

Current Concerns

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War again?! – “People are asking: What will become of us?”

by Karin Leukefeld, Beirut*



Karin Leukefeld
(picture Tilo Gräser)

cc. The following text was first published on 27 February, one day before the start of the war in Iran. It remains as relevant as ever.

“There will be no war.” A peace activist wrote this in my notebook in February 2003. We were in Baghdad. Hundreds of activists from all over the world had come as “human shields” to protect the civilian infrastructure of the Iraqi capital from attack through their permanent presence. I wrote down what motivated these activists and what Iraqi interlocutors from almost all walks of life were willing to tell a German journalist. High-ranking former UN diplomats came to Baghdad to promote peace and dialogue. There were large demonstrations against the war around the world. Even in Germany, hundreds of thousands took to the streets and demanded “No blood for oil”. Some may remember.

In the beginning of 2003, journalists and film crews descended on Baghdad like “vultures circling their prey”, as one colleague put it. Those who came from Europe, the United States and Australia mostly agreed that Iraq had hidden weapons of mass destruction and was lying to the United Nations. Arab journalists tended to believe that the war planned by the US and the “coalition of the willing” was contrary to international law and illegal. They believed that the real objectives were oil and control of the region. They considered it unlikely that Iraq had hidden weapons of mass destruction, as nothing had been found

The Israel-US illegal attacks on Iran constitute a gross violation of international law. If there ever was a “crime of aggression” under the Statute of Rome, this is it. The ICC must act – or close shop.

The international community must Boycott-Divest-Sanction Israel and the United States for their systematic outlawry. Otherwise we are all complicit in the destruction of international law.

Trump is NOT “defending American people” by striking Iran. Trump is putting the American people at a much higher risk of terrorism and placing the world on the brink of World War III. As an American I say “not in my name”.

Professor Alfred de Zayas,
28 February 2026

during the many raids carried out by UNSCOM.

Hundreds of journalists in Baghdad followed the speech given by the US Secretary of State *Colin Powell* to the UN Security Council on 5 February 2003¹ at the former Ministry of Information. Separated into two large rooms, there was an Arabic broadcast for Arab journalists and an English broadcast for everyone else. Once again, reactions varied: some were impressed by Powell’s performance, while others believed he had lied.

And that’s how it was. In 2005, Powell stated that he had received “incorrect information” and that the intelligence services were responsible. In 2011, he spoke of a “blemish” on his career².

A few months after the US Army marched into Baghdad, the UN headquarters in Iraq, the *Canal Hotel*, exploded. A truck loaded with explosives had been remotely detonated beneath the office of *Sergio de Mello*, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and head of the UN mission in Baghdad.

It was 19 August 2003, just five days after the UN mission had officially begun its work. Neither US soldiers nor the UN security forces tasked with protecting the building had noticed the vehicle. 22 people were killed, including *Sergio de Mello*, who had repeatedly criticised the behaviour of the US

army in Iraq. More than 100 people were injured, some seriously.

At that time, the *Canal Hotel* was a contact point for countless people seeking help and had provided rooms and, above all, internet connections for the coordination of independent aid organisations, including the peace activists of the “human shields”. They withdrew from Iraq amid increasing violence and the kidnapping of journalists and their own people. The war, which violated international law and was imposed on Iraq by the US coalition of the willing through the dissemination of lies, became an internal Iraqi war, which ultimately spread throughout the region and beyond.

The long war

“There will be war, a very long war.” That’s what an Arab war correspondent said at the time, having already reported from the wars in Yugoslavia and Afghanistan—and now Iraq. He was right. The US-led “war on terror” knew no geographical boundaries, nor did it recognise the limits imposed on states and their warfare by the UN Charter and international law since the end of the Second World War. It was not about “terror”, it was about land, raw materials, sea routes and control of the target countries. The “war on terror” was directed against the people, and those who defended themselves were branded as “terrorists” and sanctioned. States that were perhaps willing to cooperate but not to submit became “rogue states”. The core area of this ongoing war, West Asia, lies between the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf region. Israel – a Zionist settler state established in Palestine during the First World War – became the “war machine” with which the region³ was to be transformed into a “Greater Middle East”⁴.

Even before the First World War, the Zionists were able to make their interests in Palestine palatable to the great powers. As the “Jewish Legion”⁵ in the British Army, they fought against the Ottomans and Germans in Gaza in 1917, among others. Under the British Mandate (1920–1948), they fought against the Palestinians as the “Jewish Settler Police” and with nu-

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* Karin Leukefeld is an ethnologist, Islamic and political scientist, and historian. She has been working as a freelance correspondent since 2000. Her main areas of focus are the Near and Middle East. Her latest book is entitled *Krieg in Nahost. Geopolitik, Verwüstung, Widerstand und Aufbruch einer Region* (War in the Middle East: Geopolitics, Devastation, Resistance and the Awakening of a Region). (*Hintergrund* publishing house, 2024)

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merous Zionist militias⁶. The Palestinian uprising (1936–1939) against the Zionist settlers was brutally suppressed. The British were also attacked by Zionist militias⁷.

When the Swedish UN diplomat Count *Folke Bernadotte*⁸, accompanied by French Air Force Colonel *André Serot*, was sent to mediate in the Israeli-Arab war on behalf of the UN in 1948, both were assassinated by the Zionist *Lehi* militia. They wore uniforms of the new Israeli Defence Forces. That was in September 1948, after the unilateral establishment of the State of Israel (May 1948). Bernadotte is considered the person who laid the foundations for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, UNRWA. Today, UNRWA is being destroyed⁹ by Israel and the silence of its allies.

When *Menachem Begin*, long-time leader of the Zionist *Irgun* militia, travelled to the United States in December 1948 as chairman of the "Freedom Party" (*Herut*) to solicit financial support for his new party, *Hannah Arendt*, *Albert Einstein* and others protested in an open letter to the "New York Times"¹⁰. They argued that the *Herut* Party was reminiscent of "the Nazi and Fascist parties in its organisation, methods, political philosophy and social behaviour". It had emerged from the former *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, "a terrorist, right-wing, chauvinistic organisation in Palestine".

The signatories recalled that the *Irgun* was responsible, among other things, for the attack on the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin (9 April 1948)¹¹, in which 240 men, women and children were murdered. Their actions showed what could be expected of them as a party. The *Herut* Party later became the *Likud* Party. Its chairman for many years has been *Benjamin Netanyahu*, whose great role model is Menachem Begin.

Fed with money from the US and Germany, embedded in NATO and EU structures, the US-Israeli "war machine" has devastated Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, Syria and, time and again, Gaza and Lebanon. European, Arab and other countries have contributed to this to a greater or lesser extent as "partners" or "allies". Wheat fields have become battlefields, according to one interlocutor in Lebanon.

Now it is Iran's turn. The country is under constant threat. The US has stationed a huge military force in the region's seas. Calls in the UN Security Council¹² to remember the UN Charter and resolve conflicts through dialogue are ignored or even mocked by politicians and media in the political West – the US, EU and NATO.

There are no international peace activists. There is no armada of journalists waiting in Tehran "like vultures" for its destruction. They sit in their comfortable studios around the world, commenting, analysing, waiting for war, driving up ratings and keeping the people of the region in suspense. Except in Germany, where the focus is on pressing issues such as the "heating law, support for Ukraine, approval for the purchase of kamikaze drones, sugar tax, digital self-determination and the dispute over the Berlinale"¹³.

What will become of us?

In Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, people are asking themselves: What will become of us? They are tense. It is not only in Lebanon, where I am currently located, that they are left to their own devices. The US is withdrawing more than 50 employees from its embassy in Beirut, while more and more warships and fighter jets are being deployed in the eastern Mediterranean. Berlin is urging Germans to leave Iran and Lebanon.

"These are normal security precautions," says a conversation partner who runs a family business in the morning. The governments just want to protect themselves. Of course, everyone is talking about the Israeli threats against Lebanon, he adds in response to my question: "If *Hezbollah* interferes in the war against Iran, the country's civilian infrastructure will be destroyed." If the airport and the power supply are destroyed, "that's it for us," he says. "But you know, everyone here just wants peace, not war. You can ask anyone; we've had enough war."

Israel is "a war machine," according to my conversation partner. "When there's no war, they don't know what to do, and the economy stagnates." He follows the stock market prices, and when the Palestinians "did what they did" on 7 October, the prices were at a low. When Israel then launched its full-scale war against Gaza, the prices went through the roof. Everyone is now focusing on armaments and weapons production, "and the prices are rising and rising."

I receive a message:

"24 F-16CJ *Wild Weasels* have just been deployed to the Middle East. They are reinforcing 6 land-based E/A-18G *Growlers*. The *USS Abraham Lincoln* also has a squadron of *Growlers* (6–8). These special aircraft are used to suppress and destroy enemy air defence systems.

Another squadron of E/A-18Gs is aboard the *USS Gerald R. Ford*, which will arrive in two to three days. This will bring the total number of US SEAD/DEAD platforms stationed in the region to around 40. This is an extraordinary fleet of specialised SEAD/DEAD platforms!

In addition, an unprecedented number of manned and unmanned ISR platforms have been deployed in the region. These aircraft are also used to search for and track air defence installations.

Since last summer, it has been claimed that Israel completely destroyed Iran's air defences and that Israeli aircraft flew completely unhindered in Iranian airspace during the 12-day war.

If that is true, why then is there such a huge deployment of Growler, Wild Weasel and ISR aircraft in the region just a few months later?

It is obvious that the US is extremely concerned about the risks posed by the Iranian air defence systems that Israel allegedly destroyed last summer. This suggests that the US and Israeli military and intelligence services have fed their citizens a lot of disinformation about the actual events during the twelve-day war. And it also explains, at least in part, why the US is currently so reluctant to launch a large-scale air strike campaign against Iran."

Another message in my mailbox reports, "Trump's top general warns against an attack on Iran," according to the internet platform *Axios*¹⁴. Such an attack would involve numerous risks and could lead to a long conflict, according to "two sources with knowledge of the internal discussions." The rest is behind a paywall. After a quick search, I find the report on the Qatari news channel *al-Jazeera*¹⁵. It cites the *Washington Post*; the research is standard journalistic practice. Trump rejects the report.

