

Current Concerns

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The world has had enough of Western pseudo-morality The return of power – the end of the UN?

by Guy Mettan, freelance journalist*



Guy Mettan
(picture ma)

Donald Trump's first decisions have planted a big nail into the coffin of the United Nations and Wilsonian idealism. They anchor the return of international relations not to the 20th or even the 19th century, but to the 18th century, when

powers waged ceaseless wars of conquest in a world that was regulated neither by the 19th century's beloved "concert of nations" nor by the League of Nations and the United Nations sought by American presidents after the First World War.

With his withdrawal from the *World Health Organisation*, but above all with his demand to incorporate Canada, Panama and Greenland into the USA, Trump is not only giving the death knell to the human and international law that has been painstakingly established since the *Congress of Vienna* in 1815, but also to the international order created by his predecessor *Woodrow Wilson* in 1918. Alongside these ambitions, *Putin* with his border war in Ukraine and *Netanjahu* with his annexation of the Golan Heights and his massacres in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria only play a subordinate role.

The idealism, the fight for democracy, the "values", human rights and other moral claims that formed the basis of international relations for a hundred years are over. The liberal, moralistic and universalistic 20th century of the Western mould has just come to an end. The neo-liberal, globalist expansion under American aegis after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was its swan song. After initial successes, the operation turned into a fiasco and Trump is trying to draw the consequences.

So, the real 21st century has only just begun: It will be protectionist, revolve around regional powers, civilisational poles, as *Samuel Huntington* would say, and be multipolar, as *Vladimir Putin*, *Xi Jinping* and the BRICS+ would say. These poles will compete for control of resources and markets and will sometimes be in conflict with each other. Their relations will be interest-led and transactional. This is not necessarily bad for world peace, because the moral order that the West supposedly defends has gradually become toxic and intolerable for other nations, which are turning away in disgust from being shamelessly instrumentalised.

But let's rewind the film to better distinguish the individual sequences.

From the Ancien Régime to the French Revolution and the Congress of Vienna ...

Henry Kissinger described very well in his "Diplomacy" how, after the terrible religious wars, the monarchies of the Ancien Régime, although they concentrated on increasing their power, waged wars that were limited by aristocratic codes of honour ("Gentlemen from England, shoot first ...") and marriages between princes.

This was followed abruptly by the French Revolution and *Napoleon*, which introduced the idea of ideological war, waged in the name of the peoples' right to the blessings of revolution and liberation from monarchical oppression, and that of total war, which mobilised hundreds of thousands of armed citizens and all available economic resources.

The *Congress of Vienna* was an attempt to create a new, more stable order. The four victorious powers and France, which had become a monarchy again, agreed on a so-called "balance of powers", which was conservatively orientated, and a conflict resolution mechanism based on the convening of major conferences in the event of a serious conflict – the famous "concert of nations". The system guaranteed relative peace for a century, until the rise of Germany, its ill-advised ambitions and the gradual formation of coercive alliances and counter-alliances led, as it were mechanically, to disaster at the first spark

– the assassination of the Austrian Archduke *Franz Ferdinand*.

... to the League of Nations and the UN

In order to prevent this return to chaos, *Wilson* proposed his idea of collective security, which was to be embodied by a League of Nations whose task would be to punish the warmongers and prevent them from doing what they were doing, focusing in particular on democracy, transparency, arms control, the right of peoples to self-determination and sanctions for breaches of the rules.

A morally impeccable project, but one that was never actually realised. On the one hand, it was easy for the USA to propose these new norms, as they had just genocided their Indian population, snatched Texas and its southern provinces from Mexico, bought Alaska and annexed Hawaii and Puerto Rico without the slightest moral scruple. All this while refusing to take responsibility by renouncing participation in the League of Nations. For their part, the Europeans, whose four empires – the Russian, Austrian, German and Ottoman – had disintegrated into myriads of units and ethnicities that were difficult to integrate into nation states without historical consistency, found themselves confronted with an impossible task.

The League of Nations experiment therefore quickly floundered, leading to the catastrophe of 1939 and, in 1945, the founding of a new structure, the UN, which was to adopt the principle of collective security without the shortcomings of its predecessor. The system did not work too badly at first. It succeeded in keeping the bridges open during the Cold War and accommodating the new states that had emerged from decolonisation. Just as the Concert of Nations was unable to resist German pressure in the 19th century, it was unable to resist the American hegemonism that followed the disappearance of the Soviet countervailing power. Today, it is incapable of giving the emerging powers of the present – China, Russia, but also India, Brazil, Africa and other nations that are claiming their place at the table of power – an appropriate place. With its majority

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Here's what Trump 2.0 means for the US and Russia

by Fyodor Lukyanov*



Fyodor Lukyanov
(pictureWikipedia)

The flood of headlines about US President *Donald Trump's* first days back in the White House are stunning but unsurprising. We have grown accustomed to his hyperactivity. Yet, unlike eight years ago, the reaction now feels different. Back then, Trump's ascent was widely regarded as a political anomaly – a shock that many attempted to explain by pointing the finger at alleged Russian meddling. Trump himself seemed caught off guard by his unexpected victory.

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"The world has had enough ..."

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of three out of five permanent members on the Security Council, the West continues to have a disproportionate influence on global governance.

Add to this the fact that it has systematically betrayed the values on which it supposedly bases its policy – democracy, human rights, the rule of law, etc. – while preventing itself from negotiating with its opponents on the pretext that it is not talking to the devil. This makes it even easier to understand why this supposedly "rules-based" world order has become outdated and even offensive to the majority of humanity.

Return to a brutal form of Realpolitik

By returning to a brutal form of Realpolitik, by distrusting NATO (remember

Today, the picture has changed. The Republican's return to power is no accident; it is a deliberate comeback. He carries himself with an air of inevitability, bolstered by a party now united under his leadership and an establishment that, reluctantly or otherwise, has adjusted to his dominance. With control of Congress and a handpicked team ideologically aligned with him, Trump has two years to pursue his vision with minimal resistance. This time, his rhetoric could very well translate into reality.

Trump's worldview has been consistent for decades. Public declarations from the 1980s, long before his political career began, reflect the same core beliefs he holds today.

Trump's ultimate goal is American supremacy – but not the liberal global leadership championed by his predecessors. His version of supremacy is transactional and utilitarian.

Alliances, institutions, and relationships are only valuable if they benefit the US materially. Those that demand sacrifices without offering returns are liabilities to be discarded.

Trump's America is not interested in moral authority, global stability, or solving the world's problems. It is focused on extracting the maximum benefit from every interaction, whether in economics, security, or politics. If others refuse Trump's "deal", coercion quickly becomes his preferred strategy.

Averse to war, partial to economic combat

While Trump champions a tough, combative approach, he is reluctant to engage in armed conflict. This is not due to pacifism but practicality. Trump the developer

Kissinger, who said that every alliance is inevitably directed against someone and brings war in the long run), by concluding with the moralism and impotence of Wilsonian and UN multilateralism, Trump is trying to put the US back at the centre of the game by freeing it from the collective shackles that it itself helped to build.

The Europeans, who had struggled with Wilson's principles and idealism, are now the last to believe in them. They even cling to it with an iron grip, refusing to negotiate with the evil Russians in Ukraine and hypocritically turning a blind eye to the abuses of their Israeli protégés in Palestine.

It is not certain that history will prove them right.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

views war as wasteful and counterproductive. Destruction does not align with his instincts to build and acquire assets. For him, conflict is best resolved through negotiation, merger, or purchase – not devastation.

This aversion to military conflict explains his preference for economic warfare. Trade wars and aggressive negotiations are his tools of choice, often targeting close US allies rather than adversaries. This approach unnerves traditional partners and challenges the post-Cold War 'rules-based' international system, where alliances are valued for their collective stability. Trump sees no inherent value in these alliances unless they provide tangible benefits to the US.

Implications for Russian-US relations

For Russia, Trump's return brings mixed prospects. On the one hand, Trump's disdain for the liberal world order signals a departure from the ideological rigidity of previous administrations. The post-Cold War system often dismissed Russia's national interests in favour of US-centric global dominance. In contrast, Trump's "America First" policy focuses on national interests, which opens the door for pragmatic deals based on mutual benefit.

However, Trump's approach remains deeply flawed. He is uninterested in addressing the root causes of conflicts. In Ukraine, for example, his goal is not a comprehensive resolution but a simple cessation of hostilities. A stable ceasefire along existing lines would suffice for him, leaving the deeper security issues for Western Europe or others to resolve. For Russia, this falls short. Moscow seeks a long-term solution that addresses the imbalance in European security – a concern Trump is unlikely to prioritise.

Trump's disinterest in complex international designs further complicates matters. He prefers straightforward deals, as evidenced by the Abraham Accords in the Middle East. These agreements worked because they bypassed entrenched historical disputes in favour of pragmatic, economically driven solutions. However, applying this model to Ukraine is unrealistic. The conflict's deep historical and geopolitical roots require a level of nuance and patience that Trump lacks.

Transactional leadership

Trump's transactional leadership style also extends to his perception of governance. He measures other governments not by their ideology but by their efficiency and willingness to align with US inter-

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Trump's failures, America's failures

by Patrick Lawrence*



Patrick Lawrence
(picture ef)

Well, we now have a president who says what he means, and this is an advance beyond the four years Americans spent listening to a lifelong, compulsive liar who more than occasionally said the opposite of what he meant. It is always best to know someone means what he or she says, even if this is foolish, or impractical, or somewhere on the way to dangerous. This is the thing with *Donald Trump*: We can be certain he means what he says, but so much of what he says is foolish, or impractical, or somewhere on the way to dangerous.

