

# 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*

## Europe betrays its values

**Peace, democracy, human rights, environmental protection:  
In the fight against Russia, we sacrifice everything we hold sacred**

by *Guy Mettan*



(picture ma)

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He has been President of the *Union of Swiss-Russian & CIS Chambers of Commerce* since 2005. He was President of the *Geneva Red Cross* from 2006 to 2014 and a member of the Council of the *Swiss Red Cross* until 2019. In 1996, he founded the *Swiss Press Club*, of which he was President and later Director from 1998 to 2019.

Timothy Snyder, professor of history at Yale University, one of the most prominent academic representatives of the Western establishment, describes in the September issue of the American magazine *Foreign Affairs* what he thinks the war in Ukraine is all about. The assessment is interesting because it exemplifies the discourse that Western politicians and media have been serving us since 24 February. It is therefore worth quoting a longer section.

Snyder writes: "Russia, an aging tyranny, seeks to destroy Ukraine, a defiant democracy. A Ukrainian victory would confirm the principle of self-rule, allow the integration of Europe to proceed, and empower people of goodwill to return reinvigorated to other global challenges. A Russian victory, by contrast, would extend genocidal policies in Ukraine, subordinate Europeans, and render any vision of a geopolitical Eu-

"The third category of values we claim to defend in Ukraine are fundamental rights. This includes freedom of expression. Europe likes to present itself as a role model on this point, compared to a Russia that shamelessly disregards freedom of expression. But how can it be explained that our media trample all the criteria for objective reporting by unanimously taking sides with Ukraine without even taking note of the arguments of the other side?"

ropean Union obsolete. Should Russia continue its illegal blockade of the Black Sea, it could starve Africans and Asians, who depend on Ukrainian grain, precipitating a durable international crisis that will make it all but impossible to deal with common threats such as climate change. A Russian victory would strengthen fascists and other tyrants, as well as nihilists who see politics as nothing more than a spectacle designed by oligarchs to distract ordinary citizens from the destruction of the world. This war, in other words, is about establishing principles for the twenty-first century. It is about policies of mass death and about the meaning of life in politics. It is about the possibility of a democratic future."

### Wars against international law

These are the front lines Snyder draws: Defence of European values versus barbarism; democracy versus dictatorship; heroic virtues versus war crimes. But how do we know that this view of things is at least close to the truth? That this war is a battle of the good against the evil? That Europe's much-cited values stand the test of reality? A stocktaking is urgently needed. My conclusions differ from those of Timothy Snyder. In my view, we are witnessing a collapse of European values, and I believe many people outside Europe see it similarly.

Let's start with "peace", the very founding value of the European Union. If you read newspapers and listen to politicians these days, you will hardly come

across the much-vaunted term any more. Instead, the demands are: more arms deliveries, more sanctions, more energy-saving measures, in short, more escalation. With the President of the European Commission, *Ursula von der Leyen* leading the path ("Now is the time for determination, not appeasement"). This yawning gap between aspiration and reality undermines the entire discourse on European values.

To be sure, the beautiful ideal of peace has been losing its lustre for some time, especially with the gradual transformation of NATO into an offensive alliance after the collapse of the Soviet Union. From the late 1990s onwards, European states began to intervene militarily halfway around the world (Serbia, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan), mostly in violation of international law. Nevertheless, peace remained, at least rhetorically, a fundamental value of European policy.

As late as the end of March, an understanding between the warring parties seemed within the realm of possibility and also desired by European governments. The inflamed reporting on Bucha and the visit of the then British Prime Minister *Boris Johnson* to Kiev then put an end to all negotiation efforts on the Western side. Since then, the word "peace" has practically disappeared from the vocabulary of European politicians and journalists.

Instead, opinion leaders never tire of describing the rise of nationalism as a threat to peace in Europe, whether in

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Germany, France, Austria, Serbia or, most recently, in Italy, where the right-wing politician *Giorgia Meloni* became the new prime minister. These admonishers and alerters would be more credible, however, if they did not turn a blind eye to the bloody deeds of the Ukrainian nationalists. Besides, many of them were immediately ready to accept Kosovo's independence in 2008, while now they castigate separatism in eastern Ukraine as a crime. How does that go together?

**Politicians disregard the will of the people**

Another value that is often used in our newspapers is "democracy". Day after day we read that Europe's democratic traditions are being defended in Ukraine. But is that really true? On this point, too, the contradictions are obvious.

The Ukrainian government has banned all opposition parties, closed all non-governmental news channels, banned all minority languages (in the east of the country, Russian is even the majority language), murdered dozens of journalists and opposition members, given free rein to rampant corruption, sold off seventeen million hectares of good agricultural land to three American companies despite resistance from the population, recruited the male population forcibly, executed prisoners of war, abused as a shield the country's own civilian population, peppered the army and administration with notorious neo-Nazis, to name just a few examples. Is this really the democracy we want to defend?

And while we are on the subject of double standards: Western journalists are verbose in their condemnation of alleged Russian interference in the affairs of democratic countries. But what do they report when two American special prosecutors (*Robert Mueller* and *John Durham*) find no such interference in the US case? Little to nothing. At the same time, most of them approve of Western interference in the politics of other

countries. If, for example, a democratically legitimised pro-Russian government is overthrown in Ukraine, as happened in 2014, with the active help of the Americans, then very few see a problem.

And finally, what are we to think of our own democracy when European governments support a war without consulting their citizens? Let us recall the survey conducted in Germany and published on 30 August by the German *Stern* Magazine. The figures speak for themselves: 87 per cent of the Germans surveyed think one should talk to *Putin*; 77 per cent of them are in favour of peace negotiations; 62 per cent reject the delivery of heavy weapons to Ukraine. A survey in Austria came to similar results. Shouldn't that give us pause for thought?

**Suppression of freedom of expression**

The third category of values we claim to defend in Ukraine are fundamental rights. This includes freedom of expression. Europe likes to present itself as a role model on this point, compared to a Russia that shamelessly disregards freedom of expression. But how can it be explained that our media trample all the criteria for objective reporting by unanimously taking sides with Ukraine without even taking note of the arguments of the other side? *Audiatu et altera pars* – hear the other side too – is what journalism textbooks say. This important maxim no longer seems to apply.

Politics is in no way inferior to the media. What we usually only know from dictatorships – the closure of unpopular editorial offices – is now also the political means of choice in the supposedly value-oriented EU. In spring, the European Commission summarily banned the Russian media *RT* and *Sputnik*. Isn't this a blatant attack on freedom of expression, even if one tries to justify it with the pretext of countering "Russian propaganda"? Since when is censorship democratic and representative of freedom of expression?

One could add many items to this list of fundamental rights violations by the EU

and Western states. Let us just mention another particularly disturbing example: the blatant violation of the right to private property. Western states have confiscated the assets of the Russian Central Bank and the private property of oligarchs. Those affected were denied a legal hearing. What does this have to do with the defence of human rights? Europe is gambling away what has made it strong for centuries: the credibility of its rule of law.

**Coal-fired power plants against Putin**

The fourth and final category of values betrayed in the Ukraine war is ecology and the fight against climate change. Since the Rio summit in 1992, the West – not without difficulty and with fierce internal debates – has posed as a champion in the fight to "preserve the planet" and develop green technologies. Above all, war has been declared on CO2 emissions.

And today? Coal-fired power plants that were considered a "scandal" just twelve months ago are being reopened in Europe with the blessing of environment ministers. European politicians are courting autocrats and dictators around the world in the hope of being allowed to buy a bit of gas or oil, which is then transported to Europe using polluting oil tankers and bulk carriers. Shale gas and shale oil, just the devil's own, are all the rage. And all this in order to boycott Vladimir Putin, who as President of Russia was always willing to provide us with more environmentally friendly gas and oil for little money?

I started this article with a quote from Timothy Snyder, the keyword giver of this wrong policy. The final word belongs to *George F. Kennan*, the great diplomat and Cold War theorist. As he wrote in 1951, "The message we try to convey to others, whatever it may be, will be effective only if it is consistent with our own conduct." •

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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# Why do the Western power elites wage their war against Russia so relentlessly?

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

The former editor-in-chief of the “Tribune de Genève” and Grand Councillor of the Canton of Geneva *Guy Mettan* published a very readable article in the *Weltwoche* of 1 October 2022 entitled “Europe betrays its values”. The subtitle concretises: “Peace, democracy, human rights, environmental protection: In the fight against Russia, we sacrifice everything we hold sacred” (see page 1)

The Western power elites’ disregard for European and universal values has, it must be added, been a problem for a long time. However, time and again people have found ways to counter this. The international working group “Mut zur Ethik”<sup>1</sup>, which I am part of, was founded almost 30 years ago and is one of many examples. If you look more closely, the disregard for European and universal values has actually been going on ever since there has been such a thing as the “West”. Only in between, for example after devastating catastrophes such as the Second World War, have larger parts of the Western power elites come to their senses for a while and tried to give politics a new face, one that is oriented towards principles of political ethics<sup>2</sup>.

But at the latest with the supposed “victory” in the first Cold War after 1990/91, Western power elites indeed spoke very loudly of their mission of values, but in reality, practised exactly the opposite.

## No ethical foundations

The war that the Western power elites are waging against Russia therefore has – although this is precisely the core assertion of Western propaganda – no ethical foundations, but other causes and goals. One must always be aware of this: The Western power elites are not waging war against Russia so relentlessly because it is about defending European values, democracy or heroic virtues<sup>3</sup>. It is about something else.