Different worlds

While politicians, analysts and the media discuss the possibility of a new war against Iran around the clock, life goes on for the people of the region. "Lebanon is facing extreme social, economic and political problems," according to one report. Inflation is high, as is unemployment, and low wages and a sharp rise in prices, especially for basic foods, are a challenge for every family. Poverty is widespread and access to healthcare is limited. Education and training are unaffordable for many due to high school and university fees, especially as transport costs for schoolchildren and students continue to rise. The political situation is unstable and characterised by daily "threats to the security" of the population. The 2024 war has exacerbated the crisis.

As difficult as the situation is for the Lebanese, it is even more difficult for the Palestinian refugees in the country, the report continues. They have virtually no rights. Eighty per cent of them live in poverty and are denied access to healthcare, public education and social security systems. They are completely dependent

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Ukraine, Russia and Europe after four years of war

by Giuseppe Gagliano*, Centro Studi Strategici Carlo De Cristoforis, Cestudec

Four years into the Russia-Ukraine war, the core problem is no longer who says they want negotiations, but who is structurally able to negotiate. Any serious deal would have to settle issues that are not technical details but pillars of the European security order: territory, Ukraine's neutrality or alignment, and the future shape and limits of Ukraine's armed forces. On these points, the positions remain fundamentally incompatible because each side reads compromise as political defeat.

Europe sits inside a paradox. It is often treated as marginal in the most consequential diplomatic channels, yet it carries a large and growing share of the economic, budgetary, and political burden of sustaining the war. At the same time, European leaders publicly embrace a narrative of endurance: keep pressure high until Russia breaks. The problem is that endurance is not a slogan, it is a balance sheet. Russia's economy is strained, but not collapsing. If Moscow can keep funding the war, the "wait for exhaustion" strategy risks turning into a long, expensive stalemate where the costs are European while the leverage is limited.

On the battlefield, the dominant logic is attrition conducted as a system strategy. The target is not only units in the trenches, but the enabling architecture of a modern army: energy, logistics, railways, repair

hubs, command nodes, depots. Striking electricity is not symbolic. It slows industry, disrupts communications, reduces mobility, and undermines the capacity to rotate forces. The cumulative effect is to compress Ukraine's operational freedom: fewer reserves, harder movements, slower replacement of losses, more fragile command continuity.

The decisive variable is manpower. When personnel shortages grow, rotation becomes impossible, training is shortened, cohesion weakens, and counterattacks become local and sporadic. An army can survive losing a weapons system. It struggles to survive the simultaneous erosion of people, power supply, and logistics. Over time, defence turns into permanent emergency management: which sector to reinforce first when every sector is under pressure.

The southern axis highlights the fusion of military and economic warfare. Pressure on ports and maritime terminals is not only about geography; it is about revenue and survival. Sea access is an economic artery: exports, foreign currency, insurance, supply flows. When port capacity is degraded, the damage reaches beyond the front line into fiscal stability, production chains, and national resilience. If the war expands its operational horizon toward critical transport nodes, it becomes a campaign against the country's economic oxygen as much as its armed forces.

Three economic scenarios emerge.

First, Russia sustains a war equilibrium. It accepts slower growth and higher domestic distortion while prioritising the military budget, adapting trade routes, and keeping industrial output aligned with wartime needs. This is not painless, but it can be durable if the political objective is clear and the state apparatus remains coherent.

Second, Europe enters strategic fatigue. Stockpiles thin, production remains too slow, budgets strain, and public opinion fragments under inflationary pressures and competing domestic demands. The cost becomes institutional: the longer the war lasts, the more the EU's internal divisions and strategic dependency are exposed.

Third, Ukraine risks becoming structurally dependent. Weapons deliveries can keep defences alive, but a country also needs stable energy, repair capacity, export routes, and long-term economic visibility. Without these, support functions like a medical drip: it sustains, but it does not rebuild.

The geopolitical conclusion is uncomfortable. Between Washington and Moscow, Europe often looks less like an actor and more like a stake: a rear base, a payer, a political stage, but not the table where the decisive terms are set. When policy becomes maximalist rhetoric, it stops being policy and turns into posture.

Geo-economics is unforgiving. A long war means pressure on energy costs, industry, public finances, competitiveness, and social cohesion. It also deepens bloc dynamics, where every military decision carries industrial, technological, and financial dependency. In that framework, "forever war" is not a strategy; it is a trap.

A peace that resembles surrender is politically impossible. A war without horizon is materially corrosive. Between the two lies a narrow corridor: a hard, imperfect settlement built on a realistic assessment of forces rather than on hope. Until Europe aligns its political narrative with the realities of endurance, it risks remaining in the worst position imaginable: outside the decision room, but at the centre of the bill. ●

* Giuseppe Gagliano is an Italian journalist, geopolitical expert, and philosopher specialising in economic espionage, conflict analysis, and strategic studies, who writes for various Italian and international media. He is president and founder of the *Centro Studi Strategici Carlo De Cristoforis, Cestudec*, in Como and also teaches at the University of Calabria and the *Istituto Alti Studi Strategici e Politici*, IASSP, in Milan. He has published numerous articles on economic warfare and the role of intelligence agencies in modern politics.

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on the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) in these areas. However, its funds have been drastically cut, dozens of teachers have been laid off or are now only working on an hourly basis.

What Palestinian refugees are going through now applies almost equally to many Iraqis, Syrians and Lebanese. While the share prices of arms and high-tech companies are rising worldwide, many people lack the bread to live on.

So now it's war against Iran?!

The third round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the US is currently underway in Geneva; it is February 2026. A year ago, when the E3 foreign ministers

from the UK, France and Germany were still negotiating with Iranian Foreign Minister *Abbas Aragchi* in Geneva, the situation was similar. At the time, the Iranian foreign minister expressed cautious optimism to journalists. On his way back, during a stopover in Istanbul, he heard that Israel had attacked Iran.¹⁶ With the support of the US.

And this time, will there be war again?●

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¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhWlPo3qxak>
² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/18/stain-on-powells-record-lies-to-the-un-about-iraqs-weapons>
³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Middle-East>
⁴ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-says-hes-on-a-historic-and-spiritual-mission-endorses-vision-of-greater-israel/

⁵ <https://jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-legend>
⁶ <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/42543>
⁷ <https://www.palquest.org/en/overallchronology?id=139&chronos=139>
⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Greve-Folke-Bernadotte-af-Wisborg>
⁹ <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-commissioner-general-burning-unrwa%E2%80%99s-headquarters-unprecedented-attack>
¹⁰ https://dn721901.ca.archive.org/0/items/AlbertEinsteinLetterToTheNewYorkTimes.December41948/Einstein_Letter_NYT_4_Dec_1948_text.pdf
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¹² <https://dppa.un.org/en/mtg-sc-10091-asg-pobee-15-jan-2026>
¹³ <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/nachrichten-100.html>
¹⁴ <https://www.axios.com/2026/02/23/iran-strike-trump-gen-dan-caine-vance-rubio>
¹⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/24/trump-hits-out-at-reports-that-top-general-flagged-risks-of-attacking-iran>
¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EybZmYI-ThY>

The very same war

by *Rafael Poch-de-Feliu**



Rafael Poch-de-Feliu
(picture ma)

What we are currently witnessing regarding Iran, Ukraine and Venezuela is essentially the very same war. Its aim is to prevent, by military means, the decline of American-Western hegemony in the world, which is threatened above all by the growing strength of China. In Ukraine, the aim is to weaken Russia, an important partner of China. In Venezuela, the aim is to refuse China access to important Latin American energy reserves and resources. With its east-west and north-south energy and transport corridors, Iran is the essential link in Eurasian integration. The plan for Iran is the same as for Syria: to eliminate a sovereign and independent state and replace it with the usual mixture of a subjugated regime and a black hole.

For the second attack being prepared against Iran *Trump* has deployed a third of his aircraft carrier capacity. It is inconceivable that this extremely expensive deployment could be reversed without being used or without anything being done with it. Vice President *J. D. Vance* recently visited Armenia and Azerbaijan to enlist their support for the attack. In Turkey and especially in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, there is concern and opposition to the risk of a major regional war planned by Washington and Israel, as it could affect their own energy facilities. Much will depend on Iran's military response capability; on the damage it can inflict on its adversaries.

The Iranians say they will respond in proportion to the scale of the attacks against them. They claim to have far greater missile capabilities than in last June's 12-day war, when 45 of their missiles overcame the Israeli defence system after its interception capabilities were ex-

hausted and overwhelmed. In addition to the United States, European countries were also involved in this system. It is not known whether the Iranian military has since restored and improved its air defences, nor what role the Russians – who are too engaged in Ukraine – and, above all, the Chinese, who are always opposed to overly obvious confrontations, may have played in this. In the worst case, Iran could block the Strait of Hormuz and trigger a serious international oil and economic crisis. There are several Russian and Chinese naval vessels in the region, which increases the risks.

At the start of the fifth year of the war, negotiations in Ukraine are more unclear than ever. The fact that the US, the most important player in this war, is presenting itself as a “mediator” is solely due to fears that a military defeat for NATO could undermine Washington's prestige. Trump has shifted part of the burden, namely military aid to Kiev, onto the Europeans, but apart from the financial cost, his commitment remains unchanged. The CIA and Britain's MI6 remain very active in identifying targets and facilitating Ukrainian attacks. American and British aircraft continue to fly over the Black Sea and guide Ukrainian missiles against targets in the Russian hinterland, with little information being released about the number of civilian casualties. Kiev's military eyes and ears remain controlled by the West. According to a report in the “New York Times”, Washington continued to assist Kiev in January in selecting targets in Russia and in attacks on Russian oil tankers in the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, with Trump being informed of these measures. The chairman of the Russian Security Council, *Nikolai Patrushev*, has threatened to deploy Russia's weak navy to protect its merchant ships. Russia has extensive nuclear resources, but very limited naval forces, especially in the Baltic Sea.

Following the friendly meeting between *Putin* and Trump in Alaska last August, Washington has made no concessions whatsoever and has not shown the slightest sign of rapprochement. It has not even responded to Russia's proposals to extend the START agreement on nuclear arms limitation and has announced its insane decision to resume nuclear testing, which will prompt Russia to take similar measures. For all these reasons, Moscow trusts neither Trump nor the success

of the negotiations. It is playing along because it has nothing to lose, but it is aware that the matter will be decided on the military front. As for the Europeans, they are doing everything in their power to torpedo this farce.

