

# Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg Our world is in upheaval

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

The second Russia-Africa Summit took place in St. Petersburg on 27 and 28 July. The first had taken place in 2019. Many Western media tried to portray this year's meeting as a failure for Russia: Because of a smaller number of African heads of state and government participating than in 2019; because of alleged criticism by African states of Russia's cancellation of the grain agreement; because of alleged major disagreements between Russia and African states on the Ukraine issue, etc. – main thing: negative.

I cannot share this assessment. In the West, everything that does not correspond to the Western narrative is currently dismissed as propaganda of the “enemy” – but the articles and statements from the non-Western world published on the summit speak a different language.

It would be very desirable for those responsible in the West to start taking all these voices seriously and to move away from their hitherto declared goals – isolating Russia, “ruining” Russia, inflicting a “strategic defeat” on Russia and/or parcelling out Russia. Not primarily for Russia's sake, but as a step towards the recovery of a Western “patient” who has been suffering from a denial of reality for some time now and is endangering world peace and the world economy with his escalating power posturing.

### How the West tried to disturb the summit

The states of the West have tried to disrupt or even prevent the Russia-Africa summit by many means. Also with very concrete harassment. The Russian-based German-language *Anti-Spiegel* quotes the President of the Republic of Congo, *Denis Sassou-Nguesso*: “This summit was held in a difficult international situation, and it took a lot of effort. Many people wanted this summit to fail, and even we ran into huge difficulties on our way here. The plane that we used landed in Dubai because the insurance companies in the West opposed the arrival of this plane in St. Petersburg. So, we had to hire another plane in Dubai and fly here in a small jet. It was quite a difficult five-hour flight. I also know that other delegations have also encountered



Plenary session of the Russia-Africa Summit.  
(picture Pavel Bednyakov, RIA Novosti)

difficulties, in particular with regard to the right to overfly certain countries.”<sup>1</sup>

The same President had this to say about the Summit: “Most African delegations were here except for a few countries. It was a huge success.” And: “I believe that the conclusion of this summit opens enormous prospects in cooperation between Russia and the African continent.”<sup>2</sup>

### Comprehensive final declaration and further agreements

The authorised English-language version of the final declaration<sup>3</sup> is 14 pages long and cannot be reproduced in detail here, but is highly recommended reading. This final declaration confirms the judgement of the President of the Republic of Congo. It links up with the 2019 Summit and reaffirms the agreements reached there. This year's declaration contains agreements on the “mechanism of dialogue partnership”, “political and legal cooperation” (this is the most extensive part with 29 of a total of 74 sub-headings), “security cooperation”, “trade and economic cooperation”, “scientific and technical, humanitarian, educational, cultural, sports, health, youth and information cooperation” and “environmental and climate cooperation”. From these chapter headings alone, it is clear how broadly based the plans for cooperation are.

In addition to the final declaration, four other declarations and two special memoranda<sup>4</sup> were adopted, one with the *Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)*<sup>5</sup> and another with the *Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)*<sup>6</sup>. The four declarations include agreements on preventing an arms race in space, on cooperation in the field of information security, on enhanced cooperation in the fight against terrorism, as well as a Russian-African Partnership Forum action plan for the years 2023 to 2026.

### “Driving force of multipolarity: Being free from hegemony, dominance and paternalism”

The “Berliner Zeitung” is one of the few German mainstream newspapers that now and then allows dissenting opinions to have their say. On 30 July, this was *Thomas Fassbender*, who conducted interviews and wrote commentaries for the channel RT German until the end of February 2022 and has probably written the most comprehensive German-language biography on *Vladimir Putin* published in 2022. The following excerpt from Fassbender's article attempts to provide an answer to the question of why more and more states in the world are striving for an independent policy with-

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## South Africa's Foreign Minister reiterates firm stance on fair trade and Western bullying

by Siyabonga Sithole



Naledi Pandor (picture Dirco, IOL)

The South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation *Naledi Pandor* has once again called for South Africa to take a firm stance against the bullying tactics of Western countries.

Pandor, who is part of the delegation that includes President *Cyril Ramaphosa* for the Russia-Africa Summit currently under way in St Petersburg, added that there needs to be fair trade so that the world is not held hostage by one system.

She said the world's financial systems and institutions must not be politicised. But there must be fairness in world trade.

Pandor [...] said there must also be diversity in the financial system around the

world, adding that the continent should not be blamed for its relationship with Russia, which has been built over many years. "Africa has built up its relationship with Russia over many years. It is a very important relationship for us, particularly South Africa, given the role that the people of Russia played in our own struggle for freedom."

"From time to time, the UN has been used to further political ends. It has been used as a weapon by some against others. We need to end that. I think having diversity in structures and mechanisms allows for democratic processes," she said.

She also called for the continent to realise that the time has come for its leaders to take a firm stand on issues of international importance.

"The time has come for the continent to realise that it has the possibility of being an extremely powerful part of the world, and we need to be far more in control of our own capabilities and resources, and we should manage them in the interests of the continent."

Pandor said African leaders should do away with the notion that the continent owes Western countries and their leaders something. She said this notion shows a new wave of colonisation.

"I know there is this notion that Africa owes someone something. This is a Neo-colonial idea. We need to begin to understand our own power and use it to good effect for Africa. Even those who claim to be our friends have really exploited the resources of the continent."

"Colonialism was about resources. It was about extraction. No oppressor will change the situation of oppression, but it is *we* who can do that. I think we need to develop a different relationship with our resources," she told *Russia TV*.

She added that there must be fairness and diversity in world trade, calling for African leaders to form partnerships that favour and not exploit the continent, as the continent has suffered enough exploitation by Western countries. [...]

Source: <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/minister-pandor-reiterates-firm-stance-on-fair-trade-and-western-bullying-54fd0cea-7f66-43ae-9347-b254f0a4d21d> of 27 July 2023

### "Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg"

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out Western domination – an answer that might provoke us in the West to reflect:

"At the centre is the rebellion against paternalism, perceived or real. The driving force is a new self-confidence, the result of half a century of globalisation. Progress and modernity are no longer defined by the West. The whole world is part of it. This is clearly illustrated by the example of three BRICS countries that were traditionally considered partisans of the West: Brazil, India and South Africa. The Ukraine war has shown that these countries do no longer accept Western narratives unquestioned.

The West is losing its sovereignty over the interpretation of good and evil in politics. If it were otherwise, there would be no need for sanctions, and certainly not for secondary sanctions. It is precisely these that prove that allegiance can only be established by means of force.

But respect cannot be forced, and pressure results in counter-pressure. [...] The Russian invasion of Ukraine, followed by the West's war of sanctions against Russia, has triggered a rapid West-East estrangement. When people in Europe shout: no longer be dependent on Russia and China, they say in China and Russia: no longer be dependent on the USA. Not on the US dollar, not on the Western-dominated, globe-spanning infrastructure."

And at the end of the article, it reads:

"The 21<sup>st</sup> century is not about the antagonism of democracy versus autocracy. There is also no competition between the systems; the respective forms of rule arise from historical conditioning, social constitution and opportunity. The decisive factor is the all-round struggle for autonomy, the actual driving force of multipolarity: to be free from hegemony, dominance and paternalism."

The current events in and around the state of Niger can also only be understood in this larger context.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.anti-spiegel.ru/2023/wie-der-westen-versucht-hat-den-russland-afrika-gipfel-zu-sabotieren-\(how-the-west-tried-to-sabotage-the-russia-africa-summit\)/](https://www.anti-spiegel.ru/2023/wie-der-westen-versucht-hat-den-russland-afrika-gipfel-zu-sabotieren-(how-the-west-tried-to-sabotage-the-russia-africa-summit)/) of 30 July 2023

<sup>2</sup> The full statement of the President of the Republic of Congo can be found in the above-mentioned article of the *Anti-Spiegel*.

<sup>3</sup> <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5972> of 28 July 2023;

<sup>4</sup> cf. [en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5976](http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5976) with the further links

<sup>5</sup> The *Intergovernmental Authority on Development* (IGAD) is a regional organisation of states in Northeast Africa (Regional Economic Community) based in Djibouti. Since 1996, it has been the successor organisation to IGADD (*Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development*), which was founded in 1986 as an initiative of Djiboutian President *Hassan Gouled Aptidon*. Its aim is to support the member states in their development.

<sup>6</sup> The *Economic Community of Central African States* (ECCAS) is an economic community of the *African Union* to promote regional economic cooperation in Central Africa. Its goal is to achieve collective autonomy through cooperation, raise the living standards of the population and maintain economic stability.

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## South Africa and Russia cement bilateral relations

by Dikeledi Molobela

[...] President *Putin* was speaking on Saturday during a bilateral meeting with President *Cyril Ramaphosa* at Konstantinovsky Palace in St. Petersburg. The gathering was held to discuss South Africa and Russia's bilateral relations.

In response, President *Cyril Ramaphosa* expressed his sincere appreciation, underscoring the longstanding history of collaboration between the two nations.

He emphasised that their cooperation goes back to their joint efforts within the G20, where they have successfully worked together on numerous critical issues. [...]

Turning attention to the recently concluded second Russia-Africa Summit, President *Ramaphosa* lauded President *Putin* for hosting a successful summit, with a declaration that was "well negotiated and well crafted", representing the views of various countries.

President *Ramaphosa* took the opportunity to express gratitude to his counterpart for hosting a successful and well organised summit.

"We believe the summit was successful and well organised. The outcome was very good and the declaration was well negotiated and well crafted. It represents the views of various countries that were here and put together with your views. I believe that we have a declaration that can take forward our relationship between Africa and Russia."

"What is particularly pleasing is that Russia conducts its relationship with Africa at a strategic level, with a great deal of respect for and recognition of the sovereignty of African States," the President said. President *Ramaphosa* acknowledged that Russia's support for Africa has remained steadfast over time, dating back to the days of the Soviet Union. He expressed satisfaction that the spirit of cooperation between Russia and Africa endures to this day.

### Trade ties

Regarding the bilateral relationship between Russia and South Africa, President *Ramaphosa* affirmed that the two nations share and uphold strong ties.

"It's a multi-level relationship. On an investment level, there are quite a number of companies in the South African market that are also invested in the Russia market," he said.

The President emphasised that South Africa is presently grappling with an energy crisis and could gain valuable insights from Russia's experience. [...]

