

# Current Concerns

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## Why the Ukraine crisis is the West's fault

by John J. Mearsheimer\*, *Foreign Affairs*

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John J. Mearsheimer  
(picture ma)

According to the prevailing wisdom in the West, the Ukraine crisis can be blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression. Russian President *Vladimir Putin*, the argument goes, annexed Crimea out of a long-standing

desire to resuscitate the Soviet empire, and he may eventually go after the rest of Ukraine, as well as other countries in eastern Europe. In this view, the ouster of Ukrainian President *Viktor Yanukovich* in February 2014 merely provided a pretext for Putin's decision to order Russian forces to seize part of Ukraine.

But this account is wrong: the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis. The taproot of the trouble is NATO enlargement, the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West. At the same time, the EU's expansion eastward and the West's backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine – beginning with the Orange Revolution in 2004 – were critical elements, too. Since the mid-1990s, Russian leaders have adamantly opposed NATO enlargement and in recent years, they have made it clear

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“Victoria Nuland, the US assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, estimated in December 2013 that the United States had invested more than \$ 5 billion since 1991 to help Ukraine achieve ‘the future it deserves’. As part of that effort, the US government has bankrolled the National Endowment for Democracy. The nonprofit foundation has funded more than 60 projects aimed at promoting civil society in Ukraine, and the NED's president, Carl Gershman, has called that country ‘the biggest prize’. After Yanukovich won Ukraine's presidential election in February 2010, the NED decided he was undermining its goals, and so it stepped up its efforts to support the opposition and strengthen the country's democratic institutions. When Russian leaders look at Western social engineering in Ukraine, they worry that their country might be next.” And such fears are hardly groundless.

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that they would not stand by while their strategically important neighbor turned into a Western bastion. For Putin, the illegal overthrow of Ukraine's democratically elected and pro-Russian president – which he rightly labeled a “coup” – was the final straw. He responded by taking Crimea, a pen-insula he feared would host a NATO naval base, and working to destabilize Ukraine until it abandoned its efforts to join the West.

Putin's pushback should have come as no surprise. After all, the West had been moving into Russia's backyard and threatening its core strategic interests, a point Putin made emphatically and repeatedly. Elites in the United States and Europe have been blindsided by events only because they subscribe to a flawed view of international politics. They tend to believe that the logic of realism holds little relevance in the twenty-first century and that Europe can be kept whole and free on the basis of such liberal principles as the rule of law, economic interdependence, and democracy.

But this grand scheme went awry in Ukraine. The crisis there shows that realpolitik remains relevant – and states that ignore it do so at their own peril. US and European leaders blundered in attempting

to turn Ukraine into a Western stronghold on Russia's border. Now that the consequences have been laid bare, it would be an even greater mistake to continue this misbegotten policy.

### The Western affront

As the Cold War came to a close, Soviet leaders preferred that US forces remain in Europe and NATO stay intact, an arrangement they thought would keep a reunified Germany pacified. But they and their Russian successors did not want NATO to grow any larger and assumed that Western diplomats understood their concerns. The *Clinton* administration evidently thought otherwise, and in the mid-1990s, it began pushing for NATO to expand.

The first round of enlargement took place in 1999 and brought in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. The second occurred in 2004; it included Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Moscow complained bitterly from the start. During NATO's 1995 bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs, for example, Russian President *Boris Yeltsin* said, “This is the first sign of what could happen when NATO

**"Why the Ukraine crisis ..."**

continued from page 1

comes right up to the Russian Federation's borders. . . . The flame of war could burst out across the whole of Europe." But the Russians were too weak at the time to derail NATO's eastward movement – which, at any rate, did not look so threatening, since none of the new members shared a border with Russia, save for the tiny Baltic countries.

Then NATO began looking further east. At its April 2008 summit in Bucharest, the alliance considered admitting Georgia and Ukraine. The *George W. Bush* administration supported doing so, but France and Germany opposed the move for fear that it would unduly antagonize Russia. In the end, NATO's members reached a compromise: the alliance did not begin the formal process leading to membership, but it issued a statement endorsing the aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine and boldly declaring, "These countries will become members of NATO."

Moscow, however, did not see the outcome as much of a compromise. *Alexander Grushko*, then Russia's deputy foreign minister, said, "Georgia's and Ukraine's membership in the alliance is a huge strategic mistake which would have most serious consequences for pan-European security." Putin maintained that admitting those two countries to NATO would represent a "direct threat" to Russia. One Russian newspaper reported that Putin, while speaking with Bush, "very transparently hinted that if Ukraine was accepted into NATO, it would cease to exist."

Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008 should have dispelled any remaining doubts about Putin's determination to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO. Georgian President *Mikheil Saakashvili*, who was deeply committed to bringing his country into NATO, had decided in the summer of 2008 to reincorporate two separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But Putin sought to keep Georgia weak and divided – and out of NATO. After fighting broke out between the Georgian government and South Ossetian separatists, Russian forces took control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow had made its point. Yet despite this clear warning, NATO never publicly abandoned its goal of bringing Georgia and Ukraine into the alliance. And NATO expansion continued marching forward, with Albania and Croatia becoming members in 2009.

The EU, too, has been marching eastward. In May 2008, it unveiled its Eastern Partnership initiative, a program to foster prosperity in such countries as Ukraine and integrate them into the EU economy. Not surprisingly, Russian leaders view the

plan as hostile to their country's interests. This past February, before Yanukovich was forced from office, Russian Foreign Minister *Sergey Lavrov* accused the EU of trying to create a "sphere of influence" in eastern Europe. In the eyes of Russian leaders, EU expansion is a stalking horse for NATO expansion.

The West's final tool for peeling Kiev away from Moscow has been its efforts to spread Western values and promote democracy in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states, a plan that often entails funding pro-Western individuals and organizations. *Victoria Nuland*, the US assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, estimated in December 2013 that the United States had invested more than \$ 5 billion since 1991 to help Ukraine achieve "the future it deserves." As part of that effort, the US government has bankrolled the National Endowment for Democracy. The nonprofit foundation has funded more than 60 projects aimed at promoting civil society in Ukraine, and the NED's president, *Carl Gershman*, has called that country "the biggest prize." After Yanukovich won Ukraine's presidential election in February 2010, the NED decided he was undermining its goals, and so it stepped up its efforts to support the opposition and strengthen the country's democratic institutions.

When Russian leaders look at Western social engineering in Ukraine, they worry

that their country might be next. And such fears are hardly groundless. In September 2013, Gershman wrote in "The Washington Post", "Ukraine's choice to join Europe will accelerate the demise of the ideology of Russian imperialism that Putin represents." He added: "Russians, too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself."

**Creating a crisis**

The West's triple package of policies – NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and democracy promotion – added fuel to a fire waiting to ignite. The spark came in November 2013, when Yanukovich rejected a major economic deal he had been negotiating with the EU and decided to accept a \$ 15 billion Russian counteroffer instead. That decision gave rise to antigovernment demonstrations that escalated over the following three months and that by mid-February had led to the deaths of some one hundred protesters. Western emissaries hurriedly flew to Kiev to resolve the crisis. On 21 February the government and the opposition struck a deal that allowed Yanukovich to stay in power until new elections were held. But it immediately fell apart, and Yanukovich fled to Russia the next day. The new government in Kiev was pro-Western and anti-

continued on page 3

***War is against human life***

In his speech at the NATO summit in Wales the Swiss President and Chairman of the OSCE, *Didier Burkhalter*, emphasized four important points for the settlement of the crisis in Ukraine:

- Efforts to achieve a cease-fire and beginning of the political process,
- expansion of the monitoring mission adapted to the needs,
- support for reconciliation, reconstruction and reform,
- a debate on the restoration of European security as a joint project.

After weeks of media propaganda on the causes and actors of the Ukraine conflict, Switzerland's commitment within the framework of the OSCE and its sticking to the neutrality principle gives hope to the people in all parts of the world. "War is always a defeat of humanity," Pope *John Paul II* said in a speech nearly 10 years ago. The endeavor or must always be directed at preventing war and – where it has already been started – at finishing it immediately.

Since Friday evening the guns in Ukraine have been silent, and the people on both sides sigh with relief and

are grateful for every minute in which they do not have to risk life and limb, in which there is no killing, in which they are not losing a relative, a daughter, a son or another one they love.

And in Ukraine today? Millions of people live in fear and are exposed to the greatest threats. Various sources are already talking of 17,000 dead Ukrainian soldiers. Young men and women who had their lives ahead of them and are now being sacrificed for power interests. On the side of the Ukrainian resistance there will also be thousands. All this would not have been necessary. But what does this mean for the affected people, who have the right to a dignified life, as guaranteed by the UN Charter?

The UN, the OSCE, international humanitarian law, it is all there to solve all conflicts peacefully. Then there is the most important premise: Man is a rational being and can solve all problems of life by way of dialogue. War is always against human life.

*Thomas Kaiser*

**"Why the Ukraine crisis ..."**

continued from page 2

Russian to the core, and it contained four high-ranking members who could legitimately be labeled neofascists.

Although the full extent of US involvement has not yet come to light, it is clear that Washington backed the coup. Nuland and Republican Senator *John McCain* participated in antigovernment demonstrations, and *Geoffrey Pyatt*, the US ambassador to Ukraine, proclaimed after Yanukovich's toppling that it was "a day for the history books." As a leaked telephone recording revealed, Nuland had advocated regime change and wanted the Ukrainian politician *Arseniy Yatsenyuk* to become prime minister in the new government, which he did. No wonder Russians of all persuasions think the West played a role in Yanukovich's ouster.

For Putin, the time to act against Ukraine and the West had arrived. Shortly after 22 February he ordered Russian forces to take Crimea from Ukraine, and soon after that, he incorporated it into Russia. The task proved relatively easy, thanks to the thousands of Russian troops already stationed at a naval base in the Crimean port of Sevastopol. Crimea also made for an easy target since ethnic Russians compose roughly 60 percent of its population. Most of them wanted out of Ukraine.

