2 December 2025
No 25
ISSN 1664-7963

Current Concerns
PO Box 247
CH-9602 Bazenheid
Switzerland

Phone: +41 44 350 65 50
Fax: +41 44 350 65 51

E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch
Website: www.currentconcerns.ch

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

"An end to regime change and nation building"

*by Helmut Scheben**

Helmut Scheben (picture ma)

The director of national intelligence of the United States, Tulsi Gabbard, announces a radical change of course in foreign policy. Many fine words, but unfortunately empty ones …

On 31 October, *Tulsi Gabbard*, director of US National Intelligence, declared an end to a foreign policy that for decades had consisted of "toppling regimes, trying to impose our system of governance on others, intervening in conflicts that were barely understood, and walking away with more enemies than allies."[1] The result, according to Gabbard, has been nothing less than "trillions spent, countless lives lost, and in many cases, a creation of greater security threats, the rise of Islamist terrorist groups like ISIS."

This is a view of US policy that even Gabbard's boss in the White House has not yet expressed in such blunt terms. Many historians around the world would unreservedly endorse Gabbard's statement. According to official data from the *Congressional Research Service*[2] (comparable to the *Scientific Service* of the German Bundestag), the US carried out at least 251 military interventions between 1991 and 2022 alone. That corresponds to an average of eight military interventions per year. These figures do not include CIA operations and coup attempts. The justification given in most cases was that the US had to fight terrorism or come to the aid of an oppressed people to bring freedom and democracy.

Gabbard said *Donald Trump* was elected by the American people to put an end to all of this. This astonishing statement comes at a time when President Trump is threatening Nigeria with war and sending aircraft carriers and other warships off the coast of Venezuela. Week after week, he is sinking boats in the Caribbean that, according to official reports, are transporting drugs. As for the crews of these ships who have been killed, lawyers are talking about "extrajudicial executions." The foreign policy practice[3] of killing suspects instead of capturing them and bringing them to justice has become state doctrine in Washington since 9/11. Nobel Peace Prize winner *Barack Obama* has alone authorised several thousand "preventive killings" by drones, in which countless civilians have been killed as "collateral damage.".

US military deployment since the end of the Cold War	
Year	**Military Deployment (War)**
1991	2nd Gulf War against Iraq
1992	No-fly zone in Iraq
1992–1994	Military deployment in Somalia
1993	Cruise missile strikes on Baghdad
1994	Military deployment in Haiti
1994–1995	Bombardment of Bosnia-Herzegovina
1998	Air raid on an alleged poison gas plant in Sudan
1999	NATO war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
2001-2021	NATO war against Afghanistan
2003	3rd Gulf War against Iraq
2011	NATO war against Libya
since 2014	War against the Islamic State (IS)
since 2015	Military operations against Yemen
since 2017	Direct involvement in the war in Syria
2020	Targeted killing of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani
2024	Series of air strikes against Houthi movement in Yemen
2024	Attack on Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Iran
2025	Attack on Iranian nuclear facilities

In addition to these overt military operations, there were numerous covert operations by US intelligence agencies and other US institutions, often aimed at regime change. (Incomplete compilation and table km.)

Regime change is on the agenda: This time it is Venezuela

There is probably no competent political observer or diplomat anywhere in the world who does not realise that President Trump is not concerned with drug trafficking but with bringing about a change of government[4] that would turn Venezuela back into the petrol station it once was for US energy companies. Global demand for gas and oil is set to rise in the coming decades. Even during Trump's first term in office, Washington claimed that Venezuelan President *Nicolás Maduro* was linked to drug traffickers from the Cártel des los Soles." *Pino Arlacchi*,[5] formerly the executive director of the *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, called this "Hollywood fiction." This ominous cartel is "as legendary a creation as the Loch Ness monster. It serves to justify sanctions, embargoes, and the threat of military intervention against a country that happens to sit on one of the world's largest oil reserves."

The United States has been fighting drug trafficking in Latin America for more than forty years without the slightest success. In the early 1990s, I accompanied the *Drug Enforcement Agency*, the DEA, and the famous *Green Berets* when

continued on page 2

* *Helmut Scheben*, born in Koblenz, Germany, in 1947, was a wire service reporter and news media correspondent in Mexico and Central America from 1980 to 1985. In 1986 he became editor of the weekly newspaper *WoZ* in Zürich; from 1993 to 2012 he was an editor and reporter for *Swiss television, SRF*, and for 16 of those years he was with *Tagesschau*.

"'An end to 'regime change' …'"
continued from page 1

they invited journalists to their show operations in the coca-growing areas of Peru. I have come to the conclusion that the numerous US military bases in the Andean countries are only ostensibly dedicated to the fight against drugs. In reality, they are nothing more than a counterinsurgency programme, i.e., dedicated to geostrategic control of North America's "backyard." Incidentally, the CIA itself was described by US prosecutors in the 1980s as "the biggest drug dealer in the US."[6] The US Secret Service had already learned in Vietnam how the opium trade could help finance a war.[7]

During his first term in office, Trump had the navy deploy off the coast of Venezuela. He tightened the sanctions that the US had begun two decades earlier, when former Venezuelan army officer *Hugo Chávez* was elected president. Chávez became the arch-enemy of the US with his "21st-century socialism," his nationalisation of oil and other key industries, and his solidarity with Cuba, Russia, China and all left-wing movements on the continent. His successor, Maduro, is listed in Washington as a communist dictator in the same catalogue as *Kim Jong-un* of North Korea.

Tulsi Gabbard is right when she says that many Americans voted for Donald Trump because he promised to end the policy of global military intervention. It cannot be ruled out that Trump seriously intended to do so. Nor can it be ruled out that some of his advisers have read books such as *La défaite de l'Occident* (Gallimard, 2024; not yet available in English). by French anthropologist and historian *Emmanuel Todd*.[8] Like many other experts, Todd concludes that the NATO West, fearing the loss of its hegemonic power, would rather resort to destructive force and risk a nuclear showdown than seek a balance of interests with Russia and China through diplomacy and economic agreements.

The long arm of the military-industrial complex

The question, however, is not whether Trump wants to turn his back on the role of global policeman, who presumes to lay down the rules of the road and break them at will, but whether the ruling power structures in the US will allow him to do so. The president of the United States is considered the most powerful man in the world, but he operates within a political enclosure that he finds upon taking office. It is an enclosure defined by an apparatus in which, as economist *Jeffrey Sachs* once put it, "Wall Street controls the financial system, Big Oil controls the energy system, and the military-industrial lobby controls foreign policy." The intelligence services are closely intertwined with these interest groups, and their most important tools are the media.

Trump learned during his first term that his attempts at a new foreign policy were sabotaged by a media tsunami, backed by the *Democrats* in collaboration with the intelligence services. Trump's few attempts at détente with Russia and North Korea, and at reducing the US military presence worldwide, were immediately buried by a narrative called "Russiagate.". When *Wikileaks* published 20,000 emails from a computer belonging to the *Democratic National Committee* in July 2016, *Hillary Clinton's* campaign staff immediately claimed, citing "intelligence findings," this was a "Russian hacker attack." Russian President *Putin* wanted to harm Clinton and help Trump win the election: This was the narrative.

The story sent the media into a frenzy that lasted throughout Trump's entire term in office. The idea that Trump was being controlled by Putin was fuelled by a steady stream of "intelligence findings," most of which later turned out to be fake. Former FBI Director *Robert Mueller* was tasked with an investigation that ultimately found no evidence of the ominous "Russiagate." In May 2017, intelligence officials, cyber security companies and Clinton aides, all of whom had claimed to have evidence for the Russiagate story, were heard under oath before the Senate. None of those summoned were able to substantiate the alleged evidence. The Russiagate narrative imploded silently.

Patrick Lawrence, who served for decades as a correspondent for major US newspapers, primarily in Asia, describes in *Journalists and Their Shadows* (Clarity Press, 2023) how his job at *The Nation* was terminated because he criticised the Russiagate hysteria and argued that all the technical evidence pointed to the hacking attack being an "inside job" from Clinton's circle.

The congressional hearings were kept under wraps due to pressure from the Democrats. Lawrence: "One might have thought that the mainstream press would immediately pick up on the findings in May 2017. But the major newspapers and television stations remained silent. It wasn't until April 2020 that it was reported." Lawrence writes that the damage done to the credibility of the media and US democracy by the Russiagate lies is comparable with the psychological damage done to "American minds" by the Cold War. In the US and Western Europe, the Cold War was, more than anything else, a disinformation war waged by the intelligence services against their own populations. In the so-called Eastern Bloc, it was probably the same thing in reverse.

Journalists trained by the CIA

In 1953, *Allen Dulles*, brother of Secretary of State *John Foster Dulles*, took over as head of the CIA. Under Allen Dulles, manipulation of public opinion through the press became the most important of the agency's various political levers. Journalists were recruited for the CIA and planted "news" and "commentary" that was then picked up by other media as credible information. In turn, CIA agents were trained to assume roles as journalists.

> "It is an indisputable historical constant that the 'armament-war-reconstruction' complex is one of the strongest drivers of the Western economy, and that there is no longer any large industrial group that does not profit from it, in recent times especially the IT industry. The philosopher *Günther Anders* summed it up in the following sentence: 'Weapons are not made for wars. Wars are made for weapons.' "

This worked well until the signs that the press was infiltrated by secret service agents could no longer be concealed. In the early 1970s, CIA Director *William Colby* took the bull by the horns. He organised a "leak" to the media in which the CIA announced that it had discovered internal irregularities. Three dozen journalists were on the agency's payroll. The matter caused quite a stir and led to an investigation named after its leader, a senator from Idaho, *Frank Church*. *The Church Committee's* results were published in six volumes in 1976 and concealed more than they revealed. The accused journalists and publishers were not forced to testify. Later research by independent journalists found that it was not "several dozen" but more than 400 journalists who worked for the CIA. In 1963, former president *Harry Truman* wrote that the secret service had got completely out of hand: "When I founded the CIA, I never imagined that in peacetime it could be associated with obscure murder plots. I would like to see (…) its operational tasks terminated".[9]

continued on page 3

Venezuela and the future of Latin America

Editorial of the Mexican daily newspaper "La Jornada"

Yesterday [14 November 2025], Venezuelan President *Nicolás Maduro* called on the American people to reject *Trump's* plans for war and to take a leading role in this effort. He called on them to "stop the insane hand of the one who gives the order to bomb, kill, and wage war in South America and the Caribbean; stop the war, no to war!" One day before, at a rally in defence of Venezuela's sovereignty, the president had called on his counterpart Donald Trump not to lead the United States into an "endless war", not to start new unjust conflicts, "no more Libya, no more Afghanistan," alluding to the two nations most destroyed by US imperialism in this century.

