

Current Concerns

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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

Are the US and its allies miscalculating once again with their war plans? What another war against Iran would mean for the world

A conversation between Glenn Diesen and Douglas Macgregor

cc. In a detailed video conversation between Norwegian political scientist and author Glenn Diesen and former US Army colonel, senior Pentagon advisor, and political commentator Douglas Macgregor,¹ both discuss the situation in West Asia. An escalation is brewing here that could set the entire Middle East ablaze and lead to a world war.

[...] Glenn Diesen: One area where we could see the US, and possibly its NATO allies, coming into conflict with this new bloc being shaped – with Russia and China at the centre – is, of course, the Middle East. I'm not sure if there's a stalemate going on with Iran. It appears that Trump wanted an easy victory or a short war, but the Iranians seem to have essentially threatened massive retaliation against any attack, which makes it very difficult to assert any escalation control – that is, to decide when the war should start, how it should be fought, and when it should end. But how does this affect the wider, I guess, strategic picture here? To what extent would, for example, Russia and China involve themselves, or probably already involve themselves, to some extent? Douglas Macgregor: I think we have to understand something. The Mossad–CIA–MI6 triumvirate was successful in persuading President Trump, a few weeks ago, that Iran was on the verge of falling apart – disintegrating – all based on what they claimed was a concerted effort inside the country to overthrow the government.

In reality, the protests [in Iran] that began were quite legitimate. They were not violent, and they weren't aimed at overthrowing anyone. These were large numbers of people who were extremely upset over the state of the Iranian economy, for which we in the United States are mightily responsible. Their currency was being systematically destroyed, and they were all aware of that. And that was the foundation for the protests. They were not necessarily aimed at regime change.



(picture screenshot)

Then the Mossad – with support from MI6 and the CIA – inserted themselves into the equation. We don't need to go back over the 40,000 Starlink terminals that were smuggled into the country, or the Mossad agents who were operating within the crowds, providing money as well as weapons to people and urging them to shoot at police and kill members of the government, and so forth.

All of that was, thanks to Russian and Chinese assistance, very rapidly suppressed and eliminated, frankly. The 40,000 Starlink terminals were shut down, and the Russians and the Chinese both helped identify where they were. That helped the Iranians eliminate that threat.

But the people who went in to tell Donald Trump that Iran was weak, vulnerable, and easy to essentially overthrow are still there. And then they went back to President Trump and said, "Well, you know, our attempt to overthrow the government surreptitiously, using intelligence forces, failed." His answer was, "Well, what's the next step?" And that was a legitimate question – and he got an answer. The answer came from both the intelligence community and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs: we don't have enough firepower; we don't have enough force on hand to affect anything inside Iran.

The reason nothing has happened so far is because we're still waiting for additional assets to show up. There are probably at least two more carrier battle groups

on their way to the region. Now, one may be in the Mediterranean; I don't know. Another one will certainly be down in the Indian Ocean. But I also don't know what's going on at the Air Force side of the house. We have to remember that the real power behind the strikes on Iran won't come from the fleet at sea – it will come from the United States Air Force. They'll deliver, presumably from high altitude and out of range of Iranian air and missile defence capabilities, enormous firepower in the form of glide bombs, precision strike weapons, and so forth.

So these talks that have now been convened, I think, are meaningless. I don't think the Iranians are terribly fooled. They're showing up because the Chinese and the Russians said, "Go to the talks. Listen to what they have to say." But they've also made it very clear right up front that Mr Netanyahu's talking points, which form the basis of President Trump's demand – two out of those three talking points – have been dismissed out of hand. And that is any change, dismantlement, or restructuring of the missile arsenal so that Israel need not worry about being within range of Iranian weapons. That's off the table. And the notion that Iran will stop supporting or working with its allies in the region – that's off the table too. The only thing they're willing to talk about, apparently, is enriched uranium. Now, how far can that reach? I'm not sure it can get very far, because if you start talking about levels of enrichment, storage issues, and where it's going to be, you're on the road back to the JCPOA² that was there under the Obama administration. I don't think these talks are serious at all. I think they're just buying time. [...]

That brings us to the next question, which is the most important one: What's the objective of the probable air and missile campaign that will start in another week to ten days? Is it regime change?

continued on page 2

"Are the US and its allies ..."

continued from page 1

Are we back to that? Or is there something else? Well, I think there's still going to be a concerted effort to identify, find, target, and destroy the government if it can be done.

But I think this is about destroying Iran. People need to understand that. This is a ruthless war of destruction. It's designed to promote the disintegration of the Iranian nation-state. They think they can do this. I have my doubts. This is, after all, a nation of ninety-three million. The area is about the size of Western Europe. But of course, the areas of greatest interest are still largely in the north and central parts of the country. They're not down south, which means the targeting challenge isn't as immense as it would be if you were going after Western Europe. But it's still a significant challenge. And I think that's where they're headed. They simply want to destroy this nation-state, cause it to divide, to fragment.

And again, you go back to the intelligence assessments, to the people who've been telling Donald Trump – and who told Biden, by the way – that Russia is weak. Russia will be easy to defeat. Russia can't withstand the pressure. We're hearing the same kinds of things now about Iran. But Iran is not Russia, and Iran has several very serious vulnerabilities. You're familiar with them – water is a huge problem, and food for the people who live in the country. They're dependent on external deliveries of food. Can the Russians and the Chinese help with that? Perhaps.

But I think that's a real danger for Iran. The question is, can they [the US] do enough damage to the point where somebody stands up and says, "Enough, we can't take it anymore"? Now, what's the Iranian response to this? The Iranian response is that they have no incentive to exercise any restraint. If they're attacked, their predisposition is to use everything they have. The issue for us is, how effective that will be. I've always said – and I think others agree with this – the Iranians can handle Israel. But can the Iranians handle Israel and the United States, in terms of military power? That's unclear.

Enormous amounts of weaponry, munitions, missiles, and so forth have been delivered over the last few weeks by the Chinese. The Russians have been on the ground, working to help with the integrated air and missile defences. The Chinese – and I presume the Russians as well, though we know without a doubt the Chinese have done this – have provided satellite imagery, real-time feeds to the Iranians. So, the Iranians are not in the same position they were last time, where they might not know where things are or be caught by surprise. I think they

know where everything is now, and that includes the ships at sea. If you look at the weapons, I don't know how many of these missiles – I think it's the DF-21 or DF-23³ – that the Chinese have produced exclusively for targeting ships at sea. We haven't seen them used, and we don't know how effective they are. But given Iran's performance during the 12-day war, it turned out their weaponry was actually very accurate and very precise. I think that, in addition to firing whatever they've got at Israel, they will definitely hit our

very vulnerable because they're old aircraft. They're easy to target and shoot down.

There are a lot of questions we can't answer. I don't know what answers are being provided to Donald Trump, but I suspect he's the victim of what I'd call the "rosy scenario."

The final point is, how long can this last? I think ten days to two weeks is about it, because at that point we're actually scraping the bottom of the barrel for missiles. And that's not a minor issue, because

"*Putin* went to the memorial service in Stalingrad. And this man remarked that it wasn't so much what Putin said, which was predictable, but that he had never seen him so sombre before. Not just deeply moved by the event – that's not unusual in Russia – but especially sombre, almost downcast in his posture and expression. He connected this to some discussions going on in Russia among various people, suggesting that President Putin may have reached the point where he's not sure there's much hope for any kind of – I don't want to say reconciliation – but any kind of useful agreement with Washington. I think President Putin has now come to the conclusion that Russia may have to oppose us. [...] I say that because there are a lot of people in the West who don't understand the Russians, and certainly don't understand President Putin. I would urge everybody to take the time to look at that memorial service from 2 February and watch him very carefully – not just the translated statements, but look at him, his posture, how he behaves. He's very, very sombre. I think he's very serious, and I would take note of that if I were in Washington." (Douglas Macgregor)

bases, and they'll probably go after our ships at sea.

What they [the US] can affect, obviously, are massive bombing runs right now. Now, we don't know – perhaps, depending on the path our bombers take and the altitude – can they be tracked? Well, *stealth* is not the miracle most people think it is. *Stealth*, in terms of the design built into aircraft, can delay detection, but it can't make you invisible. So you can delay detection for some period of time; I don't know what that delay looks like. What we can't address right now is what happens to B-2s that overfly. Can you use B-52s if the B-2s have to be very effective against the air and missile defences, as well as the critical targets, before you can use B-52s? B-52s are wonderful delivery systems for massive numbers of bombs, but they're

you've got to protect your ships at sea and your bases at home. How many missiles can you afford to expend before you're at an unacceptably low and dangerous level – especially if the Chinese and the Russians become involved? I think that's the final question.

Everybody asks, "What do you think the Chinese and Russians are going to do?" And the only answer I can give is *that neither China nor Russia will allow Iran to be pulverised out of existence*. In other words, if it gets to the point where Iran really is on the ropes and could disintegrate, then Russia and China, I think, will act. Now, what will that action consist of? It won't be nuclear, but it could involve a collision at sea very easily, because both China and Russia have plenty

continued on page 3

"Are the US and its allies ..."

continued from page 2

of submarines – and we're not very good at tracking modern nuclear-powered submarines in deep water.

I think people often see China as very cautious, and I'd agree with that. But allowing Iran to fall in this way has nothing to do with caution – it's extremely dangerous. It's hard to imagine either Iran or China wanting to go directly against the United States, but something has to be done to prevent Iran from collapsing. Given that Iran would go all in, since they see this as existential, they won't accept any kind of limited "bloody nose" attack that could stop the war. And since the Chinese and the Russians can't afford to see the balkanisation or destruction of Iran, do you think the war would still happen? I've heard some suggest that Trump is trying to walk this one back – or is it simply too late now?

I don't know that it's necessarily too late. I think the decision has been made – that was my point about the talks. I don't think the talks are serious at all. I think it's just a matter of time to assemble more assets for what's obviously going to be a much larger challenge than they originally envisioned. I think they thought they were going to have an easier time destabilising and then ultimately destroying the regime. I think they had assembled what they thought they needed to attack the regime at the point when they were convinced it was very, very vulnerable. That turned out to be false.

