

Current Concerns

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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

“Oh freedom – what crimes have been committed in your name!”

Speech made by Bassolma Bazie, Foreign Minister of the Transitional Government of Burkina Faso, at the 78th General Assembly of the United Nations, 23 September 2023, much acclaimed by the whole of Africa.

Translated from the original French text, summarised and commented by Peter Küpfer



Bassolma Bazie, Foreign Minister of the Transitional Government of Burkina Faso, at the 78th General Assembly of the United Nations, 23 September 2023 (picture screenshot)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso began his speech by bowing to “great leaders” who, with their words and actions around the world, have advocated strengthening “the hopes for a humane, just and equal human community with its spirit and its willingness to sacrifice”. Among writers, heads of state and human rights activists, he named Fidel Castro (Cuba), Patrice Emery Lumumba (Democratic Republic of Congo), Modib Keita (Mali), Che Guevara (Argentina), Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya) and Thomas Sankara (Burkina Faso) – leaders, many of them “executed, condemned to languish in prisons or fallen victim to poison attacks”. For those named, the only misdeed was to have been “encouraging examples of the dreams and hopes of their abused, raped and deprived peoples”.

Bazie emphasised the fact that taking the floor on behalf of his people at the United Nations, he was doing so “neither to build walls of complaint, nor to document a benign acquiescence: On the contrary, I have come here with a grave mandate to testify that state-sponsored

lies, diplomatic hypocrisy, lust for power, unrestrained pursuit of profit and the demonic drive for the exercise of power and the exploitation of human beings by human beings are the open wounds that threaten the coexistence of us human beings and undermine all common work, including that of this our organisation, the United Nations.”

To illustrate that he was not alone in this view, the Burkina Faso Foreign Minister began by quoting four important voices, including UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Joe Biden (!). The Foreign Minister quoted Guterres as saying in his welcome address: “The world’s challenges coalesced in an awful hellscape. [...] bodies are washing ashore from the same Mediterranean Sea where billionaires sunbathe on their super yachts.” Then he quoted Biden with the following remarkable phrase: “[...] to join together with partners who share a common vision of the future of the world, where our children do not go hungry and everyone has access quality healthcare ...” [Let us assume that by “our children” we mean

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On our own account

On 11 October 2023, the weekly *Weltwoche* reported that the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service, the NDB, had recorded our newspaper *Zeit-Fragen/Current Concerns/Horizons et débats* in a memorandum classified as ‘confidential’. *Weltwoche*, published in Zurich, rightly refers to a ‘fiche’, the Swiss term for a secret file. We have a copy of this document, dated 29 September 2023. In it, the authorities claim that *Zeit-Fragen* is spreading Russian ‘disinformation’ and ‘propaganda’. There is no mention of evidence or facts in support of these claims.

The ‘hook’ or occasion for this assertion is an article by Scott Ritter, the noted American commentator, that first appeared in the US at the beginning of September 2023 and was subsequently translated and published by both *Weltwoche* and *Zeit-Fragen* and its translated editions. Ritter’s topic is Swiss neutrality. He emphasises its value and its importance for peace in the world. He is critical of the attempt by the US ambassador to Bern, Scott Miller, to interfere in Switzerland’s internal affairs by exerting intense and concentrated pressure in a diplomatically unacceptable manner.

Scott Ritter was an officer in the US Marines and subsequently a UN weapons inspector. Since the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, which was against international law, he has been an internationally known critic of US foreign policy – not least out of genuine attachment to his country.

Ritter wrote the article after he had been to Switzerland to deliver lectures at a conference sponsored by “Mut zur Ethik” and, while there, had spoken to numerous Swiss citizens about the country’s neutrality. He was outraged by America’s attacks on the principle of neutrality. His travel costs and expenses, it bears mentioning in the interest of clarity and transparency, were covered by the Swiss citizens who invited him to speak – not, as was wildly imagined in certain circles, by Russia.

We state in this regard:

– The creation of secret files by the NDB is a blatant violation of the freedom of opinion and freedom of the media as guaranteed under human rights law and in Articles 16 and 17 of the Swiss Federal Constitution.

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"On our own account"

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- For years, about 90 per cent of Swiss citizens have repeatedly spoken out in favour of Swiss neutrality. Originating from the long history of the Swiss Confederation, our neutrality is part of the political core of our federal state, but is currently under massive attack from certain circles. The NDB is obviously making itself a stooge of these circles with its creation of secret files on *Zeit-Fragen*.
- Where are we today if the commitment to our neutrality is dismissed by our own intelligence service as Russian disinformation and propaganda? This is a political and constitutional scandal – unworthy of a democracy and an indictment of certain authorities in our country.
- The origin of the pressure is an open secret and has become common knowledge. It does not come from Russia.
- *Zeit-Fragen/Current Concerns/Horizons et débats* represents a journalistic ethic according to which it is not sufficient that only one opinion should have its say in a society: Different points of view and assessments must have a place. Without pluralism in the media landscape and freedom of the press, free public discussion and debate is not possible. We have deliberately organised ourselves as a cooperative, and all members work on a voluntary basis, because, as writers and editors, we value our independence – financially, yes, but also to protect our freedom to express our opinions. We do not allow ourselves to be roped in by anyone.

The editors.

Swiss Confederation**Art. 16. Freedom of expression and of information**

1. Freedom of expression and of information is guaranteed.
2. Every person has the right freely to form, express, and impart their opinions.
3. Every person has the right freely to receive information, to gather it from generally accessible sources and to disseminate it.

Art. 17. Freedom of the media

1. Freedom of the press, radio and television and of other forms of dissemination of features and information by means of public telecommunications is guaranteed.
2. Censorship is prohibited.
3. The protection of sources is guaranteed.

"Africa has been plundered. I spoke of mineral resources. But I should have spoken of men. For centuries, you have been robbed of men, women, and children. They have simply taken what they wanted. I understand your refusal, your resistance, and I approve of your struggle. You are right to refuse to be part of a continent that has been sacrificed. The moment has come for you to develop your economies yourselves, starting from your goods and your people. And it is the duty of the countries that have so abusively profited from African labour to give back to Africa some of what they have taken from them over the last centuries." (*François Mitterrand to Colonel Thomas Sankara*)

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not only those of the so-called elites, but all the children of this one world of ours, pk]. Brazilian President *Lula da Silva* was quoted by the African representative of Burkina Faso as saying: "*There is a great dissonance between what we talk about and what we do, the facts; there is not a lack of capacity, but a lack of political will. The UN must carry out its task of active support of a world of solidarity and justice as set out in the principles of the UN Charter.*"

"The martyrdom of Libya will not be repeated with Niger"

These thoughts led *Bazie* to his main topic, the situation of his country and of the entire Sahel, as a region that is particularly hard hit by the aforementioned shortcomings in the functioning of the international community. To these failures, he added the following sins of omission, all committed by responsible heads of Western states and in open violation of the principles of the UN Charter, all actionable, especially by the population of Burkina Faso and by its neighbouring peoples: the violation of human dignity, of the right to physical integrity, of the right to self-determination, of state sovereignty, of territorial sovereignty and inviolability, and of respect for international law as laid down in the Charter.

Bazie cited the fate of *Libya* as a particularly striking example of a country plagued by such neglect. *Bazie* began his remarks on this with an apology:

"*Intellectual honesty and historical knowledge demand that we make a sincere apology to the Libyan people for having sided, individually and collectively, out of condemnable passivity or out of unacceptable active complicity, with the executioners responsible for the first, i. e. the human, catastrophe that Libya suffered and is still suffering.*" This catas-

trophe, *Bazie* pointed out in this context, brought *Libya* to its knees, bled it dry and robbed it of its leader, even before monumental floods, the second, natural catastrophe, have now caused new destruction. And unfortunately, in the first, the human catastrophe, the United Nations played a key role with its Resolution 1970¹ and its culpable silence, a silence also shared by the complicit following of ECOWAS² (French-directed West African Community of States) and the OAS³.

"*The macabre intervention of that time, spearheaded by Nicolas Sarkozy's France, led to the gruesome murder of the Libyan President, Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi, on 20 October 2011. If ever the condolences offered to the Libyan people at the time showed a modicum of sanity and were not hypocritical, then the conviction has been established that such macabre diplomacy must never be repeated in the case of Niger; there cannot and will not be a 'second Libya' there!*"

Unfortunately, the speaker continued, hypocritical diplomacy is at work again today. In this context, he sharply denounced the fact that Niger's representatives were practically barred from joining the meeting.

"*Burkina Faso strongly condemns this shabby manoeuvre, which reflects a medieval state of mind. [...] On the contrary, we emphasise in the strongest terms that the UN must under no circumstances become a tool in the hands of any state.*" In this scenario, *Bazie* solemnly appeals to the peoples of Senegal, Bénin, Nigeria, Ghana, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Comoros and Guinée-Bissau, as well as to all the peoples of Africa, "*to fortify each other in their fraternal feelings and African solidarity and to contribute in preventing the imperialists from covering Niger with blood and fire, as they did with Libya.*"

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Double standards in international conflicts

Without violating diplomatic language, Bazie also called a spade a spade when it came to the Ukraine conflict, while, at least in German-language media, there is mostly a meaningful silence about Africa's battlefields.

Just as many governments submitted to the fact that African organisations such as ECOWAS and the OAS often behaved unilaterally, he said, the UN was also prone to this divergence from its statutes, which call for equality. Bazie commented:

“The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is supported and fuelled by other powers.” But the United Nations should never be misused to participate in destabilising brother nations and assassinating their leaders.