The President mentioned his interest in exploring fields such as space, noting the presence of a Space Institute in South Africa.

"You have advanced a great deal in space, and that is one area in which we could cooperate."

"We appreciate the support we received from Russia during the COVID-19. Your innovation when it came to COVID-19 helped to inspire our own scientists. I remember you [President *Putin*] and I having a conversation after our scientists discovered *Omicron* and we spoke on the phone. You sent Russian scientists to South Africa so that we could exchange views. I do believe that that was really impactful. We thank you for that," the President said.

Regarding education, the President expressed South Africa's deep appreciation for the support received from Russia. He conveyed his desire to encourage an increasing number of students to pursue studies in various disciplines in Russia.

President *Ramaphosa* acknowledged the value of the extensive support provided by President *Putin* to many South Africans who have been educated in Russia, and expressed his wish to see this support continue.

Furthermore, President *Ramaphosa* praised President *Putin*'s stance on the representation of Africa at the United Nations level.

"We'd like to appreciate your position on the issue of the representation of Africa at the UN level. We continue to be a continent that is not represented in the key structures of the UN. Thank you for being supportive in that regard," he said. •

Source: <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/sa-russia-cement-bilateral-relations> of 29 July 2023

## Russia-Africa Summit: "Russia resembles family"

by Sikho Matiwane\*

The Russia Africa Summit, which is being hosted in St Petersburg, Russia, has heightened tensions between the West and Africa. The United States and France have threatened several African delegations attending the Summit. [...]

*Nomvula Mokonyane*'s\*\* remarks on 25 July (Wednesday) amid her interview with *Newzroom Africa* in St Petersburg divulge that South Africa is certainly one of the nations pestered by the United States and France.

When questioned about the threats, *Mokonyane* stated that the *ANC* has ongoing interactions with the United States Embassy in South Africa, and that the *ANC*'s Treasurer-General went to the US for additional engagements with the US.

"We're trying to avoid being trapped in one relationship," she said. She went on to say that South Africa would want the chance to reaffirm its stand on alternative creation and diversity.

In his opening remarks on the first day of the summit, Russian President *Vladimir Putin* reassured African leaders that they were in a country of friends and like-minded people.

They certainly are. Russia and China have always stood behind African countries during times of hardship, and unlike the United States, they are on the legitimate side of history.

A month ago, Kenya's president attended the Global Financing Pact Summit, and in his speech, he pointed out that African leaders are frequently summoned like young boys and girls and intimidated to attend summits in the West, failing which the West will rescind any prior agreements and cooperation. He stated that conferences organised by Western countries are merely for spectacle; they make pledges but fail to fulfil them. South Africa's president was among those present, and he conveyed his displeasure with the West, claiming that during Covid-19, the West

treated African leaders like beggars by hoarding vaccines while China and Russia went beyond what was necessary to safeguard human lives in Africa.

Russia has a lot to offer Africa through this conference, particularly in terms of the blue economy. The United States and the West must recognise that Russia is not and has never been an adversary of Africa; in fact, Russia has helped African countries even when doing so was unfashionable.

We have friends in America and the West. Russia resembles family. •

\* *Sikho Matiwane* is an established entrepreneur and director at *Matiwane Diplomatic Consulting*.

\*\* *Nomvula Mokonyane* is an *ANC*-affiliated South African politician. She was a minister in the South African government until 2019. (Editor's note)

Source: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/opinion/russia-africa-summit-russia-is-more-like-family-than-the-west-87a6f446-de7b-45e0-9214-f07c055fd316> of 28 July 2023

## Despite Western pressure, African states are demonstrating sovereignty

*globaltimes*. St. Petersburg hosted the second Russia-Africa Summit from 27 to 28 July that was attended by 17 heads of state from that continent. They and the other participants, which also included five vice presidents and four heads of government alongside many national delegations, bravely defied Western pressure to come to this event. Russian officials earlier claimed that the US and the EU were trying to talk their guests out of going. This allegation was lent credence by the publication of hostile Western media editorials.

The overwhelming majority of African countries participated in some capacity after only five countries declined to send representatives to the summit. Recalling that a little more than half of the continent voted against Russia at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at least once since the start of its special operation in Ukraine, this means there were countries that still decided to expand ties with Russia in spite of their disagreements over the situation in Eastern Europe.

Western political and media pressure failed to ruin the event because African countries appreciate the ways in which Russia can help them strengthen their sovereignty during these unpredictable times. The erstwhile Soviet Union supported their freedom movements and comprehensively assisted many of them with building their statehood afterwards. Regrettably, the Russian Federation struggled with many domestic challenges after independence and wasn't able to resume this international role until recently.

President *Vladimir Putin* sought to make up for lost time during the first Russia-Africa Summit that was held in October 2019, but the COVID-19 pandemic

and then the NATO-Russian proxy war in Ukraine impeded implementation of their action plan. Be that as it may, Russian-African ties didn't deteriorate in the nearly four years since their last multilateral meeting, and it can actually be argued that Russia became more important to some of its African partners during this period than at any time since 1991.

The West's anti-Russian sanctions that were imposed after the start of its special operation in Ukraine caused problems for its African partners, which weren't resolved in spite of the Black Sea Grain Initiative that Moscow recently declined to extend after it accused the West of not fulfilling its part of the deal. Nevertheless, Russian President Putin promised during the latest summit to ship the neediest of them grain free of charge by year's end.

This brings the analysis around to discussing other aspects of the event since it concerned more than just strengthening Russian-African agricultural cooperation. Consistent with the theme of "Peace, Security and Development," military ties were discussed bilaterally with interested countries behind closed doors, but the details weren't publicly disclosed due to their sensitivity. Additionally, academic, energy, financial, industrial, institutional, media and other forms of cooperation were also discussed.

What connects everything together is that the comprehensive expansion of Russian-African relations in each of these spheres advances President Putin's vision of helping his country's partners on the continent "strengthen national and cultural sovereignty" like he pledged to do leading up to the summit. He's regularly spoken about this concept since the start of

the special operation, which he considers to be the prerequisite for mutually beneficial partnerships.

It deserves to be mentioned at this point that not a single African country jumped on the West's anti-Russian sanctions bandwagon despite immense pressure to do so. This includes those who voted against it at least once at the UNGA. Never before had all of Africa come together like this. Its countries clearly wanted to show the international community that they're truly independent and will no longer let their former colonisers dictate their policies.

The West was shocked by this unprecedented display of sovereignty, which is why its officials and media began waging an information warfare campaign against Russia in a desperate attempt to convince African countries to sanction it. Examples include false claims that its military advisors are responsible for atrocities and lying that Russia is weaponising famine in Africa. No African country was swayed into sanctioning Russia, however, not even those that didn't attend the latest summit.

They all know that their objective national interests are best served by keeping their strategic options open and not burning bridges with any of their partners no matter the external pressure put upon them. Russia is regarded as a historically reliable partner with whom ties can be expanded in whatever sphere any given African country wants, which can help diversify from their previously disproportionate dependence on the West while complementing their efforts to cultivate even closer ties with China.

Russia doesn't attach strings to its agricultural and military aid, nor does China

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## African Union calls for ceasefire in Ukraine

The African Union (AU) on Friday called on Russian President *Vladimir Putin* for a ceasefire in Ukraine and a solution to the grain war at the end of the Russia-Africa Summit in St Petersburg.

"We need to achieve a ceasefire [in Ukraine], because war is always unpredictable. The longer it lasts, the more unpredictable it becomes. Putin has shown that he is ready for dialogue," said Comorian President *Azali Assoumani*, who holds the rotating chairmanship of the AU.

Assoumani referred to the ten-point peace plan presented by the African countries to Moscow and Kiev and emphasised that "we now have to convince the other side". He added: "We are acting as mediators. We will talk to both sides. I hope that we will achieve positive results."

Among other things, the plan provides for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, a de-escalation of hostilities, security guarantees for both sides and respect for sovereignty, as stipulated in the UN Charter. African countries led by South African President *Cyril Ramaphosa* had presented the plan to Moscow and Kiev in mid-June, but Ukrainian President *Volodymyr Zelensky* responded, as he did with the Chinese initiative, that the negotiations would have to include the complete withdrawal of the Russian army from the occupied territories.

For his part, Putin, who accused the United States and NATO of refusing dialogue with Russia, assured that he would talk "with interested African countries" about the situation in Ukraine. At the same

time, he announced Russia's intention to reopen embassies closed after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The final declaration of the second Russia-Africa Summit makes no specific reference to Ukraine, but condemns "aggressive nationalism, neo-Nazism and neo-fascism" as well as "Afrophobia and Russophobia". The approximately 50 representatives of the countries participating in the meeting made no secret of the fact that food security depends to a large extent on the cessation of all hostilities between the parties to the conflict. •

Source: <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/572317-la-union-africana-pide-alto-el-fuego-en-ucrania> of 29 July 2023

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

CELAC-EU summit

## A summit with imbalances and differences

by Daniel Kerssfeld, Argentina

The meeting between CELAC [*Community of Latin American and Caribbean States*] and the European Union (EU) in Brussels had a special political significance, especially because it was the first summit of heads of state and government from both continents in eight years.

Despite all the efforts of the organisers to give the summit a semblance of unity, differences and disagreements prevailed at the meeting.

The post-Covid economic recovery, the environmental crisis and the fierce power struggle between Russia and NATO were the main items on the agenda of an event with great political implications. This was already evident weeks earlier with the failed lobbying of *Volodymyr Zelensky*.

The presence of the Ukrainian president at the summit was rejected by a group of Latin American governments who, practically as a common bloc, decided not to interfere in the conflict, despite different interpretations of guilt and responsibility for the war and, above all, despite the massive pressure exerted by Washington and the main European capitals.

Inevitably, the focus was on China's current economic expansion. While Latin America is not yet playing a leading role in the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which aims to create a huge market stretching from China to Germany, Beijing's clear influence on Latin America's economy cannot be denied.

Given this reality, the European charm offensive aims to weaken China's influence in Latin America, but also to ensure greater autonomy vis-à-vis Russia, the power that served as the main suppli-

### "Despite Western pressure ..."

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attach any to its infrastructure investments and market access, with these forms of co-operation combining to strengthen African states' sovereignty. Moreover, these major countries are also sincere in their desire to improve people-to-people ties, especially academic exchanges and skills training. The reason for this is that they envisage Africa as a whole functioning as an independent pole in the emerging Multipolar World Order.

