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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

Ubuntu

*by Desmond Tutu, former archbishop and Nobel Peace Prize winner**

Desmond Tutu (1931–2021)
(picture Wikipedia)

Why should we believe that there is anything worth striving for at all? Why should we take care that the world changes, that we live in a different world? In many African countries, the world view is something referred to as *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* that is basically the core of being, the core of personality. We say: you must strive to be everything you can be, so that I can be everything I can be. My humanity is linked to your humanity. The individual detached human being is, in essence, a contradiction in terms. We say: A person becomes a person through other persons, through their fellow human beings. I have gifts that you do not have, and you have gifts that I do not have. And then God says: "Voilà, that's exactly what it's all about. This is how you realise that you need each other." We are created to live in a very fragile network of mutual dependence. Those who are completely independent and self-sufficient are not really human beings, actually are not real human beings.

Ubuntu also means compassion, generosity and hospitality. When we welcome someone with open arms, when someone is generous, the greatest praise we can give them in our part of the world is: "*Lu ubuntu, una levutu*." This means: this person has *ubuntu*, they are human. They strive for social harmony. Revenge, anger, hatred – these are all things that undermine social harmony. *Ubuntu* encourages everyone to forgive and reconcile. It means that forgiving one another is good for your health because it lowers your blood pressure. It is the best way to represent your own interests. It does not prescribe retributive justice, but restorative justice. The purpose is to build bridges rather than fuel any desire for revenge. And so, it is not surprising that *Nelson Mandela*, when he came out of prison after 27 years and was supposed to be actually full of bitterness and anger, astonished the world with the enormous generosity of spirit he displayed. He came out of prison and called on his people not to seek revenge, but to forgive and reconcile. Nelson Mandela from Africa has become an icon of reconciliation and forgiveness in the world.

Ubuntu tells us that we are so intertwined with one another that if you do not treat another person humanely, you yourself are no longer human. We saw this in our reconciliation and truth commission. Someone testified: "We shot someone in the head and burned his body – it takes

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* *Desmond Mpilo Tutu* (born 7 October 1931 in Klerksdorp; died 26 December 2021 in Cape Town) was a South African Anglican clergyman. He was Archbishop of Cape Town and Primate of the *Church of the Province of South Africa* from 1986 to 1996. For his commitment to human rights, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. From 1995, he was chairman of the *South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission*.

Subject: Intervention by the FDFA (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs) on behalf of two Swiss nationals subject to sanctions on the EU sanctions list

Open letter to Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)

cc. 300 Swiss diplomats, academics, journalists and concerned citizens are calling for Swiss intervention against the EU's draconian sanctions on two Swiss citizens.

Kyoto, 21 December 2025

Dear Federal Councillor Cassis,
Dear Federal Department of Foreign Affairs,

I take the liberty of sending you the following open letter on behalf of more than 300 Swiss citizens from the fields of diplomacy, academia, journalism, politics, and other concerned individuals.

We urgently ask you to intervene in every appropriate manner on behalf of our fellow citizens Mr *Jacques Baud* and Ms *Nathalie Yamb*, and to protest in the strongest possible terms against their sanctioning by the European Union.

The inclusion of the two individuals on an EU sanctions list is a politically motivated act of repression and is in no way compatible with the fundamental human right to freedom of expression, as provided for in Article 19[1] of the Charter of the United Nations.

Although both individuals have the right to seek a review of the legality of these measures before the European Court of Justice, the sanctions have immediate and severe effects on their fundamental freedoms. This constitutes a case of administrative punishment without a court ruling.

There is well-founded concern that further sanctions of this kind against unwelcome opinions held by Swiss citizens will follow. This act can only be challenged at the political level, and we ask you to do so. We need you and the strength of your Department of Foreign Affairs.

With the highest respect,

Dr *Pascal Lottaz*
Associate Professor, University of Kyoto, Japan

[1] *chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/03/udhr.pdf*

Source: https://pascallottaz.substack.com/p/letter-of-support-for-jacques-baud

Online publication of the letter (in German): https://neutralitystudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Intervention-fur-Baud-Yamb-FINAL.pdf

The list of 300 co-signatories can also be found there.

(Translation Current Concerns)

EU in the abyss of lawlessness

Press release by MEPs Michael von der Schulenburg and Ruth Firmenich

Brussels, 15 December 2025

The decision by the EU Foreign Affairs Council to impose sanctions on further European citizens – including former Swiss intelligence officer and retired colonel Jacques Baud – represents another serious blow to the rule of law in the European Union. With the measures now adopted against *Jacques Baud* for alleged "disinformation activities", the EU's political elite is attempting to silence one of the most renowned analysts of the war in Ukraine, says *von der Schulenburg*. "The EU is using the sanctions list as a tool against critics and is manoeuvring itself further and further into an abyss of lawlessness," says *Ruth Firmenich*.

Without a solid legal basis, European citizens are being sanctioned for "disinformation". At the same time, the illegal conversion of permanently frozen assets of the Russian central bank into collateral for loans to Ukraine is to take place this week. In parallel, proceedings are underway before the European Court of Justice concerning the unlawful application of Article 122 as the legal basis for the 150 billion euros SAFE Regulation. With its measures, the EU is threatening the rule of law. Schulenburg and Firmenich demand: "The European Parliament must act now. It can request the lifting of the sanctions regime for 'disinformation' – and it must make use of this option."

A recent legal opinion commissioned by MEPs Michael von der Schulenburg and Ruth Firmenich – available at *https://tinyurl.com/4pkttj6z* – supports this critique. In it, Professor Dr *Ninon Colneric*, former judge at the *European Court of Justice* (formerly: Court of Justice of the European Communities), and Prof. Dr. *Alina Miron*, professor of international law at the University of Angers, conclude that numerous elements of the EU sanctions framework against "disinformation" are incompatible with EU law. They also identify significant shortcomings in the protec-

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Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

Freedom of expression and information

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.

2. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected.

"Ubuntu"

continued from page 1

eight or nine hours for a human body to burn – and while the body was burning, we made a barbecue fire next to it and drank beer." It makes you wonder: what might have happened to the humanity of someone who is capable of doing such a thing? Killing, burning a corpse and barbecuing meat next to it?

Ubuntu was not something that only existed in South Africa. After *Mau Mau* in Kenya, people thought that when *Uhuru* (freedom) came to us, *Jomo Kenyatta* would lead his people in an orgy of revenge. But that did not happen. When freedom came to Zimbabwe, there was no revenge, no retaliation. *Ian Smith* remained in Parliament even after "liberation". That was before Mr *Mugabe* had changed so much. And we saw the same thing in Namibia. No, to take revenge means acting against your own interests.

Ubuntu is about the value of individuals and their dignity. *Ubuntu* is about the fact that we all belong to one family. We are all part of the human family, the family of God. I am also getting older, and every day I notice that things are becoming a little more difficult for me, and I think I have discovered something that I believe is the most radical thing that *Jesus* ever said. And I am sure it will surprise you. You may remember: on the first morning of the resurrection, our Lord meets *Mary Magdalene*, and he says something very strange to her: Mary Magdalene, a woman. You may remember that *Paul* said: To be considered an apostle, one must have seen the risen Lord. According to this, the first apostle was apparently a woman. So, let's put that in brackets for now.

And our Lord said something very strange to her. He said: Go and tell my brothers. This is the first time he has spoken of "brothers". Before, he always referred to them as friends. And now he says: "my brothers". To those of whom one betrayed him, one even denied him three times, and all of them abandoned him. He calls these people "my brothers". "Tell my brothers that I am going to my Father and their Father." That was a very significant moment. And Jesus wanted to say something with these words. He meant that you, I, that we are all brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters in this family, in which there are no outsiders, only insiders. You may remember that Jesus said: When I ascend to heaven, then he did not say: I will take a few of you with me, he said: I will take you all with me. Everyone, everyone, everyone. The rich, the poor, the white, the black, the yellow, the red, Palestinians, Israelis. Everyone, everyone, everyone. Homosexuals, heterosexuals, everyone – can you imagine? *George Bush, Osama bin Laden*. Everyone, everyone, absolutely everyone! That's fantastic! How can you have dignity if you are poor? How can you have dignity if you are sick? How can you have dignity if you are ignorant? Or made to be ignorant. How can you? It's about everyone, everyone, absolutely everyone. In the ethos of the family, you don't ask: Hey, how much do you contribute to the family income? You only get back proportionally as much as you contribute. You don't say to a baby: "So, what do you contribute to the family?" The baby doesn't contribute anything to the income, as far as we can tell. But the baby is showered with love. No, in a good family we say: Everyone should do what they are capable of doing. And then everyone will get what they need.

One thing I can tell you for sure: We will never win a war against terror as long as there are people who have to live in conditions that cause them to despair. We are one family! How can we spend so much money in so many countries on death and destruction? We produce bombs that will kill people, even though we know that only a small portion of this money could ensure that children around the world have clean drinking water, enough to eat, a roof over their heads, and a good education. How can we allow this to happen? How? And God says: Can you help me to ensure that this world shows more compassion, that we live in a world where every human being means more than material things? Can you help me to ensure that this world becomes a world where every human being can enjoy their inalienable rights? And God says: Please, please help me! Please help me! Help me to transform this world into a world of compassion, a world of generosity, a world in which everyone cares for one another, a world full of laughter and joy, a world in which poverty is a thing of the past, a world in which there is no more war.

Help me. Help me. Help me. •

Source: 8th Global Ethic Speech by *Desmond Tutu*, former bishop and Nobel Peace Prize winner, on the topic of "Global Ethics and Human Dignity: An African Perspective" on 15 June 2009 at the University of Tübingen (excerpt); *https://www.weltethos.org/wp- content/uploads/2022/08/Weltethos-Rede-8-Tutu- 2009.pdf*

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

"EU in the abyss of lawlessness"
continued from page 2

tion of minimum fundamental rights standards.

The experts are particularly critical of the denial of the right to a hearing for individuals accused of disinformation before sanctions are imposed on them. They argue that this approach is disproportionate and therefore unlawful. The damage caused to "one of the cornerstones of democracy – freedom of expression" is disproportionate to the objective of combating disinformation. The measures violate both the proportionality requirements of EU law and Article 11 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights* of the European Union.

