

Current Concerns

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

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

Open letter to the EU leadership demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza

by Geneva International Peace Research GIPRI*

15 March 2024

Dear President *von der Leyen*,
Dear President *Michel*,
Dear High Representative *Borrell*
The Geneva International Peace Research Institute respectfully comes back to you on this question of a ceasefire in Gaza, on which we have yet to receive a satisfactory response.

Since our previous email of 23 February, GIPRI has launched an academic and media campaign of awareness-raising and public debate. Our director Dr *Gabriel Galice* and the board are appalled at the inaction by European leaders in the face of the on-going genocide and the multiple violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law by the government of Israel. It is most urgent to enforce a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, followed by a lifting of the illegal blockade against the hapless population of Gaza, the full implementation of the order of the *International Court of Justice* of 26 January 2024, and the prompt and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to the starving population.

You received the proposal from Dr Galice on the 27 February last, calling for a multi-national force to break the illegal Israeli blockade on Gaza. We attach the document here again for your reference.¹

The document was shared in good faith, as a rallying call to the international community to support the besieged population of Gaza, through the formation of unilateral state partnerships with international humanitarian organisations to break the illegal blockade. What it was not meant for was to be co-opted by the EU and the US government.

The GIPRI proposal was published in the Belgian paper “Le Soir” on 29 February, and we have it on good authority

“As a group of European and American citizens, we have had enough, and we are holding you accountable for your actions in supporting Israel’s destruction of Gaza and its murder of the population. We are appalled that the EU has acted in this undemocratic way for the past five months, throwing its support behind Israel, while the citizens of the EU have been overwhelmingly demanding, for months now, an end to the senseless slaughter and destruction.”

that the next morning it was sitting on the desks of prime ministers in certain European capitals.

It was also published in the “Tribune de Geneve” on 5 March.

By some marvelous set of coincidences, the US government announced a week after the *Le Soir* article, after five months of relentless Israeli bombing, that it would build a pier in Gaza and send aid to Gaza via a maritime corridor out of Cyprus. It would do all of this while at the same time maintaining its provision of weapons and political cover for Israel to continue its murderous campaign against the civilians of Gaza unabated. The cognitive dissonance of such a situation is monstrous, as we see pictures of a tugboat pulling a barge with a couple of hundred tons of aid on it, bound for Gaza, while the images of the bloody aftermath of Israeli air strikes continue to be livestreamed. It is unethical and cynical to be complicit in a genocide and then to pretend to be a Good Samaritan with all the media hype associated with it. Last weekend, the EU announced that it would be implementing a similar initiative, although the European governments continue giving aid and comfort to the government of Israel in the midst of its ethnic cleansing campaign, engaging in apology of genocide and crimes against humanity.

There appears to be such an enormous moral vacuum and absence of ideas at the levels of Brussels and Washington, not to mention shocking apathy, that it is quite

clear that the GIPRI proposal has been co-opted by bureaucrats in both locations to make it seem as though they are doing something to help the people of Gaza, when in reality they do not care.

Not only is the mechanism that the EU has adopted useless, in the absence of a port in Gaza or any means of inland delivery of aid planned for in advance, but the EU is also continuing to provide its tacit support for the Israeli blockade, the bombing and starvation of the population, as well as the continuation of the slow and torturous Israeli aid inspection process.

By opening a maritime corridor via Cyprus, the EU is effectively surrendering any remaining moral authority it may have had to the Israelis, by presenting the scenario as though no other possible alternative exists, when in fact many alternatives do exist.

Through adopting this approach, the EU continues to support the Israeli blockade by steadfastly refusing to call for a ceasefire, and by not calling for Israel to open the land borders to allow the hundreds of aid trucks already positioned to enter Gaza. This is the only effective means through which aid can be distributed to the population by the United Nations agencies, the *International Committee of the Red Cross*, and other international partners and organisations. These agencies have been calling for months for rapid and unhindered access to deliver aid, calls that continue to fall on deaf ears.

* The Geneva International Peace Research Institute (www.gipri.ch) is a non-governmental organisation with UN consultative status. It was founded in 1980 by Professor Roy Adrien Preiswerk, Director of the *Institut Universitaire d'Etude du Développement* and Professor at the *Institut Universitaire des hautes Etudes Internationales* in Geneva.

Follow-up to an Open Letter to the EU leadership

25 March 2024

Dear President *von der Leyen*,

Dear President *Michel*,

Dear High Representative *Borrell*

We here at GIPRI in Geneva are coming back to you on the matter of a ceasefire in Gaza. We have had no response from you on our previous communications, the most recent of which dated 15th March has already been published as an open letter.

We have noted your condemnation in recent days of Israel's use of starvation as a weapon of war, and your acknowledgment that the famine conditions we now see in Gaza are entirely man-made as a result of Israel's war of aggression. This is a welcome position, but it is still not strong enough.