That the Western power elites are waging war against Russia is obvious:

- The information war against Russia has been working with prejudices for a long time. More than 20 years ago, for example, a research paper at a Berlin university stated: “The analysis of Russia reporting in the ‘Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, FAZ’ and in *Der Spiegel* has shown that primarily bad news or ‘bad events’ are transmitted from Russia. [...] Stereotyping is used to convey Russian events. So, the news factor ‘negativism’ has a very big weight in the case of Russia coverage.”<sup>4</sup> Research in other Western countries would come

to similar conclusions. Since 24 February 2022, prejudices against Russia and Russian politics have been conveyed in an extremely aggressive manner every day in all Western mainstream media – with an unprecedented propaganda roller. The demonisation of the country’s president, which stokes fear and hatred, stands out. However, this information war is not only directed against the “enemy” Russia and Putin, but with its hypocrisy and its messages appealing to aggressive emotions, it also corrodes coexistence in our Western societies.

- The Western power elites are trying to bring Russia to its knees with an economic war of immense proportions (sanctions).
- The Western power elites supply the Ukrainian military with huge quantities of weapons and ammunition. For these power elites, Ukrainians in particular are supposed to fight “to the last man”. To put it bluntly, one could also say: fanatical Ukrainian fighters are the “useful idiots” of Western power elites. This was already the case in the Second World War, when the German Wehrmacht used the extreme nationalist forces around *Stepan Bandera* for its goals. Fanatical ideologies always lend themselves particularly well to such “missions”.
- The Western power elites are also waging their war against Russia with direct war participation: in the training of Ukrainian fighters, with logistical services, military “reconnaissance”, military “advice”, direct military orders and acts of military sabotage.

## It is about more than the future of Ukraine

The question of why and for what purpose the Western power elites are doing all this, in my opinion, cannot stop at the borders of Ukraine. As understandable as the call for a ceasefire in Ukraine is – this call must not neglect the fact that there is so much more about it and that this war of the Western power elites will not be over even if the weapons in Ukraine cease.

I suggest reading again the speeches of the Russian president of the past 22 years up to his last detailed speech on 1 October 2022 and to examine them impartially for their degree of reality. It is possible that in this way one will find answers to the question of the why and the wherefore of the relentless war of the Western power elites against Russia. In these speeches, one learns that Russia is radically questioning

the previous claim to power of the Western power elites: with his demand for equal security for Russia (as well as for all other states of the world), with his demand for respect for the foundations of the Charter of the United Nations, with his demand for an independent Russian way in questions of family, religion and nation, with his demand for a different world economy, with his demand for a different world financial system, with his criticism of Western imperialism and neo-colonialism.

## How the war can end

The war of the Western power elites can be ended in various ways:

- The worst variant is total war, ending in a nuclear inferno. Some Western media, including in Switzerland, are virtually screaming – like *Goebbels* – for such a total war – and perversely calling it “solidarity”. *Heaven forbid!*
- A Russian military and political defeat would allow the Western power elites to triumph. This would not be a good end for the world as a whole.
- After significant military and/or political successes by Russia and/or the realisation of the hopelessness or excessive costs of continuing the war, the Western power elites are coming to their senses and looking for a new *modus vivendi* in terms of “Realpolitik”. That would give us breathing space. But make no mistake: the period of *détente* in the first Cold War was also a *modus vivendi* on thin ice. The first half of the 1980s showed that.
- The peoples of the Western world are finding the courage to follow a humanly viable path that sends their power elites into retirement and builds social, economic and political conditions that are guided by the principles of political ethics. This continues to be an ideal worth working towards. •

<sup>1</sup> cf. Verein zur Förderung der Psychologischen Menschenkenntnis (ed.). *Mut zur Ethik. Eine Besinnung auf gesellschaftliche Grundnormen und moralische Grundhaltung im Individuum* (Reflection on basic social norms and basic moral attitudes in the individual). Volume on the first conference from 24 to 26 September 1993 in Bregenz, ISBN 3-906989-35-6 and in particular the principles adopted there on pages 543ff.

<sup>2</sup> cf. as groundwork: Sutor, Bernhard. *Politische Ethik Gesamtdarstellung auf der Basis der Christlichen Gesellschaftslehre* (Political Ethics. Overall presentation on the basis of Christian social teaching), 1992 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), ISBN 3-506-79090-0

<sup>3</sup> The terms refer to the article by *Guy Mettan* in the *Weltwoche* of 1 October 2022 and on page 1f of this journal.

<sup>4</sup> Crudopf, Wenke. *Russland-Stereotypen in der deutschen Medienberichterstattung*. (Arbeitspa-

# The irresistible BRICS appeal

by Daniel Kersfeld, Argentina

*Joining BRICS might turn out to be one of the most important international initiatives of Argentina in recent years.*

Currently consisting of Brasil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, this alliance already is an important global axis whose political and economic influence is bound to increase in the decades to come should the trend towards a new multipolar geopolitics continue, which is capable to provide an alternative to the apparently overwhelming power of the United States today.

Data of the World Bank suggest that the BRICS countries constitute 22 % of global land mass, 42 % of world population and 26 % of GDP today, controlling a dollar reserve of more than 4 trillion.

According to the International Monetary Fund, China is the biggest economy of the group with more than 70 % of its joint economic power, followed by India with 13 %, Russia and Brazil with about 7 % each and finally South Africa with 3 %.

Its main strength seems to be the partnership of China as the world's largest manufacturer and Russia as the world's leading energy supplier. While India is already one of the most important economic powers based on its export of natural resources and grain, Brazil is currently upgrading its position as one of main actors on the global food and agriculture market, South Africa on the other hand is developing into a key nation exporting metal and minerals with far-reaching technological implications.

The acceptance of Argentina into BRICS, supported mainly by India, Russia and China (currently chairing the group), is based on their capacity to provide food

such as soy and grain as well as strategic resources including natural gas, fracking gas, several minerals and most notably the increasingly valuable lithium. Moreover Argentina's scientific potential is fully developed, including specialisation on biotechnology and applied logistics.

However, Argentina is not the only nation to announce their intention to join the bloc: at present there are governments of about twenty states from all continents whose applications are pending. And one glance at the list of applicants, especially those from the Middle East, is enough to debunk the idea that their political orientation would make them all sympathisers of the axis Moscow-Beijing.

In this sense not only Iran but also NATO member states such as Turkey have opted to join, as well as countries who have historically always been allies of the United States: Saudi Arabia, recently Egypt and even the United Arab Emirates despite being one of the protagonists of the 2020 *Abraham peace accord*<sup>1</sup> together with Israel, the United States and Bahrain.

The appeal emanating from BRICS today might challenge traditional alliances and even historical conflicts, for instance some of those still maintained by several states in the Middle East. It would come as no surprise should the growing bloc contribute to a review of the international relations and geopolitical maps of a big part of the world as shaped by the United States over the last 30 years.

BRICS is no longer the group of emerging markets as it had been conceived in 2006 and launched in 2009 as a reaction to the financial crisis which had erupted one year previously in the US and eventually affected the entire world. Today BRICS follow a developmental model of their own which is no longer informed by the axioms of neoliberal capitalism.

Instead, BRICS favour South-South cooperation and networking between complementary economies with similar economic, political and social goals.

For this reason and acknowledged by FAO one of the most ambitious aims by 2030 is to achieve a leading role in the abolishment of hunger globally, by producing more than 30 % of grain worldwide.

While BRICS have had to face several difficult moments since their foundation, due to the trade war between China and

the United States and the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the current crisis in Ukraine constitutes the biggest threat to its survival so far.

Contrary to the expectations of the US and other NATO governments though, their sanctions against Russia achieved nothing but strengthened ties within the bloc, paving its way to future by their search to find solutions to the resulting problems on the basis of concrete proposals and new long-term initiatives.

Argentina's admission to BRICS would come at a moment of accelerated bankruptcy of the international financial system which coincides with increasing weakness of the dollar, imminent inflation fuelled by an overexpanded amount of circulating money and an out of control budget deficit which shows clear signs of strain and which the US *Congressional Budget Office* states to exceed 100 trillion in 2022.

It is in this context that the most ambitious project, promoted mainly by Russia and China, aims for de-dollarisation as a main pillar of sovereignty and protection of vital means of production against US hegemony and their politics of permanent siege.

As argued by many political and economic analysts this process is uncorrectable and therefore only anticipated by BRICS. The re-introduction of a series of currencies as an alternative to the dollar will contribute to a multipolar world and at the same time provide security to the countries within this expanding bloc without vulnerabilities to enforced conditions or even blackmailing from the outside.

For many BRICS appears as a beacon of hope for a more balanced global power structure in which seemingly unstoppable powers may find their limits and checks. In the decades to come, the overthrow of neoliberalism with worldwide hunger a misery of millions of people as its most devastating consequences seems possible. Without any doubt the imminent admission of Argentina to this group is good news. •

<sup>1</sup> «Series of joint normalization statements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain», effective since September 15, 2020, signed in Washington, D.C.

Source: *Página 12* of 11 October 2022; <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/autos/422097-daniel-kersfeld>

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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# The Non-West coalesces

by Patrick Lawrence



(picture ma)

Patrick Lawrence is a writer, commentator, a longtime newspaper and magazine correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the "International Herald Tribune". He is a columnist, essayist, author and lecturer and writes often on Europe and Asia. Patrick Lawrence has published five books; his most recent book is *Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century*. His Twitter account @thefloutist has been permanently censored without explanation. His web site is [patricklawrence.us](http://patricklawrence.us). Support his work via his Patreon site.