Furthermore, the restrictions on the freedom of movement of EU citizens provided for under the sanctions regime are unlawful, while the legal safeguards for those affected are insufficient overall. The terms used, such as "information manipulation and interference", are so broad that they effectively give the Council almost unlimited discretion in imposing sanctions. This opens up the risk of politically motivated persecution.

Finally, the authors emphasise the deterrent effect of the new sanctions regime on journalists. It makes it risky to take up topics of public controversy, as information could be classified as "disinformation" at any time. The regime could deter journalists and other actors from exercising their right to freedom of expression and information without restriction. •

Source: *https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/upload/pdf/251216-Firmenich-Schulenburg-EU.pdf*
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

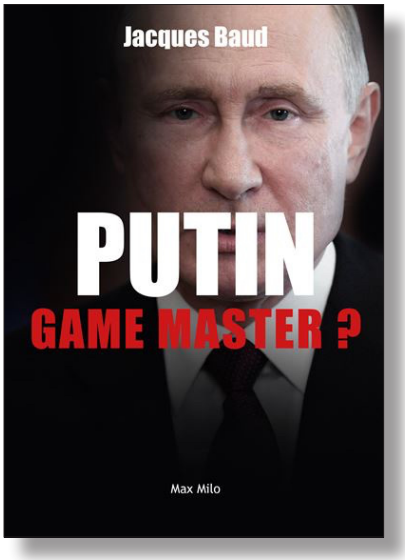
Official disinformation

zf. The EU claims: "*Jacques Baud*, a former Swiss army colonel and strategic analyst, […] makes conspiracy theories, for example accusing Ukraine of orchestrating its own invasion in order to join NATO."

Fact is: In his book "Putin: Game master?", 2022, *Max Milo Editions*, Jacques Baud quotes extensively from an interview conducted by the Ukrainian television station *Apostrof TV* on 10 March 2019 with *Oleksii Arestovych*, who later became an advisor to Ukrainian President *Zelenskyy*. Among other things, it reads:
"*Oleksii Arestovych*: With a probability of 99.9 per cent, our price for joining NATO is a big war with Russia. […]

Apostrof TV: If we put it on the scales, what's better in this case?
Oleksii Arestovych: Of course a large-scale war with Russia and joining NATO as a result of defeat of Russia. […]

Apostrof TV: When [the war will begin]?
Oleksii Arestovych: 2021 to 2022. That is to say 2020 to 2022. […]"



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Sapere aude!

What characterises the books of *Jacques Baud* is that they are sober and fact-based, that every statement is documented with precise footnotes, with 90 per cent Western sources. The EU cannot refute his arguments, but wants to erase the narrative at all costs.

This censorship entails violations of the European *Charter of Fundamental Rights* and article 19 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

Is there anything left of academic freedom in Europe, of *Voltaire*? Are we back to the days of the Roman and Spanish Inquisition? The journey to the EU Ministry of Truth will yet take many more victims on the way – including us, the readers, who are deprived of the human right of access to information – and a full range of narratives, which we have the right to read and judge by ourselves – *Sapere aude*! (*Horatius/Kant*). No democracy can survive without academic freedom and an open exchange of views. Is there anything left of "democracy" in the EU?

Alfred de Zayas

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Information is like a trickle of pure water

by Guy Mettan, Geneva*

Guy Mettan (picture ma)

> "We should not underestimate the power of trickles: Water penetrates everywhere, eventually eroding even the hardest rocks and inevitably finding its way to the ocean of truth. This, at least, is what independent journalists who may at times doubt that they have chosen the right path should tell themselves. Faith is stronger than the law of large numbers."

In the context of the cognitive warfare that we Westerners have been living in for about ten years, information has become a weapon of mass destruction. Or rather, a weapon of massive deception.

In a world where journalists are increasingly disappearing in favour of "information designers." it is not surprising that information today is produced, formatted, packaged, and distributed like a package of ultra-processed ham in the supermarket. Even if the ham originally came from a real pig made of flesh and bone, the end-product no longer has much to do with the raw material. From its colour to its consistency, not to mention its taste, there is nothing natural about it anymore. It has become completely artificial. The wonders of packaging and marketing do the rest: At the end of the chain, the consumer is left paying for an adulterated product.

The same applies to the information produced and sold by mainstream media. Its connection to reality has become very tenuous. The original ingredients, i.e., the facts, have been so thoroughly peeled, squeezed, cooked, re-cooked, and stuffed with preservatives, fragrances, colourings, flavourings, and flavour enhancers that the information delivered at the end of the journalistic production chain has only a very distant connection to the authenticity and truth of the original material – to events, to "what happened." As in the food industry, this processing and repackaging takes place in the utmost secrecy and is hidden from the eyes of the consuming public.

In this parallel world, honest journalists and media outlets that try to restore the facts and analyse them as objectively and impartially as possible have no chance of prevailing, as all official private and public media outlets spread the same bland mush. And if they did manage to do so, they would be mercilessly pursued by the bounty hunters that fact-checkers and other "verification bodies" have become.

In France, the *Macron* government has not given up on reintroducing the conformity label – the French president's proposed system to certify media deemed trustworthy – that it was unable to enforce during the Covid crisis. Private media are not standing idly by either, joining forces under banners that are as deceptive as they are hypocritical to ensure the unanimous dissemination of the Good Word. These undertakings include the *Trusted News Initiative*, launched by the *BBC* in 2019, the *International Fact-Checking Network* (IFCN), launched in 2015 by the *Poynter Institute*, and the *Trust Project*, funded since 2014 by various American foundations to combat "disinformation," "racial hatred," or "anti-Semitism" and which, in practice, aim to ensure that partner media outlets align with NATO's position on Ukraine, Israel's on Palestine, or Taiwan's on China.

Journalists who want to escape the steamroller of mainstream media are therefore condemned to conform to survive, or to vegetate on the margins of the system, using the few resources available or contenting themselves with expressing their views for free on social networks. From *Telegram* to *WeChat*, from *Substack* to *X*, or via the countless blogs and portals that populate the internet, to radio and television stations in non-Western countries – all these media can be used, but readers and viewers do not pay for them, and, it follows directly, those contributing to them are very frequently not compensated for their work.

However, these marginal voices, these thankless efforts, save the honour of the information system. They are like drops that gradually form a trickle, then a stream, then a river, which eventually prevails in the public landscape and shapes the consciousness of those who live in it.

We should not underestimate the power of trickles: Water penetrates everywhere, eventually eroding even the hardest rocks and inevitably finding its way to the ocean of truth. This, at least, is what independent journalists who may at times doubt that they have chosen the right path should tell themselves. Faith is stronger than the law of large numbers.

Numerous examples show that this strategy works. Take the example of Gaza and Israel. For months, it was impossible in our countries to talk about Palestine, the suffering of the people in Gaza, the destruction, the famine, the massacres, etc. Then, little by little, a wave arose that finally broke down the dams erected by Israeli propaganda.

Sooner or later, the same will happen with other conflicts – in Ukraine, in Sudan, in Iran, in Taiwan, in Congo. Information is like water; it requires patience and flows slowly, underground. It is tedious, unspectacular work, and the rewards are slow in coming. But they come, and the effort is worth it. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

* *Guy Mettan* is a political scientist, freelance journalist, and author. He began his journalistic career in 1980 at the "Tribune de Genève", where he was director and editor-in-chief from 1992 to 1998. From 1997 to 2020, he was director of the *Swiss Press Club* in Geneva. He has been a member of the *Grand Council* of Geneva for 25 years.

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Terrorising the world and its people

A new doctrine is taking hold: a new era of enforced dominance

*by Alastair Crooke**

Alastair Crooke (picture ma)

cc. Alastair Crooke's article, published at the beginning of October, anticipated what is becoming increasingly clear to impartial observers: for major powers such as the United States, but also for regional powers such as Israel, might is supposed to trump right. This is demonstrated by Israel's terrorisation of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, by the new US security strategy and by the violent reaching of South America. It is also becoming increasingly obvious that the EU is disregarding its proclaimed rule of law. These are all examples of the destruction of the international regulatory framework based on principles of international law, as agreed in 1945 in the Charter of the United Nations – after the horrors of two world wars.

Creeping, thunderous changes are underway in the West. A new political doctrine has taken root: Western Conservative (and younger) populist thinking is being rebuilt as something rougher, meaner, and far less sentimental, or tolerant.

It aspires to emerge too, as "dominant", deliberately coercive, and radical. Throwing components of the exiting order into the air to see if they can be landed in a beneficial way (i.e. greater rent revenues)[1] for the US.

The so-called Rules-Based Order blueprint (if it ever truly existed beyond narrative) has been ripped up. Today it is war without limits – without rules; without law; and in complete disdain for the UN Charter. Ethical boundaries, more particularly, are dismissed in parts of the West as "weak" "moral relativism". The point is to leave opponents stunned and frozen stick figures.

Deliberate disregard for rules

In parallel, something profound has reshaped Israeli and US foreign policy: Ignoring rules purposively to shock. Moving fast and breaking things. Over recent months, Israel has struck with military force in the West Bank, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Qatar and Tunisia – besides Gaza. In June, these two nuclear states bombed the nuclear facilities of a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty under IAEA protection – Iran.

This "moving fast; breaking things" phenomenon was clearly evident when Israel, with US support, launched its sneak attack on Iran on 12 June. It was also evident secondly, in the bureaucratic speed which took many by surprise, as the "European 3" members of the JCPOA, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action of 2015[2], – effected the "Snapback" of all JCPOA-mandated sanctions on Iran. Iranian attempts at diplomacy were swept aside remorselessly.

The invocation of sanctions Snapback was clearly rushed through to preempt the imminent "sunset" of the entire JCPOA framework on 18 October – after which the JCPOA will be 'no more'.

Whilst Russia and China view the US-orchestrated snapback ploy as illegal, procedurally flawed and, in their perspective, an "act" that legally never took place – the reality is chilling. It funnels Iran inexorably toward an US-Israeli ultimatum that it either capitulates fully to the US, or faces an overwhelming military onslaught.

Moving away from the Davos Consensus

This new power doctrine has emerged from a West in financial crisis – but being born of desperation, it may well fail. The wider western crisis of opposition to the establishment, however, is not as many Progressives or bureaucratic Technocrats think – simply resulting from an upsurge of regrettable "white" pushback.

