

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

Russia has made a decisive break with the West and is ready to help shape a new world order

by Dmitri Trenin

“That said, the obvious necessity for Russia to now look beyond the West means it can probably overcome the historical inertia, the legacy of previous geo-economic priorities, and cultural affinities. With the West shunning Russia, trying to isolate and sometimes ‘cancel’ it, Moscow has no choice but to kick its old habits and reach out to the wider world beyond Western Europe and North America.”

Just before the G7 leaders met at Elmau Castle in Bavaria last week, their counterparts from the five BRICS countries held an online summit under the Chinese presidency. Russia had been discussed as a threat at the G7 gathering but was a key participant in the latter.

Long gone are the days when Moscow could straddle the divide between the West and the non-West. Following the 2014 Ukraine crisis, the G8 reverted to its previous G7 format; in the wake of the Russian military action in Ukraine last February, Russian-Western confrontation degenerated into a full-blown “hybrid war,” complete with an actual confrontation – if so far a proxy one.

Expanding relations with the non-West – a difficult but necessary task

Having tried, after the end of the Cold War, to become part of the new West, and having failed at that endeavor, Russia is now focusing on developing its ties with Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

This is both a difficult and a necessary task, for a number of reasons. First, there is a powerful inertia from the past. At least since the days of *Peter the Great*, Russian elites have looked westward, adopting Western ways of appearance and behavior (while remaining distinctly Russian beneath the garb and manners); adapting Western institutions (even if often only superficially); borrowing Western patterns of thinking (while creatively developing them, as with Marxism); seeking to become a great Europe-

an power; then, in Soviet days, a global superpower; and, more recently, a key component of a greater Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

This is a pathway hard to wean off from. Yet, now, for the first time ever, Russia is facing a united West, from North America, the European Union, and Britain, to Japan and Australia. What’s more, there are no allies in the West that Moscow can turn to – even notionally neutral states such as Finland, Sweden, Austria, and Switzerland, have all ditched their neutrality. Russia’s political rupture with the West is thus complete, and any new norm of relations between them can only emerge as a result of the “hybrid war,” which will take years, if not decades, to fight out.

Economic relations with the West – a phased-out model

Second, Moscow’s economic relations have been largely built with the West. Historically, Russia has been a resource for Western European industry; a breadbasket of the continent; and a major importer of industrial products and technology. Until recently, Russia’s trade with the European Union alone accounted for more than half of Russia’s foreign commerce, and Germany was the lead exporter of machinery and technology to Russia. Since the early 1970s, oil and gas pipelines from Russia to Western Europe have formed the backbone of economic ties and provided for general stability on the continent, even in the dangerous decades of the Cold War and in the turbu-



Dmitri Trenin
(picture Svetlana TB
in wikipedia.org)

Dmitri Trenin is a member of the Russian Council for Foreign and Defense Policy (SWAP) and was the director of the Carnegie Moscow Center. He also chairs the research council and the Foreign and Security Policy Program. He served in the Soviet and Russian armed forces from 1972 to 1993, including experience working as a liaison officer in the external relations branch of the Group of Soviet Forces (stationed in Potsdam) and as a staff member of the delegation to the US-Soviet nuclear arms talks in Geneva from 1985 to 1991. He also taught at the War Studies Department of the Military Institute from 1986 to 1993. From 1993–1997, Trenin held a post as a senior research fellow at the Institute of Europe in Moscow. In 1993, he was a senior research fellow at the NATO Defense College in Rome.

lent times of the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself. This, too, is on the way out, however.

The severe sanctions imposed on Russia by the US, EU and UK will not be lifted even when the actual fighting in Ukraine stops, and the painful experience of foreign exchange and asset seizures will leave a huge imprint on any future Russian approach to economic ties with the West.

Traditional foundations of Russian culture remain European

Third, in cultural terms, Russians have traditionally identified themselves with the rest of Europe. Christianity; the leg-

continued on page 2

"Russia has made a decisive break ..."

continued from page 1

acies of Ancient Greece and Rome; the ideas of French Enlightenment and German philosophy; European literature and the arts, music, and dance – all of this helped shape and form Russia's own culture, giving it a powerful stimulus for self-development. Despite the recent political rupture and the geo-economic shift, the foundations of Russian culture remain definitely European.

However, a number of elements of today's cultural scene in the West, particularly the dominant cult of individual self-expression, runaway liberalism that is turning increasingly oppressive, the erosion of family values and the proliferation of genders, jars with the more traditional cultural code of the majority of the Russian population.

Overcoming historical inertia

That said, the obvious necessity for Russia to now look beyond the West means it can probably overcome the historical inertia, the legacy of previous geo-economic priorities, and cultural affinities. With the West shunning Russia, trying to isolate and sometimes 'cancel' it, Moscow has no choice but to kick its old habits and reach out to the wider world beyond Western Europe and North America. In fact, this is something that successive Russian leaders vowed to do repeatedly, even when relations with the West were much less adversarial, but the Europe-oriented mindset, the apparent ease of trading resources for Western goods and technologies, and the ambition to be accepted into Western elite circles prevented that intention from turning into reality.

It has been noted, however, that people start doing the right thing only when there are no other options. And certainly, capitulating to the West is no option for Russia, at this point. Things have gone too far.

Overhaul of Russia's foreign relations ...

Beyond the necessity of an overhaul of Russia's foreign relations there are real opportunities to pursue. Since the end of the Cold War, the leading countries of

"However, a number of elements of today's cultural scene in the West, particularly the dominant cult of individual self-expression, runaway liberalism that is turning increasingly oppressive, the erosion of family values and the proliferation of genders, jars with the more traditional cultural code of the majority of the Russian population."

Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America have risen spectacularly in all respects, from economically and politically to technologically and militarily.

Even before the outbreak of the "hybrid war," China had overtaken Germany not only as Russia's principal trading partner, but also as the leading exporter of machinery and equipment to Russia. India, a traditional importer of Soviet and Russian weapons, is now emerging as a major technology partner for Moscow. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are Russia's principal partners in regulating oil output in the OPEC+ format. Turkey and Iran are major independent players in a key strategic region. The fact that the vast majority of non-Western countries refused to condemn Russia for what it is doing in Ukraine – many of them despite strong US pressure – is most encouraging for Moscow. In the sense that those who are not against us could be considered to be with us.

From Indonesia to Brazil, and from Argentina to South Africa, there are many dynamic and ambitious countries that Moscow is seeking to engage.

... with an appropriate strategy

To be able to do that, Russia's foreign policy needs to come up with an appropriate strategy. Above all, it needs to give relations with non-Western countries priority over the de facto firmly frozen ties with the West. Being an ambassador to Indonesia should be more prestigious than an ambassadorship in Rome, and a post in Tashkent should be viewed as more important than one in Vienna.

There needs to be an audit of potential economic and other opportunities for Russia in the BRICS countries, and a plan to work on them. Apart from economics, student exchange programs

should be expanded, and Russian tourism encouraged to move east, and south. The Russian media would be right to increase coverage of developments in the key non-Western nations, educating the Russian elite and the broader public about the economic realities, politics, and culture of those nations.

Source: *Russian International Affairs Council* (RIAC) of 6 July 2022; reprinted by kind permission of the author

Current Concerns

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

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative

Editor: Erika Vögeli, Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

Address: Current Concerns,

P.O. Box 247 CH-9602 Bazenhaid

Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50

Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

Subscription details:

published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, \$ 40,-

for the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, , Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of

SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, \$ 20,-

for all other countries.

Account: Postscheck-Konto: PC 87-644472-4

The editors reserve the right to shorten letters to the editor. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of *Current Concerns*.

© 2022. All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

“Worst are the lies”

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

She was born in Russia and has lived in Germany for a long time. The war in Ukraine is a tragedy for her. But she also does not expect anything good for the future of Germany and Europe. No one can really prepare for what is to come, she says. It is certain that the previous prosperity will suffer massive losses. She is very worried about the hostility towards everything Russian. “But worst are the lies,” she says, and she means especially the way the war in Ukraine is reported and assessed here in the West.

The concerns expressed by this woman should make us all think. They relate to the war in Ukraine, our dealings with her home country Russia, but also the future of the country she lives in today.

Those who witnessed the public event of *Robert Habeck*, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, in Bayreuth about a fortnight ago on the TV screen got a taste of what it will mean when our politicians demand more and more cuts and renunciations from the citizens, but at the same time there is a growing realisation that it is not Russia that is responsible for this decline, but that it is largely homemade, the result of a policy in the interest of a few, but not in the German and European interest.

The Western narrative

Yes, what will happen when more and more citizens realise that the monotonously presented narrative that all Western states – including Switzerland¹ – are engaged in a decisive battle for law, freedom and democracy, against autocratic rule, lawbreaking and violence, is revealed as a lie and bursts like a bubble? That in Ukraine (and elsewhere in the world) there is no “holy” war being waged for the values of the Occident, but that the previous, deeply unjust and Western-dominated world disorder is up for debate – even if the outcome of this confrontation is still uncertain today and no one can say for sure what lies ahead for humanity in the months and years to come?

It is very likely that the citizens, who rely only on our Western media, will continue to suffer their own decline for some time and try to convince themselves that all this serves a good cause, the cause of the above-mentioned narrative. Very likely it will look different for those who inform themselves more broadly and diversely. Even if the increasing censorship in our states tries to prevent exactly that. A censorship that aims to intimidate people so that they censor their

“Those who are open to the voices of the other side also begin to examine more closely, to research and develop truly viable answers. Last but not least: understanding the other side. Yes, understanding Russia is not an offence, but perhaps the only viable way to change course after all and not let the war escalate further.”

own thinking and also no longer dare inwardly to ask critical questions.

The “other” media also includes Russia’s media. It is not a matter of believing all that one sees, hears and reads there to be true per se – especially since the country is at war. But looking and listening with an alert mind is worthwhile. Not because you know how to see things afterwards. But because completely new questions arise, questions that are not at all a topic in our media, but which are extremely important in order to really understand what happened in our world in the 20th and present 21st century and why we are where we are today.

Understanding Russia

Those who are open to the voices of the other side also begin to examine more closely, to research and develop truly viable answers. Last but not least: understanding the other side. Yes, understanding Russia is not an offence, but perhaps the only viable way to change course after all and not let the war escalate further.

Understanding Russia also means getting away from the snapshot and thinking and researching historically.

