

Current Concerns

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and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

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Double-standards at the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council

by Professor Dr Alfred de Zayas*



Alfred de Zayas
(picture ma)

It is no secret that the UN Human Rights Council essentially serves the interests of the Western developed countries and does not have a holistic approach to all human rights. Blackmail and bullying are common practices, and the US has proven that it has sufficient "soft power" to cajole weaker countries. It is not necessary to threaten in the chamber or in the corridors, a phone call from the Ambassador suffices. Countries are threatened with sanctions – or worse – as I have learned from African diplomats. Of course, if they abandon the illusion of sovereignty, they are rewarded by being called "democratic". Only major powers can afford to have their own opinions and to vote accordingly.

Back in 2006 the Commission on Human Rights, which had been established in 1946, adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and numerous human rights treaties, and established the system of rapporteurs, was abolished. At the time I was surprised by rationale of the General Assembly, because the reason adduced was the "politicisation" of the Commission. The US unsuccessfully lobbied for the creation of a smaller commission composed only of countries that observed human rights and could pass judgment over the rest. As it turned out, the GA established a new body of 47 member States, the Human Rights Council, which, as any observer will confirm, is even more politicised and less objective than its maligned predecessor.

Special Session at the Human Rights Council on 12 May – unbalanced

The special session of the HR Council held in Geneva on 12 May on the Ukraine

war was a particularly painful event, marred by xenophobic statements in violation of article 20 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR). Speakers employed a mean tone in demonising Russia and Putin, while ignoring the war crimes committed by Ukraine since 2014, the Odessa massacre, the 8-year Ukrainian bombardment on the civilian population of Donetsk and Lugansk, etc.

A quick review of OSCE reports from February 2022 is revealing. The February 15 report of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine recorded some 41 explosions in the ceasefire areas. This increased to 76 explosions on Feb 16, 316 on Feb 17, 654 on Feb 18, 1413 on Feb 19, a total of 2026 of Feb 20 and 21 and 1484 on Feb 22. The OSCE mission reports showed that the great majority of impact explosions of the artillery were on the separatist side of the ceasefire line.¹ We could easily make a comparison of the Ukrainian bombardment of the Donbas with Serbia's bombardment of Bosnia and Sarajevo. But back then NATO's geopolitical agenda favoured Bosnia and there too the world was divided into good guys and bad guys.

Any independent observer would cringe at the lack of balance displayed in the discussions at the Human Rights Council on Thursday. But are there many independent thinkers in the ranks of the "human rights industry" left? The pressure of "groupthink" is enormous.

The idea of establishing a commission of inquiry to investigate war crimes in Ukraine is not necessarily a bad one. But any such commission would have to be equipped with a broad mandate that would allow it to investigate war crimes by all belligerents – Russian soldiers as well as Ukrainian soldiers and 20,000 mercenaries from 52 countries who are fighting on the Ukrainian side. According to *Al-Jazeera*, more than half of them, 53.7 percent, come from the United States, Britain and Canada and 6.8 percent from Germany. It would also be justified to give a mandate to the commission to look into the activities of the 30 US/Ukrainian biolabs.

What seems particularly offensive in the "spectacle" of 12 May at the Council is that States engaged in rhetoric contrary to the *human right to peace* (GA Resolution 39/11) and to the *right to life* (art.6 ICCPR). The priority was not on saving lives by devising ways to promote dialogue and reach a sensible compromise that would usher an end to hostilities, but simply on condemning Russia and invoking international criminal law – of course, exclusively against Russia. Indeed, the speakers at the event engaged primarily in "naming and shaming", mostly evidence-free, since many of the allegations were not backed up by concrete facts worthy of a court of law. The accusers also relied on allegations that Russia had already addressed and refuted. But as we know from the lyrics of the *Simon & Garfunkel* song "The Boxer" – "a man hears what he wants to hear, and disregards the rest".

Precisely the purpose of a commission of inquiry should be to collect verifiable evidence on all sides and to hear as many witnesses as possible. Unfortunately, the resolution adopted on 12 May does not augur well for peace and reconciliation, because it is woefully one-sided. For that very reason China departed from its practice of abstaining from such votes and went ahead and voted against the resolution. It is laudable that the top Chinese diplomat at the UN Office in Geneva *Chen Xu*, spoke about trying to mediate peace and calling for a global security architecture. He deplored: "We have noted that in recent years the politicisation and confrontation at the [council] has been on the rise, which has severely impacted its credibility, impartiality and international solidarity."

UN Security Council meeting: Documents on bio labs in Ukraine presented

Far more important than the Geneva ritual exercise in Russia-bashing and the breathtaking hypocrisy of the resolution was another UN meeting, this time at the Security Council in New York on Thursday, 12 May, where the Chinese deputy UN Ambassador *Dai Bing* argued that anti-Rus-

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"Double-standards at the ..."

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sia sanctions would certainly backfire. "Sanctions will not bring peace but will only accelerate the spill over of the crisis, triggering sweeping food, energy and financial crises across the globe".

Also, at the Security Council, on Friday, 13 Mai, Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN, *Vasily Nebenzia*, presented evidence documenting the dangerous activities of some 30 US bio-laboratories in Ukraine.² He recalled the *Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention* of 1975 (BTWC) and expressed his preoccupation over the enormous risks involved in biological experiments carried out in US warfare laboratories like Fort Detrick, Maryland.

Nebenzia indicated that the Ukrainian biolabs were directly supervised by the *US Defense Threat Reduction Agency* in the service of the Pentagon's National Centre for Medical Intelligence. He confirmed the transfer of more than 140 containers with ectoparasites of bats from a biolab in Kharkov abroad, in the absence of any international control. Obviously, there is always a risk that pathogens may be stolen for terrorist purposes or sold in the black market. Evidence shows that dangerous experiments were conducted since 2014, following the Western-inspired and coordinated *coup d'état* against the democratically elected president of Ukraine, *Victor Yanukovich*.³

It appears that the US program triggered a growing incidence of dangerous and economically relevant infections in Ukraine. He stated "There is evidence that in Kharkov, where one of the labs is located, 20 Ukrainian soldiers died of swine flu in January 2016, 200 more were hospitalised. Besides, outbreaks of African swine fever occur regularly in Ukraine. In 2019 there was an outbreak of a disease that had symptoms similar to plague."

According to the Russian Ministry of Defence reports, the US demanded that Kiev destroy the pathogens and cover up all traces of the research so that the Rus-

sian side would not get hold of the evidence of Ukrainian and US violations of article 1 of the BTWC. Accordingly, Ukraine rushed to shut down all biological programs and Ukraine's health Ministry ordered the elimination of biological agents deposited in biolabs starting from 24 February 2022.

Ambassador Nebenzia recalled that during hearing of the US Congress on 8 March, Undersecretary of State *Victoria Nuland* confirmed that there were biolabs in Ukraine where military-purpose biological research had been conducted, and that it was imperative that these biological research facilities "should not fall in the hands of Russian forces."⁴

Meanwhile, the US Ambassador to the UN *Linda Thomas-Greenfield* rejected the Russian evidence, calling it "propaganda" and gratuitously alluded to a discredited OPCW report on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma by President *Bashar Al-Assad* of Syria, thus establishing a kind of guilt by association.

Even more pathetic was the statement delivered by UK Ambassador *Barbara Woodward*, calling Russia's concerns "a series of wild, completely baseless and irresponsible conspiracy theories."

China calls for destruction of biological and chemical weapons

At that Security Council session, the Chinese Ambassador *Dai Bing* urged countries retaining weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including biological and chemical weapons, to destroy their stockpiles: "We firmly oppose the development, stockpiling and use of biological and chemical weapons by any country under any circumstances, and urge countries that have not yet destroyed their stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons to do so as soon as possible. Any information trail of bio-military activity should be of great concern to the international community." China called on all concerned parties to respond to relevant questions in a timely manner and make comprehensive

clarifications so as to dispel the legitimate doubts of the international community.

Presumably the mainstream media will give abundant visibility to the US and UK statements and blithely ignore the evidence presented by Russia and China's proposals.

There is more bad news for peace and sustainable development. Bad news for disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament; bad news for ever increasing military budgets and the waste of resources for the arms race and war. We have just learned about Finland's and Sweden's bid to join NATO. Do they realise that they are actually joining what could be considered a "criminal organisation" for purposes of article 9 of the statute of the Nuremberg Tribunal? Are they conscious of the fact that over the past 30 Years NATO has committed the crime of aggression and war crimes in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria? Of course, NATO has thus far enjoyed impunity. But "getting away with it" does not render such crimes any less criminal.

Credibility seriously wounded

While the credibility of the Human Rights Council is not yet dead, we must admit that it is seriously wounded. Alas, the Security Council does not earn any laurels either. Both are gladiator arenas where countries are only trying to score points. Will these two institutions ever develop into civilised fora of constructive debate over matters of war and peace, human rights and the very survival of humanity? •

¹ see <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/512683>

² <https://consortiumnews.com/2022/03/12/watch-un-security-council-on-ukraines-bio-research/>

³ <https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/05/05/taking-aim-at-ukraine-how-john-mearshheimer-and-stephen-cohen-challenged-the-dominant-narrative/>

⁴ https://sage.gab.com/channel/trump_won_2020_twice/view/victoria-nuland-admits-to-the-existence-62284360aaee086c4bb8a628

Source: Counterpunch of 18 May 2022

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From the “Cold War” to the “Hate War” against Russia

by Christian Müller, Switzerland

The period from 1945 to around 1990 is historically known in Europe as the “Cold War”. However, contacts with Russia in culture and sport were also friendly during this period. Today, however, sporting, cultural and even scientific contacts with Russia are prevented by the West: Russia is simply to be hated.