Next, Putin put massive pressure on the new government in Kiev to discourage it from siding with the West against Moscow, making it clear that he would wreck Ukraine as a functioning state before he would allow it to become a Western stronghold on Russia's doorstep. Toward that end, he has provided advisers, arms, and diplomatic support to the Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, who are pushing the country toward civil war. He has massed a large army on the Ukrainian border, threatening to invade if the government cracks down on the rebels. And he has sharply raised the price of the natural gas Russia sells to Ukraine and demanded payment for past exports. Putin is playing hardball.

**The diagnosis**

Putin's actions should be easy to comprehend. A huge expanse of flat land that Napoleonic France, imperial Germany, and Nazi Germany all crossed to strike at Russia itself, Ukraine serves as a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia. No Russian leader would tolerate a military alliance that was Moscow's mortal enemy until recently moving into Ukraine. Nor would any Russian leader stand idly by while the West helped install a government there that was determined to integrate Ukraine into the West.

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Washington may not like Moscow's position, but it should understand the logic behind it. This is Geopolitics 101: great powers are always sensitive to potential threats near their home territory. After all, the United States does not tolerate distant great powers deploying military forces anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, much less on its borders. Imagine the outrage in Washington if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it. Logic aside, Russian leaders have told their Western counterparts on many occasions that they consider NATO expansion into Georgia and Ukraine unacceptable, along with any effort to turn those countries against Russia – a message that the 2008 Russian-Georgian war also made crystal clear.

Officials from the United States and its European allies contend that they tried hard to assuage Russian fears and that Moscow should understand that NATO has no designs on Russia. In addition to continually denying that its expansion was aimed at containing Russia, the alliance has never permanently deployed military forces in its new member states. In 2002, it even created a body called the NATO-Russia Council in an effort to foster cooperation. To further mollify Russia, the United States announced in 2009 that it would deploy its new missile defense system on warships in European waters, at least initially, rather than on Czech or Polish territory. But none of these measures worked; the Russians remained steadfastly opposed to NATO enlargement, especially into Georgia and Ukraine. And it is the Russians, not the West, who ultimately get to decide what counts as a threat to them.

To understand why the West, especially the United States, failed to understand that its Ukraine policy was laying the groundwork for a major clash with Russia, one must go back to the mid-1990s, when the Clinton administration began advocating NATO expansion. Pundits advanced a variety of arguments for and against enlargement, but there was no consensus on what to do. Most eastern European émigrés in the United States and their relatives, for example, strongly supported expansion, because they wanted NATO to protect such countries as Hungary and Poland. A few realists also favored the policy because they thought Russia still needed to be contained.

But most realists opposed expansion, in the belief that a declining great power with an aging population and a one-dimensional economy did not in fact need to be contained. And they feared that enlargement would only give Moscow an incentive to cause trouble in eastern Europe. The US diplomat *George Kennan* articulated this perspective in a 1998 interview, shortly after the US Senate approved the first round of NATO expansion. "I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies," he said. "I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anyone else."

Most liberals, on the other hand, favored enlargement, including many key members of the Clinton administration. They believed that the end of the Cold War had fundamentally transformed international politics and that a new, postnational order had replaced the realist logic that used to govern Europe. The United States was not only the "indispensable nation," as Secretary of State *Madeleine Albright* put it; it was also a benign hegemon and thus unlikely to be viewed as a threat in Moscow. The aim, in essence, was to make the entire continent look like western Europe.

And so the United States and its allies sought to promote democracy in the countries of eastern Europe, increase economic interdependence among them, and embed them in international institutions. Having won the debate in the United States, liberals had little difficulty convincing their European allies to support NATO enlargement. After all, given the EU's past achievements, Europeans were even more wedded than Americans to the idea that geopolitics no longer mattered and that an all-inclusive liberal order could maintain peace in Europe.

So thoroughly did liberals come to dominate the discourse about European security during the first decade of this century that even as the alliance adopted an open-door policy of growth, NATO expansion faced little realist opposition. The liberal worldview is now accepted dogma among US officials. In March, for example, President *Barack Obama* delivered a speech about Ukraine in which he talked repeatedly about "the ideals" that moti-

continued on page 4

**"Why the Ukraine crisis ..."**

continued from page 3

vate Western policy and how those ideals "have often been threatened by an older, more traditional view of power." Secretary of State *John Kerry's* response to the Crimea crisis reflected this same perspective: "You just don't in the twenty-first century behave in nineteenth-century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped-up pretext."

In essence, the two sides have been operating with different playbooks: Putin and his compatriots have been thinking and acting according to realist dictates, whereas their Western counterparts have been adhering to liberal ideas about international politics. The result is that the United States and its allies unknowingly provoked a major crisis over Ukraine.

**Blame game**

In that same 1998 interview, Kennan predicted that NATO expansion would provoke a crisis, after which the proponents of expansion would "say that we always told you that is how the Russians are." As if on cue, most Western officials have portrayed Putin as the real culprit in the Ukraine predicament. In March, according to "The New York Times", German Chancellor *Angela Merkel* implied that Putin was irrational, telling Obama that he was "in another world." Although Putin no doubt has autocratic tendencies, no evidence supports the charge that he is mentally unbalanced. On the contrary: he is a first-class strategist who should be feared and respected by anyone challenging him on foreign policy.

Other analysts allege, more plausibly, that Putin regrets the demise of the Soviet Union and is determined to reverse it by expanding Russia's borders. According to this interpretation, Putin, having taken Crimea, is now testing the waters to see if the time is right to conquer Ukraine, or at least its eastern part, and he will eventually behave aggressively toward other countries in Russia's neighborhood. For some in this camp, Putin represents a modern-day *Adolf Hitler*, and striking any kind of deal with him would repeat the mistake of Munich. Thus, NATO must admit Georgia and Ukraine to contain Russia before it dominates its neighbors and threatens western Europe.

This argument falls apart on close inspection. If Putin were committed to creating a greater Russia, signs of his intentions would almost certainly have arisen before 22 February. But there is virtually no evidence that he was bent on taking Crimea, much less any other territory in Ukraine, before that date. Even Western leaders who supported NATO expansion were not doing so out of a fear that Rus-

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sia was about to use military force. Putin's actions in Crimea took them by complete surprise and appear to have been a spontaneous reaction to Yanukovich's ouster. Right afterward, even Putin said he opposed Crimean secession, before quickly changing his mind.

Besides, even if it wanted to, Russia lacks the capability to easily conquer and annex eastern Ukraine, much less the entire country. Roughly 15 million people – one-third of Ukraine's population – live between the Dnieper River, which bisects the country, and the Russian border. An overwhelming majority of those people want to remain part of Ukraine and would surely resist a Russian occupation. Furthermore, Russia's mediocre army, which shows few signs of turning into a modern "Wehrmacht", would have little chance of pacifying all of Ukraine. Moscow is also poorly positioned to pay for a costly occupation; its weak economy would suffer even more in the face of the resulting sanctions. But even if Russia did boast a powerful military machine and an impressive economy, it would still probably prove unable to successfully occupy Ukraine. One need only consider the Soviet and US experiences in Afghanistan, the US experiences in Vietnam and Iraq, and the Russian experience in Chechnya to be reminded that military occupations usually end badly. Putin surely understands that trying to subdue Ukraine would be like swallowing a porcupine. His response to events there has been defensive, not offensive.

**A way out**

Given that most Western leaders continue to deny that Putin's behavior might be motivated by legitimate security concerns, it is unsurprising that they have tried to modify it by doubling down on their existing policies and have punished Russia to deter further aggression. Although Kerry has maintained that "all options are on the table," neither the United States nor its NATO allies are prepared to use force to defend Ukraine. The West is relying instead on economic sanctions to coerce Russia into ending its support for the insurrection in eastern Ukraine. In July, the United States and the EU put in place their third round of limited sanctions, targeting mainly high-level individuals closely tied to the Russian government and some high-profile banks, energy companies, and defense firms. They also threatened to un-

leash another, tougher round of sanctions, aimed at whole sectors of the Russian economy.

Such measures will have little effect. Harsh sanctions are likely off the table anyway; western European countries, especially Germany, have resisted imposing them for fear that Russia might retaliate and cause serious economic damage within the EU. But even if the United States could convince its allies to enact tough measures, Putin would probably not alter his decision-making. History shows that countries will absorb enormous amounts of punishment in order to protect their core strategic interests. There is no reason to think Russia represents an exception to this rule.

Western leaders have also clung to the provocative policies that precipitated the crisis in the first place. In April, US Vice President *Joseph Biden* met with Ukrainian legislators and told them, "This is a second opportunity to make good on the original promise made by the Orange Revolution." *John Brennan*, the director of the CIA, did not help things when, that same month, he visited Kiev on a trip the White House said was aimed at improving security cooperation with the Ukrainian government.

The EU, meanwhile, has continued to push its Eastern Partnership. In March, *José Manuel Barroso*, president of the European Commission, summarized EU thinking on Ukraine, saying, "We have a debt, a duty of solidarity with that country, and we will work to have them as close as possible to us." And sure enough, on 27 June, the EU and Ukraine signed the economic agreement that Yanukovich had fatefully rejected seven months earlier. Also in June, at a meeting of NATO members' foreign ministers, it was agreed that the alliance would remain open to new members, although the foreign ministers refrained from mentioning Ukraine by name. "No third country has a veto over NATO enlargement," announced *Anders Fogh Rasmussen*, NATO's secretary-general. The foreign ministers also agreed to support various measures to improve Ukraine's military capabilities in such areas as command and control, logistics, and cyberdefense. Russian leaders have naturally recoiled at these actions;

continued on page 5

**"Why the Ukraine crisis ..."**

continued from page 4

the West's response to the crisis will only make a bad situation worse.

There is a solution to the crisis in Ukraine, however – although it would require the West to think about the country in a fundamentally new way. The United States and its allies should abandon their plan to westernize Ukraine and instead aim to make it a neutral buffer between NATO and Russia, akin to Austria's position during the Cold War. Western leaders should acknowledge that Ukraine matters so much to Putin that they cannot support an anti-Russian regime there. This would not mean that a future Ukrainian government would have to be pro-Russian or anti-NATO. On the contrary, the goal should be a sovereign Ukraine that falls in neither the Russian nor the Western camp.