As *Giuliano da Empoli*[3] has written in the FT:

"Until recently economic elites, financiers, entrepreneurs and managers of large companies relied on a political class of technocrats – or aspiring technocrats – from the right and left, moderate, reasonable, more or less indistinguishable from each other … who governed their countries on the basis of liberal democratic principles, in accordance with market rules, sometimes tempered by social considerations. That was the Davos consensus".

The collapse of global liberalism and its illusions, together with its technocratic structure of governance, has – in the eyes of the new élites – simply confirmed that the technocratic "expert" sphere was neither competent, nor grounded in reality.

So the "umbrella strategy"[4] of the Rules-Based International Order is over. The new era is one of coerced dominance – whether by Israel or the US This doctrine is centred on Israeli "dominance" – to which others logically must "submit". This is to be achieved either by financial or military pressure. And is symbolised in the shift of nomenclature in the US from Department of Defence to the "Department of War".

The role of the US technology elites

"The new American technological élites, the *Musks*, the *Zuckerbergs* and *Sam Altmans* of this world, have nothing in common with the technocrats of Davos. Their philosophy of life is not based on the competent management of the existing order but, on the contrary, on an irrepressible desire to throw everything up in the air. Order, prudence and respect for the rules – are anathema to those who have made a name for themselves by moving fast and breaking things", da Empoli elaborates.

By their very nature and background, the Tech overlords are more akin to nationalist-populist leaders (the *Trumps*, the *Netanyahus*, the *Ben Gavirs* and *Smotrichs*), and in a different way to the Evangelical faction (from which *Charlie Kirk* emerged), rather than to the moderate political classes of Davos whom they (collectively) despise.

Kirk believed that his calling from God was to be a fighter, a combatant in the culture wars. "Some people are called to heal the sick," he once said. "Some people are called to mend broken marriages." Kirk declared that his call was "to fight evil and proclaim truth. That's it". One commentator called it the politicisation of Evangelism to secure the domination of Jesus.

Stephen Miller, the White House deputy chief of staff, has said that "the day that Charlie died, the angels wept, but those tears have been turned into fire in our hearts. And that fire burns with a righteous fury that our enemies cannot comprehend or understand".

What is the common vision to these seemingly disparate western factions now embracing this rougher, meaner, and far less sentimental, or consensual political doctrine?

continued on page 6

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* *Alastair Crooke* is director and founder of the *Conflicts Forum* based in Beirut. Previously, as a British diplomat, he was an advisor on Middle East issues to *Javier Solana*, the EU's foreign policy chief. He is a member of the *Global Experts* of the *United Nations Alliance of Civilisations*.

"Terrorising the world …"
continued from page 5

What is the aim of tossing all the Middle East pieces up into the air with such brutalised effect, as is evident to the world from Gaza? Israeli regional hegemony and US control over the region's energy resources. Is that the aim? Certainly – yet it is more than that.

The new doctrine of Team Trump, the Israeli Right, and the Jewish billionaires supporting him, nevertheless have an overriding "war aim". This is not just about Israeli "dominance" and others having to "submit", as US Envoy *Tom Barrack* insists. It means "getting Iran under control" too – hence the Snapback is preparation for the "big war" to subjugate Iran.

A comprehensive hegemony project

One US Jewish billionaire, speaking earlier at a *Zionists of America* conference, was picturing a wider war extending to inside America: *Robert Shillman's* said his ample funding of ZoA was intended for "confronting enemies of Israel and the Jewish people [wherever] – defending against Islamists who wish to destroy Israel – and radical Leftist Jew-haters who wish to destroy the Jewish people".

Does this maelstrom across the Middle East nevertheless tie in with Trump's apparently separate and distinct bellicosity towards Venezuela (and the coincidental sweetheart deal with Argentina)? Yes – the point is to bring the shale fields of Argentina[5] and the huge oil reserves of Venezuela under US control – to give US global energy dominance with which to mitigate the threat from growing US deficits overwhelming the US government.

The Venezuela standoff connects to the Middle East project through being another aspect of a wider hegemonic project – consolidating the western hemisphere into America's domain of interest, alongside the Middle East.

Anarchistic radicalism …

How did the West reach this bellicose, dominance-seeking point? The key underlying metaphysics of the shift towards anarchic radicalism (seemingly) owes to a period of American thinking about greed, fairness, liberty, and dominance. As Evan Osnos argues in "The Haves and Have Yachts,"[6] over the past five decades, the Oligarchs and Tech overlords have increasingly rejected constraints on their ability to accrue wealth, disavowing the notion that their great resources entail any special responsibility towards their fellow citizens.

They have embraced a libertarian ethos which casts them simply as private individuals, responsible for their own fate, and entitled to enjoy their riches as they see fit. More significantly, they have not, however, forgone the prerogative of using their money to shape government and society to their techno-autarkic vision. The resulting pattern, traced in Osnos' book, has been a "simple arithmetic – of money making money".

The lesson the Tech overlords have assimilated is: when a state or any other entity becomes incompetent, the only historical cure for such political sclerosis is not dialogue, nor compromise; It is what the Romans called "proscriptio" – a formalised purge. *Sulla* knew this. *Caesar* perfected it. *Augustus* institutionalised it. Take the élite interests, deny them resources, strip them of property, and compel obedience … or else!

… and megalomania

The Trumpian and Tech élites of today are enamoured by the ancient notion of "greatness" – individual greatness – and the contribution that greatness can "offer" to civilization. Typically, in this concept there is always a strong element of the "outsider" being some kind of anarchic transgressor, who brings a new measure of energy into play which 'expert' insiders just cannot provide.

We all think "Trump" as we read those words. There is clearly a not-so-secret affinity between today's populist conservatism and anarchic radicalism. Which begs the question: Wild policy swings, constant uncertainty, erratic posts on *Truth Social* – is this in fact desperation as US greatness visibly ebbs? Or are we being prepped for something yet more contrarian, more radical still – some attempt at a global financial makeover?

'The only mission: War fighting'

"From this moment forward, the only mission of the newly-restored Department of War is this: War fighting; preparing for war and preparing to win – unrelenting – and uncompromising – in that pursuit", the US Secretary of War told his gathering of Generals in Washington on Tuesday.[7]

The world is on fire, and fear is being ramped up in Europe to high volume. It is "Russia, Russia" everywhere, "under every bed". Are we being truly "prepped", or is this simply European scare brinkmanship intent on enlisting the US in a project to weaken and dissolve Russia into distinct parts?

The collapse of the Soviet Union gave "old" Europe – the great European nations – the huge markets of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and of the former USSR – and also gave Europe resources and cheap energy too. The EU project per se, effectively was bought with the smell of money – the enticement of easy affluence.

As that affluence pops (and Trump just markedly accelerated the bust), and without Russia's market dismemberment, what price France, Germany or Italy retaining their former political clout or global influence? More to the point, European leaders are asking, "however can I get re-elected now".

The Russia "threat" brinkmanship[8] is being pushed into the "red zone" by Europe. But neither Europe nor the US seemingly possesses the mettle for real war. And certainly, neither do their publics. •

Notes (by *Karin Leukefeld*)

1 *Oxford Languages*; meaning of tribute: payment in money or goods, levy that a defeated people in particular must pay to the victor.

2 The *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* (JCPOA) is an agreement on Iran's nuclear programme that was signed on 14 July 2015 by China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union and Iran.

3 *Financial Times* of 26 September 2025; How tech lords and populists changed the rules of power (paywall)

4 *https://umbrellastrategie.de/*: The UMBRELLA strategy is a global equity investment strategy based on the selection of companies with high innovation potential, particularly in the pharmaceutical and new technology sectors.

5 Vaca Muerta, oil and gas-bearing shale fields. *https://taz.de/Fracking-in-Argentinien/!5927002*

6 Evan Owans, *The Haves and Have Yachts. Dispatches on the Ultrarich*. (The rich and their yachts – reports on the super-rich by Evan Osnos). Only available in English.

7 *https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4318394/hegseth-announces-war-department-reforms-in-sweeping-speech-to-top-military-bra/*

8 *Brinkmanship*: "The ability to get to the verge without getting into the war" – former US Secretary of State *John Foster Dulles* in a 1956 interview with Life magazine on diplomacy in foreign policy for the enforcement of one's own interests. *https://www.britannica.com/topic/brinkmanship*

Source: *https://strategic-culture.su/news/2025/10/08/moving-fast-breaking-things-a-new-doctrine-takes-root-a-new-era-of-coerced-dominance/* of 2 October 2025; slightly edited according to the German translation in *globalbridge.ch* of 7 October 2025.

Asia – a model for a multipolar, multilateral, and multicivilizational world

*A Conversation of Pascal Lottaz (Neutrality Studies) and Kishore Mahbubani**

Pascal Lottaz: Asia has transformed massively in just one century – from a region carved up by colonial empires to the powerhouse of today's emerging multipolar world. The SCO [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation], ASEAN… so many of the key pillars of the new global order are now anchored right here in Asia. To discuss the continent's stunning success and its future, I am joined today by the prolific Singaporean diplomat and academic, Dr. Kishore Mahbubani, the author of "Has China Won?", "The Asian 21st Century" and "Living the Asian Century". Ambassador Mahbubani, do you share my assessment that Asia is really going to be one of the centres of this new multipolar world?

Kishore Mahbubani: No, Asia is not going to become only a centre. It is going to become *the* centre. And of course, there will be multiple poles within Asia. Asia itself will be multipolar, not just part of a multipolar world. The key point which I emphasise in my writings is that the 200 years of Western domination of world history have been an aberration. Because from the year one to the year 1820, the two largest economies in the world were always China and India. It is only in the last 200 years that Europe and North America took off.

But this Western domination was always an aberration. It has come to an end, and it is ending very fast. And I always give one statistic to illustrate this. If you compare the combined economy of the European Union with China, in the year 2000 the EU's economy was eight times bigger than China's. Today, they are about the same size. And by 2050, Europe will be half the size of China.

The Europeans have got to understand that when you go from being eight times bigger than China to becoming half the size of China in 50 years, you have to learn to treat China with more respect, instead of making this sort of condescending comments that European leaders still make about China – this is just insane.

> "The United States of America represents the present, but Asia represents the future. That is where all the future growth is going to come from. It will be better for Europeans to adapt to this change in advance rather than to resist it. And acceptance definitely means that you have to make real concessions."

