

# Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## Unipolarity can't be reincarnated

22 years since the launch of the NATO aggression on Serbia (the FRY)

by Živadin Jovanović, President of the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals



Živadin Jovanović  
(Picture ev)

*The Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals, the Club of Generals and Admirals of Serbia and a number of other independent, non-partisan, non-profit organisations have been continuously marking 24 March 1999, the date of the beginning of NATO*

*military aggression since the year 2000 to date, organising commemorative ceremonies, domestic and international conferences, laying wreaths at the memorials dedicated to the victims of aggression, publishing books, releasing statements, and reminding friends and partners in the country and abroad to also take part in these activities. This makes a distinct part of the overall commemorative activities of the Serbian society and, as of lately, of the state institutions of Serbia as well. This year's activities had to be in line with the measures effected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

### Moral duty towards the victims of NATO aggression

The first and the foremost reason is the sense of moral duty towards human victims, military, police and civilian ones alike, because all of them are innocent victims fallen on the soil of their own country from the foreign aggressor's weapons. The aggression itself took between 3,500 – 4,000 human lives, of whom more than 1,100 were military and police personnel, whereas the rest comprised civilians, women and children, workers, the public TV-broadcaster's employees, passengers in trains and busses, displaced people on the move. The numbers of those who died after the armed aggression, firstly from among some 10,000 wounded, then of those who perished from the scattered cluster bombs, and of those who succumbed to consequences of the use of missiles filled with depleted uranium and of the poisoning by noxious gasses generated upon the bombing of refineries and chemical plants, are yet to be



*The destroyed bridge of Varvarin after the attack by NATO bombers. Several innocent civilians were deliberately killed. The picture is still a symbol of the murderous Nato aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.*

(Picture Hans Wallow)

determined. We remember them all today and pay our deepest homage. We are confident that today's youth and all future generations will also remember those victims, aware of this remembrance being the moral duty of entire nation, a precondition for preserving dignity and peaceful future.

### Defending the truth

The second reason is to defend the truth, to leave no room for forgeries, lies and trickeries aimed, then and now, to diminish the aggressor's responsibility by inculcating the victim. This is why we have to clarify that the NATO war was neither an intervention, nor an aerial campaign, nor a "small Kosovo war", not even a mere bombing, but instead an illegal aggression committed without a United Nations Security Council's approval, blatant violation of the UN Charter, the OSCE Final Act, the fundamental principles of international law and, most notably, violation of the NATO Founding Act of 1949 and respective national constitutions of the latter's member states.

### The basic principles of international relations have been undermined

This was the first war on European soil since World War II, waged against an independent and sovereign state which neither attacked nor otherwise threatened either NATO or any of its individual member states. Thus, NATO inflicted a heavy blow to the legacies of World War II and of the agreements reached in Tehran, Yalta, Potsdam and Helsinki. Its aggression on Serbia (the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) in 1999 undermined the basic principles of international relations and the security system, for which tens of millions of people were killed. *24 March 1999 has entered history as a turning point in the world relation symbolising the peak of uni-polar domination, the beginning of its downfall and emerging multi-polar world order.* Not once, we heard that by launching attack on Yugoslavia NATO and its leading power wanted to preserve its international credibility. What came as the result was just the opposite.

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**"Unipolarity can't be reincarnated"**

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**Precedent for the globalisation of armed interventionism**

The aggressor wanted the war by all means, not any peaceful and sustainable solution for Kosovo and Metohija, the least to protect human rights or avoidance of "humanitarian catastrophe". It wanted a war to justify NATO's existence in the post-Cold War era and enormous budget appropriations for armaments, that is, the huge profits for military-industrial complex. *NATO wanted a war to demonstrate in practice its implementation of the doctrine of expansion to the East, to Russian borders and also to create a precedent for the globalisation of armed interventionism devoid of observance of international law and the role of the UN Security Council.* It was a cover-up for the deployment of American troops in the Balkan Peninsula, a mushrooming of a chain of the new USA military basis from *Camp Bond Steel* in the province of Kosovo and Metohija to a dozen of other bases from Black to Baltic Seas.

**Europe has sunk deep**

Europe has sunk deep conceding to participate in a war on itself. The fact that Europe still fails to put focus on itself, its own interests and identity, while pressuring Serbia to accept forcible theft of a part of her state territory (Kosovo and Metohija) and agree to the Dayton Agreement's revision and the creation of a unitary Bosnia and Herzegovina, only testifies to a worrying syndrome of the past now threatening its independence, unity, and development.

**NATO's responsibility for aggression must not be reduced**

Thirdly, because we do not assent to defeatism and propensity of some media from the so-called non-governmental sector and some public figures who in-

terpret NATO aggression in a way that reduces the aggressor's responsibility, while suggesting that Serbia, in the name of a purported realism and for the sake of a "better future", should shelve the topic of aggression and 'relieve herself' of Kosovo and Metohija as of a burden choking her progress.

However, NATO's responsibility for aggression and alliance with the terrorist and separatist KLA cannot be reduced in any way, the least of all could it be transferred onto Serbia. This would be shameful for Serbia and the Serbian people, and very detrimental for Europe and the future of global relations. The future of Europe's identity, autonomy, security and cooperation is highly dependent on re-examining the 1999 aggression on Yugoslavia, accepting it was a historic mistake. Otherwise, it will continue to seriously hinder its own interests.

**"Coloured revolutions" and cruise missiles do not contribute to the "export" of democracy and human rights**

Although devoted to Europe, Serbia cannot pay the price of re-establishing perturbed unity of the EU and NATO and/or of pursuing geopolitical goals of their key members, by means of renouncing Kosovo and Metohija, her state, cultural, and spiritual foundation. I am confident that Serbia will remain committed to a peaceful, just, and sustainable solution in line with the basic principles of peace, security and cooperation, while observing her Constitution and UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

By far largest share of humanity has come to understanding that there are no humanitarian wars or wars to protect population. "Coloured revolutions" and cruise missiles do not help 'export' democracy and human rights but rather serve interests of domination of liberal multinational corporate capital. In contrast to whatever the policy of force and the self-proclaimed 'exceptionality' may presume, history

cannot be halted, nor uni-polarity reincarnated.

**Deeply concerned about the escalation of global relations**

Fourthly, we are deeply concerned over the unending escalation of global relations, the arms race, the absence of dialogue among the leading powers and the deepening of mistrust among the key stakeholders in European and global relations. Public denominating of nuclear powers and permanent UN Security Council members as adversaries, plans to create 'democratic coalitions' aimed at confrontation with 'authoritarian systems', mass-scale military exercises deployed from the Atlantic and Baltic to the Indo-Pacific to 'contain' the 'malign influences' – signal a serious deterioration of global relations and risk unpredictable consequences. All this does not concern the great powers only, although is mostly dependent on them, but also reflects adversely on the position and development of all countries in the world, including also the position of Serbia and other small and medium size countries. As peace is indivisible, so are the dangers to peace and security.

**Call for dialogue**

Hence, we call on the dialogue on the highest level of permanent members of UN Security Council, urgent relaxation tensions, halt of deepening mistrust, respect for equality and partnership in resolving main urgent international challenges and problems, such as COVID-19 pandemic, deepening global economic and social gaps, climate warming, arms race and many of actual or potential conflicts.

Fifthly, because we do not want to witness a repeat of the anguish, victims, and devastation suffered by our nation during and after NATO's 1999 aggression ever, anywhere in the world. The tragic destiny of children in Belgrade, Varvarin, Korisha, Kosovska Mitrovica, Murino, must not be repeated. •

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# Internal and external peace, rule of law and democracy – only with respect for other people

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

*The theory that political events are resulting from compelling laws of nature or history, that, for example, hostile external circumstances must necessarily lead to uprisings or even violent revolutions, or that wars are inevitable when previous positions of power in the world are called into question – a current example of this is the “Thucydides hypothesis” regarding the relationship between the USA and China – is to be contradicted. The human factor is not sufficiently accounted for: neither in the negative nor in the positive. Agitation and propaganda can cause unnecessary violence in socially and politically tense situations and even set peoples against each other. Respect for others, on the other hand, is promoting and supporting the search for peaceful solutions which take all sides into account, within a country as well as in dealing with other peoples and states.*

## The poison of agitation and propaganda

It is worth remembering today where agitation and propaganda can lead. The atrocities that our history books tell us

about and that are still being committed today are the extreme. What is most striking today is how the lack of respect for others within a country, but also in dealing with other states and peoples and their governments, can disrupt not only personal but also political relationships and interfere with governance for the common good.

## Lack of emotional orientation and Gemeinschaftsgefühl (sense of community)

Lack of respect for the other person is reflected in disregard for their dignity and their rights. The rights to physical integrity and life are the most important of these. But the other fundamental and human rights are also indispensable. The right of peoples to self-determination according to Article 1 of the International Covenants on Human Rights is one of them.

What are the causes for lack of respect for other human beings? This cannot be answered in one sentence. Respect for others corresponds to the social nature of human beings. It is an imperative of living together. In history and at present, there are many people who have exemplified

and continue to exemplify this. Respect for human dignity and human rights is a logical conclusion from this. Insufficient emotional orientation or a lack of Gemeinschaftsgefühl (sense of community) is an obstacle to this. This is the gateway for agitators, agitation and propaganda – they do not want dialogue that unites people, but rather aggravation.

## How dialogue in international relations is dying

Dialogue is also dying in international relations. The agitation against Russia and especially against the country's incumbent president, *Vladimir Putin*, that has been going on for years now and the consequences of this are an example of this. On 18 March 2021, the Swiss website *Infosperber*<sup>1</sup> reads: “The West provokes, Russia will respond. *Biden's* ‘Putin is a killer’ is more than provocation. There are rules of the game in international politics, too: Countries, governments and organisations may be criticised, but not heads of state or government personally.” The text speaks

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Letter to  the Editor

## Increased aggressiveness towards Russia

From year to year, I notice an increased aggressiveness towards Russia in the German media. Of course, one should and can critically follow the political events in Russia. But one must note both that double standards are usually applied and that the tone is becoming increasingly harsh. – The way Western governments act against their opposition is often also characterised by inhumanity (examples: Condemnation and threat of punishment for Catalan separatists, treatment of *Assange* and other whistleblowers, murder of a journalist in a Saudi embassy).