Therein lies the primary difference between the US and the EU on one hand and Russia and China on the other. The first pair attaches strings of some sort to all forms of aid in order to keep Africa subordinated to them, while the second pair never attaches any of the aforesaid since it wants to empower Africa's rise.

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"We cannot agree to these sanctions. We have a strategic partnership with the EU, there can be no bans or punishments, only negotiations. [...] The basis between strategic partners should be mutual trust, not mistrust or sanctions."  
(*Lula da Silva*)

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er of energy resources before the recent economic sanctions and was thus a strategic ally for the old continent's economic engine.

European Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen* announced that the EU would increase funding for Latin America and the Caribbean under the *Global Gateway* plan to finance sustainable development and the "energy transition" of our region. The EU's main focus is not on the environmental factor, but on digital transformation, with a focus on grid connectivity, cyber defence and people's digital rights.

However, the announced 45 billion euros could only achieve full grid connectivity for more than a third of the Latin American population that does not yet have access to broadband internet. According to the figures presented by the EU, a real digital transformation project with an ecological focus would require six times the amount originally planned.

### Inconsistencies in the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement

For the countries of the South, the ratification of the agreement between *Merco-*

*sur* and the European Union was one of the most important points of discussion. However, there were difficulties from the beginning due to the differences between the two continents, which led a number of countries, including France, to reject the treaty because of its economic impact.

On the other hand, the EU already decided a year ago to impose sanctions on contracting parties to bilateral trade agreements if they violate the provisions on human rights and climate change contained therein. The EU has provided for the possibility of sanctions such as the suspension of trade facilitation or the withdrawal of tariff preferences.

While these types of environmental regulations are largely met in the old continent, they are very costly for the countries of the southern continent, especially in the current situation, which reinforces the imbalance between the two regions.

The new approach has been proposed for all trade agreements and is therefore reflected in the ongoing negotiations, as in the case of Mercosur. The European Parliament had delayed the entry into force of the agreement for more than three years because of the massive deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon region during *Jair Bolsonaro's* term in office.

Since the start of his new term on 1 January 2023, *Lula da Silva* has described the sanctions threatened by the European Union as "unacceptable", a position he also clearly expressed after his appointment as *Mercosur* secretary in early July.

In his statements, the Brazilian president reiterated: "We cannot agree to these sanctions. We have a strategic partnership with the EU, there can be no bans or punishments, only negotiations." And for the avoidance of doubt, he reiterated that "the basis between strategic partners should be mutual trust, not mistrust or sanctions."

In order not to add unnecessary burden to an already complex summit, EU representatives were at pains to stress that environmental sanctions would not be dis-

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The US and the EU can't countenance an international order that they don't lead, while Russia and China are striving to build a fair and just order where all countries are equal regardless of their size.

This insight enables one to better understand the significance of the second Russia-Africa Summit, which is intended to function as Russia's complementary version of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Both events take place at multi-year intervals, thus providing enough time to make progress on their action plans. Although Russia is comparatively late in re-engaging with Africa, it more than makes up for this delay with the strategic role that it plays in ensuring its partners' agricultural and military needs.

Source: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202307/1295280.shtml> of 29 July 2023

## Times have changed, even if the EU does not want to admit it yet ...

by Gisela Liebe

At the CELAC-EU summit in Brussels on July 18-19, 2023, most heads of state of Latin American countries were present, including Cuban President *Miguel Díaz-Canel* and EU-sanctioned Venezuelan Vice President *Delcy Rodríguez*. CELAC (*Community of Latin American and Caribbean States*) is a loose association of all 33 states of both Americas, with the exception of the USA and Canada. The fact that there was hardly any coverage of this important event in the German-language media quickly becomes understandable when one considers the course and results of the summit - which were not at all to the liking of the EU.

In recent months, the EU and Germany had already launched a veritable charm offensive in the direction of Latin America; *Ursula von der Leyen*, *Olaf Scholz*, *Annalena Baerbock* and *Robert Habeck* travelled to various Latin American countries one after the other, on the one hand to draw them to the side of the West in the Ukraine issue and, on the other, to secure supplies of raw materials to Europe. For the EU, it is also important that the free trade agreement with the *Mercosur* countries Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, which has been planned for years,

is being ratified as soon as possible, even if the agriculture of EU countries such as France and Austria would suffer severely.

Massive differences between the EU and the CELAC countries were already apparent in the run-up to the summit. Spain, which has held the EU presidency since 1 July 2023, invited Ukrainian President *Volodymyr Zelensky* to the summit, but had to withdraw the invitation after massive protests from a number of CELAC countries.

The two sides also had controversial ideas about the joint final declaration. The EU submitted a draft with several paragraphs on support for Ukraine, all of which were cancelled in CELAC's counter-draft. According to their ideas, Ukraine should not be mentioned at all in the final document. Finally, the 41-point final declaration contained the neutral phrase "We are deeply concerned about the ongoing war in Ukraine", without even mentioning Russia. In fact, this minimal consensus could not be unanimously adopted, as this wording was also rejected by Nicaragua.

For the countries of Latin America, and especially Argentina, the first-time mention of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) as an unresolved problem was particularly important. According

to the Argentine Foreign Minister *Santiago Cafiero*, this meant an invitation to Great Britain to begin negotiations with Argentina on the sovereignty of the Malvinas. The passage on the recognition of the suffering which slavery and the slave trade have brought, especially on the countries of the Caribbean, is also a concession to the CELAC countries.

The EU wants to invest 45 billion euros in infrastructure projects in Latin America, this was proudly announced by *Ursula von der Leyen*. Where the money will flow (there is already talk of green neocolonialism), what conditions the CELAC states are expected to fulfill in terms of human rights and the environment according to EU specifications, what sanctions they face in the event of non-compliance - all this will no longer be accepted unquestioningly by Latin America. The continent will no longer simply subordinate itself to great powers that pursue their own interests. The more than arrogant statement by EU foreign affairs envoy *Josep Borrell* about the alleged Garden of Europe and the rest of the world as a jungle was registered with indignation in Latin America. Again and again, incomprehension is also expressed about Europe's unconditional allegiance to the United States.

### "A summit with imbalances ..."

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cussed at the summit, while at the same time praising Lula's efforts to halt ongoing deforestation.

#### Threatened EU sanctions are unacceptable

Even within the European bloc, however, criticism was voiced against the new provision, namely because it will hardly be enforceable, but also because it does not take into account the differences between countries, let alone specific problems of the other side.

On the other hand, the European demand for an "energy turnaround" forgets the fact that the most important exports from the south of our region to Europe include, of all things, oil, hydrocarbons and energy resources ranging from coal from Colombia to lithium from Chile.

Environmental protection thus became one of the central themes of the summit against the backdrop of unequal and asymmetrical relations, which was also reflected in the so-called "Bridgerton Initiative". This was presented by *Mia Mottley*, Prime Minister of Barbados, with the support of the Caribbean countries of *Caricom* [*Caribbean Community*].

The initiative aims to prevent developing countries from falling into a dangerous dwindling spiral when their debt levels increase due to natural disasters such as floods, droughts and storms. In view of climate change and its serious impact on weaker countries that are themselves less polluting, the initiative also calls for additional resources, especially for post-disaster reconstruction, without additional burdens and interest.

The internal differences within the summit could not be hidden or reduced in

the drafting of the final declaration, especially with regard to the crisis in Ukraine, which was placed in the context of other conflict scenarios, such as in Haiti.

In this context, *Ralph Gonsalves*, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and current Chairman of CELAC, stressed the importance of the explicit reference in the final declaration to European responsibility for the genocide of indigenous peoples and the slave trade.

Undoubtedly an approach of restorative justice and a first necessary step for economic reparations at a stage in Latin American history where neither belated apologies nor demands from monarchs and rulers are sufficient. •

Source: *Página12* of 19 July 2023; <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/569180-una-cumbre-con-desequilibrios-y-diferencias>  
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## Documentation

## Negative impact of sanctions against Belarusian potash fertilisers on global food security

*zf. Repeatedly, Current Concerns has made the devastating effects of the unilateral sanctions of the USA and the EU. These sanctions are contrary to international law, on the world economy and especially on the poorest countries of the world a topic of discussion. Now the Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in Switzerland has sent us the following text, which we are documenting because of its fundamental importance.*

The Republic of Belarus has repeatedly pointed out that the sanctions against Belarusian potash fertilisers, including the illegal ban on the transit of Belarusian potash through Lithuania, pose a risk of world hunger and threaten global food security. The Belarusian aide-mémoires on this issue were published as official documents of the United Nations General Assembly (A/76/513, A/76/677, A/77/809).

However, Lithuania continues to claim that Belarus' contribution to global food security is allegedly meaningless, despite the fact that Belarus' share of the global potash fertiliser trade was 20% by 2022.

The shortage of potash fertilisers as a result of the restrictive measures against Belarusian potash has led to a shortage of potash fertilisers on the world markets and higher prices, which in turn has led to a decrease in their consumption, lower crop yields and higher food prices. The situation in the world's least developed countries is particularly dangerous and could lead to a major famine.

### The following statements come from respected international organisations and agencies

1. The situation reports of the *UN Secretary-General António Guterres Task Force on Global Crisis Management in Food, Energy and Finance*, published on 13 April 2022 and 8 June 2022, state that Belarus and the Russian Federation together export about *one-fifth of the world's fertiliser*. The loss of fertiliser supplies from the Russian Federation and Belarus has caused fertiliser prices to rise faster than food prices. Many farmers, especially smallholders, are forced to cut back on production as *the fertilisers they need become more expensive than the grain they sell*. Because of this key fertiliser problem, global food production in 2023 may not be able to meet growing demand. Yet *one in two people worldwide depends on agricultural products for which fertiliser is used*.

“It should be borne in mind that the world's population is expected to continue to grow. According to UN experts, the world's population will increase by almost 2 billion people in the next 30 years – from the current 8 billion to 9.7 billion in 2050, and it could reach a peak of almost 10.4 billion people in the mid-2080s. As the world's population grows, potash consumption will continue to increase due to shrinking and depleted farmland and rising disposable income in developing countries. This will lead to a deficit in the global supply of potash fertilisers. Belarus has always made a significant contribution to global food security, but illegal unilateral coercive measures against it push people in vulnerable countries to the brink of famine and lead to food insecurity in the countries that initiate such measures.”