*Something just happened in Vienna, where the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, now known as OPEC-Plus with the inclusion of the Russian Federation, convened for its first in-person session since 2020. It is something of epochal importance, though you will not know this if you rely solely on the reports carried in our corporate-owned media.*

*The world just took a significant turn into the 21st century. Let us stay abreast of it, leaving those who refuse to see this to their own devices.*

President *Biden*, not intelligent enough to understand the emergent new era and indifferent to the interests and aspirations of others, quickly made as big a mess of things as could be made. He now threatens Saudi Arabia, which co-chairs OPEC-Plus with the Russian Federation, with "consequences" for what transpired in Vienna. This what imperiums do when their primacy is threatened – they encourage the very currents in history they are determined to disrupt.

## OPEC-Plus decision – "a pretty big deal"

As reported everywhere, OPEC-Plus decided to reduce the oil production of member nations by 2 million barrels per day as of next month. This may amount to an actual cut of half that amount, as

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"I have asserted for years, at the risk of repeating myself, that parity between the West and non-West is a 21<sup>st</sup> century imperative – an inevitability regardless of whether or not anyone anywhere wishes this to be so."

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many OPEC-Plus members – Nigeria, for instance – have not been lifting to their quotas anyway. But oil prices are already increasing, and we will soon see this at our filling stations. As retail prices rise, it is likely to complicate the political fortunes of the Biden administration and Democrats on *Capitol Hill* just as the midterm elections approach. So, a pretty big deal.

But this is not the half of what transpired in Vienna. Saudi Arabia, long the driving wheel in OPEC, effectively declared its long history of subservience to Washington, by way of which oil production has been exchanged for security guarantees, to be on the way out. One of Washington's bedrock allies in the Middle East, Israel being the other, just took a major step toward the coalescence of non-Western nations into a coherent bloc acting in its own interests.

## The New World Order draws closer

This is more than a pretty big deal. It brings us considerably closer to the new world order Russia and China, the two most influential non-Western nations, have been talking about for several years and notably since the Biden administration took power in January 2021. Within months, Beijing and Moscow concluded that there is no making sense of a nation that, even as its power declines, has no intention of working with them as equals to mutual benefit. Since then, numerous other countries have had little trouble detecting which way the wind blows.

The Ukraine crisis has sent a new bolt of electricity through this geopolitical trend. Nations representing more than 80 percent of the global population and a like percentage of global gross domestic product are perfectly capable of seeing the Biden administration's pointed provocations and do not approve.

Partnerships that stop just short of alliances – a term of statecraft entailing explicit obligations in the way of mutual defense – have multiplied so quickly since Joe Biden took office it is hard to keep track of them. Russia's "no limits" relationship with China is the premier case. Russia has recently consoli-

dated its cooperative ties with Iran. So has China. Iran and Venezuela, China and Cuba, China and Nicaragua – the list goes on. As we speak, Moscow and Beijing are developing partnerships of various kinds in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

But these nations, it is easy to note, are by and large beyond Washington's fence posts: The policy cliques, this is to say, have them down as enemies. Every nation just named is currently subjected to sanctions. Parenthetically, I do have to wonder what happens when most of the world other than the Anglosphere and Western Europe is condemned in this way, but that is another conversation.

## "A critical distinction"

With the OPEC-Plus decision it is time to make a critical distinction.

When *Vladimir Putin* and *Narendra Modi* summited in New Delhi last December, the Russian president and the Indian prime minister oversaw the consummation of no fewer than 28 agreements covering cooperation across the board – investment, tech transfer, energy, defense. It is worth singling out India's intent to purchase a copy of Russia's S-400 missile defense system, which proves a pebble in Washington's shoe every time any nation buys one.

Since then Turkey has sent multiple signals that, never mind its NATO membership, it is increasingly inclined to cast its lot with non-Western nations. It was an observer at the recent summit of the Eurasian Economic Union in Samarkand. There is talk of membership in the BRICS mini-bloc, which now consists of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Egypt under the vicious *Abdel Fattah el-Sisi* and Argentina under its right-thinking president, *Alberto Fernández*, also intend to apply for membership.

India, Turkey, Argentina, South Africa, Egypt: These are not nations Washington likes to dismiss as pariahs, rogues, outcasts, or autocracies run by "thugs" – a favorite epithet of the thuggish Biden – even if some of them deserve it. This changes the complexion of the coalescence I de-

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scribe. We are now talking about nations the U.S. counts as friends of one or another kind.

There is a key point to be made in this connection. The policy cliques and the clerks in the press who serve them love to cast the waxing non–Western bloc as anti–American, driven by hatred or envy or whatever else these people can think of. The reporting on the OPEC–Plus meeting has it that the Saudis "sided with Russia" against the U.S. "Angered by the kingdom's decision to team up with Russia," The New York Times reported last week, President Biden signaled openness to retaliatory measures."

What shall we call this, readers? It is either blindness or narcissism or both, and I nominate this last. As the non–West gathers in the cause of constructive action, mutual benefit, and (not to be missed) noninterference, the only thing they are against is global disorder, and the only nations they are against are those responsible for it.

**Saudi Arabia acted on its own interests**

And now to Saudi Arabia.

This is another nation you wouldn't want to take home to meet mother, but Washington has had few friends in the non–West closer than Riyadh since the early 1930s, when the *Roosevelt* administration and the House of *Saud* worked out the oil-for-security arrangement (and *Standard Oil of California* got a drilling concession). It is this long party that the Saudis – who are also looking at BRICS membership, let's not miss – seem to have declared over as of last week.

Western press reports have made much of the presence in Vienna of *Alexander Novak*, Moscow's deputy prime minister, who reportedly did some spadework prior to the OPEC–Plus decision to cut production quotas. But any thought that those Rrrrrussians railroaded the production cut through is simply a flinch from a reality Washington finds hard to bear. The Saudis acted entirely of their own volition, plain and simple. *Mohammed bin Salman* [MbS], the crown prince and the kingdom's de facto leader, is many things, and a man of his own mind is one of them (for better or worse). Prince *Abdulaziz bin Salman*, the Saudi oil minister, is MbS's half-brother.

There are many reasons Riyadh, as OPEC–Plus's co-chair, decided as it did. Its stated intent is to protect prices as the world slides toward a precipitous drop in oil demand consequent on the slow growth and rising inflation – the stagflation syndrome – that the U.S. sanctions regime against Russia is forcing upon the world.

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"This is more than a pretty big deal. [...] Within months, Beijing and Moscow concluded that there is no making sense of a nation that, even as its power declines, has no intention of working with them as equals to mutual benefit. Since then, numerous other countries have had little trouble detecting which way the wind blows."

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There is also the price cap Washington proposes to impose on Russian oil exports – one of the stupidest ideas, of very many, to come out of the US policy elites in decades. The buyer tells the seller the price of goods? Say whaaaa? It has little to no chance of working, but MbS most assuredly asks. *If these American cap the price of Russia's oil in 2022, how long before they take a run at us?*

**The matter of Joe Biden**

There is the matter of Joe "Nobody fucks with a Biden" Biden (and what a polished president is he). I can't decide if he is a *schlemiel* or a *schlimazel* – as a Yiddish-speaking friend explains it, the guy who knocks over a bottle of wine at table or the man into whose lap the wine spills. After following Joe's years in the Senate and not quite two in the *White House*, I surrender: He is manages to be both.

During his 2020 campaign Biden famously called Saudi Arabia a pariah to keep the progressive peanut gallery quiet on the Yemen war but with no intent to reduce US support for it. As things got hairy in consequence of the sanctions against Russia, our president traveled to Jeddah, bumped fists with MbS during an obviously testy summit, and apparently figured everything would be O.K. on the oil-production side. Prior to the OPEC–Plus session, administration officials flew to Riyadh and practically begged MbS not to announce a production cut at least until after the midterms.

What a bed our Joe and the confirmed *schlemiels* running America's foreign policy have made for themselves and the rest of us to lie in. Once again, the man from Scranton proves what he always has been, a provincial pol who thinks he can sell snake oil around the world just as he long did in Delaware and with no clue as to what makes responsible statecraft.

**Acting in enlightened self-interest**

I do not doubt that MbS's disrespect for a clown with failing mental capacities made it easier for him to act against US wishes and more specifically the Biden *White House*. In my read he has effectively joined the Russians and Chinese in concluding there is simply no work-

ing with so unserious a regime. But the Saudis appear no more inclined to set policy out of spite or contempt than any other nation in the gathering non–Western bloc. Riyadh acted in its own interests as it sees these.

Asked at a post-session press conference if the OPEC–Plus decision was an act of aggression, Prince Abdul Aziz, the Saudi oil minister replied, "Show me exactly where is the act of belligerence."

But precisely. Dollars to donuts, as one of my editors used to say, it was an American correspondent who posed the question: It takes an American to read events with this degree of self-centeredness, as if the world revolves around Washington the way Ptolemy thought the sun and all the planets revolved around the earth. "The Saudis sided with Russia" is nothing more than a variation on the *Ptolemaic* theme, a repeat of *Bush II's* "you're with us or against us" binary – which many of us ridiculed at the time but now consider a perfectly rational way to divvy up the world.

Ideology, to make this point plain, had nothing to do with the OPEC–Plus decision and has nothing to do with the non–West's assembly into a sort of inchoate network of partnerships. Enlightened self-interest – that old phrase in a new context – is what drives this evolution in global affairs.

I have asserted for years, at the risk of repeating myself, that parity between the West and non–West is a 21<sup>st</sup> century imperative – an inevitability regardless of whether or not anyone anywhere wishes this to be so. What happened in Vienna earlier this month gives us a demonstration of how this evolution will proceed.