The statements by the Chavista politician come against the backdrop that Washington is barely concealing the fact that the deployment of troops, aircraft, and warships to the Caribbean and Pacific coasts of South America, including its largest and most modern aircraft carrier, is in reality aimed at bringing about a change of government in Caracas.

So far, the strategy of the US hawks seems to be that the mere presence of their fleets, combined with the economic blockade, the million-dollar reward for "information leading to Maduro's arrest," and the constant threats from the White House, will trigger a coup d'état, which is to be made possible by a split within the ranks of the Bolivarian Army. However, direct military action, as suggested by the Venezuelan president, cannot be ruled out.

In this sense, it is alarming that high-ranking members of the US armed forces and the US government, as well as some of their former members and spokespeople for far-right organisations, are openly discussing and even calling for military intervention against Caracas. The public and blunt discussion of imperialist attacks is evidence for the damage that Trumpism has done to international law and diplomatic norms: When the leader of the world's greatest power openly talks about imposing his whims by force, he normalises barbarism and creates a general acceptance of it, so that even the worst atrocities are no longer a surprise for anyone.

In light of these facts, the extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances of at least 80 people carried out by Washington since early September appear to be a macabre attempt to test the international community's ability to act in the face of massive human rights violations. These are committed in broad daylight and presented as trophies of war by Trump and several members of his cabinet. Unfortunately, the isolation of critical voices against these practices and the inaction of international organizations that would be obliged to take action on this matter have shown the tycoon that he will effectively remain unpunished for his violations.

This is confirmed, for example, by the publication of a secret memorandum from the US Department of Justice, which shows that the Republican administration is aware of the fact that there is no legal basis for its operations against suspected drug boats. The only "justification" for this is based on Trump's idea that his country is at war with drug traffickers and that they can be considered as enemy combatants. This is an absurd notion, because for the war to actually take place legally, it must be approved by Congress, and even in that case, international humanitarian law sets limits on what can and cannot be done in an armed conflict.

For governments and citizens who are committed to peace and self-determination for all peoples, it is more urgent than ever to join forces in defence of Venezuela, regardless of their opinion about its president: What is at stake is not the fate of Chavism, but the threat of the return to the most brutal form of US neo colonialism in the region. •

Source: *La Jornada* of 15 November 2025, editorial; *https://www.jornada.com.mx/noticia/2025/11/15/editorial/venezuela-y-el-futuro-de-america-latina*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"'An end to 'regime change' …'"
continued from page 2

Assassination attempt on De Gaulle: The CIA under suspicion.

When Truman wrote this, several assassination attempts had been made on French President *Charles De Gaulle*, all of which he survived by sheer luck. De Gaulle was convinced that US intelligence was behind them. The French press uncovered links between Allen Dulles and French coup plotters. Diplomatic tensions became so unbearable that President *Kennedy* telephoned De Gaulle to assure him of his friendship and to obtain information: information about the machinations of his own secret service chief, Allen Dulles. De Gaulle had a vision of a "Europe des Patries," a Europe of fatherlands, which was to consist of peaceful cooperation between sovereign states from London to Moscow. This made the French leader a thorn in the side of the hawks in Washington. Because De Gaulle gave up the French colony of Algeria, the Americans sounded the alarm that De Gaulle wanted to throw Algeria to the communists.

President Truman could never have imagined how many wars and military coups would subsequently be justified based on "information from Western intelligence agencies" and how the public would be cheated in each case. According to conventional doctrine, intelligence agencies help the government to avert harm from the country. But they can also harm their own government. It is certainly simplistic and inaccurate to speak of a "deep state," a "state within a state" or a "military-industrial complex" as if it were a static, closed power bloc that has been pulling the strings unchanged for decades.

Within the US intelligence services, the FBI, and the Pentagon, repeatedly there have been conflicts and controversies over the correct political course. In the Ukraine war, for example, it has often been Pentagon generals who, in opposition to hardliners on both sides, have refused to supply Ukraine with missiles that can penetrate deep into Russian territory. President *George W. Bush* writes in his memoirs how he came into conflict with his own intelligence services when they concluded in 2007 Iran had stopped building a nuclear weapon.[10] When an attack with sarin, the infamous poison gas, took place in the Syrian war in 2013, President Obama decided at the last minute not to launch a military invasion because his intelligence services had informed him that they had no evidence that Syrian President *Assad* was responsible for the use of poison gas.

When the cuckoo in the nest is called 'the intelligence community'

So, even if the power bloc often succinctly referred to as the "deep state" is characterised by shifting alliances and a changing profile, that does not mean that it does not exist and that it is a product of conspiracy theories or Donald Trump's paranoia. It is an indisputable historical constant that the "armament-war-reconstruction" complex is one of the strongest drivers of the Western economy, and that there is no longer any large industrial group that does not profit from it, in recent times especially the IT industry. The philosopher *Günther Anders* summed it up in the following sentence: "Weapons are not made for wars. Wars are made for weapons."

continued on page 4

"'An end to 'regime change' …'"

continued from page 3

One example of this is the 1997 *Project for a New American Century*, PNAC, which aims to defend the global dominance of the US through military force.[11] It is the project of a foreign policy carried on by lobbyists from the energy and arms industries as a neo-colonial war policy. That the rough direction of this has not changed is shown by Overextending and unbalancing Russia," a study published in 2019 by the Rand Corporation, the Pentagon's most influential think tank.

Many analysts use the term "deep state" because they are convinced that there is an apparatus at work that is often connected to major media through secret, "underground" channels and can use these media to drive any government forward. Whether this apparatus is called a "state within a state" or a cuckoo in the nest makes no difference. In 2010, The Washington Post reported that there were 854,000 people in the US working at ten thousand different locations at the "national security" level of secrecy.[12]

The bitter feud between President Donald Trump and his intelligence services is therefore not a one-off occurrence. There is a system in place that dates back to the beginning of the Cold War. Allen Dulles hated John F. Kennedy. And vice versa, famously enough. The White House and the agency outwardly maintained a formal correctness, but the aging CIA chief was dismayed to see that the young president was unwilling to confront the Soviet Union and communism with the uncompromising military force that Dulles considered indispensable. After taking office, Kennedy tried out a policy of cohabitation between the blocs. He wanted to avoid military escalation and nuclear war but nevertheless allowed himself to be drawn into the Vietnam disaster.

In 1961, the CIA organised an attack on communist Cuba to overthrow *Fidel Castro* – the infamous Bay of Pigs invasion. Kennedy was not pleased. He wanted the invasion to appear to be an operation carried out by Cuban anti-communist rebels and publicly to deny his government's official involvement. Dulles, on the other hand, had pushed for massive military intervention by the US and had thus run into opposition from Kennedy. Consequently, the CIA chief tried a sledgehammer approach. He kept Kennedy in the dark about the operation's slim chances of success, hoping that if failure loomed, Kennedy would be forced to deploy the Air Force and Navy to avoid a global image disaster for the US. Kennedy did not fall into the trap and the Bay of Pigs operation failed. He paid for his resistance to the power bloc of his generals and the "intelligence community" – my interpretation – with his life in 1963.

One may see Donald Trump as a bluffer, a gambler, and a risk-taker, but his erratic course in foreign policy cannot be explained solely by such psychology. Like every one of his predecessors in office, Trump has to feed the aggressive cuckoo in the nest by playing the military strongman. Hence his foreign policy slalom between "America First" and military intervention. No US president has ever been able to escape these constraints. •

> "The question, however, is not whether *Trump* wants to turn his back on the role of global policeman, who presumes to lay down the rules of the road and break them at will, but whether the ruling power structures in the US will allow him to do so. The president of the United States is considered the most powerful man in the world, but he operates within a political enclosure that he finds upon taking office. It is an enclosure defined by an apparatus in which, as economist *Jeffrey Sachs* once put it, 'Wall Street controls the financial system, Big Oil controls the energy system, and the military-industrial lobby controls foreign policy.' The intelligence services are closely intertwined with these interest groups, and their most important tools are the media."

1 *https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/speeches-interviews/speeches-interviews-2025/4123-dni-gabbard-remarks-at-iiss-manama-dialogue-2025*
2 *https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R42738*
3 *https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/drohnenkrieg-obamas-toedliches-erbe-100.html*
4 *https://weltwoche.ch/story/fluch-der-karibik-2/*
5 *https://www.lantidiplomatico.it/dettnews-pino_arlacchi__la_grande_bufala_contro_il_venezuela_la_geopolitica_del_petrolio_travestita_da_lotta_alla_droga/5871_62413/*
6 *https://www.infosperber.ch/politik/welt/barry-seal-only-in-america/*
7 *https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/CIA_und_der_Drogenhandel*
8 *https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/russen-werden-dies-en-krieg-gewinnen-und-im-westen-stellt-man-sich-blind-und-redet-ueber-den-frieden-ld.1853460*
9 "Limit CIA Role to Intelligence", In: *The Washington Post* of 22 December 1963
10 *https://globalbridge.ch/die-wandmalereien-von-der-iranischen-atombombe/*
11 *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_for_the_New_American_Century*
12 *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Intelligence_Community*

First published in *GlobalBridge* on 16 November 2025.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Current Concerns

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

Subscribe to Current Concerns – The journal of an independent cooperative

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

Annual subscription rate of
CHF 40,-; Euro 30,-; USD 40,-; GBP 25,-
for the following countries:
Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

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

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

CH:	PostFinance (CHF):	87-644472-4	IBAN CH91 0900 0000 8764 4472 4	BIC POFICHBEXXX
CH:	PostFinance (Euro):	91-738798-6	IBAN CH83 0900 0000 9173 8798 6	BIC POFICHBEXXX
D:	Volksbank in der Region, Kto. 67 517 005, BLZ 6039131		IBAN DE09 6039 1310 0067 5170 05	BIC GENODES1VBH
A:	Raiffeisen Landesbank, Kto. 1-05.713.599, BLZ 37000		IBAN AT55 3700 0001 0571 3599	BIC RVVGAT2B

Francesca Albanese: UN Security Council resolution a violation of Palestinian right of self-determination and UN Charter

Francesca Albanese (picture AHRC)

GENEVA (19 November 2025) – A UN expert today expressed serious concern with the Security Council's adoption of Resolution 2803, warning that it runs counter to the Palestinian right to self-determination, consolidates Israel's unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory, including ongoing unlawful policies and practices, and therefore risks legitimating ongoing mass violence.

"I welcome the UN Security Council's renewed attention on Gaza and the urgent need for a permanent ceasefire," said *Francesca Albanese**, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

"But I am deeply perplexed. Despite the horrors of the last two years and the ICJ's clear jurisprudence, the Council has chosen not to ground its response in the very body of law it is obliged to uphold: international human rights law, including the right of self-determination, the law governing the use of force, international humanitarian law, and the UN Charter."

"Article 24(2) of the UN Charter makes clear that in discharging its duties, the Council 'shall act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.'"