To achieve this end, the United States and its allies should publicly rule out NATO's expansion into both Georgia and Ukraine. The West should also help fashion an economic rescue plan for Ukraine funded jointly by the EU, the *International Monetary Fund*, Russia, and the United States – a proposal that Moscow should welcome, given its interest in having a prosperous and stable Ukraine on its western flank. And the West should considerably limit its social-engineering efforts inside Ukraine. It is time to put an end to Western support for another Orange Revolution. Nevertheless, US and European leaders should encourage Ukraine to respect minority rights, especially the language rights of its Russian speakers.

Some may argue that changing policy toward Ukraine at this late date would seriously damage US credibility around the

world. There would undoubtedly be certain costs, but the costs of continuing a misguided strategy would be much greater. Furthermore, other countries are likely to respect a state that learns from its mistakes and ultimately devises a policy that deals effectively with the problem at hand. That option is clearly open to the United States. One also hears the claim that Ukraine has the right to determine whom it wants to ally with and the Russians have no right to prevent Kiev from joining the West. This is a dangerous way for Ukraine to think about its foreign policy choices. The sad truth is that might often makes right when great-power politics are at play. Abstract rights such as self-determination are largely meaningless when powerful states get into brawls with weaker states. Did Cuba have the right to form a military alliance with the Soviet Union during the Cold War? The United States certainly did not think so, and the Russians think the same way about Ukraine joining the West. It is in Ukraine's interest to understand these facts of life and tread carefully when dealing with its more powerful neighbor.

Even if one rejects this analysis, however, and believes that Ukraine has the right to petition to join the EU and NATO, the fact remains that the United States and its European allies have the right to reject these requests. There is no reason that the West has to accommodate Ukraine if it is bent on pursuing a wrong-headed foreign policy, especially if its defense is not a vital interest for them. Indulging the dreams of some Ukrainians is not worth the animosity and strife it will cause, especially for the Ukrainian people.

Of course, some analysts might concede that NATO handled relations with Ukraine poorly and yet still maintain that Russia constitutes an enemy that will

only grow more formidable over time – and that the West therefore has no choice but to continue its present policy. But this viewpoint is badly mistaken. Russia is a declining power, and it will only get weaker with time. Even if Russia were a rising power, moreover, it would still make no sense to incorporate Ukraine into NATO. The reason is simple: the United States and its European allies do not consider Ukraine to be a core strategic interest, as their unwillingness to use military force to come to its aid has proved. It would therefore be the height of folly to create a new NATO member that the other members have no intention of defending. NATO has expanded in the past because liberals assumed the alliance would never have to honor its new security guarantees, but Russia's recent power play shows that granting Ukraine NATO membership could put Russia and the West on a collision course.

Sticking with the current policy would also complicate Western relations with Moscow on other issues. The United States needs Russia's assistance to withdraw US equipment from Afghanistan through Russian territory, reach a nuclear agreement with Iran, and stabilize the situation in Syria. In fact, Moscow has helped Washington on all three of these issues in the past; in the summer of 2013, it was Putin who pulled Obama's chestnuts out of the fire by forging the deal under which Syria agreed to relinquish its chemical weapons, thereby avoiding the US military strike that Obama had threatened. The United States will also someday need Russia's help containing a rising China. Current US policy, however, is only driving Moscow and Beijing closer together.

The United States and its European allies now face a choice on Ukraine. They can continue their current policy, which will exacerbate hostilities with Russia and devastate Ukraine in the process – a scenario in which everyone would come out a loser. Or they can switch gears and work to create a prosperous but neutral Ukraine, one that does not threaten Russia and allows the West to repair its relations with Moscow. With that approach, all sides would win. •

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## Conversation between US Assistant Secretary of State and the Ambassador of the USA to Ukraine

cc. Between 22 and 25 January 2014 a phone call between Victoria Nuland, US Assistant Secretary of State and Geoffrey R. Pyatt, US Ambassador to Ukraine was intercepted.

Victoria Nuland is a neo-conservative diplomat, wife of the historian Robert Kagan. She was the main foreign policy advisor to Vice President Dick Cheney, before she was appointed Ambassador to NATO by George W. Bush. Hillary Clinton appointed her spokesperson in the Secretary of State and John Kerry made her his assistant for Europe and Eurasia.

In the conversation with the US Ambassador in Kiev she gives instructions on how to react to President Yanukovich's proposal to let the opposition form a government. According to her, one had to place Arseniy Yatsenyuk, to keep Vitali Klitschko out and to sidestep the Nazi leader Oleh Tiahnybok, because he was getting awkward.

In the conversation Jeffrey Feltman, former US diplomat and now Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations is also mentioned, as well as the Dutchman Robert Serry, former head of NATO "operations". Today, both have the task of enforcing the US position in the UN.

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Victoria Nuland: What do you think?

Geoffrey R. Pyatt: I think we are in play. The Klitschko piece is obviously the most complicated electron here, especially the announcement of him as Deputy Prime Minister. You have seen my notes on trouble in the marriage right now, so we are trying to get a read really fast where he is on the staff. But I think your argument to him which you'll need to make, I think that's the next phone call that you want to set up is exactly the one you made to Yats [Yatsenyuk's nickname]. I'm glad you put him on the spot. [...] He fits in this scenario. And I am very glad he said what he said.

Victoria Nuland: Good. I don't think Klitsch [Klitschko's nickname] should be in the government. I don't think it's necessary, I don't think it's a good idea.

Geoffrey R. Pyatt: Yeah, I mean, I guess [...] In terms of him not going into the government [...] I'd just let him stay out and do his political homework. I'm just thinking, in terms of sort of the process moving ahead, we want to keep the moderate democrats together. The problem is gonna be with Tiahnybok and his guys. And, you know, I am sure that is part of what Yanukovich is calculating on all this.

Victoria Nuland: I think Yats is the guy. He has economic experience and governing experience. He is the guy. You know, what he needs is Klitsch and Tiahnybok on the outside. He needs to be talking to them four times a week. You know, I just think if Klitschko gets in, he's going to be at that level working for Yatsenyuk, it's just not gonna work ...

Geoffrey R. Pyatt: Yeah, yeah, I think that's right. Ok, good. Would you like us to set up a call with him as the next step?

Victoria Nuland: My understanding from that call that you tell me was that the big three were going into their own meeting and that Yats was gonna offer in this context, you know, a "three plus one" conversation or a "three plus two" conversation with you. Is that not how you understood it?

Geoffrey R. Pyatt: No. I think that was what he proposed but I think that knowing the dynamic that's been with them where Klitschko has been the top dog, he'll show up for whatever meetings they've got and he's probably talking to his guys at this point. So, I think you reaching out directly to him, helps with the personality management among the three. And it also gives you a chance to move fast on all this stuff and put us behind it, before they all sit down and he explains why he doesn't like it.

Victoria Nuland: Ok. Good. I am happy. Why don't you reach out to him and see if he wants to talk before or after.

Geoffrey R. Pyatt: Ok, I will do it. Thanks.

Victoria Nuland: I can't remember if I told you this or if I only told Washington this: when I talked to Jeff Feltman this morning he had a new name for the UN guy – Robert Serry. I wrote you about it this morning.

Geoffrey R. Pyatt: Yeah, I saw that.

Victoria Nuland: Ok. He's gotten now both Serry and Ban Ki-Moon to agree that Serry will come on Monday or Tuesday. That would be great I think to help glue this thing and to have the UN help glue it and, if you like, fuck the EU.

Geoffrey R. Pyatt: No, exactly. And I think we've got to do something to make it stick together because you can be pretty sure that if it does start to gain altitude that the Russians will be working behind the scenes to try to torpedo it. And again the fact that this is out there right now, I am still trying to figure out in my mind why Yanukovich [...] that. In the meantime there is a Party of Regions faction meeting going on right now and I am sure there is a lively argument going on in that group at this point. But anyway, we could land jelly side up on this one if we move fast. So let me work on Klitschko and if you can just keep [...] I think we just want to try to get somebody with an international personality to come out here and help to midwife this thing. The other issue is some kind of outreach to Yanukovich but we probably regroup on that tomorrow as we see how things start to fall into place.

Victoria Nuland: So on that piece, Jeff, when I wrote the note Sullivan's [Jacob Sullivan, who was advisor of Joe Biden, is one of the negotiators of the US Council of National Security] come back to me V.F.R., saying you need Biden and I said probably tomorrow for an atty boy and to get the details to stick. So, Biden's willing.

Geoffrey R. Pyatt: Ok. Great, thanks.

Source:  
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## Ukraine

## Is there a way out of escalation?

by Karl Müller

On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Russian President *Vladimir Putin* proposed an immediate plan which contained proposals to end the warlike conflict in Ukraine (see box). The Russian President presented this plan one day ahead of the NATO summit in Wales, but the reaction of the NATO politicians and Western media were between ignorance and rejection. The NATO had not met in Wales to look for peace in Ukraine and conciliation with Russia. Instead, resolutions were passed which follow the new “enemy stereotype Russia” and are connected with an arms buildup.

One day after the Russian President has presented his plan, also US President *Barack Obama* and the British Prime Minister *David Cameron*, in a joint article for the British “Times”, adhered to their current tone against Russia. Again they charged the Russian government with “having violated the rules with its illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the deployment of troops to Ukrainian territory” and “undermining the foundation of a sovereign state”.

With these wordings alone the two politicians have insinuated unproven claims presenting them as alleged facts: neither is there a uniform and internationally accepted legal assessment regarding the referendum and the accession of the Crimea to the Russian Federation nor is it correct that the Russian government has sent troops to Ukrainian territory. Ukraine’s sovereignty has been undermined for years, by interference of various governments and their satellite organizations with the country’s interior affairs. Part of these interferences is the Association Agreement with the EU and the efforts to tie the country closer to NATO.

The article by the US President and the British Prime Minister is just one example for how controversial assessments and insinuations are presented as facts and how specific wordings are used for manipulation. It is the obvious goal to present one’s own position as the “good side” and the other’s as the “bad one”. If Western leading media which at all are striving for objectivity and information of the public they would certainly not participate in this, but rather try to hear both sides in such a controversial situation, abstaining from bias and avoiding to add fuel to the fire. Internationally relevant journals like the US American *Foreign Affairs* moving in this direction (cf. the article by *John J. Mearsheimer* on p. 1) are a silver lining on the horizon.