**Russia and Turkey planning distribution of Russian gas and fertiliser**

Late last week Vladimir Putin and *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan* met in Astana, the Kazakhstan capital, the second encounter of the Russian and Turkish presidents in as many months. In the course of things Putin proposed to make Turkey an energy hub for the distribution of Russian gas now that the *Nord Stream I* and *II* pipelines connecting Russia to Europe are out

# OPEC's body blow to Biden presidency

by M. K. Bhadrakumar



M. K. Bhadrakumar  
(picture ma)

M. K. Bhadrakumar worked as a career diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service for around three decades. Among other things, he was ambassador to the former Soviet Union, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan as well as South Korea, Sri Lanka, Germany and Turkey. His texts deal primarily with Indian foreign policy and events in the Middle East, Eurasia, Central Asia, South Asia and Pacific Asia. His blog is called *Indian Punchline*.

*The Joe Biden administration is swiftly establishing a narrative that the recent OPEC decision to cut oil production by two million tonnes is a geopolitical "aligning" by Saudi Arabia and Russia. It taps into the Russophobia in the Beltway and deflects attention from the humiliating defeat of President Biden's personal diplomacy with Saudi Arabia. But it is not without basis, either.*

## "The Non-West coalesces"

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of commission. Erdoğan also noted that Turkey can act as a transit point to get Russian fertilisers to the less-developed most in need of them.

Here is how Erdoğan, ever eager to appear important in world affairs, concluded his conversation with Putin on these matters:

*"We can work together because we are more concerned about the poor countries than the wealthy states. This is how we should envisage this, and if we do it we will be able to change much – to change the balance in favor of poor countries.*

*Turkey and Russia are together, I know some of our steps will worry some circles and some countries, but we are full of resolve. Our relevant bodies, our colleagues [in our ministries], will establish contacts and strengthen our relations.*

Foreign policy was reputed to be *Biden's* forte but is turning out to be his *nemesis*. An ignominious end is not unlikely; as with *Jimmy Carter*, West Asia may become the burial ground of his carefully cultivated reputation.

The magnitude of what is unfolding is simply staggering. Biden realizes belatedly that territorial conquests in Ukraine is not the real story but embedded in it is the economic war and within that is the energy war that has been incubating through the past eight-month period following the Western sanctions on Russia.

## Who is winning the energy and economic war?

The paradox is, even if *Zelensky* wins the war, Biden would still have lost the war unless he wins the energy war and goes on to win the economic war as well.

President *Vladimir Putin* visualised such an outcome as far back as in 2016 when on the sidelines of the G20 Hangzhou summit, the tantalizing idea of OPEC+ crystallized between him and then Saudi Deputy Crown Prince *Mohammed bin Salman*.

I wrote at that time that "An understanding between Russia and OPEC holds the potential to completely transform the geopolitical alignments in the Middle East... This shift cannot but impact petrodollar recycling, which has been historically a robust pillar of the western financial system. In strategic terms, too, Washington's attempt to

'isolate' Russia is rendered ineffective." That was six years ago. (See Pay heed to the butterfly effect of Putin-Salman oil deal in Hangzhou, "Asia Times" of 7 September 2016)

## "The debris that surrounds Biden today"

The debris that surrounds Biden today is a large messy pile. He didn't realize that the lackadaisical way the Russian offensive in Ukraine rolled on because Putin was concentrating on the economic war and the energy war, the outcome of which will determine the future of the US' global hegemony, which has been riveted on the dollar being the reserve currency.

Precisely, back in the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia agreed that the price of oil should be determined in dollars and that oil, the world's most widely traded commodity, be internationally traded in dollars, which virtually mandated that every country on the planet ought to hold dollar reserves in order to buy oil. The US, of course, reciprocally pledged on its part that free access to dollar was guaranteed for all countries.

## The end of dollar rule?

However, it turned out to be a phony assurance in the wake of the rampant weaponization of dollar and the US' preposterous moves to grab other countries'

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*See what I mean about which way the wind blows? See what I mean about the non-West's coalescence?"*

It will be interesting to see what comes next now that the Saudis have joined the party and put some distance between themselves and the Americans. Hardly is it right to anticipate some nasty breach in relations. They seem simply to be shaking themselves loose from the embrace that suffocates, as a British ambassador once described Japan's relations with the US.

## De-dollarisation is growing closer

A final note in the matter of the BRICS and the Saudis' interest in joining them. It is a matter of record that as currently constituted the group is developing a basket of currencies intended to serve as an alternative to the dollar in international trade. This sounds like another very big deal in the making. Since the Saudis agreed in 1945 to price oil in dollars, the

petroleum market has been absolutely key to the U.S. currency's supremacy as a reserve currency – which, in turn, has been key to Washington's projection of American hegemony.

Now what? Friends in the markets used to tell me that de-dollarisation, while a long-term inevitability, would not occur in my lifetime. I don't hear much of this anymore. What appeared a distant prospect only a few years ago now seems to grow closer by the year. It will not matter how many fists Washington bumps: They don't generally stop history's wheel from turning, as Biden learned last week. •

<sup>1</sup> Als *Peanut Gallery* wurden im US-Variété des 19. Jahrhunderts die billigsten bzw. hintersten Ränge bezeichnet; heute werden auch Zwischenrufer und Kritiker so genannt, die eine Sache kritisieren, in der sie ungebildet oder uniformiert sind.

<sup>2</sup> Als Schlangenöl (*snake oil*) wird eine Substanz bezeichnet, die als Wundermittel für alles Mögliche angepriesen wird, praktisch aber keine Wirkung hat.

**"OPEC's body blow to ..."**

continued from page 7

dollar reserves. Unsurprisingly, Putin has been harping on the need for setting up a reserve currency alternative to the dollar, and that finds resonance in the world opinion.

All indications are that the *White House*, instead of introspection, is considering new forms of punishment for Saudi Arabia and Russia. While "punishing" Russia is difficult since the US has exhausted all options, Biden probably thinks the US holds Saudi Arabia by its jugular veins: being supplier of weaponry and custodian of massive Saudi reserves and investments and being the mentor of Saudi elites.

Brian Deese, the director of the *National Economic Council*, told reporters on Thursday, "I want to be clear on this (OPEC production cut), the president has directed that we have all options on the table and that will continue to be the case." Earlier on Thursday, Biden himself told reporters that the White House is "looking at alternatives."

Neither Biden nor Deese explicitly named what those "alternatives" might be, other than to reiterate their ability to pull from strategic petroleum reserves, lean on energy companies to reduce consumer prices and work with Congress to consider legislative options.

**Biden has exposed himself to ridicule**

This is a foreign policy black eye for Biden who is facing ridicule over his trip to Saudi Arabia in July, which was excoriated by Democrats and Republicans alike. The US political elites feel that the OPEC decision looks like a targeted Saudi move to weaken Biden and Democrats in advance of the November elections.

**Changing security picture in West Asia**

Potentially, this could have an impact beyond the US-Saudi relationship and could change the security picture in West Asia more than anything since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Already, the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* is slouching toward West Asia with Iran joining it and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Egypt being granted status as dialogue partners and Turkey intending to seek full membership. In the broader terms of de-dollarization, the SCO summit in Samarkand drew up a roadmap for the gradual increase in the share of national currencies in mutual settlements, flagging the seriousness of its intention.

Now, the American defense industry will stiffly resist any attempts to unwind its business in Saudi Arabia, and it has extremely close ties to the Biden administration. But Washington may work for some sort of regime change in Riyadh. Prince Salman has said he "does not care" if Biden misunderstands him. There is little affection between them. The point is, this is not a mere hiccup.

**Regime change policy has had its day**

A color revolution is unrealistic but a palace coup to block MBS from succession is a possibility. But it is risky as a coup attempt will probably fail. Even if it succeeds, will a successor regime have legitimacy regionally and be able to establish control? A chaotic situation like in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq may ensue. The consequences can be disastrous for the stability of the oil market and rocky for the world economy. It could lead to the upsurge of Islamist groups.

What rankles Biden is that his last trump card to reduce Russia's high oil revenues without depressing supply through a "price cap" is in reality a conundrum that has become a lot more difficult now. Hence, Biden's rage that the Saudis have "sided" with Russia, which will now not only benefit from higher oil prices ahead of a price cap, but if Russia indeed is ever called upon to sell oil at a discount, at least the reduction will start at a higher price level!

As FT put it, "The kingdom and its allies in the Gulf are unlikely to turn their back on Russia. The Gulf states have not spoken out against the Ukraine invasion, and bringing Russia closer to the OPEC fold has been a long-term aim."

**The confiscation of Russian Dollar reserves becomes a boomerang**

The heart of the matter is that what Biden has done to Russia by grabbing that country's reserves cannot but unnerve the Saudis and other Gulf regimes. They see the latest "price cap" project against Russia as setting a dangerous precedent that one day can lead to US attempts to control oil prices and even a direct attack on the oil industry.

Suffice to say, Russia cannot be cornered through the next 3-4-year period at least when there is such a tight-rope walk ahead. The OPEC+ decision is poised to benefit Russia in multiple ways. It will buoy Russia's oil revenue heading into winter, when demand for Russian energy from Europe typically rises – in essence, help Russia maintain market share even if its production in absolute terms drops off.

**Russia will benefit**

Ironically, Moscow won't have to reduce a single barrel of output, as it is already producing well below the agreed OPEC target, while benefiting from higher oil price, which will be achieved through cuts mainly by OPEC Gulf producers – shouldered by Saudi Arabia (-520,000 bpd), Iraq (-220,000 bpd), the UAE (-150,000 bpd) and Kuwait (-135,000 bpd).

Isn't it amazing that Russian oil companies will benefit from higher prices while at the same time keeping output steady? And this is when the Central Bank in Moscow is likely to have more than recovered the \$300 billion dollars of reserves already that were frozen by the Western central banks at the beginning of the Ukraine war.