On 8 May 1945 – in Moscow it was already 9 May – Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally. This formally ended the Second World War, even though fighting continued in various regions of the world. Germany was divided into four zones, and these were allocated to the four victorious powers: The Soviet Union, the USA, Great Britain and France. But mainly because of the different economic systems – capitalism in the West, communism in the Soviet Union – massive tensions remained between the victorious powers. It was the time of the so-called Cold War, which also became visible in considerable travel restrictions from 13 August 1961 with the building of the Berlin Wall.

Nevertheless, people communicated with each other and had contacts, not least in the areas of sport and culture. In Switzerland, for example, there were concerts by the *Don Cossack* Choir under *Serge Jaroff*, and I myself went to a concert in Baden (Aargau) by the absolutely fantastic Slovak singer *Hana Hegerová*. And vice versa: I myself accompanied my friend, the musician *André Jacot*, with his string

quartet to Prague and Warsaw in 1972, where the quartet gave concerts.

But I have also good memories of my first trip to Moscow, back in 1986 during the Cold War. I was editor-in-chief of the “Luzerner Neusten Nachrichten” (LNN) at the time, and we were the sponsors of the *Lucerne FCL football club* with the unforgettable “See LNN” jerseys. As FCL had a UEFA Cup match against *Spartak Moscow* on 17 September 1986, *Friedel Rausch*, FCL’s coach at the time, decided to attend a *Spartak vs. Dnieper* match in Moscow two weeks before this Cup match to study *Spartak’s* style of play and tactics in order to increase FCL’s chances of winning. The then FCL president *Romano Simioni* and vice-president *Fredy Egli* travelled with him – and so did I as an interested media man. At that time, it was still not possible to fly from Zurich to Moscow. We had to take the train to Paris in order to catch a flight to Moscow. And in Moscow, where we had an interpreter, we naturally went to see the city.

Today, sporting and cultural contacts with Russia are deliberately prevented

To stay with football: The European Football Union UEFA has decided that Russia will not be allowed to participate in the *Nations League* and the *Women’s European Championship*, and Russia will also no longer be allowed to apply to host the *European Championships* in 2028 and 2032 – more than ten years from now! And to

return to culture and Lucerne: “Lucerne Festival” has cancelled for political reasons the two concerts of the “*Mariinsky Orchestra*” with the Russian conductor *Valery Gergiev* on 21 and 22 August 2022.

Today, even concerts in which compositions by the Russian composer *Peter Tchaikovsky* (1840–1893) are on the programme are cancelled. And the University of Milano-Bicocca even wanted to ban a lecture by the Italian poet *Paolo Nori* on the Russian poet *Fyodor Dostoevsky* (1821–1881), but then had to back out.

Needless to say, that the “International Cat Federation” has banned cat show organisers from showing Russian cats. Which, if it wasn’t enough to make you cry, would at least make you laugh. But what if the European Association of Scientists and Doctors engaged in Research on Combating Cancer with Radioactive Irradiation – “European Association of Nuclear Medicine” EANM – expelled the Russian association? Also a laughing matter? (Perhaps it is no coincidence that the current president of this association, *Dr Jolanta Kunikowska*, is a Polish woman).

Not only all these cancellations and bans, now music is even misused for political propaganda

Music is the only “language” that is understood around the world and can also

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(picture ma)

Christian Müller (*1944) is a Swiss journalist and book author. He studied history and constitutional law at the University of Zurich and, having already

been very involved in journalism, graduated in 1974 with a dissertation on social history. He then worked for 35 years as an editor and editor-in-chief of various Swiss daily and weekly newspapers as well as in media management and media consulting, some years of which he also spent in the Czech Republic. As a journalist, he travelled to more than 50 countries, i.e., in America, Africa, Australia/New Zealand and China, always with a special focus on the cultural characteristics of the respective countries and their social conditions.

Since 2009, he has again worked exclusively as an independent journalist with a focus on West-East tensions and other geopolitical topics. As a journal-

ist, he has closely followed the West-East conflicts of the last 30 years.

He lives alternately in Switzerland, Italy and the Czech Republic.

Globalbridge

In March 2022, Christian Müller founded the politically and financially independent platform “Globalbridge” in order, according to his own statement, “to do something against the hatred in this world within the bounds of what is possible for us, to call on people to talk to each other instead of accusing each other or even shooting at each other. The unspeakable amount of money spent internationally on military armament must be diverted into mutual understanding and balance between rich and poor. We must learn to accept those of different faiths and opinions and to live together peacefully with or without borders.”

On “Globalbridge”, the interested reader will find a rich selection of well-researched contributions on current in-

ternational events. Christian Müller: “Geopolitics [has] become too much out of the focus of the big media. And where it is still or again a topical issue, the view is frighteningly one-sided – one-sided from NATO’s point of view.”

Make up your own mind:
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Resistance in Latin America against US hegemony

gl. From 8 to 9 June, the next Summit of the Americas will take place in Los Angeles. Members of the OAS (*Organisation of American States*) are Canada and the USA as well as the 32 Latin American and Caribbean states. Founded in 1948, the organisation has been criticised for several years by various Latin American governments for being too heavily influenced by the USA. After decades of exclusion, Cuba was invited to a summit meeting for the first time in 2015, after all Latin American states had spoken out in favour. The incipient normalisation in US relations with Cuba was already interrupted again by President *Trump* in 2018, and sanctions were further tightened. This policy has so far also been continued by the *Biden* administration. The US government, as this year's host of the Summit of the Americas, announced that it would not invite Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela because they were not democracies.

"From the 'Cold War' ..."

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bring together people from very different cultural backgrounds. But it is not enough that music by Russian composers or with Russian musicians is now blocked wherever possible. Now music is even being used the other way round to make political propaganda. At the *Eurovision Song Contest* ESC on 14 May in Turin in Italy, where Russia was also excluded, not the musically best participants won, as predicted by political observers, but simply the Ukrainian band "Kalush Orchestra" – as a sign of the millions of TV viewers' solidarity with Ukraine. How right the music journalist *Stefan Künzli* was who wrote the following sentence on 30 April 2022: "The Eurovision Song Contest was brought into being during the Cold War. To promote European cohesion. Now the Russian war of aggression has a firm grip on the contest. The once peaceful song contest is becoming a farce."

There was the Cold War from 1945 to 1991. What is going on now is not just Cold War 2.0, it is the – new – Russophobia war. How important and how beautiful it would be if we could and were allowed to hear the Russian poet and chansonnier *Bulat Okudschawa* even today – even in the West: "Get your coat. It's time to go home."

Source: www.globalbridge.ch of 17 May 2022; with friendly permission by the author

Mexican President *Andrés Manuel López Obrador* then repeatedly demanded that no country should be excluded from the summit. Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela are part of the Americas and must be allowed to participate.

On a tour of the Central American states of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Cuba, López Obrador repeatedly pointed out the importance of a united America. He announced that he would only attend the summit in Los Angeles if Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua were also invited. It should be a summit of dialogue and brotherhood. "No one – no matter how powerful – has the right to treat any country badly, no matter how small. All nations are free and independent, sovereign. There is no nation that can set itself up as ruler of the world. Neither Russia, nor China, nor the United States."¹ Other countries joined the call: Guatemala, Bolivia, Honduras as well as 13 Caribbean states. Brazil and Argentina are also hesitant to pledge their participation.

The US government can no longer simply ignore this demand. The days are over when the USA alone set the tone. In mid-May, the USA announced small relaxations in the economic blockade against Cuba. Cubans will again be allowed to transfer more than the ridiculous maximum amount of 1000 dollars per quarter to their relatives in Cuba. At the same time, the USA announced the start of negotiations between the oil com-

pany Chevron and the Venezuelan state oil company, which has been heavily sanctioned up to now. The fact that this decision was probably not entirely altruistic was certainly noticed in Latin America. In its editorial of 18 May, the major Mexican newspaper "La Jornada" sees a connection between the sudden concessions to Cuba and Venezuela, which in its view are insufficient, and the "increasing rejection of Washington's arbitrary policies on the continent". However, all economic sanctions should be lifted, "because they are immoral and unjust, they cause permanent economic crises in the countries that are their victims, they lead to suffering and deprivation in the respective populations and, in the end, they are completely ineffective, as evidenced by the continuing blockade against the Cuban revolution, which has not brought about any significant changes on the island for 60 years." Countries to the south of the United States should "strengthen their demand that the superpower abandon its exclusionary and illegal policies, accept coexistence and dialogue with governments of different orientations, and abandon once and for all its claim to dictate to other countries how they should govern themselves."² •

¹ <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2022/05/21/politica/no-se-gana-nada-con-la-division-amloal-referirse-a-cumbre/> of 21 May 2022

² <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2022/05/18/opinion/washington-cambios-insuficientes-20220518/> of 18 May 2022

Mexico wants to grant Assange Asylum

In light of the threatening extradition of *Julian Assange*, the founder of *WikiLeaks*, to the United States, on espionage charges, Mexico's President, *Andrés Manuel López Obrador* has reiterated today his offer to grant asylum to the cyber-activist and called for no conspiratorial action to be taken against him. At the Press-Conference this morning at the National Palace, the President was asked about the Assange's case after the British judiciary made it possible for his extradition in April last year.