Now, there's something else that deserves mention, because we don't bring it up very much. I noted that the Ayatollah – the supreme leader, whatever title you want to use – who actually speaks very rationally when you listen carefully to what he says, has made it clear that this war will not be like the last one. This will be a regional war. Now, people are interpreting that to mean, well, that's because the Iranians can target all the bases in the region and may ultimately go after ships at sea. That's part of it.

But I don't think we're looking at the region through an objective lens. And I'm talking specifically about Turkey – Türkiye. The Turks are very concerned for several reasons. First of all, they see no benefit to the destruction of Iran. What they expect is that if Iran disintegrates or fails to hold together, they'll be overwhelmed with tens of thousands – maybe millions – of refugees. That's probably also true for Iraq and the other surrounding Arab states. None of those states want to face that. And frankly, many of those people would probably be redirected toward Europe. I'd be very surprised if that didn't happen. The Turks don't want anything to do with that.

Secondly, the Turks are dealing with the Israelis right now in Syria, and to a lesser extent in Lebanon. They know what the "Greater Israel Project" is about. The population of Turkey itself is enraged over what has happened in Gaza. The hatred of the Israelis in Turkey is so thick you could cut it with a knife. In Istanbul, there's an exhibit – something we might compare to the Holocaust Museum, something along those lines. And this exhibit is all about Gaza. I haven't seen it myself, but I have friends and relatives who have been there, and they told me it's absolutely shocking. The images of murdered children, the starving population, the destruction – it's overwhelming. The Turkish population is streaming through this place in Istanbul, and it's getting coverage all over Turkey.

And there is a readiness in Turkey, to be frank, to fight. So, if you're sitting in Turkey and it looks like things are so bad in Iran that the place could, in fact, fall apart and disintegrate, do you wait to be next on the menu? Because from the Turkish vantage point, if Iran goes down... That leaves only us to oppose Israeli Jewish supremacy in the region. And I don't think the Turks want to be alone in that. Given that situation, what would you do as a Turk? Well, you'd also talk to the Russians and the Chinese.

The Russians have a lot invested in Turkey – they're building a nuclear power station there. They've had their ups and downs with the Turks, but this is an existential question. I think the Russians, the Turks, and the Chinese will all work something out at some point, and they'll be united in their opposition to the destruction of Iran. [...] In other words, *this is a disaster on a regional scale that could ultimately spill over and become almost global*. That's the bad news.

And I don't think there's an appreciation for that in the White House. I think, once again, you're dealing with people who say, just as they did about Russia, "It's weak, it's this, it's that. No one will challenge us. No one will stand up to us." What happened the last time? Did the Chinese or the Russians do anything? The answer is no. But the last time was not an existential question. The last time, it ended after twelve days.

I don't think President Trump wants this to happen. I really don't. But I don't think he has much choice. I think he's a prisoner of his commitments to others over the last couple of years that ended up putting him in the White House. So I don't think he can back away from this.

One of the major weaknesses, the way I see it, is this illusion of escalation control. It's similar to what's happening in Europe – the idea that we can just keep the war against Russia on a slow burner,

that they'll just slowly kill each other, and we can end it whenever we want at the negotiating table or whatever. But it just seems like this could explode at any time. If the front lines begin to collapse, as they appear to be doing, and the Russians start making major advances, it's very hard to see why they would accept any compromise that would allow NATO to revive the Ukrainian front line against Russia in the future.

Same with Iran. I think once this war has begun and the same thing happens, the US or Israel would run out of missiles. I don't think you can just hit the pause button and fight it again six months later. It would be very difficult to get this thing under control. So again, the illusion of escalation control seems to be a problem. [...]

Let me just make an observation that was passed to me a few hours ago by someone who has spent many, many hours – perhaps hundreds – watching videos and speeches by President *Putin*. He pointed out something I found very interesting. You realise that 2 February is the anniversary of the fall of Stalingrad. [...] *Putin* went to the memorial service in Stalingrad. And this man remarked that it wasn't so much what *Putin* said, which was predictable, but that he had never seen him so sombre before. Not just deeply moved by the event – that's not unusual in Russia – but especially sombre, almost downcast in his posture and expression. He connected this to some discussions going on in Russia among various people, suggesting that President *Putin* may have reached the point where he's not sure there's much hope for any kind of – I don't want to say reconciliation – but any kind of useful agreement with Washington. I think President *Putin* has now come to the conclusion that Russia may have to oppose us. [...] I say that because there are a lot of people in the West who don't understand the Russians, and certainly don't understand President *Putin*. I would urge everybody to take the time to look at that memorial service from 2 February and watch him very carefully – not just the translated statements, but look at him, his posture, how he behaves. He's very, very sombre. I think he's very serious, and I would take note of that if I were in Washington. [...]

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiWAwob7ANM> of 5 February 2026

² JCPOA: The *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*, which monitors and restricts Iran's nuclear program while lifting sanctions, was agreed upon in 2015 by the governments of Iran, the US, Russia, China, the UK, France, Germany, and the EU, but was terminated in 2018 by US President *Trump*.

³ DF-21 and DF-23 are Chinese medium-range missiles.

Russia's foreign minister questions the US government's willingness to negotiate

Excerpts of Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with TV BRICS international media network, Moscow, 9 February 2026

[...] The global arena is undergoing a transformation that began some time ago with the objective transition toward a multipolar world order. This is neither the bipolarity of the Soviet-American era with the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, nor the unipolarity that emerged after the Soviet Union's collapse. Instead, it is multipolarity that is shaping the trajectory of global development. For many years, the United States functioned as the engine of the global economy and the regulator of international finance, using the role of the dollar to reinforce its dominant position. It is now, objectively, losing economic significance and influence within the global system. Meanwhile, countries such as the People's Republic of China, India, and Brazil are rising. Significant developments are also taking place across Africa, where nations are increasingly seeking to develop domestic industry rather than simply export natural resources – an effort that the Soviet Union once supported.

Multiple centres of rapid economic growth, power, and financial and political influence have thus emerged. The world is being reshaped through competition. The West is reluctant to relinquish its formerly dominant positions. Moreover, with the arrival of the Trump administration, this struggle to constrain competitors has become particularly obvious and explicit. Indeed, the *Trump* administration openly asserts its ambition to dominate in the energy sector and harness their competitors.

Blatantly unfair methods are being used against us: the operations of Russian oil companies such as Lukoil and Rosneft are being banned, and there are attempts to dictate and restrict Russia's trade, investment cooperation, and military-technical ties with our major strategic partners, including India as well as other BRICS states.

A struggle is underway to preserve the old-world order, one built around the dominance of the dollar and the rules formulated and enforced by the West through the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation. When the new centres of growth, operating under these very rules, began to demonstrate far more substantial economic results and significantly higher growth rates – as is evident across the BRICS countries – the West started seeking ways to block this transition. This cannot succeed, because it is an objective, irreversible process. For several years now, the BRICS countries' growth rates and GDP volumes have, in terms of purchasing power parity, substantially exceeded the combined GDP of the G7.

These global economic processes – both the objective emergence of new development centres as well as the subjective efforts by established powers, which are losing their influence, to hinder this natural evolution – form the foundation of our work, which involves not solely global analytical forecasting but also practical bi-

lateral cooperation with each individual country. All of these geopolitical confrontations, along with the attempts to derail the objective course of history, inevitably affect bilateral relations. I am not going to mention them all; those include sanctions, the so-called "shadow fleet" invented by the West, attempts to detain vessels by military force in the open sea in blatant violation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and much more. Tariffs imposed for purchasing oil or gas from certain suppliers have now become commonplace. [...]

[...] the West is losing its hegemony but keeps on clinging to the institutions set up to secure that hegemony, which by default can no longer reflect the real situation and the fair nature of interactions at the international level, the establishment of new entities to facilitate international economic, investment, trade, and transport links is inevitable.

We are not advocating for the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO to cease their existence. For many years since the establishment of BRICS, we have been seeking a reform of these institutions so that the member states (and these were and still are the fastest growing world economies and trading powers) receive votes and rights in all those Bretton Woods institutions commensurate with their real weight in the world economy, trade and logistics.

The West is trying to oppose it categorically. President *Putin* has said on many occasions that we are not the ones refusing to use the dollar. The United States under President *Joe Biden* did everything to make the dollar a weapon against those who are deemed objectionable.

I would note that, for all the statements from President Donald Trump's administration to the effect that the war in Ukraine started by President Biden should be ended, that we should come to terms and remove it from the agenda, and that supposedly then we would see bright and clear prospects of Russian-US mutually beneficial investment and other interaction, the administration has not challenged all the laws adopted by Joe Biden to "punish" Russia after the start of the special military operation.

In April 2025, they extended Executive Order 14024, on the emergency regime, the core of which is the "punishment" of Russia and sanctions against our country, including the freezing of Russia's gold and currency reserves. That document mentions "harmful foreign activities of the Government of the Russian Federation." [...] You can find anything there!

This is all pure "Bidenism," which President Trump and his team reject. Nevertheless, they have easily pushed through the law and sanctions against Russia, which continue to be in effect. They have imposed sanctions against Lukoil and Rosneft. And they did it in the autumn, a couple of weeks after a good meeting between President Putin and President Trump in Anchorage.

They tell us that the Ukraine problem should be resolved. In Anchorage, we accepted the US proposal. [...] President Putin has said on many occasions that it is not important for Russia what Ukraine and Europe are going to say; we can clearly see the primitive Russophobia of most regimes in the European Union, with rare exceptions. The US position was important to us. By accepting their proposal, we seem to have completed the task of resolving the Ukrainian issue and moving on to a full-scale, broad-based and mutually beneficial cooperation.

So far, the reality is quite the opposite: new sanctions are imposed, a "war" against tankers in the open sea is being waged in violation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. They are trying to ban India and our other partners from buying cheap, affordable Russian energy resources (Europe has long been banned) and are forcing them to buy US LNG at exorbitant prices. This means that the Americans have set themselves the task of achieving economic domination.

Furthermore, while they ostensibly made a proposal regarding Ukraine and we were ready to accept it (now they are not), we do not see any bright future in the economic sphere either. The Americans want to take control of all the routes for providing the world's leading countries and all continents with energy resources. On the European continent, they are eyeing the Nord Streams, which were blown up three years ago, the Ukrainian gas transportation system and the TurkStream.