In reality, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states involved with OPEC+ have effectively sided with the Kremlin, which enables Russia to refill its coffers and to limit the impact of western sanctions. The implications are far-reaching, from the Ukraine war to the future relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia, and the emergent multipolar world order. •

Source: <https://www.indianpunchline.com/opecs-body-blow-to-biden-presidency/> of 8 October 2022

**Current Concerns**

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# Report of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (FDDPS) aims for “new level of cooperation with NATO”

## Scuttle Switzerland’s neutrality altogether? Not with us!

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

The renaming of Swiss neutrality to “co-operative neutrality”, planned by Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis’ Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), has not gone down well with the Federal Council as a whole. However, for purely tactical reasons: According to Swiss television, it does not want to “stir up dust in this geopolitically sensitive situation” and internally it does for to die not want to pave the way for the neutrality initiative, which will soon start collecting signatures: “If the Federal Council were now to officially relax the neutrality policy, then that would certainly also be an advantage for the opposing side, i.e. for the initiators.”<sup>1</sup> The fact that citizens who make use of their direct democratic rights are regarded by the *classe politique* as the “opposing side” is one of the unpleasant phenomena of recent times.

National Councillor Franz Grüter (SVP, LU) and National Councillor Priska Seiler Graf (SP, ZH) provide a counterweight to such efforts, insisting in clear

terms on the principles of neutrality and direct democracy.

In order to play down the fact that the Federal Council has practically abolished Swiss neutrality for the past six months, it has allowed Cassis’ neutrality report to disappear into a drawer, but is pursuing its goal of integrating our country into NATO/EU by other means: via the security report of the FDDPS, the new version of which Federal Councillor Viola Amherd also presented at the beginning of September.<sup>2</sup>

### “New level of cooperation with NATO” – a concentrated load!

The supplementary report raises the misplaced question of whether Switzerland’s understanding of neutrality is still up to date “in order to take account of the balance between neutrality and solidarity with the Western community of values” (p. 9, emphasis mw.).

The balancing act à la FDDPS: “In view of the war in Ukraine, it is in Swit-

zerland’s interest to focus its security and defence policy more consistently than before on cooperation with partners.” (p. 14) As if the Swiss NATO turbos had not been working towards closer ties between Switzerland and NATO long before February 2022 and also long before the Maidan coup in 2014!

In brief, some of the most blatant programme points of the Federal Council:

- Participation of the Swiss Armed Forces in “NATO exercises across the entire spectrum”, including “exercises for common defence” (p. 16).
- Invitation of NATO troops to exercises in Switzerland (p. 17)
- “NATO could also examine the interoperability and military capabilities of armed forces units in Switzerland.” (p. 17)
- Participation of the Swiss Armed Forces in NATO high-readiness task forces: “However, participation would have to

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## “Switzerland has massively weakened its foreign policy since 24 February. We absolutely have to formulate the term ‘neutrality’ more clearly right now”

Interview with National Councillor Franz Grüter, President of the Foreign Policy Committee of the National Council



Franz Grüter  
(picture ma)

*Current Concerns:* The Federal Council did not want to hear about Ignazio Cassis’ neutrality report. But now, in the supplementary report of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (FDDCS)

to the Security Policy Report 2021, “a new level of cooperation with NATO” is envisaged, which is even harsher than the “cooperative neutrality” of Federal Councillor Cassis. The Federal Council also emphasises in this report that joining NATO is out of the question, as this would contravene neutrality. Question for you: Isn’t the programme of this additional report a de facto NATO accession?

Franz Grüter: It is a dishonest report, a dishonest policy. If one were honest, one would have to say: the way in which

Switzerland is to cooperate with NATO according to these ideas is not a formal NATO accession, but it is in fact a NATO accession. One would take part in all joint exercises, one would be integrated into this alliance, one would go far beyond the previous cooperation within the framework of the “Partnership for Peace”. All of this would mean that Switzerland would more or less be in without formally joining. That is why, in my view, we must compete with these efforts with all our might. Because they quite simply violate our neutrality.

Alarming! We have to explain to the public as broadly as possible what the exact intentions are, and that for Switzerland this means that we would also be integrated into NATO in terms of defence and would therefore no longer be independent. Moreover, in my view it is unconstitutional.

NATO could come to Switzerland to check whether we are complying with interoperability.

Switzerland already makes sure that it uses Western technologies in its procurement. In my view, there is nothing a priori wrong with that, but if interoperability is misused as a precursor to joining NATO, then that is extremely dishonest. And because this preliminary stage already violates the constitution, I am of the opinion that this should be submitted to the people. Because that’s not the way to do it: to make a pseudo-accession through the back door, which is actually an accession.

What options does Parliament have against this additional report? Can you do something, or can you do nothing against the report itself, but only later against drafts for corresponding decrees? Traditionally, the reports of the Federal Council always come to Parliament, the Federal Council presents them, and it has already happened that Parliament has said, no, we don’t want that, and has rejected a report. Parliament will proba-

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“Switzerland has massively weakened ...”  
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bly approve the FDDCS report because its majority is very close to this alliance at the moment. We have heard that the president of the FDP said that we have to get much closer to NATO. We in the SVP will probably be the only ones to fight this. If this step should really be initiated and the Federal Council plans a law, it must bring it to parliament, then one must consider whether to take the referendum. It is not yet on the table, it is not yet a bill, not yet a draft law, but this report is a preliminary stage that has been set in motion.

*The ETH Center for Security Studies recommends that the FDDCS use the war in Ukraine as a pretext for expanding military cooperation with NATO and the EU. Should we give up neutrality because of the war in Ukraine? Doesn't the same question arise in every war? Such demands have come up before, in the Second World War, for example.*

Especially when there is a war, it is not at all easy to be neutral. Anyone who is neutral is of course always put under pressure by both sides. That is also the case in this war. We have been put under pressure by the Americans and also by the Russians. Various political actors, as the ETH report also shows, want to use the opportunity of the Ukraine war to recklessly abandon quite tried and tested instruments of Swiss foreign policy. I recently spoke

personally with ICRC President *Peter Maurer*. He says quite clearly: If we were to supply weapons to Ukraine, that would be deeply against neutrality and would do enormous damage to Switzerland's humanitarian tradition, namely that with the ICRC we always help people on both sides, support both. Neutrality is extremely important, especially for the ICRC, so that we can continue to do this credibly.

*Recently, a prisoner exchange took place between Russia and Ukraine. One was not unmoved by the fact that it was carried out by Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Do we really want to take Switzerland out of its “core business” of neutrality policy and leave our good offices to others?*

Switzerland has massively weakened itself in terms of foreign policy with its actions. That is why we are no longer recognised internationally as a neutral country. Even *Joe Biden* said in a speech that he thanked Switzerland for no longer being neutral. Russia and many other states also say we are no longer neutral, and the newspapers write it: On 28 February, four days after the outbreak of war, the “New York Times” wrote: “Switzerland has given up neutrality”. You can see the result clearly now: We are no longer considered for the *Good Offices*. Ukraine would have very much liked Switzerland to take on the protecting power mandate vis-à-vis Russia. A good example of a protecting power mandate is the relationship with Iran and the USA, where Switzerland plays a mediating role between

the two states, which no longer have direct diplomatic relations. So we are a kind of postman in this. It is precisely in this sense that Ukraine wanted to use Switzerland, but Russia said no. In fact, you almost don't believe that Turkey is now suddenly stepping into this role.

Once again, I believe that Switzerland has massively weakened its foreign policy since 24 February. I regret that very much. We absolutely have to formulate the term “neutrality” more clearly, especially now.

That is why the neutrality initiative is being launched, not by *Christoph Blocher* alone, but by a large group, “Pro Schweiz” (Pro Switzerland) and many others. I assume that our party will logically also support writing perpetual armed neutrality into the Federal Constitution in the sense of integral neutrality. This would also include that we no longer take sanctions, because sanctions are war measures without weapons. In today's case, our sanctions even have a feedback loop to the Swiss population, because we suffer from them. The Russians have never made so much money with gas and oil, the rouble has appreciated by 40 percent, but we are paying the price. Our population pays much higher energy prices, we no longer have a secure energy supply. I think a lot of things have gone wrong here, where Switzerland has no longer lived up to its traditional role, with tangible consequences that we are now noticing.

*Thank you very much for the interview, National Councillor Grüter.* •

“Report of the Federal Department ...”  
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be designed in a way compatible with neutrality [...]” (p. 17)  
“Compatible with neutrality” is nothing here! Even the lip service is of no use: “Joining NATO, which would mean the end of neutrality, is not an option for Switzerland.” (p.14) National Councillor *Franz Grüter*, President of the National Council's Foreign Policy Committee, rightly calls the Federal Council's plans a “dishonest policy” (see interview).

### Military integration into the EU?

Here, too, the FDDPS supplementary report sees possibilities for expansion, for

example, participation in *Permanent Structured Cooperation* (PESCO) projects (p. 18) or the “formalisation” of security policy consultations with the EU (p. 19). So, another bilateral treaty that Brussels could use in the usual manner to put Switzerland under pressure?