Yes, it is. Somehow this will just not leave the European mindset – they still believe everything revolves around them. But now reality is catching up very fast. One of our colleagues, Glenn Diesen, proffered this argument in a book: that Europe needs to get back to the idea that it is really just the western peninsula of Eurasia. Do you think this kind of reintegration of Europe into Asia will have to become a reality sooner or later?

Certainly. I think it is important for Europeans to understand that if you look objectively at the world today, Europe represents the past -– a beautiful past, by the way. And so I actually believe that Europe is going to become a fine museum for the world, in some ways. The United States of America represents the present, but Asia represents the future. That is where all the future growth is going to come from. It will be better for Europeans to adapt to this change in advance rather than to resist it. And acceptance definitely means that you have to make real concessions – for example, in institutions like the IMF and the *World Bank* – and not insist that the European voting share must still remain disproportionately high.

What do you think stands in the way of this system changing peacefully? Because right now we are seeing a lot of violence. We see a genocide in Gaza, the war in Ukraine, and the United States preparing to go to war with Venezuela. What makes this moment so violent in your view?

Well, overall, the war in Ukraine is certainly a tragedy, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine is illegal. It should be condemned. But at the same time, it is a war that could have been prevented if the Europeans had shown some degree of geopolitical competence. European geopolitical incompetence is responsible for this war, too, because in the run-up, they completely ignored some of Russia's real and legitimate security concerns. And certainly, the Gaza war is a tragedy, and a war in Venezuela would also be a tragedy.

But all things considered, what is stunning if you look at Asia, is that China has managed to enlarge its economy dramatically – as I have just mentioned – so that it is becoming the same size as that of the European Union, despite being only one-eighth its size in the year 2000. China has achieved this rise *peacefully*. And usually, when great powers emerge, they never do so peacefully. I mean, *Graham Allison*, in his book "Destined for War" (2014, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), said that Americans should not wish for China to become like America, because when America emerged as a great power in the 1890s, it was very violent. It declared war on Spain, conquered the Philippines and some of its neighbours. So clearly, China's peaceful emergence has been a gift to the world. That is what the West should appreciate, and accept the fact that China's rise has been peaceful, instead of trying to thwart it and thereby create a lot of problems for the world.

From your experience as a diplomat who has had to interact a lot with Europeans and Americans – the West in general – do you think they are able to do that? Do you think they will be able to jump over their own shadow and actually say, "Okay, fine, this time we're going to try to approach others on an equal footing"? Do you think the West will finally be able to realise that it has to approach others on

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* *Kishore Mahbubani* is a Distinguished Fellow at the *Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore* (NUS) and the author of numerous books. He was appointed Founding Dean of the *Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy* (LKY School) at NUS in 2004. From 2004 to 2017, Mahbubani served as dean and from 2006 to 2019 as Professor of Public Policy.

Pascal Lottaz is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law of Kyoto University (Japan). He comes from the Canton of Fribourg and is a member of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland. Lottaz runs the research network neutralitystudies.com and a *YouTube* channel of the same name.

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an equal footing, instead of constantly berating them for all sorts of alleged things?
I would say the more thoughtful people in the West understand that the world has changed, and the West has got to stop talking down, for example, to Asians. But many of the leaders cannot admit this. You remember President Joe Biden's famous statement that the Chinese have the goal of becoming the number one power in the world, but, as he said, "It ain't going to happen on my watch." No American president wants to be president of the United States when it becomes the number two power in the world. So that shows a certain lack of realism, because at some point – I do not know when – the Chinese economy will become the largest in the world. And it is better to prepare for this in advance and to accept it, rather than to keep denying it.

Earlier, for example, I mentioned the voting shares in the IMF. Even though both the EU and China are about the same size – they each have around 17–18% of the world's GNP – the EU's share of IMF voting rights is 27%, and China's share is 6%. Now, in theory, the voting shares in the IMF are supposed to represent one's share of global GNP. So the EU will have to cut its voting share from 27% to 17%, and China to increase its share from 6% to 17%. Then you would have voting shares that reflect the world of today, not the world of yesterday. That is a concrete example of how the Europeans are refusing to accept the fact that Asia has risen and that they could adapt and change.

Do you think it would be more realistic to try to nudge the West to actually adapt these institutions, or would it make more sense to just build new ones? Because it seems to me that at the moment, especially within BRICS, the idea is, "Let us build the new infrastructure, and if the West ever wants to join – maybe in the future – they can. But let us go ahead."
Well, I think that surprisingly, most Asian states are actually happy to live with the current global order that was created by the West in 1945, at the end of World War II. If you look at all the major global institutions – the United Nations, the UN family of institutions like the *World Health Organisation*, the *World Trade Organisation*, the IMF, the *World Bank*, you name it – they were all created by the West at the peak of its power at the end of World War II. Now, in theory, as Asia is rising, Asia could say, "We do not want these Western institutions; we want to create our own."

But actually, the Asians want to keep these institutions. Although, of course these institutions have to adapt and accept Asia's return.For example, you have the UN Security Council within the UN. In theory it has 15 members, but in practice there are five members who control it, the so-called P5: the United States, Russia, China, the UK, and France. The ten elected members are basically observers. The Council is controlled by the P5.

It is not necessarily a bad thing to have five permanent members with the power of veto. The point is, the great powers of today have to be represented, not the great powers of yesterday. That is what the Security Council was designed to do.

Let us take the UK, for example. I shall compare the UK to India. The reason I do so is that a hundred years ago, the British were able to rule India effortlessly. It is shocking that about a hundred thousand Englishmen were able to rule over three hundred million Indians – amazing, right?

Now of course that world will never exist again. But even as recently as in the year 2000, the British economy was three and a half times bigger than the Indian economy. Today, of course, the Indian economy is larger. And by 2050, the Indian economy will be about four times bigger than the British one. When that day comes, it will be absurd to have the UK as a permanent member of the UN Security Council while India is not.

So, if the British want to be gracious about this, they should say, "Okay, India is now a much more powerful country than we are." The British should graciously give up their permanent seat on the UN Security Council to India. I think the more thoughtful British realise that the time has come for them to give up their seat on the UN Security Council to India. These are exactly the kind of changes you need to make so you keep the institution of the UN, but modify its composition.

But in order to do that, the British would have to do it voluntarily, and the other four Security Council members would have to accept it, too. The United States might veto it. France might veto it and say, "No, you're not leaving the club." Is it realistic to believe that these declining powers are actually capable of saying, "Fine, for the greater good of everybody, we need to disempower ourselves and empower others"? We do not often see things like that in world politics, do we?
Yes, you are right. France could put in a veto, and the United States could put in a veto. You are right. But at the same time, they also have to figure out that the challenge to the UN Security Council – the danger for the UN Security Council – is that they may keep their present composition but lose their credibility. No one will listen to them. People will say, "Who are you? Who do you represent? Why should you British still be on the Council?" So, to keep its credibility, the Council has got to change its composition. That is the dilemma the current members of the P5 have: do they keep the composition and lose their credibility, or change the composition and keep their credibility?

In my book "The Great Convergence" I have suggested a comprehensive formula for reforming the UN Security Council. I call it the 7-7-7 formula. According to this, you would have seven permanent members in the UN Security Council. Those seven would of course be the United States, Russia, China, the European Union with one combined seat, and then, as the new members, India, Brazil, and either South Africa or Nigeria from Africa. So, seven permanent members. Then you would have seven semi-permanent members, because for every new member that wants to come in, there is always a neighbour who says, "Why not me?" If Brazil wants to come in, Argentina says, "Why not me?" When India wants to come in, Pakistan says, "Why not me?" So for every member that wants to come in, there is a neighbour who says, "Why not me?" These countries that say, "Why not me?" can become semi-permanent members of the Security Council, rotating every eight years and then coming back in. So, they get something too – they also benefit. And then you have seven elected members. So I believe something along the lines of 7-7-7 can work. In fact, the *Quincy Institute* in Washington, D.C., is trying to adapt my formula and suggest it as a way of reforming the UN Security Council.

In order for that reform to be passed, you would need to change the UN Charter. And that would have to go through the General Assembly and the Security Council. So would it need just a simple majority in the General Assembly, or more?
I think, probably a two-thirds majority. But if you have a formula that creates a lot of winners, that changes things. You see, right now, the current formulas create losers, not winners, for a lot of countries. But the formula I have suggested creates about 30 to 40 winners. And those winners have a stake in voting for it.

How do you sell it to those who would have to agree to reduce their relative power?
For the smaller states, it is in fact better if they do not have to compete with the middle powers in the UN Security Council. Because if you look carefully at the history of the Council, some of the middle powers – like Brazil, for example – keep coming back every eight or ten years. And then the smaller states have no chance of getting elected. They have to run against the Brazils, the Indias, the Japans, and

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such like countries. But under my formula, the middle powers are in a separate category. So the smaller states will compete among themselves, and they will have more scope to join in. So there will be more space – and if you look at it carefully – under my formula, there will be more opportunities for smaller states to get elected.

There is no question the UN needs reform. Your formula would be a good idea. The central question is how to do it – how to get it through. And I wonder if ASEAN – I mean, Singapore being part of ASEAN – also has some lessons to offer on how a multipolar world can be structured, where it is not all about top-down decision-making but more of a consensus model. What is your view on this?
Well, I think *ASEAN* is definitely a role model for the world. Because we have not discussed some of the other changes happening in the world. And I always say that the new world that is coming is what I call a "3M world,". The 3M means it will be *multi-civilizational, multipolar,* and *multilateral.* And the reason the world needs to study *ASEAN* is that *ASEAN* is the most successful multi-civilizational association in the world. In fact, no other region is as diverse as Southeast Asia. Indeed, among the roughly 700 million people in Southeast Asia, you have about 250 million Muslims, 150 million Christians, 150 million Buddhists – Mahayana and Hinayana – plus Taoists, Confucianists, Hindus, and even quite a few communists. So this is by far the most diverse region on planet Earth. Yet it has preserved itself as an oasis of peace and prosperity.

What *ASEAN* has achieved is to provide a multi-civilizational laboratory for the world, showing how different civilizations can live together in peace. And that is what the 21st century is going to be all about, because Western civilization has got to learn to live in peace with a stronger Chinese civilization, a stronger Indian civilization, and a stronger Islamic civilization. The reason why only *ASEAN* can offer a model is that if you look at the European Union, for example, this has been around much longer than *ASEAN*, but it still remains essentially a Christian club. And, you know, Turkey has been applying to join for about 30 or 40 years now. The fact that the European Union cannot admit even one Islamic member shows that it is not psychologically preparing itself for a multi-civilizational world. But *ASEAN* is teaching the world how to live in a multi-civilizational world.