"Rather than charting a pathway toward ending the occupation and ensuring Palestinian protection, the resolution risks entrenching external control over Gaza's governance, borders, security, and reconstruction. The resolution betrays the people it claims to protect."

The resolution was adopted on Monday (17 November) with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions from Russia and China.

Albanese stressed that Resolution 2803 replaces clear legal obligations towards Palestinians with a "security-first, capital-driven model of foreign control" that entrenches existing power asymmetries. "The mandate to 'secure borders,' 'protect civilians,' and 'decommission weapons,' focuses almost exclusively on disarming Palestinian armed groups while doing nothing to end the root cause of the violence: Israel's ongoing unlawful siege, occupation, racial segregation and apartheid, and ethnic cleansing," she said.

"A military force answering to a so-called 'Board of Peace' chaired by the President of the United States,[1] an active party to this conflict that has continually provided military, economic and diplomatic support to the illegal occupying Power, is not legal," the expert said. "It is a brazen attempt to impose, by threat of continued force against a virtually defenceless population, US and Israeli interests, plain and simple."

"Essentially, it will leave Palestine[2] in the hands of a puppet administration, assigning the United States, which shares

continued on page 6

* Ms *Francesca Albanese* is an international lawyer, specialised in human rights and the Middle East. Since May 2022, she has served as the *United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967* (OPT). An affiliate scholar at the *Institute for the Study of International Migration* at Georgetown University, Albanese is the author of prestigious publications, including *Palestinian Refugees in International Law* (Oxford University Press, 2020), considered as a landmark in the literature on the subject, and more recently *J'Accuse* (Fuoriscena, 2024).

A comment by Alfred de Zayas*

Alfred de Zayas (picture ma)

Professor *Francesca Albanese* is right. The Security Council is betraying the letter and spirit of the UN Charter, notably its terms of reference laid down in article 24, which stipulates "In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf. In discharging these duties, the Security Council shall act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations," which are laid out in articles 1 and 2 and build on the core principles of the self-determination of ALL peoples and the principle of sovereign equality of States. The Organization must coherently promote peace, human rights and development, including by ensuring the enforcement of ICJ and ICC orders. The Trump plan tries to circumvent the ICJ and ICC and render them irrelevant.

It goes without saying that there must be a complete end to the Israeli murder of civilians. The politicians and military concerned must be held accountable. The *International Criminal Court* is currently seized of a number of cases concerning the genocide and complicity of numerous States in the genocide. The 2024 ICC arrest warrants against *Netanyahu* and *Gallant* await enforcement. The only legitimate and durable peace scenario in the Middle East requires full implementation of the three advisory opinions of the *International Court of Justice* and of the orders in the pending case South Africa v. Israel. There must be immediate humanitarian aid to the Palestinian victims and reparation for the crime of genocide, which has been thoroughly documented by the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry under former High Commissioner *Navi Pillay*, by the Gaza Peoples Tribunal under Professor *Richard Falk*, by *Amnesty International* and *Human Rights Watch*. The Trump Diktat is tantamount to abandoning binding obligations vis a vis the Palestinian People. It constitutes egregious disrespect of the concept of the rule of law and the erga omnes obligation to implement international law and human rights treaties. It insults the many institutions that have been working for decades to achieve the self-determination of the Palestinian People and the establishment of a Palestinian State. The right of self-determination of peoples is non-negotiable. Moreover, there must be penal consequences for the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide perpetrated by Israel. Everything else is a fraud on humanity. *The authority and credibility of the United Nations has been significantly reduced, and humanity is the poorer for it. Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* [Who will watch the watchmen?] *Iuvenalis*, 6th Satire, vers. 347–348. •

* *Alfred de Zayas* is a professor of law at the *Geneva School of Diplomacy* and served as an independent expert on international order for the United Nations from 2012 to 2018. He is the author of twelve books, including *Building a Just World Order* (2021), *Countering Mainstream Narratives* (2022) and *The Human Rights Industry* (2021, *Clarity Press*).

"Francesca Albanese: UN Security ..."
continued from page 5

complicity in the genocide,[3] as the new manager of the open-air prison that Israel[4] has already established."

"If the OPT, including Gaza, requires an international presence, it should be mandated to supervise Israel's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, in line with the ICJ's 2024 advisory opinion and General Assembly resolution," the Special Rapporteur said. "Such a presence should protect civilians, guarantee the cessation of hostilities, prevent further displacement, ensure accountability for grave breaches, and support the Palestinian people in exercising their right to freely determine their political future."

Albanese warned that as long as Israel remains physically present in any portion of the OPT, including the Gaza Strip, it is an internationally wrongful act that all States, including the United States, are bound not to recognise, aid or assist."

"The ICJ was clear: self-determination is an inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the UN and all States have an obligation to assist in its realisation. This can only begin with the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel's unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory. Replacing an abusive trustee with another is not self-determination, it is unlawful".

The Special Rapporteur said that Palestinians do not need a surveillance force over the ruins of their destroyed homeland. "They need a protective international presence that ends Israel's unlawful occupation, stops the genocide and restores their capacity for self-governance. Protection means lifting the blockade, ensuring unhindered humanitarian access, supporting Palestinian-led governance, guaranteeing the right of return and enforcing international law in full," she said.

Albanese also warned that the plan has already been used by some States as a "political pressure valve" to suspend discussions on sanctions and other concrete measures necessary to halt serious violations. "States cannot ignore serious breaches of peremptory norms because a political plan offers temporary diplomatic convenience."

"I therefore urge all states, especially those that voted in favour of the resolution, to interpret and implement it in a manner consistent with binding international law," she said. "To sideline international law renders the UN complicit, undermines the UN Charter and can only lead to "intensifying human carnage".

"This is an existential moment," Albanese said. "The international community must not allow Gaza's future - or the future of the Palestinian people to be decided without their agency and consent. Only an approach rooted in justice, legality, and self-determination can lead to genuine peace." •

---

1 *https://www.commondreams.org/tag/united-states*
2 *https://www.commondreams.org/tag/palestine*
3 *https://www.commondreams.org/tag/genocide*
4 *https://www.commondreams.org/tag/israel*

Source: *https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/11/un-security-council-resolution-violation-palestinian-right-self* of 19 November 2025

"An indelible stain on our collective conscience"

by Francesca Albanese

"[...] The atrocities we have witnessed over the past two years which are the escalation of what has been denounced but for decades by international Palestinian and Israeli human rights experts will remain an indelible stain on our collective conscience particularly as Europeans and on this institution's future. Not only has the European Union failed to act as a regional organisation capable of enforcing even the most basic political measures to stop the most atrocious crimes and this despite the mass upheavals across the continent led by ordinary people. But the lack of action of the European Union has been met with active complicity and has become the alibi of member states to violate their international law obligations which are not superseded by EU laws and policies.

[...]

Through the "Horizon" program alone since 2014, the European Union has significantly financed Israeli entities including military institutions such as the Israeli aerospace industries, *Rafael advanced defense system* and *Elbit system* and the Israeli military of ministry of defense itself. European Union's financial backing goes further. Since 1981, the *European Investment Bank* has financed Israeli entities with 2.7 billion including 760 million in loans to Bank *Leomi* which is listed in the UN United Nations database of companies involved in settlement related activities. No, no need to remind that these are crimes. And the economist ties and economic ties do not stop here. Since 2022, the European Union and Egypt developed a memorandum of understanding with Israel for the supply of gas via Egyptian infrastructures overlooking evidence that Israeli military enforces and naval blockade to protect the pipelines. Through my investigation, I identified a number of major corporations are quartered in EU member states instrumental in financing, arming, and profiting from Israel's atrocities. And last but not least, the military sector remains a central pillar of the EU Israel cooperation. During the genocide, arms exports and imports from EU member states to Israel have increased and the European Union has itself supported Israel's military apparatus investing in technologies tested on Palestinians to fortify its own fortress Europe with *Frontex* deploying drones produced by Israeli companies in the sea of death that we have turned the Mediterranean into. One of the most disturbing outcomes of all this is that Europe is willing to ignore egregious human rights violations in order to perfect the tools for its own violent policies. At the same time, the European Union has been unable or unwilling to act when confronted with sanctions imposed by the United States on European citizens, myself included. I'm not the only one. [...]".

Source: Excerpt from Francesca Albanese's contribution to a briefing in the European Parliament on "Palestine, international law and the role of Europe" on 19 November 2025 (transcript);

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhT5qmNt49U

Current Concerns

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

Publisher: Zeit-Fragen Cooperative
Editor: Erika Vögeli, Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller
Address: Current Concerns,
P.O. Box 247 CH-9602 Bazenheid
Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50
Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51
E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

Subscription details:
published regularly electronically as PDF file

Annual subscription rate of
SFr. 40,-, € 30,-, £ 25,-, $ 40,-
for the following countries:
Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hongkong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA

Annual subscription rate of
SFr. 20,-, € 15,-, £ 12,50, $ 20,-
for all other countries.

Account: PostFinance:
IBAN CH91 0900 0000 8764 4472 4
BIC POFICHBEXXX

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

Germany is to be brought into line: towards "war readiness"

And who gets racked and ruined

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

On 30 January 1933, when *Adolf Hitler* was appointed Chancellor of the German Reich by the President of the German Reich, *Paul von Hindenburg*, there was still a largely freely elected parliament, various parties and independent associations, a constitution with fundamental rights and separation of powers, and besides Hitler only two National Socialists in the new government of the Reich. In early August 1934, after the death of Hindenburg, Hitler seized his official powers as a preliminary step towards a totalitarian dictatorship, proclaiming himself "Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich". Fundamental rights had already been suspended. Most communists and other opposition forces had been interned in prisons and concentration camps or even murdered. Parliament had deprived itself of its legislative powers. All parties except the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party, the Nazis) were banned and all major associations fell into the hands of the NSDAP. Most officials in the two major Christian churches came to terms with the regime. The NSDAP had seized power in all states and municipalities; there was no longer any separation of powers. The media were subject to the Propaganda Minister of the German Reich *Goebbels*. Even internal opposition within the NSDAP had been eliminated... Germany had become a Nazi state in which the NSDAP and, above all, Hitler called the shots. Historians refer to this process as "Gleichschaltung" (enforced conformity).

But how was this possible – with a people of such rich and diverse cultural history, in a country widely regarded as civilised? How was it possible that, in just over a year and a half, a state that was at least constitutionally democratic could become a brutal dictatorship?

The answer is not simple. But the principle of power and violence employed by the National Socialists without any scruples and with perfidy, and the fatal reactions of the people to it, certainly played a decisive role!

Then and now

What is the situation today, more than 90 years later? *Friedrich Merz* is not Adolf Hitler, and the bloc of parties in the German Bundestag that agree on key issues, ranging from the CSU to the CDU, the SPD, *Bündnis 90/The Greens* and *Die Linke*, is not the NSDAP. Today, there are no concentration camps or open state murders. But there is harsh defamation, various forms of censorship, social exclusion and other forms of "structural violence" (*Johan Galtung*).