“Russia's maximalist demands cannot be met with a minimalist response,” explains the ever-surprising EU Foreign Affairs Representative *Kaja Kallas*. In her list of demands, contained in a document quoted by *Radio Free Europe* on 20 February, she calls for Russia to withdraw its troops from Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Transnistria. After the war, Moscow must disarm to the same level as Ukraine, pay reparations, answer for war crimes and even hold elections in Russia under international supervision. In other words, the EU continues to dream of Russia's “strategic defeat”, which it had envisaged at the beginning of the conflict, even though the military and economic reality does not look like that.

The Russian delegation arrived in Geneva last week after a flight of more than six hours over Turkey, the Mediterranean and Italy, because Germany and Poland had refused to grant their plane permission to fly.

On 7 February, an important adviser to the Russian negotiating delegation, General *Vladimir Alekseev*, deputy head of military intelligence, was shot dead in his Moscow apartment. The crime is attributed to the Ukrainian secret service. A squadron of F-16 fighter jets, piloted by American and Dutch soldiers, is supporting the beleaguered air defence in Kiev, even though US sources claim that these are not regular soldiers but mercenaries. Against this backdrop, Russian Foreign Minister *Sergei Lavrov*, who has been withdrawn from the current negotiations by the Kremlin, expresses his scepticism about these negotiations on a daily basis. The brutal Russian bombing of energy infrastructure, which is exposing the civilian population in many Ukrainian cities to the cold, is met with widespread condemnation. However, the same practice was justified in the Kosovo War in 1999 by the notorious NATO spokesman *Jamie Shea* at a press conference in Brussels on 29 May of that year – opportunistically, this has since been removed from the NATO website. •

Source: <https://cxtx.es/es/20260201/Firmas/52234/rafael-poch-guerra-venezuela-iran-eeuu-china-ucrania.htm> of 23 February 2026
(Translation *Current Concerns*)

* *Rafael Poch-de-Feliu* was the first foreign correspondent for the Catalan daily newspaper “La Vanguardia” in Moscow from 1988 to 2002, and subsequently in Beijing, Berlin and Paris. He is the author of several political books and runs the blog rafael.poch.com.

The debt-ridden EU now wants to plunder its citizens

by Professor Dr Eberhard Hamer, Institute for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises of Lower Saxony



Eberhard Hamer
(picture ma)

The predecessor organisations of the European Union (EU) were originally intended to be merely a trade union for Europe. This has changed radically. Today, the EU intervenes in almost all areas of life – with disastrous consequences and without any legitimacy.

Becoming ever more intrusive beyond its purely economic mandate, the EU bureaucracy has increasingly taken on new tasks, tasks which the member states have tolerated and for which they have sacrificed sovereign rights:

- It introduced a common currency, the euro, whose central bank (Eurobank) was granted supremacy over the national banks.
- It created a *European Court of Justice*, which acts as a supreme court over all member states and, with the tacit consent of the member states, has even subjected their constitutions to its jurisdiction.
- The EU has intervened in the Ukraine war with money and arms deliveries “in the name of the community” and is attempting to mobilise member states for a common fight against Russia in order to gain military predominance over their national armies. It has succeeded in transforming the Ukraine war from an American war into a European war with Russia, a war that Europe must now pay for.

Debt Union

In reality, the EU has no money for any of these tasks and, according to Article 310 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU), is neither permitted to incur debt nor to grant credit-financed subsidies. At the founding of the EU, all member states swore that the Union would not be allowed to introduce “Eurobonds”, i.e. debt of its own at the expense of its member states. However, the EU has repeatedly circumvented

The Swiss cash initiative

ww. People in many places in the world are concerned about their money. Professor Hamer reports on the alarming financial situation in the European Union – in the individual countries and in the overstretched organisation. He analyses Brussels’ discomfiting plans to rapidly reduce the skyrocketing mountain of debt and ask the citizens to pay for it as well. That the situation in the EU is really something to be worried about is not only written by Professor Hamer. What does it mean for us, the Swiss? Should we join forces with the EU and give up our proven political system? A few days ago, on 8 March, a vote was held in Switzerland regarding the cash initiative. This popular initiative wanted to “preserve real money – independent of electricity, networks and corporate interests,

safe in a crisis and democratically decided upon”. It required that the federal government ensure the permanent supply of banknotes and coins. They are a part of our daily life and our identity. The counterproposal of the Parliament steadfastly maintained: The Swiss franc is and will remain the currency of Switzerland.” This statement however leaved questions unanswered – above all regarding digital money. This vote was one of many votes on the monetary system that have been taking place since 1848. They are among a total of 700 votes at the federal level which have taken place in this long period of time. Direct democracy has significantly contributed to the well-being of Switzerland (see the article on page 11). – Do we really want to endanger the construction of many generations?

this hurdle, ever since *Angela Merkel* approved this course of action. The ESM (*European Stability Mechanism*, in reality a European debt monster) was established in 2012 to prevent sovereign defaults in Greece, Ireland, and Portugal, and to provide special loans to member states facing financial difficulties – loans which, of course, then constitute EU joint debt. This Mechanism came with its own authority, no exit options for member states, and an initial capital of 708.5 billion Euro.

Following this, further joint EU debt was created: the 188.2 billion Euro EU bailout fund, the EU short-time work scheme, the “Next Generation Programme,” an EU short-time work scheme (SURE) of 98.4 billion Euro, and a 150 billion Euro “Ukraine Facility” to finance the war in Ukraine (mostly at France’s instigation, but with Germany’s approval) – not including the related NATO contributions of 5 per cent of GDP, which trigger annual payment obligations of 220 billion Euro for Germany alone.

So, although EU debt is prohibited by statute and law, the EU has nevertheless incurred more than 3 trillion euros of debt, with the consent of its member states – and this figure is rising.

In this way, the EU, which was originally intended to be a beneficial competitive organisation, has in fact become a de facto debt union, illegally according to its own statutes but with the approval of Merkel and others of her ilk. Member contributions are no longer equal to paying these debts, which thus pose an ever-

increasing threat to the very existence of the EU.

Not only is the EU overindebted, but many EU member states are so as well, for example, Greece (150 per cent of its GDP), Italy (130 per cent of its GDP), and most other European countries, and since *Friedrich Merz* was elected chancellor, also Germany. The EU has consistently had to resort to “bailout funds”, i.e. the EU’s ever-increasing debt structure through financial aid to collapsing member states – assuming liability and then the debt of unsound countries – to save the EU and the euro. Thus, the EU and its member states are collectively plunging into ever-higher, unsustainable debt.

Remedy for EU-indebtedness: Citizens’ Assets

The debt of the EU and its member states has now reached such a level that it can no longer be remedied through traditional debt repayment methods such as spending cuts, tax increases, or borrowing. This debt explosion is driving the collapse of the Eurosystem and, consequently, of the EU.

In this desperate situation, a crash can only be averted by two brutal interventions with the assets of citizens:

1. The devaluation of monetary assets and
2. Expropriation of tangible assets.

Regarding point 1: The EU is already preparing for the devaluation of monetary assets. The European Central Bank intends to switch to the “Digital Euro” in 2029, which essentially means that cash will be

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abolished and a new digital currency, determined at the discretion of the central bank, will be introduced. Such a transition is typically accompanied by devaluation.

In previous currency reforms, the currency was devalued by 10 per cent a time in France and by as much as 90 per cent in Germany in 1948. This simply means that citizens' currency holdings lose value by these percentages, while the state, as the debtor, is relieved of this percentage of its debt.

A period of accelerating inflation usually ensues on the road to currency reform because people lose faith in the value of money, or because the money supply is increased so drastically that its value decreases accordingly.

It seems significant for EU citizens that the Eurozone bureaucracy has openly declared its intention to implement a currency reform with the transition to the digital euro and to thereby destroy citizens' financial assets by the devaluation rate for its own benefit.

Our financial assets are therefore directly threatened by the EU. This applies not only to cash holdings but also to pension entitlements, stocks, bonds, mortgages, and all other nominal assets.

We must therefore expect a radical dismantling of all monetary assets in order to pay off the essentially illegal debts of the EU – and also of the member states – from the personal financial assets of every citizen.

Regarding point 2: The EU also wants to get its hands on our tangible assets. When Germany reduced its war debts through currency reform in 1948, a "burden-sharing" measure was also introduced to burden real estate assets "for reasons of fairness": this burden-sharing scheme forcibly encumbered all properties with state-owned mortgages.

The EU is planning its plundering even further: It also wants to burden or partially expropriate the movable assets of its citizens. To this end, it established a new agency, the *Anti-Money Laundering Authority* (AMLA), in Frankfurt in 2024. Allegedly, this agency serves to combat money laundering. In reality, however, it is intended to create an asset register of every single EU citizen. Its proximity to the Eurozone bank is meant to make it easy to identify, monitor, and report the financial assets of every individual citizen to the EU authority, for plundering purposes.

The Trap: Digital Money

If only digital money is left, the central bank will have sole and total control over the financial assets of every single EU citizen. This means the EU, with the help of

its AMLA (Administrative Banking Act), can not only generally reduce the financial assets of all EU citizens, but also specifically punish political disfavour, opposition, or "wrong thinking" with the withdrawal of funds, or even account freezing.

And to ensure that owners of tangible assets also contribute to the EU's debt relief, AMLA is to create an asset register for every single asset of every EU citizen.

The EU Commission commissioned a feasibility study for doing this as far back as in 2021, and this confirmed that such an asset register was fundamentally feasible, making citizens' financial circumstances transparent and accessible across borders. Nothing is to remain hidden from the authorities. Allegedly, according to EU Directive 2024/1260 this is only intended to allow the confiscation and seizure of assets and their proceeds from criminals. In reality, however, the asset register can serve as a new burden-sharing mechanism, using tangible assets to offset national debt just as inflation and currency reform will by then have devalued monetary assets. In practice, AMLA is intended to create a central asset register to record citizens' assets, so that in the event of an EU debt relief programme, it would only take a mouse click to impoverish any individual citizen, i.e. to plunder their assets.

The relevant information for the asset register is to be digitally compiled from all government records and supplemented by a questionnaire for each citizen, with severe penalties for providing false information.

This compulsory asset register applies not only to natural persons but also to foundations and legal entities – in other words, to the tangible assets of every person in the EU.

The *European Central Bank*, as the central bank of the digital currency, and AMLA, as the central asset register for all tangible assets, could therefore jointly (by 2029?) carry out the total plundering of all EU citizens' financial and tangible assets.

At least, that's the plan.

How can we avoid this?