Concerning the situation in the Sahel, he stated: *“Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are in a war which has been imposed on them. This war was imposed on them by imperialism under the guise of terrorists from very different groups, the Al Quaid au Maghreb islamique (AQMI), the Islamic State (IS), the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa-l-Muslimin (JNIM) and others. Despite the assertions of equality in the principles of the UN Charter, there is a deep chasm between the ways problems are addressed internationally. The case of Burkina Faso testifies to this. There, civilian defence forces have spontaneously formed themselves to stop the rampage of invading terrorist armed gangs. They have organised themselves as 'Forces de Défense et de Sécurité (FDS)'. They have been joined by similar civil defence associations, the 'Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie (VDP)'. In the meantime, these civilian armed resistance associations have reached the considerable number of 58,000 fighters. They are fighting the invaders under the instruction and control of the FDS leaders. They are patriots, described by certain heads of state and ECOWAS as 'mercenary forces'. Now this is just one of those shabby state lies. If the international community were honest and sincere, such civilian engagements would not exist because then our people would not have to defend themselves.”*

In this context, Burkina Faso's official representative mentioned the French-inspired backdrop of threats with its “G5 Sahel” and the hint to ECOWAS to immediately threaten intervention “to restore democracy”. In the meantime, everything had dissolved into nothing. Where was the UN's defence of human beings and peoples, as demanded by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*?

In the meantime, Burkina Faso had been subject to sanctions since 30 September 2022, France had tried to impose certain “ministers” on the transitional government and had made its relations conditional on President *Ibrahim Taoré*'s carrying out France's provisions concerning the fate of the country – all in vain, of course. In the meantime, France was trying to impose an embargo on military material that was vital for Burkina Faso's survival.

“Here in the UN you often speak about the defence of human rights. Well, here, from this tribune, I ask you to supply us with our weapons immediately, so that we can ensure the defence and protection of our war-wounded populations. This is a serious, well-founded request, and if it goes unanswered, history will hold you accountable for not providing aid to vulnerable people.”

On the question of “militias”, Bazie stated the following:

“Yes, Mr President, the 'Wagnerian troops' of Burkina Faso, that is us. That is the brave resisters of our federations, the FDS and the VDP! [...] Instead of being helped in the bloody struggle imposed on us, we are overwhelmed with fictitious accusations, shameless state constructs of lies and hypocritical diplomacy that secretly threaten us, want to impose partners on us and tell us how to behave. To this we say no!”

Bazie went on in an even more committed, even more insistent tone:

The peoples of Africa in general, he said, but especially those in the Sahel, were resolutely engaged in a movement aimed at their full emancipation and real social progress. *“Because this is so, Burkina Faso will come to a sovereign agreement with those partners from whom it will obtain the means of defence it wants and needs. Whether these partners are Russia, Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Cuba, Nicaragua, North Korea or others – Burkina Faso will buy its products in the places and deliver products to the places of its choice. It needs no middlemen for that and even less permission from outside, from whom ever that may be, and this will remain that way, whatever may happen!”*

Let's face it, it's all about Africa's mineral resources!

After Bazie has put his finger on the fact that there are about 10,000 foreign troops active in the Sahel, most of them French army personnel, but also Americans, Germans, Italians and others, all equipped with sophisticated and state-of-the-art weapons and search and reconnaissance equipment, supposedly fighting the terrorists, he gets down to “a mystery”: the hundreds of terrorists playing their bloody trade there are obviously not seen by these supposed terrorist fighters, despite their

high-tech equipment. And he adds something else: *“There is not a single arms and ammunition factory in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. So, who is equipping the terrorists? Who trains them, who supplies them permanently? Who feeds them – and by what means? And why do the French get so nervous when they are told that they are not needed and should go home?”*

Then it gets very concrete:

“The real reason for their presence lies elsewhere. As early as 1957, France was aware that immeasurable mineral resources rested in the ground in the Sahara region. The largest groundwater reservoir stretches from Mauritania to Somalia, touching Mali, Algeria, Libya, Niger, and other countries in the Sahel. As early as 23 July 1957, 'Le Monde' states below the Sahara there is crude oil with a production potential of 6 to 7 million tons per year. Besides these natural resources, we have uranium, gold, cobalt, zinc, diamonds, lithium, copper and more.”

This, he said, is the reason for the permanent presence of European and American troops in this part of the world, and not the fight against terrorism and for freedom.

“If you Westerners love us Sahelians so much that you lead your soldiers here, that they lay down their lives here for democracy, freedom, human rights and peace, then why does the whole continent of Africa, with its 1.3 billion inhabitants, with its 30.5 million square kilometres, the second most densely populated continent, not have a permanent seat on the Security Council and no right of veto?”

The speaker then recalls the statement of *François Mitterrand*, who on 17 November 1986 addressed the following words to Colonel *Thomas Sankara*, the revolutionary president who gave Upper Volta the name Burkina Faso, *“Land of the Honest”*, a year before the latter's assassination. *Mitterrand* wrote to *Sankara*: *“Africa has been plundered. I spoke of mineral resources. But I should have spoken of men. For centuries, you have been robbed of men, women, and children. They have simply taken what they wanted. I understand your refusal, your resistance, and I approve of your struggle. You are right to refuse to be part of a continent that has been sacrificed. The moment has come for you to develop your economies yourselves, starting from your goods and your people. And it is the duty of the countries that have so abusively profited from African labour to give back to Africa some of what they have taken from them over the last centuries.”*

Against this background, the alleged struggle of developed countries for free-

Surviving in Syria

Encounters on the markets of Damascus

by Karin Leukefeld, Damaskus

Off the broad Mezzeh Highway there is a busy market called Sheikh Sa'ad, in the old part of Mezzeh, a Damascene suburb. The highway connects Damascus city center with the highway to Beirut. Left and right of the busy motorway there are multi-storeyed residential houses as well as schools, offices of Syrian mobile phone companies, the court house, a sports compound and government buildings. Just before the motorway feeds into the highway to Beirut there is a residential area on the left-hand side where many ambassadors used to have their residences.

Alt-Mezzeh cowers rather unostentatiously under a hill which is crowned with the presidential palace. The French school, a hospital, mosques – the locals who come to this market seem calm and relaxed.

In the old days one could do good business at Sheikh Sa'ad, says Mister Maher, who has been running a shop for men's clothing since the year 2000. The question, how he would compare his business today with that 20 years ago, surprises him: "Compared to 20 years ago? You can't even compare the times of today with back then", he says and shakes his head. "Today people try to make ends



"Like a family". Mister Schadi (left) and his co-workers don't sell a lot of lamb meat any more. (picture Karin Leukefeld)

meet with God's mercy, from one day to the other. Back then our business was so prosperous that we could have opened a new shop every year."

Customers from all over the world had been strolling through the Syrian market places, Syrian clothes were well-known
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dom in countries where the clocks tick differently from those in the Western world becomes fully transparent, and the prodding sigh of the courageous speaker fully understandable:

"Oh freedom – what crimes have been committed in your name?"

These are the bare figures. But they include fates. Bazie presents the following list of mineral resources that Africans still have despite centuries of exploitation:

- 30 % of the world's mineral reserves,
 - 40 % of gold,
 - 33 % of diamonds,
 - 80 % of the world's coltan reserves (e. g., for mobile phones!),
 - 60 % of cobalt (for batteries, especially electric cars, 5–15 kg per battery!),
 - 55 % of the world's uranium reserves.
- And that is not all.

Bazie emphasises that the younger generation is becoming more and more aware that these treasures must be firmly defended by them as well. This list is contrasted by quite different figures, which Bazie presents subsequently. 1.2 billion people worldwide are in a state of misery, [i.e., they don't know if and what they will eat today, most of them don't know where

they will sleep, not to mention hygiene and disease, *pk.*]. 2000 billion dollars are spent on arming the USA. Worldwide, 20 times the budget of the UN is used to produce nuclear weapons.

Concluding remarks

The UN was founded at the end of the catastrophe of the Second World War. Its founders were inspired by the idea that this should never happen again. The Charter of the UN and its Statutes are inspired by the idea that people and countries all over the world should resolve their conflicts "in a spirit of brotherhood".

In view of the facts and figures cited by Minister Bazie, much of what moves us Westerners seems very questionable. Can we work for peace when we live off the luxury that children create in dark, dangerous mines where some suffocate or are buried? If they have not, instead of starving to death, become child soldiers. Bazie's engaging voice makes a lot of things understandable. Ultimately, the truth is brutally simple.

Despite everything, the speech concludes on an optimistic note. The hard-pressed, bitterly poor states of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are doing what most people do, and what is also the state-building solid foundation of states. They

join forces. In Bazie's words at the end of his speech: *"We are taking the problem of our security into our own hands. We must count on our own forces, and we can do so, especially if we take care to exchange them with each other and if we make an effort to dissolve blockages in our processes."*

- ¹ UN Security Council Resolution 1970 of 26 February 2011, which took the fact that the Gaddafi government was resisting Western-backed armed uprisings and their leaders as an opportunity to impose a comprehensive arms supply and flight ban against Libya. Shortly afterwards, armed intervention took place, first by French army bombers, then by NATO. It destroyed the entire country, which was subsequently plunged into an ongoing civil war.
- ² ECOWAS: West African Economic Community, currently consists of 15 states. It is dominated by Nigeria and had already been intervening militarily in Liberia at the beginning of the 1990s. After taking power in Niger, it threatened the new regime with military intervention.
- ³ OAS: Organisation of African States. In view of the diversity of its members' state interests, its voice and significance are severely limited.