2. Joint *FAO-WTO Conclusions and Recommendations to G-20 Countries on “Global Fertiliser Markets and Policies”*, 14 November 2022<sup>1</sup>:

- Global fertiliser prices have increased significantly;
- the price increase is exacerbated by a decline in global fertiliser supply. Exports of potash fertilisers from Belarus have fallen sharply from 3.62 million tonnes in the first quarter of 2021 to 1.95 million tonnes in the first quarter of 2022. Import statistics in recent months show that the decline in shipments from Belarus has accelerated;
- Africa accounts for only 3% to 4% of global fertiliser consumption, with about 50% of the fertiliser supplied going to grow crops important to Africa. The decline in fertiliser consumption will therefore have serious consequences, including undermining the food security of some farming communities;
- every effort should be made to keep international trade in fertilisers open to meet domestic and global demand.

3. Article by the *International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)* of 9 November 2022<sup>2</sup>:

- Belarusian potash exports have declined from 9.1 million tonnes (1 December 2021) to 3.9 million tonnes (1 December 2022) due to the sanctions;

- Importers of potash fertilisers may refuse to buy from Russia and Belarus due to the additional costs and risks involved in doing business with sanctioned countries.

4. *World Bank* article of 5 January 2023<sup>3</sup>:

- World potash fertiliser prices were *USD 562 per tonne* on 1 December 2022, compared to *USD 221 per tonne* on 1 January 2022;
- exports of potash fertilisers from Belarus decreased by more than 50% due to restrictions on the use of EU territory for transit. In particular, *Lithuania stopped using its railway network to transport Belarusian potash to the port of Klaipeda, which normally handled 90% of Belarusian exports*.

5. Recommendations of the *UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Lithuania's third report to that Committee* of 3 March 2023:

- The Committee remains concerned about recent measures taken by the State party that have prevented the transport of potash from Belarus destined for third countries in Africa and Latin America, resulting in shortages of fertilisers and negatively affecting food security in these countries;
- the Committee recommends that the State party review these recent measures affecting fertiliser prices and food security in third countries.

**"Negative impact of sanctions ..."**

continued from page 7

This list is by no means exhaustive.

In 2021, Belarus and Russia accounted for more than 40 % of potash supplies in almost equal shares, while Canada covered 35.9 % and the US 5.8 %.

*Belarus' share of global potash trade declined to about 9 % in 2022.* Russia's share fell to 16.4 %. As a result of the decline in volumes from Belarus and Russia, there was a simultaneous increase in potash fertiliser prices.

The *sanctions* imposed on the Belarusian potash industry were thus one of the *main reasons for a significant increase in fertiliser prices in 2022*, which led to a sharp rise in finished food prices.

For example, the price of potassium chloride in Brazil reached an all-time high of 1,200 US dollars per tonne in 2022. The consequences of this shock were felt by international buyers of Brazilian agricultural products for a long time, when the price of certain types of finished food products increased up to fivefold.

According to the World Bank forecast in April, the world market price for potash fertilisers will decline on average to USD 475 per tonne in 2023 and USD 425 per tonne in 2024. However, *potash fertiliser prices in 2023 and 2024 will be higher than in 2021 (when the restrictive measures against Belarusian potash were imposed)*.

It should be recalled that according to the World Bank, world prices for potash fertiliser were USD 221 per tonne on 1 January 2022. Despite a slight decline in prices, affordability for farmers remains low.

### **Weaker countries are hit hardest by Sanctions**

*Belarus' share of African potash fertiliser markets fell from 41.7 % to 2.8 % in 2022.*

While Belarus supplied about 632 thousand tonnes of potash to 30 countries on the African continent in 2021, it supplied about 30 thousand tonnes to six countries in 2022. Such countries as Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Kenya, Réunion and Tanzania were supplied exclusively with Belarusian fertilisers. A number of countries, including Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Malawi, Senegal and Sierra Leone, met 50 % of their fertiliser needs with Belarusian potash.

According to our calculations based on FAO data, the almost complete removal of Belarus from the list of potash suppliers in 2022 led to a 16.1 % decline in African grain yields.

*In 2023, deliveries to Africa will come to a complete halt due to Lithuania's measures.*

The widespread uncertainty among potash market players and related industries about potash fertiliser supplies from Belarus risks *devastating consequences for agricultural supply chains and food security around the world.*

### **The potash shortage on the international market cannot be resolved in the short term**

It is difficult to quickly increase the current production of existing producers and the entry of "new players" involves significant financial and time costs. Building a new mine takes at least 5–7 years from decision-making to the first tonne produced.

So, if the current food crisis is linked to lack of access to fertiliser, it may be linked to food shortages in the years to come. This has been stated repeatedly by UN Secretary-General Guterres.

It should be borne in mind that the *world's population is expected to contin-*

*ue to grow.* According to UN experts, the world's population will increase by almost 2 billion people in the next 30 years – from the current 8 billion to 9.7 billion in 2050, and it could reach a peak of almost 10.4 billion people in the mid-2080s.

As the world's population grows, potash consumption will continue to increase due to shrinking and depleted farmland and rising disposable income in developing countries. This will lead to a deficit in the global supply of potash fertilisers.

Belarus has always made a significant contribution to global food security, but illegal unilateral coercive measures against it push people in vulnerable countries to the brink of famine and lead to food insecurity in the countries that initiate such measures.

*Belarus once again calls for using the potential of the United Nations with regard to Lithuania to make this country abandon political manipulations and abuse of its transit position and return to fulfilling its international obligations.*

We call for the annulment of unilateral coercive measures that not only violate international obligations, including in the framework of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also run counter to the provisions of the United Nations Charter and relevant UN General Assembly resolutions.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news22\\_e/igo\\_14nov22\\_e.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news22_e/igo_14nov22_e.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/how-sanctions-russia-and-belarus-are-impacting-exports-agricultural-products-and-fertilizer>

<sup>3</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/fertilizer-prices-ease-affordability-and-availability-issues-linger>

<sup>4</sup> [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2FLTU%2FCO%2F3&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2FLTU%2FCO%2F3&Lang=en)

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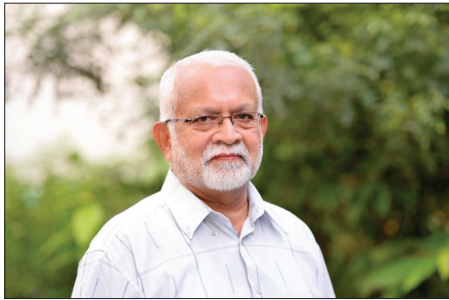
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# Glimpses of an endgame in Ukraine

by M.K. Bhadrakumar\*



M. K. Bhadrakumar (picture ma)

The problem with the war in Ukraine is that it has been all smoke and mirrors. The Russian objectives of “demilitarisation” and “de-Nazification” of Ukraine wore a surreal look. The western narrative that the war is between Russia and Ukraine, where central issue is the Westphalian principle of national sovereignty, wore thin progressively leaving a void.

## In fact a war between Russia and Nato

There is a realisation today that the war is actually between Russia and NATO and that Ukraine had ceased to be a sovereign country since 2014 when the CIA and sister western agencies – Germany, the UK, France, Sweden, etc. – installed a puppet regime in Kiev.

The fog of war is lifting and the battle lines are becoming visible. At an authoritative level, a candid discussion is beginning as regards the endgame.

Certainly, Russian President *Vladimir Putin*'s videoconference with the permanent members of the Security Council in Moscow last Friday and his meeting with Belarus President *Alexander Lukashenko* in St. Petersburg on Sunday become the defining moment. The two transcripts stand back-to-back and need to be read together.<sup>1</sup>

## An even bigger war plan by the Biden administration?

There is no question that the two events were carefully choreographed by the Kremlin officials and intended to convey multiple messages. Russia exudes confidence that it has achieved dominance on the battle front – having thrashed the Ukrainian military and Kiev's “counteroffensive” moving into the rear-view mirror.

\* 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 *Indianpunchline.com*.

But Moscow anticipates that the *Biden* administration may be having an even bigger war plan in mind.

At the Security council meeting, Putin “de-classified” the intelligence reports reaching Moscow from various sources indicative of moves to insert into Western Ukraine a Polish expeditionary force. Putin called it “a well-organised, equipped regular military unit to be used for operations” in Western Ukraine “for the subsequent occupation of these territories.”

## Polish revanchism

Indeed, there is a long history of Polish revanchism. Putin, himself a keen student of history, talked at some length about it. He sounded stoical that if the Kiev authorities were to acquiesce with this Polish-American plan, “as traitors usually do, that's their business. We will not interfere.”

But, Putin added, “Belarus is part of the Union State, and launching an aggression against Belarus would mean launching an aggression against the Russian Federation. We will respond to that with all the resources available to us.” Putin warned that what is afoot “is an extremely dangerous game, and the authors of such plans should think about the consequences.”

On Sunday, at the meeting with Putin in St. Petersburg, *Lukashenko* picked up the thread of discussion. He briefed Putin about new Polish deployments close to Belarus border – just 40 kms from Brest – and other preparations under way – the opening of a repair shop for *Leopard* tanks in Poland, activation of an airfield in Rzeszow on Ukrainian border (about 100 kms from Lvov) for use of Americans transferring weaponry, mercenaries, etc.

## Dismemberment of Ukraine unacceptable for Belarus

*Lukashenko* said: “This is unacceptable to us. The alienation of western Ukraine, the dismemberment of Ukraine and the transfer of its lands to Poland are unacceptable. Should people in Western Ukraine ask us then we will provide support to them. I ask you [Putin] to discuss and think about this issue. Naturally, I would like you to support us in this regard. If the need in such support arises, if Western Ukraine asks us for help, then we will provide assistance and support to people in western Ukraine. If this happens, we will support them in every possible way.”

*Lukashenko* continued, “I am asking you to discuss this issue and think it through. Obviously, I would like you to support us in this regard. With this sup-

port, and if western Ukraine asks for this help, we will definitely provide assistance and support to the western population of Ukraine.”

As could be expected, Putin didn't respond – at least, not publicly. *Lukashenko* characterised the Polish intervention as tantamount to the dismemberment of Ukraine and its “piece meal” absorption into NATO. *Lukashenko* was upfront: “This is supported by the Americans.” Interestingly, he also sought the deployment of *Wagner* fighters<sup>2</sup> to counter the threat to Belarus.