The weak point of the EU's plundering of the euro is less the financial system, which can be completely centralised by the EU; the problems will arise more on the AMLA side when determining tangible assets.

There are many loopholes and legal flexibilities to artificially reduce assets.

What remains is that the EU is incurring debt recklessly and illegally, has no taxes or revenue of its own, and therefore has to offload its debts onto the citizens of Europe by plundering their financial and tangible assets.

From a blessing to a curse

If the ruling parties had not suppressed all criticism of the EU, had refused to accept

its illegal debt, and had also refused to assume the annual aid payments for the over-indebted member states, the EU would not be over-indebted and on the verge of bankruptcy, and the citizens would have remained protected from its grasp.

Our politicians are themselves to blame that the EU is now reaching for our assets and is allowed to do so – with the approval of our national politicians.

Thus, the EU has been transformed from a beneficent asset (trade) into a nuisance, from an economic benefit to a danger and a burden for every propertied citizen due to the invasive overreach of its bureaucracy.

In cases of private over-indebtedness, this remains a problem between debtors and creditors. In cases of sovereign over-indebtedness, however, international finance always ensures that, as the creditor, it does not lose out, but rather that the citizens alone bear the brunt of the damage, meaning they must be plundered.

The EU is currently preparing this plunder on behalf of this international finance. The 2029 deadline is not a coincidence, because the EU has just incurred another 90 billion euros in debt related to Ukraine and, due to its own over-indebtedness, is itself threatening to become insolvent. •

Current Concerns

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Editor: Erika Vögeli, Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

Address: Current Concerns,

P.O. Box 247 CH-9602 Bazenheid

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Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

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“The worst thing you can do is not try”

Expert panel discussion: ‘Sanctions against individuals – what can be done?’

On 15 February, the German Bundestag passed a new “Act amending Criminal Offences and Penalties for Violations of European Union Restrictive Measures”, the “Sanctions Act”. Violations of sanctions were previously treated as administrative offences. From now on, at least in Germany, a person who helps a sanctioned person is guilty of an offence. Meanwhile, international protests condemning the entire sanctions regime of the European Union are mounting. The public debate was fuelled by the European Council’s imposition of sanctions on the renowned former Swiss Colonel in the General Staff and intelligence officer Jacques Baud on 15 December 2025. (Current Concerns has reported several times.) However, many other individuals are also affected. (According to its own figures, the EU has sanctioned more than 2,500 individuals and entities, more than 28 billion Euros of private assets frozen in the EU).

It cannot be emphasised enough: Sanctions without a UN Security Council resolution are illegal. Sanctions against individuals are extra-legal, decided by the EU Council and implemented by the EU Commission. They are an arbitrary act and a stab in the back for freedom of expression, devoid of any rule of law. The consequences for those subject to sanctions: freezing/termination of bank accounts, travel ban within the EU. Anyone who does business with sanctioned persons or helps them is liable to prosecution.

Austrian author and publisher Hannes Hofbauer has just written a new book on the subject:

Roberto Zamora: [...] “I do see these sanctions as illegal – in the sense that there’s a lack of foundation according to EU law. But from a strictly human rights point of view, it’s very concerning. In my view, these sanctions violate quite a number of provisions regarding human rights. They’re also based on a failure to fulfil several obligations that the EU has undertaken. For instance, Article 6 of the Treaty on the European Union states that the European Union must accede to the European Convention on Human Rights, something that has not been done. Nevertheless, there is case law from the Court of Justice of the European Union indicating and establishing that the application of human rights is mandatory and binding within the activities of the EU. What I see is the rise of a regime that’s tending toward absolutism – totalitarianism – in very, very concerning ways when it comes to human rights.”

“Aller Rechte beraubt – Mit aussergerichtlichen Sanktionen zum autoritären Staat” (Deprived of all rights – Towards an authoritarian state with extrajudicial sanctions). In the foreword, he writes: “The book manuscript was completed in early 2026, when seven Europeans – including two Swiss citizens – were listed: Jozef Hambalek, Alina Lipp, Thomas Röper, Hüsein Do ru, Nathalie Yamb, Xavier Moreau and Jacques Baud. It is to be feared that, in view of the anti-Russian furor among EU European leaders, these will not be the last. [...] The personal sanctions imposed without legal proceedings are an expression of a state of emergency that has not yet been officially declared but which exists for the people affected; and they are a first step towards martial law. Preventing this is, in my view, a task for society as a whole.”

Following numerous protests against the listing, work is now underway to determine the legal, political and civil society options available to put an end to the sanctions regime. Pascal Lottaz, a Swiss researcher on neutrality living in Japan, is one of those who are taking action. In his podcasts, he regularly invites experts to share their insights in order to develop an interdisciplinary picture of the legal situation and the options available for defending oneself against sanctions – in that case – of Jacques Baud. Lottaz deserves great credit for making this preparation process public and thus comprehensible to everyone. All the more important considering journalist Florian

Warweg’s question at the German Federal Press Conference on 19 December 2025, “Is it really the current position of the federal government to impose comprehensive sanctions on renowned military analysts such as Baud and to massively interfere with their fundamental rights simply because it disagrees with the content of their analyses of the war in Ukraine?”, the spokesperson for the Foreign Office replied: “That is what happened this Monday, it will continue to happen, it has happened in the past, and everyone working in this field must expect that it could happen to them too.” (<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/regierungspressekonferenz-2748626>).

On February 6, Lottaz published a video contribution featuring a panel of experts on the topic of «Sanctions against individuals – What can be done?». Participants in this panel included Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Dr Alexandra Hofer (a sanctions lawyer) and Roberto Zamora (the lawyer who, in Costa Rica, brought about the country’s withdrawal from the coalition of the willing that waged war against Iraq by successfully suing Costa Rica before the Supreme Court). Both are active in the field of international law and human rights.

Below, we publish excerpts from this expert panel discussion, which have been edited for clarity. The entire discussion and transcript can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9A0r8C9r0sg>.

Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

US-American and EU-sanctions

Jeffrey Sachs: “From the US point of view, I think the main thing I’d say is that there’s become an absolute addiction to sanctions – on individuals, designated corporate entities, and governments – over the last 20 years, as if it were a newly discovered tool of statecraft. Especially after 9/11, the U.S. government found that sanctions were a very cheap, quick, flexible way – without any public scrutiny, congressional oversight, or need to explain – to launch economic warfare, and geopolitical warfare in general. So the personal sanctions should be seen in that US context, at least.” [...]

So we’re in a surreal bubble on all of this, where sanctions are unconstrained tools of power – unchecked by law, unchecked by any kind of legislative oversight, unchecked by public debate. And that’s why they’re so effective, because

we’re in a world of executive abuse. And these are good tools for that purpose.”

Jacques Baud

Jeffrey Sachs: “What I’d like to understand, just mechanically, about the Jacques Baud case. He’s a very serious analyst, a very distinguished individual, one of the most experienced people in the world, actually, on the question of the war in Ukraine. This is no wild-eyed bomb-thrower; this is an extraordinarily intelligent individual. [...] It’s completely shocking, because Mr Baud is an extremely careful, detailed person. [...] He’s Swiss, after all – with all respect. That means he’s meticulous, he’s careful, he presents evidence. So what actually has happened here?”

[...]

Alexandra Hofer: “[...] It’s the Council of the EU, essentially, that puts them on

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the list. So it's the ministers of each member state, and it has to be a unanimous decision. It's quite possible that one member state in particular didn't like what Mr Baud had to say – I mean, I'm just speculating. They put him on the list, and then everybody just... nobody said anything. Maybe they don't necessarily know who Mr. Baud is. It depends, I guess, on the information they follow.” [...]

Pascal Lottaz: “This is the actual listing of Mr Jacques Baud. ‘Jacques Baud, a former Swiss Army colonel and strategic analyst, is a regular guest on pro-Russian television channels and radio programs. He acts as a mouthpiece for pro-Russian propaganda and spreads conspiracy theories – for example, accusing Ukraine of orchestrating its own invasion in order to join NATO. Therefore, Jacques Baud is considered responsible for implementing or supporting actions or policies attributed to the government of the Russian Federation, which undermine or threaten stability or security in third countries by engaging in information manipulation and interference.’ This is it. [...]

One of the main points is that these listings are executive decisions by the Council, and actually the EU court doesn't really touch them. It only checks whether this is factually correct or not. But for the reasons the EU gives for putting them there, it defers to the Council, which is responsible for determining threats to the EU. So we are in a national security, foreign policy environment, where foreign policy is being used to go after people the state determines are enemies.”

Jeffrey Sachs: “Well, it's police-state tactics. It's not anything I would have associated with the EU up until this moment, frankly, I'm rather shocked by it. I'm not as shocked by the United States, because I know we have a regime that's a security state and does whatever it can to crush opposition at the moment. If I understood you correctly, one of the people



(picture screenshot)

on the list, at least, is a German citizen. In the United States so far, the sanctioning has been overwhelmingly of non-US citizens. I don't actually know of a single case where it's a US citizen – but I'm not standing by that as a point of information; it's just my limited sense. But in the EU, they're now targeting European citizens as well for sanctions on speech.”

I thought there were norms in Europe, that something had been learned and that processes were created – and that, sorry to say it, this wouldn't happen in Europe. I'm not naive about how bad European foreign policy is; that is very well known. But the idea that you would put people on a list in Europe for speaking out because they don't accept the European foreign policy point of view, or because they agree with the Russian perspective on something, is amazing to me, frankly. This is not about treason or sedition. This is about speech by analysts. And again, Mr Baud – he's an analyst. They say he's implementing something. He's not implementing anything. I also thought you could appear on a channel, go for an interview, discuss things around the world. I didn't know, from the EU perspective, that there are places you can speak and

places you can't. That's also quite amazing to me.”

Pascal Lottaz: “It is. I mean, these are the things the EU is now – well, the thing is, they're not criminalising it. Criminalising it would mean going through the parliamentary process and actually making a law about it. They're just saying these acts are illegal. And even if it is propaganda, there's no law against propaganda.”

Jeffrey Sachs: “You're allowed to do that. It's like... well, it's worse, because this is criminalising the activity without calling it criminal, but it's ruining people's lives – ruining their ability to pay for food, for health care, to move around. It's absolutely grotesque.[...]”