This illustrates that the US objective – to dominate the world economy – is being realised using a fairly large number of coercive measures that are incompatible with fair competition. Tariffs, sanctions, direct prohibitions, forbidding some from engaging with others – we have to take all of this into account.

While remaining open, just like India, China, Indonesia and Brazil, to cooperation with all countries, including a major power such as the United States, we are in a situation where the Americans themselves are creating artificial obstacles along the way. We are forced to look for additional secure ways to develop our financial, economic, integration, logistics and other projects with the BRICS countries. [...]

All this is not to spite anyone, especially the United States. This is due to the fact that the United States seeks to bring all processes in the areas I mentioned under its strict control and demands unilateral concessions. Without giving up contacts with them, to the extent that they are willing to engage on a mutually beneficial basis, we are interested, together with our BRICS partners, in creating an architecture that will not be subject to the illegal actions of one or another player from the Western flank. [...]

Source: https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/20781961/ of 9 February 2026

The Swiss “Security Policy Strategy 2026” – in conflict with neutrality and freedom of expression

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

On 12 December 2025, unnoticed by many citizens, the Federal Council submitted its “Security Policy Strategy of Switzerland 2026” draft for consultation (until 31 March 2026). The draft comprises 60 easily understandable pages – essential reading for every citizen.¹

According to Article 185, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Federal Constitution, it is the responsibility of the Federal Council to take measures to safeguard Switzerland’s external and internal security. Some of the objectives of the present strategy are therefore necessary and sensible. These include, for example, strengthening national supply, expanding domestic energy supply, increasing cyber security, ensuring effective civil protection and, of course, restoring a defence-capable army.

The construct of the Russian threat as a ticket to NATO membership

However, what should keep every Swiss citizen awake at night is the Federal Council’s plan to integrate our nation closely into the EU and NATO military alliances. The entire document is permeated by the notion of a supposed Russian threat – hammered home to the reader at least a dozen times – even though, interestingly, the DDPS explicitly admits that a Russian attack on Switzerland is “unlikely” (see Strategy, p. 10). But the ominous Russian threat certainly serves as a hook for the Federal Council’s pursuit of NATO membership² since the End of the Cold War.

There is a lack of historical foundation in the Federal Council. The lessons learned from the two world wars, when Switzerland, surrounded by the Axis powers, was able to survive as a sovereign state precisely because it adhered to its neutrality as closely as possible and did not join any of the warring powers, are being completely ignored. Are we to abandon this fundamental framework of a neutral and sovereign Switzerland just because a few people in the federal government in Bern want to curry favour with the powerful of this world?

In an interview with National Councillor *Lukas Reimann*, the most blatant violations of neutrality in the Federal Council’s strategy are brought to light.

Unconstitutional attack on freedom of expression

Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation

Art. 16 Freedom of expression and information

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

Under the label “Combating influence activities and disinformation”, the Federal Council wants to “strengthen” the population’s “resilience” to influence. (Note: The misuse of the term resilience, which originates from psychology, distorts its original meaning, namely a person’s mental resilience despite difficult emotional experiences in life.) To this end, the Federal Council wants to set up an “interdepartmental working group” to steer public opinion and monitor the expression of opinions through “preventive and reactive measures”. This includes interfering with academic freedom and cantonal school sovereignty: “The federal government reviews existing curricula for content and initiatives that are relevant to the challenges of disinformation in connection with political education.” (Strategy, pp. 35/36)

Abolition of the fundamental right to freedom of expression, following the example of the EU? Warning examples include the brutal and unconstitutional methods used against *Jacques Baud* and *Nathalie Yamb*, as well as the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, *Irene Khan*, on the disgraceful state of freedom of expression in our neighbouring country, Germany. •

¹ The Security Policy Strategy for Switzerland 2026. Draft for consultation of 12 December 2025 (cited as: Strategy)

² See the list of Federal Council security policy reports since the 1993 Neutrality Report on pages 13/14 of the Strategy.

For a small country like Switzerland, there is only one option: perpetual armed neutrality

Interview with Federal Councillor *Lukas Reimann*, member of the National Council’s Foreign Affairs Committee



Lukas Reimann
(picture ma)

Current Concerns: One of the main objectives of the strategy (The Security Policy Strategy of Switzerland 2026) is to expand military cooperation with the EU and NATO. The Federal Council is seeking a security and defence partnership with the EU and an “Individually Tailored Partnership Programme” with NATO. It is supported in this by the security committees of the National Council and the Council of States. How is this compatible with Switzerland’s neutrality? Lukas Reimann: It is completely incompatible with Switzerland’s neutrality; it is diametrically opposed to Switzerland’s neu-

*trality. For centuries, Switzerland has relied on maintaining perpetual armed neutrality, and the law of neutrality – I myself studied the law of neutrality and even wrote my bachelor’s thesis on the law of neutrality – clearly regulates that as a neutral country, you are not allowed to enter into military cooperation with a direct party to a war. And NATO is a direct party to a war. And I also believe in general, when I look at the global political situation where power politics comes to a head, that there is only one option for a small country like Switzerland, and that is neutrality, perpetual armed neutrality. This is fundamentally at odds with the increasing number of exercises together with NATO, the transit of NATO troops through Switzerland, and also to the rapprochement with the EU, which with its *Common Foreign and Secu-**

riety Policy also wants to increasingly build up its own army. These objectives of the strategy are diametrically opposed to the core and essence of Switzerland, and we must not allow this to happen.

However, it should be noted that this already began in 2003 with *Army XXI*. At that point, they had already started to align officer ranks with NATO standards and conduct tank exercises between the Swiss Air Force and NATO. This is now intensifying once again on a massive scale. *Army XXI* was a small step toward NATO, but all these programs that have been introduced in recent years and are to be consolidated with this security policy strategy are almost like the EU framework agreement. There, it is an entry into EU with-

"For a small country ..."

continued from page 5

out membership; here, it is actually passive NATO membership.

You have already mentioned participation in NATO's Article 5 exercises. These are to be explicitly institutionalized with the strategy. This is – quote: "compatible with neutrality." In addition, the Federal Council wants to allow foreign troops and weapons to pass through and fly over Switzerland – quote: "in compliance with the law of neutrality." What do you think? The law of neutrality clearly stipulates – as stated in the *Hague Convention* on the rights and obligations of neutral states! – that a neutral state may not allow foreign troops on its territory. This is completely incompatible with neutrality. I just find that so deceitful. Either the Federal Council has the courage to stand up and tell the people that we are now breaking with neutrality, but then I believe the people will not follow it. Or it stands by neutrality. But what it is doing now is talking about neutrality but doing the opposite. This is very damaging to the army; it is damaging to the independence and freedom of Switzerland. The essence of Switzerland is being destroyed, and not only externally. Credibility abroad is dwindling, but credibility at home is also dwindling. We are a very diverse country. We have different cultures. Some sympathize with these, others with those. This is very impressive to see in *Carl Spitteler's* speech to the Swiss people during the First World War. There are stories that they cheered for France in the barracks in western Switzerland and for the German emperor in German-speaking Switzerland. Spitteler then called out: Hey, we are neutral, we sympathize with no one, we stick together as Switzerland. I think such a call is urgently needed again today. Even if you personally sympathize with someone, Switzerland as a country must remain neutral.

And I also believe that the only thing we as a small country can give to the world are Switzerland's good offices, diplomacy, and therefore we need neutrality. The foreign policy committee was recently invited to Lausanne by the Olympic Committee. They told us: We have our headquarters here in Switzerland because you are neutral, because from here we can negotiate with sports associations in every country in the world. The same applies to the ICRC in Geneva. It has its headquarters in Switzerland precisely because we are a neutral country. This gives them the opportunity to help both sides in every conflict. We are putting a lot at stake today. I believe that with this policy, we are causing enormous damage to international Geneva, because credibility is lost when you are not seen as neutral by both sides. But the crucial thing is credibility, is reality – how do you really behave?

How do you see the significance of the neutrality initiative in connection with the Federal Council's security policy strategy? The initiative could not be more important. When you look at this strategy, it is completely clear that the Federal Council wants to break with neutrality. The problem today is that the Constitution does not define clearly what neutrality is. And it is precisely this gap that the *neutrality initiative* wants to close. That we have perpetual armed neutrality, that we do not adopt EU sanctions, that we do not allow foreign troops to pass through Switzerland. I would also like to say something about the NATO "case for the alliance" exercises. These are war exercises that take place directly on NATO's outer border with a war zone. Switzerland simply has no business being involved in this, no matter which side it is on. A neutral country has no business participating in war exercises. Our military must focus on self-defence within our own country and on disaster control which is also highly valued abroad. We must be able to defend our own country. And Switzerland does not defend itself in the way a German defence minister once said: "Our country is also defended in the Hindu Kush." We defend Switzerland at the Swiss border and nowhere else.

Another worrying aspect of this strategy is the so-called "combating of influence activities and disinformation". Under this label, the Federal Council wants to steer public opinion and monitor the expression of opinions, including school curricula. Are we heading towards the abolition of the fundamental right to freedom of expression, following the example of the EU, as we are currently witnessing with Jacques Baud?

Unfortunately, yes. I am shocked by these plans, because this is not about protecting freedom of expression. This is actually disinformation. We are playing with words here. People are being told that we want to protect freedom of expression. From whom? From what? So far, I have seen no disinformation from abroad in Switzerland and no evidence of it. And now, based on these allegations, school curricula shall be rewritten, people shall be influenced, state money be used to steer people in a certain direction! In the past, I would have said this is *Orwell*, but today it is reality. *Jacques Baud* is a Swiss citizen who freely expressed his opinion, and Switzerland is not protecting him at all. I even had the impression that certain people in Bern were pleased about his sanctioning. I find it very dangerous when something like this happens, very dangerous for democracy.

I do believe that we perhaps need a kind of intellectual national defence for the young people again, that they should do military service, participate in democ-

racy, join associations, get to know Switzerland's militia system. But I envision something completely different than Federal Councillor *Pfister*, who is fully on board with this EU-NATO track. Anything that does not follow this line of policy is then disinformation, foreign propaganda and who knows what else. In my opinion, the opposite is true: EU-NATO is foreign propaganda, and we want to continue on the proven Swiss path.