### Contribute to peace and stability beyond our borders

At least one of the authors of the FDDPS Supplementary Report still remembered the actual goals of Swiss security policy: “The overarching goal of Swiss security policy remains unchanged: to protect the ability to act, the self-determination and the integrity of Switzerland and its people as well as their livelihoods against

threats and dangers and to contribute to peace and stability beyond the borders.” (p. 13) By joining NATO and EU war units, we can neither protect the security of Switzerland and its population nor make our contribution to peace. “Contributing to peace and stability beyond borders” must be put back at the centre of Swiss foreign policy. This is only possible with respect for the principle of neutrality. •

<sup>1</sup> Brändlin, Roger. “Bundesrat will nichts ändern an Neutralitätspolitik” (Federal Council wants to change nothing about neutrality policy.” In: *SRF News. Echo der Zeit* of 7 September 2022

<sup>2</sup> *Supplementary report to the report on security policy of 2021 on the consequences of the war in Ukraine.* Federal Council Report 2022 (provisional)

# No vote on the “Stop F-35” initiative – Federal Bern ignores the direct democratic rights of citizens

Interview with National Councillor Priska Seiler Graf (SP/ZH)



Priska Seiler Graf (picture priskaseilergraf.ch)

*mw.* In order to prevent the Federal Council's planned purchase of 36 F-35 fighter jets from the US weapons manufacturer Lockheed Martin, a group of citizens, consisting partly of opponents of the armed forces but also of supporters of Switzerland's armed neutrality, launched a popular initiative in August 2021. The main arguments of the initiative: The F-35 was developed for wars of aggression and is “massively oversized and unsuitable” for Swiss needs. In addition, “the US secret services are always in the cockpit – a scandal from a democratic point of view.”

Within a year, the necessary 100,000 signatures had been collected, and on 22 August 2022, the Federal Chancellery confirmed the initiative's success. Now one would expect our “servants of the people” to wait for the referendum on the initiative before signing the purchase agreement with the US. This was also the plan: “The Federal Council originally intended [...] to wait until a possible vote on the popular initiative” against the F-35 (Stop F-35) was through before signing the purchase contract.” But on 2 June 2022, a majority of the Council of States approved the purchase and demanded that the contracts be signed by the end of March 2023, because otherwise Lockheed Martin would allegedly deliver on worse terms. The Federal Council had “changed its mind in the meantime” and supported the quick conclusion of the contract. On 15 September, the majority of the National Council also gave the Federal Council the green light to sign the contract by the end of March (media releases of the Council of States of 2 June 2022 and of the National Council of 15 September 2022).

As the subject matter of the popular initiative thus fell by the wayside, the initiators withdrew it with a heavy heart. The way in which the Federal Council and the

“However, the Federal Council and Parliament – especially the bourgeois parties – have made it impossible to hold a democratic vote due to a lack of political will. The receipt is now a massive damage to direct democracy in Switzerland.” (National Councillor Priska Seiler Graf (SP/ZH))

parliamentary majority have ignored the direct democratic rights of the citizens is a scandal. Current Concerns asked National Councillor Priska Seiler Graf (SP, ZH), who announced the withdrawal of the initiative, about this.

Current Concerns: National Councillor Seiler Graf, the popular initiative against the purchase of the F-35 fighter jet came into being on 22 August with over 102,000 valid signatures. Now the initiative committee, of which you are a member, has withdrawn the initiative. Why?

Priska Seiler Graf: Unfortunately, the early signing of the treaties made the referendum obsolete. The Alliance against the F-35 did not want to offer a hand for a pseudo-referendum in which the electorate could not decide on the actual purchase decision. A vote after the contract has been signed is nothing but a democratic farce. For this reason, we withdraw the popular initiative.

However, we remain convinced that the F-35 is a bad buy and a risk worth billions for Switzerland.

But the 102,000 signatories have a right to a vote!

I can very well understand their disappointment, as I am myself. However, the Federal Council and Parliament – especially the bourgeois parties – have made it impossible to hold a democratic vote due to a lack of political will. The receipt is now a massive damage to direct democracy in Switzerland.

The risks and problems of this procurement were on the table through this initiative, but a broad and public debate was prevented by the undemocratic behaviour of the Federal Council. The political dam-

age caused by this will certainly be with us for some time to come.

Wouldn't a popular discussion on the dubiousness of a US stealth bomber for the Swiss Armed Forces nevertheless make sense, especially today when the Federal Council is considering joint combat exercises with NATO?

I am very sceptical about so-called NATO Art.5 exercises, i.e., alliance exercises. I don't believe that this kind of exercise would be possible in terms of neutrality policy. The real question is whether one wants to join NATO and give up neutrality. We can have this discussion, but it should be a political decision and not a “technology-driven” one about a fighter jet.

Thank you very much for the interview, Madam National Councillor.

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*mw.* And what does the responsible Federal Councillor have to say about this “massive damage to Switzerland's direct democracy”? Head of the FDDPS Viola Amherd: “For me, this procedure is very democratic.” In response to the accusation that the hasty signing of the agreement would be an affront to the 100,000 or so people who signed the petition for a referendum, the Federal Councillor gave an astonishing answer: “An initiative has no legal precedence – and if special treatment were given to this initiative, we would hardly be able to realise any more projects. Whether that would be democratic, I don't know.” (“Neue Zürcher Zeitung” of 14 September 2022. Emphasis: mw)

So the best thing is to abolish direct democracy, because otherwise our “servants of the people” can no longer do everything that suits them? This is precisely why the Swiss wrote direct democracy into their constitution: Here the people decide which “projects will be realised” and which will not!

“A vote after the contract has been signed is nothing but a democratic farce. For this reason, we withdraw the popular initiative.”

## Invitation to the Swiss Association Industry and Agriculture (SVIL) Symposium 2022

# Neutrality and Switzerland's security of supply

Schweizerische Vereinigung Industrie + Landwirtschaft  
Association Suisse Industrie + Agriculture  
Associazione Svizzera Industria + Agricoltura



Date: Tuesday, 29 November 2022  
Time: 10.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.  
Place: Zurich (near main station, the location will be communicated in advance)

### Why the security of supply of a small state and neutrality are interrelated

"The core of Switzerland's neutrality is not an ignoring of foreign conflicts, but rather being careful and staying out of ongoing conflicts by consciously adopting the status of neutrality. This concept of neutrality is therefore comprehensive because it addresses the solution to be found, into which every conflict must ultimately lead. If one allows oneself to be pushed into pre-judgements, neutrality is abandoned. [...] For Switzerland as an export-oriented small state, neutrality in the middle of Central Europe is the prerequisite for economic and national independence. In order to secure the supply, Switzerland, as a country poor in natural resources, is forced to focus its economic relations to their particular mutual benefit. This attitude is appreciated by trading partners worldwide as the reliability of the Swiss SME economy. This ability to see both points of view create trust and helps to forge economic relationships. That is why neutrality is also the basis of economic prosperity and security of supply of the small state. At the same time neutrality is also a politically accepted way of behaviour, how the small state can remain independent among the Great Powers. [...] Switzerland's neutrality already lives this multilateralism in a multipolar world. Instead of giving away neutrality, the neutrality of the sovereignly entered bilateral and multilateral economic relations is the solution to the crisis. For only a global economic order, in which all states participate in the international division of labour and interdependence on the basis of mutual advantage, can replace the old model of global domination and its never-ending conflicts."

(from: *Why SVIL is holding this conference*; <http://www.svil.ch>: *Neutrality and Switzerland's security of supply*)

### Programme

10.30–10.45 a.m.

*Hans Bieri*, Executive Director, SVIL:  
Welcome and introduction:  
Switzerland's security of supply and its direct relation to neutrality

#### Part 1

#### The initiative of Former Federal Councillor Dr Christoph Blocher

10.45–11.45 a.m.

a. Federal Councillor Dr *Christoph Blocher*:

Swiss neutrality: for a stronger anchoring in the Federal Constitution and against its creeping erosion. Art. 54a BV Swiss neutrality

#### Part 2

#### Neutrality as an essential feature of the of the Swiss community state

11.45–12.30

Dr phil *René Roca*, Research Institute for Direct Democracy ([www.fidd.ch](http://www.fidd.ch)):

The development of neutrality in the course of Swiss history: How can cultural, religious, linguistic and spatial diversity be united into a prosperous community state?

#### Lunch break 12.30–13.30

13.30–14.15

Professor Dr *Mathias Binswanger*, FHNW and University of St. Gallen:

Switzerland's neutrality and its development to a high-value service provider

14.15–15.00

Prof Dr *Alexandre Lambert*, Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations, GSD, Geneva:

500 years of geopolitics in the struggle for global hegemony: From the East India Companies to the City of London

Break 15.00–15.20

15.20–16.05

Dipl.-Ing. *Paul F. Reichmann*, Network of Global Security, Baden AG

Stability Policy and Neutrality: The middle class as the core of state sovereignty under pressure from global politics and monopolism

16.05–16.25

Dipl Ing ETH *Peter Bisang*, Risk Management and Innovations Methodology, Geneva Consulting & Management Group (GC & ML), Balzers:

The deadlock and the "Lugano-conference" mentality – methodological hints for Conflict and Risk Management of a neutral state

#### Part 3

#### Panel with speakers and representatives from SME industry, trade and agriculture

16.25–17.20

Target audience

- The committed SVIL environment
- The SMEs / Swissmem / Economiesuisse
- Personalities from business, politics and science

#### Registration and further information

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IBAN: CH30 0070 0110 0058 4500 0

Participation is free, contributions are welcome to the above payment details



# Are their voters all the same to German politicians?

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



Eberhard Hamer  
(Bild zvg)

*German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has unleashed a fundamental debate with her ill-considered confession that the interests of her own voters are irrelevant to her: Cui bono? For whom is policy made? Who should*

*benefit from economic returns and public finances? Whose are the interests that should ultimately count?*

A deep social, political and economic rift is opening up between theory and practice, between ideal and reality, between aspiration and what can be attained; and this is indeed calling into question the foundations of our economic and political existence.

The Western “community of values” claims to fight for democracy in the struggle against dictatorship, for the sovereignty of the individual citizen, for his or her prerogative before the state and for an electorally guaranteed policy in the interest of sovereign citizens.

Practically, however, imperative international demands issued by the Anglo-American world power and Anglo-American big business dominate; it is ultimately a matter of their interests, and democracy is only formally simulated.