Much more could be said in this direction. But most important is the conclusion: This way the conflict will not be solved.

### The ‘Putin Plan’ for settling the conflict in Ukraine

3 September 2014

*Vladimir Putin outlined the plan while speaking with journalists at the end of his working visit to Mongolia.*

In order to stop the bloodshed and stabilise the situation in southeast Ukraine, I believe that the parties to the conflict should immediately agree on and coordinate the following steps:

1. End active offensive operations by armed forces, armed units and militia groups in southeast Ukraine in the Donetsk and Lugansk areas.
2. Withdraw Ukrainian armed forces units to a distance that would make it impossible to fire on populated areas using artillery and all types of multiple launch rocket systems.
3. Allow for full and objective international monitoring of compliance with the ceasefire and monitoring of the

situation in the safe zone created by the ceasefire.

4. Exclude all use of military aircraft against civilians and populated areas in the conflict zone.
5. Organise the exchange of individuals detained by force on an ‘all for all’ basis without any preconditions.
6. Open humanitarian corridors for refugees and for delivering humanitarian cargoes to towns and populated areas in Donbass – Donetsk and Lugansk regions.
7. Make it possible for repair brigades to come to damaged settlements in the Donbass region in order to repair and rebuild social facilities and life-supporting infrastructure and help the region to prepare for the winter.

Source: <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/22899>

On the contrary, this is how it will be escalated and the price that *all* will have to pay will be very high. When will the insight set in that playing for “victory” in this conflict is only a dead end, trying to inflict a defeat on the other side but refusing to enter in a dialog on an equal footing?

In 1969, the renowned Swiss historian *Jean Rodolphe von Salis* has compiled an extensive report, which he complemented in 1971, for the research institute of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik* (German Society for Foreign Policy) in Bonn. It is entitled “Cold War and Policy of Détente between West and East” and can be read in the essay collection “History and politics. Reflections on History and Politics. Contributions to contemporary history” on pages 257 to 370. The volume of 120 pages indicates how meticulously the Swiss historian has dealt with this question of contemporary history which was highly topical at the time.

We do not have the space here to summarize this highly differentiated analysis appropriately – it needs to be studied comprehensively. But the summary of the analysis shall be cited here, because it has not lost its topicality: “It is remarkable that our Earth is called a ‘planet’, and politics ‘planetary’. Our poets’ and writers’ sensibility in their works (even though politicians hardly listen to them) has made our contemporaries aware of this incredible community of fate of the inhabitants of the Earth; it is symptomatic that a great

playwright of our time [*Friedrich Dürrenmatt*] entitled his drama which confronts the pressed, bitter and torn existence of the inhabitants of Earth with cosmic events, ‘Portrait of a Planet’. Beyond all that separates, beyond hate and misery, the real solidarity of current and future inhabitants of our planet has become inevitable. The hour of historical truth demands that political matters of the peoples, states and continents are seen and considered on the planetary scale and that the responsible persons draw the right conclusions from this undeniable insight.”

In his analysis, von Salis cites amazing statements of politicians and military personalities from West and East who bear witness of an intense struggle regarding the question how the Cold War, fatal even then, could be overcome. The first step always was the attempt to seriously consider and to take into account the view and the arguments of the other parties in the conflict. One example of many: “We have to understand how deep and sincere Russian fears are regarding the security of their country against a foreign invasion. In a true European unity, Russia needs to have its role ... It would mean to act inconsiderately and reprehensibly if we tried to solve the problem of European Unity [...] by violence. We need to avoid violence by all means. The only unity that can result from violence is the unity of ash and dead ...” This is

continued on page 8

**"Is there a way out of ..."**

continued from page 7

what the former British Prime and War Minister *Winston Churchill* said as early as 1956 when he was awarded the Charlemagne Prize.

Today as well, nearly 60 years later, the large majority of people, also in the Western states, know that the allegation that Russian policy is a threat for other European states is not true and that Western politics in the last 20 years has been characterized by arrogance and strive for global hegemony. A large majority is also aware of the fact that a further escalation of the conflict with Russia can be very costly for all states involved, particularly the Europeans. And they know that there is no realistic alternative to a negotiated solution and an understanding between the parties involved.

It is not clear how the current politics of the USA, NATO and the EU can comply with their citizens' wishes. The logic of these politics can only be requested, since we as citizen do not possess the exclusive knowledge of our governments: Are the US, NATO and the EU intending to defeat Russia in a war? Do they intend to corner Russia, to put it under such pressure that the results are rash actions or riots in Russia? Is the European Continent to be divided again? Are the bonds of other European states to Russia be cut so that these

states are bound closer to the US and thus the US are able to win back, as the military hegemon of the West, their lost global hegemony ...

Whatever may drive our European politicians to join this wrong path – as citizens we should not simply accept it. Especially not, because this path is fatal and there are

other paths available. These may be paths which move along other dimensions than victory or defeat, power or impotence, we or the others. Negotiated solutions – and mankind can not do without this kind of solutions today – require equality and a real dialog. This is an alternative to the spiral of escalation.

**Ceasefire**

km. On 5 September, representatives of the Ukrainian government signed a ceasefire contract for those areas of the Ukrainian country, which had decided in a referendum in May to become independent. Months of partly very severe and murderous military conflicts within these areas had preceded this ceasefire. This had led to extremely severe damages, tens of thousands of injured people and as many deaths – also among the civilian population.

It should be noted that the ceasefire only became a possibility after the Ukrainian Government as well as NATO were unable to enforce a victory. As early as 1 September, German news magazine *Spiegel Online* ran the following headline: „Analysis of the military situation: NATO sees Ukraine already as the loser of this conflict“.

Nevertheless, any person capable of at least some degree of reason and compassion, hopes of course that

this conflict will not claim any more victims or cause further destruction. Until today, in the madness of it all, tens of thousands of lives have been lost.

Fittingly, albeit sadly, the much-vaunted "Peace of Westphalia" in 1648 comes to mind. That particular peace agreement only became possible after neither of the warring parties could hope to gain a victory. Overall, negotiations and preparations dragged on for more than 11 years. Whenever one of the warring parties felt it had the chance to win, negotiations dried up. This continued until finally all parties were so exhausted that the end of the war became compelling.

Hopefully, we have advanced from those times. Hopefully, there is still a sense of conscience among responsible politicians and military as well as the knowledge that the ongoing killings constitute a crime against humanity.

**German exports to Russia 20 percent less**

German exports to Russia will fall by 20 percent or 8 billion euro this year. So the credit insurer *Euler Hermes* assumes. For some companies the situation, so *Ralf Meurer*, the CEO of *Euler Hermes AG*, could escalate dramatically. "There are German companies that will not stand a default by Russian buyers for long," he said to the *International Club of Frank-*

*furt Economic Journalists*. In particular, some facility building engineers had been very focused on the Russian market. "Here bankruptcies are not excluded due to the failure of Russian customers," he added. "We talk with many customers weekly and discuss the risk situation." Mainly affected are facility building companies, car manufacturers and producers

of food products. The mechanical engineering sales with Russia fell by 20, for car manufacturers by 25 and sales of the food industry by more than 30 percent in the first half year.

Source: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29.8.2014  
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

**Total Director General de Margerie: Russia-sanctions are a mistake**

According to the opinion of *Christophe de Margerie*, the Director General of the French energy company Total, sanctions against Russia are an erroneous way. "We mustn't allow anybody to convince us that Russia is our enemy," the chief executive officer (CEO) said in an interview for the "*Süddeutsche Zeitung*" on Thursday.

"Our energy supply depends in many ways on this neighbor. If the Americans want to inflame the conflict further on due to historical causes and domestic political motives – then that is their decision. But we Europeans have to manage this crisis differently, without deviding everything in black and white." He did

not think that Russia's President *Vladimir Putin* is planning the occupation of the Ukraine, de Margerie said.

Source: *Ria Novosti* from 4.9.2014

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## “The West is carnivorous and cannibalistic [...], it feeds on the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future”

The Indian Nobel Prize Laureate for Literature, Rabindranath Tagore,  
and his tireless commitment to peaceful coexistence – a role model for today

by Thomas Schaffner

“Great civilizations have flourished in the past in the East as well as the West because they produced food for the spirit of man for all time. ... These great civilizations were at last run to death by men of the type of our precocious schoolboys of modern times, smart and superficially critical, worshippers of self, shrewd bargainers in the market of profit and power, efficient in their handling of the ephemeral, who ... eventually, driven by suicidal forces of passion, set their neighbours’ houses on fire and were themselves enveloped by flames.”

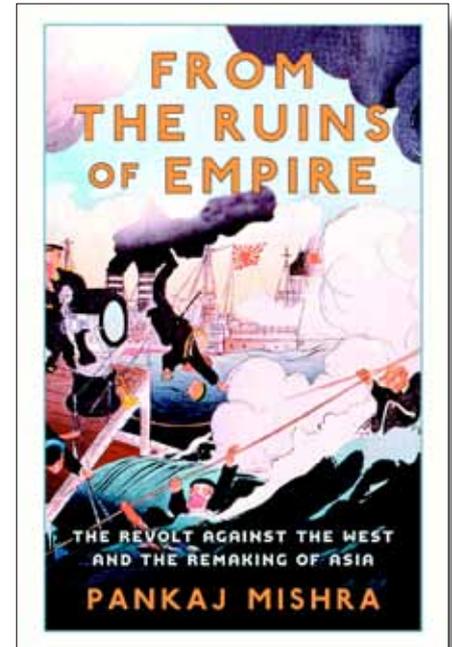
Rabindranath Tagore, quoted in Mishra, pp. 241

Asia is on the rise. This is shown not only by the “Shanghai Declaration” of the CICA, the “Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia”, are eloquent testimony (cf. *Current Concerns* no. 14/15 of 9 July). Relations between the countries of Asia are also intensifying on the bilateral level – without including the West. Among others, Urs Schoettli reported in the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 7 July about the caesura, which was made by the recent power change in Delhi with Narendra Modi: In modernizing the country, the newly elected Indian Prime Minister explicitly backs on Asian models and values and intensifies the relations not only with China but also with the East Asian tigers and especially with Singapore and Japan. The fact that they progress with “fresh pragmatics” only confirms the assessments of Kishore Mahbubani, who emphasizes exactly these pragmatics as one of the recipes for success of Asians – and the West is recommended to imitate them. This would lead to a move away from ideologically narrowed views and hostilities, because the pragmatists are negotiating with states that formerly did not count among their friends – but it is the only way to achieve more peace on the planet.