Finally, a question of state policy. The Federal Council wants to adopt this strategy after the consultation process in the second half of the year, then the two chambers are to "discuss it without taking a decision". Does that mean that Parliament and the Swiss people have no say in this programme?

We are already participating in this NATO training programme, the "Individually Tailored Partnership Programme". That has already been decided. The approach taken was that the Federal Council informed the Foreign Policy Committees, but said that this was a matter of foreign policy and therefore the responsibility of the Federal Council. It only had to consult us and could then do whatever it wanted.

continued on page 8

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Germany

Advocating for freedom of expression

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

According to German constitutional law (Article 5 of the Basic Law), freedom of expression includes freedom of opinion and freedom of information for everyone, freedom of the press and freedom of reporting, the prohibition of censorship, and freedom of art and science. The fact that these human and civil rights have been increasingly disregarded in recent years by German state authorities and by media outlets and NGOs working closely with these authorities has been met with growing consternation and criticism, not only in Germany but also internationally.

Irene Khan, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, who is assigned to the Geneva-based United Nations *Human Rights Council* (UNHRC), therefore travelled to Germany from 26 January to 6 February 2026 and met with numerous representatives of German ministries and other national authorities, representatives of various political parties, judges, prosecutors and lawyers, representatives of state authorities, state media authorities and the media, NGOs and journalists, academics and many other individuals about the situation of freedom of expression in Germany. It was the first visit by a UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression to Germany since the office was created in 1993.

On 6 February, Irene Khan presented her “preliminary observations” during a half-hour press conference in Berlin,¹ which are also available in written form, including a German translation.² She will present her detailed report and recommendations to the *Human Rights Council* in June of this year.

In diplomatic language, the Special Rapporteur acknowledges the high consti-



UN Special Rapporteur Irene Khan presenting her “preliminary observations” on freedom of expression in Germany during her press conference in Berlin on 6 February 2026. (picture screenshot)

tutional status of freedom of expression in Germany and the German state’s officially expressed position on this fundamental and human right.

However, she also states: “Freedom of expression [in Germany] is a shrinking space, undermined by several negative trends”.

Admittedly, there has also been an increase in the abuse of freedom of expression and a “deep rift in the understanding of what constitutes freedom of expression” caused by social polarisation. However, government agencies have responded inappropriately to this situation: “Many of these measures – ranging from heightened protection of officials who are confronted with public criticism to blanket bans on slogans related to pro-Palestinian protests and surveillance of organizations on vague, undefined grounds of “extremism” – are inconsistent with international human rights standards. They have generated uncertainty as to the line between protected and prohibited speech, and encourage stigmatization and self-censorship.” (emphasis km)

The UN Special Rapporteur warns against “an overly criminalized and security-oriented approach to handling political expression and activism”. This “risks narrowing the space for diverse, meaningful democratic debate, accelerating polarization, and increasing the potential for the public to lose trust in those same democratic values and institutions that the government is seeking to protect”.

From the perspective of international human rights standards, the government has a dual responsibility “to uphold freedom of expression and participation in public life on an equal basis, without discrimination, while at the same time ensuring that the most vulnerable in society are protected from hate crimes, vilification, and exclusion. In democratic society tolerance of diverse views and criticism, especially of public figures, must be respected, including for speech that is ‘lawful but awful’”.

The Special Rapporteur criticises in detail the response of the German authorities to Palestinian actions following the Hamas attacks on Israel in October 2023 and Israel’s war against the people in the Gaza Strip. Other special rapporteurs and she herself had “previously raised many of these concerns with the German government, including restrictions and bans of peaceful protests, arbitrary arrests and detentions, excessive use of force, threats of deportation of some individuals and raids on the homes of activists and human rights defenders”.

“Scores of conferences, lectures, concerts, and cultural events in solidarity with Palestine have been cancelled, postponed, or restricted. Speakers and scholars from Israel have also been vilified, cancelled, or excluded simply on account of their nationality. Journalists, academics, activists,

continued on page 8

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DDPS Director Martin Pfister – Media as an auxiliary force against freedom of information?

mw. If anyone believes that the planned opinion monitoring will not be as controversial as it seems, they should read the speech given by DDPS (Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport) Chief *Martin Pfister* to Swiss media representatives on 8 January 2026.

Federal Councillor Pfister vividly describes the practices of controlled disinformation and holds up a mirror to our own mainstream media: “The perpetrators of influence activities want to manipulate the perceptions, thoughts and actions of individuals and societies. [...] The methods used cover a broad spectrum, such as the manipulation of audio-visual content, taking information out of context, or developing new narratives.” Then, without any solid evidence, he targets Russia: “Russia in particular has been increasingly attacking Switzerland in the information space since 2022. The two best-known Russian plat-

forms, *Russia Today* and *Pravda*, distribute between 800 and 900 articles per month in Switzerland, which often have to be described as disinformation. In May 2025, pro-Russian actors coordinated the dissemination of a video from Geneva, taken out of context, on seven social media platforms in all official languages and in English. This showed that Switzerland was supposedly sinking into chaos and no longer neutral.”

Does Pfister want to ban Russian media outlets in line with the EU through his “Security Policy Strategy 2026”? Because they point out the fact that Switzerland has abandoned its neutrality by imposing excessive sanctions on Russia and other countries? And is anyone who does not regurgitate the mainstream narrative a “pro-Russian actor”?

Particularly worrying: Federal Councillor Pfister enlists the media representatives present as auxiliary forces, so to speak:

“Quality media with high journalistic standards help to mitigate the impact of influence activities. [...] In this interaction, you as media publishers and media professionals have a decisive role to play. [...] The media are therefore not only the fourth estate in a democracy. Free media are also part of our security architecture.”

These statements by a Swiss Federal Councillor are alarming. The substantive debate among citizens with different opinions is an indispensable basis for the free democratic formation of opinion. If the media are transformed into “part of the state security architecture”, this amounts to a serious violation of the constitutional fundamental right to freedom of expression and information.

Source: Speech by Federal Councillor *Martin Pfister* at the Epiphany Conference of the Swiss Media Publishers Association on 8 January 2026. <https://www.news.admin.ch/ide/news/1884444>

“For a small country ...”

continued from page 6

I see it quite differently. These are such far-reaching steps. Joining an alliance is subject to the decision of the people and the cantons. The 2026 Security Policy Strategy is at least a partial accession to an alliance. So it would have to be submitted at least to parliament and, as a minimum, to an optional referendum. I firmly believe that a referendum would also be held on this issue. We will certainly have to submit a motion in Parliament that it has to be subject to a mandatory or maybe an optional referendum, so that the people have the final say on this issue. But I believe that the

Federal Council is shying away from the opinion of the people, as it did with the EU agreements, because neutrality is fortunately still very strongly anchored as part of the DNA of the Swiss people.

Why is the Federal Council holding a consultation? Isn't that designed to ensure that the bill is then submitted to Parliament and that it is then subject to a referendum, or not?

In this constellation, the consultation seems to me to be a mere sham consultation, so that the Federal Council can then say: the vast majority of the cantons and all the major associations are of the

same opinion as us, it is completely unobjectionable, and we can now simply push it through. But I would like to see more resistance from the military itself, especially on issues like this. I mean, these are seasoned, intelligent officers, and they can see what is happening here. I do wonder why there is not more resistance out of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports (DDPS) as well. Or have all those who are not NATO-compliant been weeded out in the meantime?

Thank you very much for the informative conversation, Mr Reimann. •

“Advocating for freedom ...”

continued from page 7

artists, lawyers, politicians, and civil servants have sought to self-censor, especially on social media. This has all led to a dampening of public participation, shrinking discourse in academia and the arts, and a general climate of distrust, uncertainty, and tension.”

A study conducted in September 2025 by researchers at the *Free University of Berlin* found that “almost 85 percent of German academics have felt an increased threat to academic freedom since October 2023. Some academics particularly those without German citizenship have reported uncertainty about their job security, an inability for frank debate among colleagues, and a growing sense of general distrust that universities are becoming “securitized”, with law enforcement presence an increasing aspect of events, all contributing to a considerable chilling of both research and expression in academia”.

The Special Rapporteur also criticises the “use of anti-terrorism laws to broadly restrict or prohibit the content of Pal-

estinian advocacy. For instance, hundreds of activists have been arrested for uttering a slogan³ that has been determined to belong to Hamas, which has been designated by the German government to be a terrorist organization. Not only has that interpretation of the slogan been challenged by some experts, a general ban or criminalization for merely uttering a slogan in all circumstances is disproportionate and not in line with international human rights standards”.

Various German authorities at local and state level tended to “confuse and conflate criticism of policies and actions of the [Israeli] government, a legitimate exercise of freedom of expression, with antisemitism [...]”.

The rapporteur emphasises that anti-Semitism is indeed “a real and growing problem in Germany”. However, the fight against anti-Semitism must be “framed according to international human rights standards.” Otherwise, there is a risk “that discrimination against one vulnerable group will be replaced with discrimination against another group, which, far from re-

ducing antisemitism, will fuel more hatred and intolerance”.

In her “preliminary observations”, Irene Khan addresses further points that are worth reading, reflecting on and discussing. At this point, the first conclusion is that it is very much to be hoped that the German authorities and the media and NGOs working with them will take the UN Special Rapporteur’s warnings seriously and initiate a change of course. A few leading German media outlets – which is encouraging – have reported on the issue, albeit not in detail, but without polemics.⁴ And above all, committed citizens can refer to Irene Khan’s words. •

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amv2EDTXmew&t=71s>

² www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/statements/20260206-eom-stm-europe-central-asia-region-sr-protection-right-en.pdf dated 6 February 2026. The citation does not use gender-neutral language.