Russia did not start the war in Ukraine nor the war in Syria. Western forces have done much to destabilise and escalate the situation, such as the West's wars against Iraq, Yugoslavia, Libya, arms supplies to warring parties in Syria, etc., against international law. There are numerous books on this subject, including *Michael Luders'* “Blowback: Six Decades of Western Interference in the Middle East” or “Wir sind die Guten” (We are the good guys) by *Matthias Bröckers* and *Paul Schreyer*.

In short: One sees the mote in Russia's eye, but not the beam in one's own eye.

Regarding the title of a letter to the editor in the 9 March 2021 issue of *Current Concerns* “One can only hope ...”: Unfortunately, this will probably be a vain hope. For what one hears from *Biden* is aimed at an escalation of the relationship with Russia. *Trump* had once taken office and actually wanted a better relationship with this country. However, he came under so much political pressure at home that his attitude changed. Under *Biden*, the situation is clearly getting worse. He called *Putin* a murderer – statements of this kind are neither acceptable nor appropriate. On the subject, there is a great speech by *Sahra Wagenknecht* in the German Bundestag. Among other things, she talked about the fact that NATO spends about \$900 billion on armament, while Russia spends only \$66 billion. The relentless build-up of a threat from Russia to the West is specious and hypocritical. Yes, unfortunately, I am very afraid that the West wants to march against Russia again as it did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*Napoleon*) and in the 20<sup>th</sup> (*Hitler*), like that it is now probably to be attempted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If one thinks of the further

planned massive nuclear armament of NATO, one can only despair in view of this irrational unreasonableness and the insatiable greed for Russia's natural resources. That one could win German soldiers for a war against Russia, I can hardly imagine in view of our history. But the army is also becoming more and more diverse and colourful – many of these people no longer have the connection to this dark chapter of our history. It is not for nothing that a generation of German politicians – including *Helmut Schmidt*, *Helmut Kohl*, *Gerhard Schröder*, among others – have spoken out in favour of good relations with Russia. After all, there are some European states that do not want to accept Russia as an enemy. These include above all Serbia and Hungary – and perhaps also Italy to some extent.

A short time ago, journalist *Sebastian Huld* on *ntv* clearly publicly called Russia an enemy. It has already come that far. Many people of Europe may now hope that this “enemy” can finally deliver its vaccine and thus save many lives.

*M. Weiss, Greifswald (Germany)*

**"Internal and external peace ..."**

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of a "breach of taboo" and refers to an analysis by *Dmitri Trenin*, director of the *Carnegie Moscow Center*, dated 21 February 2021. The Carnegie Moscow Center is financed by US endowments, but the analysis is nevertheless worth reading. It says, for example: "The arrival of Joe Biden and the Democrats in the White House means more and targeted US pressure on Russia and on Putin personally, as well as a much stronger US commitment to *intervene in Russian domestic politics and in Russia's immediate neighbourhood*." [emphasis km] But also: "The range and intensity of possible [Russian] responses are wide. The Kremlin is considering various options. It will not act hastily, but it can act quickly and asymmetrically [...]. Russia's response already has a name: active containment of the United States." The *Infosperber* author adds: "Anyone who followed Russian television on Wednesday evening [17 February] [...] knows how Joe Biden's taboo-breaking was received there: as an insult to the whole of Russia. In Russia, too, people know very well that no other country has been responsible for more war dead since the end of the Cold War than the USA [...]."

Is it any wonder that recent surveys by the Moscow opinion research institute *Levada Centre* have found that - unlike in the first 20 years after 1990 - the majority of Russians aged 18 to 24 no longer want a

"Western orientation", but rather an independent Eurasian path for their country?<sup>2</sup>

**Respect is a different thing**

In an interview with the German *Nachdenkseiten* of 17 March 2021<sup>3</sup>, *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz*<sup>4</sup> said in response to the question of how she assessed the West's current relationship with Russia: "With great concern. I do not only miss political analyses that untangle the ravel of interests and morals, but above all a political strategy as to where this spiral of threats and sanctions should lead. A situation has arisen in which many still use the words 'dialogue' and 'willingness to talk', but the practice looks different."

At the end of the interview, she says: "Far be it from me to develop disaster scenarios, but I am firmly convinced that what is needed is a resolute policy of *détente* that acts without preconditions with a view to the future. Without confidence-building measures - which, used as hollow phrases, are of no use but must be filled with content - there is a danger that situations resulting from misunderstandings will get out of hand and can no longer be contained. Everyone should be aware of this, especially with future generations in mind."

**The corridors of opinion have become oppressively narrow**

In the second part of the interview<sup>5</sup>, she also addresses the internal situation in her country, Germany: "The ideologisation

and moral charging of our debates and the resulting polarisation, which inevitably leads to radicalisation: All this is dangerous for a democratic, pluralistic society, which can only withstand a certain degree of polarisation if it is to function. Climate change, mobility, gender equality or gender-appropriate language and, of course, the issue of Russia - everywhere the corridors of opinion have become oppressively narrow. In other words, dissenters are no longer a natural part of our fundamentally lively open society, but disturbing factors who are better not even allowed to have their say, or even enemies who must be ostracised consistently."

Historical experience shows that a more aggressive foreign policy often goes hand in hand with fewer human rights within a country. Lack of respect for the other human being has never been limited to the "foreigners".

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.infosperber.ch/politik/\\_\\_\\_trashed-271\\_\\_\\_trashed/](https://www.infosperber.ch/politik/___trashed-271___trashed/) of 18 March 2021

<sup>2</sup> cf. Diesen, Glenn. "Hat der Westen Russland verloren? Jugend beim Abbau der europäischen Identität führend". (Has the West lost Russia? Youth leading the dismantling of European identity). In: *rt deutsch* of 27 March 2021; <https://de.rt.com/meinung/115017-hat-westen-russland-verloren-jugend/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=70799> of 17 March 2021

<sup>4</sup> The latest book by *Gabriele Krone-Schmalz* is titled "Respekt geht anders. Betrachtungen über unser zerstrittenes Land" (Respect is a different thing. Reflections on our quarrelling country).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=70846> of 18 March 2021

Letter to  the Editor

**"How dare you ...!"**

As a supporting member of the aid organisation *Doctors without Borders*, I receive their magazine *Akut* three times a year, which reports on aid projects that the doctors are carrying out in more than 70 countries around the world. I often do not find the time and the necessary inner peace to read these often distressing and touching reports about the work of the doctors on the ground.

This time it was different: I felt the need to read the report of a young German paediatrician in *Akut* 3-2020, about whom it says in the introduction of the article: "In Yemen, *Annette Werner* feels she is in the right place - although there has been war for years and now the pandemic is also spreading." Then there's a report of an emergency in the middle of the night.

"Unexpected emergencies are part of Werner's daily routine. Just recently, the phone rang at five in the morning. 'Annette, we have a severely malnourished infant in a state of shock. You have to come immediately!' the colleague shouted on the other end. During those two minutes in the

car, I recalled the steps for shock treatment of severe malnutrition, which are different from those for a sufficiently nourished child,' Werner recalls. 'I ran to the emergency room. It's crazy how quickly you can be so awake and fully receptive when you need to be.' A doctor and two nurses tried to place an intravenous line in the girl. The little girl weighed only 2.7 kilograms at six months and was in shock because of persistent diarrhoea. Her skin was ice cold, her circulation collapsed, her eyes were sunken.

'I should have given intravenous fluids to stabilise the circulation. But because the veins were no longer filled with blood due to the shock, I couldn't place a venous access', Werner recalls. 'Fortunately, they still had a bone drill in the emergency room. That was the last option. I had drilled dozens of needles into chicken bones in trainings - but never in an emergency and certainly not for a girl whose lower leg was barely thicker than my thumb. The danger of piercing the bone was high'.

But everything went well. Werner was able to start shock therapy via the

bone needle and could stabilise the girl. 'I realised how important good training is.' After two weeks of inpatient treatment, she was able to discharge the little patient home in good condition. A little later, the paediatrician met her again: 'She was laughing and joking with her mother and had gained weight. Hurray for the chicken bones!'"

The report moved me deeply and I was filled with respect in view of the young doctor's work. The next day I completed a bank transfer. At least I can do that, I thought.

I thank the editors of *Current Concerns* for making another distressing contribution to raising awareness of the current humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen by publishing UN Secretary-General *Guterres*' opening address to the pledging conference for Yemen on 1 March 2021. And I would like to shout at the top of my voice to *Jeff Bezos* or others, "How dare you ...!" But I am afraid they won't hear it.

Annelene Neuhaus, Köln

10 Years of the “Arab Spring”

## No “struggles for democracy and human rights” NATO – and other interests in the “Arab Spring”

*Interview by Francesco Guadagni (L'Antidiplomatico) with Michel Raimbaud*

*Francesco Guadagni: Mr Raimbaud, 2021 will be the tenth anniversary of the so-called “Arab Spring”. What assessment can we make?*

*Michel Raimbaud:* First of all, let us be clear that the protest movements, which erupted from December 2010 (in Tunisia) until spring of 2011, were obviously neither a political “spring” nor “peaceful and spontaneous revolutions” for democracy and human rights. Although they initially attracted gullible people fighting against corruption and authoritarian regimes, it soon became clear that the movements were monitored and manipulated by activists trained by Western NGOs in the West. They were using standardised techniques of mobilisation, propaganda and organisation which were learned at the site from the colour revolutions (Otpor movement) that led to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

*By the dominant media corporations, they were described as “struggles for democracy and human rights”. What were they in reality?*

What was demanded was the resignation of the heads of state, a change of government and reforms aimed at weakening or destroying the state, the institutions and the army (priority targets for the West and Israel as well as for the “revolutionaries”, always inspired by foreign countries). Invocations of democracy and human rights are lures to win the sympathy of the Western protectors and “friends”. These armed uprisings, organised, orchestrated, manipulated and soon heavily financed from abroad (Anglo-Saxon countries through NGOs) degenerated into conflicts and chaotic situations and spread from country to country from the Maghreb to the Mashriq.