If India relates more closely to Japan and China, they will have to overcome some historical legacy: India, which is attributed the role of a possible mediator between Asia and the West by Kishore Mahbubani, but also by Zbigniew Brzezinski, has had a dubious reputation among its

Asian neighbors as a British-dominated country for a long time. Pankaj Mishra, himself an Indian, in his award-winning book “*From the Ruins of Empire. The revolt against the West and the re-making of Asia*” provides insight into the changing relations of the countries mentioned in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and makes clear that the phase of the 200-year dominance of the West, which Kishore Mahbubani called a “historical aberration”, does now not only come to the end, but has been met with resistance already a hundred years ago by a network of Asian intellectuals who joined in one thing: the resistance against the humiliations suffered by the racist arrogance of Europeans and Americans. In the example of Indian Nobel laureate for literature Rabindranath Tagore’s work, it becomes obvious that even their obedient Asian followers, particularly Japan that behaved increasingly imperialist, were judged critically.

India – a “lost land”? At least, many of the Chinese neighbors thought so at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Had not the British Indian traders seconded in the opium trade? Had not Indian soldiers been used in the Boxer Rebellion of the Europeans against the Chinese? And had not Indian policemen held Chinese in check in contract ports on behalf of the colonial masters? How, if not as an act of self-subjugation and self-renunciation should China understand this behavior? Unlike China, India seemed to have lost the bond to its cultural heritage. There were enough examples, so for example the family of



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the later Nobel Prize for Literature laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941). Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, his family had been connected with the East India Company, the corporation, which had more troops under arms than the British mother country, which ran private prisons in India and acted as an independent colonial power. His grandfather was the richest Indian businessman, who had been welcomed by the Queen on his visits to London. Tagore was born in 1861, four years after the Indian uprising and after universities in Western style had been founded. So he came into contact with Western ideas, but at the same time with social reform tendencies of, for example, Ram Mohun Roy (1774–1833), the “father of modern India”. He never took sharp anti-Western views. He also had differences with Gandhi, whose anti-colonial statements sounded partly xenophobic to him.

### Criticism of the Europeanization of India

Unlike the “Young Bengals”, who like the Ottoman Tanzimat or the Japanese Meiji reformers wanted to entirely align themselves with the West, Tagore was one of the sharpest critics of India’s Europeanization. In the Indian philosopher and politician Aurobindo

continued on page 10

**“The West is carnivorous ...”**

continued from page 9

Ghose (1872–1950) he found a like-minded person. Ghose, who had grown up in a Bengali, Britain-friendly family, felt the Bengalis as “drunk with the wine of European civilization” (quoted in Mishra, p. 221) and India in danger of losing its soul to European materialism. Or in the words of *Swami Vivekananda* (1863–1902), the earliest spiritual leader of India: “For this civilization [meaning the European] the sword was the means [for the attainment of given ends], heroism the aid, and enjoyment of life in this world and the next the only end.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 222) From his numerous trips to Europe and in the USA Vivekananda took the knowledge home that the Westerners as well had a kind of caste system in which the rich and powerful controlled everything.

Aurobindo Ghose accused the British, to proceed along the motto “might is right” and so to subjugate not only the Irish. He grew more militant and thought peace in Asia would only be won “by the Asiatic sword”. (quoted in Mishra, p. 224)

**Tagore celebrates Japanese victory at Tshushima in 1905**

In 1881, Rabindranath Tagore for his part dissociated himself from his grandfather, who was a central figure in the opium trade. From 1891 to 1901 he lived in the villages of Bengal. This led him to the conviction that the self-renewal of India had to emanate from the villages. Against the background of his conservative-aristocratic origin and his Western-style education, the appreciation of the simple life in the countryside was the basis for his establishment of an experimental school in rural south-west Bengal, which developed into an international university. The analysis of the West was as sharp as a knife: “Scientific rather than human ... overrunning the whole world, like some prolific weed ... It is carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies, it feeds upon the resource-

es of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future ... It is powerful because it concentrates all its forces upon one purpose, like a millionaire acquiring money at the cost of his soul.” (quoted in Mishra, pp. 224)

In 1905, Tagore wrote two songs that later became the national anthem of Bangladesh and India. On the occasion of the Japanese victory at Tshushima in 1905, Tagore organized a victory parade in his school. In 1902 he formulated: “The harder turns our conflict with the foreigner, the greater grows our eagerness to understand and attain ourselves. We can see that this is not only our case alone. The conflict with Europe is waking up all civilized Asia. Asia today is set to realizing herself consciously, and thence with vigour. She has understood, know thyself – that is the road to freedom. In imitating others is destruction.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 224)

**For an Asian cosmopolitanism and ...**

Tagore rejected the militant Indian nationalism with bombings and terrorist attacks, and in 1917 he criticized the concept of nationalism worldwide. The idea of the nation would become a “machinery of commerce”, people were pressed in “neatly compressed bales”, a “cult of selfishness” developed, which destroyed the livelihoods of the human race as a whole. His ideal was an Asian cosmopolitanism: “India has never had a real sense of nationalism ... It is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 226)

Certainly, from a Swiss perspective it must be noted here with *J.R. von Salis*, that the concept of nationalism, especially in 1917, was different from the federalist state, organized from bottom to top in a nation determined by the will of the people like Switzerland, where the sovereignty of the people is guaranteed by means of direct democracy: “The state of Switzerland is – do we have to say it again and again? – a political creation. The patriotism of its citi-

zens is a basically cooperative, democratic, federalist form of expression of nationhood, so that nationhood, if one applies the word to our country, is completely different from that in other European countries.” (Von Salis, p. 111). In this respect, Tagore cannot be instrumentalized as an advocate of large centralized structures such as the EU, which wants to dissolve the nation states, which in turn are mostly big structures governed by central governments, which have realized the people’s sovereignty only partially by representative and not or only rudimentarily by direct democracies.

**... against the cult of selfishness**

But if – as critics say – in 2014 states were to be submitted to corporations, as will be done by the planned Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Agreement TTIP (Trans Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership), or if *Zbigniew Brzezinski* demands of Europe to abandon the concept of the welfare state and puts the case for the view of man as the ‘homo economicus’ – and claims that EU’s and NATO’s expansion to the East are essential to the hegemon USA, then Tagore’s criticism seems quite understandable. It would, however, rather apply to the supra-national EU as “Fortress Europe”. A centralized large structure which hermetically seals off the southern border and, without consulting the people, decides on a policy of sanctions against the Russian neighbors – does such an egocentric EU not also represent the narrow-minded attitude – to use Tagore’s words again – that “a country is greater than the ideals of humanity”? But again: How different is Switzerland as a nation determined by the will of its people, with many naturalized citizens from other countries and a foreign population bigger than in almost any other European nation-state, open-minded, with a diversity of languages and hosting headquarters of major international organizations? In this respect the views of Tagore and the Swiss model do not contradict each other, even if they are difficult to compare. But it is certainly not allowed to instrumentalize his view, not only in favor of a large EU, but also in favor of a world structure such as the *ordo seclorum*, the new world order of one world, advocated by *George W. Bush* in 1991 – meaning the dominance of financial, economic, military and media “elites”.

**Gandhi: Do not establish an “English rule without the Englishman”**

His longtime friend Moandas Gandhi argued similarly as Tagore. Nationalists would only replace one deluded ruler by another, i.e. establish an “English rule without the Englishman” in India (quoted in Mishra, p. 226), he wrote in 1909 addressing therewith the Hindu nationalists, who based their

**J. R. von Salis: The national character of Switzerland – a counterpoint to the nationalism of other countries**

“The Federal State Switzerland – must it really be repeated ever and again? – is a political creation. The patriotism of its citizens is an essential cooperative, democratic, federalist expression of its national character so that this term ‘national’ provided that one uses this word referring to our country, has a completely different meaning than in any other European country.”

*J.R. von Salis: Schwierige Schweiz, Zurich 1968, p. 111*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

continued on page 11

# “So much for national self-determination. I think it’s really shameful!”

## Indignation in Asia at the Paris Peace Treaties of 1919

ts. The First World War ends with the Paris Peace Conference. In addition to the representatives of the European powers and of the United States it was also attended by ambassadors from those countries that had supported their European masters as colonies or as colonized peoples with hundreds of thousands of soldiers and workers; not least in the hope that after the war the European colonialists would show their appreciation and release their colonial peoples, this way thanking them for their support. From China, India, Vietnam, Egypt, Iran, etc. they came to Paris, but their hopes were more than disappointed. For China an intellectual took part who has already been portrayed (cf. *Current Concerns* No 10 of 17 May): *Liang Qichao* was his name; his aim: China, as a sovereign nation-state and as equal among equals, should be able to occupy a place in the new world order – the “unequal treaties” and all other gagging were to be cancelled. After all, the US President had supported the right of nations to self-determination! One put great hope in the United States, having

emerged from the war as the strongest financial power in the world. By *Wilson’s* 14-Point Plan nation-state-minded forces in Egypt, Ottoman Turkey, India and elsewhere were encouraged to challenge the European colonial powers, since this 14-Point Plan not only provided free trade but also government by the people, freedom of the seas, containment of armament, rights for the small nations and an alliance of nations to guarantee peace.