What has happened that today – unlike in the years around 1990 – we can no longer hope for peaceful coexistence and an era of a world of solidarity, but have to acknowledge a world in radical upheaval with many distortions and full of dangerous conflicts? What happened that in December 2021 Russia almost ultimately demanded that the USA and NATO pay attention to its security interests? And, when this was in vain, intervened militarily in Ukraine. Convincing answers to these and other important questions cannot be found in our media. I wonder if more answers can be found in Russian media? One example that offers a number of answers is the four-part video contribution by “Pravda” entitled “Der unbekannt Putin” (*The Unknown Putin*) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcaiUZK7Sho>, accessed 1 August 2022), which is largely unknown to us in the West. In the Sovi-

et Union, “Pravda” was the best-known newspaper of the CPSU, after 1991 it had a chequered history, today it is a Russian medium among others owned by an internationally diversified joint-stock company.

The video has a total duration of almost two and a half hours. It was made shortly after 2010, the original Russian sound is translated by only one German-speaking speaker (which does not make it easy to distinguish between the questions and answers in the numerous interviews) and deals with *Vladimir Putin’s* reign from 2000 to 2010, but also goes back to the 1990s, to the time of *Boris Yeltsin’s* presidency, in its analyses of Russia’s problems.

“The unknown Putin”

The content of the video is not intended to be reproduced here. However, it is worth mentioning that processes are being discussed that are hardly ever discussed here in the West, but which are of great importance for further developments after 2010: The information war of the West, above all of the USA, against Russia started right after 1991, i.e., already during Yeltsin’s presidency, but above all with the beginning of Putin’s presidency. US officials and intelligence officers who sat in Russian ministries in the 1990s and helped determine the work of the Russian government and worked on the Russian legislative texts of those years. The attempts by the West and Western oil companies to exploit the country’s energy reserves for outside interests through a law on “Production Sharing Agreements”² and to make Russia pay for this exploitation. The attempts of Russian oligarchs with close ties to the West to take possession of core areas of former Soviet industry – only to ruin them by means of supposed reformers and reforms³ so that Russia would be reduced to the status of a supplier of resources – which the West needs. The attempts to dismember the country step by step from its external borders by means of nationalist movements and by means of separatism

Serbia must stand firm

by Živadin Jovanovic, president of the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals



Živadin Jovanović
(picture ev)

Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia (1998-2000), comments on the events.

cc. In the predominantly Serb-populated north of Kosovo, there was clear tension on the Serbia-Kosovo border on 31 July; ethnic Serbs set up blockades and gunshots were heard. In the following, Živadin Jovanović, former

where live majority of 130.000 Serbs remaining in the Province. Immediately before the ethnic cleansing 1999-2003 there were about 300.000 Serbs in the Province.

Serbia top officials reacted the situation provoked by illegitimate and illegal Pristina measures is the worst in decades, that the aim is to finalize ethnic cleansing of all Serbs and that Serbia will protect its nationals from being victims of yet another pogrom like the “Storm” in Croatia 1995. Serbia demanded the West powers to exercise their influence on Pristina in order to avoid the worse.

US ambassador in Pristina said that US government has proposed implementation of the Pristina measures should be postponed for 30 days adding that this does not mean that measures should be abolished.

My understanding is that US support measures of Pristina simply because they are the masters of NATO 1999 aggression, of illegal secession proclaimed 2008 and subsequent recognition by member countries of EU and NATO, as well as by some client governments. What is going on now is just part of concerted pressures of US/

NATO/EU against Serbia to implement sanctions against Russia, cut strategic partnership with Russia and China, recognize illegal, criminal secession of the Province of Kosovo and Metohija and accept membership in NATO. All this is part of the US/NATO expansion to the East and escalation against Russia and China. Serbia’s resistance to join antirussian sanctions and diplomatic successes, particularly in Arab and African regions, further improvement of cooperation with China may have played a role in USA/NATO/EU strengthening pressures and blackmailing Serbia.

Serbia has to remain defending sovereignty, territorial integrity, military neutrality and independent foreign policy. The status of the Province of Kosovo and Metohija can be resolved only within international Law and UN SC resolution 1244. Serbia shall not surrender or submit to geopolitics of those who are trying to compensate losses in Ukraine, or to strengthen negotiation positions before inevitable global negotiations on the new European and global post Ukraine World Order.

“Worst are the lies”

continued from page 3

(for example in Chechnya) and to destroy its ability to defend itself. The scandalising misuse of deaths and assassinations to pillory Russia and the Russian government internationally without any solid evidence, thus also diverting attention from key political issues. The building of an “opposition” in Russia that does not make any constructive proposals for the country, but does a lot to win the country’s youth over to its side with “events” and to weaken the country with attacks on its system of values. All in all, this is an attempt to decompose Russia over the years.

However, the topic is also the widely unknown efforts of the Russian government and especially the country’s president to counteract this in many areas – hence the title of the video.

All this and much more comes up in the video, came up ten years ago. And since then – I think most people in Russia would say – these attempts at decomposition have not abated.

In the search for truth

Is this all just Russian propaganda? The issues raised in the video are too serious to pass over with such defensive reflexes! Particularly at a time of a monstrous image of Russia as an enemy, there is a duty to seriously investigate the Russian point of view – if one wants to ascertain

“But every individual, every citizen, can make the claim to contribute to finding the truth with the means at his or her disposal – even if it is only for himself or herself and the people with whom he or she has to deal in everyday life.”

the truth. The truth, however, will have to be put on the table in order to overcome the current situation and start an honest new beginning in international relations. Even if we are still a long way from that at the moment.

In its issue of 19 July 2022, *Current Concerns* prominently featured South African Foreign Minister *Naledi Pandor*. Here, within one country, there have been irreconcilable positions for centuries, great injustice – especially by the country’s white elites – and crimes of all kinds from all sides. “Truth Commissions”, set up by the then President and Nobel Peace Prize laureate *Nelson Mandela* in 1996 – years after the end of apartheid – did not have the task of accusing people and bringing them to court, but rather to contribute to reconciliation through a publicly accessible debate that would serve to establish the truth and provide compensation to victims of injustice and violence.

Even though there has been much justified criticism of the practical implementation of the idea of finding the truth

– its work in South Africa was terminated in 1998 – the idea that rapprochement and reconciliation presuppose seeking the truth and also making it public is once again posing itself today: this time not domestically, but with a view to the present world disorder and with a view to the search for a new, real world order. Yes, we are still a long way from that and no one can say at present how the current struggle will continue and end. But every individual, every citizen, can make the claim to contribute to finding the truth with the means at his or her disposal – even if it is only for himself or herself and the people with whom he or she has to deal in everyday life.

¹ Numerous Swiss media commentaries on 1 August used this narrative to argue for a break with more than 200 years of Swiss history and now in this way for a rapprochement with NATO and the EU and thus an end to neutrality.

² cf. for introduction https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Production_Sharing_Agreement

³ In this context, the video refers to the book by John Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hitman* from 2004, which is also known in the West and is also available in Russian.

When the media give rise to fear and hate

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer, *Mittelstandsinstitut Niedersachsen e.V.*



Eberhard Hamer
(picture ma)

Since 24 February 2022, our media have been promoting hate propaganda against *Vladimir Putin* and Russia. Since then, state radio, television and the press have been drumming up hatred against Putin and Russia, demanding punitive measures, sanctions, arms deliveries and that our politicians should queue up for photo opportunities with *Zelensky*, as other NATO officials do.

The fact that this new propaganda hero had disinvited the German president from this procession because of his “former understanding for Russia” was not criticised as impertinent by the German media, but even commented on with understanding.

Those of our politicians who had previously organised cheap energy supplies from Russia for us (*Schröder, Schwesig*), have now been persecuted by the Atlantic-controlled propaganda as friends of Putin and Russia, i.e., as cronies of hateful people and peoples. Yet they only dutifully tried to pursue German interests and did not go along with the new trend of exchanging cheap Russian for expensive American energy in Germany, i.e., of sacrificing our previous cheap energy basis of prosperity to our own detriment because of commanded hatred against Russia.

Artists were dismissed just because they were Russian (music director in Munich) or were no longer allowed to perform (*Anna Netrebko*).

The hatred aroused by the media against Putin and Russia has now gone so far that even our excellently integrated Russian Germans are once again defamed, marginalised and insulted.

On the orders of the USA, Russian assets are now being expropriated by all NATO states, even private assets of Russian citizens. Corrupt *Zelensky* broadcasts his intention to use these assets to “rebuild Ukraine”.

The media combine all reports on Russia with vilifications filled with hate: they no longer speak of war, but of “Putin’s criminal war of aggression”, no longer of Russia, but of “bellicose Russia” and no longer of armies, but of the “criminal Russian army” on the one hand and of the “heroic Ukrainian army” on the other. Something negative is always added so as to fill the population with hatred.

On the other hand, the comedian *Zelensky*, who is omnipresent in politics and the world’s media, and his impudent ambassador in Germany have been hailed as stars, and their increasing demands for money and weapons presented as self-evident, while the German chancellor’s cautious hesitation has been presented as irresponsible.

In this, history has not, as *Zelensky* claims, laid upon us “a special debt and therefore an obligation” to participate in the war on the side of Ukraine. On the contrary, history should have taught us to exercise special caution before any participation in war, as did Chancellor *Olaf Scholz*. Mr. *Scholz*’s attitude of caution is the most responsible attitude of our current political leadership, namely not to let Germany get dragged into another war.

In a conference of the *Mittelstandsinstitut Niedersachsen* on the Ukraine war, two almost irreconcilable opinions prevailed:

- One side demanded further punitive measures against Russia because Russia had started the war and invaded Ukraine in violation of international law. Its advocates hoped that the punitive measures would either lead to Russia and Putin giving in or, like *Annalena Baerbock*, wished to “permanently damage Russia”, i.e., an escalation into a world war.
- The other side asked what business the war in Ukraine was to us Germans anyway, and did not believe that the war could be ended by punitive measures, but only by negotiations and de-escalation. German participation in the war was counterproductive, they said, as well as economic sanctions, as these caused the most harm to our-

selves (permanent increase in energy prices, halting foreign trade with Europe’s most important supplier of raw materials). They saw the more than three billion euros of German payments and the German arms deliveries for the Ukraine as a confrontation contrary to our interests and as a participation in the war that was far too risky.

This discussion afterwards brought into focus the question whether a government should be allowed to pay German money for foreign wars in foreign interests at all or whether this is a misappropriation of public funds, for which German citizens and payers are being asked to make sacrifices and are being deprived of more important state tasks such as the rehabilitation of our ramshackle infrastructure.

Despite a heated discussion at the beginning, it was at least possible to reach agreement on the following points:

- that the hatred stirred up by the media with moral arguments can never be justified, as its effects already show,
- that we may not neglect or even harm our own interests in the pursuit of foreign objectives (USA, NATO),
- and that it is also right in our long-term interest to exercise moderation like *Scholz* does, because at some point the war will be over and we will have to negotiate about supplies again with Europe’s largest owner of raw materials.