This cascade of tragedies is not a succession of isolated and spontaneous civil wars, as the false version spread in the West suggests in order to hide the gross interference of the Atlantic empire. Taken together as a whole, they form the components of a plan of destabilisation and destruction (we cannot repeat this often enough), which was concerted, elaborated and theorised by the USA, its Anglo-Saxon “parents” and its Israeli “branch”. This enterprise obviously relies on relays, accomplices, allies in all the countries concerned: in the foreground, the Islamic extremist forces – often the Muslim Brotherhood, sponsored by Turkey and Qatar, or movements influenced by

the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates or other Gulf states. Without this open and finally recognised alliance of interests between the West and Israel on the one hand, states and Islamist forces on the other, there would be no “revolutions”, which will take different turns and developments.

*From Tunisia to Libya, it was a rapid escalation. The original plan to remove Gaddafi has been blown up, and it was necessary to intervene with a criminal war, the effects of which are still being felt today. Was it the resistance of the Syrian people that stopped Washington’s plan to completely destabilise the region?*

The first results were seen in Tunisia, then in Egypt (with the ousting of *Ben Ali* and *Mubarak* after a few weeks). The electoral processes were able to bring the Muslim Brotherhood to power. Then came political instability, insecurity, destabilisation. In Algeria and Mauritania in January 2011, a first “spring” was reported and nipped in the bud. Likewise, in Morocco, where the king quickly restored the situation and in Bahrain, where Saudi-Arabia intervened to “save” the Sunni dynasty from a Shiite population. The turmoil has never stopped. The “revolution” in Yemen has turned into a civil war: It continues to this moment. Libya and then Syria are hit. Gaddafi’s Jamahiriya is confronted with an illegal NATO-intervention, secession and chaos. Gaddafi is being assassinated by “revolutionaries” assisted by Western “services”. The state is destroyed and never recovers.

Syria experienced the war against jihadism, the West, the Islamists and terrorism, the “friends of the Syrian people” (114 states at the end of 2012, a number that then dissipated). The multi-layered war (“Les guerres de Syrie”, title of my latest work, which was published in June 2019) quickly took on the appearance of a war of aggression, even in its most violent and spectacular jihadist and terrorist aspects. These events, which during the last ten years have been sowing chaos and destruction in the most Arab countries, but also in the “expanded” Middle East (the “Greater Middle East” of *George W. Bush*) and create a climate of open warfare, have made obvious the global confrontation between the USA and its Israeli-Anglo-Saxon empire on the one hand and the two “emerging” or “reborn” Greats of Eurasia and their allies on the other. In this global political and econom-



(Picture ma)

The French former diplomat *Michel Raimbaud* is Plenipotentiary Minister, Knight of the Legion of Honour and Officer of the National Order of Merit. From 1976 to 1978, Raimbaud was Secretary in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) and then in Aden (Yemen) from 1978 to 1979, before being transferred to the Central Administration (African and Madagascar Affairs) from 1979 to 1985. He was then appointed Second Counsellor in Cairo and Brasilia from 1988 to 1991, before becoming French Ambassador to Mauritania from 1991 to 1994 and finally Ambassador to Sudan for more than five years. From June 2000 to February 2003, he was director of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), then in the central administration at the Quai d’Orsay, before becoming French ambassador to Zimbabwe in 2004 and retiring in 2006. He then became a lecturer and also taught at the Centre for Diplomatic and Strategic Studies (CEDS).

ic, financial, military, strategic, ideological and geopolitical confrontation, the countries of the “Greater Middle East” are a stake, a battlefield and decisive actors (see my book “Tempête sur le Grand Moyen-Orient”, first published 2015). I will come back to this later.

Interestingly, almost all Arab republics are affected by this “epidemic”, from North Africa to the Middle East, as well as two monarchies, Morocco and Bahrain. The oil monarchies (Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states) have strangely been spared, even though their regimes are the most backward, but are supported by the US and the West. As for the role of the media, it deserves a book of its own. Also I will come back to this later.

*Let us take a step back. The Heads of State of Libya and Syria, Gaddafi and*

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**"No 'struggles for democracy ...'"**

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*Assad, 2010 are visiting European countries like Italy and France, with relations that appear to be cordial. A year later, there are uprisings in Libya, that lead to the assassination of Gaddafi, and a war begins in Syria, with Assad resisting. Erdogan's Turkey itself had very good relations with Syria. What caused this change of course?*

Relations were undoubtedly of a deceptive cordiality in the two cases you pointed out; these two cases must be separated. It is more or less about the fact that the Europeans get political, strategic or economic concessions (on oil or gas) from heads of state who are known for their firmness of principle and loyalty to the alliance, without any counterpart on the side of Paris or Rome. As far as Libya is concerned, I think, the idea was to convince Gaddafi to abandon any nuclear project (he would have done so) and to give up continuing with his plans for independence and the economic, financial and monetary unity of Africa (he would not have done so and therefore had to be "punished").

The Syrian case is a bit different. France was obviously responsible for passing on the American pressure from George W. Bush and *Colin Powell* on Bashar al-Assad to convince the latter to renounce his alliance with Iran and his relations with Hezbollah in order to please Israel. The Syrian president did not give in and demanded compensation for the pipeline projects. Bashar al-Assad did not give in; he had to pay for it. Understand that these points probably represent only the obvious part of the case. In 2010/2011, it was clearly written in Washington that Syria must be destroyed. If there is no pretext, we will create one. Concession or not, it is written that there will be war, thanks to the epidemic of "revolutions" which make it possible for the conflict to break out a priori from within, without too much conspicuous interference.

*Gaddafi had established fruitful relations with Italy during the Berlusconi government and made agreements on oil and infrastructure. In the war against Libya, Sarkozy's France was one of the main sponsors: Do you think it is a mistake to say, that it was a war against Italy in order to get to the Libyan oil?*

Yes, I think it is a gamble. In the case of Libya, it was not primarily the oil, that was targeted. It was mainly "Gaddafi's billions", i.e. Libyan funds (probably several hundred billion dollars), and they are frozen before they "disappear" ... But the main objective of the armed intervention of NATO was to liquidate Gaddafi,

in order to prevent him from financing an African monetary system independent of the dollar, the euro, and the West. So, they had to destroy the Libyan state, which is what happened.

*How do you assess the role of information from the West and the Gulf states in the conflicts in Syria and Libya? How important was the propaganda?*

The role of this media you refer to, was very damaging and the propaganda was associated with a real brainwashing. They all participated in the massive misinformation of opinions: from the lies of the intellectuals to the dishonesty of the politicians. Journalists and "reporters" on the ground have largely contributed to a huge intellectual deception and blind unanimity in favour of the aggressors and criminals, in Syria as in Libya. The Western media have contributed a great deal to destroying the moral authority that the West and its clientele have wrongly claimed.

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**"First of all, let us be clear that the protest movements, which erupted from December 2010 (in Tunisia) until spring of 2011, were obviously neither a political 'spring' nor 'peaceful and spontaneous revolutions' for democracy and human rights. Although they initially attracted gullible people fighting against corruption and authoritarian regimes, it soon became clear that the movements were monitored and manipulated by activists trained by Western NGOs in the West. They were using standardised techniques of mobilisation, propaganda and organisation which were learned at the site from the colour revolutions (Otpor movement) that led to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s."**

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*What kind of country was Syria before the war?*

"Beating heart of Arabism", seat of the first caliphs, centre of influence of the enlightened Islam and cradle of Christianity. Syria – although deprived of 40% of its historical territory through colonisation and mandates – enjoyed great prestige among Arabs and Muslims. In this country with a rich archaeological and historical heritage, where tolerance in the customs and traditions of the religions and denominations is carved in marble, an art of living has been cultivated and is maintained to this day, which pleases the visitors. The quality of their diplomacy and the constancy of their commitments and alliances have always commanded respect, I would say, even in the adversity of the moment Syria is by nature a radiant

country. A prosperous, independent, stable, self-sufficient country that produces most of what it consumes and consumes what it produces. A country with no foreign debt and without dependence on the IMF and the World Bank.

A free, efficient school and education system, that produces large numbers of valuable graduates and leaders, many of whom, unfortunately migrated to the diaspora during the war.

A remarkable, modern and free health and social care system, which is available throughout the whole Syrian territory and attracts the inhabitants of neighbouring countries. A self-sufficient country that produced all fields of medicine, also for export.

More generally: a network of efficient social services, a modern economy in transition. We could add, "what has happened to Syria" by recalling some numbers and realities: 400,000 dead, one or two million wounded and maimed, six

or seven million Syrians who have been "displaced", i.e. forced to settle elsewhere on Syrian territory because of war and terrorism, at least five million Syrians who have moved to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and sometimes even Europe, most of them fleeing terrorists, armed opposition, occupiers, mistreatment, hunger, etc. 60% of the country devastated, another 20% occupied by Turks, American troops, Europeans, supported by Kurdish separatists...

*What does the Syrian resistance represent, after ten years of war and sanctions, also with the help of Russia, Iran and the Hezbollah? This conflict has not been ended according to the ideas of the West, especially the United States and Is-*

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**"No 'struggles for democracy ...'"**

continued from page 6

*rael. Has this war reshaped the geopolitical balance with new global actors such as China and Russia thwarting Western plans?*

Partly, yes. Sure, Syria is devastated, but it has not been defeated and dismantled after ten years of ruthless warfare by a collective aggression in which more than a hundred members of the "international community", i.e., more than half of the United Nations, were involved in one way or another, and an endlessly renewed stream of tens or hundreds of thousands of terrorists who claim to be part of the holy war. Syria has certainly benefited from the support of faithful allies (Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah, Russia, China, even the Iraqi Shi'ite movements, which are gradually breaking free of the US stranglehold). But the fact remains, that the Syrian army withstood the aforementioned enemies for four and a half years – from March 2011 to September 2015, the time of the air intervention by the Russian army stationed alongside it. The geopolitical balance gradually shifted and Western and Israeli plans were thwarted. But the West does not see itself as defeated, it prohibits the return of refugees, reconstruction, normal life, by an (from the outside) invisible war hushed up by the Western media.