> "This is a policy that not only goes against what every country and every human being needs most: *peace*. It also wastes hundreds of billions of Euros – money that is lacking elsewhere."

And as far as enforced conformity is concerned: Since *Boris Pistorius* two years ago for the first time demanded that Germany must become "fit for war" (by 2029), not only have all the parties in the bloc joined in, but also all the major associations and – what is deeply sobering – the two major Christian churches. In mid-November, the *Protestant Church in Germany* (EKD) also joined in. The new publication on this subject, with the beautiful title "World in Disorder – Just Peace in Sight. Protestant Peace Ethics in the Face of New Challenges"[1], does so with sweet words, but in principle entirely in line with the government's position. In the 1980s, the Protestant Church in Germany was still very active in shaping the German peace movement.

And woe betide anyone who sees things differently

In Germany, politicians from the AfD party are currently feeling the brunt of this. The AfD is divided on the issue of "war readiness". One part of the party is singing from the same hymn sheet as the other parties in the bloc. Another part, mainly from eastern Germany, the former GDR, openly states that Germany is not being threatened by Russia, hence there is no reason for such delusional armament efforts, and that it would be better, even vital, for Germany to help end the war in Ukraine (provoked by the West) as quickly as possible through diplomatic means and to rebuild good neighbourly relations with Russia.

This does not sit well with the parties in the bloc. After all, the AfD entered the Bundestag as the largest opposition party with more than 20 per cent of the vote. According to current polls, it would get almost 25 per cent of the vote in Germany as a whole, and in eastern Germany it has been the party with the highest approval rating among voters for some time. None of this says anything about the overall political quality of the AfD. But this party is a thorn in the side of the parties in the bloc – they fear truly different political opinions and fear losing power.

Question time in the Bundestag

A *question time* in the German Bundestag on 5 November 2025, requested by the CDU/CSU and SPD, with the telling title "Effects of AfD's relationship with Russia on Germany's security interests – Not patriotism, but a possible threat to our security"[2] demonstrated the new slogan against the AfD: The AfD endangered Germany's security because there are AfD politicians with good contacts to Russia, who even travel to Russia, and because the AfD submits so many parliamentary questions on security-related issues. The AfD is said to be serving Russia, acting as a kind of fifth column for Germany's greatest enemy.

The AfD was "a sleeper cell loyal to Russia" and allowed itself to be "led around by the Kremlin on a leash," according to CDU MP *Heinrichmann*. It was a "henchman of Russian interests" and "a veritable danger to our democracy," according to SPD MP *Eichwede*. The AfD had "influential agents of foreign powers in its ranks" and was "the Kremlin's Trojan horse," according to former SPD minister *Hubertus Heil*. It is "keeping the gates wide open for the aggressor Putin," according to *Green Party* member *Irene Mihalic*. "Let's no longer stand by and watch as enemies of the constitution destroy our country with Putin's support." Germany must "remain defiant against *Putin* and his helpers in the Bundestag," said Green Party member *Robert Wagner*. And also, *Jan Köstering* of the *Left Party* supported this: "It is important to address how the AfD is using its influence to serve Russia and Putin."

Enemy stereotypes and warmongering …

Significant about the question time debate was not its content. The parties had nothing substantial to offer here. But the AfD also failed to take the opportunity to counter the anti-Russian hysteria with

continued on page 8

Globi and Democracy

by Eliane Perret

Book Review

What is democracy? Who invented it? How does it work? Not only for *Globi* (see box on page 10), but for many children (and adults), our direct democracy is associated with many questions and uncertainties. "Magic formula", "separation of powers", "sovereignty", "federalism", "concordance"? ... What do these terms mean? The book "Globi and Democracy" provides entertaining and easy-to-understand answers to these questions and explains what gets to the heart of our country. "How can you get children interested in politics?" *Marc Zollinger*, the author of the book, was asked in an interview. "By telling them a story and taking them on a journey through Switzerland with a familiar and popular children's comic character," was his answer. The result is a non-fiction book, illustrated by *Samuel Glättli*, in the well-presented Globi Wissen series.[1]

The first edition was published in spring 2018. It quickly sold out and was reprinted in 2023 – the year of the 175th anniversary of the Swiss Federal Constitution – revised and supplemented with current facts and a focus on how we interact with each other.

A journey through Swiss democracy

Readers accompany Globi on his journey of discovery through direct democracy.

ISBN 978-3-85703-133-5

He is supported by his companion *Helvetia*, who symbolises Switzerland and explains everything important to him. She travels with Globi through Switzerland, taking him to important places and introducing him to people who were significant in the history of our country and the development of Swiss democracy. We visit the Rütli meadow and meet *William Tell*, then travel on to Aarau, our country's first capital. This is followed by a visit to today's Federal Palace in Bern. Finally, we learn interesting facts about the Landsgemeinde – the most direct form of democracy – as well as the significance and purpose of municipal assemblies. Helvetia arranges interviews for Globi with real and fictional government officials, who answer his questions about Swiss democracy. Together with Globi, we learn how our system of government is structured and what is needed for peaceful coexistence in a direct democracy. Zollinger's book clarifies in a varied and entertaining way what makes our country so unique and fundamentally different from other democracies.

For children and adults

"Globi is a kind of ambassador for democracy. He builds a bridge between children and abstract concepts," said *Moria Zürrer* of the *New Helvetic Society* (which commissioned the book) in an interview. "The book about democracy is not only intended for children, but also for their parents," Zürrer continued, because "it is not enough to learn about democracy from books; democracy must be lived every day. In order to participate in democratic processes, you have to know about democracy and understand its rules."2 That's why it's best for children to be accompanied by an adult on their "journey through Switzerland" with Globi and Helvetia. This gives everyone the opportuni-

continued on page 10

"Germany is to be brought ..."

continued from page 7

factual arguments. What was particularly striking was the severity of the attacks against the AfD and the unmistakable enemy stereotypes and warmongering. Anyone who followed the debate or read about it will have noticed that any criticism of Germany's war course is unwelcome and should be silenced.

This is a policy that not only goes against what every country and every human being needs most: peace. It also wastes hundreds of billions of Euros – money that is lacking elsewhere.

... even at the expense of children

On 12 November 2025, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) presented its annual report on the situation of children in Germany.[3] The press release accompanying the report states:

"The new UNICEF report on the situation of children in Germany in 2025 shows that far too many children continue to fall behind in terms of their opportunities for a good upbringing and future prospects. More than a million children are lacking the essential prerequisites for participation in social life and for later professional success. […] The unequal material and social conditions in families affect all areas of children's lives. The gap between the best-supported and the most disadvantaged children is growing. […] A considerable number of children in Germany are affected by the concrete consequences of poverty. More than one million children have been classified as deprived, meaning they have had to go without basic necessities such as the replacement of worn-out clothing, a heated home or warm meals.

Forty-four per cent of children at risk of poverty live in overcrowded homes. At least 130,000 children are homeless and housed in municipal accommodation. […] In international comparison, the proportion of children whose basic needs cannot be met for financial reasons is significantly higher in Germany than in some other European countries. […] Progress in combating child poverty in Germany has been stagnating for years. […] There is a great need for action to ensure that as many children and young people as possible have a good start in life and good prospects for their future." (unauthorized translation)

However, Chancellor Merz said: "The welfare state as we know it today is no longer financially viable given our economic performance."[4]

Is that really all German politics has to offer?

PS If, in the coming weeks and months, an American-Russian agreement was really bringing an end to the proxy war in Ukraine, Germany and the other members of the Western warring faction will be even more isolated in the world, and the impasse of Germany's war course will become apparent to all. •

---

1 *https://www.ekd.de/friedensdenkschrift-2025-91393.htm*

2 *https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/21/21036.pdf#P.3978*, page 3978ff.

3 *https://www.unicef.de/informieren/aktuelles/presse/-/unicef-bericht-zur-lage-der-kinder-in-deutschland-2025/385504*

4 *https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/merz-sozialstaat-von-heute-nicht-mehr-finanzierbar-100.html* of 24 August 2025

Unrealistic wishful thinking

From the Consultation on the Framework Agreement 2.0 Switzerland-EU

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

Apparently, some Swiss citizens have not fully grasped the principle of institutional adoption of EU legislation. Switzerland would be basically obligated to adopt new EU law and could be penalised with unknown compensatory measures if the Federal Council, parliament, or the people reject individual EU standards. Such a system is incompatible with the Swiss understanding of the state and with the direct democratic rights of its citizens. Period. Anyone who highlights individual exceptions as major achievements of the Swiss negotiating team or speculates on a democratically compatible domestic implementation is distracting from the essential part.

In the consultation procedure, which ended at the end of October, cantons, political parties, and associations have taken preliminary positions. In the time up to the referendum – which will presumably be held in 2027 – a course correction is still possible. While the *Social Democratic Party* (SP), the *Green Party*, the *Free Democratic Party* (FDP) and the *Green Liberals* generally agree with the package, the *Swiss People's Party* (SVP) rejects it for reasons of state policy.

Why does the trade association not have the guts to say a forthright "no"?

Mind you, some participants in the consultation process, such as the *Swiss Farmers' Union*[1] and the *Swiss Trade Association* (sgv) are uneasy about being constrained to implement an unfiltered adoption of EU standards and ECJ rulings. In its response to the consultation, the sgv writes in no uncertain terms: "However, the institutional rules of the new agreement package are being critically judged, and approval is only conceivable under certain conditions because they increase bureaucracy, strengthen the administration, and weaken the democratic influence of the Swiss people and SMEs."[2] This realisation should actually be enough for a clear "no" to the framework agreement. Why do the SME representatives not dare to speak out? They are, admittedly, expressing their unease to some extent by demanding a mandatory referendum including the majority of cantons.

According to the Swiss Trade Association the existing Bilateral Agreements I and II simply do bring numerous advantages to Swiss SMEs, "especially market participation via the Single Market Agreements and the free movement of persons." As if the bilateral agreements could not just as easily be continued and developed without an institutional framework – but on an equal footing. Brussels, in any case, will hardly be interested in ending the free movement of persons or transit traffic through the Alps.

A huge bureaucratic apparatus for the sake of EU law adoption "measuring up to democratic standards"?

Even the Centre Party is extremely reluctant to grasp the principle of institutional law adoption. Otherwise, it would not claim in its consultation response that everything would be fine with a Federal Council "monitoring concept". When the EU plans new rules, the "relevant parliamentary committees, the cantons, and the public […] must be informed about EU legal developments at an early stage" so that they have the opportunity to "identify controversial EU legal developments early on, discuss them politically, and provide the Federal Council with guidelines for action."[3]

As if the EU Commission and the ECJ would take note of our differentiated federalist and democratic processes! Indeed, centrist politicians from the mountain cantons even believe that Brussels might give its approval to Switzerland's independent regulation of water royalties and property rights concerning hydroelectric power plants (Die Mitte. *Consultation Response*, pp. 19f.). The Trade Association, in turn, would like the federal government to provide "guarantees for democratic participation and measures to relieve the burden on SMEs."