Roberto Zamora: “I think it takes a great deal of creativity and deep analysis of the extent and nature of the sanctions, because, as Professor Sachs has said, as Alexandra said in the interview she had with you, and as you've expressed, the sanctions limit – beyond the procedural fundamental rights that are being violated – they violate personal freedom, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, the right to property, and freedom of

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“We are Jacques Baud”

Pascal Lottaz: I'm very sorry that you're now in the place *Hannah Arendt* once called, you know, this horrible moment when the political starts crashing into the personal. For us, who are not sanctioned, these are two levels; for you, it's now one. But thank you for talking about this and for continuing the intellectual engagement with what this moment means. Is there anything you'd like to add, or anywhere you'd like people to go to read more about it?

Jacques Baud: Some friends of mine in Switzerland are setting up a support committee where people can go. It's being built up now: “We are Jacques Baud”. There are some actions underway. But beyond this, I'd like to thank all of you, including you, by the way, because with your website – your program – you've been instrumental in supporting me. And there are many others who also appear on your show from time to time who have supported me.

But there are also thousands, hundreds of thousands of people who have expressed their support for me – who feed me. I can tell you that I can hardly step out of my house without being greeted on the sidewalk by someone who supports me. Lately, I've never gone outside without meeting someone who wants to express their support. And that's absolutely fascinating, because before the sanctions, that wasn't the case. I mean, obviously, I was known, but

probably not in the same way. Today, I receive support from everywhere – literally. A lot of people write letters to my publisher, to me – emails, texts, you name it. Just last week, two Swiss guys I didn't know called me and said, “We want to show our support.” They came here, left Switzerland in the morning, and went back the same day. 1,800 kilometres just to bring me some Swiss food – specialties, greet me, that kind of thing. And I have literally hundreds of requests like that. It shows two things: first, that there are still people who understand what's going on but also have a heart, which is important.

But it also shows there's a disconnect, because the idea of a sanction is to make you invisible, to discard you, to push you out of society. And you see, it's exactly the opposite that happens. I have countless requests for shows, for interviews, and all that, in alternative media and so on.

This means that these sanctions don't even achieve the objective they're supposed to. People understand that, and they're realising more and more that our leadership – the establishment, generally speaking – is going beyond where it should. It's going beyond rationality. We're going beyond humanity. We're going beyond the values we claim to stand for. Now, Europe – I can say the European Union, in fact, and that's a fact – is doing exactly the same thing we wanted to fight against when we opposed the *Warsaw Pact* or the Soviet Union

40 years ago. They're doing exactly the same thing. It's exactly the same situation happening now: decisions are being made without regard for the law. And that should be a source of concern for everyone.

A part of my family was in the French Resistance during World War II. And sometimes, when people come and bring me food, they say they feel like they're part of a resistance, like during World War II. It's exactly the same feeling. It's very interesting, because this is something very unexpected, but that's exactly how some people feel. They are resistant. And to resist – remember that at the end of World War II, the resistance won. They were the ones who were praised for their courage, their determination, and their rational approach to the problem. And so we are here in the same situation.

Pascal Lottaz: Yep, yep. I see it exactly like that. It's an act of resistance that's needed now. And the more people resist, the higher the chances it will succeed. So, everybody watching, thank you very much for your support. Thank you very much for the collective thinking about this, and for the collective resistance against what we all know and feel is very negative.

Excerpt from a conversation of Pascal Lottaz with Jacques Baud on 17 February 2026; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0IX27Ti3Mw> (Video); https://www.video-translations.org/transcripts/2912_Pascal_2026_02_17.pdf

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movement. But there's also one element I'm seeing: there's no time limitation to the sanctions. I mean, nobody knows how long they'll last. Every twelve months, as far as I understand, there's a review process, but they can just keep it going.

Sanctions – a form of torture

In my view, this is a bit like the death row issue, where it's been argued that some inmates spend years on death row without knowing when they'll be executed – and that situation has been considered torture. So, when you put all the violations together, and you see that these people actually can't eat, can't communicate, can't move, can't pay rent, and have to depend on the good faith of neighbours and friends just to survive, well, it sounds to me like degrading treatment or torture. From a human rights perspective, when you put all the pieces together, the

EU is torturing them. And when you analyse torture, the prohibition on torture is a rule of *jus cogens* – it's at the top tier of the hierarchy of rules in international law.

The only legal mechanism available for these people to try to challenge and get their lives back is appealing to the Court of Justice of the European Union. What I would do, or what I suggest to their legal advisors – if they have any – is not just to look at the individual infractions of international law, particularly the human rights regime, but to encapsulate them and challenge these sanctions as a form of torture. I think it would be very interesting to see how the European Court of Justice understands the sanctions if they're framed under such a violation. I'd even suggest they go to the UN bodies in charge – the special rapporteur on torture, for instance – and file a complaint there. I mean, use every single available mechanism that the law provides, with a full understanding of

what these sanctions are doing to the lives of these people beyond the specific violations.”

[...]

Pascal Lottaz: “What kind of bodies could be used to create political pressure? I mean, let's take the UN Security Council. It's often ineffective because it's blocked, but it does discuss things, and those discussions do get broadcast. Can you think of ways to use the United Nations as a means for human rights activists to draw attention to human rights abuses like this one?”

The objection of a single EU Member State is sufficient

Jeffrey Sachs: “I had a different idea that I wanted to raise, which is: if supposedly these are unanimous actions by the Council, why not target one of the 27 states to say, ‘We oppose this’? Would that be sufficient? Because there are a number of

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governments in Europe that are against the supposed European foreign policy – let’s just say the policy of the European Commission. [...] Is that another approach? I can think of, of course, Slovakia, Spain, Hungary, and others that have been ardent opponents of the way the sanctions regime against Russia has unfolded, or the war in Ukraine has unfolded, or the Palestinian issue has unfolded. So could we target one of these governments to say, ‘Why are you complicit in this list?’ Would that work?”

[...]

Alexandra Hofer: “Yeah, so I think Hungary, for example, sometimes threatens that with regard to the sanctions regime on Russia. So, if one of them withholds their vote, then indeed the listing is not renewed. [...] I think, yeah, that might be a possible avenue. It would be more of a political route than a judicial one.”

Jeffrey Sachs: “You know, unanimity is hard to achieve, especially when you’re doing something rotten, like what the Commission or the Council is doing. So, I would try to break that unanimity within Europe.”

[...]

Roberto Zamora: “None of the individual members of the European Union can impose sanctions the way the Union is doing it. Because they are members of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, and, you know, in their constitutions they have these obligations – that these administrative measures cannot happen without due process. So, are these states, or can this be, the domestic challenge? Are the EU states relying on an organ created by themselves to commit a fraud of law, by doing something they otherwise wouldn’t be allowed to do in their domestic jurisdiction? I mean, since I cannot do it and you cannot do it, let’s create an organisation that can then circumvent the obligations we have, so we can move forward with these illegal measures. And I think it’s a very, very interesting argument to be raised in domestic courts – that states are committing a fraud of international law by creating the EU and by doing, through the EU, things they wouldn’t be able to do domestically.”

Pascal Lottaz: “[...] German activists I talked to argued that if even one UN member in the General Assembly created a resolution asking for a review by the UN court, the ICJ, of whether the EU’s claim that EU law takes precedence over national law is actually valid, it would have a huge impact on this issue. Do you think it’s reasonable to believe that a UN member could propose such a resolution, which might gain 50 per cent support and



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then lead the ICJ to review the claim that EU law overrides domestic law?”

Jeffrey Sachs: “I think if it were narrowly put and focused on this issue, it would be possible. [...] It should be possible to interest states in the question of sanctions lists, because most of the world is on the receiving end of US and European sanctions. Every year, the General Assembly votes overwhelmingly to oppose them. In fact, the ones that support sanctions are the U.S. and Europe, and the rest of the world says, ‘No, what you’re doing is wrong.’ So having something that addresses this particular issue in the General Assembly is actually feasible – that these individual sanctions are illegal, that they’re a violation of human rights, that they need to stop. That, I think, is absolutely possible.

Asking the *International Court of Justice* about the EU sanctions would be feasible in that way.

An advisory opinion of the ICJ on the illegality of unilateral sanctions

I do believe the easiest path – if there is an easy path – is to go after the European Union itself. My guess is that very few governments were actively involved in sanctioning Mr. Baud. His name appeared on a list, people didn’t know who he was or what it meant, and that it was a bureaucratic procedure rather than a group of ministers saying, ‘Let’s get this Swiss analyst.’ I just find it hard to believe that this was, in that sense, so well thought out. I do believe it could have been a few people sitting in the Commission saying, ‘We can get this through, let’s do it.’ So knowing that story would be very, very interesting – but also finding a few governments that say, ‘This is not what we stand for,’ to my mind, has some promise to it.”

Alexandra Hofer: “Every year the UN General Assembly adopts resolutions condemning unilateral sanctions. It’s interesting that there’s never, I don’t know if there’s ever actually been, a push for an advisory opinion from the *International Court of Justice* on these measures. But if they did it, I think it would be better for them not to focus specifically on the EU, but on unilateral sanctions – or what they call unilateral coercive measures – in general. And then ask about, you know, the human rights impacts of these measures.”

[...]

Roberto Zamora: “What Alexandra just said is a very wise way to move forward. That’s for the General Assembly to request the ICJ for an advisory opinion on the legality or illegality of unilateral sanctions. [...] If the UN is truly a democratic body based on the principle of equality of sovereign states, then the General Assembly should also do something to vindicate that general principle of international law and push for the advisory opinion.”

Jeffrey Sachs: “I think Alexandra should write the brief for the ICJ, and we should actually work on a resolution in the General Assembly, because the mood is very strongly against these actions – very strongly. That’s why the annual vote is overwhelmingly against unilateral coercive measures. We know they kill people, they kill children, they raise infant and child mortality, and they do terrible damage to real lives.

Now we have these human rights abuses alongside, so it’s both at the personal level and with the economic sanctions, and the vote is annual. I think trying to move it forward – to make it clearly stated as illegal actions through an ICJ ruling – is very timely. But in the meantime, I want to go to one or more governments in Europe as well and say, ‘What are you doing? Your name is on this list supporting this.’ It’s outrageous. And we’ll see how far we get with that as well.”

[...]

Roberto Zamora: “There are times when I really believe the worst thing you can do is not try – especially when you’re facing a regime and the full power of authoritarianism, like the people on the sanctions list are facing. I’d give a try to every single opportunity that comes to mind and doesn’t immediately sound crazy. If it makes any sense at all, I’d go for it. And then, the other thing is, yeah, the list of people might now be between 50 and 60, but we’re all under threat. I mean, it could affect Alexandra, it could affect me as a migrant in the European Union, it could affect anyone who says the wrong thing in the wrong place at the wrong moment – just because an administrative body decided so.”