*When President Assad was asked whether the politics in the United States under a Democrat will be different than under a Republican, he replied that nothing will change. Because it is the lobbies, the corporations, who set the course of American politics. Do you think that Biden will change anything?*

President Bashar al Assad is not wrong, when he says that between Republicans and Democrats in general and between Trump and Biden in particular there is no difference, and that nothing will change under Biden. For the Arab world and Syria in particular, nothing will change. At least in principle, because a change in Tehran promised by Biden could indirectly affect the situation in Syria. Indeed, the US president may be the most powerful man in the world, but he is far from being the most powerful man of the United States. Just as the Congress is nowhere near as all-powerful as it sometimes gives the impression of being. It is the neoconservative "Deep State" that he leads, supported by the Zi-

onist Jewish community and the powerful lobby of Protestant Zionist Christians (especially the Evangelical Church, which claims more than 60 million members in America and 600 million worldwide). The lobbies, the 17 US intelligence agencies, which undoubtedly have more than a million agents, the military hierarchy, the banks, the GAFAM [Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft – translator's note] – are all part of this "Deep State" – as Trump would probably put it.

a major agricultural power. It has finally become a political and diplomatic reference power again, which wants to guarantee the return to the international law that the West has despised and destroyed.

It should be noted that Russia, but also China, are jointly developing powerful strategic cooperation and that they are both supporters of Syria in view of Western Islamist aggression. Militarily and diplomatically for Russia, diplomatically mainly (so far) for China.

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**"This decline is underway, otherwise America would have already gone on the attack against Russia and China. China has become the world's leading economic and trading power. It is the factory of the world. It is well on its way to becoming a leading military power. Russia has regained military parity with America without having a huge defense budget, it is a major energy power and is becoming a major agricultural power. It has finally become a political and diplomatic reference power again, which wants to guarantee the return to the international law that the West has despised and destroyed. It should be noted that Russia, but also China, are jointly developing powerful strategic cooperation and that they are both supporters of Syria in view of Western Islamist aggression. Militarily and diplomatically for Russia, diplomatically mainly (so far) for China."**

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*To sum up, after the failures of the West in Latin America, in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the presence of a strong resistance in the Middle East, of new rising powers like Russia and China, a decline of Western imperialism and especially American imperialism is looming in the not-too-distant future?*

This decline is underway, otherwise America would have already gone on the attack against Russia and China. China has become the world's leading economic and trading power. It is the factory of the world. It is well on its way to becoming a leading military power. Russia has regained military parity with America without having a huge defense budget, it is a major energy power and is becoming

Finally, since you mention COVID-19, one will note the disastrous management of the pandemic in America and Western Europe compared to Chinese control and effective handling of the crisis by Russia. Russia and China have emerged victorious in the eyes of the world in the West's fight against COVID-19. •

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Source: <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=70743> of 15 March 2021

(Translation *Current Concerns*; last question and answer added)

# “What if our future was in the villages?”

## The awakening of “forgotten” France

by Rita Müller-Hill, Cologne

*La France profonde, the deep France, is what rural France far from Paris is commonly called. The book by Anthony Cortes, journalist for the weekly magazine “Marianne”, is about this France: “Le réveil de la France oubliée. Et si notre avenir était dans les villages?” (The awakening of the forgotten France. What if our future was in the villages?)<sup>1</sup>*

It is well known that young people are leaving the country. Especially among those in their thirties, the number of those moving to the cities is higher than those coming to the countryside. But overall, between 1999 and 2014, the number of rural residents has increased compared to urban residents (19% versus 11%), at least in areas that are still within reach of a larger city (Cortes, p. 21).

Through the yellow vests movement, we have learned a lot about how people in the countryside are doing. The farmers, the workers, the employees, the old, the young. Every year, about 370 farmers commit suicide because they don’t know what to do anymore.<sup>2</sup>

When a woman is expecting a baby, in 79% of cases she has to travel an hour by car to the nearest maternity ward. It has happened that the baby was born on the way there and died because the necessary help could not be provided. If not 300 but only 260 babies are born in a maternity ward within one year, it is unprofitable and thus closed. Several studies commissioned by the government calculate that 60 emergency wards should be closed because they are not “profitable”. There are departments where in three quarters of the area the inhabitants have to live more than one hour away from medical care.

Schools are being closed, communities are being merged, local services are being discontinued. When the post office closes, it is the absolute symbol that the state is withdrawing and abandoning the village (p. 32). There is no more bakery, no more grocery shop, no more work. The villages are depopulating.

Now a journalist has set out and travelled this France for two years. The result is a meticulous account of what he experienced and saw in this “forgotten France”. “Le réveil de la France oubliée” (The Awakening of Forgotten France) is a cautiously optimistic book. It is rather quiet in tone, the way one deals with tender plants. Anthony Cortes feels his way around the various initiatives in different parts of France. He has a good sense and a big heart for the people and their situation, because he himself comes from the coun-

tryside, from a small village near Perpignan, Occitanie region.

In his analysis of the causes of the state of rural France, Cortes draws on the latest work by Christophe Guilluy, Emmanuel Todd and Jérôme Fourquet<sup>3</sup>: the diagnosis that globalisation has left its mark here is certain. The devastating and destructive activity of the French state, which has been killing the country with its laws and decrees, in particular since the last three presidencies, and in the implementation of EU directives, and which is responsible for the conditions described above, is also clearly illustrated. Cortes also examines the individual established parties and their contribution to this development: People no longer feel represented.

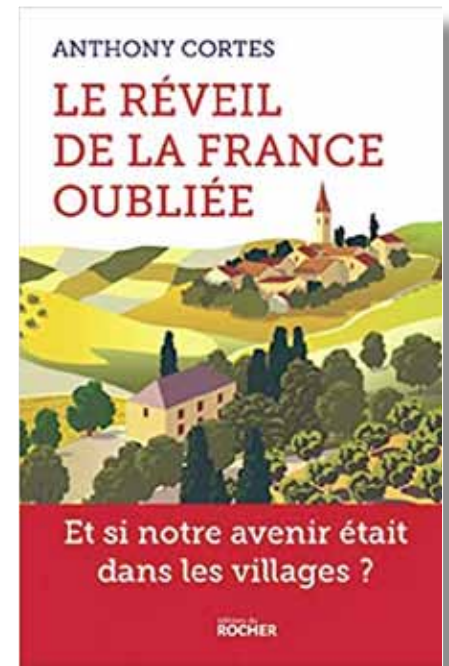
Some pages of the book are dedicated to historical experiences of peasant initiatives. However, here too it is confirmed how political decisions hinder or even destroy these self-help efforts. In 1962, the EEC’s Common Agricultural Policy introduced “productivism” (mass production agriculture): to compete on European markets, French farmers had to produce more and more. Mechanisation and monoculture take hold against the better knowledge of the farmers. The small farmers are dying. The state and the EU react or continue to react with more and more free trade and the opening of markets.

This brings us to today’s situation.

### The description of the emerging different reality

Cortes sees an important turning point in 2018. When Priscilla Ludovsky<sup>4</sup> launched an internet appeal in May, “For a lower petrol price”, signed by more than a million people, it was a beacon. Perhaps some of you remember the call for the RIC, the *Referendum d’initiative citoyenne* (citizens’ initiative referendum), which was discussed for a long time until the movement of the yellow vests was fought with unspeakable police violence and drowned in the “Grand débat national” launched by President Macron.<sup>5</sup>

However, according to Cortes, the yellow vests movement has left a legacy: “an immense thirst for democracy. For months, a people rose up, educated themselves, politicised themselves and [...] drew the contours of another, just, protective system [...]. With blameless deputies who can also be recalled in an emergency [...] and a citizen who decides”. (p. 47) Cortes writes that these ideas have not found expression at the



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national level, but that they have led and are leading to concrete results at the local, rural level. He describes the example of the commune of Commercy (Meuse), where 75 delegations of yellow vests met in January 2019 to discuss “what the world of tomorrow should look like”. There was much discussion, but without concrete results.

A year later, in January 2020, this time only residents of Commercy met. They call their meeting “commune des communes” (literally: community of communities) and develop a project: “penser un contre-pouvoir communal” (thinking about a communal counter-power) (p. 48). The yellow vests call for “constituting nonpartisan citizens’ assemblies and introducing direct democracy on the basis of the commune, and in the citizens’ assemblies giving the inhabitants the decisive power, introducing the local referendum [...]”.

Cortes still sees this declaration, which has appealed to many people, as a kind of utopian flight of fancy, in order to then report on concrete examples that had certainly emerged even before the yellow vest movement. For example, in 2014 in the village of Saillans in the Drôme. There, a large shopping centre was to be built without consulting the population. As the municipal elections were just around the corner, a list was formed “No programme, no candidates, the list, that’s us.” 57% of the

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### “What if our future ...”

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votes are gained. The mayor is appointed and the mayor's office becomes the community centre, open to all citizens of the commune. A citizens' committee meets twice a month, discussion groups are formed, a wind of accountability blows through the commune. Unfortunately, this experiment does not continue. It fails because of the newly arrived residents from the city, who have different interests than the long-established residents. Two hostile factions form, the new and the old residents. The mayoralty goes to the townspeople in 2020 with 18 more votes.

But: 730 other municipalities have shown interest in this experiment, and there have already been 300 citizens' lists in the 2020 municipal elections (pp. 51/52). Cortes comes back again and again to the problem of the “newcomers” in the villages.