Why do our media spread hate instead of contributing to peace and promoting negotiations? Why do they support hate politicians instead of moderation politicians? What power directs these media functionaries to their hate campaign? But also, why do we put up with this? Why do voices of peace and efforts for reconciliation not have their say?

It is not in Germany’s interest if the war lasts longer, even less so if it “will last a long time”, as according to the USA’s ideas. Economically, Germany is already the biggest Western loser in the Ukraine war. The warmongers have imposed economic sanctions that are hurting us now and will hurt us more than Russia in the long run. •

Chemical weapons in Douma, Syria

The dangerous game with the truth

by Dr h.c. Hans-Christof von Sponeck



Hans-Christof
von Sponeck (Bild km)

Hans-Christof von Sponeck worked for the UN for 32 years. During this time, he worked in New York, Ghana, Pakistan, Botswana, India and was Director of the European Office of the UNDP Development Programme in Geneva. From 1998 to 2000, he was responsible for the humanitarian programme "Oil for Food" in Iraq as UN Coordinator and Assistant UN Secretary-General. In February 2000, he resigned in protest against the sanctions policy against Iraq. Hans von Sponeck has received several awards, including the *Coventry Peace Prize* of the Church of England, the *Peacemaker Award* of the *Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility* and the *Bremen Peace Prize*. He is currently working with *Richard Falk* on a book on UN reform, which will be published in 2022.

On 5 February 2003, the then American Secretary of State *Colin Powell* presented CIA pictures from Iraq to the United Nations Security Council, which were supposed to testify that the Iraqi government was still in possession of weapons of mass destruction. Statements by UNMOVIC, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, that there was no evidence of this were ignored. Six weeks later, "Operation Iraqi Freedom" began, the war led by the USA and Great Britain in violation of international law.

There is something similar to report about Syria, with the difference that here it is not a government that is providing alleged evidence, but the OPCW, the *Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons*, an international body based in The Hague.

On 7 April 2018, Douma, a city of 100 000 people located not far from Damascus, had allegedly been attacked with

"Any attempt by scientists and Middle East experts to discuss the findings on potential misrepresentations of the OPCW reports within the OPCW was boycotted by OPCW management and Western governments. Even in the context of the regular Syria debates in the UN Security Council, a discussion about this was not possible. This was not surprising; after all, the aim was to prevent the justification of the air strikes on Douma from being publicly questioned. The fact that such airstrikes were illegal under international law hardly mattered anyway."

chemical weapons. The OPCW subsequently dispatched a team of scientists, whose investigative report concluded that 43 people reportedly killed in the attack had probably not met their deaths from chemical weapons. Experts from the OPCW Douma team discovered that instead of this report, the OPCW management wanted to issue a fake report stating that chemical weapons had been used. This deception was prevented by OPCW scientists. In the end, however, the final report still contained manipulated accounts of the attack and unscientific conclusions regarding the chemical substances found, the toxicology demonstrated and the ballistics.

Furthermore, the OPCW relied on the testimony of only one of the two groups of eyewitnesses that had been identified. These were a group of Syrian refugees who had been interviewed in Turkey with the assistance of the *White Helmets*¹. The second group of witnesses were mainly medical personnel in Damascus who stated that they worked in the hospital at the time when victims of the alleged chemical weapons attack sought medical attention. The testimony of this group of witnesses indicated that inhalation of dust and smoke, rather than chemical poisoning, had been the cause of the patients' discomfort. These important statements were not referred to in the OPCW report. The report on the witnesses interviewed by the *White Helmets*, on the other hand, is highlighted in the OPCW report. These reproduced witness statements were accepted without possibility of verification, even though the statements were often contradictory, especially with regard to the issue of chemical poisoning.

Irregularities and blockades

Because of these various and serious irregularities, several OPCW experts wrote to OPCW Director-General (DG) *Fernando Arias* requesting that the official Douma account be urgently discussed with the original OPCW Douma team. The public became aware of this serious contradiction when internal OPCW documents² became public, and through statements by OPCW scientists who were part of the OPCW investigation team.³

Voices calling for transparent disclosure increased. It was demanded that all OPCW scientists involved in the Douma investigation be invited by the OPCW Director-General to conduct a joint review to eliminate any suspicion of report falsification. This did not happen, on the contrary. Whether in the UN Security Council, the EU Parliament or in talks with politicians, wherever he could, DG Arias emphasised that he fully supported the conclusions of the (manipulated) Douma report.⁴

Western governments, especially those of the United States, the United Kingdom and France, had carried out the airstrikes against Syria on 18 April 2018, and affirmed in the UN Security Council and in public statements that they were fully convinced of the professional credibility of the OPCW and its Director-General. They had declared these attacks as punishment for Syria's alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma. Left unmentioned, however, was the fact that the air strikes had taken place before (!) the OPCW investigation.

Any attempt by scientists and Middle East experts to discuss the findings

“Chemical weapons in Douma ...”

continued from page 6

on potential misrepresentations of the OPCW reports within the OPCW was boycotted by OPCW management and Western governments. Even in the context of the regular Syria debates in the UN Security Council, a discussion about this was not possible.

This was not surprising; after all, the aim was to prevent the justification of the air strikes on Douma from being publicly questioned. The fact that such airstrikes were illegal under international law hardly mattered anyway.

Even the participation of the former DG of the OPCW, Ambassador *José Bustani*, in a meeting of the UN Security Council was prevented under pressure from Western Security Council members, although he had been invited to make a statement. The reason given for the refusal was that “Bustani had left the Organisation ten years before Douma and therefore could not contribute to the discussion”.⁴ In his statement, which was eventually delivered by Ambassador of the Russian Federation *Vasily Nebenzya*, Bustani spoke, among other things, about the independence, impartiality and professionalism of the OPCW, and about the pressure exerted on the Organisation by “some” member states. He added: “If the OPCW is confident in the robustness of its scientific work on Douma and the integrity of its investigation, it should have nothing to fear in hearing out its inspectors. Instead, it hides behind an impenetrable wall of silence... and makes dialogue impossible.”⁵

BerlinGroup21 takes action

Due to the events around Douma described above, the *BerlinGroup21* (BG21) was formed at the end of 2020. This is a small group of individuals who aim to further inform the public about the controversy surrounding the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma⁶. BG21 published a “Statement of Concern” in March 2021, signed and published by 28 internationally respected individuals.

Signatories include four senior OPCW staff members, as well as former OPCW Director-General Ambassador Bustani, Lord *West*, First Sea Lord and retired Chief of Staff of the British Navy, and others with many years of legal, military, intelligence and diplomatic experience.⁷

This statement points to the serious scientific irregularities and substantive omissions in the OPCW Douma reports issued, calls for transparency, the hearing of OPCW inspectors and accountability of all parties. There is a warning that the organisation would be discredited if no hearing took place. It was also point-

“The public expects such leaders to be willing to expose injustice and to help depoliticise scientific knowledge. United Nations agencies involved in disarmament, mediation and the protection of populations lose their *raison d’être* if they do not take these basic obligations seriously.”

ed out that the OPCW handling of the Douma investigation could call into question the reliability of other OPCW reports on Syria. For example, the investigation into the 2017 attack in Khan Shaykhun.

The statement was sent by BG21 to all 193 UN and OPCW member states, the presidents of the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and the Human Rights Council. Secretary-General *António Guterres*, High Commissioner for Human Rights *Michelle Bachelet* and the Chair of the UN Commission on Syria, *Paolo Sergio Pinheiro*, were also informed and all were asked to comment. OPCW DG Arias was informed by letter.

UN and OPCW silent

The reaction of the multilateral institutions contacted can only be described as staggering. All the “political” parts of the UN, i. e., the General Assembly and the Security Council in New York, and the Human Rights Council in Geneva, did not react at all. Officials representing the “operational” UN, i. e., the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, did not react either. Only the head of the UN Syria Commission of Inquiry acknowledged the reception with a brief note that Douma was not one of the sites investigated by the Commission. The OPCW Director-General acknowledged receipt of the statement by returning the letter unopened (!) to BG21.

Taking a stand in a dispute over whether the OPCW’s mandate to investigate the possible use of chemical weapons in Douma may have been violated is unquestionably a difficult task for the Administrative Council of the Organisation. But it is also a challenge for the United Nations, especially for UN leaders such as Guterres, Bachelet, Pinheiro and Nakamitsu, especially as part of their basic responsibility is to work for peace and security. This includes the issue of weapons of mass destruction and thus what happened in Douma.

The public expects such leaders to be willing to expose injustice and to help depoliticise scientific knowledge. United Nations agencies involved in disarmament, mediation and the protection of populations lose their *raison d’être* if they

do not take these basic obligations seriously.

The significance of distorted OPCW Douma reports to legitimise Western military attacks in Syria weighs even more heavily when the information on Douma is assessed in a larger historical context. In the context of this article, the example of the neighbouring country Iraq may suffice to illustrate the dangers that arise for people, organisations and also for international law when the “Great Game” is systematically played with false cards.

Memories of Iraq

In the late 1990s, there was intense debate in the UN Security Council about whether or not the government of *Saddam Hussein* had fulfilled its disarmament conditions. Some thought Iraq had been disarmed, others, including *Scott Ritter* – one of the leading UN disarmament experts at the time – said that Iraq was, if not quantitatively, then qualitatively disarmed, and therefore could no longer pose a threat. After the entire UN disarmament team had been evacuated from Baghdad on 16 December 1998 and the office of UNSCOM with its chemical and biological laboratories, had been closed down, the “Operation Desert Fox” began, a bombing of Baghdad by the American air force lasting four nights in violation of the international law. Washington had previously informed at short notice the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan about this military operation. At the same time he had made the politically correct decision, to evacuate UN staff to Jordan, but at the same time to leave a team of 28 international UN staff from the humanitarian oil-for-food programme in Iraq.

This reference is relevant because in the months that followed, there was growing concern among UN staff in Baghdad about the possible dangers posed by the substances stored in the closed UN disarmament laboratories.

This was especially the Iraqi UN staff, who knew more than their foreign colleagues, since they had been undoubtedly in contact with the Iraqi secret service, the Mukhabarat.⁸

“Chemical weapons in Douma ...”

continued from page 7

After protracted disputes between different departments of the United Nations in New York, Kofi Annan decided in June 1999 to mandate the OPCW to send a fact-finding mission to Baghdad.

The mission was tasked with destroying the toxic substances in the chemical and biological disarmament laboratories. The fact-finding mission was to examine all the rooms of the UN Disarmament Agency in Baghdad, with the exception of rooms 252 and 253A, “since things stored in these rooms were belonging to a foreign government”!

It was no secret that the American government was meant. This restriction meant that UN staff members of American nationality had a privileged special status in the UN building in Baghdad. And this despite of the fact that precise disarmament investigations were to be conducted impartially and with the utmost scientific care. What an abuse of an international institution!