Plans and actions

“For purposes of National Security and Freedom throughout the World,” Trump declared just before Christmas, “the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity.” He made this statement¹ as he announced *Ken Howery*, a venture capitalist turned diplomat, as his ambassador to Copenhagen.

O.K., a case in point. You have to believe Trump means it when he says these kinds of things, even if you cannot for a moment believe they are true or of any worth.

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As long as it's “great“? (picture Wikimedia Commons/The Trump White House)

Trump also wants to annex Canada as America's 51st state. He wants to reclaim sovereignty over the Panama Canal, too. And rename the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America. “The United States will once again consider itself a growing nation,” he said in his Inaugural Address², “one that increases our wealth, expands our territory.” This is a man with plans, truly. We can count on this these next four years.

Before going any further, Trump has done two things meriting approbation since he was inaugurated, and we should note these briefly. One is his determination, via one of many *executive orders*, to restore the *First Amendment* and so defend free speech.³ We will have to see how this order is interpreted – whether it will extend, for instance, to the rampant censorship in some media and in universities under the disgracefully corrupt charge

that opposition to Israel and Zionist terror amounts to “anti-Semitism.” To be determined.

Independent of the *executive orders*, Trump has also made it clear that he intends to speak soon with *Vladimir Putin* with a view to bringing the *Biden* regime's proxy war in Ukraine to a close. Trump, it is now evident, has no plan to end the war: He has been winging it all along. But opening talks with the Russian president is nonetheless big. Biden and his adjutants, frozen in ideological anachronisms and in consequence incapable of anything to do with statecraft, refused contacts with Moscow for most of the past four years. Against this background, reopening diplomatic channels is a significant move. We ought not miss this just because Donald Trump made it.

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ests. Leaders who reject his advice or fail to meet his standards are dismissed as incompetent. While this approach is less ideologically driven than previous administrations, it still results in the US dictating terms to other nations, often disregarding their sovereignty.

This attitude underscores a continuity in American foreign policy: The belief that the US has the right to define the “legitimate interests” of other nations. Trump may abandon the ideological justifications of his predecessors, but the outcome – a US-centric worldview – remains unchanged.

A New era in international relations

Trump's return marks the beginning of a new era in global politics. His presidency is not an anomaly but a reflection of broader socio-political changes. The old model of global leadership, symbolised by *Joe Biden's* fading presidency, has run its course. Trump's disruptive approach may rationalise politics by prioritising national interests, but it also sharpens contradictions and risks creating confusion.

For Russia, Trump's pragmatism offers opportunities and challenges. While his disdain for liberal ideology aligns with Moscow's critiques of the West, his lack of interest in addressing systemic issues limits the potential for meaningful col-

laboration. Trump's focus on short-term gains and his tendency to dictate terms may lead to friction, even as he seeks to avoid direct confrontation.

Ultimately, Trump's presidency embodies the logic of a changing world order. As traditional alliances and institutions falter, new dynamics emerge, driven by national interests and pragmatic calculations. Whether this shift leads to greater stability or heightened tensions remains to be seen. One thing is certain: The era of ‘global leadership’ as we knew it is over, and Trump is its most prominent symbol.●

Source: *Russia in Global Affairs* of 27 January 2025; <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/trump-2-0-lukyanov/>. By courtesy of the author.

"Trump's failures ..."

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As long as it's 'great' ...

There is something else we ought not miss as Trump puffs out his chest in behalf of some kind of neo-expansionist America. All his plans to recast our republic's place in the world – "America will reclaim its rightful place as the greatest, most powerful, most respected nation on earth, inspiring awe and admiration," etc. – are fundamentally hermetic – hatched in an odd state of solitude. There has been no consultation with the Danes about Greenland, and certainly none with Greenlanders. None of Trump's people has asked the Canadians about statehood. I know of no contacts with the Panamanians about the status of the Canal.

... and without consultations

Even the promised *démarche* to Russia betrays this... this what?... this isolation from reality. Here is Trump's most recent statement on his plans to take up the Ukraine crisis with the Kremlin, as reprinted in "The Telegraph"⁴:

I'm going to do Russia, whose economy is failing, and President Putin, a very big FAVOR. Settle now, and STOP this ridiculous War! IT'S ONLY GOING TO GET WORSE. If we don't make a "deal," and soon, I have no other choice but to put high levels of taxes, tariffs, and sanctions on anything being sold by Russia to the United States, and various other participating countries.

Where to begin?

Russia's economy is not failing. It is Europe's economies that are failing in consequence of the sanctions regime the U.S. has imposed on Russia. Washington has no favors to offer Moscow. Given the progress of the war, it is the U.S. that is in need of a favor from Russia. U.S. imports from Russia in 2022⁵, the most recent year for which statistics are compiled, were 16 billion dollar – taxi fare in the global trade context.

Detachment from reality

Apart from these details, telling as they may be, there is Moscow's desire to develop a new security structure to serve as the basis of an enduring peace that benefits Russia and the Western alliance alike. Putin and *Sergei Lavrov*, his foreign minister, have made it clear on numerous occasions that there is no point in negotiations unless this fundamental objective is recognised. Trump, either unaware or simply uninterested in this, appears once again to be operating at that distance from reality noted above. Who among his people, I may as well ask, would be capable of diplomacy

of this import and sophistication? *Marco Rubio*? Please.

Greenland, Canada, the Panama Canal, a non-plan plan for peace in Ukraine: These are all failures-in-waiting. We can dismiss them as somewhere along the continuum running from foolish to impractical to dangerous. Let us add, to finish the thought, unserious. No, Donald Trump's foreign policies, even in outline, show no chance whatsoever of success. The greatest, the most respected, awe and admiration: No, Trump now sets out to lead American in precisely the opposite direction.

The anatomy of failures to come

But not so fast. It is well worth pausing to conduct a brief but considered anatomy of Trump's failures to come. What are they made of? How did he hatch these plans and arrive at these positions? What can we learn from these opening days of what looks like a very long four years. There are, indeed, things we stand to learn, and I mean about ourselves.

Donald Trump as mirror. Let us look into it and think about what we see. The causality of failure: This is what we are looking for, and I see two things worth our time.

Many of the big-name philosophers of the past 100 years – *Husserl*, *Heidegger*, *Lévinas*, et al. – shared a pronounced pre-occupation beginning in the 1920s. I relate this (and the scholars may correct me) to the wreckage of the First World War they found all around them. These were the explorers and developers of the discipline called phenomenology. Who are we? What has become of us, we who dwell in mass, mechanised societies? What is the nature of human relationships? These were among the questions.

The indifference to the other

Emmanuel Lévinas, a Lithuanian Jew who lived in France (1906–1995) and wrote in French, elevated these matters to an enduring discourse concerning the Self and the Other. Indifference to others, he argued – and how radically must I simplify – lay at the root of the 20th century's ills and evils. The cult of the individual, he posited (among a lot of other things) must be transcended in favor of relationships with all the Others among us. We realise who we are only by way of these relationships; they are primary. "The Self is possible only through the recognition of the Other," he wrote, a noted line. So, to continue my simplification: We are social beings first; our individuality derives from our sociality. Lévinas published *Totality and Infinity*, the book wherein he stated his case most fully and famously, in 1961.

I touch upon these people and their thinking because, 64 years after Lévinas

brought out his masterwork, we can see how very, very right he and his colleagues were about humanity's destiny. To see from the perspective of the Other – grasping it, I mean, knowing it with no special need to share it – is among our 21st century imperatives: This is how I have put it in this space and elsewhere. To develop the capacity in oneself to understand what the world looks like to other people is among the lessons I learned during my years as a correspondent abroad. It is essential, to say this another way, to any people's constructive participation in the human project as we now have it.

Poor diplomats

Americans are not well-advantaged in these matters, to put the point mildly. We long ago turned our insistence in our individuality into the "ism" of individualism, an ideology that, however far it has taken America in the past, now proves a ball and chain at our ankles. Equally, America has had such power since the 1945 victories that its policy cliques long ago lost interest in the perspectives of others – how the world looks to them, their aspirations, their histories, all the rest. This is why, with admirable but few exceptions, America produces such poor diplomats. It has had no need of them. And the policy cliques in Washington have not yet registered that we have in consequence already begun to fail.

And this is why, to finish off, Donald Trump thinks it is perfectly O.K. to declare his plans for Canada, Greenland, and the Canal without so much as a preliminary consultation with a Canadian, a Dane, or a Panamanian. These ideas are nonsensical to the point they embarrass. But, their loopy aspect aside, are they any more nonsensical than – make your own list – Vietnam, *Reagan's* invasion of Grenada, the Iraq war, Syria, Ukraine, indeed? Are they any more out of touch with the perspectives of others?

Claudia Sheinbaum's reaction

In this connection, I loved *Claudia Sheinbaum's* reaction to Trump's proposal to rename the *Gulf of Mexico*. At a press conference the day after Trump pulled the satin drape off of this one the Mexican president stood before a 1607 map that marked the Gulf just as we know it today. Pointing to North America, she proposed with an amused smile, "Why don't we call it Mexican America? It sounds pretty, no?"

Sheinbaum was goofing on Trump, as we would have said long ago, and good for her. But let's not miss what she was saying: This is how the world looks to us, we Mexicans. There is even a map depict-

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ing our perspective. You are not getting anywhere with us unless to understand this.

The early years after 1945 – A hopeful world

The decades after the Second World War were among the most significant of the last century. They were less violent than the war years, although there was plenty of violence of another kind. This was "the independence era," when scores of different peoples negotiated or fought their ways out of the colonial burden and made new nations of themselves.