Even before 2018, people “went independent” in 1970 in the village of Trémarcat in Brittany with its 180 inhabitants. Reportedly, 600 hectares of the commune's land were uncultivable. Today they are cultivated by 16 farmers. In 1970, a group of farmers settled here because of the cheap land. The old-timers were sceptical, but the newcomers were not deterred. Today, the project continues and the municipality joins in, providing land and housing cheaply for newcomers. A baker has come to the village, a greengrocer's shop, supported by a citizens' initiative from Saint-Brieuc, whose members want to eat fresh vegetables and bread from the region.

In Saâles, in Alsace, the village of about 800 inhabitants is being revitalised in 1995 on the initiative of the mayor. Fruit growing and meadows are added to pure forestry, dairy farming, cheese, an organic bakery, a library with internet access and a café, because being together and talking to each other is important. Doctor, nurse, physiotherapist. The biggest difficulties for him were the bureaucracy, says the mayor, who is leaving office after 20 successful years.

Cortes lists many more initiatives of various kinds. They all live from the courage and determination of the citizens and their mayor to give life back to their village. Here a school is founded, a private one, because the state is not involved. There, a meeting place is started so that people can talk to each other again. A doctor is found. Or “rolling” medical care is organised. All are aware of the importance of their work: “Running a shop is not just about collecting a few bank notes. You bring a whole valley to life”. (S. 80)

### The school

In Cahus, in the Lot, with a population of 204, the school is to be closed in 2018. According to the school board, maintaining a school for 46 pupils is a foolish thing to do, because it needs the posts for the larger towns. For the children, this would have meant a 45-minute commute to school. To the mayor, this sounded like the decided death of the village. Without school, families will not stay in the village. With some villagers, they decide to occupy the school, the press reports about them. They hold out. The school remains. The children who go from this village school to the Collège (the intermediate level of secondary school) have a good level because they can learn in smaller groups and under good conditions.

In another village, in Quérigut, in the Ariège, the primary school teacher went on maternity leave. There was no substitute. Without the local school, the three-to-ten year old pupils would have been on the bus for two hours a day. That's when two mothers took the initiative and, with the support of the school authorities, saved the school by taking over the lessons. In other places, schools were founded “hors contrat” (i. e., public schools). First, a cooperative had to be founded to raise money to realise the project.

### Medical care

In addition to schools, medical care is considered another most important element of community's life. Cortes quotes (p. 86) a mayor of the “Association of French Mayors of Rural Communities”: “For years, our fellow citizens have had no medical care. All available means must be used to change this state of affairs as soon as possible”. Telemedicine, which is promoted by the state, is not enough to meet people's needs, and the health centres, also initiated by the state, are proving far too expensive for the individual communities, because they have to attract doctors with all kinds of financially favourable offers, as they prefer to practise in the cities. Thus, in some areas, they have come up with the bus, which drives around the communities once a week to ensure a minimum of medical care. This model finds its limits in a government regulation that prohibits outpatient medicine. Thus, manning the bus remains limited to nurses and similar paramedical professions. Sometimes exceptions are made, “in the interest of public health” (p. 87), when the département allows one, as in Givors on the Rhône. Ultimately, however, the question remains for the mayors: how can young doctors be persuaded to establish themselves in the countryside?

In October 2018, “81 % of French people consider life in the countryside to be the ideal life, according to an opinion poll by IFOP”<sup>6</sup> (p. 133). Cities would have to become more human again and the countryside more vital. The villages should be revitalised. The priority given to cities should be called into question.

Cortes also discusses this question; he raises the difficulties in the encounter between “city dwellers” and rural dwellers, reports on successful experiments, but also on internet platforms that want to implant something from above and nothing comes of it. In the countryside they say: “With us, you don't serve yourself, you serve”. (p. 132) As a city dweller, one has become more accustomed to the consumer side, the much-invoked individualism, personal freedom leads to loneliness. In the countryside, people live together and take care of each other.

The solutions in Anthony Cortes' book are village-based. They show what is possible at the local level, but also question the ever-increasing expansion and concentration of the big cities. These are approaches that should be thought about further. First and foremost, the importance of personal initiative in connection with direct democracy at the local level instead of centralised government and a supply from local production instead of mass production and globalised dependence. Many problems today, with their origins in flawed decisions, thought by elites for the big cities, show up in the village, in the smallest unit of the civic community.

If you want to read an encouraging book with many successful examples of personal initiatives, without falling into nostalgia, but also want to learn about the origins of the problems and realistic thoughts on how to overcome them, perhaps also looking for suggestions for your own initiatives, you should definitely read Anthony Cortes' book. •

<sup>1</sup> All book quotations translated by the author.

<sup>2</sup> According to a Senate Commission report, “Succès en agriculture: mieux prévenir, identifier et accompagner les situations de détresse”, published on 17 March 2021, quoted from: *Front Populaire*, 23 March 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Guilluy, Christophe. *La France périphérique*. Flammarion, 2014; es. *Le temps des gens ordinaires*. Flammarion, 2020; Todd, Emmanuel. *La lutte des classes au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Editions du Seuil, 2020; Fourquet, Jérôme. *L'Archipel français*. Edition du Seuil, 2019

<sup>4</sup> P. Ludovsky was one of the most active yellow vests.

<sup>5</sup> “‘Le grand débat national’ was a public debate in France launched on 15 January 2019 by the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, which practically diluted the real concerns of the people on hundreds of issues”. Guilluy, Christophe. *Le temps des gens ordinaires*. 2020, S. 49

<sup>6</sup> *Institut français d'opinion publique*, oldest French polling institute.

# “Only a realistic economy has a chance of contributing to the solution of our world’s problems”

On the book “New Economic Policy” by Richard A. Werner

by Dieter Sprock

*If we assume that the economic and social problems of the world are not due to the plan of a world spirit of whatever kind, but are man-made, then this gives us the task of tackling the problems and looking for solutions. To this task, economist Richard A. Werner contributes with his textbook “New Economic Policy. What Europe can learn from Japan’s mistakes”, published as early as 2007. Therein he examines the extent to which misguided economics has contributed to the development of the existing economic ills and calls for a realistic economics, because: only a realistic economics has a chance to contribute to solving the problems of our world.*

*In my contribution, I will try to describe some of the findings of this work, especially those that seem to me to be important for a better understanding of economic and political processes today. In doing so, I am aware that my selection reflects only a small part of the very extensive material given, especially since I will not go into a technical discussion of economic theories, which are of course an essential part of the textbook.*

For Richard A. Werner, economics is in a deep crisis. The macroeconomic theories on which it is based, which form the basis of economic policy decisions in many countries, are, in his estimation, “more fiction than reality”. Their credo that the “effective power of free markets” with as little state intervention as possible is the best way to achieve economic stability and prosperity has not proved to be true. For decades, the neoliberal conviction has been implemented worldwide, especially in developing countries and former communist countries, but the expected positive results have not materialised: Poverty, lack of social security and economic inequality continue to be a major problem for the majority of the world’s population (p. VII).

## Neoclassical economics

“Privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation” is the credo of the school of thought Werner deals with under the less commonly used name of “neoclassical economics”.

According to neoclassical doctrine, only a free market enables “prosperity, a flourishing economy and maximum personal happiness”. Companies in which the state has a stake are to be sold. The labour market must become more “flexible”. This means layoffs and greater insecurity for those who still have jobs. Reforms

of social security and health care are demanded. State and social regulations and interventions in the movement of capital, goods and people are to be reduced as far as possible and the regulation of all economic activities is to be left solely to the “invisible hand” of the market.

As early as the mid-1980s, debates on economic and socio-political issues were dominated by neoclassical thought, “in all aspects, whether concerning the role of the individual, communal concerns, firms, the state or even the international community” (p. 3) [all quotes translated by Current Concerns]. Neoclassical economics is based on the assumption that the “primary goal and overriding motive of humanity is the increase of material wealth”. “Social relations and the need of individuals to relate to each other and to find recognition in their community” are outside the scope of the neoclassical model (p. 20).

Richard A. Werner explains that in the 1990s, the influence of the neoclassical school of thought became all-encompassing. Most economics courses taught only neoclassical doctrines, and its representatives were given access to the highest public offices: “Neoclassical economics dominated the decisions of the major international organisations dealing with economic policy. Prominent among these are the regional development banks, the IMF, the World Bank, the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the WTO (and its predecessor organisation [GATT], and the OECD”. In over one hundred countries, “central bank policies, structural adjustment programmes led by the IMF, and reform packages put together by development banks have led to drastic changes in fiscal and monetary policy”. And these changes were always in line with neoclassical policy – usually supported by the US Treasury (p. 5).

## Theory and reality of neoclassicism according to the example of Japan

Japan and other countries in the Far East did not base their economies on neoclassical theory. They developed a form of capitalism in which market mechanisms had a due place, but at the same time it was ensured that not the shareholders but society as a whole was the beneficiary of the system. They were guided by theories that could be attributed to the “German historical school” or “social economics”.

Until the end of the 1980s, the Japanese post-war economy relied on a multitude of state regulations in the form of state “economic steering”: capital markets were lim-

ited, “shareholders” had little influence on companies in the productive economy, the labour market was “inflexible”. Employees in permanent employment with large companies enjoyed a lifetime job guarantee. Their career advancement depended on their length of service, which led to great loyalty of employees to their companies. And there were a large number of formal and informal “cartels” – this term refers to industrial associations consisting of numerous companies linked by long-

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(Picture ma)

cc. Richard A. Werner is a German Economist and University professor. After graduating from the London School of Economics and Oxford University, he taught at the Sophia University in Tokyo, the University of Southampton, England, the Goethe University, Frankfurt, the Corvinus University in Budapest and is currently Professor of Finance at the Fudan University in Shanghai and Professor of studies in Banking and Finance at the De Montfort University in Leicester, England, among others. In addition, he has collected experience in the finance sector, as Chief economist of the British Investment Bank, Jardine Fleming Securities (Asia) in Tokyo, as Senior Consultant at the Asian Development Bank in Manila and as Senior Managing Director of Bear Stearns Asset Management in London, among others. His book, “Princes of the Yen” which was first published in 2001 in Japanese reached first place in the Bestseller list. In 1995, he published, in the Japanese financial newspaper, *Nikkei*, his proposal for a new monetary policy in order to quickly end the banking crisis, which he named “quantitative easing” and which became known to many central banks. Richard Werner is the founding member and on the board of the Local First Community Interest Company, a non-profit organisation which has also been introduced in Great Britain’s local banks using German cooperative banks and savings banks as models.