"We are for his release because he is a politically persecuted person. It is a shame that a person who makes public valuable information, in which corruption cases, governmental crimes and everything which the elite secretly does, suddenly comes to light due to their investigations and the person who publishes this information, is punished because he allegedly violated confidential affairs," emphasised the President. Above all, he stressed, the core of the complaint should be to show –

based on the information revealed by Assange – what he called "extremely serious interference" in government affairs and of all kinds (by the United States).

"The journalist is convicted, he should be given his freedom, and – if he wishes – he, his family, his lawyers and friends could be given asylum in our country. That is our position and if there is a cooperation, it depends on them. I hope that all the elements will be taken into consideration and that they will not act conspiratorially in any way, rather that justice prevails" said López Obrador.

He recalled that he himself and his movement "were harassed during the electoral fraud (of 2006) and in these reports (from *WikiLeaks*) all the information shows up, but it is not only in our case and we don't know if in the world they don't continue to do it."

Source: <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2022/05/26/politica/reitera-lopez-obrador-ofrecimiento-de-asilo-a-assange/>

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Can Europe exist without Russia?

by Michel Pinton

The question that is the title of this article was the one asked of the participants of a seminar that I had the honor to organise thirty years ago. It was 1994. Russia was struggling to emerge from the ruins of the Soviet empire. Its long captivity had exhausted it. Finally free, it had only one aspiration—to regain its strength and become itself again. By this I mean not only to regain the material prosperity that the Bolsheviks had squandered, but also to rebuild its shattered social relations, its collapsed political order, its distorted culture and its lost identity

At that time, I was a member of the European Parliament. I felt it was essential to understand what the new Russia was, what path it was taking, and how Western Europe could work with it. I had the idea to lead a delegation of deputies to Moscow to discuss these issues with our counterparts in the Federal Duma. I spoke about it to *Philippe Séguin*, who was then president of the French National Assembly. He immediately agreed to my project. The Russian parliamentarians responded to our request by inviting us to come immediately. By mutual agreement, we decided to expand our respective delegations to include experts in the fields of economics, defence, culture and religion, so that their thoughts would inform our discussions.

“We wanted to continue the policy of understanding”

Séguin and I were not only driven by the curiosity of this then-undecided nation. We saw ourselves as heirs to a French school of thought that Europe is one, from the Atlantic to the Urals, not only geographically, but also in terms of its culture and history. We also believed that neither peace, nor economic development, nor the progress of ideas could be established on our continent, if its nations were to tear each other apart, or even ignore each other. We wanted to continue the policy of understanding and cooperation begun by *Charles de Gaulle* from 1958 to 1968 and briefly taken up again in 1989 by *François Mitterrand* in his proposal for a “great European confederation.”

We knew that there was an obstacle to our project—it was called NATO.

De Gaulle had warned against NATO

De Gaulle, the first to do so, had constantly denounced this “system thanks to which Washington holds the defence and consequently the politics and even the

territory of its European allies.” He affirmed that there would never be “a Europe truly European,” as long as its Western nations did not free themselves from the “heavy tutelage” that the New World exercised over the Old. He had set an example by “freeing France from integration under American command.” The other governments did not dare to follow him. But the fall of the Soviet empire in 1990, and the dissolution of the *Warsaw Pact*, seemed to us to justify Gaullist policy: it was obvious to us that NATO, having lost its *raison d’être*, had to disappear. There was no longer any obstacle to a close understanding between all the peoples of Europe. Séguin, as a visionary statesman, could foresee “a security organisation specific to Europe,” in the form of “a European Security Council in which four or five of its main powers, including Russia and France, would have the right of veto.”

A seminar in Moscow, 1994

It was with these ideas that I flew to Moscow. Séguin was held back in Paris by an unforeseen constraint of the French parliamentary session. Our seminar lasted three days. The Russian elite came as eagerly as the representatives of Western Europe. From our exchanges, I retained one main lesson – our interlocutors were haunted by two fundamental questions for the future of their nation: who is Russian? How to ensure Russia’s security?

The first question arose from the arbitrary borders that Stalin had imposed on the Russian people within the former Soviet Union. The second was the resurgence of tragic memories of past invasions. There were those who thought that the answers were to be found in exchanges with Western Europe, whose nations had learned to negotiate their limits and to collaborate fraternally for the good of all. And then there were others who, rejecting the idea of a European vocation for Russia, saw it as having a destiny of its own, which they called “Eurasian.” Of course, it was the first group that we encouraged. It was to this group that we brought our proposals. At that time, it was dominant.

When Russia is not understood

Rereading the minutes of that seminar thirty years later, my heart sinks as I rediscover the warning given to us by an eminent academician, a member of the Presidential Council at the time: “If the West does not show any willingness to understand Russia, if Moscow does not acquire what it aspires to – an effective



(picture ma)

cc. *Michel Pinton*, born in 1937, is an engineer and a French politician and publicist. In the 1960s he worked for *Robert Kennedy* in the USA and later at Princeton University, where *Valéry Giscard d'Estaing* – then French Finance Minister – met him at a lecture in 1968. Specialising in opinion polls and election campaigns, Michel Pinton became one of the collaborators of the Minister of Economy and Finance who was elected President of the Republic in 1974. He was a founding member of the UDF (*L'Union pour la démocratie française*) and became General Delegate in 1978 and General Secretary in 1981. As an opponent of military deterrence, he resigned from his position as General Secretary of the party in 1983 and left the party. In 1992 he took a stand against the single currency, the euro, and in 1993 and 1994 he was a Member of the European Parliament. From 1995 to 2008 he was mayor of the French commune of Felletin. In 1998 he joined *Jean-Pierre Chevènement's* Pôle républicain.

European security system – if Europe does not overcome our isolation, then Russia will inevitably become a revisionist power. It will not be satisfied with the status quo and will actively seek to destabilise the continent.”

Why has our generation failed so miserably?

In 2022, that is precisely what it is doing. Why has our generation of Europeans failed so miserably in the unifying work that in 1994 seemed within reach?

We tend to put the responsibility exclusively on one man: *Vladimir Putin*, “a brutal and cold dictator, an inveterate liar, nostalgic for a vanished empire,” whom we must fight, or even eliminate, so that democracy, a precious treasure of the West, may also prevail in the East and establish peace there. It is to this task, under the aegis of NATO, that the President of the United States, *Joe Biden*,

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calls us. His explanation has the advantage of being simple; but it is too self-serving to be accepted without examination. Those who do not allow themselves to be dominated by the emotions of current events have no trouble understanding that the problem facing Europe is much more complex and profound.

The West has increasingly distanced from the East

The history of our continent over the past thirty years can be summarised as a progressive distancing of East from West. In the former Soviet empire, the main concern was, and still is, to rebuild nations that reconnect with their past and live in security in order to be themselves again. For Russia, this means bringing together all the peoples who claim the motherland, establishing stable and trusting relations with the brotherly peoples of Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, and building a European security system that protects it from external dangers.

Western European leaders have had a very different preoccupation. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, they have given their attention, their energy, and their confidence to what they have called the "European Union." The *Maastricht Treaty*, the construction of the single currency, the *Lisbon "constitution"* – this is what they have been working on almost full time.

The elites in the West considered the idea of nationhood as overcome

While in the East they made painstaking efforts to make up for lost time in national history, in the West the elites were carried away by an irresistible mystique – that of the overcoming of nations and the rational organisation of the common space. The problem of security no longer arose in the West, since all disputes between member states were to be settled by supranational bodies. Peace in the "Union" seemed to be definitively established. In short, the West thought it

had overcome the idea of nationhood and built a stable system of the happy ending of history. Russia was facing burning questions about the idea of nationhood and had a growing sense of heart-breaking appointments with history. Under these conditions, the East and the West had little left to exchange, except oil and machine tools, which are on a level too low to mitigate their divergent future.

Today, NATO is far more dangerous than in the days of the two blocs

As a result, NATO has become an even worse bone of contention than it was in the days of the two blocs. In Western Europe, the Washington-led military organisation is seen as a benign guarantee against the possible returns of history. It allows the member peoples of the European Union to enjoy the "peace dividend" from the outside world without worrying about it, just as the Union does with its internal peace. In Russia, NATO appears as a mortal threat. It is the instrument of a power that has shown on many occasions, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, its desire for world hegemony and domination over Europe. The inclusion of Poland, the three Baltic states and Romania, all so close to Russia, in the territories covered by America's supremacy, was applauded in the West. In Moscow, it raised alarm and anger.

And France?

And France? Why has it not tried to prevent the progressive division of our continent? Because its ruling class has consistently chosen to give absolute priority to the mystique of the "European Union." As a logical consequence, it has allowed itself to be drawn into its natural complement, NATO. *Jacques Chirac* participated, reluctantly of course, but explicitly, in the expedition decided by Washington against Serbia. *Sarkozy* took the step of re-adhering our country to the system that America dominates. *Hollande* and *Macron* have tied us more and more closely to the organisation whose head is across the Atlantic. As they tied us more closely to NATO, our presidents

lost much of the international credit that France had when it was free to do as it thought best.

A surge of conscience has sometimes led them to reject American tutelage and to resume the mission that de Gaulle had begun. *Chirac* refusing to participate in Bush's aggression against Iraq, *Sarkozy* settling alone with Moscow the conditions of an armistice in Georgia, *Hollande* negotiating the *Minsk agreements* to put an end to the fighting in Ukraine – all performed acts worthy of our vocation in Europe. They even managed to involve Germany. But alas, their efforts were improvised, partial and short-lived.

"An abyss of misunderstandings divides Europe"

It is because of this series of divergences that Europe has once again been cut in two. The unfortunate Ukraine, situated on the fracture line of the continent, is the first to pay the price in blood, tears and destruction. Russia claims it in the name of history. The European Union is indignant in the name of democratic values which, according to it, have put an end to history. America takes advantage of this insoluble quarrel to silently advance its pawns and make the outcome of the war even more complicated.