Let's give the green light for the next 700 referendums! (Part 2)

The Importance of Direct Democracy in Switzerland

by Dr rer. publ. Werner Wüthrich

Since the founding of the Swiss federal state in 1848, voters have been called to the ballot box around 700 times to decide on federal matters. These votes have covered a wide range of issues: revisions of the Federal Constitution, amendments to constitutional articles, new or revised legislation, and major national decisions – from the creation of the canton of Jura to the purchase of fighter jets.

Two particularly important votes for Switzerland are expected in the near future. The planned framework agreement with the European Union would integrate Switzerland more closely into EU institutions and could significantly limit the scope of direct democracy. At the same time, voters are expected to decide this year on the “Neutrality Initiative,” which aims to reaffirm and strengthen Switzerland’s traditional policy of neutrality.

Under the heading “Let’s Give the Green Light for the Next 700 Referendums!”, *Current Concerns* is publishing an occasional series exploring the political significance of direct democracy in Switzerland (see Part 1 in the issue of 23 September 2025). The following article examines how the Swiss people – working together with their political institutions – have repeatedly found practical ways to safeguard the referendum at the federal level, even during difficult times.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Professor *Wolf Linder* of the University of Bern and his colleagues compiled and systematically organised data on all federal referendums held between 1848 and 2007. Their work was published in the *Handbook of Swiss Referendums 1848–2007*, which remains publicly accessible today. After Linder’s retirement, other researchers continued the project. As a result, information on all federal referendums from 1848 to the present can now be found online at swissvotes.ch.

Each of these votes is numbered. As of 1 January 2026, the total stands at 700. Many readers may be surprised to learn that Switzerland has held 700 federal referendums since the country’s founding. And if we were to include votes at the cantonal and municipal levels – across 26 cantons and roughly 2,000 municipalities – the total would run into many thousands.

But the importance of referendums lies not only in their number. Their true significance emerges when they are viewed in historical context – and in the remarkable civic commitment of citizens who repeat-

edly engage in political decision-making for the common good.

Optional referendums and popular initiatives

The revised Federal Constitution of 1874 introduced a ground-breaking provision:

“Federal laws and generally binding federal decrees that are not declared urgent shall be submitted to the people for approval or rejection if requested by 30,000 eligible Swiss voters or by eight cantons.”

This article established the optional referendum, which was to have a profound influence on Switzerland’s political and legal system. The innovation was possible

take immediate measures in extraordinary situations.)

Citizens take action

The Swiss public quickly made use of the new instrument. Between 1875 and 1879, citizens launched twelve referendums, collecting the required 30,000 signatures within just 90 days. These campaigns demonstrated a remarkable willingness to participate actively in politics and assume responsibility for public affairs.

Such engagement reflected the fact that many citizens were already familiar with direct democratic practices at the cantonal level. These early experiences paved the way for the next major innovation: the popular initiative, introduced in 1891.

“Modern Swiss history demonstrates how citizens and political authorities together shape the country’s development. Direct democracy may slow the political process – but this is often a strength rather than a weakness. It reinforces social cohesion and helps hold together Switzerland’s diverse society with its multiple linguistic and cultural regions. Even in difficult times, it strengthens shared responsibility and helps prevent political violence.”

because referendums had already been introduced in several cantons. In the canton of Zurich, for example, the “Democratic Movement of Winterthur” played a decisive role in advancing this development.

At the time, constitutional lawmakers faced an important question – both at the cantonal and federal levels. Political decisions often involve complex and time-sensitive issues that require swift action. The politician and railway pioneer *Alfred Escher*, for example, believed that such situations favoured a purely representative system without referendums.

Parliament ultimately adopted a compromise. Article 89 of the constitution allowed referendums only for laws “that are not of an urgent nature.” This clause created a loophole: Parliament could declare a law urgent by a simple majority and bring it into force immediately, thereby bypassing a referendum. Moreover, the constitution did not clearly define what constituted “urgency.”

(Urgent legislation should not be confused with emergency law, which allows the Federal Council and Parliament to

With the required number of signatures – then 50,000, today 100,000 – citizens could demand a nationwide vote on a constitutional amendment. Because constitutional changes affect the foundations of Swiss federalism, they must obtain a double majority: a majority of voters and a majority of cantons.

The interplay between referendums and popular initiatives would profoundly shape Swiss politics in the decades that followed.

The struggle for direct democracy

Until the First World War, Parliament rarely used the urgency clause to avoid referendums. This changed during the interwar period, especially during the severe economic crisis of the 1930s. During those years Parliament declared 151 federal decrees urgent, exempting them from the referendum process.

Initially, the population supported many of these extraordinary measures. They were often intended to help farmers and small businesses, combat unemploy-

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ment, fund infrastructure projects such as Alpine roads, rescue the Volksbank, or support industries like watchmaking and textiles.

But an increasingly pressing question arose: how would these measures be financed?

Trade unions launched a popular initiative proposing a temporary crisis levy, similar to the wartime tax introduced during the First World War. Their aim was to prevent wage cuts for federal employees.

Parliament, however, bypassed the initiative and introduced the levy through urgent legislation that took effect immediately without a referendum. The initiators reluctantly withdrew their proposal – but public dissatisfaction grew.

Soon afterward, wages in the federal administration, the postal service, and the Swiss Federal Railways were reduced. The Federal Council initially demanded a 10 percent cut; Parliament settled on 7 percent.

This time, a referendum could not be avoided. Within four months, citizens collected over 300,000 signatures – more than ten times the number required. With turnout exceeding 80 percent, 55 percent of voters rejected the government’s proposal.

Distrust of the people? Searching for a remedy

As the situation persisted, criticism grew. Many believed that constitutional freedoms were being curtailed too severely. The constitutional scholar *Zaccaria Giacometti* spoke out forcefully, describing the practice as “parliamentary absolutism” or even “parliamentary dictatorship.”

Between 1929 and 1933 alone, Parliament exempted 92 federal decrees from the referendum process. The loophole had effectively become a wide-open gate. As constitutional historian *Alfred Kölz* later wrote, the authorities clearly wished to avoid exposing economic policy measures to the “uncertainties of a popular vote.” (Kölz II 2004, p. 768)

Public criticism intensified. Citizens asked: Why can we not vote? Almost every law is declared urgent – otherwise Parliament would not pass it. Do the Federal Council and Parliament prefer to govern without the people?

Five different political groups eventually launched popular initiatives aimed at limiting the use of urgent legislation. Some proposed stricter parliamentary majorities before urgency could be invoked; others suggested judicial review by a constitutional court. Yet none of these proposals initially won majority support.

A workable solution would only emerge after the Second World War.



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1949: Urgent legislation becomes democratic

In 1949, voters approved the popular initiative “Return to Direct Democracy,” drafted with the participation of *Zaccaria Giacometti*.

The reform preserved the possibility of urgent legislation but introduced an important safeguard: a referendum would still be held afterward, within one year. If constitutional provisions were affected, the referendum would be mandatory.

In 1949, *Zaccaria Giacometti*’s circle did not foresee how much their popular initiative would one day contribute to involving the population directly in political decision-making, even in times of crisis.

This rule – now anchored in Article 165 of the Federal Constitution – ensured that even emergency measures would ultimately remain subject to democratic oversight.

A test during the economic boom

The 1960s and early 1970s brought a crisis of a very different nature to that of the 1930s: not recession but economic overheating.

In 1962, for example, only 62 unemployed persons were registered in the entire country. Overtime was widespread, and anyone who lost a job could usually find another within hours.

Employees in companies were working feverishly to complete all pending orders on time. The “emergency law”, which had been democratised in 1949, was frequently applied. Parliament passed eleven temporary and urgent federal decrees, all of which came into force immediately. They all violated the constitutional rights of freedom – in particular the freedom of trade and commerce – and, under the new rule of 1949, they were immediately put to a vote (cf. *Rhinow* 2011, pp. 36–37).

However, these urgent federal decrees had a completely different content from those passed by Parliament in the 1930s, primarily to combat unemployment. The authorities attempted to “cool down” the overheated economy. For example, they temporarily banned the construction of luxury single-family houses (in order to free up construction capacity for infrastructure and normal housing construction). Or they banned the creation of new additional jobs for a year by capping the number of employees in companies, i.e. setting an upper limit on staffing levels. Hundreds of thousands of workers immigrated from abroad – initially mainly from Italy, which was at war.

To make new investments more difficult, individual federal resolutions required banks to be cautious when granting loans. Social problems grew: there was a shortage of housing, emergency shelters had to be set up, school buildings were too small, and motorways needed to be built. Environmental pollution became increasingly severe, and Lake Zurich and Lake Lugano soon became unsuitable for swimming because the water was so polluted... Waste incineration plants had to be built quickly. Inflation threatened incomes. Finally, the *Bretton Woods* monetary system collapsed, and streams of foreign currency – mainly US dollars and German Deutschmark – sought refuge in Switzerland. Their owners tried to exchange them for Swiss francs, which were backed by gold following a referendum in 1951. Exchange rates plummeted. The National Bank introduced capital controls and levied negative interest rates of more than 10 per cent at times. This was accompanied by further urgent decisions to protect the currency and combat inflation. “Monsieur Prix” began to monitor prices. Gold rose to unprecedented heights – similar to today.

In the eleven referendums, the people clearly said yes, expressing their confidence in the authorities and strengthening their resolve. This was important because in turbulent times (which required swift action), it is not easy for the authorities to make decisions that are both appropriate and proportionate – i.e. that do not unduly restrict civil liberties and democracy. The approval rates were mostly high. Direct democracy had passed the practical test with the new rules of the popular initiative of 1949. It was also to prove its worth in more recent times.

Direct democracy had passed an important test.

Direct democracy in the Covid-19 pandemic

Another major test came with the Covid-19 pandemic beginning in 2019. Govern-

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ments around the world imposed sweeping restrictions – lockdowns, school closures, and vaccination mandates – that significantly affected civil liberties.

In Switzerland, the Federal Council initially issued emergency ordinances under the Epidemics Act. These were later converted into urgent federal legislation. Under the constitutional rules introduced in 1949, referendums could still be held afterward.