### "Only a realistic economy ..."

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term contracts and mutual trust –, and in the 1950s and 1960s up to 1,000 genuine cartels that were approved "by way of exception".

Japan had an average real GDP growth rate of 6.3% between 1950 and 2000 (despite ten years of severe recession since 1991); this was almost twice that of the US and almost three times that of the UK (p. 127). According to neoclassical theory, however, the Japanese economy should have been a "shamble" during this period.

Japan and other large economies in East Asia achieved high economic growth for decades without benefiting from the "advantages of free markets", while many of the "IMF model students" in Africa and Latin America, which relied on free markets, lay in "abject poverty" (p. 8).

After decades of astonishing neoclassical economists with its enormous growth, the Japanese economy inexplicably fell into a deep recession in the early 1990s. In the late 1990s, unemployment rose to over 3.8 million officially registered unemployed. More than 210,000 companies went bankrupt. This resulted in "immense social commotions" and left a "pile of non-performing loans". Every year, about 30,000 people took their own lives (p. 10). The extent of the crisis went far beyond what is conventionally understood as a cyclical downturn.

All economic policy measures, such as lowering interest rates or increasing government spending, which according to neoclassical theory should have stimulated the economy, remained ineffective: short-term interest rates fell from 6% in 1991 to 0.001% at the beginning of 2004, and long-term, ten-year interest rates from over 7% to 0.4%. The ineffectiveness of the interest rate policy suggested the use of "fiscal stimulus measures" to provide social security for the country. The national debt rose to a record 150% of the annual gross national product in 2002. But the expected successes failed to materialise. The crisis lasted for more than ten years.

"Traditional economics", Werner says, is put to the test by the facts that neither a decade of interest rate cuts to record low levels nor a decade of fiscal expansion helped the Japanese economy get on its feet. "It may well happen," Werner writes, "that theory and reality diverge over a year or two." On the other hand, when more than a decade of exemplary stimulus measures merely results in glaring underperformance, this can only be taken as a sign that the "mainstream" line of thinking is flawed (p. 11).

### The role of the "Bank of Japan"

Richard A. Werner, in whose textbook the study of the Japanese economic cri-

sis occupies a central place, concludes that the responsibility for the crisis clearly lies with the *Bank of Japan*. Not only did the Bank of Japan deceive the public about the policies it was pursuing, but it also disregarded the Ministry of Finance's monitoring function (p. 384). It had "continually lowered interest rates, seemingly in line with its zealous assurances that it was doing everything possible to bring about an economic recovery", while in fact it was practising "an overwhelmingly restrictive monetary policy", thus artificially prolonging the crisis (p. 423). It pursued goals "that were in line with its own political credo and served to implement structural changes in Japan and create facts that favoured deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation" (p. 414).

The basis for the recession had already been laid by the Bank of Japan in the 1980s by "imposing excessive credit growth ratios on commercial banks". In a decade of excessive lending, Japan had become the "all-dominant power in the global financial markets". Japanese investors were doing real estate deals and corporate takeovers at home and abroad. "Around the globe, financial and real assets of all kinds, including works of art and similar treasures, seemed to be targeted by Japanese buyers." Expansionary bank lending drove up asset prices in the real estate sector and on the stock markets until the speculative bubble burst in 1991 and the house of cards collapsed within a quarter of a year (p. 180).

During the crisis, thousands of deregulation measures had been implemented, which had already been demanded by the USA in the 1960s during the negotiations on a trade agreement: administrative reforms were introduced, the liberalisation of the financial markets was decreed and the cartels were dismantled. But the further the Japanese economy moved away from the traditional post-war structure and towards "US-style shareholder capitalism", the more lacklustre its performance became. "As US-style shareholder capitalism spread," Werner writes, "inequality of income and wealth increased. The suicide rate increased markedly, and so did violent crime."

If you enter the social effects into the equation, there can be no doubt that the decline in the performance of the Japanese economy was even greater and more consequential than the mere figures documenting the collapse in the GDP growth rate show (p. 133).

### On the nature of money and banks

"Banking transactions," Werner writes, "have been an indispensable part of mankind's economic activities for thousands of years" (p. 212). They stem from an earlier date than coined money. Bank-



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ing was already widespread in Mesopotamia in the third millennium BC. Banking services were also "at the heart" of the ancient economy. "Bank representatives rose to become influential senators – and senators were active in banking" (p. 211). Between the third and sixth centuries AD, goldsmiths and silversmiths discharged banking functions in Europe, and here, too, banking dynasties were always closely linked to politics and the economy. Banks are the linchpin of every economy; all cashless transactions are processed through banks. But they are not only the "bookkeepers" of an economy, they also supply the economy with new money, which they are allowed to create out of nothing by lending. They decide on the allocation of money and thus on which sectors of the economy grow and which do not. This gives them enormous power and creative competency. As the example of Japan shows, they are also capable of creating, exacerbating and prolonging crises.

"Banks," Werner writes, "were by no means limited to the deposit and lending business. Their domains also included trade, mining, manufacturing and tax collection (acquiring the right to collect taxes and retain surplus earnings). Banks financed governments and their campaigns" (p. 210). Not least because of their "connection with warfare", they played a decisive role in the course of world history (p. 212).

Military conflicts kept the world in ever-lasting suspense. Despite all the differences in the circumstances which triggered them, there are also commonalities: "Frequently encountered occasions for armed conflicts lie in the area of economic inequality; rivalries over scarce resources – from water, oil and raw materials to fertile land – play a major role". There has

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**"Only a realistic economy ..."**

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never been a lack of economic motives for armed conflict (p. 21).

**The creation of money and credit out of thin air**

What the alchemists in the Middle Ages did not succeed in doing, namely producing gold from lead, the banks achieved as they were able to create money from nothing and to collect interest and compound interest for this money.

The credit business with interest and compound interest is extraordinarily profitable and, in comparison to other industries where new goods are produced, involves little effort. For example, if someone takes out a temporary loan of 100,000 euros at an annual interest rate of 8%, he will have paid back 221,964 euros after ten years; after 30 years it would already be 1,093,573 euros (p. 216). None other than Baron *Rothschild* is said to have called compound interest "the eighth wonder of the world".

What makes banks and central banks truly unique, however, is their ability to create money out of thin air. Although commercial banks no longer issue banknotes as they did before the emergence of central banks, the granting of loans has remained their most important business to this day.

When loans are granted, however, it is not about money that already exists and is

diverted to new uses; instead, new money is created that would not exist without the loan. "Banks create money out of thin air". The debtor receives a "fictitious certificate of deposit" or a corresponding entry on his account, although in reality he has made no deposit or only a much smaller one (p. 220 f.). To this effect, the bank uses "creative accounting" by creating "a bookkeeping fiction" that makes it look as if the borrower had deposited corresponding funds (p. 230).

The ability to create credit, or money – the terms "creation of money" and "creation of credit" are used synonymously –, explains why in history, banks have acquired wealth and influence so quickly. It provides "the key to why banks were able to establish themselves in prominent positions in various branches of the economy, to found companies and entire industries and to dominate them – not infrequently even by buying them up". A licence to print money might make life easier sometimes, says Werner (p. 231).

**Money creation by the state**

In the course of history, states have also repeatedly made use of the possibility to create money themselves in order to finance government spending. This has the advantage that they do not incur debt, which would force the payment of interest and compound interest. In most indus-

trialised nations, especially in the USA and Japan, liabilities are considerable because of the compound interest effect, so that generations of taxpayers have to pay off the debts.

*Thomas Jefferson* (1743-1826), the third president of the United States, was an opponent of private central banks. Under his administration, the American Constitution explicitly allowed the government to create its own money. But since the creation in 1913 of the *Federal Reserve*, which is still privately owned today, there has been an increasing shift away from Jefferson's course. In thus wandering from the path, states have saddled themselves with a substantial national debt and the associated debt service. Today in the USA, the banking system and the Federal Reserve banks – all privately owned – exercise the monopoly over credit creation.

One of the few presidents to challenge this monopolistic system was *John F. Kennedy*. "With his 1963 Presidential Executive Order No. 11110 – one of his last – he decreed the issuance of 'United States Notes', government banknotes that were visually almost identical to 'Federal Reserve Notes' but had nothing to do with the private institution of the Federal Reserve." After his death, however, no president had the courage to enforce his order (p. 332 f.)

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**The Chinese Paper Money**

"In the city of Khanbaliq is the mint of the Great Khan. The way it is wrought is such that you might say he had the Secret of Alchemy in perfection. I will demonstrate that to you here and now.

He makes them take of the bark of a certain tree, in fact of the Mulberry Tree, (the leaves of which are the food of the silkworms). He takes from it that thin inner ring which lies between the coarser bark and the wood of the tree. This being steeped, and afterwards pounded in a mortar, until reduced to a pulp, is made into paper, resembling that which is made from cotton, but quite black. When ready for use, he has it cut into pieces of money of different sizes, nearly square, but somewhat longer than they are wide [...]. All banknotes will bear the seal of the Great Khan. The issuing procedure is as official and highly official as if they were made of pure gold or silver. Specially appointed officials sign their names on each piece of money and set their own seal. When the procedure is completed according to all the regulations, the chief of the officials appointed by the Khan dips the seal bestowed on him or the bull entrusted to him in vermilion and presses it on the upper side of the money note so that the shape of the seal in vermilion adheres to it.

The Money is then authentic. Any one forging it would be punished with death.