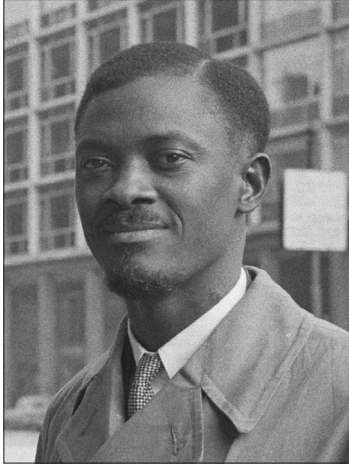
³ The slogan is: “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

⁴ Reports appeared in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*, the “*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*”, the “*Handelsblatt*” and on *Deutschlandfunk radio*

Document commemorating the political assassination of Patrice Lumumba (17 January 1961)

“We shall institute in the country a peace resting not on guns and bayonets but on concord and goodwill”

Speech by Prime Minister Patrice Eméry Lumumba on the occasion of the celebration of Congo’s independence, Léopoldville (Kinshasa), 30 June 1960



Patrice Eméry Lumumba
(picture Wikipedia)

Men and women of the Congo, Victorious independence fighters, I salute you in the name of the Congolese Government.

I ask all of you, my friends, who tirelessly fought in our ranks, to mark this June 30, 1960, as an illustrious date that will be ever engraved in your hearts, a date whose meaning you will proudly explain to your children, so that they in turn might relate to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren the glorious history of our struggle for freedom.

Although this independence of the Congo is being proclaimed today by agreement with Belgium, an amicable country, with which we are on equal terms, no Congolese will ever forget that independence was won in struggle, a persevering and inspired struggle carried on from day to day, a struggle, in which we were undaunted by privation or suffering and stunted neither strength nor blood.

It was filled with tears, fire and blood. We are deeply proud of our struggle, because it was just and noble and indispensable in putting an end to the humiliating bondage forced upon us.

That was our lot for the eighty years of colonial rule and our wounds are too fresh and much too painful to be forgotten.

We have experienced forced labour in exchange for pay that did not allow us to satisfy our hunger, to clothe ourselves, to have decent lodgings or to bring up our children as dearly loved ones.

Morning, noon and night we were subjected to jeers, insults and blows because we were “Negroes”. Who will ever forget that the black was addressed as “tu”, not because he was a friend, but because the polite “vous” was reserved for the white man?

We have seen our lands seized in the name of ostensibly just laws, which gave recognition only to the right of might.

We have not forgotten that the law was never the same for the white and the black, that it was lenient to the ones, and cruel and inhuman to the others.

We have experienced the atrocious sufferings, being persecuted for political convictions and religious beliefs, and exiled from our native land: our lot was worse than death itself.

We have not forgotten that in the cities the mansions were for the whites and the tumbledown huts for the blacks; that a black was not admitted to the cinemas, restaurants and shops set aside for “Europeans”; that a black travelled in the holds, under the feet of the whites in their luxury cabins.

Who will ever forget the shootings which killed so many of our brothers, or the cells into which were mercilessly thrown those who no longer wished to submit to the regime of injustice, oppression and exploitation used by the colonialists as a tool of their domination? [lively and prolonged applause]

All that, my brothers, brought us untold suffering. But we, who were elected by the votes of your representatives, representatives of the people, to guide our native land, we, who have suffered in body and soul from the colonial oppression, we tell you that henceforth all that is finished with.

continued on page 11

Letter to  the Editor

Swiss neutrality during the Second World War

Peter Küpfer deserves credit for drawing attention to a very important exhibition at Château de Morges (*Current Concerns* No. 3 of 10 February 2026). The exhibition sheds light on the activities of international secret services in Switzerland, particularly during the Second World War. Switzerland’s existence was under serious threat, especially after 1940 with the occupation of France by German troops. Immediately after the outbreak of war in 1939, the Federal Council declared Switzerland’s integral neutrality along with general mobilisation.

Even more than during the First World War, Switzerland had to strike a balance between conformity and resistance, particularly with regard to neutrality. Switzerland had to make concessions that pushed the limits of what was acceptable to both sides, i.e. the Allies (primari-

ly Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union) and the Axis powers (Italy and Germany). On the Allied side, as the exhibition in Morges clearly shows, this meant tolerating the activities of the Allied secret services operating from Switzerland. At the time, Switzerland could be described as a “hub” for the secret services. However, Switzerland itself benefited greatly from these contacts, learning details of German attack plans and being able to adjust its defences accordingly. On the other hand, Switzerland had to accept particularly sensitive procedures, especially with regard to *Hitler’s* Germany. Here, too, Switzerland violated the principles of neutrality by granting state loans to Germany and Italy for war material deliveries and by insufficiently controlling transit traffic between Germany and Italy. However, this has nothing to do with the “flex-

ible handling of neutrality” demanded by the Federal Council today, but was due to the specific, extremely difficult historical situation. Switzerland had to give something to both sides in order to survive!

This balancing act, together with General *Guisan’s* Réduit strategy, met with broad approval among the population, in contrast to the hesitation of the Federal Council at the time (especially *Pilet-Golaz*). Under the banner of “spiritual national defence”, the Swiss population gained unprecedented strength, which deterred potential enemies. Our confederation needs precisely this kind of anti-totalitarian consensus again today. This will be possible with broad support for the neutrality initiative!

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

Lumumba's historic speech alarmed Western intelligence agencies

Patrice Eméry Lumumba (1925–1961), the first and probably only democratically elected head of government in post-colonial Congo, was the hope of an entire generation, not only for the Congolese, but for many freedom-loving people and critics of colonialism around the world. At the end of June 1960, he was elected Prime Minister of the newly founded Democratic Republic of Congo by the Parliament and the Senate, which had just been constituted through free elections. Just one week after his election, the founding ceremony took place at the National Palace (after 80 years of colonial status as the “Free State of Congo”, then “Belgian Congo”) – in the presence of the reigning Belgian King Baudouin and high-ranking representatives of the Belgian government and its colonial army, as well as politicians, diplo-

mats, military personnel and journalists from around the world.

At the beginning, the king spoke and glorified the Belgian colonial era as the historical phase in which the formerly backward country had come to know and appreciate the delights of the Western lifestyle and thus caught up with European culture. His speech made no mention of the drastic punitive measures that were customary at the time against anyone who acted against this European-arrogant state doctrine. Afterwards, President Kasa-Vubu took the floor. He echoed the words of the Belgian king in Africa and eagerly praised Belgium's work as a protective power. Then the unthinkable happened. The President of Parliament gave the floor to Prime Minister Lumumba, even though this was not provided for in the protocol officially agreed with Bel-

gium. As eyewitnesses later reported, the king turned pale and the faces of the dignitaries of the former colonial power present froze. Soon, however, hesitant, then increasingly powerful applause rang out from the ranks of the African guests for the courageous speaker, as can be heard on the authentic recording of the speech. At the end, Lumumba received thunderous and sustained applause. His speech not only corrected the ideologically charged distortions of the two previous speakers, but also laid a compelling foundation for his government programme. His main message: the goal of the new Congo under his government is to do everything in its power to promote human dignity, to which all people are entitled, for all Congolese people, not just some.

Peter Küpfer

Anyone who wants to realise human dignity is marked for death

pk. What Patrice Lumumba did not know on 30 June 1960, but perhaps suspected: even in the run-up to the independence celebrations, the Belgian government had intensified its traditional contacts with the neo-colonialist traditional forces within the Congo and expanded them unofficially through its secret diplomacy. These were primarily economically motivated, especially through existing channels to the dominant Congolese classes in the provinces of South Kasai and Katanga. To this day, these regions are considered rich in minerals, especially copper (Katanga) and diamonds (South Kasai). Brussels' main Congolese guarantor for safeguarding its interests also in the new Congo was Moïse Tshombe. He came from a leading family of the Katanga copper dynasty. Due to his direct connections to the mining companies that had long been leaders in the Congo, especially the Belgian *Union minière du Haut Katanga*, he became the representative of the neo-colonialist forces, which pursued very different goals also in the new Congo than Lumumba. Tshombe had been educated at a Methodist school in the United States, admired the United States and had founded an anti-communist movement in Katanga. At the time of the declaration of independence, he became its president, then president of the province. Just nine days after Lumumba took office, Tshombe declared Katanga's independence and fought against the central government, soon resorting to military action. This led to bloody fighting, which continued as the Congo Crisis until Mobutu's second and final military coup in November 1965.

Due to his decisive appearance at the ceremony on 30 June 1960, the Belgian government, its American advisers and both secret services had come to the conclusion that Lumumba had to be “neutralised”, which they pursued covertly and determinedly from that day onwards: the

assassination of Lumumba (*Allan Dulles*, head of the CIA, to the Belgian government: “The removal of Lumumba is our main objective,” fax dated 26 August 1961, De Witte, p. 403). In internal directives, the term “removal” (*éloignement*) was soon replaced by “neutralisation”, then “liquidation”, then “physical liquidation”, i.e. assassination. As early as 14 September, the Belgian and US secret services, acting in concert, had used their machinations (including bribery) to oust Lumumba from office and replace him with the compliant *Kasa-Vubu*. Due to massive protests in the capital and other cities, they feared Lumumba's triumphant return. One day later, army units staged a coup against Lumumba on the orders of a then little-known *Sese Seku Mobutu*. Mobutu was already acting on behalf of the CIA at that time. He had managed to gain Lumumba's trust by deception, so that the latter, unaware of his true mission, had made him commander-in-chief of the Congolese national army. Shortly afterwards, they placed Lumumba under “protective custody” (10 October). Finally, after a foiled escape attempt, on 17 January 1961 they handed him over to those who had declared war on him, the military regime of Katanga under Tshombe and his shadow cabinet of Belgian officers, secret service agents and advisers. It was the latter who had Lumumba shot and two ministers who had remained loyal to him, *Maurice M'Pololo* and *Joseph Okito*, near Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) on the night of 17 to 18 January 1961, after tolerating unspeakable abuse of the three defenceless prisoners throughout the day. An execution squad of Katanga gendarmes carried this out under Belgian command and in the presence of Tshombe, other members of the Katanga government, officers, Katanga police and Belgian secret service officers, as well as army personnel.

The next day, official radio stations report the deaths of Lumumba and his two loyal followers. Later, it was said that they had been recognised during another escape attempt in a village, then apprehended by villagers and shot. Neither the location nor the perpetrators nor the motive were mentioned. The day after the shooting, a small task force has to dig up the provisionally buried bodies at the site of the execution and completely dissolve them in a tub of sulphuric acid they had brought with them. No trace of the three murdered men was to remain – but one of those involved had pocketed one of Lumumba's teeth. It is later identified as genuine by its gold filling and handed over to his widow.