In accordance with the rules of 1949, the “Friends of the Constitution” launched a referendum, and a vote was quickly held – on 3 June 2021, 28 November 2021, and 18 June 2023.

Each time, roughly 60 percent of voters supported the government’s policy. These votes were unique internationally. They expressed democratic confidence in the authorities during a difficult crisis, helped defuse political tensions, and contributed to social stability – even though a substantial minority remained critical of the measures.

Direct democracy as a success story

Modern Swiss history demonstrates how citizens and political authorities together shape the country’s development. Direct democracy may slow the political process – but this is often a strength rather than a weakness.

It reinforces social cohesion and helps hold together Switzerland’s diverse society with its multiple linguistic and cultural regions. Even in difficult times, it strengthens shared responsibility and helps prevent political violence.

The roots of this system reach far back into Swiss history. The cooperative traditions of the Old Swiss Confederacy, symbolised by the Federal Charter of 1291, laid the foundations for today’s federal structures and democratic practices. (Roca 2012)

Every referendum fosters a sense of participation and community across linguistic and social boundaries. Even those who do not vote inevitably hear about the issues, discuss them with neighbours, and form opinions.

In times of tension, referendums created a sense of unity and stabilised the country. As recent Swiss history has repeatedly shown, the search and struggle for better solutions is part of direct democracy in Switzerland – in cooperation with the authorities.

Conclusion

Switzerland has developed one of the world’s most extensive systems of political participation. This system depends on a high degree of political independence – expressed most clearly in the country’s tradition of neutrality.

“Let us therefore give the green light for the next 700 referendums – especially in today’s world, where democracies in many countries are struggling and facing unrest. Worldwide politicians are looking for ideas on how to get citizens more involved. the challenge is not how to involve citizens more in politics – but how to recognise and preserve what direct democracy has already achieved – before we integrate institutionally into the EU, which ticks very differently, or even into NATO. We have every reason to preserve and nurture this treasure at all political levels!”

Independence, neutrality, bottom-up federalism, and direct democracy at all political levels are essential elements of Switzerland’s political identity. Together they have helped shape the modern Swiss state and its prosperity.

There have never been rigid ideological “firewalls” in Swiss politics – only the occasional “Röstigraben,” the cultural divide between German- and French-speaking Switzerland.

Let us therefore give the green light for the next 700 referendums – especially in today’s world, where democracies in many countries are struggling and facing unrest. Worldwide politicians are looking for ideas on how to get citizens more involved. the challenge is not how to involve citizens more in politics – but how to recognise and preserve what direct democracy has already achieved – before we integrate institutionally into the EU, which ticks very differently, or even into NATO. We have every reason to preserve and nurture this treasure at all political levels! It is strange that referendums carry so little weight in our war-torn world, given that the evidence of their peace-promoting effect has long been on the table. On 8 March, six more referendums will be added to the 700 that have already been held at federal level in Switzerland. These are:

1. Law on individual taxation (optional referendum)
2. Climate Fund Initiative (popular initiative)
3. a) Cash Initiative (popular initiative)
b) Federal resolution on currencies and cash supply (direct counter-proposal by Parliament).
- c) Tiebreaker question: What applies if both proposals are accepted?
4. SRG initiative (popular initiative) “200 francs are enough”

The questions posed are challenging. (For details, see: *admin.ch* => *voting booklet*;

swissvotes.ch => *votes*.) A broad, nationwide debate has been ongoing for several weeks.

Further questions were added on 8 March in the votes of individual cantons.●

Further reading:

Wüthrich, Werner. *Wirtschaft und direkte Demokratie in der Schweiz – Geschichte der freiheitlich-demokratischen Wirtschaftsverfassung der Schweiz* (Economy and Direct Democracy in Switzerland – History of Switzerland’s Liberal Democratic Economic Constitution). Verlag *Zeit-Fragen*, Zurich 2020; ISBN 978-3-909234-24-0
Kölz, Alfred. *Neuere Schweizerische Verfassungsgeschichte II* (Recent Swiss Constitutional History II), Bern 2004

Linder, Wolf; Bolliger, Christian; Rielle, Christian. *Handbuch der eidgenössischen Volksabstimmungen 1848–2007* (Handbook of Federal Referendums 1848–2007), Bern 2010

Rhinow, René et al. *Öffentliches Wirtschaftsrecht* (Public Economic Law), Basel 2011

Roca, René. *Wenn die Volkssouveränität wirklich eine Wahrheit werden soll ...; Die schweizerische direkte Demokratie in Theorie und Praxis – Das Beispiel des Kantons Luzern* (If popular sovereignty is to truly become a reality ...; Swiss direct democracy in theory and practice – The example of the canton of Lucerne), Zurich 2012

admin.ch (voting booklet); *swissvotes.ch*

Amendment

In *Current Concerns* No. 3, the article «AI – it’s not intelligent!» (Eliane Perret) was missing the following footnote: I borrowed the term “simulated intelligence” from Professor Dr Hans Köchler from: Köchler, Hans. (2024). *Die Trivialisierung des Öffentlichen. Kulturanthropologische Überlegungen zum Digitalzeitalter. Ein Vortrag*. (The trivialisation of the public. Cultural anthropological reflections on the digital age. A lecture.) Publisher: IPO *International Progress Organization*. p. 18 (of the German original) ISBN 978-3-900704-38-4. There it says: “The latest stage in the development of digital technology is the promotion of ‘artificial intelligence’ (AI), which should actually be called SI – simulated intelligence.”

Letter to  the Editor

Become a Putin-understander!

Right at the beginning of his speech at the *Valdai Discussion Club* – and every listener must have noticed this! – *Putin* said that the West's view of Russia and him was biased and that Western politicians did not engage in dialogue with the Russians and with *Putin* on an equal footing and at eye level.

In my opinion, *Putin* is right about this.

There are deep-seated prejudices against the Russian people in the West. It is claimed here that Russia is an imperialist state, or that it wants to return to the USSR and restore it. *Putin* has clearly and succinctly expressed his opinion on the USSR in a bon mot: “Whoever does not miss the Soviet Union has no heart. Whoever wants it back has no brain.”

As for Russia's purported plans to conquer Europe, *Putin* has repeatedly said in recent months: “It is absurd to say that Russia wants to conquer European countries.”

What does *Putin* want? Recognition of Russia's importance in the world as a large, expansive country, as a central power with influence and not just a regional power, a Great Power that has successfully solved some problems in recent decades and has a strong economy and nuclear power: he wants to deal with all states on an equal footing, he wants his

speeches to be discussed in the West and not go unheard. He wants to make Russia's voice heard in the concert of nations.

What is so wrong with that? There has been no talk in Russia in recent decades of reconquering Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Latvia and Lithuania. If that were the case, the European media would have been jubilantly reporting on it in sensationalist articles for a long time... And it would indeed be completely insane to attempt to restore the Soviet Union.

Quotes from statements made by *Putin*, the president who has been in office the longest anywhere in the world, are almost always shortened, distorted or not reproduced at all in the German press. People here don't want to hear him; above all, they don't want to be seen as “*Putin-understander*”. Yet in diplomacy, we only have one chance in the upcoming negotiations. We should become “*Putin-understanders*”!

I think that European politicians are still cooking up the same old disastrous recipe from 2008 in Bucharest, namely to bring Ukraine into NATO. They are planning to station European soldiers in Ukraine as supposed guarantors of security. Even the new head of the *Munich Security Conference*, *Wolfgang Ischinger*, warned against doing this a year ago in the

German “*Stern*” magazine. That time he said that Russia would never accept European security guarantees. His warning has fallen on deaf ears. The *Starmers*, *Merzes*, *Macrons* and *Melonis* stubbornly continue on their path.

European politicians currently have nothing else on their minds but the war they are planning – allegedly defensively! – for 2030 in the East. They are arming themselves, arming themselves heavily, even though there is no talk in Russia of arming itself beyond what is needed for the war in Ukraine!

I am surprised that *Putin* is not defending himself against such unreasonable demands (“security guarantees”). Would it not make sense to commission another country to provide forces for security guarantees and also to involve the UN in the negotiations on the war in Ukraine?

It would be important to eliminate the causes of Russia's 2022 attack on Ukraine, namely NATO's eastward expansion! This can only be achieved through direct and unprejudiced negotiations. Self-reflection and reflection on our own behaviour would be necessary on our part, urgently necessary!

Susanne Wiesinger, teacher of history and social studies, Freiburg, Germany

Consultation on framework agreements with the EU

In June 2025, the consultation on the framework agreements with the EU was opened. According to an article by *Dominik Feusi* in the Swiss journal *Nebenspalter* on 3 February 2026, over 1,000 Swiss private individuals had responded:

“Federal Parliament insiders on the consultation on the framework agreements. How the FDFA decided to ignore private comments. In the middle of the consultation, Federal Councillor *Ignazio Cassis*' department decided not to evaluate the submissions from private individuals at all.

The facts: According to the consultation report, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) ignored all 1,058 comments from private individuals during the consultation on the framework agreements. The official reason given was that these had been generated by artificial intelligence. However, internal documents show that this only affected “around 100 comments”. Nevertheless, the remaining 958 private submissions were not taken into account. The decision was made in mid-September – six weeks before the end of the consultation process.

Why this is important: Internal emails and minutes show how dismissive and biased the federal administration was in its handling of comments from private individuals. They never had any intention of taking private submissions seriously.”

The question is, if the people and our rights are trampled on in this way, what is the point of a consultation, a vote, direct democracy? Is the Federal Council, our government, still worthy of our trust?

If the Swiss people approve this framework agreement, our current democratic rights will melt away like snow in the sun! There will certainly be winners, but also many losers, above all the people. Much will change for us Swiss, and not only for the better. We will be seeing our direct democracy, neutrality and right to have a say, which are so typical of our country, disappear!

As *Franz Grüter* (National Councillor) said: “No democracy can survive without freedom and an open exchange of opinions! When I see how the European Union is acting against people in terms of their fundamental right to freedom of expression (e.g. *Jacques Baud* and many others), I think

that our Federal Council is stumbling blindly into the EU without knowing where the journey is taking us! The FDFA's actions are only the beginning, and this also applies to the neutrality initiative, which is so important for our country and which, let's be clear, was torpedoed by Federal Councillor *Cassis* when he clearly declared the Russians to be the enemy and, in my opinion, abused his power. This is costing Switzerland its credibility today, and we are no longer perceived as a neutral state.”