Unrealistic wishful thinking over and over again! In the authoritarian EU system, the European Commission and the European Court of Justice dictate the terms. The idea that a national parliament or the member states could issue "guidelines" to their governments vis-à-vis Brussels' supremacy is beyond absurd. When it comes to "decision shaping" regarding the creation of new EU law, the head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) might, at best, sit alongside 27 ministers from EU countries, but would have virtually no say. The pro forma involvement of the *Conference of Cantonal Governments* (KdK) and the parliamentary foreign policy committees does not, in reality, protect us from significant legal changes slipping through and becoming Swiss law directly – not to mention direct democracy. Surely the Swiss cantons, parties, and associations cannot want this!

"It is not enough for the people's rights to be enshrined in the constitution; they must also count in practice. And that is not possible if we are institutionally tied to the EU. Reading the explanatory notes to the EU treaties clearly shows that the Federal Council is saying things that are not true. They make believe that everything will continue as before. Anyone who supports the treaties would logically have to say that they consider direct democracy antiquated." (*Oliver Zimmer*)[4] •

continued on page 10

What we would be in for with the institutionalisation of the bilateral agreements

A recent example: In August 2023, a serious train accident occurred in the Gotthard Base Tunnel, fortunately without fatalities or injuries. A broken wheel caused a freight train to derail, severely damaging the tunnel. The repairs took 13 months. Cost: 150 million Swiss francs. Subsequently, the federal authorities conducted thorough investigations with the aim of preventing similar accidents in the future. In June 2025, the *Swiss Transportation Safety Investigation Board* (STSB) published its report. Based on this, the *Federal Office of Transport* (FOT) ordered stricter controls for rail freight transport on 11 September 2025.[1]

One would take this for a normal procedure in a sovereign state. Switzerland bears all the practical and financial consequences of this accident; it has the sole right to decide on adequate safety measures within its territory. However, the European Commission sees things quite differently: they immediately complained that "a national rather than a Europe-wide approach" was "not in the interest of its rail sector."[2]

Under the current bilateral agreements, the Brussels bureaucracy can only express its displeasure with Switzerland's independent regulation – but with the institutional treaty package, it would take the legislative power out of our hands. Is this worth it?

[1] *"BAV beschliesst Massnahmen für sicheren Güterverkehr (FOT decides on measures for safe freight transport.)" Media release of 11 September 2025*

[2] *"EU befürchtet Störungen im Güterverkehr wegen Schweizer Regeln. (EU fears disruptions in freight transport due to Swiss rules.)" Keystone-SDA of 27 October 2025*

Comments on Swiss neutrality

Indulging in war rhetoric or defending neutrality

Dr. phil. René Roca, Research Institute for Direct Democracy

In the ongoing debate surrounding Swiss neutrality and the *neutrality initiative* that has been launched, emeritus international law experts and former ambassadors are also weighing in and attempting to dismantle Swiss neutrality. They join the ranks of those who bow to the zeitgeist and indulge in war rhetoric that will inevitably drag Europe into the abyss. Beyond Russophobia and anti-Americanism, the neutral position is the only moral one and requires a deeper reflection. It focuses on the conflict and seeks peace. International law experts and Swiss ambassadors should know that the right to neutrality cannot simply be dismissed as "outdated" and replaced by the UN Charter. They repeatedly claim that this charter contains an "absolute prohibition of aggression and violence". They deliberately overlook the two exceptions: firstly, the "right of individual or collective self-defence" (Art. 51). Today, every warmonger claims this right for themselves and incorporates it into their logic of war. On the other hand, the Security Council's right to use armed force (Art. 39ff.). The Security Council thus assumes the role of a "world judge," relegating the other countries – i.e., the UN General Assembly – to the status of compliant followers. This cannot possibly be the basis for neutral country. The law on neutrality can at best be supplemented in consultation with the signatory states, but remains irreplaceable for neutral countries.

The *neutrality initiative* aims to strengthen this moral position and expose the prevailing unspeakable logic of war. Therefore the initiative must be accepted in the upcoming vote, even if Switzerland is criticised from all sides as a result. As a neutral country, it must endure this for the sake of peace. •

"Globi and Democracy"
continued from page 8

ty to reflect on what previous generations have achieved and how we can preserve this globally unique gem. For teachers, the book can serve as an important source of ideas for lessons on Swiss history, far removed from ideology or contemporary narratives. Knowledge of Swiss history, along with discussions about what it takes to live together in peace, provide an important educational foundation and are significant in the formation of a child's identity and emotional development. Such encounters and discussions can become milestones in children's development: they feel taken seriously, realise that people believe in them, and sense that their contribution to community will be important now and in the future. •

[1] Zollinger, Marc; Glättli, Samuel. *Globi und die Demokratie* (Globi and Democracy). Globi Verlag, Zurich 2023. Translations into the other national languages and English are planned.

[2] Beti, Luca. Globi erklärt Kindern die Demokratie (Globi explains democracy to children). https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/kultur/deardemocracy_globi-erklaert-kindern-die-demokratie/44399144

Robert Lips (1912–1973), the inventor of Globi

ep. When *Robert Lips* created an advertising poster for "Schaffhauser Wolle" in 1932, *Ignatius Karl Schiele*, advertising director at the *Globus* department store, took notice of him. Schiele gave Lips the opportunity to design a poster to mark the 25th anniversary of *Globus*. This marked the beginning of a long-standing cooperation between the two. Although Lips had studied architecture at the Technical College in Winterthur, he subsequently turned his attention to his artistic passion for painting and drawing, caricatures and sculptures. It is little known that he also created cartoons for magazines such as *Zürcher Illustrierte*, *Sport* and *Nebelspalter* (a Swiss satirical magazine), as well as illustrations for books that were important in Switzerland. In 1932, Lips and Schiele jointly developed the idea of *Globi* as an advertising character for the department store. After many drafts, Globi was "born" as we know him today: half human, half parrot, with a yellow beak, beret and checked trousers. With Globi, Lips had created a Swiss classic that has undergone hardly any visual changes in the 90 years since its creation – a testament to the quality of Robert Lips' artistic work.

From 1938 onwards, at least one new Globi book was published each year, with four-line verses accompanying each illustration on the opposite page. Globi became a favourite for many children. Even in 1943, during the war, 90,000 Globi books were sold. In 1966, "Globi und Robi und ihr unterhaltsamer Zoo" (Globi and Robi and their entertaining zoo) was published, the 33rd and officially last volume that Robert Lips drew for *Globi Publishers*.

It was not easy to find a successor who could take over Robert Lips' drawing style. Illustrators faced the challenge of familiarising themselves with Robert Lips' drawing style. They mastered this task, and today only experts can spot differences in the design of Globi. He remains a cross-generational figure and the protagonist of countless adventures that children can experience with him. By February 2025, 99 picture books had been published. They have been among the best-selling children's books for several generations; to date, over 9 million books have been sold. Since January 2007, *Globi Publishers* has been part of *Orell Füssli Publishers*.

Sources:

Robert Lips' homepage; https://www.cyranos.ch/lips01.htm and homepage of the Globi Publishers; https://globi.ch/ueber-globi

"Unrealistic wishful thinking"
continued from page 9

[1] See "Swiss Farmers' Union: Securing agricultural sovereignty with the EU agreement?" In: *Current Concerns* No 23 of 4 November 2025 *https://www.zeit-fragen.ch/en/archives/2025/nr-22-14-oktober-2025-1/schweizer-bauernverband-sicherung-der-landwirtschaftlichen-souveraenitaet-mit-dem-eu-vertrag*

[2] "Vorstand des Gewerbeverbands beurteilt EU-Verträge kritisch und empfiehlt eine Abstimmung mit Ständemehr (Trade Association Executive Board critically assesses EU treaties and recommends a vote with a majority of cantons." *Press release* of 17 October 2025

[3] Die Mitte. "Vernehmlassung: Paket 'Stabilisierung und Weiterentwicklung der Beziehungen Schweiz–EU' – Bilaterale III (Consultation: Package 'Stabilising and Further Development of the Bilateral Approach - Relations between Switzerland and the EU' – Bilateral Agreements III.)" Summary. 29 October 2025

[4] Fontana, Katharina. "Oliver Zimmer: 'Es entwickelt sich eine soziale Zweiteilung in der Schweiz – man muss nicht Sozialist sein, um das zu erkennen (A social divide is developing in Switzerland – you don't have to be a socialist to see that.')" In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 21 October 2025

"The atomic bomb and the human being"

Reflections on Hiroshima from the perspective of Swiss neutrality

by Beat Kissling

A wave of indignation swept through the ranks of numerous Swiss politicians around two years ago – fuelled by the media – when the then Swiss Federal President *Alain Berset* spoke in an NZZ interview of a "war frenzy" that he perceived in "certain circles". At the time, the issue was about Switzerland's stance on arms exports abroad. These are subject to the legal requirement that Swiss weapons sold abroad may not be resold to any country at war. In connection with the war in the Ukraine, the Swiss Federal Council had come under enormous pressure at home and abroad to relax the relevant law and allow exports to countries at war. This would have required to make Swiss neutrality more "flexible", an opportunistic stance that now seems to be widespread among Swiss politicians from left to right. Here are the exact words Berset used to defend the ban and the context in which he spoke of the "war frenzy":

> *"I understand and respect that other countries have a different stance. But Switzerland's position must be respected, too. And I also believe that we will be understood if we explain how our position came about. It is based on our commitment to peace, to humanitarian law and, where possible, to mediation. We are the depositary of the Geneva Convention, the ICRC and the UN. And this special role of Switzerland is reflected in our laws, including those concerning the export of arms."*

He then said, referring to the pressure exerted on Switzerland to finally allow arms exports:

> *"The current climate is reminiscent of the climate at the beginning of the First World War. At that time, the prevailing opinion was that so much tension and frustration was around, that could only be discharged by war – and many people were enthusiastic about this idea."*

When asked about the parallels with today, Berset said:

> *"I can still sense this war frenzy today in certain circles. And I am very concerned about that. Because this feeling is based on a short-term view. We must always think long-term: what kind of shared future do we want on this continent?" (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 11 March 2023)*

The presidents of almost all Federal Council parties were shocked by Berset's statement. His own party colleagues, who are otherwise always keen on taking a sceptical or even hostile stance towards the military, distanced themselves wordily from their Federal President and spoke, at best, of a misguided choice of words, with some even calling it a gift to *Putin*.

Was what Berset said really so far-fetched? With his words, he passionately defended Swiss neutrality as an expression of a commitment to peace and described the mood in Europe, the willingness to continue to let people die in Ukraine and to accept war in Europe as a possibility at all, as highly problematic.