One must also ask why the United Nations had given the OPCW the sole man of destroying substances, such a narrow frame of reference, for its Iraq mission? Was this framework thoughtless or deliberate? Why was the UN not interested in the origin of the substances stored in the laboratories?

Dr *Amer al-Sa’adi*, an experienced Iraqi scientist who was not a member of the government’s Ba’ath Party, wanted the OPCW mission to know just that.

As representative of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, al-Sa’adi met the four OPCW scientists, three chemistry experts and one biology expert, at the UN building in Baghdad. When he heard that the experts had only come to destroy substances they had found, he said: “You are depriving Iraq of the last chance to prove that the VX was not of Iraqi possession, but was imported from outside!”⁹ To this day, this issue/question has not been resolved.

This important incident fits like a brick in the Iraq edifice that the U.S. government of the time was trying to build using repeated misinformation and destabilisation.

The primary goal was regime change to rid the country of its dictator.¹⁰ World-wide well-known is the feigned “evidence” that Secretary of State Colin Powell presented to the UN Security Council on 5 February 2003. He insisted that Iraq was still in possession of weapons of mass destruction, that were non-existent. Less well known is an American air strike in April 1999 north of Mosul, in which, according to a press release, Iraqi “radar and artillery installations” were alleged-

“Members of a parliament in Europe have requested a report on Douma. This has been completed in draft form by BG21 and will soon be presented to this parliament. This comprehensive and analytical report, based on authentic documents in the public’s possession, shows in detail how evidence was suppressed, scientific fraud and irregularities took place.”

ly destroyed. In fact, six shepherds and their flock of 101 sheep lost their lives.¹¹

BG21 demands clarification instead of intimidation

What does all this have to do with OPCW and Douma? First of all, it has nothing to do with a defence of the current Syrian government of *Bashar al-Assad* or the then Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein. *BerlinGroup21*’s efforts are exclusively about protecting the truth, scientific work, international law and the integrity of the OPCW and the United Nations. It is only for these reasons that BG21 has spent time and energy pointing out the strategy exerted by Western, especially American, policy regarding dictatorships in Syria and formerly in Iraq. This included in Iraq and still includes in Syria, besides the manipulation of facts, other ‘ingredients’ such as the following:

- Individual experts and groups are prevented from speaking in international and national fora and correcting misinformation;
- Institutions such as the OPCW and the UN are threatened with cuts in contributions;¹²
- Computers are hacked to hinder the exchange of critical information;
- Sabotage and operations are carried out under false flag;
- National minorities and opposition groups receive covert financial support;
- OPCW and UN officials are threatened.¹³

BG21 is fully aware that this statement will be met with harsh words and gloating from some sides. All those who work to bring the truth to light about what happened in Douma are accused of incompetence, naivety and venality, and of being stooges. However, this will not stop the internationally respected figures, who signed the “Statement of Concern”, from insisting on their legitimate demands.¹⁴ Members of a parliament in Europe have requested a report on Douma. This has been completed in draft form by BG21 and will soon be presented to this parliament. This comprehensive and analytical report, based

on authentic documents in the public’s possession, shows in detail how evidence was suppressed, scientific fraud and irregularities took place.

It is to be hoped that the OPCW management will take the BerlinGroup21 report into serious consideration by agreeing on a transparent and inclusive participation of all inspectors, who took part in the Douma investigation, in order to reassess the published OPCW report. •

¹ The so-called *White Helmets* operated mainly in areas of the Syrian opposition. As from Wikileaks contributions can be seen, the *White Helmets* have an extremely questionable reputation.

² *Brian Whitaker*, former Middle East Editor. “OPCW and the leaked Douma Documents: What we know so far.” In: *The Guardian* of 21 May 2019

³ e.g. in his conversation with the UN Secretary-General *Guterres* on 6 November 2019 in New York

⁴ *Journal for Foreign Public Law and International Law (GPIL)*

⁵ UN/S/Pv.8764 (5.10.2020)

⁶ founding members of BG21 are ambassadors *José Bustani*, former Director General of the OPCW; Dr h.c. *Hans C. von Sponeck*, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations and Professor *Richard Falk*, Professor Emeritus of International Law, Princeton University

⁷ see: *www.BerlinGroup.org*

⁸ Iraqi UN employees had to report to the Iraqi secret service at regular intervals report their work to the UN.

⁹ The author attended this meeting. See also: von Sponeck, Hans-Christof. *A Different Kind of War – The UN Sanctions Regime in Iraq*, page 230

¹⁰ The Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 states: “It should be the policy of the United States to support Efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq.” The law was signed by US President *Bill Clinton* on 31 October 1998.

¹¹ see: US European Command (USEUCOM) *press release* of April 30, 1999

¹² The American government pays 20% of the OPCW annual budgets.

¹³ US Ambassador *John Bolton* told DG *Bustani* during a visit to the OPCW in The Hague: “We know where your children live!”

¹⁴ On 12 May 2021, the German ambassador at the OPCW, *Guidrun Lingner*, declared in an international webinar with reference to the “Statement of concern” and the statements of the 28 personalities, including four German people, among others the co-founder of the German section of IPPNW, Professor *U. Gottstein*: “They are throwing mud again and again, even when clear answers have been given, [...] throwing mud hoping that something might stick [...]”

First publication: *IMI Analysis 2022/31* (June 2022); Reprinted with kind permission of the author

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

“National Interests – Orientation for German and European Politics in Times of Global Upheaval”

Klaus von Dohnanyi’s plea for a change of political course

by Winfried Pogorzelski

In his book published before the Ukraine war, the former SPD politician Klaus von Dohnanyi (born 1928), formerly active i.a. in the Ministries of Economics and Foreign Affairs of the Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt governments, pleads for an orientation of politics towards fundamental national and European interests. The European states, he notices, are too different in terms of their history and culture to be able to grow together into a homogeneous European Union, which in any case runs the risk of being instrumentalised by the USA for its world and power political plans. Europe’s most important real chance lies in becoming a competitive economic power. He took a critical stance on Germany’s current Ukraine policy in interviews.

Since 24 February, events have been unfolding at a rapid pace. The book already seems like a relic from times past, but it shows all the more which opportunities were missed and why, to make the world safer and more peaceful with different political decisions.

The nation state as a foundation, especially in the relationship with the great powers

Klaus von Dohnanyi argues for a clear commitment to the “democratic nation-state” (p. 149f.), because only this – in contrast to an association of states such as the European Union – is fully legitimised by free elections and the separation of powers. As such, he says, it is obliged to act with its institutions in the interest of the population; because it is responsible for their well-being and for ensuring that the chances of a secure future and general prosperity are intact. Be they democracies or dictatorships.

The great power that most influences the decisions on our continent and those of the nation states with its interests and political measures is the USA. They dominate Europe in terms of foreign and security policy, which has considerable consequences for the nation states: They are drawn into conflicts between the USA and other great powers and have to face the decisions that set the course, whether these are in their interest or not.

Traditional North American policy, he says, is to impose its system on other states as the only blissful one, without regard to history and mentality – be it with sanctions or military force – usually with the result that exactly the op-

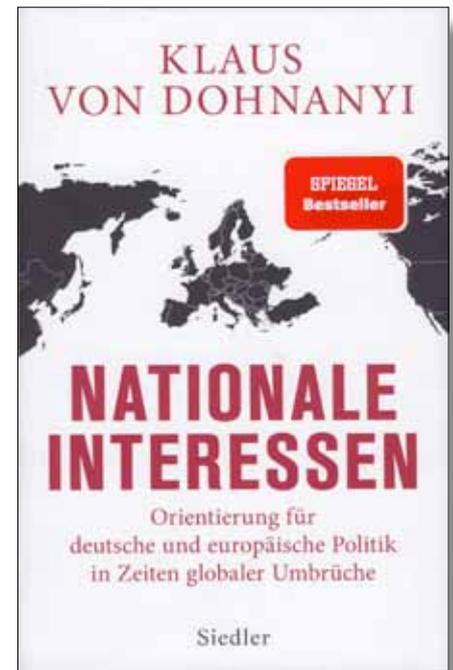
posite is produced of what one wants to avoid: a strengthening of authoritarian political systems. Here, too, the interests of affected states are not taken into account (p. 73).

For a good neighbourhood with Europeanised Russia

The author doubts that Russia has an interest in expanding towards the West; there is no evidence of this. On the other hand, he can understand that for Russia, NATO expansion to the East is “the most irritating issue in Western policy towards Eastern Europe” (p. 65), all the more so because the then US Secretary of State James Baker had assured Mikhail Gorbachev that he would refrain from NATO expansion to the East. This fact, as Dohnanyi demonstrates in detail, was the basis for the talks between Helmut Kohl and Mikhail Gorbachev, who, “on the basis of the US promise, gave” the West and “then also Kohl approval for monetary union – and thus for reunification –” (p. 67). US President George H. W. Bush disagreed with Baker and retracted his promise with the pithy words: “To hell with it. We came out on top, they didn’t. We cannot allow the Soviets to snatch victory from the claws of defeat and thus turn defeat into victory at the last minute” (pp. 68f.). For the author it is clear that the USA thus missed the greatest opportunity to ensure lasting peace in Europe.

Since 1990 and until today, the policy of the West under the leadership of the USA towards Russia has been confrontational without reason. Diplomacy, on the other hand, was needed to protect the security interests of Central Europe, Russia’s neighbour. Instead, NATO’s eastward expansion has been pushed forward, thus poisoning relations with Russia and dragging Europe into conflicts with other great powers (p. 72).

In addition, he says, the USA sees itself as an “exceptional nation” that feels called upon to push other countries and ultimately the whole world towards democracy in the conviction that this will make the world a safer place. Opponents of this imperialist policy were already confronted with Theodor Roosevelt (1858-1919), who roundly defamed them as “futile sentimentalists of the international arbitration type” who exhibited “a flabby type of character which eats away at the great fighting features of our race.” (p. 74).



ISBN 978-3-8275-0154-7

USA and Europe – a community of values with cracks

This policy is concealed by the much-vaunted Western community of values, which for Dohnanyi consists only of the common features of universal suffrage, freedom of the press and democracy. With regard to the responsibility of the individual citizen for his or her future, the extreme gap between rich and poor and the private financing of political parties, the differences are considerable, he notes. Even some US scholars speak of “plutocratic democracy”. And Presidents Bill Clinton and Donald Trump had been able to afford offences that, if committed by a German prime minister, would immediately lead to impeachment.