Lumumba's ordeal (and that of countless soldiers and mercenaries who died in the so-called Congo turmoil) documents exemplarily the boundless unscrupulousness of European colonial rule and its then protective power, the USA.

In his immense and solid research work *Ludo de Witte* has traced Lumumba's path.

To this day, the Belgian government denies any involvement in this political assassination, but its denials are unconvincing, as every page of this well-documented book proves. Originally published in Flemish in 1999, it was soon available in French, German and English – but is now out of print.

Source: De Witte, Ludo. “L'assassinat de Lumumba”, Paris (éd. Karthala) 2000, ISBN 2-84586-006-4;

The French, German and English versions, translations of the original Flemish text, are out of print and have not been reprinted, but are available second-hand. German version: De Witte, Ludo. “Regierungsauftrag Mord. Der Tod Lumumbas und die Kongo-Krise”, Leipzig, Forum Verlag 2001; ISBN 9783931801090; English version: De Witte, Ludo. “The Assassination of Lumumba”, available as E-book by Verso, London; ISBN 9781839767913

“Trails of Tears” – Traces of the Indigenous People in North America

by Scott Ritter

The United States seeks to impose its will on the people of Greenland. Many are shocked by this flagrant disregard for issues of sovereignty. But as history shows, it is just business as usual.

*Come out, come out, no use in hiding
Come now, come now, can you not see?
There's no place here, what were you expecting?
No room for both, just room for me
So you will lay your arms down
Yes, I will call this home ...*

I sometimes feel like a prisoner trapped in a nightmare of my own creation.

I have always considered myself an American patriot, and to be frank, I always will.

But sometimes I wonder if the America I cherish existed only in a dream.

I watch with barely suppressed anger as the Inuit people of Greenland struggle with the reality that they are but pawns in a geopolitical power struggle powered by



Inuit children, Greenland. (picture Kim Hansen, Wikimedia (CC))

a modern-day version of American *Manifest Destiny* on steroids.

Around 52,000 people identify as Greenlandic Inuit. Together they comprise around 90% of the population of Green-

land, which is an autonomous region within the Kingdom of Denmark. There are three major groupings of Greenlandic Inuit: the *Kalaallit*, the *Tunumiit*, and the *Inughuit*.

continued on page 12

“We shall institute in the country ...”

continued from page 9

The Republic of the Congo has been proclaimed and our beloved country's future is now in the hands of its own people.

Brothers, let us commence together a new struggle, a sublime struggle that will lead our country to peace, prosperity and greatness. Together we shall establish social justice and ensure for every man a fair remuneration for his labour.

We shall show the world what the black man can do when working in liberty, and we shall make the Congo the pride of Africa.

We shall see to it that the lands of our native country truly benefit its children.

We shall revise all the old laws and make them into new ones that will be just and noble.

We shall stop the persecution of free thought. We shall see to it that all citizens enjoy to the fullest extent the basic freedoms provided for by the Declaration of Human Rights. [Applause]

We shall eradicate all discrimination, whatever its origin, and we shall ensure for everyone a station in life befitting his human dignity and worthy of his labour and his loyalty to the country.

We shall institute in the country a peace resting not on guns and bayonets but on concord and goodwill. [Applause]

And in all this, my dear compatriots, we can rely not only on our own enormous forces and immense wealth, but also on

the assistance of the numerous foreign states, whose co-operation we shall accept when it is not aimed at imposing upon us an alien policy, but is given in a spirit of friendship. [Applause]

Even Belgium, which has finally learned the lesson of history and need no longer try to oppose our independence, is prepared to give us its aid and friendship; for that end an agreement has just been signed between our two equal and independent countries. I am sure that this co-operation will benefit both countries. For our part, we shall, while remaining vigilant, try to observe the engagements we have freely made.

Thus, both in the internal and the external spheres, the new Congo being created by my government will be rich, free and prosperous. But to attain our goal without delay, I ask all of you, legislators and citizens of the Congo, to give us all the help you can.

I ask you all to sink your tribal quarrels: they weaken us and may cause us to be despised abroad.

I ask you all not to shrink from any sacrifice for the sake of ensuring the success of our grand undertaking.

Finally, I ask you unconditionally to respect the life and property of fellow-citizens and foreigners who have settled in our country; if the conduct of these foreigners leaves much to be desired, our Justice will promptly expel them from the ter-

ritory of the republic; if, on the contrary, their conduct is good, they must be left in peace, for they, too, are working for our country's prosperity.

The Congo's independence is a decisive step towards the liberation of the whole African continent. [Applause]

Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, fellow citizens, my brothers and sisters of our race, my brothers in arms – this is what I wanted to say to you on behalf of the government on this glorious day of our complete and sovereign independence [lively and prolonged applause].

Our government, a government of national and popular unity, will serve its country.

I call on all Congolese citizens, men, women and children, to set themselves resolutely to the task of creating a national economy and ensuring our economic independence.

Eternal glory to the fighters for national liberation!

Long live independence and African unity!

Long live the independent and sovereign Congo! [Prolonged applause]

Source: Patrice Lumumba, *The Truth about a Monstrous Crime of the Colonialists*, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961, pp. 44–47. Written by Patrice Lumumba

The original speech delivered in French: [youtube/AfricaMuseum/Speech at the Congolese independence ceremony](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...), Leopoldville, 30 June 1960.

“Trails of Tears” – ...”

continued from page 11

I bring this up because I read today how many Americans have taken up the “cause” of the Greenlandic Inuit, citing the past sins of the Danes when it comes to the treatment of Greenland’s indigenous population.

But the reality is most Americans haven’t the foggiest clue about the Inuit of Greenland.

We don’t know anything about them.

And we don’t want to.

We just want their land.

And we will stoop to any level to take it, even to the point of feigning concern for their troubled history with European colonisers.

*Away, away you have been banished
Your land is gone and given me
And here I will spread my wings
Yes, I will call this home*

Sunrise at the Grand Canyon

I recently finished driving across the great expanse that is the United States of America, from Palm Springs, California, to Albany, New York. I was on family business, and so the schedule and pace of travel was my own. Given the reality of my age, I opted not to try and repeat the heroics of my youth, driving 15–20 hours a day was not an option. I instead broke the trip down into a series of eight-hour drives, giving me time to take in the sights along the way.

The first leg of my journey took me from Palm Springs to Flagstaff, Arizona. I had wanted to catch the sunset over the *Grand Canyon*, but the weather was not cooperative, and I instead opted to get up early the next morning and try instead for the sunrise.

The weather that morning was clear, and the sunrise spectacular.

As I am wont to do, I took some time to read up on the locations I would be driving through, and the places I wanted to see. The history of the creation of the *Grand Canyon National Park* contains a dark side unknown to most Americans. For centuries, *Havasupai* Indians lived in *Havasupai Canyon* and on the surrounding plateau, which today fall within the boundaries of the *Grand Canyon National Park*. They lived in the canyon during the spring and summer and farmed corn, beans, peaches, melons, and cotton. In the winter, *Havasupais* moved to the plateau, hunting and gathering food.

As interest in the *Grand Canyon* region increased (initially because of the discovery of silver and the need to support the demands of silver mining companies, and later because of tourism), a series of Executive Orders were enacted by US President, beginning with *Rutherford Hayes* in 1880, and ending with *Chester Arthor* in



Sunrise at the Grand Canyon. (picture Scott Ritter)

1882, which stripped the *Havasupai* Indians of their tribal lands, confining them to what was the smallest reservation in the United States, a 518 acre plot of land that isolated them from the Grand Canyon plateaus they relied upon for their traditional way of life.

When the *Grand Canyon National Park* was created in 1919, the *Havasupai Indian Reservation* found itself surrounded by park lands. In the decades that followed, the *Havasupai* lobbied to have their lands returned to them, and in 1975, Congress passed the *Grand Canyon National Park Enlargement Act*, which returned over 180,000 acres to the *Havasupai*, forming the current *Havasupai Reservation*.

All is not well, however. In July 2024, uranium ore started to be mined at the *Pinyon Plain Mine*, located in the *Kaibab National Forest*, near Tusayan, close to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. The *Pinyon Mine* threatens groundwater feeding into the Colorado River and *Havasupai* lands. However, its operations are protected by the 1872 Mining Act. The

Havasupai Tribe opposes the operation of the mine, arguing that it risks “desecrating one of our most sacred sites and jeopardising the existence of the *Havasupai* Tribe.”

To date, the concerns of the *Havasupai* have gone unheeded.

Exploring the data bases of American history, one finds reference to Sergeant *Yuma Bill Rowdy*, a *Havasupai* Indian who served as a cavalry scout in the US Army during the final campaigns to subdue the Apache in 1890. At the *Battle of Cherry Creek*, in March 1890, Rowdy “trailed the Apache through some of the ruggedest terrain, the *Salt River Canyon of Arizona*, finding them and leading the rest of the cavalry party to their location,” a feat that earned him the *Congressional Medal of Honour*.

What’s that you say?

You feel the right to remain?

Then stay and I will bury you

What’s that you say?

Your father’s spirit still lives in this place,

Well, I will silence you

The Navajo Reservation in north-eastern Arizona

After catching the *Grand Canyon* sunrise, I proceeded to drive east on Interstate 40, my destination being Albuquerque, New Mexico. On the way I stopped off at the *Petrified Forrest National Park*, before crossing into the *Navajo Reservation*.

North-eastern Arizona is known for its magnificent vistas, defined by a glorious labyrinth of canyons that include *Canyon de Chelly* and *Canyon del Muerto*, formed over the course of thousands of years as

continued on page 13



The Navajo Reservation, north-eastern Arizona. (picture Scott Ritter)

“Trails of Tears” – ...”

continued from page 12

water etched paths through layers of sandstone and igneous rock to produce spectacular walls looming more than 1,000 feet above the verdant canyon floor.