Here is where Europe is, a third of a century after its reunification – an abyss of misunderstandings divides it; a cruel war tears it apart; a new *iron curtain*, imposed this time by the West, is beginning to separate its space; the arms race has resumed; and, even more than the vertiginous fall of economic exchanges, it is the end of cultural exchanges that threatens each of its two parts. The great European *John Paul II* said that our continent could only breathe with its two lungs. Now, in the West as in the East, we are condemned to breathe with only one. This is a bad omen for both halves. But true Europeans must refuse to be discouraged. Even if they are little heard today, it is they and they alone who will be able to bring peace to our continent and restore its prosperity and greatness. •

(Translated from the French by N. Dass)

What if ...

Germany and the Ukrainian war

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

Driven by other NATO states and the private and public media in Germany, most of the country's politicians and officials have been outdoing each other since 24 February 2022 with anti-Russian rhetoric and pledges of allegiance to the transatlantic alliance that were unheard of even in the first Cold War. And so far, there are no signs of improvement. The most recent examples were the government statement of the German Chancellor and the subsequent speeches in the German Bundestag on 19 May, but also the speech by the President of the German *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* [Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution] on the same day.

Why is a speech by *Thomas Haldenwang* worth mentioning at all? The fact that heads of public authorities and representatives of public authorities in Germany are now talking along the lines of politics is not what Germans had hoped for from their civil servants after 1945: independent-minded personalities, inspired by the common good, committed to the constitution of the country as well as to law and order, but not to the media and politicians who are currently setting the tone.

Russian Foreign Minister *Sergei Lavrov* tried to characterise the current state of our countries in a speech on 14 May 2022, saying not only that the West had “declared an all-out hybrid war on Russia”. But also: “The amazing thing is that in almost all ‘civilised’ countries a raging Russophobia is rampant. They have thrown their political correctness, decency, rules and legal standards overboard.”

One should not dismiss these words as Russian propaganda.

What has become unbearable

What our media, our politicians, our representatives of the authorities are currently stating, on a daily basis, has become unbearable. If you don't want to take part in it, don't want to submit to it or don't want to numb your own thinking and feeling, you can only endure analysing the events and the behaviour of those “responsible” with an alert mind and a healthy distance. Don't get too emotionally involved ... and don't forget the question of what would be “normal”, reasonable and emotionally appropriate in view of the tragedy that didn't just begin on 24 February 2022, which

also doesn't just concern Ukraine, but the overall state of our world today.

I imagine, for example, what the government statement of a German chancellor on 19 May 2022 might have been that took seriously what the Russian foreign minister had said five days earlier and extended a hand towards peace.

Core ideas of a of an imagined Chancellor's speech

Of course, this is not meant to be a complete speech, but a few key ideas of such an imagined speech. The German Chancellor could have started his speech with the *Charter of the United Nations* of June 1945; with the attempt of many serious politicians from all over the world who had been shaken up by death and destruction to create a basis for peaceful and equal coexistence of sovereign nations and self-determined peoples after the end of the European war. And how difficult it was even then to follow words with deeds. For only a few weeks after the adoption of the Charter and the hope for a better world, bomber pilots of a founding member of the UN dropped the first two atomic bombs on Japan, killing tens of thousands of innocent people.

The German chancellor could have pointed to the more than 10 million other victims of wars between 1945 and 1990, to the failure of the world community and especially of the great powers to put their power and money interests behind a global bonum commune.

To the hopes of people all over the world that in 1990, after the end of a Cold War with many hot wars, they would be able to build a more peaceful and just world.

Bitter disappointment in many parts of the world

And to the bitter disappointment in many places of the world, when one country of the world and its influential forces was reaching for the only world power and in doing so once again overran many states and peoples with wars and other plagues. Not at all being prepared to allow any kind of equality among the peoples and states of the world. On the contrary, other peoples and states were considered vassals or colonies of a modern kind! The Chancellor could have spoken of Africa, Asia, and Latin America ... but also of Europe and its intended function as a “bridgehead” on the Eurasian continent before the “black hole” – that's how some in the West spoke of Russia in the 1990s. Of the Anglo-Sax-

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Letter to  the Editor

My thoughts on war and peace

When I read reports on the subject of the Thirty Years' War of 1618/48 in Europe, I ask myself what caused people to beat each other to death, rob each other and burn each other's houses. I understand that it was different ideas of God and different beliefs about what happened at mass and communion that led people to fight each other. Retrospectively, this is incomprehensible to me.

History shows that millions of dissenters and unbelievers were killed in the name of God and his truths. This belief in one's own infallibility has had a fatal effect not only on those who are religious (Jews in the *Old Testament*, Christians, Muslims, etc.), but also with reference to modern ideologies, Nazis and communists. When I think of the role of the military, *Tolstoy* comes to mind. In history books, it is not the peaceful people who have won the greatest fame; it is the most successful butchers of men, such as *Alexander the Great*, *Charlemagne*, *Frederick the Great*, *Catherine the Great*, etc. *Napoleon Bonaparte* has his grave in the Pantheon.

Are we, the people of today, any the wiser? Instead of religious truths, we es-

pouse modern principles such as freedom and democracy. We Westerners believe in our Western values, which we want to defend at all costs. These values are comparable to the religious values that led to the Thirty Years' War in the 17th century. We make up only about one tenth of the world's population, but we are convinced that the whole world should adopt our way of thinking. We do not tolerate that, for example, Russians and Chinese want to live by their own rules. Why do we Westerners have to interfere all over the world, spread our system by force? According to all the rules of war propaganda, once a war gets underway, the parties close their minds to the other side's arguments and fears. It has often proved effective to demonise the opponent, to make him into a subhuman who will commit any atrocity.

Those who think further come to this conclusion: Once enough weapons have been delivered, enough damage caused and enough deaths mourned, the opponents of war will sit down together and seek a new beginning. Unless a nuclear war will destroy this hope as well.

Hans Jordi, Braunau (Switzerland)

“What if ...”

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on belief in its own special position in the world. Of the “Five Eyes” and their claim to be able to put the whole world under surveillance.

Germany – still not sovereign, but no longer “Never again war”

The German chancellor could also have talked about how his own country, Germany, failed in its attempt to become a truly sovereign country with a self-determined people – even though this was officially proclaimed in 1990. That after 1990 unfortunately the reunited Germany did not much contribute to peace in the world, as its government and parliament had contractually promised. Instead, it pursued power and interest politics in the Balkans – and not only there – and was jointly responsible for the wars there in the 1990s. Yes, that his country, Germany, was complicit in a war of aggression that violated international law against another European country in 1999 – and was jointly responsible for the death and destruction there. And that after 1990, his country’s politicians wanted this “never again war” to be forgotten and instead wanted to “normalise” German participation in wars step by step with “salami tactics”.

The German chancellor could have said that he deeply regrets all this, that he is ashamed of this policy of injustice and violence, that he is filled with deep compassion for the victims of this policy.

Taking Russia seriously

And that Germany’s dealings with Russia after 1990 also were neither fair nor open, that Germany did not answer honestly Russia’s many offers of cooperation and that Germany, with many wrong steps, is partly responsible for the tragedy that has been unfolding in Ukraine for many years. But that he now finally wanted to take seriously what a Russian President has said again and again for two decades and once again on 9 May 2022: “The United States began claiming their exceptionalism, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, thus denigrating not just the entire world but also their satellites, who have to pretend not to see anything, and to obediently put up with it.

But we are a different country. Russia has a different character. We will never give up our love for our Motherland, our faith and traditional values, our ancestors’ customs and respect for all peoples and cultures.”

Yes, the German chancellor could also have said that Russia should not be made the scapegoat for the economic turmoil in Germany and many other countries in the world, especially those that are already poor. That there were once again profiteers

“Therefore, the German chancellor could have said that it is now high time to take a different, completely different path, a real ‘turn of the times’, which recognises that a world full of enemy images, a Europe against Russia cannot be an outlook, but only self-destructive for all of Europe ... And that he therefore wants to change the course of German politics, fundamentally. And that he also wants to campaign for this in the EU, in all of Europe and with his allies in the USA. That he now wants to fully comply with his oath of office to ‘devote his strength to the welfare of the German people, to increase its benefit and to prevent it from harm’. Above all, however, the commandment of the German basic law to ‘serve the peace of the world’”

of war at the expense of the general public and that it would be very worthwhile to look more closely at the economic and financial policy mistakes of the past decades, at the devastating consequences of our own sanctions policy, at our stock exchanges and the large fortunes in our countries.

Finally, he said that he could no longer stand the disrespect with which politicians and other “elites” in his country looked down on other countries and governments, and how they set themselves up as judges of good and evil, when Germany had every reason to be self-critical and now finally had to tackle its own serious, home-made political, economic, and social problems.

A real “turn of the times”

Therefore, the German chancellor could have said that it is now high time to take a different, completely different path, a real “turn of the times”, which recognises that a world full of enemy images, a Europe against Russia cannot be an outlook, but only self-destructive for all of Europe ... And that he therefore wants to change the course of German politics, fundamentally. And that he also wants to campaign for this in the EU, in all of Europe and with his allies in the USA. That he now wants to fully comply with his oath of office to “devote his strength to the welfare of the German people, to increase its benefit and to prevent it from harm”. Above all, however, the commandment of the German basic law to “serve the peace of the world”.