### In 1919, the Asian countries set on US President Wilson, ...

In particular India, which in the First World War had mobilized – believe it or not – one million people as soldiers and workers for the British, now hoped for release from the yoke of colonialism. Thus, the Indian Nobel Prize Winner for Literature in 1913, *Rabindranath Tagore*, in the beginning of 1919 wrote to his fellow writer, world citizen and opponent of war of the first hour, *Romain Rolland*: “There is hardly a corner in the vast continent of Asia where men have come to feel any real love for Europe.” (quoted in Mishra,

p. 192) And in China a book with speeches by US President *Wilson* was a bestseller. A lot was expected, especially from the United States, and all the greater was the disappointment that the United States, France and Great Britain negotiated all important decisions among themselves. China was excluded from the table of the great powers and put on the same level as Thailand and Greece. Many Asian representatives, however, were not even heard at the Conference, so those of Iran, Syria and Armenia. *Ho Chi Minh*, at that time a penniless laborer in Paris, was expressed his disgust for the French, who had recruited 100,000 Vietnamese for their war, as mere cannon fodder. However, he expected a lot from *Wilson*; quite different from *Lenin*, who already in 1916 had considered imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, and in doing so had mercilessly settled accounts with the United States. After the October Revolution, *Lenin* and his comrades called on the peoples of Asia, to shake off the yoke of the

continued on page 12

### “The West is carnivorous ...”

continued from page 10

ideas on those of *Bankim Chandra Chatterjee* (1838–1894) and later took over elements of the fascist parties of Germany and Italy.

Gandhi knew what he was talking about, since as a young man he had also been trying to be more English than the English. The London-trained lawyer changed only by virtue of a series of racist humiliations he had suffered especially in South Africa. Gandhi saw imperialism, similar to *Lenin* and *Rosa Luxemburg*, in a context of capitalism, but he went further and submitted modern civilization to a general criticism: It was fixated on economic growth and utilized violence to obtain political sovereignty, lacking a broader understanding of social harmony and spiritual freedom. The Industrial Revolution had declared wealth a main objective, had destroyed religion and ethics and had submitted the people to the rule of machines. Spiritual strength and moral self-knowledge were the foundations of true civilization. People should sympathize with their political opponents, because they too were victims, victims of violence and greed, ancient forces. Satyagraha, literally grasping the truth, hence the idea of non-violent enforcement of the things that are known to be true, was true for everyone, and before a country could renew itself, the people had to renew themselves. A concept that the

German classical authors, ostracized by the neo-Marxist 68 students, would have equally represented – the beautiful soul, purified of passions, as a basis for a better world. And not class struggle and revolution from which then the “new man” would emerge – indeed still an unparalleled carnage in history, performed fanatically and ideologically.

### In 1930 Tagore is received by US President Hoover

Tagore, who was in contact with Gandhi until his death in 1941, was awarded the 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature. All over the world, he spoke in crowded halls, and in 1930 he was even received by US President *Hoover*. All this, even though he spoke openly about the West being a destructive force, based on the cult of power and money, and that it would get out of control without the spiritual Eastern wisdom. He compared Western civilization to a machine: “The sole fulfillment of a machine is in achievement of result, which in its pursuit of success despises moral compunctions as foolishly out of place.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 231)

Japan’s burgeoning nationalism, coupled with a militarized imperialism, made Tagore worry a lot: he considered Japan only a copy of the West and he put it in a lecture in Beijing as follows: “Physical power is not the strongest in the end ... You are the most long lived race, because you have had centuries of wisdom

nourished by your faith in goodness, not in mere strength.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 236)

### Criticized by CPCh, later rehabilitated as anti-imperialist

Tagore’s orientation towards *Confucius* and Buddhism caused an ensuing sharp campaign by the young Communist Party of China. He was called a slave, who wanted to “Indianise” the Chinese youth; they, however, did not want a philosophy, but materialism, and they had already enough *Confucius* and *Mencius*. Leaflets against him were distributed on his events, only personal protection saved him from violent attacks. He was grievously wronged. So the Chinese writer *Lu Xun* conceded (1881–1936) a year later, that Tagore was an anti-imperialist. And effective: In 1930, at a reception in New York Tagore said in the presence of President *Roosevelt*, the present era belonged to the West, and the world had to be grateful to the West for the sciences. But: “you have exploited those who are helpless and humiliated those who are unfortunate with this gift.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 241)

### Tagore warns of “callow schoolboys of the East”

As mentioned above Tagore realized very late that Japan, his great hope, whose mil-

continued on page 12

**“So much for national ...”**

continued from page 11

imperialist “robbers and oppressors”. The anti-imperialist orientation of the USSR found approval in Korea, Persia, India, Egypt and China. The Communist International (Kominintern) assisted in the foundations of local communist parties in the Asian countries.

**... although Wilson campaigned for the predominance of the “white race”**

For the time being, however, Wilson was more popular among the Asian elites than Lenin. Also, because the news agencies, particularly *Reuters*, *al-Afghani*'s old enemy, were in western hands and portrayed the Bolsheviks as a dangerous disease.

The subjugation of Haiti and Nicaragua as military protectorates of the United States was hardly known in Asia, nor did the exclusion of “Asians Americans” in the United States make hardly any waves in Asia. Wilson had the reputation of being anti-imperialist, although his “differentiations” listed below were not acceptable for colonized peoples. Mishra writes: Wilson “regarded European imperialism as a matter of physical occupation of far-off lands and spheres of influence, and deplored

it as such. Proposing the Open Door, he did not see that free trade, the third of his Fourteen Points, could be seen as equally oppressive by economically disadvantaged peoples.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 197)

What was not or hardly noticed in Asia: Wilson thought in terms quite similar to *Kipling* with his “burden-of-white-man” rhetoric. As a Southerner, the US President not only made “jokes” about the “darkies”, but he also considered, that one had to bring law and order to “less civilized peoples” like the Philippines and Puerto Ricans, because “after all they are children and we are men”. In 1917, he had stressed that the United States had to stay out of the war so that “the white race remains strong against the yellow one – for example, the Japanese”. What’s more, the intact USA can ensure that “the white civilization and its predominance on the planet” will persist.

**Mao about Wilson:  
an “ant on a hot frying pan”**

Wilson’s idea of the nations’ self-determination referred to Europe, Poland, Romania, Czechs and Serbs, and not to the claim that the British and French give up their colonial possessions. Mishra’s conclusion: “Wilson had his chance when in the

spring of 1917 he first heard of the secret treaties that outlined how Britain, France, Japan and Italy would share whole empires among themselves after the war. He could have made American intervention in the war contingent upon the Allied powers cancelling their squalid arrangements. Instead, he pretended that the treaties did not exist, and even tried to prevent news of them being published in the United States after the Bolsheviks exposed them to the world.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 198) When in Paris, Wilson had to give his consent that on the initiative of the victorious powers in Europe Germany was to be excluded from the League of Nations, in the far Hunan the then 25-year-old *Mao Zedong* wholeheartedly felt sorry for the US President comparing him with an “ant on a hot frying pan.” And he commented the fact that India and Korea were not listened to, by saying: “So much for national self-determination. I think it’s really shameless!” (quoted in Mishra, p. 199)

**Ho Chi Minh:  
“It was patriotism which had prompted me to believe in Lenin”**

The year 1919 was a turning point – less for the Western powers, although in the

continued on page 13

**“The West is carnivorous ...”**

continued from page 11

itancy he had long underestimated, had been “infected by the virus of European imperialism” (quoted in Mishra, p. 239) Shortly before his death, Tagore expressed deep pessimism: “We are a band of hapless people, where would we look up to? The days of staring at Japan are over.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 240) He said so in 1938, after Japan had occupied Manchuria in 1931 and attacked the Chinese heartland in 1937. And in one of his last essays he warned strongly against the callous “schoolboys of the East”:

“The carefully nurtured yet noxious plant of national egoism is shedding its

**It takes a genuine confession to impartiality ...**

“A clear, preferably objective working out of facts based on sources and already existing documentations is the skeleton of any historiography. Neither the historian nor the reader should read their own prejudices in the historical facts. Certainly it takes an enormous effort and a genuine confession to impartiality to change long accustomed views on the basis of a deeper investigation of the facts.”

J.R. von Salis, *Weltgeschichte der neuesten Zeit. Volume II, Zurich 1995, p. 1*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

seeds all over the world, making our callow schoolboys of the East rejoice, because the harvest produced by these seeds – the harvest of antipathy with its endless cycle of self-renewal – bears a western name of high-sounding distinction. Great civilizations have flourished in the past in the East as well as the West because they produced food for the spirit of man for all time. ... These great civilizations were at last run to death by men of the type of our precocious schoolboys of modern times, smart and superficially critical, worshippers of self, shrewd bargainers in the market of profit and power, efficient in their handling of the ephemeral, who ... eventually driven by suicidal forces of passion, set their neighbours’ houses on fire and were themselves enveloped by flames.” (quoted in Mishra, pp. 240)

**UN Charter as the basis for peace – despite systemic contradictions**

Tagore fortunately did not have to experience what he had predicted here, for he died in 1941. What greed was able to inflict on both sides could be seen in the war raging worldwide from 1941 and its end with the launching of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The spiritual food for humanity demanded by Tagore then arose from the UN Charter, the basis for a more peaceful world order, highly acclaimed by Kishore Mahbubani

– be it ever so flawed with the “systemic contradiction between the sovereignty of states and the self-determination of peoples” (Professor Dr *Köchler* on the occasion of a lecture in Switzerland in spring 2014). A contradiction which can be both abused to interest-led military campaigns as well as to peaceful resolution of conflicts, if you let the local people only do as they like, i.e. let them determine themselves how they want to organize their lives together – even if this does not always correspond entirely to Western ideas. This is one of the implicit quintessence of Pankaj Mishra’s book, which in terms of international understanding more than justifies the awarding of the Leipzig Book Prize.

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“So much for national ...”  
continued from page 12

longer term they had to take notice of a shift of the center towards Washington and the rising of a revanchist seed for the “humiliation of Versailles” in Germany – but indeed they stayed in the saddle and in power with their colonies and protectorates. In Asia, by contrast, mass parties began to form, which wanted to stand up to the racism which was officially declared by the West: in Indonesia, in India, there especially after the massacre in Amritsar on 13 April 1919, where British soldiers massacred 400 defenseless people. And Ho Chi Minh became a Communist in 1921: “It was patriotism, not Communism, which had prompted me to believe in Lenin” (quoted in Mishra, p. 202), he wrote later.

The British *Lloyd George*’s dictum that the Turks were “a human cancer, a creeping agony in the flesh of the lands which they misgoverned, rotting every fibre of life” (quoted in Mishra, p. 203) is admittedly ranked in the tradition of a country which had been the first to build concentration camps, in South Africa during the Boer war against the – nota bene also white – Boers, but did not exactly give hope to the colonized peoples.