The bottom line is that Putin and *Lukashenko* held such a discussion publicly at all. Clearly, both spoke on the basis of intelligence inputs. They anticipate an inflection point ahead.

## War with Poland?

It is one thing that the Russian people are well aware that their country is de facto fighting the NATO in Ukraine. But it is an entirely different matter that the war may dramatically escalate to a war with Poland, a NATO army that the US regards as its most important partner in continental Europe.

By dwelling at some length on Polish revanchism, which has a controversial record in modern European history, Putin probably calculated that in Europe, including in Poland, there could be resistance to the machinations that might drag NATO into a continental war with Russia.

Equally, Poland must be dithering too. According to *Politico*, Poland's military is about 150,000 strong, out of which 30,000 belong to a new territorial defence force who are “weekend soldiers who undergo 16 days of training followed up by refresher courses.”

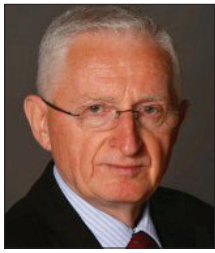
## How much political support Poland has for its plans of conquest?

Again, Poland's military might doesn't translate into political influence in Europe because the centrist forces that dominate the EU distrust Warsaw, which is controlled by the nationalist *Law and Justice* Party whose disregard for democratic norms and the rule of law has damaged Poland's reputation across the bloc.

Above all, Poland has reason to be worried about the reliability of Washington. Going forward, Polish leadership's concern, paradoxically, will be that *Donald Trump* may not return as president in 2024. Despite the cooperation with the Pentagon over the Ukraine war, Poland's current leadership remains distrustful of

# Equality, security, freedom of movement and human rights for all in Kosovo and Metohija

by Živadin Jovanović, Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1998–2000)  
and President of the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals



Živadin Jovanović  
(picture beoforum.rs)

*Intimidation, physical attacks, arbitrary detentions and ethnic cleansing have been part of the everyday life of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija<sup>1</sup> since the end of the NATO aggression in 1999. The intensity of this repression has fluctuated, but there have been no interruptions. All of this, including the denial of the right to the free and safe return of around 250,000 expelled Serbs and other non-Albanians, took place under the auspices of UNMIK, KFOR, and the “status neutral” EULEX<sup>2</sup>.*

While Serbia, in the name of realism and concern for peace, faithfully fulfilled all its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1244, as well as a series of disputed documents, the so-called collective West, with its humiliating “stick and carrot” tactics, ensured the continuous retreat of Belgrade, building before our eyes, step by step, another Albanian state, as a stage for the creation of a so-called Greater Albania.

## Endless crushing of Serbia

In a long series of agreements signed with the European Union as a “status-neutral” intermediary, each new accord represented a consolidation of the plunder achieved

## “Glimpses of an endgame in Ukraine”

continued from page 9

President Joe Biden – much like Hungary’s Prime Minister *Viktor Orbán*.

## A warning to the West

On balance, therefore, it stands to reason that the sabre-rattling by Lukashenko and Putin’s lesson on European history can be taken as more of a forewarning to the West with a view to modulate an endgame in Ukraine that is optimal for Russian interests. A dismemberment of Ukraine or an uncontrollable expansion of the war beyond its borders will not be in the Russian interests.

But the Kremlin leadership will factor in the contingency that Washington’s follies stemming out of its desperate need to save face from a humiliating defeat in the proxy war, may leave no choice to the Russian forces but to cross the Dnieper and advance all the way to Poland’s bor-

der to prevent an occupation of Western Ukraine by the so-called Lublin Triangle, a regional alliance with virulent anti-Russian orientation comprising Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, formed in July 2020 and promoted by Washington.

## Three key elements of the endgame in Ukraine

Putin’s back-to-back meetings in Moscow and St. Petersburg throw light on the Russian thinking as to three key elements of the endgame in Ukraine. First, Russia has no intentions of territorial conquest of Western Ukraine but will insist on having a say on how the new boundaries of the country and the future regime will look and act like, which means that an anti-Russian state will not be allowed.

Second, the Biden administration’s plan to snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat in the war is a non-starter, as Russia will not hesitate to counter any contin-

## Calling for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council

On Thursday, July 6, 2023, domestic and foreign media reported the statement of Aleksandar Vučić, the president of Serbia, that due to the escalation of tensions and threats to the security of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, he will request the convening of an emergency session of the UN Security Council, “because Serbia always behaves in accordance with the UNSC Resolution 1244 and international legal norms”<sup>1</sup>. The statement aroused great attention and expectations from the Serbian public, as evidenced by numerous comments published in the newspapers. “Well done”, one of these read. “Finally, a concrete move!” There were many other commentaries with a similar tone and message.

What followed were talks between President Vučić and *Chen Bo*, China’s ambassador to Belgrade (13 July), *Aleksandr Botsovan-Kharchenko*, Russia’s ambassador, (18 July), and NATO Secretary-General *Jens Stoltenberg* (19 July). Leaving aside the densely scheduled calendar of these meetings, especially considering the importance and urgency of the matter, these talks were received by the public as a transition to concrete preparations and probing of the greatest possible support for Serbia’s stances so that the results of the emergency session of the Security Council would be as favourable as possible for the endangered Serbs in Kosovo and Serbia – and to

continued on page 11

ued attempt by the US and NATO to use Ukrainian territory as a springboard to wage a renewed proxy war, which means that Ukraine’s “piece meal” absorption into NATO will remain a fantasy.

Third, most important, the battle-hardened Russian army backed by a powerful defence industry and a robust economy will not hesitate to confront NATO member countries bordering Ukraine if they trespass on Russia’s core interests, which means that Russia’s core interests will not be held hostage to Article 5 of the NATO Charter. •

<sup>1</sup> <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71714> of 21 July 2023 and <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71723> of 23 July 2023

<sup>2</sup> <https://eng.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-sheds-light-on-pmc-wagners-plans-160461-2023/> of 23 July 2023

Source: <https://www.indianpunchline.com/glimpses-of-an-endgame-in-ukraine/> of 25 July 2023

**"Equality, security, freedom ..."**

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no lesser extent, for peace, security, and development in the region and in Europe.

**Eliminate causes of escalation**

Holding an (extraordinary) emergency session of the Security Council is important from numerous perspectives.

First, its importance lies in ending the escalation and pacifying the situation – for eliminating the risk of bloodshed. Pacification can be achieved only by removing the well-known causes of the escalation. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that the causes are not only, or even predominantly, in the personal characteristics of the leaders in Pristina, although it is known that they are driven by hatred and the idea of a greater Albania. Ultimately, the causes are in the policy of double standards of the Western power centres and representatives of the so-called international community, including structures entrusted with the mandate of the UN Security Council.

**Equal security, human rights and freedoms for the Serbs**

Second, an emergency session of the SC is an opportunity to reaffirm the principle of guaranteeing equal security, human rights and freedoms of Serbs throughout the province. It cannot be tolerated that Serbs live in ghettos, that their property is taken by force, and that monuments, churches, monasteries and cemeteries are turned into ruins, garbage dumps, construction sites, or that Serbs are a priori responsible for everything happening there.

**The basis of the solution for Kosovo and Metohija**

Third, the session of the SC is an opportunity to reaffirm the inviolability of the Security Council as the only competent authority to decide on Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the lasting value of SC Resolution 1244, which expresses the will and represents the legal obligation of the entire world community, without exception. It is in Serbia's interest that the solution for Kosovo and Metohija must be based on the UN Charter and UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and that there is no just and sustainable solution outside of or against those legal documents and the Security Council as a body that is exclusively responsible for peace and security issues.

It is known that Serbia cannot give up its sovereignty and international borders, which were confirmed by its admission to the membership of the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and other international organisations. Resolution 1244 is not an ideal

document, but for the defence of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, it has unquestionable value and lasting importance. If it were not so, neither the Western centres of power nor Pristina would run away from it, nor would they demand that the issue of Kosovo be de facto removed from the agenda of the UN Security Council.

Fourth, Serbia has the opportunity at this session to launch an initiative (request) for the fulfilment of unmet obligations by the other parties (KFOR, UNMIK, NATO, EU, bodies of the provisional self-government), according to Resolution 1244, namely: ensuring the conditions for a free, safe, and dignified return of around 250,000 expelled Serbs and other non-Albanians to their homes and properties; return of the agreed contingents of the Serbian army and police for certain tasks (up to 2,000), including their presence at important international border crossings (into North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro); disarmament and demilitarisation of all armed formations; declaring null and void all decisions and acts contrary to Resolution 1244, and guaranteeing equality, security, freedom of movement and human rights for all people living in Kosovo and Metohija.

**Naked geopolitics**

Fifth, it became clear that the EU recently "stepped out" of the mandate it received from the UN General Assembly in 2010, which was formulated exclusively to "facilitate dialogue between the parties". It is high time to publicly say that ultimatums like the *Scholz-Macron* plan<sup>5</sup> cannot be classified under "facilitating dialogue between the parties". The texts and formulas they impose are not based on law, principles, or democracy, and least of all on the UN Charter and Resolution 1244, but on hegemony and the naked geopolitics of expansion to the detriment of Serbia and the Serbian people.

It is clear that the UNSC, due to the well-known positions of the Western permanent members (UK, USA, France), will not accept this truth as a common position, but if it is presented at the Council session, it will have a positive echo in the world of diplomacy and politics and will force many to think when and to whom to extend their trust. No one can turn a deaf ear to such a perspective, not even the powerful, who are less and less what they once were.

**Strengthen Serbia's reputation and credibility at the international level**

Sixth, the implementation of this initiative would contribute to the strengthening of the reputation and credibility of Serbia at the international level, as a country that is principled, respects its publicly declared

positions, and knows how to fight for them. It would also be a reaffirmation of Serbia's balanced, independent, and militarily neutral foreign policy, which is not without significance in the conditions of global changes towards the democratisation of international relations, on the one hand, and all kinds of speculations about "changing the public political paradigm", on the other.

Striving for peace and the role of the UN in the de-escalation process in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia would at the same time show that it is not in favour of confrontation, conflicts, or alignment on the global level, but for the rule of law and its principles, for the democratisation of international relations, and for strengthening the role of the UN system. On the internal level, the realisation of this initiative would, at least to some extent, repair the shaken national self-confidence, self-esteem, as well as the credibility of state institutions. The Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija would receive an important encouragement to endure by relying on a state that keeps its word and is respected by others.