The world was full of aspiration then. The idea of a just, ethical world order seemed well within reach. When America forced the Cold War upon all nations – and don't bother me with alternative versions of history – all became binary. The with-us-or-against-us decades began. Most new nations, even if they did not succumb to what we now call neoliberal ideology in all its exploitative aspects, failed to realise many or most of their early hopes.

Renewed hope after the fall of the Berlin Wall

But the hopes and aspirations were never extinguished: Submerged or corrupted, placed under house arrest so to say, but never outright assassinated or shot by a firing squad. This is among the fine things about what happened when Germans took

down the Berlin Wall in November 1989: As soon as the post-Cold War era announced itself, all the old goals, the ambitions that once soared, came brilliantly back to life. They were there, as if hibernated, all along.

Among these is one worth noting now. Parity among nations, with its deep roots in the independence era, is another item on my list – a list of two so far – of 21st century imperatives. Any power of any magnitude that proposes to make its way in our new era must accept this. The only alternatives are decline and violence – one or another kind of failure. To resist historical necessity, I mean to say – and this goes for individuals as well as reactionary elites – is sheer impotence.

Multipolarity and Non-Alignment

Multipolarity is another term for the phenomenon I describe. It is emergent now, with the non-West naturally and inevitably in the lead, and manifests in what we are calling the new world order. It has various principles. I trace these, in spirit if not in declared fact, to the Five Principles Zhou En-lai formulated⁶ in the early 1950s, soon after adopted by the brand new Non-Aligned Movement. Respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, equality and conduct for mutual benefit, peaceful co-existence: I note that the Chinese Foreign Ministry⁷ has now taken to stating these as the new

world order's rules of the road. Interesting. Give them a moment's thought and you find the only missing word is parity.

I leave it to readers to judge how far, how many galaxies distant, Donald Trump is from any such conception of the world as it is as he takes office again. The point seems too obvious to belabor. But again, is his regime so much farther from reality than its predecessors, notably but not only Joe Biden's? This is our question because it is the important question.

If Trump is a mirror, think of it as one of those wavy, distorting mirrors famous in the old funhouses. But as I recall so well from the harvest fairs of my childhood, you can still see yourself even if everything looks funny. •

¹ <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-president-elect-donald-j-trump-announcing-the-nomination-ken-howery-ambassador>

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address/>

³ <https://scheerpost.com/2025/01/24/for-once-trump-gets-it-right/>

⁴ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2025/01/22/trump-tells-putin-stop-this-ridiculous-war-now/>

⁵ <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle-east/russia-and-eurasia/russia>

⁶ <http://www.zhouenlaipeaceinstitute.org/five-principles-of-peace-2/history/>

⁷ https://www.mfa.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zy/wjls/3604_665547/202405/t20240531_11367551.html

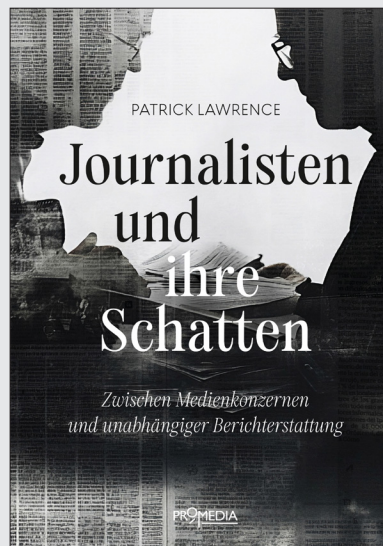
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Book announcement

"Patrick Lawrence can draw on over 30 years of experience as a columnist and correspondent, during which he got to know the US media landscape from the inside like no one else. He describes how the major media lost their independence, integrity and credibility, traces their decline during the decades of the Cold War and reports on the (few) moments of splendour that gave way to a rapid loss of trust among the reading public after 2001.

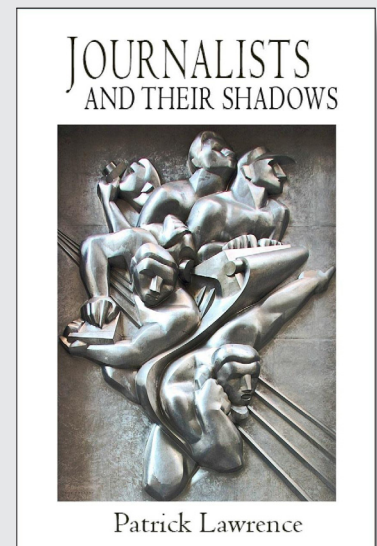
At the core of the book, the author deals with the split nature of each individual journalist, driven simultaneously by the need to fulfil ideologically conformist standards and subliminally striving to do justice to the true events that must be disguised in the work. Lawrence calls the latter – after Carl Gustav Jung – the shadow of the journalist

In recent years, digital media has opened up new opportunities to research and publish independently of the influence of large corporations. As the most dynamic sector of the profession, they represent a promise for a better future, in which Lawrence has high



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hopes." (Publisher's announcement, the book will be published in its German translation, March 2025.)



ISBN 978-1-949762-78-5

"Patrick Lawrence has written an outstanding, eloquent book about journalism. It is angry and bracing and wise, and it gives us hope." (John Pilger).

Dramatic escalation in eastern Congo

by Peter Küpfer

The situation in eastern Congo is once again escalating dramatically. After long months of the planned advance of the M23¹ mercenaries – reinforced by other alliances of so-called rebels and units of the Rwandan army, all under Rwandan control – and for the third time in this endless war, Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, has now been completely captured by this guerrilla armada. Fierce fighting throughout the northern part of North Kivu province preceded this. In addition, there has been a violent occupation of the world's largest coltan mine at Rubaya, near Sake. (See: “‘In war, the first victim is the truth’. Thirty-year economic war for raw materials in eastern Congo”, in: *Current Concerns* No. 27 of 31 December 2024). The capture of the nearby metropolis is also underway. The Congolese national army has evacuated its positions without resistance.

In the days prior to the occupation, Goma was under artillery fire and thousands of desperate people were forced to flee from the invaders. But where to? The frontline town, located a few kilometres from the border with Rwanda, has survived several occupations and has been under siege for some time. In recent months and weeks, the numerous refugees from the northern districts have necessitated the creation of immense, improvised refugee camps in and around the city. These have grown once again in the last few days. The improvised tent camps, mainly made of plastic tarpaulins, have been erected on bare ground and stretch as far as the eye can see around the city. The number of refugees struggling to survive in this war – abandoned by the entire “Western world of values” – is in the millions.

Devastating dimensions of the humanitarian disaster in Goma

International aid organisations are themselves in need of help. Artillery shells re-



Civilians fleeing the combat zones north of Goma and heading for the city, some of them among the tens of thousands. A few days later, gunfire and artillery shells are also heard in Goma, and in some cases they are also fired at the huge improvised tent camps on the outskirts of the city. (picture Keystone)

peatedly hit the refugee camps, causing horrific injuries. In a news release titled, “The ICRC condemns attacks that left many civilians in North Kivu wounded or dead”, the Geneva-based *International Committee of the Red Cross* reports the following:

“The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is alarmed by the devastating impact on the civilian population of ongoing armed clashes in and around the city of Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Of special concern is the massive influx of people wounded by firearms and explosive weapons into ICRC-supported facilities, in particular the CBCA Ndosh Hospital in Goma.”

The extent of the humanitarian catastrophe is illustrated in the following account given by *Myriam Favier*, head of the ICRC’s sub delegation in Goma:

“Some of the wounded are transported by motorbike, others by bus, or with the help of volunteers from the DRC Red Cross. Civilians are arriving with serious bullet and shrapnel wounds. The whole hospital has been mobilized and three surgical teams are working around the clock to treat patients, some of whom have been forced to wait lying on the floor because of the lack of space. [...] This situation has been caused by the use of artillery in densely populated areas – in particular, in large urban areas like Goma or in camps for displaced people – and by the devastating impact of intense clashes on the civilians caught in the crossfire. [...]” (ICRC, news release 28 January 2025)

A senior surgeon describes the situation

Dr *Denis Mukwege*, senior physician, and the founder and clinic director of the *Panzi Surgical Hospital* in Bukavu (South Kivu), describes the misery that this war has brought to the civilian population of eastern Congo for the past 30 years. The doctor and peace campaigner was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018. In 2022, he was one of the candidates in the rigged elections for Congolese president. Mukwege was not interested in the results of the election, but in the opportunity it provided to draw to the attention of the Congolese voters, the confused situation in their threatened country. He was the only candidate who resolutely and courageously named the real reasons for, and perpetrators of, this war against the Congolese people. The following excerpts are current views of a man who, as a specialist in the horrific injuries of women who have been systematically raped, has been doing all he can to help people in the clinic he founded, since the start of the wars in eastern Congo in 1996.

‘Finally put an end to this economic war!’

Kagame, the autocratic head of state of Rwanda, cancelled a summit meeting with *Tshisekedi*, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, to resolve the ongoing crisis. This was accompanied by gestures that were degrading for Tshisekedi. The next day, the first strike of the current campaign towards Goma began. Dr. Mukwege reported these developments on his website:

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ICRC: “The parties to the conflict must abide by international humanitarian law”

“The parties to the conflict must abide by international humanitarian law, taking care always to spare civilians and their property. They must also take every possible measure to minimize the humanitarian consequences of their military operations,” said *François Moreillon*, head of the ICRC’s delegation in the Democratic Republic of Congo with respect to the recent humanitarian catastrophe in eastern Congo. (ICRC, *Media release* of 28 January 2025)

"Dramatic escalation ..."