The term "war frenzy" refers to an attitude towards war that is rightly cause for concern since it trivialises the reality of war, just as it was the case before the First World War. Alain Berset has issued a warning to all those who have lost their abhorrence of war and who are engaging in a rhetoric that deeply contradicts Switzerland's neutrality. Neutrality is a concept of international relations that firmly rejects any form of dominance and any tendency towards violent conflict resolution, and that is exclusively committed to promoting and mediating peace and to fulfil humanitarian missions in aid of victims. The ethical dimension of a country's neutrality as a service to peace seems to have fallen victim to amnesia in recent decades. Alain Berset is obviously one or the few politicians in Switzerland who is still aware of the role and significance of Swiss neutrality in this sense. Warnings against barbarism and the horrors of war have become rare in the so-called civilized world, with a few exceptions, as the following example shows.

"Never again Hiroshima and Nagasaki" – a beacon for humanity

In 2012, I came across an exhibition in the foyer of the University of Iceland in Reykjavik that moved me deeply. It was called "The Atomic Bomb and the human being" and consisted of 40 framed posters with images and texts documenting the horrific consequences of the atomic bomb. They showed the unimaginable extent of destruction, the enormous number of charred corpses, images of dying people exposed to radiation trying to find relief in a river, and much more. As we learned, the exhibition was conceived by *Nihon Hidankyo* ("Council of Japanese Victims of Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs"), the Japanese association of atomic bomb victims founded in 1956, with the aim of keeping the memory of this war crime alive and of warning as many people as possible about the devastating consequences of this murderous weapon. Last year, *Nihon Hidankyo* was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize because the organization gives survivors a voice and has worked tirelessly to this day to outlaw the atomic bomb.

After my visit to Iceland, I tried to persuade the teaching staff at a cantonal grammar school to show the exhibition to our pupils. My intention to engage the pupils in a discussion about the causes and consequences of war and to sensitize them to the horrors of war, met with little enthusiasm. The argument was that the images and content were too brutal. A few years later, after all, an opportunity arose to let the pupils reflect on the catastrophe in Hiroshima: a colleague suggested showing a documentary film depicting the bitter reality of the *hibakusha* (atomic bomb victims) and their deeply traumatic experiences.

"When the Sun Fell from the Sky"

First broadcasted in 2015, the documentary When the Sun Fell from the Sky by Japanese-Swiss author *Aya Domenig* shows the crime of the atomic bombing in a factual yet deeply moving way. Domenig begins by recounting her family's perspective. Her grandfather was a doctor at the Red Cross Hospital in Hiroshima. Although he was not in the city when the bomb was dropped at 8:15 am on 6 August 1945, he arrived shortly afterwards and remained there continuously for ten days without having time to notify his wife. The events in the film are narrated including numerous conversations with Domenig's grandmother, who tells her story from memory to her grandchild. Aya Domenig, who lives in Switzerland, had visited her grandmother just before the Fukushima disaster (2011) to hear her eyewitness account of the consequences of the atomic bomb. By then, her grandfather had long since died from the effects of radiation.

The grandmother recounted that her husband returned home completely exhausted after these ten days in Hiroshima, without saying a word about his experiences. It was only later that he once confided to his granddaughter that during those ten days, surrounded by countless dead people, he had tried to save at least those who were still alive. He added: "Those who weren't there and didn't ex-

continued on page 12

"'The atomic bomb …'"
continued from page 11

perience it themselves cannot understand" – and laughed and cried at the same time.

The film also features a group of elderly ladies who worked as nurses in Hiroshima. They are very emotional as they recall their memories and watch a film about their hospital from the time after the bombing. They recount how they carried the many dead out of the city every day and burned them there, how after a few days the bodies were covered with maggots because the flies laid their eggs in the flesh of the dead. They describe how terrible and how stressful it was for them to remove the bandages from the seriously injured. After further descriptions, one of them energetically stops the conversation: she can no longer bear the memories and does not want to continue talking.

Another contemporary witness and former nurse, *Chizuko Uchida*, who is over 90 years old, describes that, as a young woman, she chose this profession because she wanted to be a heroine, like the soldiers who sacrifice themselves in the war. But her experience with the atomic bomb, the unbearable sight of countless dead and dying people, radically changed her view of war. When the film was made, the woman, severely bent by age, took a great interest in the fate of the people who used to live near Fukushima, who may themselves have been exposed to radiation and fled. The film shows how the old woman sends bags of tea with healing properties she had harvested herself to those affected by the nuclear fallout and how she, as a spontaneous act of humanitarian aid, temporarily takes people from Fukushima into her home.

Another portrait of a contemporary witness in the film is dedicated to *Shuntaro Hida*, who again is well over 90 years old and the last surviving doctor who worked with Aya Domenig's grandfather at the Red Cross Hospital in Hiroshima. Bitterly he points out that after his death, there will be no one left to tell the truth, especially since politicians are not really interested in educating and protecting the population. That is why he still meets with journalists or gives lectures almost every other day. The camera follows him to various events where he talks about the atomic bomb and its fatal effect on human civilization. He tells Aya Domenig: "I will speak until I collapse!"

His descriptions of what he experienced are difficult to bear: at the time of the bombing, he says, he had been with a patient in the countryside. Thereafter he saw so many people die without being able to explain their condition. He reported of blood pouring out of mouths, noses and even eyes. When people opened their mouths, there was a terrible smell of decay; it seemed as if people were literally rotting away before the doctors' eyes. Never before, he said, had a Japanese doctor seen people die like this. The reason for the experts' helplessness – a circumstance that caused Shuntaro Hida a visible outrage – is that between 1945 and 1952, the American occupiers had forbidden Japanese doctors and nurses from talking about what they had seen and experienced after the bombing. With that prohibition the Americans wanted to ensure that the health consequences of the atomic bomb remained a closely guarded secret. The commander-in-chief of the US Army even prohibited any exchange of information among experts, including any research and the carrying out of scientific studies. Anyone who dared to say anything risked being put in prison. As a result, medical personnel confronted with radiation victims exhibiting completely unknown symptoms were unable to do much. They did not understand why, for example, people died even though they had not been directly exposed to the bomb.

To this day, as a consequence of American censorship, people in Japan suffer not only from the long-term effects of radiation exposure, but also from the fears and prejudices that arose from ignorance and misinformation. For a long time, and in some cases to this day, people from families of radiation victims found it difficult to find work and often remained single, unable to start a family because of the widespread fear that such people were a potential danger to others.

This moving film left a lasting impression on the grammer school pupils, as became clear during the discussion that followed. The disturbing images, the shocking fates, the obvious terrible threat left no one unmoved. This shows how worthwhile it is to use such documentaries for younger generations to develop a sense of revulsion and realism in the face of war and its consequences, to strengthen their unconditional determination to resolve conflicts through negotiation as well as to search for non-violent solutions, as enshrined in the UN Charter.

"A blessing for humanity"?

A recent article in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung (16th July 2025) reported with commendable openness on the development of the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The lead paragraph of the article states: "The USA invented the atomic bomb in the secret *Manhattan Project* – and dropped it twice on Japan. In Los Alamos, this is still today presented as a blessing for humanity. The victims are not mentioned."

The atomic bomb as a blessing for humanity? How is such an incredible perversion of reality possible? It illustrates an essential insight into the reality of war: truth is its first victim, even before the first shots are fired. How much manipulation was necessary to reinterpret the obvious war crime as a humane act? On the vital question of how the US justified the use of the bombs, the article quotes historians who point out that the Americans were not primarily concerned with ending the war as quickly as possible, as they led the population to believe. Rather, they intended to demonstrate "the destructive power of the new weapon to the Soviet Union" – "and what would happen to them if they thwarted America's post-war plans". At the end of the war, they stated, 85% of Americans welcomed the bombing as a moral act. It was only when it became known over time that Hiroshima was not a military base, as President *Truman* had claimed, and that 95 per cent of the victims in Hiroshima and 99.8 per cent of the victims in Nagasaki were civilians, as well as that the atomic bomb incinerated all living things in the immediate vicinity within seconds, and that the survivors and their descendants still suffer from radiation damage to this day, that the attitude of many Americans began to change.

Neutrality and the urgent need for education for humanity

The future of humanity, whether plagued by war or blessed by diverse forms of serious, respectful intergovernmental cooperation, as firmly anchored in international law, depends on the attitude and commitment of people everywhere. Peace initiatives such as that of *Nihon Hidankyo* or documents that open people's eyes and shake them up, such as Aya Domenig's film, are contributions by people who, thanks to an ethic based on reason and humanity, contribute greatly to the common good worldwide. They therefore deserve the utmost recognition and support. Switzerland's position, as defended by Alain Berset in his statement in 2023, namely to understand neutrality as an expression of a serious commitment to peace, understanding and humanitarian aid, is based on the same aspiration. Our educational institutions should make much greater efforts to impart an emotionally anchored ethic of peace to young people by giving them access to the knowledge and experience that gave rise to international law. They should be familiarised with people who have made significant contributions to this cause – *Henry Dunant, Berta von Suttner, Albert Schweitzer, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King* and *Nelson Mandela*, to name but a few – and with their works. As a teacher I have repeatedly had the joyful experience of seeing that such role models of lived human ethics meet with great interest among young people. •

How can peace ethics succeed?

The example of the CSCE process and Swiss neutrality

by Dr phil. René Roca, Research Institute for Direct Democracy*

René Roca (picture kpe)

Switzerland remained permanently neutral throughout the Cold War (1949 to 1991). In doing so, it helped to initiate a process of reconciliation in many conflicts. Switzerland served not only its own country but also Europe and the world in terms of peace policy. At that time, Switzerland was a diplomatic great power.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, Switzerland's neutrality has begun to erode. During the First Gulf War in 1991, Switzerland adopted the UN's economic sanctions against Iraq, even though it was not yet a member of the UN at the time. In doing so, it returned to what it called "differential" neutrality, meaning it was willing to make concessions on its neutrality. As is well known, the economic sanctions against Iraq had devastating effects on the civilian population, especially on children. According to UN organisations such as UNICEF and the WHO, and especially according to the reports of *Hans-Christof von Sponeck*, the former coordinator of the UN's humanitarian aid program for Iraq, more than one million people died, including more than 500,000 children under the age of five. The reasons were shortages of food and medical aid such as medicines. Switzerland bears part of the responsibility here because it supported the sanctions. That had nothing to do with neutrality anymore.

The erosion of neutrality continued throughout the 1990s, until it was virtually destroyed with the adoption of EU sanctions packages against Russia in March 2022 in the context of the war in Ukraine. This death blow to neutrality was the reason why a cross-party working group launched a popular initiative to safeguard Swiss neutrality. It was submitted in Bern on 11 April 2024, with just under 130,000 valid signatures. The Swiss government, the Federal Council, rejects this initiative and states in its message that it wants to continue to handle neutrality "flexibly". The parliamentary process is now underway. But even if the government and parliament, and even all the parties, reject the initiative, it will still be put to a vote next year. That is democracy in action in Switzerland: the people have the final say!