Sources:

"Discours de Bassolma Bazie devant la 78^e Assemblée générale des Nations unies, 23 septembre 2023", sur www.Lefaso.net (original unabridged text, French).

Full speech on video, in French: <https://youtu.be/yjg2zqLR-sA?si=l73PsUZAiwJAjjuY>

(Translation Current Concerns)

“Surviving in Syria”

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for their high quality. Just 25 % of all goods sold on the market had been foreign production, 75% of all shirts had been produced domestically. “We could make every dream come true for ourselves and our children”, Mister Maher says and lingers on in his memories for a while. “Today people are pre-occupied with getting some food on the table for their families. Today survival is all there is.”

No energy, no resources, no working hands, no business

Without supporting relatives sending money from abroad life in Syria is no longer possible, says the mercer. “Not in Syria, not in Lebanon, not for the refugees no matter where they are.” Nobody is willing or able to invest in Syria, businesses go bankrupt. “We can’t export, we can’t import.”

Mister Maher raises his arms and asks: “Factories have no energy, no material, no workers and they cannot repair their machines – what are we supposed to do?” The once, prior to 2011, booming commerce has collapsed. “War at first, then the siege, trade sanctions, now the inflation.” There used to be a spirit of solidarity in the Syrian society, people helped each other out. Nowadays everybody thinks of himself and just minds his own survival.

The once famous Syrian textile industry has all but disappeared. The good cotton which had been cultured in the Eastern Euphrates valley since the 1950ies is now traded by the *Syrian Democratic Forces* (SDK) and their business partners, operating from Northern Iraq or Turkey under Kurdish control. Companies in Aleppo don’t get involved and have to import expensive cotton from India or Pakistan. Syrian enterprises can no longer deliver the same quality products as in the past, mercer Maher admits, the production volume has decreased, too.

“See the shops out there on the pavement to my right and left, with second hand clothes? That’s where people buy today, because they have no money to spend on a high-quality shirt or pair of trousers.” Men’s shirts in Mister Maher’s shop cost between 130’000 and 150’000 Syrian Pounds, that’s between 10 and 12 Euro. A T-Shirt costs half that prize, for a very good shirt they have to pay up to 200’000 Syrian Pound. “I don’t keep shirts for that prize in store any more in my shop”, the mercer says. “The people who live here in Al-Mezzeh can no longer afford this.” Nowadays employees and government officials earn 300’000 Syrian Pounds, less than 30 Euro, at the most. Workers get a lot less, around 180’000 Syrian Pounds.



“A man is busy stirring milk and semolina for a pudding.” (picture Karin Leukefeld)

On Bab Srijeh Market

A big market for sub-prime quality clothes is situated in Midan, running parallel with another very popular domestic market, the Bab Srijeh market. The import of these clothes is illegal, but as soon as they have reached the shop counters the trade is tolerated. One reason to prohibit their import is to protect domestic textile production. Another one is, that drugs and weapons have been smuggled in the tightly sealed cloth packages that are delivered from all corners of the world. Police searches have been conducted time and again, but now the trade is tolerated because people cannot afford anything else.

Most of the sub-prime clothes merchants at Bab Srijeh decline interviews. At last Mister *Ibrahim* is willing to take questions. The man seems tired when he declares that he had made not more than 150000 Syrian Pound that day, about eleven Euro. Two lads help him to put the jackets, coats and trousers on hangers to get them ready for the winter. In front of the shop there are t-shirts, blouses, shirts and a lot more things lying around on big tables. Young people, mainly women, dig into the clothes, pick a piece up from time and hold it to the light to scrutinise it.

Before the war his business had been going well, Mister Ibrahim recalls wistfully. Then he was drafted into the army and sent from one frontline to the other. After 2016 things got more relaxed and he was serving near Damascus. In the afternoons he was working in his shop again and in the evenings he could go home. “I don’t know what happened to our country”, he says shrugging his shoulders. “We were so well-to-do and still we helped those foreign forces to carry the war into our country!” It would take another 10 years at least before Syria would be able to recover, he predicts. But he finds

it even difficult to imagine how this could happen: “As bad as this it has never been in Syria before during my life-time and all the young people want is get out of here.”

Aubergines as big as footballs

Some blocks further down fish, meat, vegetables, fruits and cheese are offered on Bab Srijeh market as if nothing had changed. The merchants have built sophisticated pyramids from lemons, grapes and nuts. In between there are aubergines as big as footballs which are referred to as “cow’s eggs” by the people.

A young man peeps curiously from behind the high counter of his shop. He offers honey and nuts, various blends of white Sheep’s and goat’s cheese, coffee, milk and other goods. Thin bread from Sweida, wrapped into quadrangles, lies on top of the counter and is selling fast.

Apart from rice and sugar everything is from Syria the young man says who introduces himself as *Mohamed Hejazi*. The shop is owned by his father who has been a merchant at Bab Srijeh market for 50 years. He describes their business as not as good as it used to be but they were still selling things, he says and answers questions of customers patiently about prizes and where the merchandise came from.

On one side of the counter a pale-looking woman buys 250 grams of cheese and some yoghurt in a plastic bag. On the other side several round, big plastic bowls with various blends of cheese are boxed for women in gorgeous robes. “There you see the differences to our customers”, Hejazi laughs. “The Syrians buy small amounts, because they have no money. The women from Lebanon seem to have enough money and buy a lot. For them it is still much cheaper here in Syria as compared with Lebanon.”

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“Back to the facts, back to dialogue”

Jacques Baud’s book: “Putin – master of events?”

by Ewald Wetekamp

A proven expert on military strategic issues, *Jacques Baud* worked for the Swiss Strategic Intelligence Service, where he was responsible for the Warsaw Treaty states. His excellent reputation led him to the UN. Here he headed the area for peacekeeping operations. In 2014, he was involved in missions in Ukraine on behalf of NATO.

The concept of his book, published last year first in French and now in German translation, is as follows: As an observer of French media, he took the programme “*Putin, master of events?*” on the French TV channel *France 5* as an opportunity to subject the claims made in this programme about Putin and Russia to a systematic analysis. He refutes the claims made piece by piece, exploring the following questions:

- “Was there a promise that NATO would not expand eastwards after 1990?”
- “Was Russian intervention in Syria opportunistic?”
- “Did Putin approve the forced rerouting of *Ryanair* flight 4978?”
- “Did Russia interfere in the 2016 American presidential election for the benefit of *Donald Trump* (*Russiagate*)?”

- “Did Russia try to influence the Brexit vote?”
- “What is the significance of the Munich speech in 2007?”
- “Did Vladimir Putin try to prevent a Ukraine association agreement with Europe?”
- “Is Russia not fulfilling its obligations under the Minsk agreements?”
- “Is *Navalny* the main opponent of Vladimir Putin?”
- “Can the Russian economy be compared to the Italian economy?”
- “Is the Western strategy in relation to Russia purposeful?”

Jacques Baud formulates his concern in concise compressed words: “Back to the facts, back to dialogue.” How else should a long-term solution be achieved, that can be supported by all sides? In this way he makes it clear what he, as an expert with a Swiss biography, is concerned with in this



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book. He is not concerned with apportioning blame or polarisation, but wants to open up paths to dialogue. With this concern, he stands in the long tradition of Swiss politics with its neutrality and good offices.

In his introduction, Jacques Baud points out that he has only used Western sources in his book, often American and French traditional media. In this way, he wants to counter the accusation that he relies on Russian “propaganda” in advance.

In order to keep his bearings in the mishmash of a fierce information war, Baud begins by clarifying the terms “lie”, “fake news”, “propaganda” and “conspiracy theory”. Since he repeatedly refers to the term “conspiracy theory” in the course of the individual chapters, his definition of it is given here with an example: “Conspiracy theory is the creation of a narrative, based on partial information, conjecture or suspicion, which is treated as fact

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Semolina pudding for the Prophet’s birthday

Loud music honouring the prophet *Mohammed* comes from a loud-speaker, his birthday is celebrated by Muslims these days. A man is standing in the middle of the pavement and stirs milk and semolina together in a big metal kettle for a pudding. The kettle is heated by a gas flame, boys holding bowls in their hands flock around the man and keep a keen eye on what is going on in the kettle.

“Please take a bowl”, the young man offers. “Today is the birthday of our prophet Mohammed and we want to celebrate that.” Some men watch the scene from a nearby meat shop. Apart from one single piece of meat the hooks are empty, the knives are lying idle on the tables. Some pieces are covered under a rag to protect it from the swirling flies.

Business is bad, says Mister *Schadi*, who inherited the shop from his father 25 years ago. As a child he had already helped his father, after school. Mister Schadi sells lamb meat, the customers’ favourite. But it is not indispensable for survival and it is expensive. One kilogram costs between 130’000 and 150’000 Syrian Pounds today.

Many of his customers used to come from the suburbs of Damascus, they don’t

come any more. “People simply have not enough money; their income is too little. No money for the bus, no money to buy meat”, Mister Schadi says. “Even today, on prophet Mohammed’s birthday, we hardly sold anything. The people can’t even afford sweets for the children.” Most of them had cut out at least one of the three meals they used to have in a day. “We eat only once per day meat we have forgotten altogether.”

Next to Mister Schadi a tall youth is standing, he is 16 years old. “He doesn’t even know Syria as it used to be”, says Mister Schadi and slaps the young lad’s back. “Were he about to marry he would need millions to find a home, to get the gold and everything for the bride. How is he supposed to ever save that amount of money? He is making about 200’000 Syrian Pounds here, how will he ever be able to pay for a wedding?”