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I am very concerned after reading the latest report of the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo². Despite the agreement for a humanitarian truce and a ceasefire, the Kigali regime continues to flout international law and pursue its policy of territorial expansion with its AFC/M23 coalition auxiliaries supported and controlled by 3,000 to 4,000 RDF elements. In a flagrant violation of the territorial integrity and Congolese sovereignty, those troops use sophisticated military equipment and high-tech weapons [...]. It controls the conquered territories, in particular the Rubaya area, whose mines constitute one of the largest sources of coltan in the world.

The experts mandated by the Security Council have reported, with supporting evidence, that the AFC/M23 coalition exercises a monopoly on the fraudulent extraction, trade and illegal export of minerals from Rubaya to Rwanda. This causes the most significant recorded contamination of the supply chains of "3T" minerals (tin, tantalum and tungsten) in the Great Lakes region for the last ten years.

Experts estimate that the AFC/M23 coalition controls the trade and transport of approximately 120 tons of coltan per month and that the tax on the production and trade of Rubaya coltan generates at least USD 800,000 per month for the occupying forces.

Faced with the critical situation prevailing in eastern DRC, we once again urge the community of States to no longer accept superficial condemnations and empty words. Strong sanctions must be adopted against the actors of destabilization. Immediate and decisive measures must be taken to ensure that Rwanda ceases its support for the M23 and immediately withdraws its forces from Congolese soil.

It is time to put an end to this economic war and the illegal extraction and trade of strategic minerals in the heart of Africa [...]. (Panzi News of 10 January 2025)

Congolese civil society is under threat from within

In a statement on the Congolese news channel "congoflash infos" on 28 January, Patrick Mbeko, a politician with Congolese roots and author of two fundamental studies on the endless war in eastern Congo since its beginnings³, made the fol-



Red Cross doctors and volunteer helpers are doing all they can. They have been increasingly short of everything since the fighting started again three years ago. (picture Keystone)

lowing points, among others: What is currently taking place in and around Goma is not a natural disaster, but a long-planned strategic step that will be followed by further acts of military aggression. One problem in the region is that the Tshisekedi government has neither sufficient information nor the necessary forces to effectively stop the international annexation of part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is an unprecedented gap between the expectations of the Congolese and the passivity or even inability of the government in Kinshasa. Among the leading political class in Kinshasa, praise dominates, fuelled in part by ethnic tensions and clientelism. According to Mbeko, it is time to speak clearly with the Congolese. All Congolese must see clearly what is planned: the balkanisation of the Congo, the division of its coveted, strategically important natural resources among the sharks of modern finance, with Rwanda as a militarily secured international contact point.

* * *

What is currently taking place in and around Goma, combined with unbearable human suffering, has been planned for a long time, has strong international lobbies in the background and is being strategically and tactically led mainly by Rwanda's army under the command of its autocratic head of state. This is done with the connivance and support of the authoritative states and organisations of the self-proclaimed "values West", which supposedly stands for freedom, democracy, and prosperity for all.

Kagame's autocracy, and his role in the 30-year war in eastern Congo, is supported by the West. This is especially true of the EU, with Germany in the lead, which pumps hundreds of millions of euros into the country every year. In return for this support, the EU, and therefore also Ger-

many, received a favourable contract concluded with the Rwandan leadership last spring. In it, Rwanda guarantees to supply the EU with raw materials, primarily cobalt, lithium and tantalum, which are essential for the automotive and weapons industries as well as computer technology.

This is what is really at stake, and not the conjured-up "civil war" or "war of rebellion". The fact that today the entire Western world speaks of the paid mercenaries in eastern Congo as "rebels", as if from a single mouth, is yet another unacknowledged rule in the international media war for opinions, one almost certainly enforced by various secret services. It is a historical lie in short form. The so-called rebels are well-paid mercenaries under the command of unscrupulous profiteers, both domestic and foreign. They are named in hundreds of UN reports, well organised in UN archives, but which need not concern them. As long as lies and hidden agendas determine the fate of our world, they are safe. Not so when the wind changes.

¹ M23 is the abbreviation for the "23 March Movement", the new name for the particularly sadistic terrorist group CNDP, which was disbanded on 22 March 2009. AFC, *Alliance Fleuve Congo* (Alliance of the Congo River), is the collective name for other phantom rebel formations in the service of discreet international donors.

² <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/373/37/pdf/n2437337.pdf>. Denis Mukwege refers to the UN document "Letter dated 27 December 2024 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council", *UN document S/2024/969*. It records the failure of Uganda's and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's efforts to gain military control over the various so-called "rebel" groups.

³ "Stratégie du chaos et du mensonge", with co-author Honoré Ngbanda-Nzambo, 2014; and currently "Malheur au vaincus", 2024

Current German foreign policy

Balance of a failure

by Petra Erler, Potsdam*



Petra Erler
(picture ma)

It no longer requires any intellectual effort to recognize the fatal failure of German foreign policy since 2022. With the so-called Zeitenwende of that year, the turning point, elements of German foreign policy that had

made Germany a respected and recognized player in international relations in recent decades have been abandoned: the peace imperative enshrined in the Basic Law, the German commitment to dialogue, moderation, and understanding, the will to establish good neighbourly relations across all dividing lines.

Today, the European continent is dominated by the old friend-or-foe mentality, which was effectively announced by the renewed military tensions that have followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union. What was an almost universally shared hope during the process of German unification, the development of a “common European home”, as Gorbachev memorably put it, has failed.

German submission

Instead of uniting the Continent, Germany and the European Union submitted to the American claim to hegemony, which is presented as the defence of the so-called “rules-based order”. The “turning point” was accompanied by the adoption of a mil-

itaristic foreign policy and a confrontational economic policy. Since then, Germany has been a vassal of the US in its, America’s, struggle to halt its global political decline as the only remaining superpower. Germany has thus tied itself politically to the declining power in the major geopolitical changes of our time and deprived itself of the ability to act independently.

Germany became incapable of playing an active mediating role in the early negotiations to end the war in Ukraine in spring 2022, as well as opposing an open-ended escalation of the war. Even now, in the face of a foreseeable military defeat in Ukraine, Germany continues to march along on the general course of war.

It is by no means certain today whether or not our country will enter into direct war against Russia, as the U.S., Great Britain, and France have done not only by approving Ukraine’s use of long-range Western weapons against Russian territory, but also by directing and controlling the use of these weapons on the ground. This means that the threshold for direct military confrontation between two nuclear powers has long since been crossed with one foot.

What was long considered a conspiracy theory or Russian disinformation has now become an undisguised reality. Ukraine is the proxy warrior against Russia, and as it weakens, the NATO states are throwing themselves into the breach to achieve the actual objective of the war, the permanent weakening of Russia.

Even the Russian test of a hypersonic weapon against Ukraine did not force the European NATO members off their course. Only the US was informed that this missile would be conventionally equipped. From Moscow’s point of view, it may be logical that it is enough to in-

form only the master and not the servants. From a German and E.U. perspective, it exposes the insignificance into which they have maneuvered themselves. German politicians and the vast majority of media are also singing the song of the Russian nuclear bluff in unison, as if the Continent, which could possibly be the first to be devastated by nuclear weapons, is located in a parallel universe for which they bear no political responsibility.

For this was long since discarded when one joined the chorus of those who declared everything the Russian side announced to be bluff, lies and imperial spite, and surrendered to the neo-liberal war frenzy. The counterpart to this is the hysteria with which a Russian attack on NATO territory is painted on the wall, because Putin denied it.

As a result, there was no decisive opposition from Germany to the US decision to supply anti-personnel mines to Ukraine to slow down the Russian advance in the Donbas and increase casualties. These weapons are outlawed by the majority in the international community, and for good reason [because they aim to injure and maim their victims to overwhelm the medical support system of enemy forces and to demoralize them; the editor]. Ukraine has also ratified the relevant convention. But it now turns out that the Ukrainian government, which carried the war into the Donbas regions in April 2014, gave itself a free pass to use such weapons in this territory if necessary. Where was and is the German protest?

Double standards

The handling of the *International Criminal Court* whose formation the EU strongly supported, is now also characterised by double standards. The court’s arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin for alleged war crimes, issued 17 March 2023, was found to be correct. The issuing of arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, the Israeli prime minister and his former defence minister, was not part of the Western plan: In the “rules-based order”, the villains are always the others. Allies do not commit alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

It is good and logical that Germany, due to its history, has a historical obligation toward the Jewish people, but this includes a responsibility toward all Jewish fellow citizens in our country. This historical obligation has become an empty formula because the genocide of the Holocaust did not lead to the realisation that all victims of any presumed genocide need

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* Petra Erler, born in the G.D.R. in 1958, earned her doctorate at the *Institute for International Relations* at the *Academy for State and Law* in Potsdam. She was part of the peaceful opposition and, after the parliamentary elections in the spring of 1990, was initially a (non-partisan) advisor and member of the planning staff of Foreign Minister *Markus Meckel* (SDP, the *Social Democratic Party* of the GDR), and then as a state secretary in the office of Prime Minister *Lothar de Maizière* (CDU). After 3 October 1990, the date of German reunification, she worked as head of the European Commission’s policy department at the Brandenburg state representation in Bonn from 1991. In 1999, she became a member of the inner circle of *Günter Verheugen*, who was then an E.U. commissioner. Between 2006 and 2010, she was his head of cabinet. Since 2010, Erler has served as managing director of the *European Experience*, Potsdam (pe@european-experience.de). Together with *Günter Verheugen*, she published *Der lange Weg zum Krieg. Russland, die Ukraine und der Westen – Eskalation statt Entspannung* (The Long Road to War. Russia, Ukraine and the West: Escalation instead of détente), Heyne, ISBN 978-3-453-21883-3) 2024.