The referendum campaign has been underway since 11 April 2024 and has sparked lively debates in Switzerland. Every initiative has a so-called "pre-effect". This means that the submission of an initiative ensures that politicians, the media and the population address the issue and that a more or less factual discussion takes place. This is at the heart of Swiss political culture. I myself am a grammar school teacher and a historian and a member of the committee for the neutrality initiative.

For some time now, I have been working on historical examples from Swiss history that clearly illustrate the role and significance of Swiss neutrality. These examples show how important perpetual neutrality has been for Switzerland, Europe and the world, and why it must now be more firmly anchored in the constitution through the initiative. In this context, I also came across the anniversary of the *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe* (CSCE), which celebrated its 50th anniversary on 1 August 2025. This process exemplifies the great value of Swiss neutrality.

Background of the CSCE

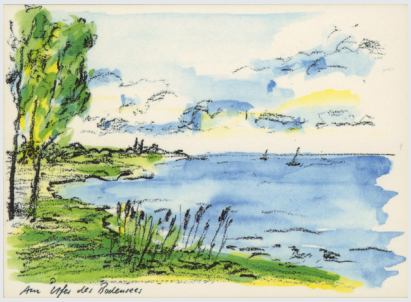
The initiative to convene a European security conference was launched in 1969 by the Soviet Union and the *Warsaw Pact* countries. The policy of détente between East and West had already taken shape: there was a direct channel of communication between Moscow and Washington, and disarmament negotiations were also taking place. East and West sought to improve the situation on the European continent and considered creating a "security architecture" for Europe. The European Community (EC, now the EU), NATO, the neutral and non-aligned states, but also the Eastern Bloc had partly divergent demands in this regard. However, this did not prevent the states from beginning mutual consultations. Switzerland also participated actively in these consultations.

In 1970, a working group from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs drafted a report setting out Switzerland's interests. Building on its traditional role as a mediator in conflicts between states, Swiss diplomacy launched a proposal to establish a system for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The focus was to be on "promoting interpersonal relations between East and West". The report also called for "the right to neutrality to be enshrined in the conference".[1] In addition, Geneva was offered as a possible venue for the negotiations as part of its "Good Offices".

Two years of mutual soundings and talks across Europe followed. Switzerland exchanged ideas most intensively with the other neutral countries, but also found the exchange of ideas with the countries of Eastern Europe surprisingly fruitful. The main negotiations then took place in Geneva from September 1973, as proposed by Switzerland. Thirty-five countries took part: the seven Warsaw Pact countries, the 15 NATO countries and 13 neutral countries. The neutral or non-aligned countries were: Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Yugoslavia, Cyprus, Malta, San Marino, Liechtenstein, Ireland, Iceland, Monaco and the Holy See.

Four thematic areas, known as "baskets", were defined. The first basket concerned the catalogue of principles on fundamental issues of sovereignty and inter-state relations, security policy considerations in the narrower sense, and confidence-building measures in the military sphere. The second basket was devoted to cooperation between East and West in the

continued on page 14



cf. From 29 to 31 August 2025, the XXXII Congress "Mut zur Ethik" (Courage to take a moral stance) was held in Sirnach in the Swiss canton of Thurgau, this year on the topic of "Reason and Humanity". We published a first series of the lectures held there in a special supplement in *Current Concerns* No. 19/20 of 23 September. We published further lectures in No. 21 of 7 October, in No. 22 of 21 October, in No. 23 of 4 November and in No. 24 of 18 November. Further lecture texts will follow in the coming issues. The published texts are revised and, in some cases, supplemented versions of the spoken word.

* *René Roca* (PhD) is a Swiss historian and a high school teacher. He founded and directs the *Research Institute for Direct Democracy* (*www.fidd.ch*). He is a member of the committee of the Neutrality Initiative (*www.neutralitaet-ja.ch*).

"How can peace ethics succeed?"
continued from page 13

fields of economics, science, technology and the environment. Basket three was to address "human contacts" between East and West, as proposed by Switzerland. Finally, the fourth basket dealt with defining the further working process of the CSCE.

The role of Switzerland

It should be noted that neutral Switzerland continued to play an important role with its quiet behind-the-scenes diplomacy. Together with the other neutral countries Austria, Sweden and Finland, it provided important mediation services, thereby strengthening the entire process. From 1974 onwards, it also did so in association with non-aligned Yugoslavia and the small states of Cyprus, Malta, San Marino and Liechtenstein as the "N+N Group", the "Neutrals and Non-Aligned". There was no fundamental willingness to compromise on the part of the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the USA. In his final report on the CSCE process, the head of the Swiss delegation, *Rudolf Bindschedler*, refers to the "rigidity of the great powers".[2] In his report, he also repeatedly mentions the "double game", i. e., the gap between the public statements of governments, especially those of the great powers, and the position of the delegations in Geneva. However, when the discussions reached such an impasse that neither side could make or accept concessions without losing face, proposals were put forward through the neutral countries. At such key moments, Swiss diplomats helped to break the deadlock in the negotiations and ultimately achieve a result that was acceptable to all states. This meant that the superpowers could repeatedly be persuaded to compromise on a temporary basis.

In his final report, Bindschedler discusses the role of the neutral countries throughout the process in detail and assesses their influence as very high: "The extent of common interests [i.e. of the neutral and non-aligned countries, author's note] proved to be much greater than could initially have been assumed. Cooperation within this group was close and trusting. Their unified stance forced the blocs to show consideration and facilitated the implementation of numerous postulates. […] For the neutral and non-aligned countries, their mutual trust is probably one of the most important outcomes of the conference."[3]

Final Act in Helsinki

After two years of negotiations, which took place in Geneva from 18 September 1973 to 21 July 1975, the delegates of 35 states signed the CSCE Final Act in Helsinki on 1 August 1975.[4] The document is divided into four sections. The first section deals with "Questions relating to Security in Europe" and is structured around a declaration of ten guiding principles:

1. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty
2. Refraining from the threat or use of force
3. Inviolability of frontiers
4. Territorial integrity of states
5. Peaceful settlement of disputes
6. Non-interference in internal affairs
7. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
8. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples
9. Cooperation between states
10. Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law

Bindschedler's assessment of the ten guiding principles is very insightful: "The Final Act contains numerous positive rules of conduct for the future that are worthy of praise."[5] He cited the ten guiding principles in particular: "Admittedly, the ten principles on mutual relations between states largely reiterate existing international law, as set out primarily in the UN Charter."[6] However, the catalogue of principles further develops and completes important fundamental principles, he continued: "The first principle expressly emphasises the right of states to belong or not to belong to international organisations, to be members of an alliance or not, and the right to neutrality."[7] This meant that an important demand made by Switzerland had been included in the final document. Imagine if the countries aligned with the blocs had exercised this right!

The second section of the Final Act deals with cooperation in the fields of economics, science, technology and the environment, section three deals with issues of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, and section four finally deals with principles of cooperation in humanitarian and cultural fields. In his final report, Bindschedler emphasises the importance of the neutral countries in this area in particular: "The results […] in the areas of human contacts, travel, family reunification and information are largely attributable to the activities of the neutral countries."[8] According to Bindschedler, "political and psychological considerations"[9] played a major role in this. This example in particular clearly demonstrates the political and moral superiority of the neutral position. However, Bindschedler also recognises the shortcomings of the Final Act. It is not an international treaty: "This is regrettable, because only on the basis of law does a lasting and stable settlement appear possible. […] Thus, the Final Act is merely a political declaration, a declaration of intent. As such, it can have a psychological and political impact. However, its value can only be assessed in the future."[10]

With regard to the 10th guiding principle, Bindschedler emphasises in particular "the fulfilment of obligations under international law in good faith." These are essentially central principles of peace ethics in politics and, according to Bindschedler, "rules of conduct for the future that should be positively acknowledged."[11] This important provision was also established under the decisive leadership of the neutral countries.

In summary, Bindschedler notes: "On the other hand, the conference can be a starting point for further political development and contribute to improving the climate among states and reducing existing tensions."[12]

And specifically for neutral countries: "The conference and the final act have strengthened the position of small states and neutral countries. They have become a factor that must be reckoned with, not militarily, but politically. The task for the future is to maintain this position."[13] According to Bindschedler, this position should be used in particular for "peaceful dispute resolution". Finally, he describes the role of neutral Switzerland as a major diplomatic power: "In general, the conference has led to an increase in Switzerland's influence, role and importance. Swiss proposals were successfully implemented on numerous individual points. […] Together with the other neutral countries, Switzerland acted as a mediator and contributed significantly to achieving solutions that were satisfactory to all sides."[14] According to Bindschedler, this work must be continued: "Inaction would be most damaging; here, too, the rule applies that we must be pessimists in our assessment, but optimists in our actions."[15]

On 1 August 1975, Swiss President *Pierre Graber* signed the CSCE Final Act on behalf of Switzerland. In his address to the assembled delegates, Graber spoke of neutral Switzerland's special commitment to the success of the conference: "Switzerland, located at the crossroads of three cultural spheres that have contributed greatly to the global influence of the old continent, has always been attuned to the life of Europe. Throughout its 700-year history, it has shared its highs and lows. As I explained two years ago, here in the same place, my country's neutrality has never been an excuse for a policy of 'empty chairs', for indifference and withdrawal into itself. On the contrary, it has awakened in it the need for solidarity and the will to serve the international community at all times and in accordance with its means."[16] Graber continues in his powerful speech: "Good relations throughout Europe are and remain our constant desire. The fact that we have not joined any alliances or coalitions was therefore deeply in line with a vocation that is European in the

continued on page 16

What does a sober retrospective view from the future demand?

*by Professor Dipl. Ing agr. Dr iur. Heinrich Wohlmeyer**

Heinrich Wohlmeyer (picture ma)

Within the framework of the European Environmental Councils (EEAC), we introduced the method of retrospective analysis to assess current developments. This has since become common scientific practice.

In light of this method, we resemble a global train of lemmings racing towards the abyss. We are on the brink of disaster in ecological, social and political terms.

The apparent diversity of negative developments is very great. For the sake of brevity, I will highlight only a few of the most significant threats.

On ecology:

Marine pollution calls for a reversal. Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) reports that a plastic island of the size of Europe is already floating in the Pacific Ocean. The plastic waste lying at the bottom of the oceans is 100 times heavier than that floating on the surface. This is estimated at 12 million tonnes.

The recent UN conference in Geneva on global plastic waste reduction, which ended without any result, demonstrated the narrow-mindedness of the producing countries.

They are acting with an attitude of "devil-may-care".