And the Grand Khan causes every year to be made such a vast quantity of this money, which costs him nothing, that it must equal in amount all the treasure in the world. With this money, which is manufactured as I have just described, everything is paid for: in all the provinces, in every kingdom, in the entire imperial sphere of influence, it is the only means of payment. If anyone refuses to accept it, he faces the death penalty. But I assure you, every single one, all the peoples of the empire gladly accept these papers as a means of payment, because wherever they go, the notes are valid everywhere; people purchase goods, pearls and gold and silver with them. With these pieces of paper they can buy everything and pay for everything. And the notes, which are worth as much as ten Byzantines, don't even weigh as much as one.

Often in the year, traders come to Khanbaliq in groups and bring the emperor pearls, precious stones, gold and silver and other valuable things such as gold and silk fabrics. The Great Khan calls twelve officials to him. These have been elected for the office of examining and valuing the merchants' goods and pay-

ing out the corresponding value in paper money. The twelve experts examine everything as they see fit, set the price and pay it in paper currency. The merchants are happy about the notes, because they can use them to buy anything they wish and like in the great Tartar Empire.

It is the plain truth: several times a year, the merchants deliver goods worth about four hundred thousand Byzantines; the emperor remunerates everything in paper money.

But listen further: Often in the year, the order is made known in the cities that every owner of precious stones and pearls, of gold and silver, must bring everything to the imperial mint. Everyone obeys, and a vast number of precious objects accumulate and are converted into paper notes. In this way, the metals and stones from all over the empire pile up in the treasuries of the Great Khan. And all the Khan's armies are paid with this paper money.

I have now told you how it is that the Great Khan possesses more treasure than anyone else in the world. I can go further and confirm that all the powerful people in the world together do not possess as much as the Khan alone."

*Marco Polo, quoted after Werner, p. 213f  
(Translation Current Concerns)*

### "Only a realistic economy ..."

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An example from the 13<sup>th</sup> century is Chinese paper money. In what artful way the Mongol ruler *Kublai Khan* (1215-1294) had this means of payment produced and how he enforced its acceptance throughout the Mongol Empire is shown in the notes of the Venetian merchant *Marco Polo* (1254-1324), which Werner quotes at length. This paper money was not backed by gold. On the contrary: the merchants brought the emperor "pearls, precious stones, gold, silver and other valuable things" and exchanged them for those banknotes with which they could buy and pay for everything. And the emperor could control the economic situation at will by expanding or contracting the flow of money (See box: Chinese paper money).

### Foreign investment

Namely economically weak and so-called developing countries hope for economic upswing and development to be brought about by foreign direct investment. However, Werner warns, these investments often bring considerable disadvantages with them: on the one hand, foreign investors have their own interests, which often do not coincide with those of the developing countries concerned. And moreover, those in possession of the "real assets" also have the "power of disposal" over the use of profits, over the closure of production facilities or their withdrawal from foreign countries. "So why," Werner asks, "go into debt abroad, make interest and redemption payments, when you can generate the means [to mobilise domestic resources] in your own country at zero cost? After all, foreign banks do nothing else either; they create money 'out of nothing' through the credit creation process" (p. 280).

### A new economic policy is needed

Neoclassical economics had its chance to help the world make real progress. It has failed and proved that "free markets" cannot possibly bring about a social optimum in the real world. Therefore, it is time to establish a new kind of economy.

Neoclassicism speaks of "competition" as a "key mechanism". But in reality, "the market" is much less important for so-called "market capitalism" than is commonly assumed. Economic solutions are "in reality not negotiated in markets, but decreed by allocators [investment banks and other large investors]" (p. 437).

Most of the world's economic activity is controlled by a few big banks, which are in many ways more powerful than governments. They control the creation and distribution of credit, but are not subject to

direct democratic control, and that greatly endangers democracy.

Monetary policy is the most effective creative force in the implementation of macroeconomic goals. Not only does it influence economic growth, but is also able to bring about social change. "Because of the immense power and scope of monetary policy to control and direct national economic resources, it should be entrusted to an institution that is firmly anchored in the democratic process – such as the Ministry of Finance." How can it be right, Werner asks, that growth-neutral fiscal policy is debated in parliaments, but not monetary policy, which determines both growth and serves redistribution and structural policy (p. 451)?

Fiscal policy – all measures that affect the revenue and expenditure of public budgets, including taxes, or even the issuance of government bonds – is "growth neutral". Therefore, it should only be used with the greatest restraint. It is exclusively an instrument of redistribution.

"In order to avoid net welfare losses, which arise from unnecessary government debt and uneconomic interest burdens, the principle of a balanced budget should be taken to heart", Werner demands (p. 450).

The first step in implementing a new paradigm of macroeconomics should therefore be to subject the decision-making power over credit creation and the social allocation of credit to democratic controls and to strive for an economic policy that produces better and more socially balanced results than the currently prevailing mainstream approaches (p. 454). The control of central banks is particularly urgent for this.

But at the same time Werner urges caution: a clumsy intervention by state authorities lacking comprehension will hardly be crowned with success. The state must take care to grant individuals maximum freedom of action and limit the scope of its direct interventions to indispensable occasions. Intervention is necessary specially when credit creation flows into unproductive uses and finances speculative transactions in the real estate sector, the acquisition of hedge funds or takeover activities. *In order to prevent the formation of price bubbles and inflation, money must be used for productive and value-creating purposes.*

Werner presents the Japanese example of high growth, but also calls for new research. It is necessary, he says, for research to deal much more intensively with the set-up of purposeful institutions, meaningful incentive systems, and with the actual behaviour of people – "a broad field of the highest importance for the theoretical justification and practical realisation of the principles of a legal and economic order" (p. 451). Werner says that

a huge research programme will be open to anyone who sets out on the path to a new kind of economy. *What is needed is the courage to think through, debate and apply a genuine, practice-oriented and reality-based economics.*

### Addendum

Thirteen years have passed since this textbook was published. I think it has lost none of its topicality. Werner's even earlier book "Princes of the Yen" (*Quantumpublishers.com*), which was a bestseller in Japan, will be published in German this year.

Today, there is a growing body of opinion that the gap between rich and poor countries and between the rich and the poor within individual countries is widening. The Corona pandemic seems to be reinforcing this trend.

Not a day goes by that the business section of the newspapers does not warn of a possible or already imminent crash. Prices for shares or real estate have shot up to unrealistic heights, as they did before the Japanese recession, and continue to rise despite the crisis. Money is flowing into the financial industry and not into the real economy. The stock market has degenerated into a casino. And a new computer money system in

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## Pent-up inflation?

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer, *Mittelstandsinstitut Niedersachsen* (SME Institute Lower Saxony)



Eberhard Hamer  
(Picture ma)

The *Mittelstandsinstitut Niedersachsen* is receiving an increasing number of enquiries from self-employed entrepreneurs and employed SMEs about what they should do with their saved cash. Obviously, during the COVID-

19 lockdowns, liquidity in many households has increased to such an extent that investment pressure has arisen.

This is also indicated by the highs in the stock markets – after all, the “COVID-19 money flood” has to go somewhere and it goes first into the stock markets, but also into bonds, which do not yield a return, but are still a traditional investment option.

And the gold price also shows that people are willing to invest in security (gold) instead of returns.

The most pressure is apparently in the real estate market, which is already a real estate bubble, but which many people see as an escape from the dreaded inflation and currency reform. That after a currency reform the real values of real estate would also be burdened is not yet believed by most, despite past experience.

The private household liquidity squeeze is a natural consequence of the lockdown of our shops, restaurants and entertainment venues. People could not spend anything in the last six months, so they accumulated idle income. But this means that after the lockdown is lifted, pent-up demand will come into the market with excess demand and shortages of supply, which will lead to price increases, and thus we will see a temporary “post-COVID-19 boom” until the pent-up cash flow of private households is spent.

### “Only a realistic economy ...”

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the form of “cryptocurrencies” is already in the pipeline. Reason enough to give first priority to research for a “new economic policy”.

“We have every reason to shape the world’s economies in a way that offers more room for cooperative behaviour; it is incumbent upon us to establish a socially acceptable form of capitalism that has the welfare of all in mind, and in which everyone will be considered a valuable human being,” writes Richard A. Werner (p. 450). •

In anticipation of this expected price increase, commodity producers already announced up to 30% commodity price increases for the summer of 2020 (metal, wood), and the tourism industry is also starting to make up for the losses from the COVID-19 drought with surcharges.

In the USA, *Biden* has launched the 1.9 trillion consumption package already initiated by *Trump*, so that a new upswing is to be achieved by flooding the country with money.

The EU is trying to do the same with 750 billion gifts and loans to the highly indebted states as “COVID-19 aid” and at the same time as a “Green Deal”.

So trillions of newly created money is being pumped into the market to absorb the recessionary consequences of the COVID-19 period and create a new artificial boom. However, an increase in the money supply in the case of stagnation of goods usually means excess demand and price increases, i.e., inflation. The FED and the ECB have now set themselves a maximum inflation target of 2%, because the over-indebted countries such as the USA, Greece, Italy, Spain, France would become insolvent – would have to go bankrupt – if the interest rates on their bonds were higher. In order to prevent this, inflation, especially of government bonds, is stopped, zero interest rate policy prevails, the inflationary pressure of money multiplication is continuously stopped by state and central bank interventions.

This behaviour is actually only typical of socialist central administrations, which create and spend money excessively, but then have to shut it down so as not to let the price level rise accordingly, in order to prevent inflation. Under *Hitler* this was called “pent-up inflation”. This works well as long as the central power can still direct and neutralise the additional money. In socialist administrative economies this is done by stopping prices on the markets, in our financial-socialist system this is done by state debt financing and redistribution.

As long as the central banks pack the newly created money into new government debt and the states can convert this money into social benefits, it will not have an effect on the market, it cannot lead to the inflation that is actually inevitable. This is the only way to explain why, despite the flood of money in recent years, the central banks have been able to successfully impose a zero-interest rate.