“Current German foreign policy”

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our protection. It seems that German political perception has become deaf and blind to the deliberate announcements and responsibility of Israeli politicians for atrocities against Palestinian civilians.

This is how Germany and the entire EU have failed. Now there is even a question as to whether we have become accomplices as a result of the mistaken historical deduction, which has led to unquestioning support and arms deliveries to Israel. And no, it is not anti-Semitic to subject Israeli policy to the same standards of assessment under international law as all other states. International law does not recognise any nation’s claim to exceptionalism. Just as it is not anti-American to apply the same yardstick with which one condemns

the Russian aggression against Ukraine to decisions made by the US, to NATO, or, more generally, to Western activities vis-à-vis the so-called “rest” of the world. This reveals the duplicity, hypocrisy, and resistance to inevitable change that characterise the West’s international relations today.

Lost credibility

As a result, we are now sitting on two nuclear powder kegs, one in Europe and one in West Asia. A third, in the Indo-Pacific region, has long been in the making.

Along the way, we have lost a great deal in the eyes of many states and peoples; German credibility and also a long-standing trust in Germany’s peace policy have also declined. Who will sweep up the broken pieces and try to create new trust and give dialogue and understanding a chance? Can we expect this from German politics, from the broken coalition government? Which parties and personalities have the stature and courage to break out of the bondage of the U.S. and to stand up vocally and clearly against further escalation of war so that the danger of nuclear degeneration can be averted?

It is no longer 90 seconds before the end of the world, as the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, first launched by Einstein, predicted at the beginning of 2024. Without determined cooperation between the US, Russia, and China, the clock is ticking inexorably toward the end of civilisation. This is the reality that we no longer want to see due to ideological blindness and war-mongering.

The domestic political price for the changed, highly ideologized and militarised foreign policy is very high. Friend-or-foe thinking in foreign policy, along with hybrid warfare, are also changing the situation in our country. Society is becoming more divided, more hateful, more silent. At the same time, authoritarian temptations to suppress possible dissent are growing.

It didn’t all start with the *Zeitenwende*. As early as 2019, a survey by the *Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research* found that only around 18 per cent of Germans express themselves freely in public, while 59 per cent still do so among friends. At that time, there was already a feeling that there were unwritten laws and taboos on some political topics that imposed limits on what could be said. In 2023, the institute stated that more Germans believe they can no longer speak freely than vice versa. This is a threat to democracy, of which freedom of opinion is a constituent element. Anyone who refers to the legal protection in the Basic Law in this context and therefore understands the whole thing as merely a “feeling” does not understand the creeping erosion that our country is experiencing.

Freedom of opinion is eroded when politicians and media attack dissidents or pose as authorities of absolute truth. Thinking is increasingly “supervised”, democratic discourse vigorously discouraged. This goes hand in hand with a loss of the reality attaching to words and ideas, so that language no longer corresponds to facts or the actual course of events.

This is causing more damage in our country than the Russian, Chinese, or Iranian hybrid warfare that has long been suspected everywhere could ever achieve. Because just as democracy can be neither exported nor imported, it cannot be destroyed from outside without violence. Apart from war, coups, or other sorts of “regime change” operations, the work of destruction always takes place internally. It does not proceed from the bottom up, but is set in motion when the democratic claim that all power (“state power”) comes from the people degenerates. This is the price of the chosen neoliberal foreign policy, which was not determined in elections but proclaimed from the pulpit as a *Zeitenwende*.

Its most recent equivalent was the courtly re-enactment of the U.S. decision to deploy medium-range weapons, including hypersonic weapons, which is to take place in Germany in 2026.

Instead of realising that anyone who fuels the war in Ukraine is bringing the war back to Germany, Washington’s supreme warlord, President Biden, was honoured in Germany before his departure from office last month, and his personal decency – his purported decency – was portrayed as a light that shines far and wide. At the same time, it was acknowledged that Europe is now at its most dangerous moment since the Second World War. How could it come to this? In any case, leadership responsibility, human decency, or a willingness to reach an understanding have not been dominant in recent years, but the delegitimisation of diplomacy and open militarisation have, as if the “continuation of politics by other means” were the only way forward.

In fact, this approach takes the citizens’ tax money out of their pockets, throws it down the throats of a few war profiteers, and makes life miserable and uncertain for billions, while the people of Ukraine are sacrificed (sent to the slaughter) and the ungrounded hope of defeating Russia militarily is maintained.

This is the opposite of responsible or even morally determined policy, internally and externally alike. The only way out of this double dilemma is to overcome speechlessness and embark on the long and arduous journey toward peace, which the majority in our country, if you believe the polls, have long been demanding. •

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WeltTrends is a journal for international politics and has been published quarterly since 1993. The editorial office is located in Potsdam. The magazine is published by the registered association *WeltTrends*. The aim of its foundation was always – for more than 30 years – the critical monitoring of Germany’s foreign policy. The magazine is politically and financially independent. As an original eastern project, the magazine focuses on developments in Eurasia. The global view on events all over the world and the role of Europe are increasingly the main topics of *WeltTrends* publications. Analyses of individual countries and regions are published regularly. Each issue focusses on one main topic. In addition, various sections debate on current problems, discussed by renowned national and international authors.

WeltTrends is firmly committed to the movement for peace and the demilitarisation of international relations.

Lutz Kleinwächter,
Chairman *WeltTrends* e. V.

Who wants war against Russia?

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



Eberhard Hamer
(picture ma)

Ursula von der Leyen wants to become the biggest thief in the history of Europe, namely to embezzle 300 billion in confiscated Russian assets and pay them to Ukraine to prolong the war. Never before has a government

dared to break international trust in property – the basis of all foreign trade – by stealing foreign property, expropriating international investors from Russian assets and thus destroying the property trust of European trading partners and international investors. This is not only illegal, but also punishable by law and threatens to shake the international legal order – all in order to reignite the long-lost war in Ukraine.

EU-Europe wants to continue the war against Russia

While the new US President *Trump*, i. e. the supreme commander of NATO and the EU, wants to stop a war that has become unsuccessful and pointless, the European war fanatics not only want to continue the war, but also escalate and take it over as a European war against Russia.

Do the European people want this?

If von der Leyen were to waste further EU funds on the war in Ukraine, this would be punishable by law because it is not the EU's task. And if she even commits theft of Russian assets in order to finance the war in Ukraine, this is doubly punishable as soon as the immunity of the EU post no longer protects her.

It is unclear why von der Leyen wants to take over and continue the US-Russian war so fanatically from the EU despite the withdrawal of the USA, but this may be due to her circle of warmongers.

km. Born in 1932, Professor *Hamer* lived through the Second World War and knows what war means. Growing up in a Protestant parsonage, he not only learnt to actively shape his life through achievement – as a successful medium-sized businessman and also as a scientist – but he also experienced his parents' strict rejection of National Socialism and war as a child and teenager. As a result, he is one of the few prominent liberal-conservatives in Germany today to take a firm stand against Germany's war policy.

As far as the CDU's candidate for chancellor, *Friederich Merz*, is concerned, I would like to add a few words. *Merz* is in the unfortunate tradition of parts of the CDU

One of the fiercest warmongers is EU foreign policy chief *Kallas* (formerly Estonian head of government). She is characterised by a fundamental hatred of Russia and now wants to live this out in her new EU position without thinking about the consequences of her warmongering for the whole of Europe. Anyone who appoints such a fanatical Russia-hater to a leading EU office should actually know what this fanatic can do with it and at least block it, instead of mindlessly following her hatred.

The candidate for chancellor of the CDU is also fully committed to the course of war

The fact that *Annalena Baerbock* has not only formally declared war on Russia, but always has been a warmonger also, has not been taken seriously internationally, nor did *Baerbock* take it seriously herself. It could become problematic after the next election that not only the Greens have become a warmongering party (formerly a peace party), but also the CDU with *Röttgen*, *Kiesewetter* (wants to bomb Moscow) and above all the probable new Federal Chancellor *Merz*.

Anyone who lived through the last world war will be appalled by the carelessness with which *Merz* is provoking the next world war. If he is serious about this, he is dangerous and unsuitable as chancellor. But even if he didn't mean it seriously, he would still be a danger as chancellor.

The Ukraine war has already been adopted by the traffic light government as 'their' war and has harmed Germany more than any other country in Europe, tripled our energy costs, disarmed our Bundeswehr by giving weapons to Ukraine, cost us more than 100 billion euros through money and weapons deliveries and through the Ukraine refugees, and will cost us tens of billions of euros more through the EU's warmongering.

* * *

that need blatant enemy images and believe they can use them to raise their own profile.

"All roads of Marxism lead to Moscow", read a poster in the CDU election campaign in 1953. And this poster was not directed against any agents of influence of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, CPSU, but against the German SPD at the time. The "Red Threat" was a constant theme in the Cold War from the late 1940s to the 1960s – and served not least to maintain power.

Once upon a time: CIA admitted wrongful convictions

We have already pointed this out several times, but it cannot be said often enough:

Fighting until the 'final victory'?

Ukraine is broke, over 1 trillion euros in debt, partially destroyed, partially depopulated and militarily finished. Nevertheless, it continues to talk about the 'victory plan', like *Hitler* used to talk about the 'final victory'.

Trump knows that the war in Ukraine is lost, that the USA no longer has any military or economic interest in it because it has economically completed the re-equipping necessary for the modern drone war by disposing of the old material in Ukraine and by placing orders worth 400 billion dollars with its defence industry (as "Ukraine aid"), meaning that apart from further damage to Russia, it will no longer benefit from continuing the war in Ukraine "to the last Ukrainian" or then "with European fresh meat". They are now only interested in a face-saving exit so as not to experience another NATO escape like the one in Afghanistan.