### Ataturk’s victory as synonymous with Japan’s victory in Tshushima

When the British and French occupied Istanbul in 1920, after they had adjudicated Western Anatolia to Greece, the shock was deep among the Muslims of the world. And the stronger was the sigh of relief, when *Mustafa Kemal*, later known as *Ataturk*, expelled all foreign troops from Turkish soil – the fate of the Greek civilian population of Asia Minor is a different issue. *Ataturk* was called “Sword of Islam” for his actions in India – his victory was similarly epochal for the East as the Japanese victory at Tshushima. Wilson’s right to self-determination, you had to fight for it militarily: this was the doctrine in Asia. In China, *Ataturk*’s victory was met with the strongest echo. For there they had been duped twice: Unlike Indians, Turks, Egyptians and Koreans, the Chinese had been adequately represented at the Paris Peace Conference, China had provided hundreds of thousands of workers for the Allies, had even entered into war on their side, however: in order not to reset Japan any longer, and as France and Great Britain held on to their possessions, China came away empty-handed and did not even get back Shangdong. Shangdong, *Confucius*’ prestigious birthplace and the

cradle of Chinese civilization! Japan remained occupiers. Even in the United States, parliamentarians were furious at this betrayal, which would “dishonor and degrade any people”, as Senator William Borah said. (quoted in Mishra, p. 205)

### “Might is right” – how much longer?

The Chinese *Liang Qichao* declared that the statement “might is right” still applied; buzzwords such as justice and humanity were nothing but smoke and mirrors, and China could only count on itself. These are insights that are shared by *Kishore Mahbubani*, when he reproaches the West of its policy of double standards lasting up to the present day. Insights which a Westerner should not forget when dealing with Asian countries, but also with his own history. •

## Letter to the Editor

### You just have to look very closely ...

The detailed report by *Thomas Schaffner* about *Al Afghani* respectively about the book by *Pankaj Mishra* is really very interesting. He shows, among other things, how difficult it is to get a clear picture about historical personalities and their work on closer inspection. And how difficult it was (and is) for politically active people to act “right” in the complex contexts of each historical present. Or in other words: How careful we must be if we want to form a judgment about the work of historical figures. This doesn’t mean to imply that it is not possible to form a judgment. But you just have to look very closely and carefully and try to understand individual mindsets, motives and actions always re-

lated to the respective complex environment.

In addition, he also demonstrates by an apparently small example how for many decades and centuries in the Islamic world the confrontation with European colonialism in thought and action has proceeded and so he makes the current events a little more understandable. We know far too little about these processes and would be well advised to continue our studies thoroughly before we divide the players of the world into good and evil ones. Thank you very much.

*Dr Christian Fischer, Cologne*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## Current Concerns

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## “Uniting the Asian people against Europe – a legitimate means of self-defense”

ts. “Our country, too, suffers from this disgrace [the exploitation by the Europeans, ts]. The Turks are Asians like us ... And so, they’ve come to us and communicated their friendship.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 128) With these sentences a Japanese newspaper welcomed an Embassy from the Ottoman Empire, who visited Japan in 1889 by sea in the early period of Pan-Asianism. The guests from the Sublime Porte aimed at studying the Japanese model in order to be better prepared against the European powers.

Also for the young Turks, who later built a nation state on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, Japan was an inspiring role model, especially after the fleet agreement with the United Kingdom in 1902 and the victory in Tshushima in 1905 against Russia. They deliberately overlooked the violence, militarism, and racism, in which the land of the rising sun was not lagging behind the Western powers, already at that time, and all the more later on.

### Japan’s recipe for success: Not to hand over public finances

But, what was the success of Japan? In the Meiji-Restoration, parts of Japanese elites had recognized that their weakness was caused primarily by the scientific and technological backwardness. That’s why they sent students and experienced envoy abroad, brought experts into Japan and got down to the construction of a modern nation state. In 1889, a constitution in western-style was passed, even though the emperor still had a divine position.

Japan’s advantages when compared to countries failing in their modernization, such as the Ottoman Empire, China and Egypt: Japan’s population was homogeneous, the old elites hardly opposed and were part of the innovations, and: they kept control over the financial system, unlike Egypt. With a lot of diplomatic skill, they managed to repeal the unequal treaties! So, in 1894 the British renounced their extraterritorial rights. The modernization started to become questionable when in that same year 1894 Japan attacked China and inflicted a crushing defeat in order to dominate Korea. But Japan justified that by stating that it showed that “civilization is not a monopoly of the white man”. (quoted in Mishra, p. 133) Other voices cheered that “the real birthday of New Japan began with the conquest of China”. (quoted in Mishra, p. 133)

### Whites saw the Japanese “close to monkeys”...

And a voice that shows why despite all negative aspects the rise of Japan in Asia received a huge echo: formerly the whites had seen the Japanese “close to monkeys” (quoted in Mishra, p. 133), as written by the Japanese journalist *Toku-*

*tomí Soho*: “We are no longer ashamed to stand before the world as Japanese. ... Before we did not know ourselves, and the world did not know us. But now that we have tested our strength, we know ourselves and we are known by the world. Moreover, we know that we are known by the world”. (quoted in Mishra, p.133).

The same Soho, which so far had been a defender of individual rights and freedom, campaigned well for a Japanese imperialism, to “break the worldwide monopoly and destroy the special rights of the white races”. (quoted in Mishra, p. 134)

### Transnational network of Asian intellectuals against Western imperialism

Japan became the Mecca of the fighters for independence throughout Asia, especially after the repeatedly mentioned epochal Japanese victory against Russia in Tshushima in 1905. But besides Tokyo, Asian intellectuals gathered in Chicago, Berlin, Johannesburg and Yokohama. Many traveled also to vocational trainings to Western countries, so *Gandhi* to London, *Lu Xun* to Japan and *Sun Yat-Sen* to Honolulu. Thus a transnational network developed, which had also an effect in the home countries of the Asian exiles. The Pan-Asian, Pan-Islamist and Pan-Arabists aimed at uniting against the Western imperialist powers. Such as the widely travelled Muslim intellectual *Abdurreshid Ibrahim*, admirer of *al-Afghani*, born in Russia, in various Japanese magazines in 1909. It was the disunity of the Asian peoples “that enabled Western powers to invade the East. Without being aware of this defect, and putting an end to internal opposition, Asian peoples will have no future.” (quoted in Mishra, p. 168) And Ibrahim went on, “bringing about the union of Asian countries to stand up to Europe is our legitimate means of self-defense”. (quoted in Mishra, pp. 169)

### Russian Muslim sees Japan as Savior

Ibrahim, the widely-travelled Pan-Asian Muslim exile-Russian, then founded the journal *Islamic Fraternity* in Tokyo, – along with Egyptian and Indian exiles, which had to flee the British from their occupied countries – an association of victims of imperialism, which is unusual for a western observer; probably this is because we still doubt – and as *Kishore Mahbubani* suspects this to be the attitude of us Westerners – whether Asians are actually able to think or even take action. “Can Asians think?”, this is the provocatively revealing and also accusatory title of Mahbubani’s book, a century after the events described by Mishra!

And even more in contradiction to all our Western historical schemes is the following episode of world history: In 1909 our Russian Muslim Ibrahim travels to Istanbul, supported by the Japanese secret society Black Dragon, to inform from there the Muslims in China and in the British and Dutch colonies that a savior is ready for them: Japan!

First World War: the front lines looked very different in the hearts of Asians.

And you will be reading the following sentence of Mishra’s three or four times until you get the cross-references correctly sorted: “During the first world war he [Ibrahim] raised an ‘Asian battalion’ of Russian prisoners of war in Germany, which fought against the British in Mesopotamia.” Of course the Muslim Russians didn’t fight for Germany, but for the liberation of Asia and the Muslims – and the United Kingdom forced itself on them as an enemy! In our western view it was the large centralized nation-states that were fighting each other in the first World War, “Germans” against “British”; but from the perspective of Asian peoples, the situation looked quite different: countless people were forced to fight under the flag of their oppressors – but in their hearts the front lines looked quite different ...

### “10,000 ‘Annamese’ are worth less than a French dog?”

As another example of how strongly many Asians put their entire hopes on Japan as a Savior, Mishra mentions the Vietnamese *Phan Boi Chau* (1867–1940). His text “History of the loss of Vietnam” was reprinted in *Liang Qichao’s* magazine in Japan and as a book later reached the most remote villages of Vietnam and became the Bible of *Ho Chi Minh* and the anti-colonialists in Viet Nam. Already earlier Phan Boi Chau had written in a mixture of shame, bewilderment and anger about the attack of the French in his homeland: “Since France gained their protectorate they have taken over everything, even the power of life or death. The life of 10,000 ‘Annamese’ is worth less than one French dog; the prestige of 100 mandarins is less than that of one French female. How is it that those blue-eyed, yellow-bearded people, who are not our fathers or elder brothers, can squat on our heads, defecate on us?” (quoted in Mishra, p. 169) Unfortunately the Vietnamese had to endure further wars in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – with the well-known complications, such as for example the tons of toxin agent orange spread on them. Is to be hoped that in the muscle game between the United States and China in the far East Vietnam will not again become the plaything in the great game of *Zbigniew Brzezinski* ...

# “The Voice of the Citoyen”

## In memory of Frédéric Walthard (1921–2014)

by Dr phil René Roca



Frédéric Walthard  
(picture jk)

*Frédéric Walthard has passed away on 25 August 2014 after a short illness at the age of 94. Thus, our country loses a political voice which until recently did not fall silent and continually commented on the day's current events and put them in a context with a barbed pen. He was a personality of impressive stature and has made an unprecedented commitment to the economy and politics of Switzerland throughout his long life.*

Frédéric Walthard was born on 13 March 1921 in Faido, Ticino. His father had worked as an engineer in the Balkans and in Turkey since 1911. So Frédéric spent his youth and school years in Sofia, Bulgaria, where he graduated from high school in 1939. Studies in Sofia and Bern, as well as the recruit school and the active service in Switzerland followed. From 1944 to 1971 Walthard worked as a diplomat and lawyer, last as Secretary General of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, under the chairmanship of the Federal Councillor *Hans Schaffner*. His diplomatic career took him to the focal points of international politics, hence to New York, Washington, Paris, Brussels and Geneva.