He and his co-workers were only able to survive because relatives were sending money from abroad from time to time. Therefore, he was not going to lay anybody off, without this shop, without this little income at least, they would have nothing left. “We are like a family, and stick together. We used to work together when times were better and we will stay together now as well. We hope that Allah might grant us a better future eventually.”

Three hours electricity

A private report published by the churches about the situation in Damascus on 25th September 2023 states, that the situation was «stable and largely safe». Electricity supply in some areas of the capital was described as “3:3 hours”, i.e. 3 hours with electricity and 3 hours without. Most of the time, however, it’s more like 2 hours with and 4 hours without electricity, in the areas outside city centre and in the suburbs the supply is worse. One hour with electricity and 5 to 7 hours without. In more remote areas there is often just 1 to 2 hours of electricity per day.

Water supply was better, the report says, thanks to the Ein el-Fijeh spring at least 12 hours per day are guaranteed. Only in some areas water supply is restricted to fewer hours.

There is a shortage in petrol, heating oil, electricity and propane gas. Prices on the markets and for public transport have increased and keep rising. Poverty is widespread, many people are starving, the report asserts. The number of beggars is increasing and so is the number of thefts. Many families could not afford more than one sufficient meal per day. •

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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and linked with the help of a tendentious logic. [...] it can combine propaganda elements with misinformation and disinformation.” (p. 16) The example given refers to the accusation that Russia is standing like a shadow behind the protest movement of the *yellow waistcoats*, this would be allegedly proven by tweets from Russia. Since there are also tweets from Switzerland or Germany and the Russians are not Russia and certainly not the Russian government, this report is a mixture of propaganda and disinformation processed into a conspiracy theory. Amazing how easy it seems to be to deduce the alleged policy of the Kremlin from Russian tweets.

Allegations about Vladimir Putin’s foreign policy

Baud succinctly contradicts the claim made by *France 5* and others that Putin wants to restore the USSR. According to Baud, Putin sees quite clearly that the USSR was a Marxist state whose ideology differed fundamentally from the basic economic liberal view of today’s Russia. In this respect, there is no nostalgic mourning for the USSR, which the Western media repeatedly accuse him of. They refer to an alleged statement by Putin in which he is said to have claimed that the destruction of the USSR was the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century. They infer that this is Putin’s Soviet nostalgia, which would make it clear that he wants to return to the greatness of the USSR. In fact, however, what Putin has described as drama and as chaotic was the way in which the transition to democracy took place in Russia. Putin, according to Baud, is firmly in favour of a liberal economy on the Western model. Baud describes the claim that Putin wants to restore the “Russian Empire” as a Western fantasy.

Was there a promise that NATO would not expand eastwards after 1990?

There is a bitter dispute over this question. The dispute illustrates how the “West” deals with promises and treaties. With NATO’s eastward expansion by including Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland, the Baltic countries, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, NATO has moved inexorably towards the Russian border. Baud is not the only one to see it this way. But NATO’s eastward expansion in and of itself was not the real problem for Russia. Russia’s reactions only became more decisive after the US pulled out of nuclear disarmament treaties in the early 2000^s and decided to install nuclear-capable missile “defence” systems with the potential for nuclear offensive weapons in the new NATO member states. Missile systems that have reduced the warning time for

Russia to only a few minutes. This, Baud says, was the reason for Putin’s decisive speech in Munich in 2007, in which he recalled that *Mikhail Gorbachev* had received assurances in 1990-1991 that there would be no NATO eastward enlargement. This assurance was and is supported by numerous declassified documents made available in December 2017 by the George Washington University *National Security Archive*.

Many Western politicians and institutes, Western NGOs, Western broadcasters and NATO Secretary General *Jens Stoltenberg* argue that there never was an assurance because any form of written contract or written agreement would be missing. Baud confirms that such written contracts and assurances do not in fact exist, but at the same time points out that it is not the case that such promises have not been made. It is true that these promises were owed to a “deal”, Baud emphasises, because without this promise German reunification would have been a distant prospect. But Baud emphasises that a promise, a unilateral pledge to a counterpart “is a unilateral contract under international law” that has validity. Anyone today who disputes the validity of such a legal act thinks nothing of the value of the word given.

Another actor interested in a fundamental NATO enlargement was the arms lobby in the United States, as the “New York Times” revealed in 1998. To this end, it had spent 51 million US dollars just on bribing American politicians who should work for its goal.

Did Putin want to prevent an association agreement between Ukraine and the EU?

There was a further escalation towards today’s conflict because of the way the EU misused the planned association agreement with Ukraine in order to cut Russia’s historically established ties with Ukraine. “European diplomacy has seen Ukraine as a border between East and West, while Russia has seen it as a bridge.” (p. 111) This is how Baud sums up the difference in interests between East and West. Ukraine was oriented towards the Russian market in its entire industrial mode of production. In a competition with the European market, Ukraine was bound to lose hopelessly, both in its industrial products and in its agricultural products. Many Ukrainian leaders also saw it that way. That is why Russia proposed a tripartite agreement. On the one hand, this would have preserved ties with Russia, and on the other, it would have made it possible to open up to the European market. But this is exactly what the then EU Commission President *Barroso* did not want. Instead, he asked the Ukrainians to make up their minds. This was the starting point of another “well-placed” explosive device.

The West and its support for the Euro-Maidan

The explosive device was detonated with the help of the EU and the United States in 2014 in the form of the so-called Maidan revolution. The news magazine *L’OBS* described this action as a coup d’état. The well-known telephone conversation between *Victoria Nuland* (US Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia) and *Geoffrey Pratt* (US Ambassador in Kiev) makes this obvious. For it was not the Ukrainian people who were to determine the future members of the Ukrainian government, but the two American officials. But this did not bother official Europe.

Likewise, the West was not offended by the fact that the first legislative act of this parliament abolished Russian as an official language with equal rights in 2014, as provided for by a law of 2012. Another explosive device. And so it goes on: the leader of the largest parliamentary opposition party is arrested. Three Russian-language television channels are closed down. Moscow-friendly media are banned.

That such action turned the Russian-speaking population against those they had not elected is understandable. This rebellion led the NATO military and the Ukrainian government to consider the population in the Donbass and Crimea as foreign enemy forces. This started the war against the Russian-speaking part in eastern Ukraine, which cost an estimated 14,000 lives. More than 80% of them were civilians.

In Crimea, too, the Russian-speaking people were incensed. Baud again guides the reader through the recent history of Crimea using sources. Beginning with the cession of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954, he proves that even this cession was not legal, because it was not approved by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, nor by the Soviet of the Russian Socialist Republic, nor by the Ukrainian Socialist Republic. Never before had the population of Crimea been under the rule of Kiev. It is therefore not surprising that the first autonomy referendum – still in the times of the USSR – in Crimea on 12 February 1991 was approved by 93.6%. Such a vote was repeated in Crimea in 2014, after the government they had elected in Kiev was overthrown and after the incumbent government had decided to abolish Russian as an official language, thus undermining the protection of minorities. Unsurprisingly, this time too, the vote in favour of affiliation to Russia was 96.77%. In the West, people spoke of annexation and justified this with the presence of Russian soldiers and “little green men”. Baud explains that Russia had a stationing agreement with Ukraine until 2042. According to the treaty, the limited number of soldiers was allowed to move across the entire Crimea. The fact is, as Baud says,

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The multipolar world must become more human

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

How can one endure this? Once again war and destruction in the Middle East! Hundreds of thousands of dead already in the Ukraine war! The exodus of tens of thousands of Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh! And then there is the suffering of the people that almost no one talks about anymore. In the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo! In Syria! In Afghanistan! ... Which country can be left out when talking about injustice and its consequences?

Enduring this is possible only by contributing towards making the living together in this world better, making it more humane. And by first listening to those striving for such a world. Are the considerations serious, reasonable, and humane towards many small steps uphill?

To do this is not a matter of course. And it takes courage. Powerful, influential forces have so far “profited” from injustice and from a lack of equality – in quotes because it is an unnatural, one could also say: sick “profiting”. It contradicts the social nature of man, the survival imperative of compassion, of a sense of community.

One world view and many phrases

It is no surprise that the profiteers fire sharply when they see their “profits” in danger. They do not want the world to be shaped differently from the way they want it to be.



The photo exhibition “The Family of Man,” which has been on permanent display in Clervaux, Luxembourg (pictured), since 1994, has been around since 1955. After the experiences of World War II, it was intended to help promote understanding between people. It was also meant to show what all could be destroyed in the event of an impending nuclear war. The exhibition was intended to show that all people are equal and that everyone, regardless of class, race, culture, religion, age or gender, has dignity and that all people share a common nature. The power of love and humanity should overcome hatred, violence and destruction. (picture Wikimedia Commons)

And if you look more closely, the underlying world view assumes an eternal above and below between people: Life as a struggle for

power and money, in which there are only winners (above) and losers (below)...

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that the population of Crimea joined forces with the territorial militias, the armed volunteers and, above all, the 35,000 Ukrainian defectors to defend themselves against the attacks from Kiev and to vote together. The West’s suggestion that there were soldiers in Crimea without recognisable insignia, soldiers who were immediately labelled as Putin’s agents, turned out to be false. For it was the Ukrainian defectors who tore off their army insignia. Baud sums up that there had been no Russian invasion either in the Donbass or in Crimea in 2014.

Why did Putin decide to attack Ukraine?

Since the attempt to peacefully settle the 2014 conflict through the *Minsk I* and *Minsk II* agreements, Putin has never stopped demanding the implementation of these agreements. As a reminder, these were never about territorial delimitation, but always about administrative autonomy while retaining Ukrainian citizenship. The way the West has dealt with these agreements makes it clear that it not only does not keep promises made, but not even treaties under international law. *Merkel, Hol-*

lande and *Poroshenko* even boast that they never took these agreements seriously.