Another thing the West seems unwilling to give up is this habit of thinking in black and white – friend or enemy, ally or adversary. But ASEAN, and Asia in general, does not go along that route. The rest of the world does not move toward forming more and more alliances. How do you actually see the security structure? What can we learn from how Asia has organised its security structure?
Well, one thing you notice is that, relatively speaking, in Asia the major powers are not building alliance structures. China is not building an alliance structure. India is not building an alliance structure. Indonesia is not building an alliance structure. Of course, some Asian states are allies of the West – I mean Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand. But at the same time, they are also pragmatic. Even though they are allies of the United States, they still maintain good relations with China. Although, as you know, right now Japan and China seem to be having a very difficult time. But they have gone through difficult patches before and come out of them, so I hope they will come out of this difficult patch, too.

But the notion of creating exclusive alliances is not part of the Asian tradition, because we are much more inclusive. We say we had rather have people who are different from us in the same club, because we have to live with people who are different from us, not just those who are similar to us. Under the Western system, you have to be a democracy before you can join a Western alliance, right? But some of the states in *ASEAN* are democracies, some are not. We say, okay, you choose your political system; we will not pass judgment on it. We accept you for what you are, and we will live with you. And that acceptance of diversity is a big asset for Asia, as opposed to the Western tradition of creating like-minded alliances.

Do you think the pressure on Southeast Asia and other regions will increase to have more balanced security ties – that is, not to put all their eggs in one basket? Singapore seems to be caught in this field of tension to a particular degree: are we an integral part of the U.S. alliance system or are we not? In my view, the pressure will increase for countries to be more neutral, in the sense of having more partners. How do you see this?
Well, I think certainly in the case of, for example, most Asian countries there is no question. My book "Has China Won?", which you mentioned, tries to explain why the competition between the U.S. and China will definitely accelerate over the next 10 to 20 years. This is normal, because the world's number one power will never give up its position gracefully. It will always try to push down the number one emerging power. So the fact that the United States is pushing down China is logical, predictable behaviour for any number one power. We should not be surprised by it. But what is interesting is that, unlike in the case of the Cold War – when the United States was very successful in recruiting allies, both in advanced European countries and also among developing countries – back then, countries like Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, and to some extent even China were allies of the United States; and this time, the situation is different.

This time around, in the contest between the United States and China, almost all the major countries in the world – especially in the Global South – have said, "We are not taking sides. We want to be friends with the United States of America. We want to be friends with China." And I think that is the pattern. That is the pattern. Certainly, among the eleven *ASEAN* countries their position has been made very clear: they want to be friends with the United States, they want to be friends with China, and they do not want to take sides. That, in general, also reflects the position of the countries of the Global South.

There is this very telling video of the foreign minister of India, Mr. Jaishankar, in an interview about a year and a half or two years ago. The Western media interviewer really pressed him: when push comes to shove, will you be on the side of the West or with China? Will you be with the West, or will you be with China? It seems not to register in the West that you can have friendly or non-aligned relationships with several sides. Do you also observe that?
Yes, yes, certainly. And India will emerge as a strong, independent pole in a multipolar world. You know, I have already given you the example of how India's economy is growing very rapidly compared to the British economy. And in the case of India, it is already the fifth-largest economy in the world, and very soon, within four to five years, it will become the third-largest economy in the world. So clearly, ten years from now, the United States and China will hold the number one and number two positions, and India will be the number three. There is no reason for India to align itself with either the United States or China, because it is big enough and strong enough to be an independent third pole. And frankly, the rest of the world will be happy to see India as an independent third pole, because if that independent third pole does not take sides, it provides political cover for other countries also not to take sides in this US-China contest.

A very concrete question: do you think it is about time we start reforming that very old part of international law, the law of
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neutrality, to adapt it to this modern idea of being multi-aligned?
Well, I do not think they will necessarily be neutral. In my view, the word "non-aligned" is still much more accurate, because on some issues, clearly, countries will work closely with the United States, for example, since the United States is still a leading country in many areas and the world will still have to work with it. And in other areas, they will work closely with China. So that is not necessarily being neutral – they will be non-aligned and willing to work with anybody.

The interesting thing is that non-alignment has never been codified in international law, at least not in any way similar to how neutrality was codified. Do you think the UN should work on non-aligned principles and norms to become more useful?
Well, I think what is more important is for states to show their positions through their behaviour. Behaviour is a much stronger indication. So, for example, the European states – they could have chosen to be an independent pole. In the geopolitical contest between the United States and China, they could have chosen to be friends with the United States and friends with China, right? And that would be a sensible thing for Europe to do, because in many ways, in the long run, the biggest challenge for Europe is not going to come from Russia, right? Russian tanks are not going to invade Germany or France.

In fact, the biggest challenge to Europe is going to come from the demographic explosion in Africa. In 1950, Europe's population was double that of Africa's. Today, Africa's population is two and a half times bigger than Europe's, and by 2100, Africa's population could be ten times bigger than Europe's. So Europe has a very important vested interest in the economic development of Africa. Every dollar invested in Africa is a gift to Europe, because it creates jobs for Africans to stay in Africa.

If China is now the biggest investor in Africa – when China invests in Africa, Europe should send China a thank-you note and say, "Thank you for investing in Africa, because you are creating jobs in Africa." But instead of thanking China for investing in Africa, the Europeans have shown their geopolitical incompetence by slapping China, criticising China for investing there. This is a classic case of shooting yourself in the foot, when you criticise China.

When I listen to European leaders like *Ursula von der Leyen, Kaja Kallas*, or *Annalena Baerbock*, the former foreign minister of Germany, I find that they do not take a step back and make a rational, pragmatic, long-term strategic calculation of what Europe's interests are in the long run and what Europe should do to protect itself.

So in some ways, I am actually the best friend Europe has, because I am trying to tell the Europeans: look out for your own interests first. And your own interests dictate that you should not necessarily take the side of the United States against China, because your interest – geopolitics – is a combination of two words: geography and politics. And because the geography of Europe is different from the geography of the United States, it makes sense for Europe to say, "okay, when it comes to our geography, we need to work with China first to create jobs in Africa". And Europe should not join the United States in blocking Chinese investments in Africa.

And in some ways *Donald Trump* should be seen as a gift to Europe. Because Donald Trump says, "My mission is not to make Europe great again. My mission is MAGA –make America great again." And therefore Europe should say, "Okay, if your mission is to make America great again, our mission is to make Europe great again." So Europeans should become more pragmatic in the way they handle their geopolitical issues.

> "Europeans should become more pragmatic in the way they handle their geopolitical issues. But as Henry Kissinger told me in our last one-on-one conversation, the mental quality of European leaders has diminished a lot. They are no longer able to engage in long-term strategic thinking the way previous generations of leaders could."

But as *Henry Kissinger* told me in our last one-on-one conversation, the mental quality of European leaders has diminished a lot. They are no longer able to engage in long-term strategic thinking the way previous generations of leaders could.

Well, the United States was also very successful in building these transatlantic ties and in fostering a lot of European leaders who see more value in continuing those ties and strengthening the U.S. than in strengthening their own domestic capacities, and that is a tragedy. But let us put that aside. Do you think these things will come back into balance in the long or short term? Or do you foresee more turmoil coming, especially for Europe?
You know, there was a famous British statesman – *Lord Palmerston*, I think his name was – who said that countries do not have permanent friends, they do not have permanent enemies; they only have permanent interests. Now, in the Cold War, it was not values that brought the United States and the European Union together. There was a convergence of interests. Both felt equally threatened by the Soviet Union, and they said, "okay, if you have a common enemy, you cooperate," right? The Soviet Union was right there on the border of Europe. In fact, Soviet tanks were very close to Germany, so it made sense for Germany to form a close alliance with the United States of America.

Now, about China – there is a distance between Brussels and Beijing of 12,000 kilometres or more. China is not a threat to Europe. So, in that case, if you want to look after your own interests – as, by the way, to be fair to Donald Trump, he is actually looking after American interests very well, right? He is taking care of American interests – so I think Europe should also learn to take care of its own interests and decide where those interests converge and where they diverge.

Because in the long run, geopolitical alliances are not based on values; they are based on interests, as Lord Palmerston said. And the European Union needs to do a complete strategic reboot and figure out where its interests lie. Because without doing that reboot, you know, the Europeans are making mistakes. For example, *Susan Glasser*, a writer for "The New Yorker", wrote recently that the current European policy is one of practicing "strategic self-abasement." Those are her words – strategic self-abasement. Now, strategic self-abasement means kowtowing. And you never get anyone's respect when you kowtow. Therefore, the Europeans will have to work out their own independent foreign policy and not rely on others to safeguard their interests.

May your words, Ambassador, resound in the ears of the Europeans – or the European Union, at least. I have to be very mindful of your time, and I thank you very much for speaking with us. •

Source: *https://www.video-translations.org/transcripts/2070_Pascal_2025_11_25_de-DE.pdf* of 26 November 2025 (slightly abridged and linguistically revised version of the transcript of the spoken word)

"Crossroads of International Criminal Law"

International conference in Belgrade

by Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

From 30 October to 1 November 2025, the "Serbian Association for International Criminal Law" (SUMKP 2001), based in Belgrade and the Beijing-based "World Forum on Crime and International Criminal Law" (IFCCLGE), jointly held an international scientific conference in Belgrade. Eighty-three academics, legal experts and representatives of international organisations from many countries were invited to share their knowledge on current and fundamental international criminal law issues. The conference was entitled: "Crossroads of International Criminal Law".

The president of the Serbian Association for International Criminal Law, Professor Sreto Nogo, during his opening speech. (Picture: SUMKP.RS)

The topic was chosen in light of the global tectonic shifts in the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world. In addition to contributions from various countries, key topics were discussed at two roundtables: "Introduction of the new criminal offence of 'political genocide' into international criminal legislation". The second roundtable was entitled "On the Hague Ad Hoc Tribunal, the Residual Mechanism and the initiative to annul all decisions of these bodies."