For more than 5,000 years, the *Canyon de Chelly* was home to the indigenous peoples of the region, including the *Diné*, or *Navajo*. As the United States sought to fulfil *John O’Sullivan’s* vision of *Manifest Destiny* – the belief that God mandated American westward expansion to spread democracy, capitalism, and the American way of life throughout the North American continent – the settlers so motivated began clashing with the indigenous peoples who populated the land they coveted. In north-eastern Arizona, this meant that Americans were soon in conflict with the *Diné* people.

In 1863 the famous American frontiersman, *Kit Carson*, led a military expedition against the *Diné*, culminating in the Battle of *Canyon de Chelly*. The canyon was the final fortress of the *Diné*, where they planned on making their final stand. But rather than directly confronting the *Diné* warriors, *Kit Carson* instead undertook a campaign of scorched earth tactics, destroying the crops and slaughtering the herds of sheep the *Diné* relied upon for their survival.

In January 1864 the *Diné*, starving and without any means of sustaining themselves, were compelled to surrender. Over 8,500 were then sent on what has become known as “the Long Walk”, a trek of almost 300 miles from north-eastern Arizona and north-western New Mexico to *Bosque Redondo*, along the *Pecos River* in eastern New Mexico. Over the course of two months, in harsh winter conditions, more than 200 *Navajo* died of cold and starvation as they made their way to their new home. Hundreds more perished after they arrived at the *Bosque Redondo Reservation*.

In 1868, confronted by the reality that the forced relocation of the *Navajo* had been an abject failure, the United States government allowed the surviving *Diné* people to return to their native lands, including the *Canyon de Chelly*, which was made part of a larger *Navajo Reservation*.

The exploits of the *Navajo* in defence of the United States are legendary. During the Second World War, hundreds of *Navajo* enlisted in the *United States Marine Corps*, where they served as “Code talkers” – radiomen who communicated in the *Navajo* language, which the Japanese were unable to decipher.

*Here’s the hitch, your horse is leaving,
Don’t miss your boat, it’s leaving now
And as you go, I will spread my wings
Yes, I will call this home*



Palo Duro Canyon. (picture Scott Ritter)

*I have no time to justify to you
Fool you’re blind, move aside for me
All I can say to you, my new neighbour
Is, you must move on or I will bury you.*

Palo Duro Canyon

Leaving Albuquerque, I drove east, toward Oklahoma City, my destination for the day. My journey took me through the panhandle of Texas where, upon reaching Amarillo, I exited the highway and headed due south, toward the *Palo Duro Canyon*.

Palo Duro is the second largest canyon in the United States, after the Grand Canyon. Formed from millennia of erosion created by an eponymously named creek, the *Palo Duro Canyon* feeds into the southern extension of the High Plains of North America known as the *Llano Estacado*, or “Staked Plains.”

The *Llano Estacado* was home to the *Quahadis*, or *Antelope*, tribe of the *Nermernuh* people, popularly known as the *Comanche*, a name derived from the Ute word *Komántcia*, meaning literally, “anyone who wants to fight me all the time.” The *Quahadis*, like all of the *Nermernuh* people, were expert horsemen who made their livelihood hunting the herds of buffalo and antelope that roamed the *Llano Estacado*. They were fiercely independent, and extremely warlike. For decades they resisted the *Manifest Destiny*-driven encroachments of the American settlers, refusing to sign treaties with the US government and rejecting any notion of reservation life.

In 1874, the *Quahadis* were led by the legendary *Comanche* war chief, *Quanah Parker*. Parker made common cause with

the *Kiowa* and *Western Cheyenne Indians* who had fled their reservations, and together they took refuge in *Palo Duro Canyon*, gathering resources so that they could survive the coming winter.

In September 1874, the US Army dispatched a force of soldiers, led by Colonel *Ranald Mackenzie*, who cornered the *Quahadis*, *Kiowa*, and *Western Cheyenne* in the confines of the *Palo Duro* canyon. While *Quanah Parker* and the other tribal leaders were able to lead their peoples away from *Mackenzie’s* troops, they were forced to abandon the supplies they had been gathering, along with thousands of their best horses.

Mackenzie ordered the supplies burned and the horses slaughtered.

Starving, and without means of transportation, *Quanah Parker* was compelled to surrender and submit to life on a reservation. He was the last of the free *Comanche* leaders.

US Army records show that 14 *Comanche* men enlisted during the Second World War, where they formed a special unit of *Comanche* code talkers assigned to the 4th Infantry Division. These *Comanche* landed at *Utah Beach* on D-Day, 6 June 1944, and fought their way across France, where they found themselves in the middle of the Battle of the Bulge. The last surviving *Comanche* Code Talker, *Charles Chibitty*, passed in June 2005. His awards included two *Bronze Star* medals for heroism, and a *Purple Heart*.

*Now as I rest my feet by this fire
Those hands once warmed here
But I have retired them*

continued on page 14

“Trails of Tears” – ...”

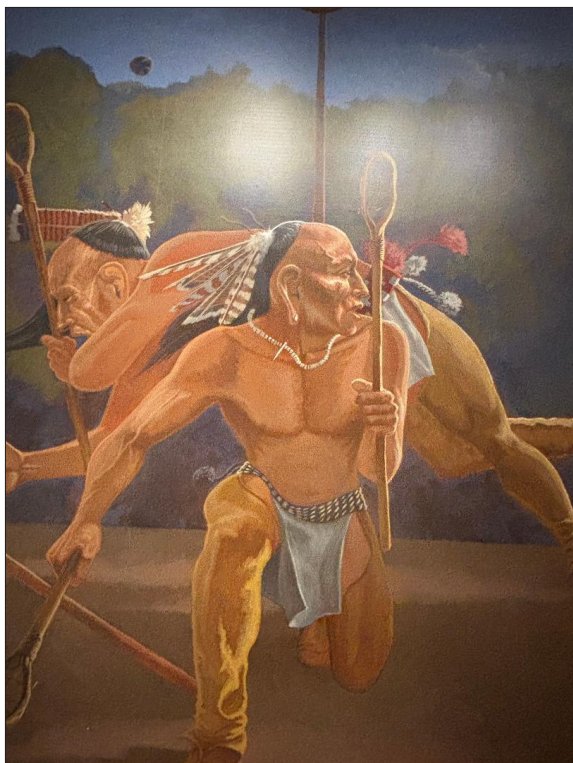
continued from page 13

*I can breathe my own air
And I can sleep more soundly
Upon these pour souls
I'll build heaven and call it home
'Cause you're all dead now.*

**The Cherokee National
Museum, Tahlequah, Oklahoma**

My final day's drive through territory which constituted what we American's colloquially refer to as the “Old West” took me east, out of Oklahoma City, to Little Rock, Arkansas. As I approached the border with Arkansas, I exited Interstate 40, heading north, towards the city of Muskogee. Northeast of Muskogee one finds the town of Tahlequah where, in the original Cherokee National Capitol building, one finds the *Cherokee National History Museum*.

The *Cherokee* self-identify as the *Aniyywiya*, and for centuries they lived as a united people in the southeast part of what is now the United States. On May 28, 1830, President *Andrew Jackson* signed into law the *Indian Removal Act* of 1830. The law called for “an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the states or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi.” Between 1838 and 1840, this law was used as justification for the forcible expulsion of the *Aniyywiya* people from their traditional homelands to what was known as Indian Territory, which today constitutes the State of Oklahoma.



Mural from the Cherokee National History Museum. (picture Scott Ritter)



“Trail of Tears” Painting by Robert Lindneux. (1942) (picture ma)

In May 1835 Andrew Jackson compelled the *Cherokee* leaders to sign the *Treaty of New Echota*, which gave the *Cherokee* two years to leave their ancestral homes for Oklahoma. By 1838, however, only 2,000 *Cherokee* had voluntarily done so. In May 1838 General *Winfield Scott* received a final order from President *Martin Van Buren* to forcefully relocate the remaining *Cherokee*. In the winter of 1838 this operation began, with US troops escorting some 13,000 *Cherokee* on a journey of more than 1,000 miles. The conditions were extremely harsh, and more than 4,000 *Cherokee* perished along the way in what has become known as the “Trail of Tears.”

The “Trail of Tears” is widely regarded as an act of genocide.

More than 25 million acres of land was freed up for economic exploitation by the citizens of the United States by this action.

Billy Walkabout was a *Cherokee* man who enlisted in the US Army and served in Vietnam. There, he was awarded the nation's second highest medal for heroism, the *Distinguished Service Cross*, for action that saved the lives of several American soldiers. *Billy Walkabout* also earned the *Bronze Star* for heroism and was awarded the *Purple Heart* for wounds received in combat.

Billy Walkabout died in 2007 from complications arising from his exposure to *Agent Orange*, a defoliant extensively used by the United States in Vietnam.

*And I live with my justice
And I live with my greedy need
Oh, I live with no mercy
And I live with my frenzied feeding
And I live with my hatred
And I live with my jealousy
Oh, I live with the notion
That I don't need anyone but me*

Inuit children in Greenland

My travels through the United States exposed me to the reality of the sordid history of my country.

While the United States has, over the years, attempted to right the many wrongs that we committed against the indigenous peoples who occupied the land coveted by the European colonisers who later morphed into the American people, the fact is today the American Indian people are treated as second class citizens by a nation they have repeatedly defended in time of war.

Some may be shocked by the attitude taken by the Trump administration towards Greenland and the indigenous Inuit people. But for me, it is just business as usual.

*Don't drink the water
Don't drink the water
Blood in the water
Don't drink the water
Don't drink the water
Don't drink the water
There's blood in the water
Don't drink the water
Blood in the water
You'll all be dead*

(Lyrics from the song “Don't Drink the Water”, by The Dave Matthews Band)•

Source: <https://scottritter.substack.com/p/dont-drink-the-water> of 18 January 2026

“Now I’ve got you ...” Successful language promotion needs a foundation

Dr. Eliane Perret, Psychologist and Special Education Teacher

The discussion (and the astonishment and alarm) about the lack of German language skills among Swiss school-children has been a recurring theme for years – and it is still relevant today. Speech therapy kindergartens are making painstaking decisions as to which of the many registered children they are able to accommodate, and speech therapists might double their working hours. This is not just about children from other language backgrounds who enter kindergarten or school with rudimentary German skills; many Swiss pupils also have inadequate language skills, and the gap in classrooms between highly proficient students and those with significant language deficiencies is widening considerably. How

can this problem be addressed? Various solutions are being discussed time and again. Unfortunately, the focus is usually on structural changes: smaller class sizes, individualised learning programmes, teachers specialised for these children, language courses for toddlers and non-native speakers, mandatory attendance at playgroups and daycare centers, and so on.