From the depths of his conviction and with all his strength. Because the current path is a dead end: for politics, for the economy, for culture ... for the vast majority of people. And that otherwise it may

very well be that humanity will not be “lucky” again ...

The German chancellor could have said all this and much more on 19 May. We must live with the fact that he did not ... it would have been quite unlikely and very likely will be anytime soon. However – this also strengthens the thinking and the feeling: to imagine alternatives to what is wrong. •

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The hardship of the Syrians is the result of wrong policies

by Karin Leukefeld



ef. Independent journalist *Karin Leukefeld* has been reporting from the Extended Middle East for daily and weekly journals as well as German state sponsored radio programmes since the year 2000. Since the beginning of the war in 2011 she moves back and forth between Damasucs, Beirut, other places in the Arab world and her hometown Bonn. She has published several books, such as "Syrien zwischen Schatten und Licht – Geschichte und Geschichten von 1916-2016. Menschen erzählen von ihrem zerrissenen Land" (Syria Between Light and Shadow – History and Stories 1916–2016. People Narrate about their War-torn Country.) (2016, Rotpunkt edition Zurich); "Flächenbrand Syrien, Irak, die Arabische Welt und der Islamische Staat" (Surface Fire Syria, Iraq, the Arab World and the Islamic State.) (2015, 3rd edition 2017, Papy-Rossa edition, Cologne). Her new book will be released soon: "Im Auge des Orkans: Syrien, der Nahe Osten und die Entstehung einer neuen Weltordnung" (In the Eye of the Hurricane: Syria, the Middle East and the Rise of a New World Order).

When natural resources become weapons, life becomes a humanitarian crisis. Then, if the EU is the donor, any aid is sure to have a drawback. This was confirmed in the recent statements on Syria.

For this year's Mother's Day on 8 May, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Children (*UNICEF*) issued an appeal to draw attention to the situation of "children in Syria and neighbouring countries". The point was not to put the mothers of these children in the spotlight, but for *UNICEF* to demand more money for the care of these children.

The occasion and addressee of the statement was the 6th Brussels Conference for Support to Syria and the Region, held in Brussels on 9/10 May. *UNICEF* pointed out that it had so far received less than half of the funds needed for 2022 for children in Syria and neighbouring countries.

"Millions of children" are living in "fear, hardship and uncertainty in Syria and neighbouring countries", said the statement by *UNICEF's* Regional Direc-

"When the war in Syria began in 2011, the country was debt-free. No one had gone hungry, and the tourism business had boomed. Syria's relations with the neighbouring countries of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey were characterised by economic and political cooperation, which had benefited everyone. The relations with European states had been marked by numerous agreements and exchange programmes."

tor for the Middle East and North Africa, *Adele Khodr*. In Syria alone, 6.5 million children are in need of assistance. Another 5.8 million children "in Syria's neighbouring countries, burdened by political instability and fragility" also need help because "their lives are marked by poverty and hardship". Many families are struggling to cope with the rising prices of basic goods and food. "So that no Syrian child is left behind", investments are needed to maintain the systems of "education, water and sanitation, health, nutrition and social protection".

The *World Food Programme* (WFP) also appealed to potential donor countries two days before the start of the EU-Syria conference, calling the war in Ukraine a "fresh hammer blow to Syria's ability to feed itself". The price of food has risen by 24 per cent in one month, the (financial) resources of the WFP are under pressure, the needs of the population are greater than what is available in terms of funding. Food rations have had to be reduced, and a 13 per cent reduction in food aid for north-western Syria (Idlib) is imminent.

By the end of 2021, according to the WFP, around twelve million people in Syria – 55 per cent of Syria's pre-war society – were considered poor and in need of food aid. But like *UNICEF*, the WFP complains of insufficient aid funds to continue its operations in and around Syria. According to the organisation, it will only have 27 per cent of the money it needs for its work by October 2022. In concrete terms, 595 million US dollars are missing. If there is no more money, the aid programmes will have to be further reduced, the WFP warned.

As *UNICEF* and the WFP, numerous private, church, state and UN organisations registered their claims at the beginning of the Brussels Syria conference. Country and project reports were updated to make it clear that money was urgently needed from the EU pot and the coffers of EU member states to continue humanitarian aid to Syrians at the current level.

All complained that the situation had worsened "as a result of the war in Ukraine". Most also stressed the importance of their projects in the north-west of Syria – meaning Idlib – and that cross-border aid deliveries from Turkey to this area must be maintained.

On Tuesday – the second day of the EU-Syria conference – the participating states put their money promises on the table. Germany generously offered to pay 1.05 billion euros. The money is to be used over several years "to improve the prospects of people in Syria and neighbouring countries severely affected by the Syrian war, which have taken in millions of refugees", according to a statement from Berlin. 623 million euros of the sum will come from the budget of the *Ministry for Development and Economic Cooperation* (BMZ). The "critical need" of Syrians is "further exacerbated by rising wheat prices as a result of the war in the granary Ukraine", announced the responsible Minister Svenja Schulze.

Josep Borrell, EU Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, promised almost 1.6 billion euros from the EU pot for 2022. By way of comparison: for the care of refugees from Ukraine – this conflict is currently lasting eight weeks – the EU Commission made 3.5 billion euros available to EU member states, according to its own figures.

EU: Do not abandon the Syrians

The EU Commissioner for Crisis Management, *Janez Lenarčič*, said ahead of the Brussels conference that the EU would "not abandon" the Syrian people. But above all, "unhindered access to humanitarian aid for all those in need must be made possible in a timely manner", he added.

In fact, the EU Commissioner did not mean "unhindered access for humanitarian aid", which should come unhindered from all sides, i.e. also from Syria. Rather, he was talking about unhindered "cross-

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"The hardship of the ..."

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border aid deliveries", which are brought from Turkey exclusively to Idlib, where they are supposed to help internally displaced persons. Idlib, as already described, is controlled by al-Qaida-affiliated jihadists. From Idlib, the aid then continues – unhindered – to the jihadist-supported areas in the north-east of Aleppo.

De facto, these aid deliveries are controlled by a "redemption government" in Idlib, which is under the control of the al-Qaida-affiliated organisation *Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham* (HTS). Aid deliveries, which according to UN Security Council Resolution 2585 should also be brought across the frontline – i.e. from Syria – to Idlib and the north-east of Aleppo, are not supported by the EU and the USA despite the UN Security Council Resolution.

EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement *Olivér Várhelyi* blamed "Russian aggression against Ukraine" for the worsening of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the region. He said the EU Commission had quickly allocated 225 million euros to its Food and Resilience Facility initiative and had developed an "economic and investment plan" to support "the socio-economic recovery and stabilisation of the region in the long term". The term "resilience facility" means "financial ability to adapt to adverse conditions".

The EU says it will "activate all instruments" to help the Syrian people eventually reach a "negotiated political settlement and establish the conditions for a better future for all Syrians", a statement on the 6th EU Donors' Conference said.

The question, however, is why a sixth EU donor conference already has to take place when the EU is so good-willed to do everything to help the Syrians. Since 2011, the EU and member states have pumped 27.4 billion euros into humanitarian aid for Syria and the region. Why are the living conditions in the region still getting worse?

The misery in Syria is the result of wrong policies

Western and European governments and think tanks regard Syria as a "failed state". The consequences of war and destruction and a mass exodus are a heavy burden on the country. But Syria is also being prevented from rebuilding the country on its own.

An important prerequisite would be the withdrawal of foreign troops and combat from the resource-rich areas of the country. Syria would have to define its borders in coordination with neighbouring sovereignty. The economic sanctions imposed unilaterally by the EU and the USA, which also affect neighbouring countries and non-Syrian companies, should be lifted.

Syrians, who wish to do so, should be supported by the UN when returning to their homes. The EU and the USA refuse to do this and are deliberately prolonging the humanitarian crisis in Syria as well as the hardship and lack of prospects for refugees in the neighbouring countries. The crisis situation is being perpetuated in order to keep the government in Damascus and its allies Russia and Iran under pressure.

When natural resources become a weapon, life becomes a humanitarian crisis

When the war in Syria began in 2011, the country was debt-free. No one had gone hungry, and the tourism business had boomed. Syria's relations with the neighbouring countries of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey were characterised by economic and political cooperation, which had benefited everyone. The relations with European states had been marked by numerous agreements and exchange programmes.

Since the beginning of the war, the situation has deteriorated continuously. The consequences of the war and the hostile isolationist policy of the EU and the USA contribute to the erosion of the economic and social conditions in Syrian society. A sign of this is the disappearance of a stabilising middle class. Black market trade and corruption are on the rise.

An important reason for the difficult situation is that Syria is denied access to its natural resources. The water, which is controlled both by Turkey – on the upper reaches of the Euphrates – and by Israel – on the occupied and annexed Syrian Golan Heights, is lacking. There is a lack of electricity for the power pumps to bring water from underground water reservoirs and wells to irrigate the fields, orchards and olive groves. Electricity has become scarce in Syria, because armed groups have destroyed the country's electricity supply infrastructure. Electricity became also scarce, because Syria no longer has access to its oil and gas resources in the north-east of the country, which is controlled by US troops and local actors. Syria can also no longer dispose the cotton in the Euphrates valley, the wheat in Al-Hasakah or the olive trees in Afrin. The important resources of the country are occupied and controlled by opponents of the government, which harms all Syrians. In the speeches at the 6th EU-Syria Conference this is not mentioned.

Criticism from Moscow

The Russian Federation – which, for the first time, was not invited to Brussels – criticised the conference as worthless if neither the Syrian nor the Russian government were invited to participate.