Examples:

- The Greens (of all genders) want “ecology instead of economy”, deliberately reduce our economy for the sake of fine particles and CO<sub>2</sub>, and yet they think nothing of the fact that American global corporations, by destroying primeval forests in the Amazon, are causing four times more environmental damage than the maximum of what Germany would be able to avoid (2% of global CO<sub>2</sub> pollutants in Germany and 8.5% CO<sub>2</sub> damage in the primeval forest). Is this still environmental policy in the German voters’ interest?
- The green ministers of agriculture are swamping farmers’ agricultural production with more and more regulations, but are not bothered by the fact that international corporations ( *Monsanto et al.*) are systematically and totally changing the world with their genetically contaminated seeds. Agriculture for the farmers or for the corporations?
- Even before *Putin* attacked Ukraine, the USA ordered a world sanctions war against Russia, and all the old parties

“*Gaetano Mosca* already pointed out in 1939 that in all forms of government, all political elites would evolve into a functionary oligarchy. The clique of functionaries would close ranks among themselves – even democratic cliques of functionaries would develop an aloof life of their own, at the expense of the population, and form a functionary feudalism. [...] There would be a camaraderie among the established parties to fight new parties together in order not to have to share their power and sinecures.”

enthusiastically agreed that our government – without having any alternatives for it – cancelled not only a quarter of our raw material imports, but also the purchase of cheap gas from Russia. These sanctions have driven up oil and gas prices<sup>1</sup> and thus destroyed the German prosperity basis of cheap energy, without harming Russia, as this had higher revenues than before with half the gas supplies and double the prices. Ultimately, Germany is the main loser.

- The self-inflicted gas crisis and increase in prices put the gas suppliers of the international corporations in financial difficulties. Instead of solving this through insolvency according to the usual practice in a market economy, the Green government wants to use 34 billion to rescue gas importers, thus replicating *Merkel’s* bailout of bankrupt banks at the German expense in 2008. To pay for these gifts to the corporations, a gas levy is to be imposed on all citizens (over 3000 euros per household). Since this brought general protests, a “relief” of this burden to the amount of 300 euros (for a burden of more than 3000 euros) for the socially weak and for pensioners is now to appease the anger of the population. No government has ever harmed its own voters as much as the current one. Ms *Baerbock* gave the explanation: she does not care what the voters think and want.

Whose interests does this “representative of the people” represent?

*Gaetano Mosca* already pointed out in 1939<sup>2</sup> that in all forms of government, all political elites would evolve into a functionary oligarchy. The clique of functionaries would close ranks among themselves – even democratic cliques of functionaries would develop an aloof life of their own, at the expense of the population, and form a functionary feudalism. In contrast to dictatorships, democracies would only

have the advantage of peacefully replacing the ruling elite (through elections). The next majority, however, would form the same sort of functionary oligarchy. There would be a camaraderie among the established parties to fight new parties together in order not to have to share their power and sinecures.

In this sense, *Mosca* also denied that political elites have “the good of the people” and their interests in mind. They are only concerned with obtaining majorities for their own re-election, and besides, also with their own interests or the interests of more powerful people on whom they depend.

We have long suspected that our leading politicians are not acting in the interests of their own people, but in that of foreign powers and interests, given the above-mentioned cases of harming their own citizens for the good of foreign interests.

Ms *Baerbock*, however, in her stupidity, has confirmed this presumption. This government does not act in the interest of its voters, not even despite taking an oath “for the good of the German people”, but in the interest of our colonial power, international high finance (*Merz, Lindner*) or an ecological ideology out of touch with reality.

As our prosperity now collapses as a result of such economy-destroying policies, we will all – high achievers as well as recipients of transfer payments – become poorer as a result. The political elite, on the other hand, has secured impunity (immunity) for its actions and will disappear into the bushes with maximum pensions (as the public broadcasting corruption shows), thus remaining unaffected by its own destructive policies.

This is what red-green “social justice” looks like! •

<sup>1</sup> This was the Americans’ intention, so they would be able to sell their fracking oil and gas to the world in the first place.

<sup>2</sup> See his book “The Ruling Class”.

# Neutrality: Open Letter to the Austrian Federal Government

## Supporters so far: 48 437 (as of 23 October)

*Ladies and Gentlemen of the Austrian Federal Government,*

The events of the last few weeks have brought us, the signatories of this letter, to the realisation and decision that it is high time to convey to you, as representatives of the Republic of Austria and the people who live in Austria, our attitude and conviction and to call upon you to act in accordance with the wishes of your sovereign.

*War is always pointless. The dying of young people for the ambitions and power games of political actors is terrible, unbearable and unacceptable.*

For us as ordinary citizens it is impossible to know and question all aspects, backgrounds and facts, we all only see the terrible effects of the war between Russia and its neighbour Ukraine. But as responsible citizens we also see that this war is undoubtedly also being misused for strategic political interests.

The Western defence alliance NATO, under the leadership of the American government and with active support from the European states, has started an economic conflict by imposing sanctions that goes far beyond the limits of the war in Ukraine. By politicians and the media, we have been given the impression that the world is united in its opposition to Russia. We were assured that the imposition of sanctions would weaken the Russian economy to such an extent that the war would have to be stopped by the Russian leadership. We citizens have been led to believe that there was no alternative to the imposition of sanctions.

Now, after several months since the imposition of these sanctions, we think it is abundantly clear that none of this corresponds to reality. Outside Europe, the majority of states do not support the sanctions imposed by Western countries; on the contrary, a new power constellation is emerging in Eurasia, Africa and parts of South America that is in open opposition to the Western industrialised countries. Russia's economy seems to be far from suffering the damage from the sanctions that the inventors planned and communicated. There is no sign whatsoever that the sanctions can stop the senseless deaths of young people in eastern Ukraine.

On the contrary, we as citizens can also clearly experience every day that we are the actual sufferers of the eco-

omic sanctions and that *our* national economy and thus the entire social fabric of our society are suffering the most severe damage and that we are now facing the most severe economic crisis of the last 80 years due to the consequences of the sanctions. Now, as if this development were not bad enough, we as concerned citizens also have to recognize that the NATO states are in a veritable spiral of escalation also in military terms. As we can see, the alert of more than 300,000 troops of the NATO armies is being raised, the Western states are sending ever heavier weapons to the war zone, conflicts with Russia are already beginning to arise in other zones of Europe, and the speed of the rhetorical and factual escalation frightens us.

As a small country, we Austrians are not in a position to influence the actions of the NATO states. But we can become active ourselves and in the interest of our homeland.

After the horrors of the last world war, the generation of our fathers, mothers and grandparents committed themselves to perpetual neutrality for very good reasons.

Neutrality has entered the DNA of our nation for good and sensible reasons, an overwhelming majority of the population supports the retention of Austria's neutrality for good and true reasons. And therefore we, the signatories of this letter, see ourselves urgently called upon to go public and call upon the Austrian Federal Government:

- Let us, as the Republic of Austria, *immediately* return to strict neutrality towards *all* parties to the conflict in the Ukraine war.
- As part and consequence of this neutrality, let us strengthen controlled humanitarian aid for the civilian population in the regions affected by the war.
- Let us make Vienna available as a venue for an international peace conference in keeping with decades of tradition and invite *all* parties to the conflict and their political leadership to Vienna.

In order to prove our credibility as honest mediators – and to avert further damage to our national economy – we must *immediately* withdraw from supporting the unilaterally imposed sanctions by the Western defence alliance Nato! Austria has no place in Nato,

the Austrian population *does not want* membership in this military alliance, and consequently there is also no reason whatsoever for Austria to support Nato's sanctions against Russia!

We further call on the Austrian Federal Government not to continue to support the sanctions within the European Union, to speak out against them, not to participate in them under any circumstances and to take an initiative that aims at *peace, ceasefire and coexistence* among all peoples and states of the world!

The signatories of this letter expressly state:

This is not a party-political initiative or movement.

We do not support any political parties or individual politicians with this appeal. We are OPEN to support from all camps of the political spectrum, from all parts of civil society and the media landscape. This letter was written exclusively out of concern for the lives and well-being of the people who live in this country of Austria. We stand for peace and freedom. However, not at the price of destroying our own existence.

With the greatest respect

### The signatories:

By signing this letter, I freely support the demands of this letter.

*Gerald Markel*, Entrepreneur

*Wolfgang Sendlhofer*, Entrepreneur

*Max Pucher*,

President of Union Sovereignty

Professor DDr *Martin Haditsch*,  
Specialist in Microbiology

*Andreas Gass*, President EMUs

*Bernhard Costa*, Vice President EMUs

Dr *Wolfgang Schmidauer*, Lawyer

DI Dr *Jürgen Meinhart*, Entrepreneur

*Beatrice Hubner*, Co-founder of the  
"Löwenmamas" (Lion Mamas)

Signing media:

*TKP, Peter F. Mayer*

*Report24, Florian Machl*

*RTV, Nicolas Schott*

*Sovereign Media*

Source: <https://souveraenitaet.org/neutralitaet/>

(Translation Current Concerns)

## “If you keep reading the Anglo-Saxon media you get a completely distorted view”

**Kishore Mahbubani invites the US to join the Asian century – in parity**

ts. He has been listed as one of the world's 100 greatest intellectuals by *Foreign Policy* and *Prospect* magazines, and by the *Financial Times* in its list of the 50 most important figures who will shape the debate on the future of capitalism. He has also been called “the muse of the Asian century”. Kishore Mahbubani, a political scientist and highly decorated diplomat from Singapore, gave us a glimpse in an interview of what an Asian perspective on the current crisis between the USA and China and the USA and Russia looks like. People in the West would be well advised, Mahbubani said, to realise that Western dominance is over, and that the Asian century has long since begun and that conflicts can be solved through negotiation and deeper trade relations pragmatism rather than ideologically blinded

“The United States is the only modern developed country where the average income of the bottom 50 percent hasn't gone up in 30 years.”