Participants from the following countries were represented: Egypt, Albania, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Italy, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, the Republic of Srpska, Russia, Switzerland, Serbia, Spain, Uganda and Hungary.

Professor *Sreto Nogo*, President of SUMKP 2001, who worked for many years in the Yugoslav Ministry of Justice and as a high-ranking official in the Serbian government, warmly welcomed the conference participants. He said that international relations were increasingly influenced by power politics in the face of a changing world order. He stated that meaningful global reform required the participation of China. Nogo was highly critical of the *International Criminal Court* (ICC) – not to be confused with the *International Court of Justice* (ICJ). He warned against double standards and the politicisation of the UN special tribunals (ad hoc criminal courts convened by the United Nations). He called for people to raise their voices, for example by submitting a proposal to the UN Security Council (see below).

The opening speech was given by Italian Professor *Pino Arlacchi*, President of the IFCCLGE and former Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the *United Nations Drug Control Programme*. His speech focused on the current wars. They contradict the founding principles of the UN, which are "to save future generations from the scourge of war" and "maintain international peace". "Every day there is terrible news. What can be done to protect ourselves?" he asked. The vision outlawing war was already laid down in 1928 in the *Kellogg-Briand Pact*, but it failed to gain acceptance. Civil society must not remain silent about conflicts. As history shows, the same fate could befall us. He praised the UN Charter as a document that aims at preventing armed conflicts. In view of today's prevailing practice of the "legal use of force", Arlacchi called for a restructuring of the UN, while retaining the best aspects of the current system. "It is not impossible to achieve this; it just requires the will and perseverance of people to create a more humane world", he concluded.

Wide range of topics

Following the opening speeches, the participating countries had the opportunity to report on the status of their research and areas of focus. The focus was on national and transnational criminal law provisions and considerations. The range of topics was very broad. Here are just a few of the topics from the conference programme:

- "Criminal liability of company directors for omissions in relation to the actions of their subcontractors" (Brazil),
- "Challenges of AI and money laundering in the application of international criminal law" (Spain),
- "Organ transplantation: various control strategies" (Serbia),
- "Enforcement international sentencing jurisprudence in Northern Uganda" (Uganda),
- "Preventing flight and migration: international social work in crisis situations" (Germany),

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The International Forum on Crime and International Criminal Law (IFCCLGE)

ef. The *International Forum on Crime and International Criminal Law* was founded in 2009 by Professor *He Bingsong*, a renowned Chinese legal scholar, and other criminal law and criminology scholars from eight countries, including Professor *Pino Arlacchi*. The forum offers criminal law experts a comprehensive platform for international exchange on reforms, innovations, integration and the development of criminal law theory.

The Serbian Association for International Criminal Law

The Serbian Association for International Criminal Law was founded in 2001 as a non-partisan, non-governmental and non-profit association of citizens with the aim of researching, studying and improving scientific, professional and educational programs in the field of criminal law. The association brings together lawyers and experts who deal with criminal law disciplines. By organising conferences, seminars and publishing collections of papers, the association contributes to the affirmation of law as a science and profession and its application in practice.

Source: https://sumkp.rs

"'Crossroads of International ...'"
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– "Efficiency and effectiveness of the *International Criminal Court*" (Albania),
– "Is international criminal jurisdiction feasible and desirable today? Lessons from the ad hoc tribunals and the ICC" (Greece),
– "Extradition requests and immunity of the accused in international crimes" (Georgia),
– "Abuse of big data modelling technologies in the digital economy" (China).

Professor *Sergey Baburin*, politician and constitutional lawyer from Russia, delivered a message of greeting from *Alexander N. Savenkow*, Director of the *Institute for State and Law* at the *Russian Academy of Sciences*. In his greetings he praised the conference topic as being highly relevant. International criminal law, which has been the basis for the international legal order and peaceful coexistence between states since the *Nuremberg Trials*, is now facing global changes due to new forms of international crime. This requires a reassessment of existing legal instruments and the development of effective mechanisms for criminal prosecution. Baburin spoke about the "civilisational nature of the challenges facing international law today". International relations are very unstable today. The war in Ukraine is also a war between civilisations. In the field of family life, Western societies lack respect for elder people. A state should emanate kindness and friendliness, i.e., be a moral state. International law has been distorted, particularly with regard to the loss of sovereignty. As an example of double standards, he cited the 1999 war in Yugoslavia, where NATO carried out a "humanitarian intervention". The West did not intervene in the genocide in Ukraine in 2014. He proposed incorporating moral and spiritual values into international law.

Political genocide and special tribunals

Lively and sometimes controversial discussions took place at the two roundtables. The first roundtable focused on the proposal to introduce "political genocide" (*policide*) as a new offense in international criminal law. Professor *Jove Kekenovski* (North Macedonia) provided an introduction to the topic (here according to the written text):

"Political genocide constitutes the systematic and intentional abuse of political power, institutions and international mechanisms for the purpose of denying, erasing or redefining the national, cultural, and political identity of a people or a community, undermining or abolishing the right of a people to self-determination and self-identification". Today, there exist forms of systematic destruction of political and cultural identity that do not require the use of physical force; yet, political genocide can produce consequences for the political, cultural and national identity of a community equally destructive as those of classical genocide. The extension of existing international criminal law to include the offence of "political genocide" seeks to create a legal basis for sanctioning such acts. "This is also a civilisational obligation to preserve diversity, freedom and political autonomy of peoples in contemporary world." A corresponding resolution was adopted at the conference.

It was fascinating to observe how each country's history and culture was reflected in the individual contributions to the discussion. One participant from Azerbaijan preferred to refer to the genocide of the Armenians as a "war against Armenia". Another participant from Egypt considered it unnecessary to create new terms. A participant from Greece compared the discussion about the term political genocide with the term colonialism and neocolonialism. Instead of adding a new term to international criminal law, he suggested that the historical context should be taken into account in each case; Palestine was the best example of this; in the war in Ukraine, for example, the language ban (Russian); in Cuba, for example, the blockade. Establishing a federal system would be the way to resolve the conflicts in the Balkans as a whole. Another participant from the Republic of Srpska pointed out that the protection of minorities was also an issue. A participant from Russia recalled the ethnic cleansing in Greece and concluded that the term political genocide was like a scalpel and should be used as such.

The discussion at the second roundtable was just as lively. The topic here was the ad hoc UN court for the Yugoslav Wars. A participant from Montenegro stated that 70 per cent of those arrested were Kosovars and only 30 per cent were Serbs, and: there had also been massacres of Serbs in Kosovo. *Carla del Ponte* had once said that NATO was an ally of the special tribunal, which meant that it could not be challenged. The poor treatment of prisoners in The Hague was also discussed. A participant from Greece called for the release of the prisoners; this would require the involvement of the international legal community, for example by having 100 lawyers protest in front of the prison in The Hague. He also emphasised that the ICC did not represent the international community.

At the end of this discussion forum, an initiative was proposed to be addressed to the UN Security Council. The Council is called upon "to adopt a resolution annulling all decisions on the establishment of the 'International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia'". It also calls for the annulling "of all legal consequences of the convictions rendered against any persons prosecuted before the ICTY or its legal successor, the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals".

"It was fascinating to observe how each country's history and culture was reflected in the individual contributions to the discussion."

The resolution stated "that the *International Criminal Court* (ICC) – established by the *Rome Statute* – constitutes an adequate and necessary foundation for the reaffirmation of international justice through the adjudication of an independent and impartial court competent to try those accused of genocide or other serious international crimes, in accordance with the principles of sovereignty, the rule of law and general international law."

Accountability

Another proposal was put forward by *Srđan Aleksić*, a Serbian lawyer and legal representative of numerous victims who developed cancer as a result of DU bombing during the 1999 Yugoslavian War. He referred to the consequences of the war and the massive damage to the environment and health, and proposed launching an initiative to hold NATO accountable.

One participant drew attention to the environmental damage caused in 1999, for example in Kosovo. His proposal: Environmental crime (ecocide) should be added to the list of international crimes.

A participant from Georgia saw double standards as the main problem in the application of law. There is too much political influence. "We must adhere more closely to conventions", he said. "In international criminal law, as in administrative law, it is always a question of power."

The various contributions and discussions were characterised by a high degree of seriousness and objectiveness. Language barriers were overcome with the help of professional translators and the spontaneous assistance of some of the participants. The exceptionally hospitable welcome during the three days and the friendly atmosphere contributed greatly to the success of the conference. •

Young people want to live in peace

German high school students demonstrate against conscription and war

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

On 5 December, tens of thousands of high school students demonstrated against conscription and war in around 90 German cities. On the same day, the German Bundestag passed a law on military service that moves towards conscription and ignores the concerns of schoolchildren.

Many German media outlets reported on the demonstrations. Short excerpts from students' statements were often quoted. These quotes and the videos available on the internet with various student statements, but also a look at the many posters carried by the students, show that the demonstrations were coordinated and that party slogans could be heard and seen. However, most participants were independent-minded, unorganised young people who also had their say. Microphones were passed around, and anyone who wanted to say something could do so. The statements were refreshingly unpolished and elaborate.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, the state's student representation has also spoken out – with a statement that I would like to see from German politicians. It criticises the federal government's security policy, warns of "*increasing attacks on democracy and society*" and sees "*exaggerated portrayals of a Russian threat as a form of media manipulation designed to stir up social fear and justify military measures*".[1] [emphasis km]

Chancellor *Friedrich Merz* set an example of this in his speech at the CSU party conference on 13 December. Contrary to the facts, he once again painted a picture of a Russian threat: Russia wanted to (forcibly) restore the Soviet Union within its old borders. Peace in Ukraine respecting Russian interests was a new "Munich Agreement" of 1938. Germany gave young people "many opportunities […], but then we also want you to make a contribution […] We are doing this on a voluntary basis now, and if necessary, we will make it mandatory before the end of this legislative period."

Other politicians had tried to curry favour with the students, *Boris Pistorius* taking the cake. On 5 December, *tagesschau.de* wrote: "Defence Minister Boris Pistorius himself did not take offence at the strikes in his speech to the Bundestag. He described them as 'great'. They showed the interest and commitment of the students – and that they 'know what is at stake'." Pistorius is the minister who is at the forefront of making Germany "fit for war" and reintroducing conscription.