They did not see any real efforts to solve Syria's urgent humanitarian problems in Syria, Moscow said. Humanitarian aid should be provided in accordance with internationally recognised principles and should not be politicised.

The Brussels conferences, on the other hand, "are sinking deeper and deeper into the reckless politicisation of humanitarian issues," was the statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry. The West is doing its best to prevent Syrian refugees from returning to their homeland. The difficult situation in which the (regional) receiving countries find themselves are going unnoticed by the EU. Washington and Brussels were suffocating the Syrian people with illegal unilateral sanctions, the Syrian daily newspaper "Al-Watan" is citing the statement from Moscow. The USA held Syrian territory in the region of Jazira (north-east Syria) and Al-Tanf and plundered Syria's national resources.

The US and the Europeans hindered the implementation of projects for a first phase of reconstruction in Syria, as envisaged in UN Security Council Resolution 2885. Instead, political preconditions, including the cross-border assistance (from Turkey), would undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

Three "No's" against Syria

Borrell confirmed in an interview with the Saudi Arabian daily newspaper "Asharq Al-Awsat", which is also published in English, that the EU would not change its three "red lines" against Syria. It would not contribute to reconstruction of the country, it would not lift the sanctions and not establish diplomatic relations with Damascus, "as long as there is no sustainable political change that complies with UN Security Council Resolution 2254", as Borrell confirmed. Borrell continued that Russia had not been invited to the EU donor conference. The EU only invites "partners who are genuinely interested in contributing to the peace in the world and in helping the victims of the conflict," the EU foreign affairs representative said. "With its aggression against Ukraine Russia has shown that it does not share this interest."

The spokesman for the UN *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (OCHA), Jens Loerke, however, said that the UN would not participate at the "important annual event" in Brussels. The EU had taken the decision not to invite the Russian Federation, he said. In response to the enquiries from journalists, Loerke declined to comment on the EU's decision. However, he stated that the Russian Federation, as a "member of the UN and a permanent member of the UN Security Council [...] was an important interlocutor". •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Switzerland's place in Europe

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

Switzerland lies at the heart of Europe. It is closely connected with its neighbouring states, the other European states and the European organisations – since time immemorial and of its own accord, not because an office in Brussels demands it.

This is shown by the programmes of the National Council and the Council of States for the current summer session. In the Council of States on 1 June and in the National Council on 7 June, an impressive series of reports were/are on the agenda. These are the reports of the “Delegations for relations with neighbouring states”; the “EFTA/European Parliament Delegation”; the “Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE”; the “Parliamentary Delegation to the Council of Europe”; the “Delegation to the Interparliamentary Union”; the “Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie”; and the “Swiss Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly”. We are present everywhere, whether as a member or as an observer delegation, and that is a good thing.

It would be advisable for the members of parliament to use the meetings with EU and NATO members of parliament to introduce them to the Swiss model. For it is striking how little some decision-makers in the Western states – even some ambassadors in Bern! – know Switzerland and understand its position. It is up to our parliamentarians and diplomats to lay the necessary groundwork.

What follows is a brief critical overview of some of the reports and an appreciation of the report on relations with neighbouring countries, the cultivation of which is particularly important for every country.

Swiss Delegation to EFTA and to the European Parliament (Report 22.010 of 31 December 2021)

With regard to EFTA, the delegates were mainly concerned with new and planned free trade agreements and reviewed the compliance of the contracting states with labour and environmental regulations. Relations with the EU are well known: Brussels insists on “clarification of institutional issues” as a condition for updating existing and concluding new “market access agreements”. (Parenthesis note: Some of these do indeed open up market access to Switzerland for the EU rather than vice versa, for example the overland transport agreement, because north-south truck transit benefits almost exclusively the EU states).

The Swiss delegation rightly rejects the expulsion from the EU's education and re-

search programmes because of Switzerland's unwillingness to sign a framework agreement dictated by Brussels: “In the delegation's view, this political linkage between market access and cooperation agreements remains irrelevant and incomprehensible.” (Conclusions, Report, p.10) Therefore, it seems that the main activity of the delegates in 2021 was – and will be in 2022 – to lobby from one EU body to the next and from one member state to the other to ask for access to *Horizon Europe*, *Erasmus+* and what they are all called. There are truly more meaningful things to do in the mutual relations of the European peoples! Especially since Switzerland knows how to counter the harassment from Brussels with creative and cost-effective solutions.

Swiss Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (Report 22.011 of 31 December 2021)

The scope of activities of the *Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe* (OSCE) and the importance it could also have today for law and peace have already been outlined several times in *Current Concerns*. Switzerland has always played an active role in the OSCE. The introduction to the detailed report mentions the engagement of Swiss diplomacy since 2014 in the effort to find a solution to the Ukraine crisis, with special mention of Ambassador *Heidi Grau's* mandate as OSCE Special Envoy to Ukraine in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

How much the Swiss diplomats could achieve on the ground of impartiality in this unfortunate country, whose people and their belongings are being sacrificed to the power madness of what was once the only superpower, we do not know. What we do know: Without strict adherence to neutrality towards both warring parties, Switzerland will not be perceived as a trustworthy interlocutor, neither in Ukraine nor elsewhere. But all is not yet over – one should never give up hope that human reason will prevail. By offering Good Offices, Switzerland could contribute far more in today's as in any war situation than by chasing Russian assets (without any proof of their illicit acquisition!).

Swiss Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly¹

What are Swiss parliamentarians doing at NATO? Well, they attend the meetings of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA)² as well as its seminars and working meetings and are “informed” there about NATO's views and objectives. The president of the NATO PA is – as

On Swiss neutrality during the Ukraine war

From the Swiss Federal Council's statement of duties

“Switzerland's engagement within the OSCE is based on the principles of the Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–2023: Considering the current volatile international context, Switzerland is committed to act as a bridge-builder for a peaceful and secure world.”

Source: Ambassador *Heidi Grau* as Special Envoy of the OSCE Chairman in Ukraine and the Trilateral Contact Group. Federal Council media release of 15 January 2021

Ueli Maurer, Federal Councillor, speaks a straightforward language

Tages-Anzeiger: Has Switzerland positioned itself correctly in this war?

Federal Councillor Maurer: We are implementing what the Federal Council has decided by infinite wisdom.

How do you assess these “infinitely wise” decisions regarding the neutrality issue?

If you ask around here at the WEF, you have to say: We have caused a lot of damage. Many people ask for the question of trust concerning the handling of neutrality.

Source: *Rutishauser, Arthur; Walser, Charlotte*. “Der Benzinpreis ist in der reichen Schweiz bezahlbar” (“The price of petrol is affordable in rich Switzerland”). Interview with Federal Councillor *Ueli Maurer*. In: *Tages-Anzeiger* of 25 May 2022

one would expect – a US-American, *Gerald E. Connolly*, and he set the tariff at the spring session of 2021 (i.e., one year before the Russian military operation in Ukraine). There was talk, for example, of “revitalising transatlantic relations through a renewed US commitment” or of the upcoming “revision of NATO's [outdated] strategic concept”, because it “still talks about Russia as a partner, and China is not mentioned and climate change is barely mentioned” (Report, p. 3). On a total of 14 pages, the entire programme of the USA/NATO war power can be read, which was announced to the Swiss delegates on various occasions.

Conclusions of the Swiss delegation: “Many of the topics dealt with by the NATO-PA are also important for Switzerland's security policy”, for example the new NATO Strategic Concept, the tensions between NATO and Russia, the rise

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of China or the fight against terrorism and cyber threats (Report, p.14).

What is urgently recommended to the National Councillors and Councillors of States of neutral Switzerland is to obtain security and geopolitical information from states and alliances of states outside NATO as well as from independent experts. It would be necessary! (See box “Who is pushing Switzerland into NATO?”)

Delegations for relations with the neighbouring states: a happy thing

Since 2003, Swiss parliamentary delegations have maintained regular relations with the parliaments of the five neighbouring states (Delegation for relations with the German Bundestag (Del-D), the Austrian Parliament (Del-A), the French Parliament (Del-F), the Italian Parliament (Del-I) and the Parliament of the Principality of Liechtenstein (Del-FL)).³ The activities of the individual delegations vary according to the current situation; in the reporting year 2021, they had to be resumed after the break resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an example, the Del-A is singled out here; it consists of six members of the National Council and four members of the Council of States; its counterpart comprises twelve members of the Austrian

National Council and one member of the Federal Council. Their meeting last year took place on 1-2 July in Brunnen on Lake Lucerne. It served to cultivate relations and gave the visitors an insight into the economic and cultural background of the region. The programme included a visit to the production site of the world-famous Swiss pocket knives, the *Victorinox* company, as well as to the Bundesbrief Museum and the Morgarten memorial. (Del-A report of 19 July 2021).

A central topic of discussion in 2021 was understandably the conclusion of the negotiations on the institutional framework agreement between Switzerland and the EU. The exchange with the Austrian parliamentarians was enjoyable and forward-looking. The Swiss participants explained the reasons which, from their point of view, had led to the breakdown of negotiations. “They emphasised that Switzerland remains a close and reliable partner of the EU even after this decision and that it is in the interest of all parties to continue the proven cooperation in many areas.” The Austrians and Swiss agreed that Switzerland’s participation in the EU Framework Programmes, in particular the *Horizon* research programme, should be considered separately from the question of an institutional agreement and [...] is in the interest of the entire European research landscape.” The Austrians

showed understanding for Switzerland’s situation and assured that Austria would “work at EU level for the closest possible relationship between Switzerland and the EU” (Annual Report 22.017, p. 6).