What does one do with such negotiating partners who stoop to amplifying the bluster of American representation in the media and prophesying an imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine on 16 February 2022? Alleged evidence for this were American satellite photos that were supposed to show military equipment and military units. However, these were quickly withdrawn after it became known that Russian troops, more than 200 km from the Ukrainian border, were close to the Belarusian border.

In order to provoke Putin’s intervention, Ukrainian forces began to increase the shelling of the Donbass republics. The OSCE documented the increase in shelling since 16 February. Until now, Putin had hesitated to recognise the Donbass republics even after a decision to that effect by the Russian parliament, the Duma. This changed under the conditions of the continuous shelling. On 21 February 2022, the Donbass republics were recognised. Consequently, “treaties on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance” were concluded at the same time. As the Donbass republics expected a large-scale offensive by Ukraine

on their territory, they asked Russia for military support on 23 February 2022. Russia decided in favour of the “special military operation” on the basis of Article 51 of the *United Nations Charter*, as well as on the basis of *Responsibility to Protect*.

For those who still have doubts about the intentions of Western actors after Baud’s explanations up to this point, Baud submits the statements of *Oleksej Arestowitch*, advisor and spokesman for President *Selensky*, who already admitted on 18 March 2019 to plans for one or even several major wars with Russia. He gave the interview to the Ukrainian channel *Apostrof TV*:

“With a probability of 99.9%, our price for joining NATO is a big war with Russia. [...] A conflict bigger than today. Or a series of conflicts of this kind. But in this conflict, we will be very actively supported by the West.” (p. 196f.)

For those who want to find their way through the thicket of daily propaganda, not only from the state media, to see more clearly what the path to a peaceful solution might be, this book is highly recommended. Taking the author’s concern further can bring us all a step further towards dialogue, towards settling the conflict. •

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The profiteers do not say this openly. They put forward high “values”: In the West, “democracy”, for example. In recent years they have agreed to speak of a “rules-based international order” (RBIO). They have defined the rules themselves. Those who want a different world are pilloried. They are said to be “autocratic” and “aggressive”, a danger to “peace” and to “democracy”, a danger to RBIO. They are demonised. Almost every day. Blocking contact in every respect is the goal. The propaganda wave is in full swing. Many media have put themselves entirely at the service of the RBIO profiteers.

Why not also listen to the other

But why should it be wrong to listen to the other side as well? Couldn't it be, for example, that the Russian President *Vladimir Putin*, demonised in our country, says quite reasonable things, makes statements that can be helpful in working towards a more humane world?

I am trying to read as much as possible of what Vladimir Putin says in the original language. Now I have read his speech at the annual conference of the *Valdai Club*, the *International Valdai Forum*, which took place in Sochi on the Black Sea in early October. An authorised English-language version can be found on the Russian president's website¹.

Vladimir Putin is speaking of an “era of change”

At the outset, Vladimir Putin speaks of an era “when the entire world order is crumbling,” stating that “it was major changes that dictated the fundamental transformation of the very principles of international relations”. At the beginning of the 21st century, everyone had hoped “that states and peoples had learned the lessons of the expensive and destructive military and ideological confrontations of the previous century, saw their harmfulness and the fragility and interconnectedness of our planet, and understood that the global problems of humanity call for joint action and the search for collective solutions.” But, regrettably, “[Russia's] interest in constructive interaction was misunderstood, was seen as obedience, as an agreement that the new world order would be created by those who declared themselves the winners in the Cold War. It was seen as an admission that Russia was ready to follow in others' wake and not to be guided by our own national interests but by somebody else's interests.”

Once again, the Russian president explains his criticism of the West's policies, as he has done repeatedly and ever more clearly and pointedly since his speech to the Munich Security Conference in February 2007², since 24 February 2022 also re-

garding the consequences of Western policies for the Global South.

Once again, he explains why Russia intervened militarily in Ukraine on 24 February 2022. And he adds: “The Ukraine crisis is not a territorial conflict, and I want to make that clear. Russia is the world's largest country in terms of land area, and we have no interest in conquering additional territory. We still have much to do to properly develop Siberia, Eastern Siberia, and the Russian Far East. This is not a territorial conflict and not an attempt to establish regional geopolitical balance. The issue is much broader and more fundamental and is about the principles underlying the new international order.”

A lasting peace

He adds: “Lasting peace will only be possible when everyone feels safe and secure, understands that their opinions are respected, and that there is a balance in the world where no one can unilaterally force or compel others to live or behave as a hegemon pleases even when it contradicts the sovereignty, genuine interests, traditions, or customs of peoples and countries.”

And further on: “Clearly, commitment to bloc-based approaches and the push to drive the world into a situation of ongoing “us versus them” confrontation is a bad legacy of the 20th century. It is a product of Western political culture, at least of its most aggressive manifestations. To reiterate, the West – at least a certain part of the West, the elite – always need an enemy. They need an enemy to justify the need for military action and expansion. But they also need an enemy to maintain internal control within a certain system of this very hegemon and within blocs like NATO or other military-political blocs. There must be an enemy so everyone can rally around the leader.”

For centuries, this had led to the replication of one thing: “big wars, with various ideological and quasi-moral justifications invented to justify these wars.” Today, when the existing weapons systems can destroy the whole world, this was particularly dangerous. It is therefore necessary to look for a way out of this vicious circle. This is also a task of the International Valdai Forum.

Many different civilisations in one cohesive world

In the second part of his speech, Putin takes up the concept of *civilisation*. He rejects the equation of civilisation and the West, which makes the West alone the yardstick, and articulates instead: “First, there are many civilisations, and none is superior or inferior to another. They are equal since each civilisation represents a unique expression of its own culture, tra-

ditions, and the aspirations of its people. For instance, in my case, it embodies the aspirations of my people, of which I am fortunate to be a part.”

And he continues: “The essential characteristics of a civilisation-state encompass diversity and self-sufficiency, which, I believe, are two key components. Today's world rejects uniformity, and each state and society strive to develop its own path of development which is rooted in culture and traditions, and is steeped in geography and historical experiences, both ancient and modern, as well as the values held by its people. This is an intricate synthesis that gives rise to a distinct civilisational community. Its strength and progress depend on its diversity and multifaceted nature.”

He is convinced, “that humanity is not moving towards fragmentation into rivaling segments, a new confrontation of blocs, whatever their motives, or a soulless universalism of a new globalisation. On the contrary, the world is on its way to a synergy of civilisation-states, large spaces, communities identifying as such”.

But many in the West, as Putin continues, seem to have “forgotten the notions of reasonable self-restraint, compromise and a willingness to make concessions in the name of attaining a result that will suit all sides”.

Six objectives of Russian policy

At the end of his speech, Vladimir Putin summarises the objectives of Russian policy in six points: “First. We want to live, in an open, interconnected world, where no one will ever try to put artificial barriers in the way of people's communication, their creative fulfilment and prosperity. We need to strive to create an obstacle-free environment.

Second, we want the world's diversity to be preserved and serve as the foundation for universal development. It should be prohibited to impose on any country or people how they should live and how they should feel. Only true cultural and civilisational diversity will ensure peoples' wellbeing and a balance of interests.

Third, Russia stands for maximum representation. No one has the right or ability to rule the world for others and on behalf of others. The world of the future is a world of collective decisions made at the levels where they are most effective, and by those who are truly capable of making a significant contribution to resolving a specific problem. It is not that one person decides for everyone, and not even everyone decides everything, but those who are directly affected by this or that issue must agree on what to do and how to do it.

Fourth, Russia stands for universal security and lasting peace built on respect

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After the summer break between Brussels and Bern – EU Parliament wants to stay its course

by Dr. iur. Marianne Wüthrich

Once again Brussels issues a request rather sounding like a command to Switzerland. On 4 October, the EU Parliament waved through the “Switzerland Report” by the Austrian Lukas Mandl, who represents the Foreign Affairs Committee¹, by 538 votes to 42 with 43 abstentions. The MEPs criticised the Federal Council’s termination of negotiations on the institutional framework agreement (InstA) in June 2021 without taking note of its reason for doing this. Instead, the current “Switzerland Report” lists the whole range of demands on Switzerland that were already in the draft InstA, and the EU Parliament also puts forward an absurd “time window” for an agreement to be reached by the EU elections in mid-2024. Yet it would not be possible to square the circle in even a longer time frame.

What is it that Switzerland wants?

“At the heart of Europe and yet not part of it. What is it that Switzerland wants?” This is the title of a commentary by two German members of the Bundestag in the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” of 25 September 2023. Yes, what is it that Switzerland wants? This is a question to which our domestic editorial offices, our politicians and diplomats, as well as the law and history professors at our universities should be able and willing to give the EU politicians a fine-tuned answer: “Switzerland”, that is us, the Swiss citizens; and we decide what we want at the ballot box. Swiss solutions that appeal to a vast majority of the people are rigged up on the basis of freedom, and they are tailor-made for the pillars of our state: Neutrality, sovereign-

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for the interests of everyone: from large countries to small ones. The main thing is to free international relations from the bloc approach and the legacy of the colonial era and the Cold War. We have been saying for decades that security is indivisible, and that it is impossible to ensure the security of some at the expense of the security of others. Indeed, harmony in this area can be achieved. You just need to put aside haughtiness and arrogance and stop looking at others as second-class partners or outcasts or savages.