In this context, Geneva is particularly worth highlighting since Walthard participated actively in establishing the *European Free Trade Association* (EFTA)

as the Deputy delegation Chief as from 1960. With the EFTA he supported an alternative to the uprising *European Union* (EU), which the “admirer of Sovereignty” Walthard loathed as a supranational entity. Walthard has repeatedly stressed the importance of the independence and sovereignty of equal states as guaranteed by the EFTA until today. In one of his last articles, Walthard focused on the developments of the EU. Just an EU that increasingly mutates to a political power colossus correspondingly with little sense for a sensible diplomacy and on a rapid course toward confrontations (see Russia).

After his diplomatic career from 1971 to 1988 Walthard became head of the *Swiss Trade Fair in Basel* (MUBA). There, he worked extensively as a real pioneer. So he opened the fair for foreign trade products and exhibitors (among others for the Eastern bloc countries and China). Such constructive contacts were a soothing counterpoint in the climate of the Cold War. In the years 2005 to 2007, Walthard presented a three-volume autobiography worth reading, which traces his career comprehensively and in detail.<sup>1</sup>

Since his retirement in 1988, he has devoted himself on the one hand to his artistic work, in particular to painting, which allowed him to rest and relax. On the other hand, he fell back again upon his diplomatic and political experience and almost continuously published articles on current domestic and international issues. This commitment was immense, and it served primarily – as Walthard himself put it – “promoting the independent Swiss democracy against the rising anti-democratic supranational power bloc of the European

Union”.<sup>2</sup> Almost tirelessly Walthard observed the political daily news and campaigned with his articles for a Switzerland which should adhere to its federalist and direct democratic foundation and strengthen it. Reading through the articles of his last years, it is amazing how clearly he anticipated many developments. Thus he spoke of a threatening “cold integration into the EU”<sup>3</sup> some years ago. This process is becoming more and more a reality and countermeasures are an urgent necessity today.

With the help of his daughter *Catherine* he enlarged his own web site during the last months. The web page is called “The Voice of the Citoyen” and now includes Walthard’s legacy: A true wealth of thoughts, which clearly opposes the “political correctness” of our days and is so beneficial and enlightening. In the sense of a lasting heritage his daughter will now be completing Frédéric Walthard’s website.

With his incredible creativity, always supported by his wife *Simone*, and his political ethics Frédéric Walthard is and remains a role model for coming generations. It is now up to us to carry on his legacy and to give a response to his voice, the “Voice of the Citoyen”.

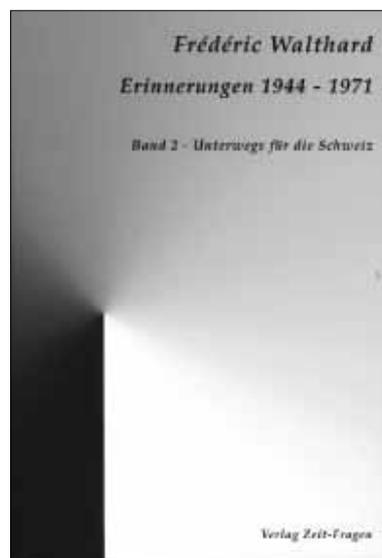
<sup>1</sup> Cf. Walthard, Frédéric: *Erinnerungen 1921–1944, Band 1 – Balkanschweizer im Sturm von Krieg, Terror und Faschismus; Ders.: Erinnerungen 1944–1971, Band 2 – Unterwegs für die Schweiz; Ders.: Erinnerungen 1971–1988, Band 3 – Messe Basel. Öffnung für Europa und die Welt* (all three volumes published by *Zeit-Fragen*)

<sup>2</sup> Walthard, Frédéric: cover, *Erinnerungen 1944–1971, Band 2 – Unterwegs für die Schweiz*.

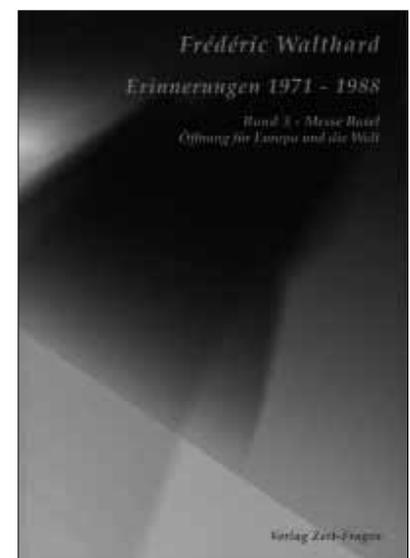
<sup>3</sup> see for example Walthard, Frédéric, in: *Zeit-Fragen* No.14 of 8 May 2000, page 1



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## Part II: Studies and Military Service 1939–1943

**Chapter 1: A difficult transition****1. The election of General Henri Guisan****The first shadows of war**

My student days were entirely overshadowed by the Second World War. The move to Berne had worked, and I had started very well with my legal studies at the university. As early as the end of June, my parents and I had travelled by car through a still quite peaceful Yugoslavia and a politically less pleasant Italy to Switzerland, mainly because my father urgently wanted to show me the National Exhibition in Zurich. A good way, he said, to familiarize myself with Switzerland and Swissness. I am still dreaming today of the high level route with its thousands of municipal flags.

At the time of the Zurich “Landi”, the National Exhibition, Swiss patriotism was at a climax that had not been reached for a long time before and has never been reached again, since. I must say that patriotism means to me what once a respected member of the French Academy called it, “patriotism, love of my native country.” This is not to be confused with nationalism, which is based on the hatred of other countries.

Surely *Hitler’s* successful march towards the conquest of Europe had contributed to the re-awakening of patriotic feelings in Switzerland. The majority of the people were alarmed and outraged by the military annexations of the Nazis which followed each other stroke upon stroke: the Rhineland in 1936, Austria in 1938, 1938–39 first the Sudetenland and then the whole of Czechoslovakia, and finally there was the threat on Poland with the invasion on 1 September 1939. Even those who, on the basis of their real understanding of democracy and the respect for dissenters which is typical for this way of thinking, had allowed a free hand to the Nazis and their Swiss offshoot, the “Frontists” – think notably of *Pilet-Golaz*, the Swiss Foreign Minister at the time, – were all at once alarmed, or rather they had woken up facing the efficient Third Reich machinery of war and occupation. The “Landi” in Zurich became the symbol of the Swiss people’s wish to defend themselves and their independence. Many a historian nowadays may write about all this whatever he wants, but as an 18 year-old youngster, this patriotic enthusiasm the majority of the Swiss had developed really got at me, and carried me off.

**A historic day**

When the United Federal Assembly appointed Colonel Corps Commander

*Henri Guisan* General of the Swiss Army and endowed him with all the associated and very extensive powers on 30 August 1939, we all suddenly became aware that the situation had become really serious with respect to the Second World War and that the closing of the ranks that was so perceptible at the “Landi” would now have to pass its first acid test. And when on 2 September 1939, 430,000 men and women and 200,000 head of emergency service personnel were called up to report for duty by the first General Mobilisation and when all those who were not or no longer conscriptable, namely girls and women, were asked to volunteer for duty, nothing could hold my father back any longer. He reported for service immediately as a lieutenant of the field artillery, as he had done in the First World War. First, the Cantonal Military Administration in Berne wanted to have nothing to do with this. Pointing to his age, he was then 52 years old, my father insisted that he wanted to do the General’s bidding like anyone else. Once having perceived his experience from the railways, the military administration was glad to be able to make use of him in organising and monitoring individual shipments of ammunition supplies as they were taken from the local depots in the caves on Lake Thun near Interlaken and sent on to their various destinations.

My efforts of also speedily reporting for duty were initially unsuccessful. However, I was summoned on 22 January 1940 to take part in the examination for recruitment, and when I had passed this, I was assigned to join the Light Motorized troops as a gunner. Admittedly, I was not able to join military training school at once but only in the time from 14 July to 8 November 1941. My brothers *Heinz* and *Erich* had already been drafted at the beginning: *Heinz* into the infantry battalion no 37 and *Erich* to the air force troops in Payerne. My brother *Hermann*, my father’s eldest son and deputy in the company in Sofia, who had been staying in Switzerland at the outbreak of war, was exempted from military service after a relatively short time, i.e. about 30 – 40 days. The reason for this was simple: As my father was bound and determined to do his duty for his country, the authorities concluded of their own accord that under these circumstances my brother was to be exempted.

**Agricultural service instead of military training**

It probably happens very rarely that anybody is as ashamed of himself as I was during the first months of the war. There were enough trained soldiers, and I just had to wait until a military training school would have room for me. Out of sheer embarrassment, I then very quickly reported for agricultural service in the spring of 1940 and I ended up on the very large farm of *Hans Bracher* near Burgdorf. He had more than 55 bovines, a large number of pigs and only a small number of staff.

*Bracher* was a cavalry colonel and the officer responsible for the provision and readiness for action of the horses then kept by each cavalryman at home. He owned a number of horses himself, had two sons in the cavalry, and an old servant of his was the first servant in military service. What remained was only one other servant, a student of the School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences in Zollikofen and my humble self, as well as his two daughters-in-law, one daughter and his wife. As *Bracher* worked for the army every afternoon and then until midnight, he was able to help only in the mornings. But he woke us all each morning at four o’clock to mow and gather in two cartloads of grass for the cows, which were kept in the stable back then. It is amazing how much work the women were able to do in those days, when mowing or raking up the wet grass to lift it up over their heads in a great big heavy bale and so to load it onto the wagon. I felt embarrassed by my poor little bales, my slovenly cut “*Grasmädli*” (haystacks) and by my over-cautiousness when whetting the “*Sägesse*” (the scythe), but those things were as sharp as a razor. We used to return to the farmhouse at seven clock, dead tired but with the two wagon loads, each load drawn by two horses, which were naturally led by the two daughters-in-law. Then finally we got a hearty “*Z’morge*” (breakfast), “*Rösti*” with bacon, coffee with milk, and bread. But after twenty minutes, the word was, “*Chop-chop, back to work!*” •

Source: Frédéric Walthard, *Erinnerungen 1921–1944*, Volume 1, pp 187, ISBN 978-3-909234-02-4.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)