With more and more money, however, the pressure of excess liquidity in the financial system increases, despite the price freeze or zero interest rates. •

This can – if it rises slowly – have the effect of a slow increase in interest rates desired by the central banks, as long as the liquidity wave of new money is not too strong. However, it has long since become too strong due to the COVID-19 bailouts; hence the other way follows, that the state and central banks exert counter-pressure against the liquidity wave until the flood of liquidity overruns the financial system and blows it up. This was the case in post-war Germany in 1947, in the GDR in 1989 and will probably soon be the case here as well.

The liquidity bubble, which in the meantime has been doubled by the COVID-19 bailouts and the COVID-19 lockdown, will therefore be artificially maintained until autumn at the latest, and will only burst open after the lockdown with price increases, incipient inflation and a short-term bogus boom, until the worldwide flood of artificial money threatens to lead to galloping inflation. However, galloping inflation would not only be an expropriation of savings capital and credit balances, but would also mean mass national bankruptcies of the over-indebted countries. To prevent this, a currency reform is already being prepared by the central banks, which is expected to lead to a digital currency. Such a currency would have the advantage that the central bank could carry out monetary reforms at will by deleting zeros, that people would no longer be able to spend money without the consent of the banking system and that they would be subject to the total financial control of the central banking systems. Financial freedom would then be gone, but a new central financial domination system would be established.

In any case, we should not believe that the unrestrained money multiplication of our financial politicians and the central banks (“Euro bailouts”, “Green Deal”) would remain without consequences. We are not yet noticing the consequences only in the short term, because the actually necessary inflationary consequence is being artificially stopped for the time being. But a pent-up inflation will break out at some point.

Thus, pent-up inflation is not a permanent condition, but merely a temporary artifice that cannot be sustained, but will eventually dissolve into natural inflation or monetary reform.

In any case, a post-COVID-19 interim boom should be welcome to our government for the election. Even bogus prosperity and pent-up inflation appear to ordinary voters as (bogus) prosperity for which they thank the government. •

# “My father taught me many tricks ...”

## The family as a place of emotional security

by Dr Eliane Perret, curative teacher and psychologist

Recently, I read a report in the newspaper about a family whose two small children, aged three and five, made more than a thousand drawings since the pandemic began. They decorated the flat with them, but at some point, there was simply no more free space on the walls. This put their parents in a tight spot. They thought about it and found a wonderful solution. Without further ado, they developed a clever picture frame that simply collected the drawings thus facilitating a changing exhibition. The report exemplified a positive interaction between parents and children in times of the pandemic. It made me reflect and think about how important and relevant the family is to children.

### Components of development

Children come up with a lot of ideas throughout the day that often relate to the adult which serves to provoke a reaction. This makes daily parenting exciting and sometimes exhausting.

It is easy to understand that with their creative activities, the two children found a positive echo and a lot of interest from their parents. This encouraged their joy of creative work and motivated them to continue. This type of experience forms the mental foundation on which children shape their personality. Today, these components of psychological development are supported by carefully thought-out and well-validated studies of modern developmental psychology, especially by relationship research. The results are aligned with the personal view of the human being and of cultural anthropology, which see the child as a being that develops individually in social relations.

### In a sensitive, mutual interaction

The key to a successful development process lies in the relationship between parents and child. All participants have the necessary prerequisites for this. Thus, from the very first day of life, the infant's entire physical and sensory-physiological equipment is geared towards establishing contact with the human being. They prefer interpersonal experiences to all other impressions, as corresponding studies and observations impressively prove. In this way, the baby makes an active contribution to building a trusting relationship, first naturally mostly with the mother. If she succeeds in satisfying the infant's need for human security in a sensitive, reciprocal interaction, the infant can build up primal or basic trust, because he experiences their mother as a haven of security and warmth.



(Picture ma)

The mother is not alone in the task of giving the child the security to face the world with confidence. Increasingly, the emotional anchoring in the whole family, with the father, the siblings and the wider social environment becomes important. Even though the following is primarily about the parents, siblings are all important in their own way and, as resilience research shows, can be important supporters when one parent is missing. Older siblings, grandparents or also teachers can become important caregivers for children who encourage, challenge and support them, make them aware of their strengths and remain by their side as reliable fellow human beings.

### “A trustworthy, strong and wise companion”

Naturally, mothers and fathers form their relationship with the child differently and in this way also meet the different needs of the child. For a long time, research focused predominantly on the bonding issue and thus on the importance of the mother for the development of the child. Today's research results show, however, that fathers are just as important reference persons as mothers. However, they differ in their task, because in addition to the natural desire for closeness and protection, the need to discover the environment is also an innate human need. This is where the father plays an important role by helping the child discover their environment and by supporting them to venture into new challenges. Who has not watched fathers enthusiastically playing football with their

children, showing them how to find their balance on a bicycle or balancing on a tree trunk? In this way, the father becomes the child's playmate, so to speak, or, as *John Bowlby*, one of the pioneers of the relationships research, called it, a trusting, strong and wise companion who supports and protects the child in its explorations.

Both parents therefore have important, mutually complementary tasks and together lay the foundation for the child's intellectual activity, their motivation, their joy of learning and his bond with fellow human beings.

### Boredom as a motor for creativity

The family therefore holds the first and most important position in the development of a child as a maturing human being. During the children's development and growth, parenting tasks are always new and often challenging. The three- and five-years old artists, certainly did not always just sit quietly and happily at the table and drew in a concentrated way. There were certainly also conflicts in which they tested their strength. However, with their creative activity in the “boring” time during the lockdown last spring, they found a meaningful way to be to pass time and thereby found inner peace and contentment. For them, boredom triggered creativity. This will develop into a complex process which today is one of the “key skills” required in the professional world. This ability is built on many previous experiences.

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### “My father taught me ...”

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Through active testing and playing, even young children gain sensory experiences that stimulate their thinking: they try out how many blocks they can stack on top of each other until the tower collapses.

The child eagerly observes what happens when they mix red watercolour with yellow, and how it sounds when they strike two sticks together. They play with sounds and noises and try out the possibilities of their voices. If a balloon simply floats up into the air – without being asked – the child is either delighted or sad, depending on the situation. When looking at a picture book together, the child not only picks up new words and sentence structures and intuitively learns a language, but also forms pictures in his mind, combined with warm memories of cosy cuddling. In this way, they gain experience and begin to grasp their environment more and more precisely. They develop their own ideas, which then must be tried out – not always to the delight of the adults.

The interpersonal actions encourage a child to continue, as in the case of the two little artists. In interpersonal interaction, they creatively and curiously acquire knowledge about the world. In this way, they begin to comprehend connections and build up thought structures that become increasingly complex and are oriented towards the realities of the world. Such maturation processes become the basis for creative processes in which networked thinking and creative ideas combine and make it possible to think through tasks in a wide variety of areas.

#### Giving structure to the child's world

In these first relationships, children form their attitudes toward other people, their values and conscience. For us adults, this requires an awareness of which values are important to us in life. Because, whether we like it or not, our thoughts, feelings, speech and actions always have an effect on children. They need well-considered rules and values with which they can engage with in an age-appropriate way. In this way, we structure the child's world, which holds many unforeseen events in store, and give the children security and reliability. This enables them to develop trust in themselves and their environment. Especially in today's world, which is characterised by diversity and arbitrariness of possible value orientations, it is more important for the growing generation to experience clear

standards and boundaries. As adults, we ourselves must exemplify the values that we want to transmit to our children. Therefore: If we “help” them to gain access to a social media platform by lying about their age, this is not a trivial offense, but legitimises lying and fraud.

It is also double-edged to expect children to resolve conflicts without verbal and physical violence if we ourselves do not settle our disagreements with mutual respect. Thus, not only are the children challenged, but we are also challenged. It is worthwhile to take a close look at our own behaviour. In this way, the family becomes the framework in which cultural values and norms are passed on from generation to generation. The child begins to feel that he or she is part of the human community and, if successful, develops independence, a sense of relating to others and an inner readiness to assume responsibility as a prerequisite for an active, self-determined life and a mature ability to cooperate in interpersonal relationships.

#### What is valuable to me

In the family of the two children, creative activity is apparently a value that is appreciated. As the newspaper report goes on to say, the parents also enjoy drawing and designing. Thus, one can assume and hope that the little ones will further develop their drawing skills. They can draw confidence from the associated experience, which they will transfer to learning processes in other areas.

So, it's not the big undertakings and projects, as the leisure industry suggests to parents, that determine whether a child feels protected and valued in his or her family. I also noticed this in a lesson in which my ten- to twelve-year-old students reflected on what are or were valuable moments for them in the family. Their reflections are thought-provoking: “My mother and I always go to the lake in the summer and bath our feet in the water”. – “I've watched my dad cook and we've talked about all kinds of things”. – “Last week I baked a cake with my mother, and I was very proud”. – “My father and I played soccer in front of the house, and he taught me many tricks”. – “My father, mother and I once had a snowball fight”. – “I went to the city with my father, and we looked at the big churches together” ... What made these situations valuable to the children? It was the inner home they experienced at that moment, the closeness to their parents and the feeling of being taken seriously. Even with older children, therefore, the family

is a place of emotional security - not always through emotional harmony, sometimes also through friction that generates warmth.

Later, in the transition to adulthood, these experiences protect them against the aggressive seductions of the leisure and consumer industries and help them to follow their own, self-determined path, in which they preserve their own dignity and the desire to defend the dignity of others.

#### Natural fundamental group unit of society

It is therefore no coincidence that in 1948 the drafters of the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* accorded the family outstanding importance for the coexistence of people in peace and freedom. In Article 16, they recognise the family as the “natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State”. This is our responsibility as educators. If we understand what makes a healthy childlike emotional development possible, we will be mindful in our daily family life (incidentally also in school) and discover ways to strengthen our children's self-esteem and give them a child-appropriate and age-appropriate sense of the social interrelationships of human life. Knowing that our actions are a mosaic piece of a larger whole. Like the drawings of the two little ones. •

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