Fifth, we stand for justice for all. The era of exploitation, as I said twice, is in the past. Countries and peoples are clearly aware of their interests and capabilities and are ready to rely on themselves; and this increases their strength. Everyone



Volunteers counting votes at the Confederal elections in 2019. (Picture keystone)

ty, federalism, direct democracy – and, corresponding to our cooperative bedrock, a good public service for all. If foreign powers seek to impose a model on Switzerland that contradicts our understanding of the state by 180 degrees, then we take the liberty of saying no. What is there so difficult to understand?

Institutional Framework Agreement – new edition from Brussels

The “Switzerland Report” by Lukas Mandl simply ignores the indispensable pillars of the Swiss state system and once again repeats the well-known authoritarian demands from Brussels (one-to-one adoption of EU law, application of the ban on state aid and subordination to the ECJ).²

The EU Parliament spent a whole 35 minutes on the debate “Relations with Switzerland” in front of largely empty

seats - but apparently everyone was back to vote. The contents in brief:

- *Threat of “the risk of erosion” applied to “numerous bilateral agreements”*: Here, the main issue is the “Agreement on dismantling technical barriers to trade (Mutual Recognition Agreement – MRA)”, i.e. access for Swiss export companies to new technical regulations of the EU. What is absurd about this is the fact that on this point Switzerland has always been willing to adopt EU rules – but if it is to the advantage of our companies, it is not allowed...

- *Free movement of persons*: The Swiss trade unions’ concern about wage protection worthy of the name is dismissed with the nebulous explanation that “the application of temporary, fixed-term or security measures, based on EU law”, might be considered “for a certain period of time”. Note the wording “based on EU law” – i.e. precisely not on the basis of the carefully coordinated parity controls of the Swiss workers’ and employers’ associations. (It does not suit the Brussels bureaucrats that in Switzerland, we do not simply reel off only a computer programme, but instead the social partners jointly check a large part of the employment contracts on site, especially in the catering and construction sectors). Moreover, the measures are to be considered only “for a certain period of time” – our trade unions and the left-wing parties could never, ever agree to such a thing this shaky. Incidentally, the Union Citizenship Directive is not mentioned in the media, although the associated easier access to the attractive Swiss social insurances would lead to a further in-

should be given access to the benefits of today’s world, and attempts to limit it for any country or people should be considered an act of aggression.

Sixth, we stand for equality, for the diverse potential of all countries. This is a completely objective factor. But no less objective is the fact that no one is ready to take orders anymore or make their interests and needs dependent on anyone, above all on the rich and more powerful.

And he adds: “This is not just the natural state of the international community, but the quintessence of all of humankind’s historical experience.”

Can it be a bad thing to think about all this thoroughly? •

¹ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72444> of 5 October 2023

² <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034> of 10 February 2007

"After the summer break ..."

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crease in immigration and is therefore unacceptable for Switzerland. The bottom line: the Swiss sovereign, the people, must finally be able to control immigration themselves again.

- *Electricity agreement*: The lack of an electricity agreement "poses risks for the European electricity grid", the "Tages-Anzeiger" quotes. In fact, the Swiss Alpine transit line is indispensable for the EU as a hub and centre of the European electricity grid. Switzerland is of course willing to cooperate even without an institutional agreement, but it also wants its share of the electricity that flows through the Alps. To ensure that Swiss electricity ends up in "the right hands", the EU has long been calling for the privatisation of hydroelectric power plants, and in doing so is banging its head against a brick wall with the owners, namely the cantons and municipalities, i.e., the voters.
- *"Horizon Europe" research programme*: Switzerland's participation is obviously very desirable, not only in our universities, but also in the EU Parliament: "This will strengthen Europe as a whole as a location for science and innovation", says Lukas Mandl. Where

is the problem? If Switzerland is such a sought-after research location, we can surely join in without a bureaucratic superstructure? Incidentally, there are also voices in favour of this in our neighbouring countries.

- *"Modernisation" of the free trade agreement and a "modern" investment protection agreement*: Switzerland's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the EC of 1972, a trade treaty concluded on an equal footing with more than a hundred subsequent agreements, would thus be institutionalised in one go with the Bilateral I agreements. This is because "modernisation" refers to the basic pillars demanded by the EU: adoption of existing and future EU law, application of the ban on state aid, and subordination to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice ECJ.
- *Cohesion payments*: The "ceterum censeo" from Brussels is not long in coming: "Incidentally", the "Switzerland Report" calls for regular and higher payments by Switzerland - into the EU's bottomless barrel.

Critical comments are sought in vain in the mainstream media

Our mainstream media "inform" us about this new edition of the outrageous framework agreement from Brussels without

uttering one word of solidly-Swiss resistance. The "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" relinquishes its commentary to two German parliamentarians without even the most minimal knowledge ("What is it that Switzerland wants?") or - even worse! - to some Swiss who want to get closer integration into the EU through the referendums as smoothly as possible. For example, there is *Thomas Pfisterer*, former federal judge, member of a cantonal government and of the Council of States (FDP). His proposal for a reform concept that "makes more democracy possible for the implementation of the EU treaties [...]" contains a whole host of ideas such as sending "experts" to the EU bodies, involving parliament and "the cantons" (i.e. the *Conference of Cantonal Governments*, CCG). Wait a minute: without any treaty with the EU even being ready to be signed, let alone accepted by the sovereign, the author has already arrived at its "implementation"! Especially when it comes to dealing with the electorate in the event of a referendum: Parliament would have to "make every effort to ensure that the electorate decides in full knowledge of the facts on the content of an EU act of law to be adopted[...]" If parliamentary commissions are in favour of an EU legal act, they should "work towards making it

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The trust factor: Importance for democratic Switzerland

mw. At this point, I have to correct myself – fortunately! Because here and there, there are true treasures to be found in the mainstream media. For example, there is a report by *Benjamin von Wyl* about the significance of the trust factor for democratic Switzerland on *swissinfo.ch*, the news and information platform of Swiss TV channel SRF, *Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen*.¹

"Solid land, solid money, solid life designs: compared to other countries, many things are going good in Switzerland. One important factor to that fact is the high amount of trust towards institutions. On a train journey to or from Bern, chances are one might encounter a member of the Swiss government. Almost always, they travel without special protection." According to von Wyl, trust towards the government in Switzerland is higher than in any other OECD country, Switzerland is one of the most stable countries in the world both politically and economically, also due to the fact that representatives of all major parties from left to right wing are leading the country together.

In Switzerland, the author continues, the government, parliament and the justice department are controlling each other, just like in other democracies. But something really significant is added on top of that: "The Swiss Federal Councils (as well as the Parliament) have to face public voting on a regular basis. And the majority of voters just happen to say No, because in

the Swiss self-understanding, they themselves are the sovereign." Thus, the trust towards the state is based upon the fact that the citizens can actually decide how they want to shape their community, canton and the confederation.

Swiss militia system: "The possibility of participation creates trust"

Another reason for the amount of trust is the militia system. Benjamin von Wyl states: "The Swiss militia system hands responsibility over to the population. He who wants to make a difference can join a club, take part in a demonstration – or work as a vote counter at the numerous referenda. The possibility of participation creates trust."

How the votes are being counted in Switzerland actually creates a high and unique amount of security against abuse. The vote or election sheets of each community and each urban district are emptied upon the table by a group of community employees and citizens who either volunteered or were called up and are counted together. Each person eligible to vote knows that due to this procedure, even in times of digitalisation, a false result is highly unlikely which creates trust eventually.

Trust towards the police and the Swiss franc

The Swiss not only have trust towards the government. Benjamin von Wyl also ad-

dresses the great amount of trust towards the economy and the courts and continues: "But it is the police who receives the highest amount of trust: In the annual study by the ETH Safety, the police takes first place in the trust ranking on a regular basis." This happens in spite of the criticism towards the police, for example regarding operations at demonstrations.

Finally, von Wyl states a vital reason for the low-price increase and low inflation rate compared to other countries: "As to why prices in Switzerland increased less than in neighbouring countries last year, one reason surely is the Swiss franc, which happens to be quite stable towards inflation."

The author concludes with the following words: "Switzerland is facing the very same challenge like every other democracy: How can the population develop and maintain a societal coherence? The starting grounds for that are not that bad."

These good starting grounds however will not persist by themselves. To defend our unique design actively and at all costs lies in the responsibility of each and every Swiss citizen.

¹von Wyl, Benjamin. "The trust factor: What is its importance for Switzerland" from 3 June 2023; <https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/warum-die-menschen-in-der-schweiz-dem-staat-vertrauen/48534372>

Social media and excessive internet use also harm economic capacity¹

by Christian Kreiss*



Christian Kreiss
(picture ef)

Extent of media consumption

In a report, published by the German Federal Ministry of Health in October 2022 on the consequences of the Corona pandemic period on substance and media use², it says, during the Corona

period there was a significant increase in media consumption of adolescents (14–17 years) and young people (18–21 years) in Germany. For young people, it currently amounts to five hours per day on a typical weekday and nearly seven hours on days off. Seven hours. That is almost half of the waking hours of the day. In 2015, it was nearly three hours (166 minutes a day).³

Accordingly, about 60 per cent of adolescents and 57 per cent of young adults showed “problematic internet use behaviour”. This affects girls and women more

often than boys: Among the girls 67.7 per cent, and among the boys 50.5 per cent showed internet addiction behaviour, among young women 63.6 per cent, and 49.4 per cent among young men.

In short: Three out of five young people in Germany aged between 14 and 17 currently show “problematic internet use behaviour”. What are the effects of this excessive, compulsive internet use?