There are also serious differences when it comes to international law: “Because US citizens are obviously something better than the citizens of other states” (p. 77), Dohnanyi smugly remarks. The great power just refuses recognition to the Hague Tribunal and even threatens with sanctions if one of its citizens should be called to account. At the same time, it is not afraid to undertake one intervention after another in violation of international law. And one rubs one’s eyes: American law even permits the murder of persons (“targeted killing”) if they are seen as a danger to the security of the USA (p. 77).

continued on page 10

“National Interests – Orientation ...”

continued from page 9

Sanctions, i.e., economic warfare, are also part of the arsenal of US foreign policy. They are used when other methods seem unsuitable or too risky. Yet they are usually of little or no use, as Dohnanyi shows with the example of the Uyghur problem in China. On the contrary: the affected states react stubbornly, and above all the population of the affected states is harmed, which is why they are also illegal under international law. It is to the author's credit that he clearly states these facts, when at the moment all German politicians are competing to see who can make himself the fastest and most unconditional accomplice of US policy!

Is Europe protected by NATO or a potential theatre of war?

After Dohnanyi's astonishingly naive appreciation of the merit of the “non-European hegemon” (p. 90) USA in freeing Europe from outbreaks of violence and wars - most recently “through its saving intervention in the Balkan war” (ibid.) – he also names the high price, namely the loss of Europe's sovereignty through the USA's assumption of responsibility for the continent's security. In concrete terms, this means that in the event of an exchange of blows between the USA and Russia, Europe would be the theatre of war where nuclear weapons could also be used – without any risk to the USA, of course.

Thus, for the author, the question arises whether Europe could become sovereign as a military power, for example, to defend itself against the great power Russia. General *de Gaulle* had already envisaged a European defence power independent of NATO, in which France, as a nuclear land power and permanent member of the UN Security Council, could claim a leading role.

Today, Dohnanyi sees an obstacle to this concept in the diversity of Europe, which also consists of the most varied interests of the countries. A common security policy is possible, he says, but not a common defence policy. The talks initiated by *Angela Merkel* and *Emanuel Macron* with Russia were successful and led to the Minsk agreements. Germany and France – he recommends – should continue to move forward and pursue an active peace policy by remaining in dialogue with Russia in the interest of Germany and Europe.

Astute German or European Ostpolitik as security policy? Not at all!

Once again, Dohnanyi criticises the eastward expansion of the military alliance

under US leadership. In the meantime, he says, this policy had been criticised by such prominent minds as *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, security adviser under President *Jimmy Carter*, and *Williams Burns*, former US ambassador to Russia and current head of the CIA. These steps had nothing to do with an astute European peace policy for the good of the European continent. It would have been possible to offer Ukraine security even without joining NATO, that is via the two Minsk agreements. But Ukraine had not been moving on this issue for years, and the United States had never been interested in any progress in this process.

Klaus von Dohnanyi refers to the courage of *Mikhail Gorbachev*, whom the West should take as a model: there is a need for fresh thinking. At the end of 2021, he was still placing his hopes in the new federal government, made up of members of the SPD and FDP, whose task it was to “preserve a valuable common heritage from the 1970s and 1980s and to breathe new life into it.” “After all, both parties have a great tradition of successful Ostpolitik, which they could now [...] bring to mind. In doing so, the new government should convey to the U.S. that its ‘bridgehead’ on the European continent will be all the more welcome if the US pushes for a détente in relations with Russia.” (p. 111)

Dohnanyi anticipated the danger of the worst possible turn of events when writing the book. This turn has occurred, indeed, and all hopes have given way to total disillusionment: Germany's and Europe's once astute Ostpolitik is in ruins, and moreover, the new government – led by Minister for the Economy and Vice Chancellor *Robert Habeck* and Foreign Minister *Annalena Baerbock*, both from the previously pacifist Green Party – is standing toe-to-toe and blindly follows the US bellicose policy with sanctions against Russia and arms deliveries to Ukraine.

The European Union and its prospects

In addition, the author comments in detail on the EU and its structural and economic peculiarities. He states that militarily, the EU is neither able nor willing to play a decisive role by international standards. Therefore, the goal must be “a neutral stance towards any alliances” (p. 119). For those unable to defend themselves alone against a more powerful nation, the safest way is to refrain from intervening in conflicts of the larger nations.

On the other hand, the diversity of cultural, scientific and economic capabilities is unique in the world. Europe demonstrates strength and competence in terms of climate and environmental protection, while at the same time maintaining social

harmony. However, some economic indicators show that the USA and China are still ahead of Europe, e.g. with regard to the foundation of new large companies in the last 25 years; the *Economist* diagnoses that the continent has “lost its entrepreneurial ambition [...]” and “the most important reason for Europe's falling behind in global competition” is probably “a misguided policy of the European community” (p. 163).

In terms of foreign policy, the author especially focuses on Germany: The policy of “change through rapprochement,” as started by *Willy Brandt* and *Egon Bahr* and always rejected by the US, led to reunification under *Helmut Kohl*. This policy is still a diplomatic model today, not only for Germany, but also for the EU in shaping its relations with the world powers.

On the Ukraine-war

In the ARD TV talk show “*Maischberger*” (11 May 2022), the 94-year-old steadfastly resisted all attempts by the moderator to paint a negative picture of *Vladimir Putin*. With good reason, the latter had been insisting for a long time and again that Ukraine not become a member of NATO. The West, first and foremost the United States, imposed sanctions on Russia and turned a deaf ear. “What is important to you will not be the subject of negotiation,” has always been *Joe Biden's* attitude toward Russia. The possibility of preventing an escalation of the conflict had been clearly in the hands of the West, in the hands of the USA, which, contrary to all warnings – including from its domestic ranks – kept on disregarding Russia's interests and thus making the Kremlin's efforts to negotiate a dead end.

The book is highly meritorious: for the author is a responsible former politician reflecting on the future of Germany and Europe; he draws on his rich political experience, on his study of history and on his reading of publications by numerous experts and contemporary witnesses. He encourages the Germans to free themselves from political dependence on the United States and to work with partners on the Eurasian continent toward reconciliation and cooperation in order to approach the goal of stable peaceful coexistence and economic exchange. He hopes for “political courage and the patience to debate extensively” (p. 224), including and especially in parliament.

The elder statesman Klaus von Dohnanyi certainly thinks in longer-term time stages. So far, his wish has not come true; but every responsible politician is advised not to set his admonishing words at naught.

“Joining a war alliance through the back door is an abolition of neutrality through the back door”¹

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

Since the end of February, the Federal Council has been submitting to the command from Washington and Brussels and adopting one sanctions package after another against Russia. Many people’s heads are spinning because of the flood of “news” and “fake news” in the media and because of the shaky to un-neutral statements from Bern. Anyone who recognises the implications of this will feel wind and pain when they have to watch Switzerland’s credibility as a neutral mediator, built up over centuries, being thrown to the wind.

It is high time to pause. The debate on the content and meaning of Swiss neutrality is open: Bring back Swiss-style neutrality with a popular initiative or let the Swiss army participate in “Art. 5 exercises of NATO troops” according to the ideas of Ignazio Cassis, head of the FDFA?

An “internal administrative paper” is currently circulating in Berne, the draft of the new neutrality report that the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA has put out for consultation within the federal administration. The aim of the report is to “create the basis for a structured political debate on neutrality”. Among other things, it is to contain an analysis of various neutrality options, including first and foremost *Ignazio Cassis’* reinvention and favourite, “cooperative neutrality”. The Federal Council intends to discuss the report by the end of August and decide which concept it prefers.

Some newspaper and television editors “have the [so-called internal] report from the FDFA”, while everyone else has to pick out the details from the more or less informative media reports. So, let’s do it!

How the FDFA wants to drive Swiss neutrality into the ditch

Three patterns from the homepage of the FDFA²:

- The Federal Council wants to give itself (even) greater leeway for its desired further rapprochement with NATO: “If Switzerland would like to cooperate more closely with NATO in the future or supply weapons to certain countries, it must examine what leeway neutrality allows without violating the law of neutrality and losing the credibility of being perceived as a neutral state.” In fact, it is neither in the interest of Switzerland nor of the international community if the Federal Council is given a free hand – and

does not even realise that Switzerland has already violated the law of neutrality and lost its credibility with many states of the world community.

- “Has the Federal Council abandoned Switzerland’s neutrality with its decision of 28 February 2022 to adopt the EU’s sanctions against Russia?”

“No, not at all: Switzerland’s neutrality will not change even with the adoption of the EU sanctions.” The facts look different. For example, the Russian special envoy for Syria, Alexander Lavrentyev, recently spoke out in favour of “abandoning Geneva as a location for talks on a Syrian constitution because of the harsh Swiss sanctions against Russia. Because Geneva is no longer neutral”.³

- “Neutrality is not a rigid parameter, but an instrument of foreign, security and also economic policy that must be adapted to the prevailing political climate at any given time.” What nonsense! Firstly, neutrality is not an “instrument” but an attitude. Secondly, adapting it to the prevailing political climate would per se contradict the principle of perpetual (permanent) neutrality. Rather, neutral Switzerland must show itself to be as resistant as possible to external (and internal) pressure, especially in the most difficult situations.

“Cooperative neutrality”: arms deliveries and participation of the Swiss army in NATO war exercises

According to the *SonntagsZeitung*⁴, the draft of the neutrality report lists the cornerstones of so-called “cooperative neutrality”. Basically, “cooperation” with other states “that share values such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law” is to be intensified. This refers to the EU and NATO member states.

First cornerstone: The rules for arms deliveries are to be relaxed. In other words, “arms deliveries to war zones would still be prohibited. However, if partner states want to transfer arms produced in Switzerland to warring parties, this would no longer be prohibited.” And further: “Military flights over Switzerland for non-conflict parties would also be facilitated.”

Have the people in the FDFA forgotten that, in addition to the law of neutrality, Switzerland also has a strict *War Material Act* (WMA) (which was tightened again by parliament in September 2021)? Not only does the WMA prohibit the di-

rect export of military equipment to warring countries, but Switzerland also requires a declaration from the government concerned when war material is exported that it will not be re-exported (WMA Art. 18 para.1).

Second cornerstone: The automatic adoption of foreign sanctions against other states is to be stipulated: “Sanctions, including those of the EU, would be adopted as is already the case in the Ukraine war.” (*SonntagsZeitung* of 17 July 2022) Actually, the vast majority of the Swiss do not want the automatic adoption of EU rules ...