So, who is behind the warmongering of *Merz* and Co. *Merz* was an employee and lobbyist of the largest Anglo-Saxon asset manager *BlackRock*. When in doubt, he does what his clients want. However, according to the contract with von der Leyen, they want to rebuild Ukraine as a general contractor for 500 billion euros at European expense. They should therefore be more interested in an end to the war for their reconstruction business than in continuing the war.

Or does he just want to save his warmongering face after the AfD and BSW, as well as the majority of the population, are increasingly clamouring for an end to the war and peace negotiations? In any case, as long as *Merz* wants to continue and escalate the war in Ukraine, he is unfit to be chancellor and a threat to Germany's existence.

The Soviet Union's foreign and defence policy was – deliberately – misjudged for many years. We owe this knowledge to *Willy Wimmer*, the former CDU foreign and defence politician and State Secretary in the German Ministry of Defence at the time of the GDR's accession to the scope of the German Basic Law. In his book "Die Akte Moskau" (The Moscow File), published in 2016, he describes how the defence working group of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group travelled to Washington for a working visit in the early summer of 1988. Surprisingly, the travellers were taken directly

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Christian or Woke School?

On the Federal Court Ruling on a Girls' Secondary School

mw. On 17 January 2025, the Federal Court announced its view of a constitutionally compliant school – it is hard to imagine anything more absurd. According to the said ruling, the *St. Katharina* Girls' Secondary School (*Kathi*) in Wil, SG, violates the “requirement for confessional neutrality of public schools.” As stated by Switzerland’s highest court, “The *Kathi* is clearly Christian, or rather, Catholic oriented. Significant religious elements are consciously integrated into daily school life.” Furthermore, it is “incompatible with the principle of equal treatment that access to *Kathi* is only open to girls.”

Look how far we’ve come! Does a school violate our constitution just because it embodies Christian values? Apparently, this aligns more with some parents’ preferences compared to their children having their minds confused by wokeness, gender, and other contemporary ideological trends in schools. By the way, the school accepts students from all denominations and religions and promotes mutual respect for the religions of others. Moreover, attendance at *Kathi* is voluntary, as pointed out by one of the federal judges: Religious neutrality is only breached if a child is compelled by the state to attend a religious school. And

why should it not be constitutional for the school to be exclusive to girls? Other secondary schools are free to compete with *Kathi* by adopting similarly high academic, artistic, and ethical standards.

With this ruling, the Federal Court also disregards the federal constitutional order: According to Article 62 Paragraph 1 of the Federal Constitution, school sovereignty lies with the cantons. The Wil city parliament, after lengthy and arduous deliberation, had democratically decided to fund *Kathi* from the municipal budget, and the administrative court of the canton of St. Gallen dismissed a complaint against it. Although the Federal Court notes, “The neutrality requirement is not absolute. Differing cantonal weightings can be permissible,” it disregards the federative diversity of the Swiss school system, which is worrying.

Given the fact that 20 percent of our school leavers neither can read, write, nor count adequately, we should be grateful for a school where value education and academic performance are paramount, and whose diverse artistic offerings foster the creativity, willingness to perform, and social skills of young people (4 pillars: value school, performance school, day school, artistic school).

Thankfully, there is some refreshing protest from the media. *Philipp Gut* in *Weltwoche* states, “Instead of promoting freedom and diversity, the high judges pose as advocates for an educational uniformity. Oh, holy simplicity!” *Katharina Fontana* in the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” mentions, “Instead of aiming to raise standards in public schools, the better competition is simply being destroyed. Egalitarianism takes precedence over all else, even if it lowers the level. The decision of the Second Public Law decision was made by three votes to two. This ruling has little to do with justice in its narrow sense but everything to do with the personal worldview of the judges.”

It is hoped that *Kathi*, as a private school, finds ways to continue accepting students whose parents cannot afford tuition fees – as many students have already enrolled for the next school year. •

Sources: Federal Court *press release*. Judgement of January 17, 2025 (2C_405/2022); Gut, Philipp. “Irrwege der Gleichstellung” (“The wrong path to equality”) in: *Weltwoche* No. 4/25 of 23 January 2025; Fontana, Katharina. “Aus für die Schule St. Katharina: Ideologie bringt eine erfolgreiche Mädchenschule zu Fall.” (“This is the End for the St. Katharina School: Ideology Brings Down the Successful Girls’ School”) in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 20 January 2025; <https://www.kathi.ch/4-saeulen/>

“Who wants war against Russia?”

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from the airport to the CIA headquarters in Langley:

“We were astonished to listen to the explanations there, which focussed on a completely new American policy towards the Soviet Union: We should break away – so the message at the large round table – from what we had heard for decades about military potentials and strategies in the conflict between East and West in Europe. The results of a study on this topic were clear: The Soviet Union was pursuing purely defensive intentions. It was solely a matter of defence to protect “Mother Russia”. The Warsaw Pact’s strategy to date was ultimately the logical reaction to the murderous attacks by Napoleon and Hitler, so it had absolutely nothing to do with any aggression.”¹

1988 was a year of further rapprochement between the two presidents *Ronald Reagan* and *Mikhail Gorbachev*. Reagan, who had still spoken of the “evil empire” with regard to the Soviet Union in the first half of the 1980s, had recognised this: With the new Soviet President Gorbachev, he was able to reach agreements that could

have signalled a real “*Zeitenwende*” (turning point) in world politics towards peaceful and prosperous coexistence, taking into account the interests of all parties involved – if the US presidents after Reagan had continued to pursue this line. Which, however, was not the case – as is now very well documented.

Friedrich Merz wants to be the new strong man

On 23 January 2025, Friedrich Merz, the CDU’s current candidate for chancellor, gave a keynote speech to a select audience at the German *Körber Foundation* on his foreign policy² should he become the next German chancellor. This speech was so historically blind and crude that Germans should be ashamed of themselves. He spoke of an “epochal break” with a view to 24 February 2022. Why has he never used this word when referring to the USA and NATO and their “illegal wars” (*Daniele Ganser*) with millions of deaths and immeasurable destruction? Merz referred to *Helmut Kohl*, but in fact represented something quite different from the former German Chancellor, who – as a result of his own war memories – was very keen to reach an understanding with every country, including the Soviet Union and then Russia. Merz’s concrete proposals did not

contain a single seed of détente; his proposals were all warmongering (not only against Russia, but also against China and the nations plagued by Israel) and characterised by an authoritarian habitus: Merz wants to be the coming “strong man” and make Germany the “leading power” in Europe.

Germany, quo vadis?

His remarks were based on the familiar propaganda formulas for demonising Russia. Their constant repetition does not make them true. “Understanding Russia”, i.e. seriously investigating the question of what prompted Russia to intervene militarily in Ukraine in February 2022, as the CIA at Langley did in 1988, i.e. analysing the causes of the war and Russia’s concerns in a historically serious manner – not a word of this from Friedrich Merz. Instead, a string of half-truths and untruths.

It was also a shame that no one mentioned this in the subsequent discussion with Merz. Germany, *quo vadis*? •

¹ Wimmer, Willy. *Die Akte Moskau* (The Moscow File), 2016, page 11f.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

² <https://koerber-stiftung.de/mediathek/friedrich-merz-zu-aussen-und-europapolitischen-prioritaeten-fuer-deutschland/>

The small neutral state as a 'grease' in the geopolitical machine

Pascal Lottaz and Jean-Daniel Ruch on Swiss neutrality

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

It is a high-profile discussion which Pascal Lottaz, Professor of Neutrality Studies at Kyoto University, shares with his audience at "Neutrality Studies" on 14 January 2025. Under the title "Ex-diplomat reveals: NATO destroys peace", he explores burning questions of our time with long-standing Swiss ambassador Jean-Daniel Ruch.¹

Based on Jean-Daniel Ruch's recently book "Peace and Justice"², published by the *Weltwoche*-Verlag, Lottaz and Ruch discuss the devastating role NATO is playing in the world and the associated elimination of the OSCE as a tried and tested instrument of peace-promoting dialogue between East and West. One focus of the discussion is Swiss neutrality, from a critical analysis of its current precarious state to encouraging thoughts and plans for a successful referendum on the neutrality initiative in the near future and for a positive impact of neutral/non-aligned states in world affairs.

Some excerpts on the subject of Swiss neutrality will be reproduced here.

Jean-Daniel Ruch studied International Relations and International Security in Geneva and Lausanne. From 1988 he worked in the Swiss Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Since 1994, he has worked for the OSCE as a human rights officer and election observer in numerous countries.

He was deputy head of mission at the Swiss embassy in Belgrade (2000–2003), deputy at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague (2003–2007) and special representative of the FDFA for the Middle East (2008–2012), Swiss ambassador to Serbia and Montenegro (2012–2016), to Israel (2016) and Turkey (2020–2023). In 2023, he was nominated by the Federal Council to head of the newly established *State Secretariat for Security Policy* (see box "NATO sceptic in the DDPS disrupts US plans").

Dr Pascal Lottaz is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law at Kyoto University (Japan). He holds a doctorate from the *National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies* (GRIPS) and heads the research network *NeutralityStudies.com*.

Restoring credible neutrality – a rocky road

Pascal Lottaz: "Switzerland is clearly neutral and has also said that it's going to behave neutrally according to the rules of The Hague and is not sending weapons to Ukraine. But on the other hand, it is clear-

ly in the camp of the West. [...] So where is Switzerland going, and is there still a way for Europeans to remain neutral? Are there still neutral Europeans in your view?"