The return visit of the Swiss to Vienna has now taken place on 4/5 April 2022. The focus here was on the implementation of the strategic partnership that the two foreign ministers had decided on in the summer of 2021.4 The two parliaments see themselves as “providing impetus for concrete projects, for example for a cross-border exchange in the area of apprenticeship training”. A happy thing.

¹ Report 22.015 of the Swiss Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly of 31 December 2021 https://www.parlament.ch/centers/kb/Documents/2022/Kommissionsbericht_NATO-V_22.015_2021-12-31.pdf

² The NATO PA is a discussion forum in which a total of 269 parliamentarians from the 30 NATO member states deliberate on security and defense policy issues. In addition, delegates from eleven associated states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, Austria, Republic of Moldova, Sweden, Switzerland, Serbia, Ukraine) can participate in the deliberations. Russia’s participation has been suspended since 2014. (Source: German Bundestag, NATO Parliamentary Assembly)

³ Annual Report 22.017 Report of the Delegations for the Maintenance of Relations with Parliaments of Other States of 31 December 2021.

⁴ “Federal Councillor Cassis on visit to Vienna: signing of a declaration of intent on the new strategic partnership between Switzerland and Austria”. *Federal Council media release* of 10 June 2021

Who is pushing Switzerland into NATO?

mw. In unison with some parliamentarians and journalists, DDPS head *Viola Amherd* demonstrated at the WEF in Davos that she wants Switzerland to be closer to NATO. After their meeting with NATO Secretary General *Jens Stoltenberg*, both had their say on the *SRF Tagesschau*.

Federal Councillor *Viola Amherd*, head of the *Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport* (DDPS): “Secretary General *Stoltenberg* clearly told me (that) if Switzerland wants closer cooperation with NATO, to whatever degree, that NATO is open and that Switzerland’s contributions are already appreciated today.” *Viola Amherd* did not elaborate on what “closer cooperation” should look like. Instead, she used questionable clichés: “For me it is clear that we do not want to be free riders.” *SRF*: “Sweden and Finland also wanted more cooperation at first, and now they want to join NATO. Will you also lead us into NATO, Madam Federal Councillor?” *Viola Amherd*: “That is not an issue at the moment.” (my emphasis; *mw*). I wonder if these tones are the result of DDPS chief *Amherd*’s recent visit to the USA? According to the “*Neue Zürcher*

Zeitung” of 14 May 2022, she discussed there possible “opportunities for even closer security policy cooperation” (*Weisflog*, Christian. “Die Schweiz gewinnt die USA für viele Jahre als zuverlässige Partnerin.” (Switzerland wins the USA as a reliable partner for many years to come).

In the subsequent interview with *Jens Stoltenberg*, the listener did not get the impression that NATO was pressuring Switzerland to join the war alliance more strongly, although *SRF* interviewer *Sebastian Ramspeck* went to great lengths to cast neutral Switzerland in a skewed light: “Some say Switzerland is a free rider for NATO. Is Switzerland a free rider?” *Jens Stoltenberg*: “Switzerland is a very valued partner. We respect its neutrality. It’s up to Switzerland to decide whether it wants to continue to be a neutral state or whether it wants to join NATO.” *SRF*: “German Vice Chancellor *Robert Habeck* says that he would like Switzerland to also supply military equipment to Ukraine. Do you see it that way, too?” *Stoltenberg*, however, was not moved to criticise Switzerland, but praised the Swiss *Kfor* mission in Kosovo, listed some well-known ex-

amples of closer cooperation (technological cooperation, cyber security) and added: “Always with respect for neutrality and for Switzerland’s decisions.” This did not stop the interviewer from asking the provocative question: “Would you like Switzerland to be in NATO?” *Stoltenberg* (energetically): “No! I have no opinion on that. It is extremely important to me not to get involved in domestic political debates.”

It remains to be seen whether the US-NATO bloc is actually satisfied with the already very close cooperation that has existed for a long time (contrary to neutrality!) or whether it would prefer to take over Switzerland completely. But the way in which Federal Councillor *Viola Amherd*, who was put on course by her visit to the USA, and Swiss television *SRF* are trying to completely undermine Switzerland’s already battered neutrality is “shameful”.

Source: *Ramspeck, Sebastian und Kohli, Andreas. “WEF 2022: Amherd und Stoltenberg wollen enger zusammenarbeiten” (WEF 2022: Amherd and Stoltenberg want to work more closely together). Interview in: SRF-News of 24 May 2022*

(Translation Current Concerns)

“Golden hands” – and what it takes to achieve them

Why vocational education must be properly evaluated

by Dr Eliane Perret, curative teacher and psychologist

“Noah, weighing 3520 g and 49 cm long», that’s how a young couple who are friends announced to us a few months ago the birth of their son, for whom they had been eagerly awaiting. We rejoiced with them. Of course, it was also on my mind – this can hardly be avoided in my profession – that they now had the task of introducing their son to the world. But into which world? That’s not only on my mind at the moment, but on many awake contemporaries’ minds!

A school – not like we had it

In the meantime, a few months have passed. Recently, the young parents told us that their thoughts kept circling around their son’s future. How do you think he will do at school? What profession will he want to take up? And much more. Thought far ahead but showing a sense of responsibility.

The mother fears above all that her child will no longer have guided lessons at school. This had already been the case with her. She had struggled with a weekly schedule and had to organise her own learning in the workshop lessons. They would have said SOL¹ – school without teachers (in German: Schule ohne Lehrer). “The teachers didn’t even correct the homework”, the young mother is still outraged and disappointed at the same time. The father felt the same way. He had learned to write late with fewer mistakes because he had been taught with a first reading course that was very common at the time, in which one was supposed to learn to read by writing independently with the help of initial sound pictures. “Yes, I learned on my own how to make a lot of mistakes when writing;” he says laconically. This affected him during his later school career and to this day.

Now the two are considering saving money so that they can choose their child’s school according to their own quality standards. “We want a real school where the children are guided, the subject matter is structured logically, the children can work on the subject matter together and form a class community. That is important for the teamwork that is constantly required today,” the father said thoughtfully.

Porsche and flowers

Despite their problematic school careers, the two had successfully completed a vocational education and graduated with very good marks. The father had even repeated a form. Nevertheless, he was able to complete an apprenticeship as an auto-



(picture caro)

otive specialist, and today he is a workshop manager in a garage. “Porsche”, he smiles and says, “the apprenticeship was a second chance for me.” Noah’s mother also enthuses about her apprenticeship as a florist. She enjoyed it a lot and was able to learn the many names of plants and flowers without any problems. In the meantime, she has a broad knowledge of botany, floristry and composition.

It’s not the intelligence – “Talent pool” under the magnifying glass

The two confirm what the Swiss educationalist Margrit Stamm² roves through her research. She had conducted a representative longitudinal study³ between 2005 and 2009, in which she took two cognitive performance tests at the beginning with 2706 first-year apprentices at 21 vocational schools in German-speaking Switzerland. 196 of the test persons achieved above-average scores and were subsequently assigned to the “talent pool”. They came from all occupational fields. Now they were compared with a group of trainees of about the same size who had performed with average results and combined into a sample. The result was a sample with two groups that only differed in their above-average performance in the intelligence tests. The test persons were now examined during their entire apprenticeship period. Interestingly, the “talented” ones, with the high IQ scores, only swung out at the top at the beginning of the apprenticeship. Towards the end, they were overtaken by the comparison group. From this, it could be concluded that bright minds alone do not guaran-

tee skill in the form of “golden hands”, as Stamm notes. What was it then?

Despite problem-laden school career ...

Unravelling this mystery was the next task, because in the top third of the newly compiled ranking list were 58 people from the “talent pool” and 61 from the comparison group. It turned out that 30% of them had only a lower secondary level certificate, 45% a secondary level certificate and 25% a progymnasium graduation. 23% had repeated a grade once, 10% twice, and 30% had been considered lazy at school. However, they excelled in characteristics such as work motivation and identification, stress resistance, diligence and perseverance, which were significantly more pronounced than in the other test persons. In addition, the working atmosphere of the respective training company was characterised by performance recognition, support, challenge, stimulation and training and also played a prominent role in the trainees’ performance.

... strengths, undiscovered resources and false attributions

In other words, Margrit Stamm’s study showed that when selecting trainees, the focus should be less on the negative characteristics of young people and more on their strengths and undiscovered resources. Otherwise, tunnel vision blocks the view on young people suitable for training and possibly discriminates against them through prejudice.

In our society, academic training is often valued more highly and associated with higher intelligence than vocational apprenticeships. The term “practically intelligent” is used (rather pejoratively) in connection with a craft activity and with good vocational specialists. This is wrong, however, because “golden hands” can certainly go hand in hand with a clever head, just as academics are not always of above-average intelligence, remain in the ivory tower of science and must have two left hands. Such attributions are therefore unhelpful. But what is it that makes young people ultimately experts in their profession, who carry out their work with “golden hands”?

Who is intelligent?

Today, a large part of research assumes that intelligence is not an unchangeable, innate quantity, but can change positively during the lifespan (which in turn is more successful in a supportive environment). However, the fact that different abilities are considered intelligent in different cul-

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“Golden hands’ ...”

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tures is usually not taken into account. For example, in other cultures, the ability to listen well, to have strong communication skills, to ask adults for advice or to be involved in community life is considered a sign of high intelligence. The intelligence tests used in our latitudes are therefore often criticised for hardly including such competencies and for having been developed exclusively on the basis of our occidental culture. The so-called culturally fair tests are also criticised as unsatisfactory because they would still falsify results and disadvantage minority groups.