*Belgrade, 19 July 2023*

Notes of the editor:

- <sup>1</sup> The Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija commonly known as Kosovo is an autonomous province defined by the Constitution of Serbia that occupies the southernmost part of Serbia and is claimed by Serbia as an autonomous province (under UN Security Council resolution 1244, see: <https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/archives/2019/no-2-23-january-2019/1244-a-key-to-peace-in-europe>). A minority of more than 100,000 Serbs live there. The territory is the subject of an ongoing political and territorial dispute between Republic of Serbia and the partially recognised, self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo, the latter of which has control over the territory.
- <sup>2</sup> EULEX (*European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo*) was launched in 2008. It operates under the overall authority of the UN, guided by the 1244 UN Security Council Resolution of June 1999, when Kosovo was first placed under the UN administration as a province of Serbia. EULEX supposed to be a technical mission remaining neutral when it comes to Kosovo's political status. In its own words: "EULEX's overall mission is to support selected rule of law institutions in Kosovo on their path towards increased effectiveness, sustainability, multi-ethnicity and accountability, free from political interference [...]". It consists of police officers (including four anti-riot units), prosecutors and judges. At its beginning in 2008 the Mission included around 3,200 police and judicial personnel (1,950 international, 1,250 local)
- <sup>3</sup> The northern part of Kosovo, generally understood as a group of four municipalities with ethnic Kosovo Serbs majority (96%): North Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zvečan and Zubin Potok.
- <sup>4</sup> President *Vučić* has not yet formally requested the emergency session but according to Mr *Jovanović* (14 August) the President has reaffirmed last week: "We still have not abandoned our initiative to call for the extraordinary session of the Security Council"
- <sup>5</sup> cf. *Current Concerns* No 3, 7 February 2023

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# Summer break between Bern and Brussels – but behind the scenes the strings continue to be pulled

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

Even during the holiday season, a lot is going on between Switzerland and the EU. The Austrian EU parliamentarian Lukas Mandl is responsible for relations with Switzerland in the “Committee on Foreign Affairs”. In the “Sonntagsblick”, he has recently commented on the question of negotiations between Bern and Brussels. According to him it is “five to twelve” if an agreement is to be reached before the EU elections in June 2024.<sup>1</sup> – Economist Rudolf Walser, who has retained his critical intuition even as a former senior consultant at Avenir Suisse, reports on how “academia” is trying hand in hand with the federal administration to steer Swiss public opinion towards EU integration.

Furthermore, Christoph Eisenring, economics editor of the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, explains with astonishing frankness what he and many other economic liberals are really after when it comes to closer ties with Brussels: the “opening of markets” for the benefit of certain corporations. – On the other hand, the president of the pharmaceutical association, Matthias Leuenberger, is more down-to-earth in the Swiss sense. – Meanwhile, Federal Councillor Albert Rösti is proving in Rome that Switzerland does not need a framework agreement 2.0 with Brussels, but rather more intensive cooperation with neighbouring countries.

## “Happy Hour of Free Speech”

In his “Happy Hour of Free Speech” at the EU Parliament on 10 July, Lukas Mandl discussed “new dimensions of cooperation” between the EU and Switzerland.<sup>2</sup> Without having been there, one can roughly imagine the discussion. The speakers were, on the one hand, EU Commissioner Maros Šefčovič and EU Parliamentarian Andreas Schwab, both known for their authoritarian approach to Switzerland, and on the other, the two Swiss Eric Nussbaumer and Alec von Graffenried. Nussbaumer is a member of the National Council (Social Democratic Party) and President of the (New) European Movement Switzerland (NEBS) (its motto: “EU accession is and remains the most sensible option for Switzerland”<sup>3</sup>), von Graffenried is Mayor of Bern and President of the NEBS section Bern!

Consequently, no one was there who could or would have explained to the EU politicians why we Swiss, by a large majority, do not want to annex our country to the EU or to another power bloc (NATO). Lukas Mandl dismisses as “populism” that we don’t want to submit to the jurisdiction of the ECJ and plays the wise guy:

## Better an energy agreement on an equal footing with neighbouring states than an unequal treaty with Brussels

mw. Federal Councillor Albert Rösti, the new head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Italian energy minister in Rome on 6 July to secure Switzerland’s gas supply. The plan is that in the event of a sudden interruption in the gas supply from Germany, the state-owned Italian energy giant ENI will sell Swiss energy companies some of its gas, which, like electricity and lorries, also flows through the Swiss Alps. According to the Federal Council’s media release, Switzerland and Italy maintain a close partnership

in the supply of gas and electricity “for geographical and logistical reasons (interconnected grids)”.

Switzerland has always concluded such agreements with neighbouring states, on an equal footing and for mutual benefit, as is customary among neighbours. On the other hand, we freedom-loving Swiss are allergic to threats and sanctions with which the EU bodies want to get us to conclude agreements they like.

Source: “Bundesrat Rösti unterzeichnet in Rom Vereinbarungen für Verkehr und Energie”. DETEC media release dated 6 July 2023

“Every business school student learns in first grade that a common market needs a common jurisdiction.” (Sonntagsblick, 23.7.2023) In reality, Switzerland is, for good reasons, precisely not a member of the EU internal market (the electorate rejected EEA accession), but a contractual partner of the EU (Bilaterals I and II as well as the 1972 Free Trade Agreement with many other treaties).

Mr Mandl and other EU representatives would be well advised to have knowledgeable Swiss people explain to them the comprehensive direct democratic decision-making rights of the Swiss people, the sovereign. The people not only elect their authorities, but also decide in the Confederation, in the cantons and in the municipalities on amendments to the constitution and laws as well as on substantive business, and even on tax increases. For example, a federal referendum is held on every 0.1 % increase in value added tax. The Federal Supreme Court is not a constitutional court that could declare federal popular or parliamentary decisions invalid, because the legislature, i. e. parliament and, as the last instance, the voters, are the supreme power of the state.

Anyone who knows even that much about the Swiss state system will realise that the adoption of EU law and decisions of the European Court of Justice in principle are incompatible with the Swiss understanding of the state and its foundation, the citizens’ will for freedom and independence.

## When everyone agrees in advance – is that science?

Something similar to this political “discussion” often happens at so-called aca-

demic events. For example, the *Europa Institut* of the University of Zurich held a seminar on “European Integration: Perspectives and Challenges” on 13 June, “with the kind support of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA”.<sup>4</sup>

The list of speakers consisted “largely of EU-friendly Swiss and foreign experts”, says former *Avenir Suisse* consultant Rudolf Walser.<sup>5</sup> Among the Swiss professors, the eternal EU turbos Matthias Oesch and Christa Tobler stand out. Also present as President of the Zurich *Europa Institut* was Markus Notter, former member of the Zurich government (SP), an EU fanatic even then. Also present was a representative of the EU Commission and Patric Franzen, representing the FDFA, who praised the Federal Council’s “tailor-made bilateralism”, including the adoption of EU law and ECJ rulings as well as the state aid scheme. Probably the only rock in the wall was the constitutional and European law expert Prof. Andreas Glaser. As Rudolf Walser notes: “Since EU-sceptical experts were absent and critical questions were unwelcome, the conference proceeded in great harmony.” Is this the science we as citizens expect from our universities?

## “Why we are so rich” – a reminder to us Swiss

With his advertising drum for the “opening” of the still relatively good Swiss public service to corporations from the EU area, NZZ economics editor Christoph Eisenring reveals why neoliberal media like the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” are pushing for a close link between Switzerland and the European Union.<sup>7</sup>

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### “Summer break between Bern ...”

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Eisenring’s basic assumption – “The wealth of nations is based on competition” – is only partially true. For the wealth of nations should actually be based on their natural resources and the work they do. The countries of Africa, whose mineral resources have been exploited for centuries and are still being exploited today by the Western (neo-)colonial powers without adequate payment, recently demanded emphatically at the Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg that they not only supply lithium or cocoa, but also want to produce and sell batteries or chocolate themselves.

It is also not true for Switzerland that it owes its good economic condition to global competition, as Eisenring claims. It is exactly the opposite: the small state of Switzerland and its economy are also well positioned in global competition. This is thanks to the unique strengths of the Swiss model: High degree of sovereignty and independence from power blocs, including the maintenance of our own currency; high reputation as an impartial, reliable country thanks to neutrality and our stable political system; direct democratic decision-making rights and citizen control over financial and personnel grievances; small-scale economy based on federalism and communal autonomy; extraordinarily flexible and innovative companies, especially the SMEs rooted in the country (more than 99 per cent of companies based in Switzerland have fewer than 250 employees). A central role is also played by the unique Swiss dual vocational training system, to which the SMEs, but also the “real” large Swiss companies such as *Swiss Post* or *Migros*, contribute.

But beware! Christoph Eisenring’s remark: “Switzerland is gambling away what has made it successful” is true today in a highly alarming way, but in a different sense. If our authorities and mainstream media continue to recklessly put the pillars of the state at risk and want to annex our country to the EU and NATO, the good state of the economy and thus the prosperity of the Swiss population may also rapidly decline. The situation is aggravated by the disastrous restructuring and dismantling of Swiss primary and secondary schools. Unless we provide our children with a good education again, a central basic prerequisite for all areas of life, including a successful economy, will be missing. This is already having a severe impact today.

Boundless competition of large corporations or citizen-friendly public service?

Eisenring reproaches us Swiss for being unwilling to “open up” our public services to EU corporations, i. e., to privatise them, out of “fear” of more competition. Reading the three examples he pre-



ICN passing through Twann on Lake Biel. (Image Wikipedia)

sents actually makes every hair stand on end – not out of fear, but because most of us Swiss want to continue to put the common good first.

#### *Example 1: “A pinch of competition on the railways”.*

First of all, it is about the admission of “FlixTrain”, which “wants to serve the Munich-Zurich route”. In reality, it is not only about the Munich-Zurich route, but about interference by foreign corporations on a currently unknown scale in the very well functioning Swiss public transport. *SRF News* confirms this: “One of the EU’s wishes is that in future the railway market should be open not only to SBB but also to foreign railways. A declared pilot project for this is a green *FlixTrain*, a low-cost provider from Munich to Zurich.”<sup>8</sup> According to [www.flixbus.de](http://www.flixbus.de), the *Flix Group* is “a global mobility provider” that has “become the market leader in many regions with *FlixBus*” and has “created Europe’s largest long-distance bus network in a very short time [in just ten years!]”. *FlixTrain* has also been offering “a continuously growing range of train connections” since 2018.