Global soil consumption is equally alarming when one considers that soils have the highest biological diversity after the oceans. Soils can store around 2,000 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide.

The loss of over 10 million hectares of arable land per year also destabilises food supply. If this land consumption continues, we will fall below 2,000 m² of fertile soil per person and thus face a real food crisis that is no longer distribution-related.

On social issues:

The gap between rich and poor is widening both internationally and nationally. According to OXFAM, the five richest people in the world have doubled their wealth since 2020. This development is normally downplayed because extreme poverty has fallen from one third of the world's population to less than 10 per cent over the last 40 years.

Nevertheless, this development must not be allowed to continue, not only in terms of human rights.

Above all, the rising debt of nations is extremely dangerous. If it continues as before, interest payments and repayment obligations will dominate budgets.

Nothing would be left for the social sector. Education, health, unemployment and pension provision would fall by the wayside.

Economists *Dirk Sollte* and *Wolfgang Eichhorn* highlighted this in 2009 as part of the Forum for Responsibility in their book "Das Kartenhaus Weltfinanzsystem – Analyse – Rückblick – Ausblick" (The House of Cards: The Global Financial System – Analysis – Review – Outlook). They projected that by 2030, the entire value added would be needed to service interest and returns if we continue to let the financial system run as it has done so far. In addition, big capital is pushing more and more for larger, environmentally destructive projects.

Unfortunately, the political landscape also points to stormy times ahead:

Enemy stereotypes are being created so that the military-industrial complex can continue to be financed instead of prosperity-enhancing expenditure.

Thomas P. M. Barnett outlined this in his book: "The Pentagon's New Map after the fall of the Iron Curtain" in 2004.

The flooding of Europe with migrants was also conceived as a means of domination.

Military spending has been rising worldwide for 10 years. According to SIPRI Sweden, it rose by 9.2% from 2023 to 2024 to 2.7 trillion US dollars, or 2,700 billion US dollars. Approximately 0.7 per cent (14 billion US dollars) would be enough to alleviate the worst cases of world hunger – *a scandal of inhumanity*!

Additionally, the escalation of current conflicts brings with it the danger of a nuclear war.

This is particularly important for Europe to consider: the US has terminated the treaties with Russia on mutual inspection of nuclear weapons and at the same time announced that it will equip its military bases in Europe – especially in Germany – with nuclear-tipped medium-range missiles. The target year is 2026.

I am now putting myself into the shoes of the Russian military leadership: before Russia will be completely surrounded and practically defenceless, a surprise liberation strike might become an obvious option. The Russians do not want a nuclear war. Therefore, they will try to take out US nuclear weapons using "conventional" means.

This coincides with the predictions of the Bavarian seer *Alois Irlmaier* (1894–1959), who said to a young nurse: "Young girl, you will see the Third World War, and I will tell you how it will unfold:

First there will be prosperity like never before.
Then there will be an unprecedented decline in faith.
This will be followed by moral decay as never before.
Then a large number of foreigners will come into the country.
There will be high inflation. Money will lose more and more of its value.
Soon after, a revolution will follow.
Then the Russians will invade the West overnight.

Irlmaier then saw specifically: While peace is still being discussed, three tank divisions advance westward overnight. One in the north, one across Berlin and one north of the Danube. They will reach the Rhine (thus taking out the US missile bases). But then the US will attack from the south (base in North Africa) using drones creating a death strip (neutron bomb) "from the city on the bay (Szczecin?) to the golden city (Prague)".

This will lead to a desperate and devastating final battle, in which the Russians also will use nuclear weapons, and Germany north of the Danube will be destroyed.

The three tank divisions correspond to the three western military districts that the Russians have established in response to the NATO manoeuvre *Defender Europe*.

These are equipped with the most modern tanks (*Armata* tanks). The Russians are not using these in Ukraine to ensure that the technology remains unknown.

We should not dismiss this scenario, because unfortunately it is plausible.

However, I observe a collective denial and escape into trivialities. Peace initiatives and neutral concepts are therefore more urgent than in the past – and necessary.

continued on page 16

---

* *Heinrich Wohlmeyer*, born in St. Pölten in 1936; retired Director General; Honorary Professor, Dipl. Ing agr. Dr. iur; Dipl. in Law, studied agriculture and law in Vienna, worked as a Fulbright scholar in the USA on "Agricultural Economics and Business Administration" and obtained his doctorate in London on "International Raw Materials Control Agreements". Wohlmeyer worked in industry, regional development and trade policy for 20 years and was a research manager for a good ten years. He taught at the *Vienna University of Technology* and the *University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences* in Vienna. At an early stage, he addressed issues of sustainability, circular economy, and economic, ecological, and social undesirable developments. Various awards and numerous publications.

"How can peace ethics succeed?"
continued from page 14

broadest sense. We are therefore pleased that the option of neutrality has been included in the chapter on principles that should apply in relations between states. Neutrality has thus been recognised as a specific instrument of European security and cooperation."[17] Graber then explicitly addresses Europe's responsibility to look beyond the continent and also support developing countries. In other words, he wants to build a security architecture that extends beyond Europe. Just think of the Vietnam War, which also ended in 1975, and its consequences for Southeast Asia. Graber then emphasises the psychological dimension of human relationships. The aim, he says, is "on the one hand to create more complete and secure structures in intra-European relations and, on the other hand, to develop human relations in each of our countries and across borders and make them more harmonious."[18] According to Graber, the documents represent a first step in this direction: "The provisions that we are solemnly adopting here must […] be put into practice tomorrow. […] It requires the unremitting goodwill of all participating states, and it will take the greatest of efforts to achieve this goal. […] Ultimately, these texts will be worth as much as their application."[19]

The signing of the Final Act by 35 heads of state and government was a strong sign of détente, thanks in particular to neutral Switzerland. The Act is an extraordinary document. It is not a matter of course that, in the midst of the Cold War, representatives of all European states from East and West, including the Soviet Union, the United States and Canada, came together around one table, agreed on common values and committed themselves to adhering to the same rules. Europe was to become safer, and human contacts between East and West were to be expanded. Unfortunately, however, the détente soon ran into crisis.

Conclusion and outlook

Follow-up conferences were to examine the implementation of the CSCE Final Act in the individual states. The CSCE remained a forum for East-West dialogue until the end of the Cold War and played a major, perhaps even decisive, role in overcoming the Cold War. On the one hand, the continuity of the CSCE process contributed to this development, while on the other hand, the USA and the Soviet Union increasingly disregarded the basic principles of the Helsinki Act. In the USA, the Reagan years in the 1980s exacerbated mutual mistrust and fuelled discord with insinuations and deception. *Ronald Reagan* took advice from neoconservatives and, together with British Prime Minister *Margaret Thatcher*, implemented neoliberal policies that fuelled globalisation. With the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the second superpower once again opted for confrontation and war, thereby exacerbating the East-West conflict. The important principle of the CSCE Final Act, namely the "fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law", was broken and much trust was squandered once again.

The end of the Cold War was celebrated in 1990 at a special CSCE summit in Paris. But the Charter of Paris, with its title "A New Era of Democracy, Peace and Unity", could not hide the new divisions. The USA, as the sole world power, even spoke of an "end of history". As we know today, that was a simple lie. As early as 1991, the USA staged the First Gulf War and has been waging war ever since. As already mentioned, Switzerland's adoption of economic sanctions marked the beginning of the process of dismantling its neutrality.

Although the global political situation was precarious, it was decided at the CSCE summit in Budapest on 5 and 6 December 1994 to transform the CSCE into an organisation. It was continued on 1 January 1995 as the *Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (OSCE) and is now a permanent conference with its headquarters in Vienna. The destruction of Yugoslavia during the 1990s marked the beginning of the decline of the already weakened OSCE. It is now completely irrelevant.

Switzerland will assume the chairmanship of the OSCE next year (as it did in 1996 and 2014). With its 57 participating states and permanent institutions such as the Ministerial Council and the Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE is still the world's largest regional organisation for cooperative security. It spans the northern hemisphere and could regain its influence through cooperation with, for example, BRICS and other organisations of the countries of the South. These organisations could serve as models for interstate coexistence in a multipolar world. Switzerland would therefore have a very important task next year as chair of the OSCE and the opportunity to strengthen the OSCE again in line with the CSCE Final Act. It should urgently call again for mutual respect between countries, the renunciation of violence, the resolution of conflicts exclusively by diplomatic means, the renunciation of border changes and cooperation for the benefit of all.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is why the initiative that will also be put to the vote next year, which aims to enshrine neutrality more clearly in the Swiss Constitution, is so important. Not only for Switzerland, but also for Europe and the world. This could also strengthen the OSCE, bearing in mind the importance that neutral countries had for the CSCE process. Perhaps, as Bindschedler said, I am a pessimist in terms of my view of the world situation, but I am also an optimist in terms of my actions. With this in mind, the Swiss population must be encouraged to support the neutrality initiative. A great deal of work still lies ahead of us. Let's get to work! •

"What does a sober retrospective …"
continued from page 15

Stephane Hessel deliberately included the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which calls for reason and humanity, in his farewell booklet: "Time for Outrage" (2011).

Therefore, Switzerland and Austria, as permanently neutral states, are called upon to mediate and not to allow themselves to be drawn into confrontations – which, unfortunately, is gradually happening.

As an old man, I would like to conclude with a memento from *Antoine de Saint-Exupery*, because I believe that peace begins in the hearts of men. Let this be written in the book of the exploiters and warmongers.

"When people become godless,
then their governments are clueless,
lies abound,
debt rises immeasurably,
meetings are pointless,
enlightenment is brainless,
the politicians characterless,
Christians prayerless,
churches powerless,
nations peaceless,
morals decadent,
fashion shameless,
crime rampant,
conferences never-ending, – prospects bleak."

I would like to add a quote from an atheist ex-communist, *Gregor Gysi*. He said:

I do not believe in God, but I fear a godless society. •

(Übersetzung *Current Concerns*)

---

1 *Die Schweiz und die Europäische Sicherheitskonferenz, EPD*, (Switzerland and the European Security Conference, EPD), 7 July 1970, cited in: *dodis.ch/34490*

2 Bindschedler, Rudolf. *Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa. Beobachtungen und Bemerkungen* (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Observations and comments), 29 August 1975, cited in: *dodis.ch/38870*

3 ibid.

4 Final Act of the Helsinki Conference (CSCE), cited in: *dodis.ch/58821*

5 Bindschedler, Rudolf. *Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa. Beobachtungen und Bemerkungen* (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Observations and comments), 29 August 1975, cited in: *dodis.ch/38870*

6-15 ibid

16 Ansprache von Herrn Bundespräsident *Pierre Graber*, Vorsteher des Eidgenössischen Politischen Departements (Address by Federal President Pierre Graber, Head of the Federal Department of Political Affairs), Helsinki, 30 July 1975, cited in: *dodis.ch/38867*

17-19 ibid