Media use and mental stress of girls and young women

Since around 2015, there has been a trend towards deterioration of the mental and

British Journal of Psychiatry, 7 per cent of all children in the UK have attempted suicide by the age of 17, and almost one of four has committed an act of self-mutilation in the year before. Girls were particularly affected. One reason cited is, that “social media can be a toxic environment”.⁵

In the House of Lords at the beginning of 2022, in the face of rising numbers of suicides and self-mutilations among girls, there was a major enquiry into “what role social media played in the deaths of children in the UK, including suicides, self-mutilation and murder”.⁶

“In the face of growing global concerns about internet addiction and other illnesses, such as increasing teenage depression or impaired social skills as a result of heavy media use, several countries have already taken measures to protect the mental health of their children, according to the ‘Wall Street Journal’”

* Prof. Dr. Christian Kreiss, born 1962: Studies and doctorate in economics and economic history at the LMU Munich. He worked for nine years as a banker, seven of them as an investment banker. Since 2002 professor of business administration with a focus on investment, financing and economics. Author of seven books: *Gekaufte Wissenschaft* (2020); *Das Mephisto-Prinzip in unserer Wirtschaft* (2019); *BWL Blenden Wuchern Lamentieren* (2019, together with Heinz Siebenbrock); *Werbung nein danke* (2016); *Gekaufte Forschung* (2015); *Geplanter Verschleiss* (2014); *Profitwahn* (2013). His latest book, *Das Ende des Wirtschaftswachstums* (The End of Economic Growth). *Die ökonomischen und sozialen Folgen mangelnder Ethik und Moral*, was published in August 2023. Three invitations to the German Bundestag as an independent expert (*Greens, Left, SPD*). Numerous television, radio and magazine interviews, public lectures and publications. Member of *ver.di* and *Christians for a Just Economic Order*. Homepage [www.menschengerechtwirtschaft.de](http://www.menschengerechsetwirtschaft.de).

“After the summer break ...”

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internally capable of obtaining a majority or consensus”.³

Such one-sided and democracy-defying “reporting” could have the opposite effect of what our newspaper editors are striving for: instead of us Swiss voting the way we are constantly being told to, perhaps more and more subscribers will cancel their daily newspaper and get their information elsewhere, for example from *Current Concerns*.•

emotional health of young girls, which has led to suicides and self-mutilation. The statistics speak an impressive language. Since 2010 hospitalisation rates of teenage girls because of self-mutilation have risen by 143 per cent in eleven countries, according to the *Economist*. For boys, they rose by 49 per cent.

The main reason for this is said to be the use of social media, especially *Instagram*. Smartphones are particularly dangerous for girls, as boys are more involved with video games and less with “depression-inducing social media”. Numerous studies have shown that social media can cause sadness and anxiety amongst teenagers.⁴

According to “The Guardian”, which earlier in 2021 referred to a study by the

The dark side of Facebook, Instagram and Mark Zuckerberg

From September 2021 onwards, the *Wall Street Journal* published an unusually extensive series of articles on *Facebook*. The Journal had been provided with internal documents of the media group, which highlight the impacts of *Instagram* use on the mental health of young people, especially girls.⁷ According to the internal documents, *Facebook* and *Mark Zuckerberg* knew, for example, that 32 per cent of teenage girls felt worse after *Instagram* consumption, if they had already felt bad before. “Comparisons on *Instagram* can change how young women see and describe themselves.” Moreover, *Facebook* knew quite well that *Instagram* was addictive. In public, however, *Mark Zuckerberg* and other *Facebook* executives had repeatedly stressed that the research results were inconclusive, that *Facebook* was hardly harmful and also had many beneficial influences. One US senator said *Facebook* had adopted the blueprint of big tobacco – luring teenagers with dangerous products while hiding the scientific results from the public. US psychology professor *Jean Twenge* argued: To believe that a tobacco company should be more honest about the connection between smoking and cancer is equally naive as believing that *Facebook* should be more honest

continue to be pulled”. In: *Current Concerns* of 15 August 2023

² For the following, see the two daily newspaper articles of 4 October 2023, “Schweiz-Bericht vorgestellt. EU-Parlament fordert mehr Vertrauen zwischen Bern und Brüssel” (Switzerland report presented. EU Parliament calls for more trust between Bern and Brussels” by SDA/fel in the “*Tagess-Anzeiger*” and Schöchli, Hansueli. “Bis spätestens Herbst 2024: Das EU-Parlament will eine rasche Einigung im Konflikt mit der Schweiz” (By autumn 2024 at the latest: the EU-Parliament wants a swift agreement in the conflict with Switzerland) in the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”.

³ Pfisterer, Thomas. “Die Schweiz und die EU – Demokratie gewährleisten” (Switzerland and the EU – guaranteeing democracy). Guest commentary. In: “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”, 27 September 2023

¹ see “Summer break between Bern and Brussels – but behind the scenes the strings con-

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about the link between *Instagram* and depression in teenage girls.

The head of the US Public Health recommends: No social media use under 16

In mid-June 2023, the “Wall Street Journal” published an article titled “Why 16 should be the minimum age for social media – A plea to ban *TikTok*, *Snapchat* and *Instagram* for children under 16”.⁸ Since the harms of social media outweigh the benefits, and since existing laws protect marketing and data collection, but not child safety, the newspaper recommended that, analogous to driving, children should not be allowed to use social media until they are 16. The business journal referred to the statements of doctor *Vivek Murthy*.

Murthy is head of the US Department of Health and Human Services (*Surgeon General*) and wants to give his own children, aged 5 and 6, no access to social media before 16. There is plenty of scientific evidence to suggest that social media use from the age of 10 years contributes to the current *youth mental health crisis*. Murthy considers this the greatest challenge for public health system at the moment. Doctors and politicians agree that 13 is too young to use social media. Teenagers under 16 are far too sensitive to peer pressure, opinions and comparisons. At this early age, the brain is still far too vulnerable in its development to be exposed to social media. These are surprising statements for a business journal that advocates the freest possible capitalism.

Impact of media use on our boys

Boys partly use other types of social media, other computer games, and they usually also react differently than girls to media use. While boys live aggression more outwardly, girls often react with aggression inwardly (auto aggression). War and killer simulations such as *Fortnite*⁹, *World of Warcraft*, *Call of Duty*¹⁰ and so on are predominantly played by boys and young men.

In his film “*Fahrenheit 9/11*”, *Michael Moore* already demonstrated in 2004 how young soldiers in the US military were prepared for combat missions in war through such games. These kinds of war games are deliberately used by military superiors to make the young men callous and unempathetic, to make them lack compassion, to make them no longer see the soldiers facing them as human beings, but as enemies that have to be eliminated. From the soldier’s or the war’s point of view, this makes sense. Soldiers are supposed to kill in combat operations, and compassion and empathy are obstacles to this. Soldiers are to be educated to become fighting machines. Scruples to shoot, to kill, are to be suppressed by such games. In short, these games are used

to promote ruthlessness, dehumanisation and brutalisation. The professional trainers of soldiers know exactly what they are doing and why they are doing it.

It is all the more astonishing that we let our children and young people play these killer “games” to the greatest possible extent and without any significant public discussion. Age barriers are often circumvented. Often, even ten-year-olds play these kinds of killer and first-person shooter games. What is happening in the psyches of our children? Even grown men, US soldiers, apparently respond to this kind of brutalisation and become more inhuman. How much more does this apply to minors? The earlier our children are immersed in these kinds of killer games, the longer they kill on screen, the more widespread this kind of fun activity is, the more they are being raised to be inhumane.

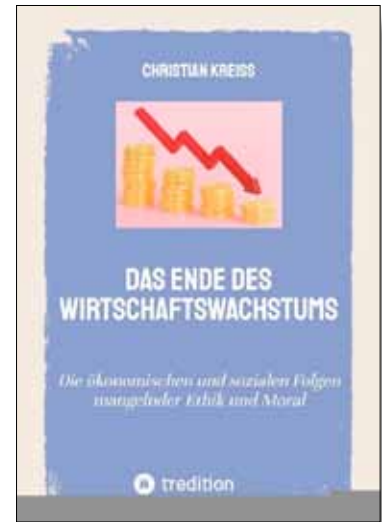
My fear is that after a few cohorts of children and adolescents who were hooked on these soul-crushing games at a particularly early age, we will face terrible social consequences. Aggression, ruthlessness, egoism, but also addictive behaviour and illness will be massively promoted in my opinion. Through *Fortnite* alone, hundreds of millions of our children and young people are already being sworn in and prepared for the war of all against all. Through *Fortnite*, which works with the highest intelligence, brilliant design and ingenious marketing, it has been possible for the first time to inspire legions of minors to kill each other as early as never before. For millions of young men, I believe this lowers moral standards.

E-sports trivialisation

The trivialisation of these processes is actively and deliberately promoted by the industry’s lobbyists. Time spent in front of a screen is the opposite of exercise, gymnastics and sport. Terms and naming are important for public perception, including that of parents. Labelling competitions in war and killer simulations like *Counter Strike* or *Fortnite* as “e-sports”¹¹ – that is, electronic “sports” – is a clever move by lobbyists and an accurate distortion of the truth. This says a lot about our moral standards, better: the double standards that prevail here. According to the coalition agreement, the current red-green-yellow German government plans to give e-sports the status of a non-profit organisation¹² and thus to promote processes that make our children ill by means of tax privileges.

