the strengthening and expansion of the air force. In 1936, the Federal Council declared the *Flieger- und Fliegerabwehrtruppen (FF TRP)* (aviation and air defense forces) as an independent branch commanded by a major general.

When the *Legion Condor* of German Air Force bombed the Spanish town Guernica in April 1937, the threat out of the air and the devastating effect of the weapons became increasingly obvious. The air force developed to be an integral part of

the military strategy and was further expanded during the Second World War. The Swiss army massively increased its aircraft portfolio as well: Maintaining the neutrality and the defense of state sovereignty are only possible if the army has the means to enforce them.

Defense of sovereignty and neutrality

The defense of the airspace played and today still plays a decisive role in the war strategy. During the war month February 1945, 491 air space violations by the allies and Axis Powers were counted in Switzerland. In addition to these airspace violations, which were repelled only by means of a deployable air defense and air force greater damage could be prevented; however, the country had to expect an invasion of foreign troops all the time. During the Second World War the Swiss Air Force was involved in defending the sovereignty and neutrality in aerial combat with the German air force as well as with the allied forces and had as well to suffer some downings, besides its successes.

With the onset of the Cold War, it was perfectly natural for Switzerland to defend its airspace sovereignly and independently. For this, it needed a powerful and well-equipped up-to-date air force, which deserved its name. Even though each procurement of aircraft was connected with severe discussions in the country, one could always – unlike today – fully protect one’s own airspace. All political opinions from left to right agreed to the right to preserve one’s sovereignty and neutrality.

The Air Forces’ prevailing role in war

If we analyze the modern warfare of the Americans and their allies today, 25 years after the end of the Cold War, we realize that the air forces have become a decisive factor. Already in the Viet Nam war, the US Air Force dropped three times more bombs compared to the en-

tire Second World War. In the last 20–25 years the wars of Israel and NATO were carried out mainly by air forces. NATO flew over 20,000 aerial sorties in the Libya 2011 war alone. It is naive and far from any reality to argue that our country does not require an air defense, since the great wars were over. A glance at the Ukraine changes one’s mind, it shows that a country can get under influence from outside in the shortest time, in particular from the European Union and United States and has to face a situation in which war is constantly in the air. A year ago, the majority of people would have said that in Europe a war is not possible, but the attention was focused mainly on the Middle East. Who will predict what will happen in the next 5 years?

The centuries-old history of our air force shows that in the best case our policy was too gullible and too little realistic and our country had to make the greatest effort to be adequately prepared in case of an attack. But we must not forget, that due to happy coincidences as well, our country got away more or less unscathed in all European wars and world wars. However, this should certainly not be regarded as the rule. Prevention is better than complaining. Therefore the Swiss army needs a new military aircraft urgently. •

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