On 17 February 2026, the *neutrality initiative* was also buried in the Council of States, torpedoed by the political party “*Die Mitte*” (The Centre), as the Federal Council had already done, which does not bode well should the people approve this decision. Yes, the *Rütli Oath* was once, though for me it is still relevant today!

We want to be a single People of brethren, never to part in danger nor distress.

We want to be free, as our fathers were and rather die than live in slavery.

We want to trust in the one highest God and never be afraid of human power.

Regula Birbaum, Versoix/Genève

Eppur si muove – ‘But still it moves’

Why we still have good reason to be optimistic

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

Galileo lived in various cities in Italy from 1564 to 1642. These were decades of great upheaval for Europe and the world. Following a long period of decline, the Christian Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire, which had existed for more than 1,000 years, had come to an end in 1453 with the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Empire. In 1492, while searching for a new sea route to India leading westward, Christopher Columbus discovered islands in the Caribbean and later the American mainland. This was not only the beginning of European states’ colonial expansion, policies that continue to this day, but also a boost for scientific research and technological innovation.

In Central and Northern Europe, the Reformation movements in the first half of the 16th century finally broke the monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church. The Counter-Reformation and the Thirty Years’ War, from 1618 to 1648, fought with unimaginable brutality on all sides, were the last, ultimately unsuccessful attempt to restore the joint hegemony of imperial power and the Catholic Church in Europe.

Galileo was an Italian scientist and polymath of his time. He became famous for his scientifically substantiated thesis that, contrary to the world view of the Roman Catholic Church at the time, the Earth revolves around the sun and not the sun around the Earth. After many years of back and forth, the church leaders, already weakened and challenged by the upheavals of the time, resorted to threats of inquisition, torture and burning at the stake for heresy, and in 1633 they brought Galileo to trial. To escape torture and to save his life, he recanted his findings. Galileo was placed under house arrest and used the last years of his life to record his scientific research findings and leave them to posterity – findings that have long been universally recognised, even though the Church itself did not rehabilitate Galileo until 1992.

Soon after his death it was rumoured that, despite his official recantation before the Inquisition, he had whispered quietly to himself: “But still it [the Earth] moves” – a sign of his inner resistance. Galileo’s little sentence, just four words – three in the Latin, *Eppure si muove* – is a metaphor still used to insist that, despite all adversities, one should stick to the truth and be confident that sooner or later the truth cannot be denied any longer.

And today? The representatives of a power structure and power politics that are being questioned by more and more people around the world have openly switched to pure power politics. Politicians be-

have like the masters of the world, and states are rapidly becoming unjust states – in their international relations, but also against their own citizens. The dams that people have tried to build over centuries of legal development have become fragile and are in danger of being complete-

fit well into a multipolar world. Kriele, however, qualified this by saying that the world’s problems would become “completely unsolvable under socialist tyranny” and that, fundamentally, only a state and constitutional order based on the Western model would be forward-looking.

“Politicians behave like the masters of the world, and states are rapidly becoming unjust states – in their international relations, but also against their own citizens. The dams that people have tried to build over centuries of legal development have become fragile and are in danger of being completely washed away.”

ly washed away. Who today would dare, as the German constitutional law professor Martin Kriele did in 1987, to write and publish a book titled *The Democratic World Revolution: Why Freedom Will Prevail?* In 1987, many people in Europe and around the world hoped – not without reason – that the Cold War, which had defined the postwar decades, would come to an end and that a new, better world order would be possible.

The back cover of Kriele’s book provides a good summary of its contents:

The history of the democratic revolution is the history of the emancipation of humankind. The legal system that guarantees individuals and peoples the freedom to shape their own lives, while at the same time limiting this freedom so that other individuals and peoples enjoy the same freedom, is the form of coexistence that is solely in accordance with human nature. This is the reason why the democratic revolution has an inherent tendency towards universal expansion. It is the world revolution par excellence.

What a relief!

However, Kriele’s view needs to be broadened. In 1987, he himself wrote – in view of a still-bipolar world with the heavily armed bloc centres of the Soviet Union and the US – that the “military balance” corresponded to a “political balance.” And: “The policy of détente and mutual recognition of the territorial status quo is based on this idea. This policy is indispensable for the sake of maintaining world peace.”

He also wrote: “The great tasks of our time – such as securing peace, averting ecological disasters and overcoming poverty, especially in the Third World – [... require] reason and cooperation ...” These are formulations that would also

Broadening our horizons through a genuine “dialogue of civilisations,” to take Hans Köchler’s phrase, meaning a move away from dividing the world into “good” and “evil” and instead developing a cultural and historical sensitivity to “the other,” would be a necessary corrective.¹ Implicit in this is a recognition that cultures are indeed different, and without such a dialogue there can be no equal cooperation to solve the world’s problems and to achieve progress for all peoples and states.

A book like Martin Kriele’s is captivating in its confidence that “human nature” has an “inherent tendency towards universal expansion.” Expansion would therefore mean pursuing his fundamental statements further while asking the question of “human nature” more precisely and not reducing it to the framework of a Western constitutional order. In other words: What is the actual substance of “democracy,” “the rule of law,” and “freedom” when viewed from the perspective of human nature and its traditions and culture? What potential for development do all the peoples and states of the world have, and what is more conducive to development and what is more disruptive?

These questions become even more urgent as it becomes clearer that the states with Western constitutional orders have formulated many fine things on paper, but in reality – for a very long time now – have been practising quite different things. In this the United States and the European Union are altogether exemplary. The past 500 years and the current state of affairs have abundantly demonstrated that “humanitarian interventions,” “nation building,” hegemonic “spheres of influence,” the expansion of power, the use of force in violation of international law, and the deprivation of rights at home are certainly disrupting factors.

Towards peace – on the educational mandate of schools

by Eliane Perret

“The study of foreign languages and literature is an incentive and driving force for education in the spirit of international understanding and peace,” wrote *Federico Mayor Zaragoza*, Director-General of UNESCO from 1987 to 1999 and later head of the Spanish foundation *Cultura de paz*, in the foreword to the book “Towards Peace. A Reader.”¹ As he describes the editors’ goal, it is intended to “give new impetus and a new purpose to the teaching of foreign languages and literature.” This anthology on peace was published in 1989 by the *International Association of German Teachers* and is aimed at young readers – even today. Mayor Zaragoza wisely quotes the preamble to the Constitution of the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation*, which contains the guiding principle: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.” He therefore describes the task of school as follows: “But if the idea of peace is to be firmly anchored in the consciousness of the young people, the women and men of the 21st century, then it is most appropriate for the school to ensure that peoples learn more about each other, since getting to know each other forms ‘the basis of the spiritual and moral solidarity of mankind.’”

The resulting reader brings together a hundred poems and prose pieces from five centuries – the roots of our culture. They provide a wealth of inspiration for teaching, which is all the more urgent given the oppressive state of the world. Impressive in their diversity, the authors are united in their desire for peace and their resolute rejection of violence, destruction and

war. Mayor Zaragoza writes: “As different as the authors are in style and sensibility, they unequivocally reinforce the reader’s vital realisation: we must overcome what divides us and promote what unites us.” These are topics that speak to many young people at a deeper level. They offer the prospect of a dialogue with adults from which they can draw courage, clarity and confidence.

Beginning with *Ingeborg Bachmann*’s poem “Nach dieser Sintflut” (After this deluge), well-known and lesser-known authors have their say in the three sections “The Signature of War and Peace”, “Peace as the Goal of History” and “Peace as a Necessity”, providing teachers with a wide range of opportunities to engage in conversation with their students. The authors lived in periods ranging from the Middle Ages to the 1990s, but their poems and prose texts are unfortunately still highly relevant today.

For its part, the editorial team outlines the educational mission associated with its peace anthology in the accompanying text, stating: “In accordance with its statutes, the International Association of German Teachers is guided by the spirit of international understanding in fulfilling its mission. Its members therefore see themselves not merely as foreign language teachers, but as mediators of a global desire for peace.”

This is precisely what we need to think about today. Do today’s neoliberal schools still understand their mission in this way? Or is (foreign) language teaching not guided more by a doctrine of utility, which could even be carried out by AI? If so, then it fails in its mission and objectives. In other words, education, foresight



and human maturity are needed if teachers are to continue to design language teaching as “an incentive and driving force for education in the spirit of international understanding and peace”. Do our educational institutions still fulfil this peace-building and nation-uniting mission, as was taken for granted half a century ago? This is a reason for everyone – whether involved in education or not – to reflect as fellow human beings on what we want to pass on to the younger generation and what the educational mission of schools must therefore be again. “Towards Peace” is an important support and guideline in this regard.

¹ International Association of German Teachers (ed.) (1989). „Dem Frieden entgegen. Ein Lesebuch“ (Towards Peace. A Reader). Munich: Langenscheidt-Verlag and Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie.

“Eppur si muove – ...”

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The vast majority of humanity suffers from injustice, violence, and the pursuit of power and has at least a natural, if unmanifest, protest against this. A protest that becomes all the stronger and more explicit the more one feels connected to one’s fellow human beings and lives in mutual aid. In his 1919 essay *Die andere Seite. Eine massenpsychologische Studie über die Schuld des Volkes*, in English as *The Other Side: A Mass-Psychological Study of a Nation’s Guilt*, *Alfred Adler* rejected the idea that his people, who killed and died in the millions on the front lines, were to blame for the horrors of war. He pointed to the thunderous propaganda and daily humiliations of

“The vast majority of humanity suffers from injustice, violence, and the pursuit of power and has at least a natural, if unmanifest, protest against this. A protest that becomes all the stronger and more explicit the more one feels connected to one’s fellow human beings and lives in mutual aid.”

Germans in the run-up to the war, but he also wrote:

A strong bond of mutual trust, a strong and educated sense of community that would have allowed open efforts of resistance was lacking in this people that was made to move with a blanket pulled over its head.

Despite the many individual sacrifices that we rightly mourn today and whose

suffering has not yet ended, the knowledge of the power of bonding and mutual aid gives us confidence.

¹ see, for example: Köchler, Hans. “Die Bedeutung des Dialoges der Zivilisationen für die internationalen Beziehungen” (The significance of dialogue between civilisations for international relations). Abbreviated text of a lecture given on 30 August 2014 at the *Mut zur Ethik* conference in Sirmach, Switzerland. <https://i-p-o.org/Koehler-Dialog-der-Zivilisationen-int-Beziehungen--IPO-OP-2014.pdf>.