Third cornerstone: Switzerland should “cooperate more closely with the EU and NATO and, for example, conduct joint military exercises – even on Swiss soil”. *SRF News* shows the original wording from Cassis’ draft in the picture: “Cooperation can be strengthened in important areas, such as with a participation of the Swiss army in NATO Art. 5 exercises, or the hosting of exercises on Swiss soil [...]”.⁵

Oops, that’s hot! What “NATO Art. 5 exercises” are is explained by *Deutsche Welle DW* (foreign broadcasting of the Federal Republic of Germany): “The NATO alliance case is defined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949.” There, “the contracting parties agree ‘that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all’.” Each Party is to assist those attacked by taking without delay “such measures, including the use of armed force, as it deems necessary to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area”.⁶

What the team in the Foreign Department is doing is outrageous! For SP National Councillor *Fabian Molina*, for example, it is clear that the model planned by the FDFA is tantamount to joining NATO: “Joining a war alliance through the back door before you have come closer to the peace work of Europe, then yes, that is an abolition of neutrality through the back door.” (*SRF-Tagesschau* of 22 July 2022). (However, Switzerland should only come as close to the “European peace project” as is possible within the framework of our state system).

“A little bit” neutrality or none at all?

In addition to the “cooperative neutrality” prioritised by Ignazio Cassis, the

“Joining a war alliance ...”

continued from page 11

draft neutrality report lists two other options: “Continue as before” or “switch to a so-called ad hoc neutrality, in which Switzerland would decide on a case-by-case basis how to act. Permanent neutrality would be partially abandoned in this variant.” (*SonntagsZeitung* of 17 July 2022) In fact, the Federal Council has already ended up with such ad hoc neutrality in its dealings with Ukraine and Russia. To “partially abandon” neutrality is a contradiction in terms: either it exists permanently, or it does not.

On the homepage of the FDFA the option of “no neutrality at all” is even considered: “Switzerland would theoretically also be free to renounce neutrality. It has chosen this for itself and is not obliged to do so under international law.” That’s how far it will go!

Switzerland’s good services are inextricably linked to neutrality

According to the FDFA’s homepage, good services are “not the *raison d’être* [reason for existence, meaning] of Swiss foreign policy and they must never be a barren morality”.

Does Switzerland’s decision not to take part in wars and war alliances need a barren morality, Mr Cassis?

For former ambassador *Paul Widmer*, on the other hand, neutrality is an inseparable part of Swiss foreign policy and – particularly important – a peace factor: “Neutrality is by far the most important principle of Swiss foreign policy. It is the guiding principle in the major foreign policy issues. [...] If every state pledged itself not to start a war or to be drawn into a war instigated by others, then, if these principles were observed, there would be world peace. But even if perpetual and armed neutrality is practiced by only one state, it is a factor in peace.”⁷

Popular initiative to enshrine neutrality in the Swiss Federal Constitution

With Paul Widmer’s soothing words in mind, we make the link to the “Swiss neutrality” popular initiative, which a considerable number of Swiss people from different parties or without party affiliation want to launch.

The initiative text was recently submitted to the Federal Chancellery for (formal) preliminary examination. Its content is generally understandable and does not need to be explained in detail. A small remark: If this Article 54a is in the Federal Constitution, it should apply

Grain trade with Russia: His Master’s Fact Sheet

mw. According to the daily press of 25 July, the EU Council of Ministers “stated explicitly and in writing” that “agricultural commodities were exempt from the sanctions against Russia”. This applies to grain, but also to sunflower oil and fertiliser. Until now, “no commodity trader and no financial institution involved in the trade wanted to take the risk of trading in grain from Russia. The danger of being branded as a sanction breaker and fined due to the vague wording in the relevant provisions seemed too great.”

Why did EU leaders allow no grain trader to dare trade in Russian grain for five months, to the detriment of the world’s poorest? The buck was passed to the Russian president, contrary to the facts: He had only used the EU sanctions as a pretext to hoard his own wheat and thus drive up the price. «We are dealing with an ice-cold, merciless and deliberate blackmail of the weakest countries and people of the world by Putin,” said

Commission President *von der Leyen* in a slanderous and at the same time hypocritical manner – as if the well-being of the poorest people was a priority for her and the other EU leaders!

Why does Brussels so suddenly give the green light for wheat imports from Russia? The explanation is provided by a “leaflet” from Washington, which came out a few days before the EU decision and announced that “international trade in Russian agricultural raw materials – and also in Russian fertilisers – is permitted”.

So, the hegemon directs his vassals and the world’s hungry with a mere leaflet! Pride comes before a fall.

Sources:

Gyr, Marcel. “Swiss commodity traders also want to sell Russian grain”. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 24 July 2022

US-Department of the Treasury. “OFAC [Office of Foreign Assets Control] Food Security Fact Sheet: Russia Sanctions and Agricultural Trade”. 14 July 2022

again and actually be a matter of course for every Swiss – armed neutrality (that is, an army that is capable of defending the country), military cooperation only in the event of an (imminent) military attack on Switzerland, no participation in wars of other countries (not even with arms deliveries), no sanctions against belligerent states (for exceptions, see paragraph 3), use of perpetual neutrality for the performance of good offices.

FC Art. 54a Swiss neutrality

1 *Switzerland is permanently armed and neutral.*

2 *It does not join any military or defensive alliance. Cooperation is reserved in the event of a military attack on Switzerland or its preparatory actions.*

3 *It does not take part in military conflicts between third countries and does not impose sanctions on warring states. Obligations towards the UN as well as measures to prevent the circumvention of measures taken by other states are reserved rights.*

4 *It uses its perpetual neutrality to prevent and resolve conflicts and is available as a mediator.*

Why is it even necessary to include this article in the Federal Constitution? Because the substantive form of neutrality

has not yet been included in the constitution. Article 173, paragraph 1a states as the duty of the Federal Assembly: “Taking measures to safeguard external security and the independence and neutrality of Switzerland..” The Federal Council has the same duty in accordance with Art. 185 para. 1. Up until around 25 years ago, it was not necessary to define Swiss neutrality more precisely. But since Switzerland joined the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) – without a referendum! – the substantive anchoring of neutrality in the constitution is pending, and after the Federal Council decisions on the Ukraine crisis that were contrary to neutrality, it has become even more urgent. •

¹ National Councilor *Fabian Molina* (SP ZH) in the *SRF Tagesschau* of 22 July 2022

² Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA. “Questions and answers on Switzerland’s neutrality” of 18 May 2022; <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/das-eda/aktuell/newsuebersicht/2022/03/neutralitaet.html>

³ Bausch, Saya and Ramirez, Manuel. “Questioned neutrality. Will Geneva be weakened as an international conference location?” In: *Tagesschau SRF* from 20 June 2022

⁴ Schmid, Adrian. “Cassis wants to realign Swiss neutrality”. In: *SonntagsZeitung* of 17 July 2022

⁵ Rhyn, Laryssa. “Switzerland: What is ‘cooperative neutrality’?” In: *SRF News* from 22 July 2022

⁶ <https://www.dw.com/de/deutschland-und-artikel-5-des-nato-vertrages/a-273717>

⁷ Widmer, Paul. *Swiss foreign policy. From Charles Pictet de Rochemont to Edouard Brunner.* Zurich 2014, p. 24f.

Switzerland's neutrality – “not imposed from outside, but the result of its internal composition”

Good offices and neutrality are mutually dependent –
the Swiss model as a peace model for the world

by Thomas Schaffner, historian

Switzerland's good offices, not only through the ICRC and the Red Cross Societies, go hand in hand with Swiss neutrality. What is more, the two characteristics of modern Switzerland are mutually dependent: without neutrality, there is no basis for an impartial commitment to people around the world; without the Good Offices, neutrality policy remains stale and soulless. It was at the time of the French-German war of 1870/71 that Switzerland first demonstrated to the world how it was willing to complement its neutrality policy with humanitarian services in a war. And this commitment also had a face: Johann Konrad Kern (1808–1888) from Berlingen, Canton of Thurgovia, who not only held out at the risk of his life in shelled Paris and worked in a humanitarian way, but also recorded fundamental thoughts on how people could live together peacefully in the future: beyond nationalistic egoism, according to the model of the federally structured nation of will, Switzerland. A curriculum vitae and ideas that must not be left out of today's debate on Swiss neutrality and the future of the Good Offices, since looking back into history always means looking ahead.

He was considered the eighth Federal Councillor and was the Swiss ambassador in Paris from 1857 to 1883. It was there that Johann Konrad Kern took over the foreign interests of other states for Switzerland for the first time in the French capital, which was surrounded by the Germans in 1870/71, and thus founded the so-called Good Offices, the “political substitute offered by a small state”, as the long-time Swiss diplomat and university lecturer Paul Widmer calls it.¹

“Kern had the mandate to care for thousands of Bavarians and Badenians in Paris. This was the beginning of the ‘good offices’ in Swiss diplomacy. Kern ‘set an impeccable precedent for a secondary area of Swiss diplomacy’, Widmer emphasises.”

Neutrality necessarily goes hand in hand with human commitment

ts. In his text on Johann Konrad Kern, the Swiss diplomat Paul Widmer points out that his political legacy from the “Political Memoirs” of 1887 was printed by the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”. This was towards the end of the Second World War, when Swiss neutrality was once again strongly contested. And he says: “The content of the statements seemed dewy fresh, 60 years after they were written.” Kern's thoughts still seem dewy today, 135 years later:

“Switzerland's neutrality is not a law imposed on us by foreign countries, it is rather the consequence of its composition and its internal organisation. That is why Switzerland preserved the special character of its neutrality in this war [the Franco-German War of 1870/71].

By remaining neutral, however, it was not an idle spectator in the struggle of the two peoples. By its diplomatic intervention in favour of the adoption of an additional article to the *Geneva Conventions*, by sending a large number of doctors to the battlefields, by the care in which it took the wounded of the two belligerents, and by the help and protection which it brought at the same time to the Germans expelled from France and to the population of Strasbourg, it showed that it knew how to fulfil the duties of a neutral state not only with loyalty but with humanity.”

Kern, Johann Conrad. *Politische Erinnerungen 1833 bis 1883. (Political Memoirs 1833 to 1883) Frauenfeld 1887. p. 226ff, cit. after Widmer, p. 138*

Kern would not have been able to put his life at the service of humanity without the support of his wife, the wealthy Aline Freyenmuth, who grew up at Frauenfeld Castle as the daughter of the councillor and state treasurer Johann Konrad Freyenmuth. An obituary of the “noble woman” noted: “Based entirely on Pestalozzi's principles and also sharing his love for fellow human beings, she wanted to give the poor more than just a few mechanical skills to get through life: education, upbringing, moral feeling, moral strength and all that in heartfelt love.”

Already a star negotiator in the Neuchâtel dispute

As a liberal, Kern was a prominent figure in cantonal and federal politics from the 1830s onward. For example, he was instrumental in drafting the text propos-

als for the new Federal Constitution of 1848. As a reward for his commitment, the new Federal Assembly elected him chargé d'affaires in Vienna. There he experienced the 1848 revolt and with his own eyes the lynching of the Austrian Minister of War. Kern, who had only suspended his duties in Switzerland, immediately returned to his homeland. There he turned down a candidacy for the office of Federal Councillor, which they were eager to give him.