After the flood disaster in Germany's Ahr Valley in the summer of 2021, numerous young people helped and continue to help with great dedication. As can be seen here, they do so with joy. Voluntarily and for their fellow human beings. (Picture German Foundation for Monument Protection/Jan Bosch)

On 5 December, the German website *NachDenkSeiten* published a lengthy text by a young man of about 30 who commented on conscription (see box page 14). I find this text very worth reading and I was also pleased about the demonstrations. It may be that the students who stayed away from school on the morning of 5 December violated school rules.

But I also had to think of *Wolfgang Borchert*.

He began his short story "On this Tuesday" with a description of a school lesson during dying in war:

"On this Tuesday,

they practised writing capital letters at school. The teacher wore thick glasses. They had no rims. They were so thick that her eyes looked very quiet. Forty-two girls sat in front of their blackboards, writing in capital letters:

OLD FRITZ HAD A TIN DRINKING CUP. BIG BERTHA [howitzer; heavy gun] SHOT ALL THE WAY TO PARIS. IN WAR, ALL FATHERS ARE SOLDIERS.

Ulla reached her nose with the tip of her tongue. Then the teacher nudged her. You spelled war without the 'r', Ulla. War is spelled with an 'r'. 'R' as in rim. How many times have I said that? The teacher took a book and put a tick next to Ulla's name. Tomorrow you will copy the sentence ten times – neatly – understood? Yes, said Ulla, thinking: She with her glasses."

So what matters?

Or should today's young people wait until, after another big war, the voices of the young victims of war have to be read again – as was the case after the First and Second World Wars: "All Quiet on the Western Front"[2], "War Letters of Fallen Students"[3] or the memories of a young German soldier of the exterminatory war against the Soviet Union in 1941–1945: "Strangely foreign to myself"[4].

A coordination centre for the student protests has announced on the internet[5] that the nationwide demonstrations are to continue on 5 March 2026.

It also states:

"Conscription is to be reintroduced. Initially as 'voluntary military service', but one thing is already certain: if not enough of us sign up, lots will be drawn and then it will become compulsory for everyone. The argument is that we should be able to wage war for Germany.

But what about our right to live in peace and decide for ourselves how we want to live our lives? What about Article 4, para 3 of the Grundgesetz (German basic law), according to which no one may be forced to serve in the armed forces? We do not want to be locked up in barracks for six months of our lives, trained in drill and obedience, and taught to kill. War is not a prospect for the future and is destroying our livelihoods.

Whether it's the news or talk shows, almost everyone is talking and discussing it. Politicians, the

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What comes next?

by Nicolas Riedl

And then? What comes next? After all 18-year-olds have been mustered? After "human resources" have been mustered out or deemed fit for service based on combat effectiveness criteria? Then... we'll probably be ready for war in two to three years.

And then? What comes next? A current poster campaign by the German Armed Forces, which looks as if *Orwell* himself had written it, lists 70 reasons for the existence of the German Armed Forces on the occasion of its 70th anniversary [in 2025]. Several times, peace of whatever kind is used here as a *sales pitch* for war. So we should join the largest peace movement – according to the German Armed Forces' latest self-description – heavily armed and... yes... and then what?

What would happen in the event of a so-called state of tension? Which might be declared if another *Media Markt* drone strayed into the vicinity of an airport. And then? Would it still be permissible to criticise the army in public? Or would that fall under Section 89 of the Criminal Code ["Anti-constitutional influence on the Bundeswehr and public security organs"]? Would the German Armed Forces still fight for my right to oppose them? As one of the 70 posters promises. I'm asking for a friend, of course.

Now suppose we had this crisis and the whole country switched to war mode... yes... and then what?

Would peace come? Eventually? Would that be the darkest hour before the dawn? But when exactly would this peace come? And above all – how? By young men... and women... shooting, bombing and sniping the young men and women of another nation? More specifically, young Russian women and young Russian men. Let's assume that our uniformed and armed peace activists did this. Let's assume that they made their visions of bringing Russia to its knees come true. Then I ask again: and then what?

What comes next? What would come next? I'd rather speak in the subjunctive. Would we then have peace? Does the key to peace lie in a bombed-out Russia? In a Russia in which, once again, every family would have at least one death to mourn? Let us assume that this would be the accomplished work of the federal peace movement, a defeated Russia in which *Putin* has been removed from power or even killed outright – then the question arises again: and then?

Would we then live in peace? Would we then live in good neighbourliness with this huge country, which has been relieved of its diabolical leader? Would we be certain that the bereaved families of the Russians killed would not seek revenge, that they would not harbour hatred towards Germans or the West in general? Would we be certain that in this case no power vacuum would form in Russia and that the country would not fall back into the chaotic state of the 1990s?

And then? ... Then I ask myself what it would our own backyard look like. Would we then have the freedom again that – according to the German Armed Forces – does not come for free? And what freedom exactly? The freedom we were all allowed to enjoy between 2020 and 2022? When you weren't even allowed to sit alone on a park bench and read a book? Is that the freedom we need to defend? To be honest, I'd rather be a real hero – the kind of real hero the Federal Government outlined in 2020: a real hero who stays at home. On the sofa. From there, after the war is over, I can look out of the window when our service women und servicemen return, our peace activists. The peace activists who, after their peace movement, their peace march movement, are probably no longer quite so mobile – I mean... without legs and so on. Then, moving, mobility in general, is rather difficult. Older people still remember the sight of wounded and crippled people from the war, moving along the streets with severed limbs. When we see this sight ubiquitously again, then we can talk about it once more... about *hashtag* cityscape. Provided, of course, that there is still such a thing as a city, because – a quick *reminder* – Russia is a nuclear power. And if a nuclear war broke out, then... well... then there would be no more "then" for me to ask.

But even if not a single nuclear bomb left its hangar and the war were fought purely conventionally … yes … and then what? How can there be peace when *Generation Z* is physically and mentally reduced to a state similar to that of the war generation? How should peace emerge when this vicious circle starts all over again? The vicious circle that begins with mothers and fathers traumatised by war, who are once again emotionally absent from their children and even become violent towards them? The baby boomer generation can tell you a sad thing or two about this, with the sound of slaps serving as the *snare drum*.

So, what vision of the future do all those who are so fervently calling for military readiness have in mind?

The answer to this question is quite simple. These people have no vision, no answer to the question: what next? They have no ideas, no plans, not even sketches for a world worth living in. It is this war fever that prevents them from thinking about the morning after. The focus is on letting a genie out of the bottle that will be extremely difficult to recapture, and only after many years.

Everything that people are supposed to risk their lives for is a complete farce. Ostensibly, it is the fight for a supposedly prosperous and free country, but one in which bridges collapse, pensioners collect deposit bottles and critics need bathrobes. In 1999, former NATO commander *Wesley Clark* mused in an interview with "The New Yorker" (2003): "I mean, what if we find out one day that America is just a land of hamburger stands? What have we got to defend?" This thought can be applied to Germany in the medium term or even today.

The intertwining of high finance and political office is more obvious than ever, and the sell-off is in full swing. Against this backdrop, if you still feel compelled to do what really matters – go ahead! Just be clear about one thing: You are not fighting for the FRG, for the Federal Republic of Germany. No. At best, you are fighting for the BRD – for *BlackRock Deutschland*.

And then?

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"Young people want to live …"
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armed forces and various presenters are arguing that we should reintroduce conscription.

But no one is talking to us.

No one asks us what we want.

No one wants to know what we think about it.

But we are the ones affected! It is our lives they want to discuss and decide on! That is why we are forcing them to listen to why we are against conscription!"

Time and again, there have been young people who have had a particular sensitivity to right and wrong. In a time of war and pure power politics – only for one's own "interests" and no longer for the good of all people – in which the powerful and the "clever" of the world lose all sense of right and wrong, power takes precedence over justice and this is even embellished with propaganda, for example as "realpolitik", this sensitivity is a valuable treasure.

Supporting young people in following their sensitivity to right and wrong and not allowing themselves to be swayed is a major task. •

[1] Quoted from *https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/regional/nordrheinwestfalen/wdr-schulstreik-gegen-wehrdienst-aenderungen-demos-am-freitag-in-nrw-100.html* of 5 December 2025

[2] Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*, first edition 1929; film 2022 (English)

[3] Witkop, Philipp (ed.). *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten*. [War letters from fallen students]. With a foreword by Wolfgang Helbich, Weltbild-Verlag 2013

[4] Schmitz, Stefan (ed.). *Willy Peter Reese. Mir selber seltsam fremd. Russland 1941–44* [Strangely alien to myself. The inhumanity of war. Russia 1941–44], Claasen-Verlag 2003

[5] *https://schulstreikgegenwehrpflicht.com/*

Bring joy and laughter back into our homes

What children in war zones around the world wish for

by Eliane Perret

In 1941, in the midst of the Second World War, the American composer *Katherine Kennicott Davis* wrote a Christmas carol entitled "The Little Drummer Boy". The origin of the song is one of the mysteries of the Christmas season, as *Hajej, nynej* from Czechia and *Patapan* from France are mentioned as little-known muses of Davis. "The Little Drummer Boy" is a song of peace for all people around the world. It has been interpreted and performed in different versions by many children's choirs and artists for a long time.[1]

More than sixty years later, British children's author *Bernadette Watts* turned this story into a picture book and illustrated it with delicate drawings. It depicts the life of an orphan boy who lives in extreme poverty. Only thanks to the charitable gifts he receives when he plays his little drum can he cope with his difficult everyday life. When he hears about the birth of the Christ Child, he would like to go with the many people, the kings and the shepherds, who want to honour him with rich gifts. But he has nothing he can imagine giving as a gift. All he has is his little drum. But it is precisely with this that, after a star has shown him the way to the crib, he can offer his drum roll as a gift to the newborn.[2]

'May God bring joy and laughter back into our home'

This deep desire of people to live together in peace, which underpins the song of the little drummer boy, unfortunately remains an unfulfilled dream for many people today. Millions of children, women and men around the world continue to live in great fear, insecurity and threat. Violence and death are part of their everyday lives. International regulations designed to prevent injustice and war seem to have no validity for them, including for the people of Gaza and the West Bank. For decades, they have been victims of arbitrary humiliation, disenfranchisement and violence.