Jean-Daniel Ruch: "Maybe Ireland. Listen, I think that neutrality has to be seen like a building with three floors. The lower floor is the law of neutrality, which is basically the *Hague Convention* of 1907, which states you should not offer any military advantage to any of the conflicting parties. From that point of view,

legally speaking, we are neutral. The second stage is the policy of neutrality, and this is very much defined by the government with little consultation of the parliament or anybody else. By taking the sanctions, which was a political act with implications on neutrality, then, and this is the third stage, we influence the perception of neutrality. To be credible, we need to be perceived as neutral. Unfortunately, because of this decision and others, also the looming accession to NATO, the perception of neutrality is not there anymore among certain big world powers. I don't say it's lost forever, but it will be an up-

hill struggle to restore the credibility of our neutrality."

'Interoperability': handing over command of the Swiss army to the USA?

Former Ambassador Ruch points out that the armies of Finland and Sweden were already prepared for joining NATO through various measures before they joined. This is "the kind of measures we are taking in Switzerland now; by the way in terms of what they called interoperability, which is actually giving the management of our army to NATO or to the Americans, let's be clear."

Lottaz: "Why are we doing that? I mean, I've observed that too in Switzerland, that there's so much push from certain corners of our government. Your former boss, *Viola Amherd*, I think, is one of the key political figures pushing for giving up Switzerland's defence structure to NATO. And there's no threat to Switzerland."

Ruch: "Well, I think it's because of the deep penetration of American, but also Israeli, influences in all our military systems.

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'If Switzerland acquires the F-35A, it will effectively join NATO'

*mw. National Councillor Pierre-Alain Fridez** has dedicated an entire book to the Swiss army's hair-raising acquisition of the US F-35A stealth bomber. Here are some of his criticisms with regard to Switzerland's neutrality.

"In all the parliamentary debates and during the campaign for the referendum on the *Air2030* bill of 27 September 2020, there was always talk of procuring a multi-role combat aircraft to perform the tasks that were to be entrusted to it: air police and protection of our airspace. However, the F-35 is primarily an aircraft for air-to-ground attack, a stealth bomber that is ideal for taking the war into the depths of enemy territory, preferably as part of an integrated military alliance such as NATO – and, according to many experts, certainly not the first choice for the tasks of air policing and air defence." (p. 12 of the German book; all quotes translated by *Current Concerns*)

"If Switzerland acquires the F-35A, it will effectively join NATO. If it is not a member of NATO, it will not have access to the information that makes the F-35A what it is: a flying giant computer. Making optimal use of the sensors and the capabilities for integrating the data received only makes sense in the context of a broad alliance such as NATO. And these capabilities can only be used if Switzerland is in-

tegrated into the NATO command structure." (p. 29)

Complete data control by the USA: The author describes the data flow from the individual aircraft to the US command structure and adds: "This process testifies to the pronounced dependence of each individual F-35 operator on the manufacturer and the USA. And it should be noted that an aircraft that remains more than 30 days without a connection to the parent company will no longer take off [...]. We would do well to always maintain a perfect relationship with *Uncle Sam*." (p. 63)

Dependence on the USA for maintenance: The Federal Council in the 2022 army message: "The aircraft will be fully maintained in Switzerland and exclusively by Swiss personnel." Fridez corrects: "(Because) according to our information, the F-35A will be taken to the centralised European maintenance centres for major overhauls (*depot level maintenance*). For the really big repairs, the jets would have to be transferred to the USA." (p. 65)

Source: Fridez, Pierre-Alain. "Der Entscheid für den F-35. Ein gewaltiger Fehler oder ein staatspolitischer Skandal?" (*The decision in favour of the F-35: a huge mistake or a scandal for the country?*) (2022) ISBN 978-3-7557-9835-4

* Pierre-Alain Fridez is a member of the National Council (SP JU) and the Security Policy Committee SPC -N.

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It's not just the army in uniform; it's also the procurement system. I mean, the way the F-35 was selected is a scandal. A national councillor from the *Socialist Party* has written a book about that. And it's either incompetence or corruption. [...] All our security systems, all of them, all aspects, are deeply penetrated by these influences." – "The latest one is the total failure of the purchase of drones for 300 million from Israel. Now, this week there was a press conference where they said that, well, first, the drones that had to be put in service in 2019 will not be operational before 2029." Ruch continues: "And this incompetence is the result of a blind trust in the Americans and their Israeli friends. In this case, this is procurement, but this is also true for the general assessment of the situation. If you read the latest report of our intelligence services on the threat towards Switzerland, you would believe that this document has been written either in Tel Aviv or in Washington. I mean, the enemies for Switzerland are North Korea, China, Iran, and, of course, Russia.³ Come on. I mean, this is a vision from Washington, but it should certainly not be the vision from Switzerland."

Federal Councillors without clear vision of Swiss identity

Many Swiss are very concerned about the current lack in politics, especially in the Federal Council, of personalities with a genuinely Swiss view on the key issues of foreign policy. The two interview partners are also concerned about this existential problem for our country. Lottaz: "How did that happen? I know that we had an independent foreign policy once upon a time. We managed to avoid two world

wars. We managed to navigate the Cold War. We had a very strong foundation for what we would and wouldn't do with certain sides, although Switzerland in the Cold War was on one side of the camp. But there was independence."

Ruch: "Yes, I think the reason is the people, the people who are in charge [...]" In Switzerland, "there is very little democratic or civilian control over what the armed forces are doing. And simply the people who are in charge, they have been socialising, they have been trained in NATO countries. So quite naturally, they have adopted this mindset. And what happens in the administration of the Ministry of Defence is no longer balanced either by the foreign ministry, which traditionally was much, much closer to a true neutral point of view. But our foreign ministry has been largely destroyed by the current incumbent, the current minister of foreign affairs. And also at the level of the federal council, I'm talking about the politicians, the federal councillors, you no longer have someone who has a clear vision of the Swiss identity and Swiss role in the world."

As a long-standing Swiss ambassador, Jean-Daniel Ruch recalls, for example, former Federal Councillor *Micheline Calmy-Rey*, who criticised the USA at the time of the war in Iraq. "We do not have any people like that in positions of command anymore. We will see now, maybe [*Alain Berset*] is there. He seems to be more principled, but [as Secretary General of the *Council of Europe*] he has no real involvement in foreign affairs."

2022 sanctions against Russia: Federal Council made no use of its leeway

Ambassador Ruch is particularly critical of the Federal Council's rapid U-turn in Feb-

ruary 2022, when it came to adopting the Western sanctions against Russia. While he acknowledges that Switzerland's position in the middle of Western Europe is not easy, he adds: "But I don't think we have maybe exploited enough the room for manoeuvring that we had, because at the end of the day, between 2014, when the first sanctions against Russia were decided by the West, and 2022, we could stay outside of the sanctions just by creating a system whereby the sanctions could not be circumvented through Switzerland. Nobody has ever explained to us why this same policy was not possible after 2022. And I think we were a bit quick to join these sanctions. In a weekend, actually, the Federal Council changed its mind without ever explaining to us why they did that. And I think that this has contributed to a deepened mistrust between a large part of the population and the Swiss government." And it should be added that this has also contributed to a serious loss of credibility for Swiss neutrality in a large part of the world.

OSCE Chairmanship 2026 – a new opportunity for Switzerland?

Pascal Lottaz and Jean-Daniel Ruch also address the importance of the OSCE and the question of whether there, Switzerland could once again take a meaningful place. According to Ruch, after the end of the Cold War, the OSCE "would have offered the right forum to have a permanent structure for European security. And by the way, Switzerland, and not only Switzerland but the other neutral states, played a key role back then to create this system, which unfortunately remained embryonic because the West wanted to push its advantage as much as possible while Russia was weak."

In response to Pascal Lottaz's question: "Do you still have hope left for the OSCE and for the revival of this Cold War détente in the new Cold War?", the diplomat points to the many imponderables of today's world, but emphasises that the OSCE is "the only institution that exists where all states are represented on an equal footing". Switzerland will take over the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2026, so it should get in touch with the US and Russian governments at an early stage "to see how we can usefully play a role there to bring the parties together. By the same token, try to restore a little bit of the credibility of our neutrality, which has been badly damaged since 2022."

Neutrality initiative – 'One of the most important referendums we will have in Switzerland'

Jean-Daniel Ruch sums up the task ahead for Switzerland: "So I think it's about the people and the loss of the consciousness of what it means to be Swiss, what it

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NATO sceptic in the DDPS* disrupts plans of US

mw. Jean-Daniel Ruch's report on his personal shock experience with the USA gets under your skin. In September 2023, the highly respected top diplomat was selected by the Federal Council as State Secretary for Defence and praised in the highest terms on the Federal Council's website: "With his track record in the national and international environment, his many years of experience in the administration and in the diplomatic service, and his education and training, he fully meets the requirements profile for the role of State Secretary"¹. Just a few weeks later, Ruch was out of the picture, shot down by a nasty smear campaign. In an interview with Pascal Lottaz, he names names: The penetration of our security system by the Americans "is also the reason why they launched a smear campaign against me when I was appointed State Secretary for Defence, because I had made no secret of my scepticism towards a NATO rapprochement in internal discussions". – "So, you know"

continues Ruch, "they are really prepared to use means to bring Switzerland into line. To be honest, I was naive. I never would have thought they would use such means to ensure that Switzerland will be incorporated into the US camp".

The encroachment from across the Atlantic is one thing. To our shame, however, it should be added that no protests were heard from either the Federal Council or the DDPS team.