For the Swiss population, the fundamental question is whether we want to leave the SBB and the other public transport companies to be sold off to the highest bidders. The employees of the state-owned transport companies fear “that wage protection for employees in Switzerland will be undermined”, says *Matthias Hartwich*, President of the transport workers’ union SEV on *SRF News*. In addition, “the reliable timetable of the SBB [...] will come under pressure if foreign providers can travel to Switzerland”.

The “pinch of competition” in Swiss public transport is thus turning out to be an actual surrender of the public service, combined with knock-down prices at the

expense of quality and safety and with wage pressure for the staff of the transport companies. Fortunately, the people have the last word!

#### *Example 2: Doctor’s visits across Europe?*

Swiss health insurance companies only pay for services provided in Switzerland. Christoph Eisenring states: “Here, too, the opening of national borders could lead to quality and cost competition that would benefit patients.” Eisenring puts it more concretely: “Why not go to Vorarlberg for psychotherapy or to Hamburg for prostate surgery if the quality is good there?” And the patients should then regularly fly to Hamburg for follow-up treatment?

Eisenring continues: “Conversely, patients from the EU could visit Swiss hospitals, which would help improve their capacity utilisation and provide them with additional income. In fact, foreigners have been seeking treatment in Swiss hospitals for a long time, but only those who can pay their bills themselves as private patients. The assumption that health insurers in EU countries would pay their citizens the high Swiss doctor and hospital rates is absurd!

#### *Example 3: The never-ending story of the allegedly necessary electricity agreement with Brussels.*

This issue has already been dealt with several times in *Current Concerns*. Here it is in brief: NZZ editor Eisenring joins the chorus of those who claim that without an electricity agreement Switzerland would be cut off from the European grid. Yet, as is well known, the centre of the European electricity grid lies in the Alpine transit line through Switzerland. The neoliberal EU turbos, however, are concerned with something else: “If one wants

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Letter to  the Editor

## Dangers of digitalisation in schools

Schools are trying to live up to the requirements of life, which could lead to a “reform tie-up” in times of rapid changes. Little by little, amongst many teachers – my colleagues – there is a weariness setting in which is quite understandable in my opinion, and some of them are longing for just teaching once again in a way that they – as professionals – deem right and appropriate. Some are feeling being patronised and rather disturbed in their every-day work than supported or even promoted.

The overflowing bureaucratisation in almost all areas of life, and so also in schools, is revealing itself more and more as an evil that is growing uncontrollably, like a cancerous ulcer. Teachers nowadays are telling me that after work – alongside follow-up and preparation of lessons – they spend at least one hour with inserting detailed observations about certain children into the computer. There has to be a record about every child’s good and bad deeds, its behaviour, its efforts and its failures. You never know! If parents would

come forward with objections or criticism, you must be able to react on it with extensive documentation.

This frantic having to live up to the “pulse of the time” can lead to misconceptions. Let me give an example to what I mean by that exactly.

In the “Silicon Valley”, high castle of global digitalisation, there are naturally a lot kids whose parents are employed in the computer industry. What might make you wonder: The majority of these parents does not send their children to public schools. Out of all places it is in this region where alternative schools are sprouting like mushrooms for years now. Amongst them also a number of Rudolf Steiner schools. Why?

To people who put their efforts into the development of digital systems, it is very important that their children – Attention! – are kept away from any sorts of electronic devices (smartphone, laptop, tablet, etc.) until they have reached twelve or even fourteen years of age.

If you ask these parents as to what are their motives, you get answers like: The potential of danger (addiction) exceeds the educational value by far. Or: Entering the virtual world too early takes the children away from immediate life. Or: Children learn when they move physically, not when they are sitting down, staring at a screen. Or: Premature contact with technical devices can sustainably handicap the natural development of children.

These statements are already proven worldwide due to innumerable investigations. Several countries already have turned their back on this ill-fated development.

Why don’t we listen to them? When ask about the educational value of these expensive devices in day-to-day lessons, all I am getting in this country is a resigning shrug of the shoulders. Meaning: This too! What for, anyway. Nobody asked us.

Daniel Wirz, Zug

### “Summer break between Bern ...”

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to conclude an electricity agreement with the EU, one would have to allow foreign competitors – and introduce freedom of choice.” But do we really want that? The electricity suppliers of our communes or cantons are committed to the common good, whereas for *Eon* or *Electricité de France* the supply of the Swiss would certainly not be in the foreground when electricity becomes scarce – with or without an electricity agreement.

#### Swiss Pharma President keeps his feet on the ground

Matthias Leuenberger, country president of the pharmaceutical company *Novartis* for Switzerland and president of the association of the chemical-pharmaceutical industry scienceindustries comments on the relationship between Switzerland and the EU in a newspaper interview.<sup>9</sup>

The pharmaceutical industry spends seven billion francs a year on research, and 90 percent of its products are exported. In the meantime, only about half of this goes to the EU, but it is understandable that Leuenberger, as the representative

of the pharmaceutical companies, wants “regulated relations with the EU”. But the Swiss entrepreneur keeps his feet on the ground. Asked what concrete problems his industry will face “if no solution is found with the EU, for example if the agreement on the mutual recognition of products expires in a few years”, he answers: “Quite simply, Switzerland will become more expensive as a production location than other countries. Suddenly, multiple controls and inspections will have to take place again that are not needed today.” Leuenberger adds: “That’s annoying, but I wouldn’t say it’s an absolute killer criterion.” He continues, “I don’t want to paint the devil on the wall either. *Switzerland would still be a good location with many advantages. But the advantage over other countries would diminish.*” [emphasis mw]

Let’s keep in mind: Switzerland is “a good location with many advantages” precisely because of its still relatively high degree of independence from the EU. That is what annoys the bureaucrats in Brussels. Even if they cap Switzerland with sanctions that are contrary to the treaty, our companies will have more hassle, but they will still have “an advan-

tage over other countries”. Because they have always been adjusting to having to cope with the realities of the world that surrounds little Switzerland. •

<sup>1</sup> Rauch, Raphael. “Zoff zwischen Bern und Brüssel. ‘Die Schweiz gehört sofort zu Horizon zurück’” (Quarrel between Bern and Brussels. “Switzerland belongs back to Horizon immediately”), in: *Sonntagsblick* of 23 July 2023

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lukasmandl.eu/der-schweiz-bericht-geht-ins-finale-mit-eu-kommissar-maros-sefcovic/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.europa.ch/themen>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.eiz.uzh.ch/EIZ\\_Seminarprogramm\\_Europa-Tag\\_3.pdf](https://www.eiz.uzh.ch/EIZ_Seminarprogramm_Europa-Tag_3.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Walser, Rudolf. “Schweizer Professoren huldigen Brüssel” (Swiss professors pay homage to Brussels), in: *Die Weltwoche* of 6 July 2023

<sup>6</sup> Book title by Rudolf H. Strahm

<sup>7</sup> Eisenring, Christoph. “Plötzlich haben alle Angst vor Wettbewerb: Die Schweiz verspielt, was sie erfolgreich gemacht hat” (Suddenly everyone is afraid of competition: Switzerland is gambling away what has made it successful), in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 7 July 2023

<sup>8</sup> Strasser, Matthias. “Verhältnis Schweiz-EU. Eisenbahner befürchten teilweise Marktöffnung” (Switzerland-EU relations. Railway workers fear partial market opening), in: *SRF News* of 15 June 2023

<sup>9</sup> Schäfer, Fabian and Feldges, Dominik. “Unsere Firmen sind hier in gewissem Sinn gefangen. Sie können nicht einfach weg” (Our companies are trapped here in a sense. They cannot simply leave). Interview with Matthias Leuenberger, Präsident of *scienceindustries* and *Novartis* Switzerland, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 27 June 2023

# What a Greek teacher can do for his students

## A look at France

by Rita Müller-Hill

There are a multitude of assumptions and attempted explanations that work towards an understanding of the unrest in France. They range from complete failure of the state to drug trafficking on a large scale. There have been problems in the suburbs for 40 years, all governments have always talked a lot but done nothing.

However, one aspect is mentioned in almost all comments: the social injustice and inequality that has intensified in the last decades and has become visible in the *yellow vest* movement and the long protest movement against the pension reform. And school plays a central role among the multiple causes. It is obviously failing as an “ascenseur social” (social lift – opportunity for social advancement), since the many “school failures” without prospects can be manipulated and instrumentalised by all kinds of manipulators, especially the drug dealers who apparently make the “laws” in the suburbs. And there are also the hate preachers of the jihad.

### What is going wrong with the schools?

Shortly after the attacks of January 2015 (*Bataclan, Charlie Hebdo*), teachers of a lycée<sup>1</sup> from Aubervilliers published a text that ended with the sentence: “We are the parents of three murderers.”<sup>2</sup>

Augustin d’Humières, for 20 years a Latin and Greek teacher at a “lycée” (a grammar school) in a suburban town in the Seine and Marne department, said in an interview with “Le Figaro”<sup>3</sup> that reading this text made him think that these young radicalised Frenchmen had spent ten times more time on the school benches of the republic than in any other place. He wondered what tools the school had given these young Frenchmen to defend themselves against the powers that instrumentalise them and use them for criminal purposes. Do they have a language at their disposal? Have they come into contact with texts that might have been able to teach them values? Have they had to prove themselves in arguments and debates? Do they know some pertinent dates? What about their vocabulary? For so many young French people to become receptive to these violent, hopeless, primitive speeches, they must have been completely defenceless before. What benchmarks do students have when they leave school?

For d’Humières, the breeding ground of fundamentalism is first of all the ignorance of thousands of students who have nothing up their sleeves to resist manipulators. In his opinion, this failure is due to the schools by way of the curricula, the regulations and instructions, timetables,

through the way teachers are recruited, through the reduction of hours for basic subjects and the multiplication of new subjects, through the amount of time and importance given to just any projects and the completely arbitrary experimentation left to chance.