This was also the case between 2008 and 2014, when three more wars targeted the civilian population: *Ramzi al-Far* was seven years old when the first of these wars broke out. When the Israeli army attacked his homeland for the third time in an offensive from July to August 2014, he was attending the *Edward Said National Conservatory of Music* (ESNCM) in Gaza City. The air and ground attacks caused unimaginable destruction. Thousands of homes were rased to the ground, electricity and water supplies were cut off, and the entire civilian infrastructure was severely damaged. This third Gaza war lasted 51 days and cost the lives of over 2,100 Palestinians, nearly 80 per cent of whom were civilians, including over 500 children. Over 100,000 people lost their homes and were driven out of the Gaza Strip, with entire neighbourhoods left in ruins after intensive bombing.[3]

For Ramzi al-Far and his family, too, it was once again a matter of survival. Ramzi had meanwhile founded the *Al-Takht al-Sharqi Orchestra* (The Arab Orchestra) together with four young musicians between the ages of 12 and 16. They were all born in Gaza and came from families with different religious backgrounds. At the ESNCM, they were given the opportunity to study both Middle Eastern and Western music free of charge. They seized their opportunity, and hard work led them to outstanding achievements (despite their daily lives being spent amid Israeli bombing raids). The conservatory was a refuge for them, a place where they could live out their love of music. It was a difficult time, as Ramzi-al-Far, the 13-year-old tabla player, reported: "I used to play indoors to drown out the noise of the bombing. But it didn't help; the bombing is louder than the music."

Saleh al-Najjar, director and founder of ESNCM, understood the importance of his school and music for Ramzi and his friends: "If they are taught well and play well, it gives them self-confidence. Music is important in everyone's life, especially in Gaza. Our children's lives are very hard; there is no place where they can develop freely, no place where they can pursue their interests."

Ramzi's school was repeatedly closed, and like many other children, he had to cope with the fear and traumatic images of his destroyed city at home. But he did not give up, even when there was a ray of hope during this difficult time: His five-piece band took advantage of a brief ceasefire in the third Gaza War to shoot a video audition so they could take part in a singing competition in Beirut on 27 February 2015. The young musicians took on a lot to finally cross the border into Egypt via Rafah after several failed attempts. They had to spend a night at Cairo Airport before flying to Beirut, where the competition was to take place. They wanted to perform a song by the Lebanese composer *Wadih Al-Safi*. "May God bring joy and laughter back to our homes", it said. They gave it their all, and their message touched not only the audience but also the judges, who awarded them the "golden buzzer," granting them direct access to the semi-finals.[4]

Although the music group ultimately did not reach the final, they attracted the attention of many people, who downloaded the video of their performance over nine million times. A Palestinian-Jordanian mother of two living in Dubai wrote with emotion: "They sang in the midst

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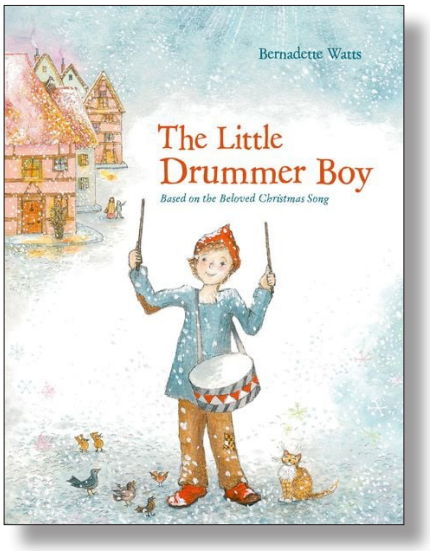

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I'm a child, born to live, not to die

Look at the children of Gaza crying.
The children of Gaza are dying from war.
And the world is standing by watching
It can see but does not want to hear.
It hears but doesn't speak.
Justice in this world is heartless
And it doesn't speak.
When can I dream of a world without fear,
where we dont hear guns
or worry about being bombed
I'm a child, born to live, not to die.
NOT TO DIE, NOT TO DIE,
Gaza is calling, my children
We want love, life, and justice
We will create it with our own hands, no matter what happens.
We will build our country after destruction.
Home after home, we are determined
Gaza is strong, no matter what
WE ARE DETERMINED!
Oh heaven let it snow safety and peace.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsEbIVJy0Gg

"Bring joy and laughter back …"
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of war. Amidst all the death and suffering, they did not give up and were determined to realise their dream. So many other children from Gaza have not been able to leave. So many wonderful, talented children were killed before they had the chance. But I am glad that at least these children succeeded."[5] Ramzi al-Far and his music group as ambassadors of peace – were they heard?

I was born to live, not to die

Christmas 2023: The song of the little drummer boy was also sung by the children of the *Ramallah Friends School*[6] in the West Bank and shared on YouTube.[7] They had rewritten it in light of the dramatically escalating situation in Gaza. "The children of Gaza are dying because of the war. And the world stands by and watches. It can see, but it doesn't want to hear. It hears, but it doesn't speak. […] I am a child, born to live, not to die," they sing (see box). They addressed their appeal to the world, confident that their call for peace and justice would have an impact and create a network of hope that transcends borders. Were they heard?

Why do humanitarian laws apply to some children but not to us?

The humanitarian situation of the people in Gaza and the West Bank has deteriorated dramatically since 2023. All fundamental principles of human rights and international law have been disregarded by Israel and its supporters. That is why, on 21 November 2023, the pupils of *Ramallah Friends School* wrote an urgent letter to the members of the US Congress, asking: Why are our voices not being heard, and why do humanitarian laws apply to some children but not to us?

Dear Members of Congress

As students of *Ramallah Friends School*, it is with heavy hearts that we address you in light of the devastating events, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where civilians and children are suffering most from the catastrophic genocide. The recent escalation of violence in the West Bank further exacerbates our situation as children.

Dear Members of Congress,

As students of Ramallah Friends School, we urgently reach out to you with heavy hearts [about] the devastating events unfolding, particularly in Gaza, where civilians and children bear the most profound impact of catastrophic genocide. The recent escalation of violence in the West Bank further intensifies our vulnerability as children.

We write to you as the voices of the next generation, as innocent souls caught up in this turmoil, in the hope that you read our letter and consider it in a serious matter. Just two weeks ago, near our school, a 14-year-old child was shot when the Israeli army entered the city, heightening our fear during these unexpected distressing incidents. Many of us also struggle with the challenges of traveling to school due to blockades in our areas, coupled with the constant fear of settler attacks along the routes we must navigate.

The genocide in Gaza has claimed the lives of over 11,000, including almost 5,000 children. Additionally, around 625,000 students, our peers, have been deprived of education, essential needs, and the necessities of life, water, and food.

Children in Gaza endure not only the absence of educational opportunities but also the harsh reality of living without access to vital resources. The fear they carry is profound, fearing for their lives and the potential loss of their parents, leaving them alone and in danger.

With a profound sense of urgency, we implore you to prioritize a cease-fire, protecting innocent children's lives and securing their access to water, food, and education. We question why our voices are not heard and why humanitarian laws apply to some children but not to us. Isn't childhood a term for all or are we not children? Is it justifiable for us to endure life under occupation, live in constant fear, and be haunted by the unsettling presence of settlers in our dreams?

In alignment with the foundation principles of our Quaker school, rooted in values of peace, equality, and justice, we earnestly appeal for your support in addressing these critical issues. We turn to you, members of Congress, seeking a deeper understanding and meaningful action on these matters that weigh heavily on our young hearts and minds.

In Peace,
The Students of
Ramallah Friends School[8]

Who listened to them and took them seriously?

We have ears to hear, eyes to see and hearts to feel

That is why we know that in the last two years, Israeli military strikes in Gaza and the West Bank have killed more than 80,000 people, most of them civilians. Thousands still lie beneath the rubble of destroyed houses. Essential facilities, hospitals and schools have been destroyed. The land where the Palestinian population has lived for generations is now a pile of rubble. It is difficult to be optimistic in view of the more than 500 violations of the ceasefire by the Israeli army. Several hundred Palestinians have been killed again, innocent women, children and men. Those who remain are waiting for urgently needed humanitarian aid, which is only slowly being allowed through. A peace plan has been initiated, but whether it will succeed remains to be seen, because credible and lasting peace can only be achieved if it is based on international law and human rights.

"The rules of war are one of our most powerful tools in the fight for human life, safety, dignity and ultimately peace. Failure to respect those rules betrays the foundations of humanity they were designed to protect. By upholding IHL, states protect their own people. Violating or letting others violate them fuels instability", warns urgently *Mirjana Spoljaric*, President of the ICRC.[9] We need to think about this. It is therefore encouraging that more and more people around the world are no longer turning a blind eye and a deaf ear, but are empathising with the horror in their hearts, even if they cannot undo the deprivation and decades of injustice since the *Nakba*. Rezi and his friends and the children of *Ramallah Friends School* are counting on them! •

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1 *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Little_Drummer_Boy*

2 Bernadette. "The Little Drummer Boy." North South Books, New York, 2018 (2nd ed.)

3 See Wyss, Kurt O. *Die gewaltsame amerikanisch-israelische "Neuordnung" des Vorderen Orients* (The violent American-Israeli "reorganisation" of the Middle East). Lery-Verlag Bern 2022. pp. 119–142.

4 «Cinq jeunes musiciens de Gaza embrassent le monde arabe». *https://www.france-palestine.org/Cinq-jeunes-musiciens-de-Gaza-embrasent-le-monde-arabe*

5 *Al Takht Al Sharqi – Young Gaza Musicians.* (*https://arabhyphen.wordpress.com/2015/03/03/al-takht-al-sharqi-young-gaza-musicians/*)

6 *Ramallah Friends School* is a Quaker school that has been located in the West Bank since 1889. Over the course of its long history, the school has also served as a medical facility and shelter for refugees, as well as a centre for lectures, community events, concerts and much more.

7 *www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsEbIVJy0Gg*

8 *https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2023-11/ramallah-friends-school-students-congress-prioritize-cease-fire-protect-childrens*; The *Friends Committee on National Legislation*, the FCNL *Education Fund, and Friends Place on Capitol Hill* are national, non-profit, non-partisan Quaker organisations working together to promote peace, justice, and environmental protection.

9 Spoljaric, Mirjana. *https://ir.icrc.org/en/2025/09/icrc-president-if-states-do-not-act-the-brutality-of-today-s-wars-will-become-the-baseline-for-conflicts-tomorrow/* (Excerpt from the statement made by the President of the ICRC on 23 September 2025 ahead of the United Nations General Assembly in New York)