The zenith of his work were the years of legation in Paris (1857–1883). As an old Thurgovian acquaintance of the current French Emperor Louis Napoleon III, he had already gained his favour as a neutral mediator in two disputes, and especially in the so-called Neuchâtel dispute of 1856/57 he rose to become a real star mediator in the Swiss Confederation. The negotiations between the major European powers on the status of Neuchâtel had lasted two months, with Kern right in the middle. The great powers had never conferred longer on a federal dispute. In the end, despite the fact that the Prussians initially mobilized the military to protect their traditional possession of Neuchâtel, they relinquished their rights to the principality altogether.

continued on page 14

“Switzerland’s neutrality...”

continued from page 13

Against bombing Paris population

In 1857, the Kern couple moved to Paris, where Kern always had direct access to the emperor, his old acquaintance. Thus, he succeeded in resolving a territorial dispute between France and Switzerland in Dappental in the Jura, but more important was the economic agreement of 1864, the first comprehensive economic agreement in Swiss history. “With its free-trade principles, this treaty helped the Swiss export business achieve a breakthrough in France and overseas,” Widmer says.²

When the French-German war of 1870 was brewing, Kern mediated on his own initiative, but events came to a head after *Bismarck’s* forged *Ems dispatch*, which fatally snubbed France. As is well known, Bismarck needed the war for his work of German unification – without war, the southern German states could not have been forced under the Prussian thumb. When German troops surrounded Paris at the end of September 1870 and bombed the city centre for weeks, Kern persevered and, as doyen of the diplomatic corps, appealed to Bismarck to stop the flagrant violation of international law. This forbade waging war against the civilian population; moreover, the occupying power should have allowed foreigners to escape to safety. Bismarck rejected Kern’s request, saying, after all, that the French troops had barricaded themselves in the city and were shelling the German lines as if from a fortress. Kern’s attempt to mediate in the peace negotiations be-

“Alliances with foreign powers had only ever harmed Switzerland. True neutrality still means staying out of foreign affairs. And importantly, one should oppose nationalism, because above culture and peoples there is the human nature, which is common to all people.”

tween France and Germany, which the Federal Council had asked him to do, was also harshly shot down by Bismarck: “You neutrals have no business interfering.”

Even if Kern was unsuccessful in „big politics”, he earned great merits in the humanitarian field. “Not only did he work tirelessly on behalf of his compatriots, but he also demonstrated for the first time how Switzerland could complement its policy of neutrality with humanitarian services during a war,” Widmer says in praise of Kern’s selfless commitment which was not without danger.³ “Large-scale actions such as the distribution of love parcels for the trapped Swiss in Paris, the evacuation of the civilian population from besieged Strasbourg and especially the internment of the oppressed Bourbaki army anchored the idea of a humanitarian mission deeply in the Swiss self-image.”⁴

“Active participation in the suffering of their neighbouring peoples”.

This was the beginning of what has shaped Swiss foreign policy ever since: the combination of humanitarian action and neutrality. The intention was not only to stay out of foreign affairs, i.e., wars, but also

to show “active participation in the suffering of neighbouring peoples”, as it was now put in a Federal Council message. After all, “the common human nature” was above all human differences. This view did not come out of nowhere. Shortly before, *Henry Dunant* had written his memoirs of the battle of Solferino and the Red Cross movement was founded, as was the ICRC. The fact that the latter happened under the leadership of a high-ranking military officer, General *Dufour*, is also a typically Swiss act: Man is first and foremost a fellow human being and a citizen, even in uniform.

When the Paris Commune, which had taken control of Paris after the lost war, was bloodily put down by the French General *Mac-Mahon* – Mac-Mahon had 2,000 communards shot on the spot alone – Kern tried to ensure that at least the Swiss participants in the Commune were not deported to the galleys. He even sought out collective camps and got the Swiss prisoners out. His wife had selflessly nursed the sick in a hospital he had founded in Paris, through all the turmoil, in the best tradition of the common good orientation of

continued on page 15

Johann Konrad Kern (1808–1888)

Johann Konrad Kern studied theology in Basel from 1826 to 1830 and law in Basel, Berlin and Heidelberg. He was a member of the Swiss Zofingerverein, a member of the Thurgau cantonal parliament from 1832 to 1853 and nine times president of the cantonal parliament. From 1832 to 1852 member of the Education Council. 1837 to 1850 chief justice and president of the cantonal justice commission. 1849–1853 member of the Thurgau cantonal government. 1850-1858 Founder and President of the Thurgau Mortgage Bank. 1837-1840 and 1850-1853 he was president of the Thurgau charitable society, spiritus rector of the Thurgau cantonal school founded in 1853.

At the national level, Kern was the representative of his canton in the Federal Diet in 1833-1838, 1840-1842, 1845-1848, where he co-led the liberal ma-



jority in the *Federal Diet of Switzerland* (“Tagsatzung”). 1847 Member of the so-called Siebner Commission to resolve the Sonderbund conflict, which then pro-

posed armed action against the Sonderbund. Then editor of the Federal Constitution of 1848, first President of the Federal Supreme Court, member of the National Council (1848–1854) and the Council of States (1855–1857), President of the National Council 1850/1851, President of the Swiss School Board, co-founder of the *Federal Institute of Technology* in Zurich and from 1853–1857 Director and member of the Board of Directors of the *Swiss North-East Railway Company*. He always declined election to the Federal Council. From 1857 to 1883 he served as Swiss envoy in Paris. Kern is considered the founder of Swiss professional diplomacy.

Sources:

Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz. <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/004072/2008-10-14/>
https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Konrad_Kern

Good offices

“Switzerland’s good offices are a long-standing tradition and play a key role in Swiss peace policy. Switzerland can build bridges where others are prevented from doing so, because it does not belong to any power bloc and does not pursue a hidden agenda.”

Source: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/dfa/foreign-policy/human-rights/peace/switzerland-s-good-offices.html>

“Switzerland’s neutrality...”

continued from page 14

wealthy Swiss women. Kern also had the mandate to care for thousands of Bavarians and Badenians in Paris. This was the beginning of the “good offices” in Swiss diplomacy. Kern “set an impeccable precedent for a secondary area of Swiss diplomacy”, Widmer emphasises.⁵ Kern always unconditionally stood up for neutrality, as early as 1848, when important Swiss politicians wanted to come to the military aid of the people of Sardinia-Piemont in violation of neutrality on the grounds that neutrality only applied to princely families, but never to peoples who wanted their freedom. Kern argued this. Alliances with foreign powers had only ever harmed Switzerland. True neutrality still means staying out of foreign affairs. And importantly, one should oppose nationalism, because above culture and peoples there is the human nature, which is common to all people. Switzerland, with its peaceful coexistence of four different language groups, should show Europe the way. The future belongs to the “Willensnation” (nation based on a common political will), not to ethnically homogeneous, nationally charged nation states.

Switzerland’s neutrality in the interest of civilisation as a whole

The Federal Council and Kern recognised early that neutrality was not only the fruit of foreign policy wisdom, but also a domestic political necessity that held the country together. It could easily have broken up if the various regions of the country had wanted to join the large nation states of Germany, France and Italy. Thus, in connection with the Franco-German War, the national government formulated: “Switzerland’s policy of neutrality is therefore basically not a law imposed on it from outside, but to a much greater degree the result of its internal composition.”⁶ During the First World War, *Carl Spitteler* had put his finger on this still fes-

“Switzerland, with its peaceful coexistence of four different language groups, should show Europe the way. The future belongs to the ‘Willensnation’ (nation based on a common political will), not to ethnically homogeneous, nationalistically charged nation states.”

tering wound with his speech “Our Swiss Standpoint”, despite admonitions from the Federal Council.

Kern’s conviction that neutrality, especially for Switzerland, was in the interest of civilisation as a whole, as a model of peace that bridged the divides between peoples and emphasised the commonality of human nature, must not be forgotten in the current discussion about the future direction of Switzerland. Although many things have changed since his death, the human nature to which he repeatedly referred has remained the same.

¹ Widmer, Paul. *Schweizer Aussenpolitik*. (Swiss Foreign Policy) Zurich 2003. p. 98

² Widmer, p. 112

³ Widmer, p. 130

⁴ Widmer, p. 130

⁵ Widmer p. 133

⁶ cit. after Widmer, p 136

Literature:

Kern, Johann Conrad. *Political Memoirs 1833 to 1883*. Frauenfeld 1887

Schoop, Albert. *History of the Canton of Thurgau*. Frauenfeld 1987

Widmer, Paul. *Schweizer Aussenpolitik*. Zurich 2003

Wüthrich, Marianne. “Neutrality as the compass, direct democracy as the basis”. In: *Current Concerns* No. 17 of 7 August 2019.

Wüthrich, Marianne. “Foreign policy in the young federal state: linking neutrality and humanitarian activity”. In: *Current Concerns* No. 17 from 7 August 2019

Guggenhürli



Guggenhürli, summer residence of Konrad Kern. (picture ts)

ts. *Konrad Kern’s* summer residence in Frauenfeld, called Guggenhürli, was brought into their marriage by his wife *Aline*. The name comes from “Guggen” (look, see) and from the Old German term “Höra”; (small hill), which provides a view. In 1963, the cooperation founded especially for this purpose, *Guggenhürli* saved the dilapidated house and

created a small exposition about the couple Kern. A small room which is used for civil weddings, is said to be among the 50 most beautiful places to be married in Switzerland. The *Guggenhürli Cooperation* cultivates a small vineyard at the foot of the hill. The Müller-Thurgau wine which is appreciated far and wide not only by bridal couples.

The fable says openly what other texts (must) conceal

“The Wolf and the Lamb – the law of might is right” (La Fontaine)

by Peter Küpfer

“A thirsty little lamb is feeding at a clear brook. Suddenly a wolf appears, furious.

How dare you, roars the hungry beast of prey, wade around here in my watering hole and muddy the water for me, me of all people!

But, Your Highness, interjects the sheep, how could that be? Your Majesty will be so kind as to consider: I am standing much further down the stream than Your Royal Highness, so I can’t possibly ...

What there, interrupts the beast, I see what I see. Anyway: last year you insulted me publicly, with your unwashed mouth.

I, reviled you? How say your Majesty – last year? I wasn’t even born then.

If it wasn’t you, it was your brother!
I have no brother.

Then it was another rascal, one of you over there, from your clan. I know you already. You won’t leave me alone. You’re always after me, you scum, the whole bloody lot of you. I have no life any more, you and your shepherds, with your sticks and bloodthirsty dogs. I know, I’ve been told everything, I’ve had enough. I must take revenge on you!