*striving for supremacy are called for. A way to avoid wars in the future.*

If there is a new Cold War, the US wrongly assumes it would have the same outcome as the first Cold War, Kishore Mahbubani says: “But the difference between cold war 1.0 and cold war 2.0 [is], and this is slightly provocative, it's the United States that's acting like the Soviet Union, and it's China that's acting like the United States, you know.” The Americans of today would slide into complacency along

the lines of, “Hey, we've had a cold war, we won it, of course we'll win a [new] cold war.” But this would be a blatant misjudgment. Today, China is very well integrated into the world, China signs free trade agreements with the world, just as the US did during the first Cold War, but in complete contrast to the US today. China is making investments with the Road and Belt Initiative, while the US is withdrawing from the world. Mahbubani recommends that the US reconsiders its misperception and not continue to underestimate China. Western domination has only lasted for the last two hundred years, he said, and is nothing more than an aberration in world history. The 1800 years before that, China and India had always been the two largest economies in the world. China has been existing for four thousand years and has already been through a lot: “It will right through this contest too.”

### A major geopolitical contest has broken out

Mahbubani was in Washington DC in July as head of an Asian trade delegation and states that US-China relations are at their lowest point since at least 1989, and that the situation is akin to that of two trains that have left the station and are hurtling toward each other at full speed. “A great geopolitical confrontation has broken out. And the sad thing is that it is both inevitable and avoidable at the same time.”

Trade within China, between China and Southeast Asia, and with the rest of the world has skyrocketed in recent years, he said. “Let me just give you one piece of data. In the year 2000 US trade with Southeast Asia was 135 billion dollars, more than three times China's trade with Southeast Asia. You fast forward to 2021: US trade with Southeast Asia has gone up significantly from 135 billion to over 300 billion – an increase of two and a half times. China's trade with Southeast Asia has gone from 40 billion to 800 billion increase of 20 times! And this is just the beginning!”

What we will see in the 21st century, the Asian century, is a massive explosion of economic productivity and profits

### Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Established in 1967 and composed of ten member states, the *Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)* is the most important intergovernmental organisation in Southeast Asia.

ASEAN is composed of ten member states: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

It facilitates regional integration and cooperation, promoting peace and security, economic well-being and human development. Taken together, the ASEAN countries make up the fifth largest economy in the world with a market of more than 655 million people.

The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia, and has numerous offices and administrative centres throughout the region. The chairmanship of ASEAN rotates annually and key meetings take place in the country which currently holds the chairmanship. ASEAN is at the centre of other regional fora, such as ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, Republic of Korea), the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum. It maintains privileged relations with other states and organisations, with whom it enjoys varying degrees of association; there are eleven Dialogue Partners (Australia, Canada, China, EU, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, USA, UK) four Sectoral Dialogue Partners (Norway, Pakistan, Switzerland, Turkey) and four Development Partners (Germany, Chile, France and Italy).

Switzerland became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 2016. This partnership

strengthens Switzerland's presence at the multilateral level in the Asia-Pacific region as well as its bilateral relations with the ASEAN member states. Fields for cooperation between Switzerland and ASEAN are jointly identified in an action plan (“ASEAN-Switzerland Practical Cooperation Areas 2017–2021”). The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs lists four priority areas: human security, vocational education and training, climate change and social forestry, disaster management and risk reduction.

The partnership is assessed once a year at a meeting of the *Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee*. High-level political dialogue takes place during the annual ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, when the head of the *Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)* or the State Secretary meet with their ASEAN counterparts.

At the end of 2019, Swiss companies had invested around CHF 40 billion in ASEAN countries, up from CHF 2.3 billion in 1995. Switzerland figures among ASEAN's ten largest foreign direct investors. In the tourism sector, more than one million overnight stays in Switzerland were booked by Southeast Asian tourists in 2019, an increase of 50% from 2013 to 2019. Around 20,000 Swiss citizens reside in ASEAN member states while 25,000 citizens from the ASEAN region reside in Switzerland.

Source: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/dfa/foreign-policy/international-organizations/asean.html>



**“If you keep reading ...”**

continued from page 15

in Asia. And China will be a part of that, he said, while the US will be left out: “... unless it really seriously has a long-term comprehensive economic engagement policy with the region, which by the way we want, we want the United States to be engaged as region, but it doesn’t have a strategy for doing so.” Mahbubani also warns against a Western-narrowed perception of the world and East Asia in particular: “If you are going to understand this region through the lenses of the Anglo-Saxon media, you will completely misunderstand what’s happening in East Asia, because they have a very jaundice black and white view of what is happening here.”

Mahbubani illustrates this with the example of Hong Kong. Contrary to what is portrayed in the Western media, it must be clearly stated that: “Hong Kong was a British colony that was illegally seized by the British in the humiliating opium war of 1842.” China was just correcting a great historical humiliation by recapturing Hong Kong. Hong Kong was a part of China, he said. “So, that’s the reality, in the same way that Goa [long occupied by the Portuguese, ts.] is part of India. Right so it’s important therefore, if you keep reading the Anglo-Saxon media, you get a completely distorted view.”

**Asia is engaged in trading that unites – the West is fighting wars**

It cannot be emphasised enough that of the 7.8 billion people on our planet, 1.4 billion live in China and 1.3 billion in India. Together with the 700 million people in ASEAN (see box), that is, says Mahbubani with an ironic wink, “the new CIA”: China, India, ASEAN. Those are the world’s three main growth engines, he said. “And guess what you read, the Anglo-Saxon media, you’ll never understand the “CIA” and what’s happening in this region.” When asked who contributed more to global economic growth in the decade between 2010 and 2020, the European Union or ASEAN, Mahbubani responded as follows: “The answer is ASEAN, and nobody knows anything about ASEAN, so what you have here in this region is a culture of pragmatism that is prevent-

ing wars like Ukraine that’s going to drag down the United States and EU. While the EU keeps on fighting wars, Asia is trading”, he said.

Of course, there are also differences between the Asian countries. He said the China India relationship is complicated and they’re not going to become buddies anytime soon. “But at the same time, I think the Indians have very wise long-term strategic thinkers, and the worst thing that can happen for India is to sort of be completely alienated from China and dependent only on the United States.” Despite the political disagreements between India and China, however, trade between the two countries has continued to grow. He said: “the Ukraine war may have helped to stabilise the China India relationship, because when the West criticised India very heavily for not condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, when the West condemned India for continuing to buy Russian oil and continues to criticise India for not continuing to buy Russian equipment, that’s when the Indians said, okay, you don’t like what I’m doing, I’ll go independent. What are you going to do about it?” China and India both neither condemned nor supported the Russian invasion of Ukraine, he said, and Western criticism brought the two countries closer together.

Mahbubani has clear words for the role of the Europeans in the Ukraine conflict: “This is a conflict that could have easily been avoided if the Europeans had shown some kind of strategic common sense. They didn’t show strategic common sense by trying to bring Ukraine to NATO.” Europe now pays the price for this. “It’s your stupidity that has caused this conflict, you go fight it, we don’t get involved.”

**It would be in the interest of the US to cooperate with the world**

As far as the US is concerned, it faces a choice of direction: The United States has basically got to make a choice between primacy or to improve the well-being of its people. Primacy does not come without making a great economic sacrifice. If you want to improve the well-being of your citizens – and that is urgently needed, because the United States is the only modern developed country in which the average

**“One of the biggest mistakes Europe made”**

“I think it was one of the biggest mistakes Europe made, especially after 2014, to exclude Russia from the G8. Because you don’t solve a problem by excluding someone who is geographically your neighbour. It solves nothing and creates an additional problem.”

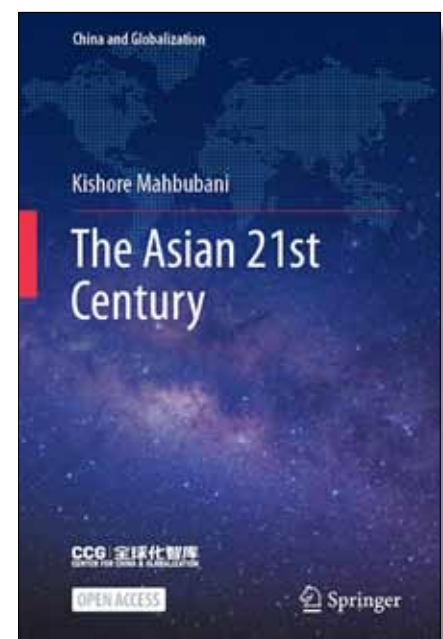
Kishore Mahbubani in his presentation on the book “The Asian 21st Century” of 24 June 2022.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3RYeyKIVHg>

income of the bottom 50 percent has not risen in the last 30 years – then you cannot work against China, but must seek cooperation. It should be the business community in the United States that would have to say, “Let’s take care of our people, let’s take care of our own business interests, let’s work with China, ... just work with China and don’t try to stop China from becoming number one, because it is a mission impossible.”

Wouldn’t Europe and the US be well advised to adjust their imperial view of the world and take the outstretched hand from Asia? Pragmatism or ideological delusion: What will secure our peace, what will lead to more and more wars? “Can Asians think?” was the title of an earlier book by Mahbubani. The question today is probably rather: Can we Westerners think? Listening to Mahbubani, wouldn’t that be a first step on this path? •

Source: Kishore Mahbubani and Steven Okun. “USA = USSR, China = USA if Cold War 2.0?” of 1 August 2022; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5klNOA8WRyg>



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