All this has resulted in a system that aims to teach nothing precise, that only makes the hatred and anger worse through the distance between what it pretends to be and what it actually is. “For this school system was designed, structured, organised so that the student would learn as little as possible.”<sup>4</sup>

Teaching seems to d’Humières like a martial art, not directed against the students, who in his opinion and experience have an unbroken hunger for learning, but against ministry orders, pedagogical experiments, illogical decisions made by the respective minister, such as the quasi-prohibition of letting a student repeat a class, because in this way the costs per student can be reduced.<sup>5</sup> The proposal to ban homework because it is supposedly a reason for unequal opportunities, is also counterproductive. If parents cannot afford supervision, and that is no small part of social inequality, a remedy must be found.

This is why after-school homework support was organised, at Augustin d’Humières’s suggestion, and this is attended by 300 students (primary, secondary and grammar school students).

D’Humières himself continues to teach *Homer and Villon, Seneca and Proust* – “texts that are our treasure, our ‘mineral oil’”. His two books are impressive in their intrepidity and courage. They point to a viable, realistic path with a chance of success. They are books from the practice of a teacher who cares about his students, who understands the importance of his subject and who assesses school policies with common sense. In his first book, “Homère et Shakespeare en banlieue” (Homer and Shakespeare in the Suburbs), Augustin d’Humières describes his experiences as a teacher of “lettres classiques” (Greek, Latin and French).<sup>6</sup> In 2017, in “Un petit fonctionnaire” (A Lowly Civil Servant), he deals with the teachers’ responsibility, the sensitivities of the college, the situation of a teacher who “steps out of line”.

In “Homère et Shakespeare en banlieue”, Augustin d’Humières describes how, “contre vents et marées” (storm tides), he revives the teaching of Greek in a lycée in a so-called “banlieue” in the Seine et Marne department. The most violent storms and floods the author faces

come less from the students than from the school bureaucracy, the headmaster, the teachers’ unions, the colleagues. He has the parents on his side and, once they have decided in favour of Greek, the students. D’Humières is convinced that students want to learn if you let them, if you give them the framework.

The difficulties he encounters are the following: His Greek classes are confined to the last lesson on Fridays, colleagues leave the teachers’ room when he enters it, the director forbids him to advertise Greek during enrolment in his school.

In general, there is a *laissez-faire* pedagogical attitude. The students are basically unpunctual. The number of absences is gigantic.

Parents who want their children to learn something and who understand the connection between school and social success try to find another school as soon as possible. Teachers change all the time. Young teachers who have just come from the academy are assigned to the most difficult classes.

When Augustin d’Humières begins to promote his Greek classes, he is repeatedly asked the question of “usefulness”. Why should students who have already failed to learn to read and write properly in primary school now learn Greek? They will, if they are lucky, be sitting at the checkout in a supermarket or be found in sales somewhere, so what is the point of Greek?

He has two of the most important French Graecists on his side. Time and again, they publicly advocate the teaching of ancient languages and of what these languages convey in terms of culture and philosophy: *Jacqueline de Romilly* and *Jean-Pierre Vernant*, coming from opposite political directions. D’Humières is convinced of his cause. He knows what he can convey to the students by teaching the ancient languages. He counters the argument that “students leave school without knowing French properly” by stating that the old languages remind us of the history of words, of the background of their orthography, of how their meaning changes over time. To the objection that “students have problems with foreign languages”, he counters: “The old languages remind us of the common etymology of the various modern languages.” And: “The ancient languages allow us to approach at a distance and in peace important topics, like religion and life as a citizen.” They are what it all began with: the birth of philosophy and tragedy. The ancient texts

### “What a Greek teacher ...”

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encourage us to think about life, death, happiness, time, power, democracy, the republic, religions.

And: in Greek lessons, every student starts at the same point.

This is very important for those students who are otherwise always behind linguistically. Here, everyone is at the same level: they start from scratch.

Augustin d’Humières’ judgement of the school is scathing. He sees that it no longer fulfils its most fundamental tasks: To educate citizens, to impart knowledge, to prepare students for professional life. Students leave school completely defenceless, with an approximate command of French, a foreign language babble, a virtually non-existent education in history, science, literature and philosophy.

So how to deal with the curricula when the prerequisites for their implementation do not exist? Put them aside. First of all, find out where the students stand, where they have their gaps, which they have often brought with them from primary school?

The huge gap between the few good schools, even primary schools, and all the others becomes clear here. As an example of the inequality of schools and the respect shown to the student as a learner, the author describes the following.<sup>7</sup> Augustin d’Humières, who himself spent his school years at the prestigious *Henri IV* grammar school in Paris, imagines how the following incident would have been handled there: A student informs him in the corridor that the class cannot come to Greek lessons because they are going on an excursion with their CPE<sup>8</sup>. The students are allowed to be present at the filming of a cooking programme. What would happen at the *Henri IV* or *Louis Le Grand*<sup>9</sup>? A CPE who came up with this idea two months before the baccalaureate would be dismissed immediately.<sup>10</sup> In the suburban grammar school, the CPE is congratulated by his superior: “We have projects, we are teeming with ideas, something is moving, we are open to the world ... This teeming grammar school becomes the one that offers the fewest lessons but shines on the surface. There are grammar schools where the producer of the cooking show is trained, those where the cook is trained and finally those where the audience of the show is trained. And that is us. This is then called the social differentiation of teaching. Isn’t that brilliant?”<sup>11</sup>

**“For this school was intended, structured, organised so that students would learn as little as possible”<sup>12</sup>**

The discussion of the books could end here, if it were not for *Métis*<sup>13</sup>, the clever ruse.

Augustin d’Humières succeeded in making Greek and Latin popular subjects<sup>14</sup> at his school again. It is a pleasure to read the dialogues with his students rendered in the book.

He wins over former students who go to the collèges with him and advertise the teaching of Greek and Latin. (He is not allowed to show up at his own school for enrolments). So he makes round trips with his troupe in the catchment area of the lycée.

He founds the association “Métis”, students and pensioners help students. Homework supervision, theatre performances, excursions and trips are on the programme.<sup>15</sup>

With the help of former friends from the theatre world in Paris, he succeeds in performing “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*”. The rehearsals are an ordeal, but a week before the premiere, all the students are there. No one is missing, they are all on time, they know their lines, they reflect on their roles, they are happy.

These students can express what this class, what Greek means to them. They are successful in their studies and careers. Yet they are children of the suburbs who had no other perspective than to loiter at the foot of their apartment towers, take on odd jobs, be abused as errand boys for dealers and run into the arms of the jihad.

#### Student voices

*Sikem Hamdaoui:* After three years of Greek, I was not disappointed. It helped me to open my mind, to educate myself, to travel in history, as well as in the other subjects and to make the many trips that were organised. These three years were memorable. You learn an infinite amount in just two lessons a week.

*Morad Saouti:* At the beginning, it didn’t seem very attractive to me; I had prejudices against Greek. But then I realised that the lessons were very enriching, especially in terms of culture. Studying philosophers like *Plato* or *Socrates* brings knowledge that is also useful for other subjects.

*Sajo Drame:* I am in the first year of my medical studies. There is not a single lesson that does not contain Greek words. Clearly, it becomes much easier for the person who has learnt Greek when you have to remember key words. •

<sup>1</sup> The lycée comprises grades ten to twelve. There are two basic types, the general education lycée and the vocational lycée.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Monde*, 13 January 2015

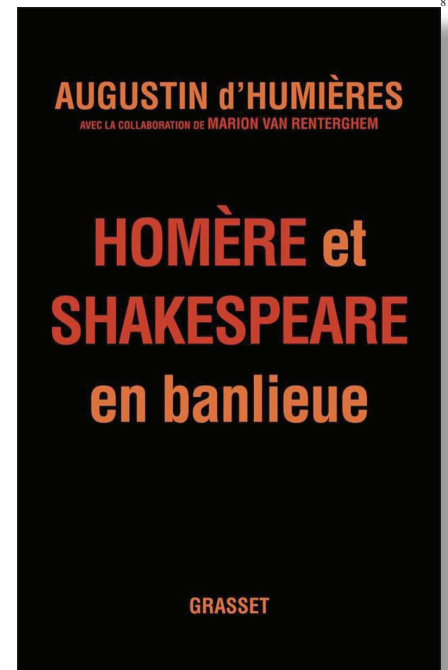
<sup>3</sup> *Le Figaro*, 7 April 2017

<sup>4</sup> Augustin d’Humières, *Un petit fonctionnaire*, ed. Grasset 2017, p. 24

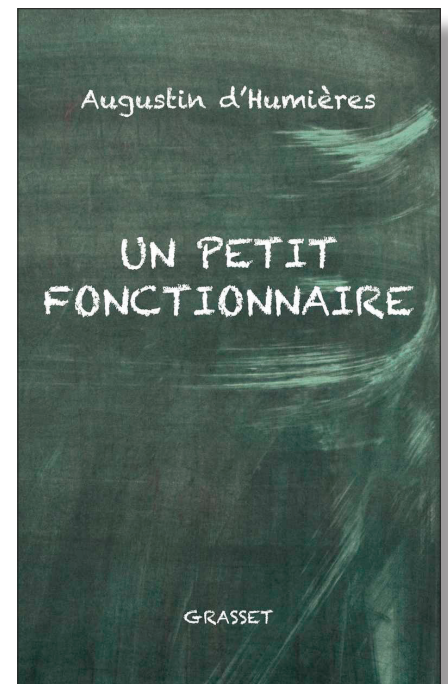
<sup>5</sup> *Un petit fonctionnaire*, p. 81

<sup>6</sup> Editions Grasset 2009

<sup>7</sup> *Un petit fonctionnaire*, p. 104



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Conseiller Principal d’éducation: the CPE is responsible for the practical running of school life, maintains contact with pupils and teachers.

<sup>9</sup> Parisian elite school

<sup>10</sup> *Un petit fonctionnaire*, p. 104

<sup>11</sup> see above. P. 105

<sup>12</sup> see above. P. 24

<sup>13</sup> *Métis* is the first wife of *Zeus*, father of the gods. Since she was his rival because of her cunning cleverness and farsightedness, he wanted to internalise these attributes instead of simply getting rid of her. So he consumed her.

<sup>14</sup> In 2015, Minister of Education *Najat Vallaud-Belkacem*, tried to deal a death blow to the old languages with her reform of the Collège. Latin and Greek lessons were reduced to one and two hours per week respectively.

<sup>15</sup> Internet address of *Métis*: [www.operationmetis.com](http://www.operationmetis.com). Here you can see the programme and the students’ comments.