Jean-Daniel Ruch: "My position has always been that what constitutes our strength, what constitutes our role or our usefulness in the world, is that we maintain a credible neutrality, and for this we must keep our distance from the great powers". Which Swiss citizen can have an objection?

* Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, DDPS

¹ "Jean-Daniel Ruch becomes State Secretary for Security Policy". Press release of the Federal Council of 15 September 2023

Maybe the Pope in Rome is more important than the President in Washington

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

As a politically independent newspaper, we are freed from the heavy burden of having to or wanting to engage directly in politics. Instead, we are focussing on issues arising from a political ethic based on the social nature and the personal concept of man¹, on questions regarding issues of mankind – both large and small.

Many people are currently focussed on one topic: What is the new US president planning ... and what will he do? This focus is easy to understand. The USA are a major military and economic power, and its policies have too often had nothing to do with political ethics. But even the new US president is not the ruler of the world ... and hopefully humanity will keep in mind that others also have a say.

Much of what is currently written and broadcast is also part of a major war of information: not only between the USA, Russia and China, for example, but also between the desire to actually shape the

future world order differently than before and the violent inertia of the old powers, especially those in our Western countries. Public statements by politicians and their media mouthpieces are therefore often open to interpretation – and many things are not to be taken at face value.

Sometimes, however, you can find accurate statements even in a newspaper like the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”. For example, in an otherwise uninviting interview from 22 January 2025 with the Director of the *European Council on Foreign Relations*. This director is also focused on the new US president, but at least he says: “Many people in the world are rejecting the current type of American foreign policy. They dislike the idea that America, as the self-proclaimed leader of the free world, sees itself as morally legitimised to determine what they should – and should not – do.”

That is indeed the case. And that is why it is so important not to focus on the words and actions of the new US president like a rabbit caught in the headlight but to think

more about what the real issues facing humanity are.

Message for the World Day of Peace

The Pope in Rome is one person trying to make human issues a public topic. This year, as every year, he did so again in his message on 1 January, celebrating the 58th World Day of Peace. The Pope says things that should be self-evident, but which are in danger of being forgotten in our countries.

For example, the Pope said that “no one comes into this world doomed to oppression: all of us are brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same Father, born to live in freedom, in accordance with the Lord’s will.”

As Pope, he feels “bound to cry out and denounce the many situations in which the earth is exploited and our neighbours oppressed.” Each of us, the Pope said, “must feel in some way responsible for the devastation to which the earth, our common home,

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means to be neutral, and how important it is for Switzerland, but also for the world, I believe, to have a neutral Switzerland.”

Pascal Lottaz: “You and I, we try to change that back, right? There is a referendum coming that’s already a done deal. [...] The referendum will ask, should Switzerland go back to an integral neutrality, including neutrality when it comes to sanctions, a.k.a. no sanctions, except certain little exceptions, [...]. Now, what else is civil society doing at the moment to push back? Because I feel there’s a pushback in Switzerland, too, against this kind of megalomania of certain circles, including the media. The media is almost exclusively, not completely, but to a large extent, in the same camp of pro-NATO, pro-US ...”

Ruch: “Now, as you say, I think the people are very skeptical. The power of the traditional media is not at all what it used to be. People are getting informed through YouTube channels like yours or others, through social networks. [...] And as I think you mentioned elsewhere, this debate will be really fierce and is maybe one of the most important referenda that we will have in Switzerland.”

As Jean-Daniel Ruch does not want to leave the concept of neutrality to a political party whose credibility in terms of a neutral stance is, moreover, in question, he has already become active: “For that reason, I’m trying, together with a number of friends,

to create a movement in the French part of Switzerland, which is more neutral, which is neutral in the Swiss terms, meaning apolitical, but simply based on our patriotism and on what we believe should be our identity and our role. For that purpose, in December, we created the *Geneva Centre for Neutrality*.” Great news!

Network of neutral states as urgently needed bridge builders

Ruch outlines the path of a neutral Switzerland together with other states for a more peaceful world. The aim is to counter the American/Western ideology of good and evil, which leaves little room for neutrality. “And I’m absolutely convinced that for the future of the world, you need a network of states which belong neither to one nor the other [side], who can really make the link, build bridges, and create spaces for negotiations on important issues like disarmament, arms control, and artificial intelligence. [...] The risk of a nuclear war decided by artificial intelligence is not excluded anymore in the foreseeable future. For that, you need to have negotiations, talks, and agreements. [...] It seems to me that neutral states can play a crucial role in creating this framework for disarmament.” Ruch continues: “It could start with think tanks like yours and mine to create this network of people who think differently and who have a more far-reaching vision of the future and don’t want just to be members of a camp. But it’s

much easier, it’s much more comfortable to be part of a camp. If you are a think tank connected to the American military industry, you will see the millions coming, you will see a lot of money, you will have positive coverage everywhere. Whereas when you want to think differently, which is not going mainstream, then everything is, of course, a little bit more difficult and requires more courage.”

Lottaz pursues the thread: “The way I see it is that smaller neutral states can act as the grease in the machine that gets peace agreements or de-escalatory moves going, but it cannot be the push that overcomes the inertia. Do you see it the same way?” Ambassador Ruch answers in the affirmative: “Grease is a very good metaphor. Usually, I used to use the word, you know, [for] the liquid that you have in the articulation to make you able to function without pain. I think this is exactly the role that we should have. Obviously, the superpowers will keep their autonomy of decision, and there is no way we can really influence the decision-making process. But what we can try to do is to influence the communication and the connectivity between the various great powers.” ●

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFtnNXZA-6c>

² Ruch, Jean-Daniel. *Crimes, Hate and Tremors – From one Cold War to the Other, in Pursuit of Peace and Justice*, 2024, ISBN 979-8-3273-7668-7

³ see *Security Switzerland. Situation report of the Federal Intelligence Service 2024*, p. 12

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has been subjected, beginning with those actions that, albeit only indirectly, fuel the conflicts that presently plague our human family. Systemic challenges, distinct yet interconnected, are thus created and together cause havoc in our world. I think, in particular, of all manner of disparities, the inhuman treatment meted out to migrants, environmental decay, the confusion wilfully created by disinformation, the refusal to engage in any form of dialogue and the immense resources spent on the industry of war. All these, taken together, represent a threat to the existence of humanity as a whole."

Hearing the cry of humanity

He continues: "At the beginning of this year, then, we desire to heed the plea of suffering humankind in order to feel called, together and as individuals, to break the bonds of injustice [...]. Sporadic acts of philanthropy are not enough. Cultural and structural changes are necessary, so that enduring change may come about."

Because: "The celebration of the Holy Year [which the Roman Catholic Church celebrates every 25 years] spurs us to make a number of changes in order to confront the present state of injustice and inequality by reminding ourselves that the goods



Official picture of the Vatican on the World Day of Peace 2019. (picture vaticannews)

of the earth are meant not for a privileged few, but for everyone." And "the international system, unless it is inspired by a spirit of solidarity and interdependence, gives rise to injustices, aggravated by corruption, which leave the poorer countries trapped."

The logic of exploitation

Specifically: "I have repeatedly stated that foreign debt has become a means of control whereby certain governments and private financial institutions of the richer countries unscrupulously and indiscriminately exploit the human and natural resources of poorer countries, simply to satisfy the demands of their own markets. In addition, different peoples, already burdened by international debt, find themselves also forced to bear the burden of the "ecological debt" incurred by the more developed countries. Foreign debt and ecological debt are two sides of the same coin, namely the mindset of exploitation that has culminated in the debt crisis."

Mutually dependent

What foundations can a change be built on? "The cultural and structural change needed to surmount this crisis will come about when we finally recognize that we are all sons and daughters of the one Father, that we are all in his debt but also that we need one another, in a spirit of shared and diversified responsibility. We will be able to 'rediscover once for all that we need one another' [here the Pope quotes his encyclical *Fratelli tutti* of 3 October 2020] and are indebted one to another."

Specifically, the Pope proposes three measures to overcome the debt crisis: firstly, "a total cancellation of international debt"; secondly, "at the same time, a new financial framework must be devised, leading to the creation of a global financial Charter based on solidarity and harmony between peoples"; and thirdly, "firm commitment to respect for the dignity of human life from conception to natural

death, so that each person can cherish his or her own life and all may look with hope to a future of prosperity and happiness for themselves and for their children".

In view of the catastrophic situation of millions of children and young people in the world, he also calls for "a fixed percentage of the money earmarked for armaments to establish a global Fund to eradicate hunger and facilitate in the poorer countries educational activities aimed at promoting sustainable development [...]."

It was also important to "eliminate every pretext that encourages young people to regard their future as hopeless or dominated by the thirst to avenge the blood of their dear ones."

"The goal of peace" is the title of the last section of the Pope's message. There we can read: "When I divest myself of the weapon of credit and restore the path of hope to one of my brothers or sisters, I contribute to the restoration of God's justice on this earth and, with that person, I advance towards the goal of peace."

For a world in which we experience ourselves differently, more united and more fraternal

"May 2025," said the Pope, "be a year in which peace flourishes! A true and lasting peace that goes beyond quibbling over the details of agreements and human compromises." Because "peace does not only come with the end of wars but with the dawn of a new world, a world in which we realize that we are different, closer and more fraternal than we ever thought possible".

Truly, this is a different programme!

PS: In German-speaking media outside the Catholic Church, the Pope's message of peace was hardly mentioned anywhere. In other parts of the world, however, the situation is different.

¹ see, for example: Sutor, Bernhard. *Politische Ethik. Gesamtdarstellung auf der Basis der Christlichen Gesellschaftslehre* (Political ethics: A comprehensive presentation based on Christian social teaching), 1992 (2nd edition)

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