Surprisingly little attention is paid to the numerous research findings that meticulously demonstrate how a child learns language and what their family and school environment may contribute to supporting them in this crucial developmental task. This research would provide important insights for family life and for the design of language instruction in kindergarten and schools. However, this is often overlooked in current measures, which is why the following article aims to broaden the perspective.

Language – a bond between people

“The mouse is enjoying the evening stillness. But suddenly there is a smell of fox. And then there is a noise ...” This is how a picture book by *Lorenz Pauli* and *Kathrin Schärer* begins.¹ Have you not become curious about what is going on and what the story might be of the mouse and the fox? Many children feel the same way when they hold beautifully illustrated, engaging picture books in their hands. They gaze in wonder at the pictures and, full of curiosity, allow themselves to be taken on a “journey” through



“This isn’t a hunting ground, it’s a library,” says the mouse. “A Pippi what ...?” asks the fox. (picture detail L. Pauli/K. Schärer)

the story. This is an opportunity for every child, because the ability to fully utilise language is crucial for a child’s socio-emotional and cognitive development. Language connects children with their fellow human beings and is an extraordinarily complex structure with many facets. A “marvel that distinguishes humans from all other living beings,”² as the Viennese physician and psychologist *Alfred Adler* (see box) aptly described it in the early decades of the 20th century: “The development of human language [...] presupposes this contact between human beings. It arose from this intimate bond and, moreover, it is also a new bond for connecting the individual with others.”³ Adler thus anticipated many current research findings, because today’s language teaching should by no means simply be about being able to order a hamburger with toppings at *McDonald’s* or to communicate at work.

Picture books – an invitation to dialogue

Picture books are an important tool for parents, caregivers, and teachers today, as they help them to introduce children to the mysteries of language, for example, when they sit together on the sofa with a picture book or gather in a circle in kindergarten or the classroom. The picture and story – in our case, about the mouse and the fox – then become an invitation to a dialogue that encourages attentive listening and the sharing of one’s own thoughts and questions. “Why does the mouse dis-

appear through the cellar window? Why does the fox lick his lips?” “I hope the mouse gets away from him.” “I think the little mouse is so cute, don’t you think so too?” The pictures not only help to first recognise their connection to the words, and then to follow the plot and understand the course of a story, but in particular those pictures designed with many details awaken children’s joy in storytelling and encourage lively exchange with others. Today, it is often emphasised that children playfully expand their vocabulary, internalise linguistic structures, practice sentence formation, and learn to use correct grammatical forms in such situations. This is true, but it by no means adequately captures the value of picture books and,

above all, shared conversation for the language learning process.

Language – a gateway to culture

Language is fundamental to being human and opens the way for a child to connect with its fellow human beings, its environment, and the culture which it was born into and which it will grow up into — guided by its caregivers. Here, the significance of language skills extends far beyond individual life choices, as it creates a link to the achievements of previous generations and to our own culture. How did our grandparents, our ancestors in general, live? What was their daily life like? What did they do when someone was sick? When were schools “invented”? How did the technological advancements that are “normal” for us today come about? What difficulties did people have to overcome? Were there wars back then? Why? ...

Such questions, and many others, already spark great interest in young children. This is extremely important, because in their conversations with us, children not only practice their linguistic expression but also learn about the thoughts and creations of present and past generations. Language then becomes the medium for intellectually and emotionally accessing and appreciating the roots of their own culture. In this way, their interest grows in delving into the many literary and philosophical works that human history has produced in word and image. They understand the path

continued on page 16

“Now I’ve got you ...”

continued from page 15

of technological achievements and learn to assess what has contributed to the progress of humanity and what were (and are) dead ends. Only when such testimonies can be linguistically understood and grasped can they be available to the next generation to support them in solving the pressing problems of today. Is it not characteristic of our time that this important, supra-individual, and culture-bearing aspect of language is being fatally neglected in families and schools?

Human interaction is required

Learning linguistic expression is therefore an irreplaceable part of a child’s personality development for many reasons. This is precisely why children must be enabled to carefully acquire, practice, and comprehensively cultivate their ability to express themselves with words – both at home and at school. This also applies to children whose first language is not German. When they start kindergarten or school, they can only successfully navigate this expansion of their environment if they feel secure and emotionally at home in their first learned language. This “interpersonal” language learning process can never be replaced by a digital medium, no matter how technically sophisticated. Alfred Adler stated: “Language can only be practiced and vocabulary can only be acquired in a social environment where the child has connections and also establishes communication.”⁴ This statement has since been confirmed by many current research findings.⁵

Thinking needs language

Among the many facets of the language learning process is its close connection to a child’s cognitive development. In short: differentiated thinking needs language! The complexity of this developmental task becomes clear when we return to the story of the mouse and the fox and witness how the *Pippilothek* (i. e., the library with its treasure trove of books) becomes a life-saver for the mouse. “The mouse scampers around a shelf, and the fox follows. Suddenly the mouse stops: ‘Psst! We’re in a special place. No one is supposed to be disturbed here. And you’re disturbing us terribly!’” What a clever idea the mouse must have had!

Such conversational prompts challenge and foster children’s thinking skills, their ability to express themselves, and their creativity. Alfred Adler commented: “Logical thinking is only possible on the condition that there is language, which, through the possibility of concept formation, enables us to make distinctions and create concepts that are not private but common property.”⁶ Engag-

ing in joint deliberations and practicing thinking is therefore also indispensable for a child’s cognitive development. In addition to family conversations, dialogic learning should therefore once again take centre stage in the language learning process. The collaborative development of subject material within the classroom community, often neglected today, should thus regain a central place in classroom activities for the benefit of all. Here, individual reflections converge, are weighed against each other, and conclusions are drawn. This is a training ground for democratic coexistence, a *conditio sine qua non*, given the global conflict zones. Now we can certainly comprehend what Alfred Adler already noted in the 1930s: “Language is a bond between two or more people to convey what they mean. We owe this work of art to the collective and can understand that it could only develop where there was interest in the other person.”⁷ In other words, family and school are important places for language development.

But what about the Pippilothek?

Perhaps you would now like to know how the story of the mouse and the fox ended and what role the *Pippilothek* played in it. Knowing this is – for now – reserved for me, as I enjoyed looking at the picture book right up to the last page. But for now, let me just say this: The fox asked the mouse, “What is a *Pippilothek*?” “A place with lots of books, books to borrow. And books are needed to experience things, to learn things, and to come up with other ideas,” replied the mouse. Would a trip to the library or bookstore not be a good starting point for a conversation with children, right now? ●

¹ Pauli, Lorenz; Schäfer, Kathrin. (2011). *Pippilothek???* Eine Bibliothek wirkt Wunder (Pippilothek??? A Library Works Wonders). Zurich: Atlantis Publishing. ISBN 9-7837-15206-202

² Adler, Alfred. (2009). *Understanding Human Nature*. Bad Hersfeld: Libri. p. 40 (of the German edition)

³ Adler, Alfred. (1929/1982). *Psychotherapie und Erziehung, Band I: Ausgewählte Aufsätze 1919–1929* (Psychotherapy and Education, Volume I: Selected Essays 1919–1929). Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. p. 122 (German edition)

⁴ Adler, Alfred. (1930/1974). *Die Technik der Individualpsychologie 2 – Die Seele des schwererziehbaren Schulkindes* (The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology). Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. p. 181

⁵ for example, Ainsworth, M.D.S.; Bowlby, John; Buchholz-Kaiser, Annemarie; Herzka, Heinz Stefan; Hobson, Peter; Spitz, René A.; Tomasello, Michael

⁶ Adler, Alfred. (2009). *Understanding Human Nature*. Bad Hersfeld: Libri. pp. 40–41 (of the German edition).

⁷ Adler, Alfred. (1931). *Der Sinn des Lebens*. In: Adler, Alfred. (1982). *Psychotherapie und Erziehung, Band II: Ausgewählte Aufsätze 1930–1932*. (What Life Should Mean to You. In: Adler, Alfred. (1982). *Psychotherapy and Education, Volume II: Selected Essays 1930–1932*). Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. p. 74

Alfred Adler (1870–1937)



Alfred Adler (picture Wikipedia)

ep. Alfred Adler was born on 7 February 1870, in Penzing, then a suburb of Vienna, as the third child of a Jewish grain merchant. He studied medicine at the University of Vienna, graduating in 1895. After completing his medical studies, Adler initially worked as a psychiatrist and ophthalmologist. In 1902, he joined *Sigmund Freud’s* Psychoanalytic Society and became one of his early collaborators. However, through keen observation, he soon developed theories that differed significantly from Freud’s drive theory. From 1911 onward, Adler broke away from Freud and founded his own *school of Individual Psychology*. From 1916 to 1918, he served as a military physician in the First World War.

His experiences in the war profoundly influenced his theoretical development. Unlike Freud, he did not see the cruelty of war as an inherent human characteristic. As he explained and argued in his 1919 work “Die andere Seite (The Other Side)”, humans must be seduced or even forced to go to war.

In the post-war years, serious social problems had arisen as a consequence of the war and had to be solved. The neglect of many young people presented an urgent educational and psychological problem that required immediate attention. Adler therefore placed greater emphasis on questions of pedagogy and special education and sought ways to apply his theoretical approach in educational practice.

With lectures for teachers, counselling centres for doctors, social workers, teachers, and students, educational counselling centres, and the implementation of individual psychological principles in the Vienna school reform, Adler and his students had a broad and highly successful sphere of influence.

As early as 1926, Adler travelled to America for a series of lectures. From 1935 onward, he relocated his work entirely to the USA, but continued to undertake intensive lecture tours in various European countries. He died in 1937, during one of these trips, in Aberdeen, Scotland. Adler’s psychological and pedagogical legacy remains incomplete to this day, even though it could provide many answers to existing problems.