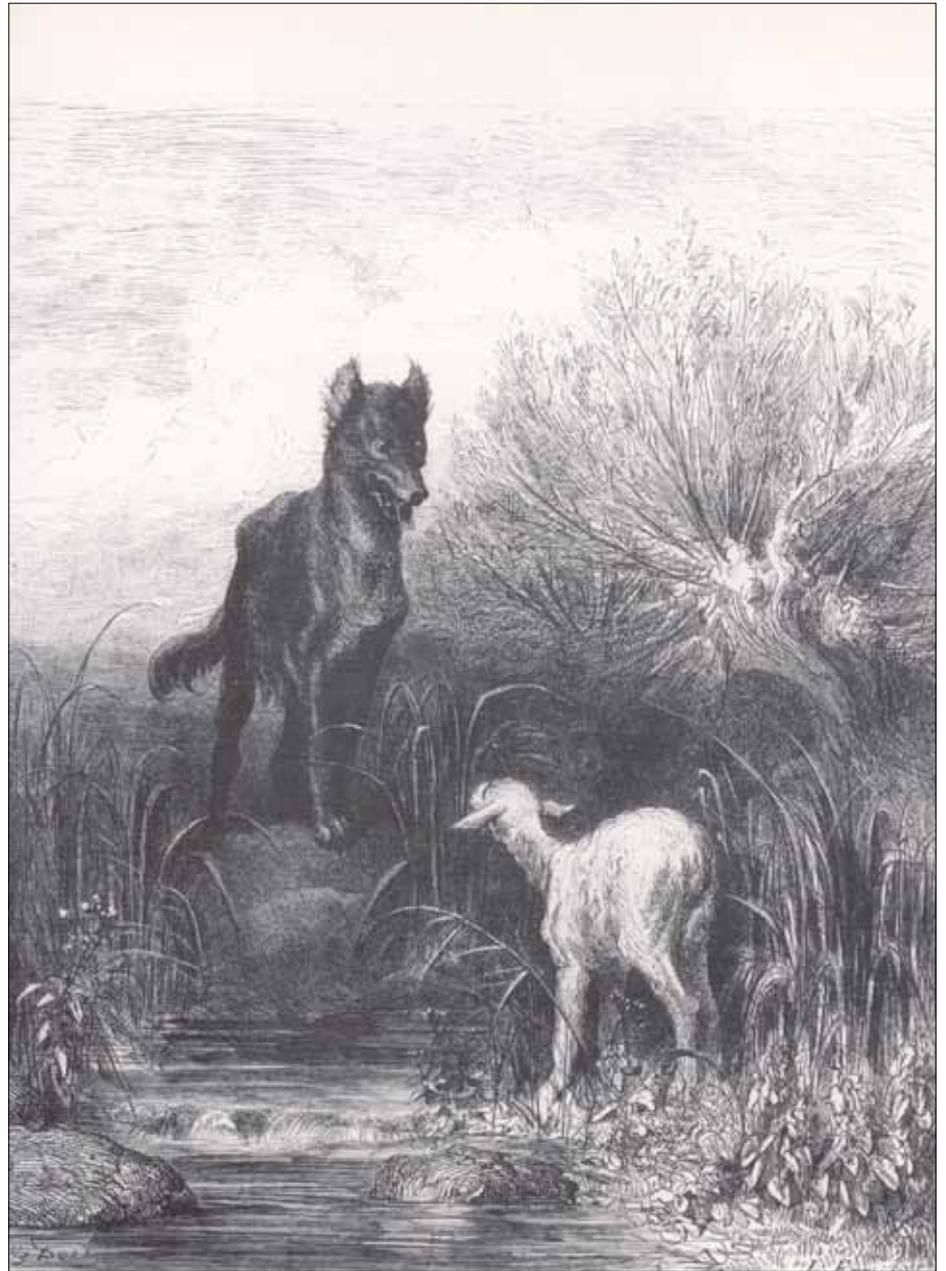
Having said this, he grabs the poor lamb and drags it into the forest. There he makes short work of it. He kills it and eats it up entirely, to its bare bones.”

(La Fontaine, *The Wolf and the Lamb*, retold from the original French text)

This is one of La Fontaine’s master fables (*Fables I, X, Le loup et l’agneau* – The Wolf and the Lamb). It always gets under my skin anew, despite or perhaps because of its cool, cuttingly matter-of-fact language, and this in the face of a crying injustice. In the French original, in the master’s polished verse and in his inimitable brevity (in La Fontaine, every word counts), it is unrivalled. And all the more outrageous is its content.

Intent to kill

Nothing helps here against the intention to kill that was there from the beginning. A similar feeling of bewilderment sets in as, for example, when we read today’s UN reports on what has been going on for decades in other parts of our world, what has been happening again and again, with regard to injustice and crimes against humanity. These reports are available in the archives of the UN, in reams and piles and stacks; they trouble no-one there. They meticulously describe



*The Wolf and the Lamb. Illustration by Gustave Doré.
(picture Gustave Doré. Fables de La Fontaine, p. 21)*

the war atrocities taking place every day on the hundreds of currently ongoing crises and so-called “civil war” fronts in our war-ravaged world. The very language of these reports, which are supposed to be “objective”, often breathes the systematic lie hidden in them: “civil war”, “rebellion”, “rebel troops”. In reality, these are often wars created from outside, so-called proxy wars, fought precisely not by citizens but by mercenary armies acting on orders that come from elsewhere, miles away. These are wounds and poorly healing, often permanent scars on our

globe. In the investigative reports mentioned above, acts, places, times, circumstances, even names are also mentioned, page after page, in hard-to-bear enumerative factual language, and behind each there are people and fates – hard to bear reading in the face of the monstrosities they describe. And even more unbearable is the knowledge that these reports have little or no consequences, at least when they name settings that are somewhat removed from “the world” (“our” world, of

continued on page 17

"The fable says openly..."

continued from page 16

course!) for example in Africa, for example in Eastern Congo.

Arbitrariness without consequences

Similarly, there are no consequences in La Fontaine's sober fable. There is, perhaps, one difference: the "justification" offered by the slayer of this lamb is so arbitrary and screamingly stupid that it would make us laugh, were it not for the poor victim doomed to die.

Is injustice easier to "bear", when shaped in this highly artistic form by La Fontaine? Hardly so, as injustice remains injustice. Through the strong stylisation on simple role models, as the fable is wont to show, the arbitrary contempt for every conception of justice only stands out all the more strongly. Here the attempt to stop or at least reduce the looming disaster through politeness, objectivity and reference to facts – there the blatant, droning, mocking, accusatory, even sentimental construction of an enemy image that ignores all facts (you sheep destroy my life by resisting being eaten by me!). The rhetoric used by the wolf obviously only serves the attacker's intention to convince himself of a motive for his act of aggression. In terms fashionable today, the wolf's gathering of reasons for his attack could be taken as a prime example of what many now call hate speech. While the clever and almost overly gentle sheep meets the wall of

prejudices and arbitrary accusations with arguments, reason and a good dose of politeness, the interest-driven murderous accuser (he is both judge and executioner) confronts it with ever new, ever more absurd accusations, allegations and disparagements. There is a shift from "you" (you have insulted me – *lèse majesté!*) to "he" (if it wasn't you, then it was your brother), which factually corresponds to the illegitimate clan liability practised by the Nazi regime; then a collective guilt is built up with clumsy generalisations (I know you, you scum, that's just how you are); finally, an unnamed, highly implausible witness is invoked as "proof" (*On me l'a dit* – it was told to me, it says in the original text). Told by whom, on what occasion and with what degree of credibility? – That all remains unmentioned.

That sounds like the present. In our factual reality, NATO, together with the servile EU, is working to enforce worldwide its self-fabricated, strongly West-orientated "systems of rules", if necessary, with a strong rapid reaction force of 300,000 men (or women?), as *Jens Stoltenberg* triumphantly proclaims. For the EU leadership and its comrades-in-arms, these systems of rules also include the above-mentioned EU fight against public hate speech. The EU is the follower of an American president who publicly dubbed the president of the "other side" a "killer" (long before 24 February). Is that not "hate speech" "sanctioned" by the highest politician of the country? Only recently, the self-proclaimed defender of

"our" freedom had a supposedly criminal "terrorist chief" liquidated with a drone (in the purest mafia manner: only the hit is important, collateral damage is accepted!). This is a style based on one thing: the pure arrogance of power.

Criticism of absolutism

This insincere "game" was already seen through by a writer like La Fontaine, even if he chose the cautious form of the fable to denounce what was at his time pure power politics obvious to many. Every somewhat educated French reader knew who was really meant by the ravenous wolf (*Louis XIV*, the ruler of France, which had become a world power). La Fontaine cunningly concealed the fact that the brutal wolf meant no one other than the king by his use of the obligatory form of address for royalty at the time, formulas at the disposal of the clever lamb: "Sire" and "Votre Majesté". La Fontaine took a clear stand by making use of the fable, a stand for the defenceless, against the arrogance of power. Its bogus legitimation applied "for the audience" cannot hide the fact: The wolf murders an innocent being, not out of necessity, not out of self-defence, not even out of revenge for an injustice, no: out of pure greed. Any "argument", crudely crafted as it may be, is fine with him to cover this up. In this way, the fable makes him not simply the symbol of a man of power, but the symbol of an inhuman politics, of the madness of a rule detached from all law. ●

Current Concerns

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

Subscribe to Current Concerns – The journal of an independent cooperative

The cooperative *Zeit-Fragen* is a politically and financially independent organisation. All of its members work on a voluntary and honorary basis. The journal does not accept commercial advertisements of any kind and receives no financial support from business organisations. The journal Current Concerns is financed exclusively by its subscribers.

We warmly recommend our model of free and independent press coverage to other journals.

Annual subscription rate of
CHF 40,-; Euro 30,-; USD 40,-; GBP 25,-
for the following countries:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of
CHF 20,-; Euro 15,-; USD 20,-; GBP 12,50
for all other countries.

Please choose one of the following ways of payment:

- send a cheque to *Current Concerns*, P.O. Box, CH-9602 Bazenhaid, or
- send us your credit card details (only *Visa*), or
- pay into one of the following accounts:

CH:	Postcheck-Konto (CHF):	87-644472-4	IBAN CH91 0900 0000 8764 4472 4	BIC POFICHBEXXX
CH:	Postcheck-Konto (Euro):	91-738798-6	IBAN CH83 0900 0000 9173 8798 6	BIC POFICHBEXXX
D:	Volksbank Tübingen, Kto. 67 517 005, BLZ 64190110		IBAN DE12 6419 0110 0067 5170 05	BIC GENODESITUE
A:	Raiffeisen Landesbank, Kto. 1-05.713.599, BLZ 37000		IBAN AT55 3700 0001 0571 3599	BIC RVVGAT2B