Impact

To the extent that health declines, the labour force diminishes and we also have to put additional resources into health care. This reduces our real economic power and our standard of living. When morals and ethics decay, counter-mechanisms



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are set in motion that are supposed to bring about from the outside what is decaying from the inside: instead of intuitively adhering to norms and rules, of behaving decently and honestly, there is an attempt to enforce rules and laws through police violence, security, surveillance cameras, etc., through external coercion, pressure, deterrence and fear. This leads to a real decrease in our prosperity due to increasing unproductive activities. The damage to society as a whole, however, goes far beyond stagnating or declining economic power. In view of the massive harmful influences to which our youth has been exposed via the electronic media for less than 20 years, we seem to be well on the way there at the moment.

Countermeasures

China submitted a new law in early August 2023 that severely limits the amount of time young people can spend on mobile devices.¹³ According to the “Wall Street Journal”, these measures will put China even further ahead of other countries.¹⁴

Therefore, the Cyberspace Administration of China requires device manufacturers to introduce time limits in the future. The measures are planned to “protect the physical and mental health of young people”. The new bill would only allow children under the age of eight a maximum of 40 minutes per day on mobile devices, and young people from 16 to 18 a maximum of two hours per day. Since 2021, children under 18 in China have only been allowed to play video games for a maximum of three hours per week (!). China was among the first countries to require app providers to introduce a “youth mode” that limits screen time as well as the type of use.¹⁵ From 10 pm to 6 am, internet use is to be largely blocked for minors. In 2021, the approval of new video games had been frozen for nine months.¹⁶

In the face of growing global concerns about internet addiction and other

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War is not a necessary evil

by Dr. Eliane Perret, psychologist and curative teacher

Recent events in the Middle East have shocked many people. The reports and images are hard to bear, and the heightened emotional reporting by the media makes it difficult for us to remain level-headed, and able to grasp what is happening with a clear mind.

For this very reason, we must be aware that every war is accompanied by propaganda that is intended to elicit certain opinion in us. Given the power of these manipulative strategies, it is ever more important that we seek out accurate information about the situation surrounding the war, including its historical background. Only in this way can we find our own, well-founded point of view and think self-determinedly about our options for action. We will then also know that wars are not an unavoidable natural event, but are part of great power politics, always have a history, and are frequently prepared long in advance.

We adults bear responsibility

But what about our children and young people? What are they supposed to do with all the news that is bombarding them? Many of them have mobile phones with internet capability and immediate access to social media platforms. They are confronted with news that they cannot fully understand or process and that is emotionally and mentally disturbing. The pictures and news videos that are common today have a significant impact on young people, and leave deep and lasting impression on their feelings and memories.

In the best case, our youth turn to us with their questions. Adults bear an important responsibility: Children want to be, and should feel, understood by the adults they turn to with their concerns and questions, which



A grieving infantryman whose comrade has been killed in action is comforted by another soldier (Haktong-ni, Korea 28 August 1950). The picture is now part of the permanent exhibition "The Family of Man" in Clervaux, Luxembourg. (Picture Al Chang, National Archives)

often remain unarticulated. We must not overwhelm children with our knowledge, or press them with our opinions, but communicate with them as genuine and honest partners – a challenge we must rise to.

News infotainment and wars as the norm

The social development of previous decades has not made it easier for us, or for

the next generation, to maintain a human standpoint in situations of crisis and war, even if the desire for peace is part of our social nature. After the terrible wars of the last century, our world did not attain lasting peace. Instead, it continued to be overrun by ever more wars with millions of casualties. Too frequently, only well-informed and interested citizens seemed

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illnesses, such as increasing teenage depression or impaired social skills as a result of heavy media use, several countries have already taken measures to protect the mental health of their children, according to the "Wall Street Journal". In the US, the governor of Utah passed a law in March 2023 prohibiting children under 18 from using social media platforms without parental permission. France had introduced a law in June 2023 according to which *TikTok*, *Instagram* and other platforms could only be used by under-15s with the written consent of their parents.¹⁷

These are, in my estimation, first, promising steps to protect the mental and emotional health of our children from the frontal assault of profit-maximising media corporations. •

¹ The article largely reproduces statements from my book *Das Ende des Wirtschaftswachstums* (The End of Economic Growth), published in August 2023. *Die sozialen und ökonomischen Folgen mangelnder Ethik und Moral*, tredition, Hamburg.

² https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/fileadmin/Dateien/5_Publikationen/Drogen_und_Sucht/Berichte/Abschlussbericht/ACoSuM_Abschlussbericht_bf.pdf

³ https://www.drogenbeauftragte.de/fileadmin/dateien-dba/Drogenbeauftragte/Drogen_und_Suchtbericht/pdf/DSB-2018.pdf

⁴ *Economist* from 3 May 2023: <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2023/05/03/suicide-rates-for-girls-are-rising-are-smartphones-to-blame>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/feb/21st/uk-17-year-olds-mental-health-crisis>

⁶ <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/social-media-potential-harm-to-children/>

⁷ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-facebook-files-11631713039>

⁸ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-case-for-banning-tiktok-snapchat-and-instagram-for-kids-under-16-37f63180> from 13 June 2023

⁹ In *Fortnite*, there are about 28% female users: <https://cybercrew.uk/blog/how-many-people-play-fortnite/>

¹⁰ https://www.reddit.com/r/Games/comments/2xancg/gender_and_computer_game_players_who_seems_to/: "80 per cent of gamers who play *Call of Duty* are male (with those aged 15 to 19 accounting for 20 per cent of all players). And, despite the age restrictions, one in five of all players (21 per cent) are aged 10 to 14."

¹¹ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-Sport>

¹² https://www.iwd.de/artikel/e-sport-begeistert-mil-lionen-556635/?gclid=CjwKCAjw-vmkBhBMEi-wAlrMeF2s3sbEyFBr4mj9sH0pEA7RPEhy5A0JE-F4LIeessdKm1XqXLbupBoCPnEQAvD_BwE

¹³ <https://www.faz.net/pro/d-economy/china-will-handy-nutzung-fuer-kinder-und-jugendliche-stark-begrenzen-19076280.html>

¹⁴ *Wall Street Journal* of 4 August 2023: "China Pleases Parents with Plan to Limit Kids' Smartphone Use – Policy would limit time and content by age, on top of videogame restrictions", <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-set-to-impose-mobile-device-limits-for-minors-c547cac5>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ <https://www.stern.de/panorama/china-will-smartphone-nutzung-von-kindern-beschaenken---und-fuehrt-ein-internet-verbot-ein-33707208.html>

¹⁷ *Wall Street Journal* of 4 August 2023: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-set-to-impose-mobile-device-limits-for-minors-c547cac5>

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to notice. In the usual news infotainment, war became normalised, and enemies were quickly identified and demonised without any serious thought or analysis.

Murder and killing as a source of amusement

Our next generation is also affected in another way. In their family relationships, many young people lack the emotional support and encouraging guidance they need to successfully tackle their life's tasks. Schools are increasingly failing to educate children so that they can become mature adults, capable of assuming their responsibilities in society in a compassionate and intelligent manner.

As so-called “digital natives”, children are at risk of getting lost in the jungle of media offerings. On these “adventures” on the internet they are often and abruptly confronted with perverse and brutal content. In many computer games – originally developed to train soldiers to overcome the natural human inhibition against killing – murder and killing are cultivated, intentionally or otherwise, because of the way they are linked with pleasure and competition. All of this will have a deadening effect on the minds of our children and young people, as responsible scientists have pointed out.

What are our children to be deadened to?

An example of this is the computer game “The Godfather”, which has been on sale for some time. Although it is officially approved for young people over the age of eighteen, it is often played by much younger children.

To be as “successful” as possible in the game, players are instructed thusly: “Once you have targeted your victim, you can beat him up a little – or a lot. If you are standing next to an injured opponent, an ‘Execute’ message may appear. In this case, press ‘V’ or the eight key to release your opponent. Press ‘X’ or hold the left and right analogue sticks to strangle your opponent. When the end of your opponent is near, kill him or give him one last reprieve. Thanks to the precision mode, you can target non-vital ‘weak points’ of your opponent. That way he lives long enough to tell you what he knows. If you want to prevent him from escaping, just put a bullet in his leg.”¹

How is it possible in a “civilised” society to influence our children in such a



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way and abuse their minds? For what reason and to what purpose are our children exposed to content that dulls their minds? Why do our authorities not do everything possible to prevent this mental ordeal through appropriate education and prohibitions? Appeasing answers from so-called “experts” cannot explain or excuse the damage being done to our children’s minds!

A reflection must begin

We must finally start thinking about how to create and encourage a reluctance in children and young people, to accept instruction in violence and war. The social nature of the child is on our side. This also illuminates the task we have before us. Especially now, in the current world situation!

Preparatory work for this was already done after the atrocities of the Second World War by UNESCO, a sub-organisation of the UN. It stated in its preamble:

“The Governments of the States Parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare:

That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed” and further, “that the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races”².

An important task lies ahead

What the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation stated at that time is still valid today and is all the more urgent in the current world situation. We have the duty to take up this preparatory work, to continue it and to pass this legacy on to the next generation. It is all the more urgent to identify and resist destructive processes that hinder this project, so that our children and young people can develop into healthy, mature people who say no to all violence and war, and who want to use their strength and intelligence to promote peace, which is deeply rooted in people. There is an important task ahead of us, because war is not a necessary evil of humanity! •

¹ *Die Welt*. “Drücken Sie ‘V’, um Ihren Kontrahenten zu erlösen”. (Press ‘V’ to redeem your adversary). Published 3 Oct. 2006. <https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/webwelt/article157064/press-’V’-to-redeem-your-contrahent.html>.

² https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1949/334_334_338/de

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