No tunnel vision when choosing a career

There is still a widespread belief that academic intelligence is the gateway to career and life success. Many parents, and sometimes even teachers, mistakenly see a vocational apprenticeship as a second-class path for young people who are less successful in school and do not make it to grammar school. That is why it is important to get parents on board, because they are still the most important opinion-makers when it comes to choosing a career.

The aim here is not to play off academic education against vocational education and training, but to take a stand against tunnel vision with regard to vocational apprenticeships (which otherwise run the risk of being classified as a transit stage on the way to a university of applied sciences). Today, there is a broad spectrum of vocational training programmes that are demanding and attractive even for young people who perform well at school. And that’s where the often underestimated practical intelligence is in demand.

Practical intelligence – what is it?

If one is dissatisfied with the performance of a craftsman, it is often commonly assumed that he did not acquire the necessary knowledge during his training. Behind this is the assumption that knowledge is the only and indispensable prerequisite for skill and the ability to solve problems. This ignores the great importance of practical intelligence. For there are several steps between knowledge and ability or even expertise, without which it is not possible. Nor is it a matter of diligence and motivation alone. Nor does it help anything in practice to be able to talk about problems in a highly scientific way. What is crucial is a competent approach to real problems. According to Margrit Stamm, “Practical intelligence is not simply the manual dexterity of the less gifted, but the ability to apply specialised knowledge at a high level in practice.”²⁴

The long way to the certified specialist



(picture Caro)

If there is a problem for which a craftsman is called in, it is often only vaguely defined: The washing machine no longer works, the car engine makes a suspicious sound, or plants lose their leaves. The problem is only rudimentarily defined, more precise information is often missing. And now? If the expert called in wants to solve the problem, he has to grasp the situation quickly and holistically, relate his expert knowledge to the problem, think creatively about different ways and methods of solving the problem and run through them in his mind, choose the best solution and include experiences already made. This makes high demands, which a proven professional, starting from factual knowledge and rules, gradually acquires through intensive practice, reflection and observation, and which ultimately enable him to act intuitively in the right way, taking into account the most diverse problems. On his way to becoming a professional expert, he has acquired many things; this is often referred to as “tacit knowledge”, which generally increases with growing professional experience.

“Tacit knowledge” – a treasure of gold without which nothing works

People speak of “tacit knowledge” as the core of practical intelligence and mean by this the knowledge that every human being carries within him or herself and has acquired through every day and habitual actions, so that it is intuitively available. However, it is not about automatisms, routine or imitation. Rather, it is the knowledge that professionals acquire “incidentally” in their daily work, without always being aware of it. This knowledge, which is linked to action sequences, is usually acquired without the help of third parties, is linked to intensive and complex practice and training processes and often cannot be verbalised precisely. However, it is a golden treasure that is an indispensable part of practical intelligence and combines knowledge and skills.

“Golden hands” have made Switzerland great

With this understanding of practical intelligence, the classical models of intelligence experience an important supplement and expansion, with which a vocational apprenticeship is given the right weighting. Noah’s parents have succeeded and acquired the ability to deal successfully with real problems. They will also incorporate this experience into their education. Ideally, school provides a field to learn about this area and to give practical talents the opportunity to develop. But what about the fact that in recent years the relevant subjects have increasingly eked out a wallflower existence and have been reduced in favour of early foreign language teaching and media studies? Is this significantly promoted by *Curriculum 21*? How can a vocational apprenticeship remain attractive? The vocational competitions, in which Swiss participants have won many medals up to now, must not become folklore. This should be thoroughly rethought! “Golden hands are an important cultural asset that has made Switzerland great”²⁵, says Margrit Stamm. There is nothing to add.

¹ SOL is the abbreviation for Self-Organised Learning.

² Margrit Stamm was a professor of education at the University of Fribourg and today heads the research institute she founded, Swiss Education. Based on her research, she has published numerous books on education and educational issues.

³ The following comments are based primarily on two of her publications: Stamm, Margrit. (2015). *Praktische Intelligenz. Ihre missachtete Rolle in der beruflichen Ausbildung*. Dossier 15/2; (Practical intelligence. Their disregarded role in vocational training); Stamm, Margrit. (2017). *Goldene Hände. Praktische Intelligenz als Chance für die Berufsbildung*. (Golden hands. Practical intelligence as an opportunity for vocational education) Bern: Hep-Verlag.

⁴ Stamm, Margrit. (2017). *Goldene Hände. Praktische Intelligenz als Chance für die Berufsbildung*. (Golden hands. Practical intelligence as an opportunity for vocational education) Bern: Hep-Verlag. P. 26

⁵ Stamm, Margrit. (2017). *Goldene Hände. Praktische Intelligenz als Chance für die Berufsbildung*. (Golden hands. Practical intelligence as an opportunity for vocational education), Bern: Hep-Verlag. P. 95

The end of globalisation dreams

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer, Mittelstandinstitut Niedersachsen e.V.



Eberhard Hamer
(picture ma)

For three decades now, under the leadership of the WEF in Davos, paeans have been sung to the “one world” and the “overcoming of nation states”, the progression from a national economy to a global economy and an unlimited freedom of capital, products, services and labour.

In theory, this was correct because international exchange can be an advantage for all participants:

- Countries with low capital resources, low wages and cheap product prices offer cost and profitability advantages for international investment, which in turn helps them to build their own industries and thus generate economic progress.
- Conversely, countries with high capital resources, high wages and high product prices can gain economic growth at cheaper costs through foreign investment and imports.
- According to Ricardo’s law of comparative costs¹, foreign trade offers a cost advantage to both sides, and more foreign trade offers cost and wealth advantages to both sides. That is why the surge in foreign trade has contributed significantly to world prosperity over the last 50 years.
- But everyone knew that foreign trade is fragile, that it depends on all partners behaving fairly and not causing disruptions to world trade.
- However, economists believed that such foreign trade barriers could be removed through international cooperation, for example legal barriers to investment through *World Trade Organisation* (WTO) and investment country bans, and so forth.
- The USA claimed that it had to enforce the “freedom of the energy market” through sanctions against those countries (Russia, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela) that did not want to have their oil or gas marketed by American oil multinationals but wanted to keep the profits for themselves.
- Since the USA imports more than it exports and therefore has to accept increasing trade deficits, the FED was forced to increase the money supply in order to finance these deficits. In

the same way, the ECB was forced to permanently finance the deficits of the highly indebted European countries Greece, Italy, Spain, France, etc. – in other words, foreign trade was financed out of debt.

- Conversely, countries that achieve permanent export surpluses (above all Germany) have had these surpluses drained from them through forced loans (target crediting, “bailout financing”, indirect state financing of the central banks) (with the exception of China, which has accumulated dollar assets of over three trillion US dollars and is now frantically seeking investments for them all over the world).
- The USA is fighting the import of, for example, the European automobile industry with high punitive sanctions for alleged technical transgressions and in doing so, has subjected all companies and countries trading with America to American jurisdiction and its punitive options (example also: *Nord Stream 2*). Against more and more countries like Russia, Iran, Venezuela and against companies that did not want to submit to the American monopolies, ever harsher sanctions were imposed by the USA and its satellite governments, i.e., economic warfare was got off the ground.
- Since *Vladimir Putin* has been fighting the takeover of Ukraine by the USA, there has been the largest worldwide surge of NATO sanctions (i.e., the start of the economic war against Russia) through supply stops, financial blockades and expropriations of Russian assets all over the world. This economic war has already torn globalisation apart, split the world, cut traditional supply relationships, especially in raw materials, and plunged the world into the biggest recession in history.

Those who had previously trusted in globalisation are now suddenly the losers:

- Those who have invested in Russia or established stable business relations with Russian companies suddenly find themselves without these partners and therefore with supplier problems.
- Those who have shifted their production to low-wage countries – especially China – see their supply chains torn and even have to fear that China, just like the USA, will also sanction or expropriate foreign companies if the Ukraine war escalates.

- If foreign trade collapses, the export surpluses of, for example, Germany will also plummet, the prosperity based on exports will collapse.
- The international corporations are therefore already taking refuge in national investments in order to produce nationally again what they used to get cheaper from abroad, in order to get it at all.
- Medium-sized suppliers are also now realising that their world production has become uncertain, is causing them growing difficulties and that they have to create national alternatives.
- The triggered decline in global foreign trade and especially the decline in previous export opportunities means shrinking production and falling economic activity with all its consequences for investments, jobs, incomes and national prosperity throughout the world.

The regression from the previously globalised export boom to nothing but safe national production will be a difficult transitional phase of several years, could bring the dreaded stagflation, will in any case have cost-increasing and inflationary consequences from the declining exports and imports as well as from the increasingly expensive relocations of production, which will make the whole world poorer. How long the recession process lasts will largely depend on how long the US economic sanctions freeze world production and how the Ukraine war develops, whether it can be ended and overcome in peace, or escalates and becomes the third world war waged by the economic blocs.

So, we are facing a shorter or longer globalisation contraction – perhaps the end of globalisation altogether. The long feared economic crash² or recession will cause our bogus prosperity, based first on exports and then on massive fiat money multiplication, to collapse; the global world will once again become national and our bogus prosperity will sink back into real poverty.

Have the sanctions war-mongers and wealth expropriators considered or even only wanted to consider these consequences? •

¹ If each country specialises in the production and export of those goods that it can produce with the smallest absolute cost disadvantage – relative comparative cost advantage – this is an advantage for all.

² See also Hamer, Eberhard. *Was passiert, wenn der Crash kommt?* (What will happen when the crash comes?), Hannover 2000