Why is there still no call for a ceasefire? Why no call for sanctions on Israel? Why no condemnation of the slaughter of hundreds of aid seekers murdered in cold blood?

The EU was very quick to sanction Russia two years ago. Israel's crimes are infinitely worse, yet there is no call from the EU for them to suspend their violations of international law.

As our colleague *Josh Paul* has commented recently, "This has been an opportunity for Europe to stand up and demonstrate itself to be an important counterweight to the U.S. within the

"More than 13,000 children have been murdered in less than six months, and this has been on your watch. Many more are starving to death. How many more must be murdered before you say something? This is not even about Palestine anymore. It is about all of us. It is a shame and a disgrace on our collective humanity as citizens of this earth, that we have allowed such a slaughter of innocent children to take place and have done nothing to stop it."

broader Western alliance. This could have been done in a way that would benefit both that alliance and help pull the US out of its intellectual and moral stupor regarding Israel/Palestine policy.

Other than a few notable exceptions (to include Ireland, Belgium, Spain, Slovenia and Norway), the moment has been entirely missed, to the detriment of all of us."

It is absolutely incumbent upon you as leaders of the European Union to demand an immediate ceasefire, according to your obligations under the *Rome Statute*. Time is no longer on our side, as we wake up every day to the horrific news of hundreds more innocent civilians killed overnight.

More than 13,000 children have been murdered in less than six months, and this

has been on your watch. Many more are starving to death. How many more must be murdered before you say something? This is not even about Palestine anymore. It is about all of us. It is a shame and a disgrace on our collective humanity as citizens of this earth, that we have allowed such a slaughter of innocent children to take place and have done nothing to stop it.

Please be informed that our group is preparing a draft communication to the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC (pursuant to Article 15 of the ICC Statute) on 'Responsibility of officials of the European Union and of certain EU Member States for complicity in war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide

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"Open letter to the EU ..."

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This assault on Gaza was never about 7 October, or about Hamas, or about Israel's notional right to defend itself. It is clear now that it is nothing less than a pre-planned genocide, a land-grab for the creation of a greater Israel, a more secure Apartheid ethno-state. The EU has supported it and you are all guilty of enabling this genocide to take place in plain sight. Words have lost their meaning at this point to express the horror of what we have witnessed for the past five months. Again, just last night, we witnessed another 'Flour Massacre', with over 60 people murdered by Israeli tanks and machine guns while waiting for food aid.

This is a shocking disgrace and once again there has been no condemnation from the EU of these cold-blooded massacres we have witnessed in the past two weeks.

As a group of European and American citizens, we have had enough, and we are holding you accountable for your actions in supporting Israel's destruction of Gaza and its murder of the population. We are appalled that the EU has acted in this un-

democratic way for the past five months, throwing its support behind Israel, while the citizens of the EU have been overwhelmingly demanding, for months now, an end to the senseless slaughter and destruction.

We demand that the EU calls for an immediate and unconditional end to the Israeli bombing of Gaza right now, and we demand that the EU also calls for an opening of the borders, allowing rapid and unhindered delivery of food, shelter and medical supplies to the population.

Anything less than this is unacceptable and in breach of international law, which you all claim to uphold, but which it is evident that you are in breach of.

Short of this, we will be amplifying calls at the public level for your immediate resignations, as you no longer represent the population of the EU, with your continued support for a racist, murderous, apartheid regime.

Professor *Alfred de Zayas*, former senior lawyer with OHCHR, former UN Independent Expert on International Order, and member of the GIPRI board is prepared to substantiate the violations by Israel of the *Hague Convention* of 1907, the

Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the 1977 *Additional Protocols*, of the 1948 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, and of articles 6, 7, and 8 of the *Statute of Rome*.

If there ever was a case for the application of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine (GA Resolution 60/1 paras 138-39), this is it.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan O'Connor – Ireland

Gabriel Galice – France

Gilles Emmanuel Jacquet – France

Cristina Cabrejas – Spain

Soaade Messoudi – Belgium

Guy Mettan – Switzerland

Professor Alfred de Zayas – Switzerland,

United States

Tim Clennon – Switzerland,

United States

¹ Galice, Gabriel. "Saving Gaza across the sea". In: *Current Concerns* No 5 of 5 March 2024 (editor's note)

First published by <https://www.counterpunch.org/2024/03/18/open-letter-to-the-eu-leadership-demanding-an-immediate-ceasefire-in-gaza/> of 18 March 2024

Switzerland-EU: Start of negotiations with many question marks

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

On 18 March, another chapter of the big show began: President of the Swiss Confederation *Viola Amherd* and EU Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen* posed in front of the cameras in Brussels in colour-coordinated jackets and officially launched the negotiations on the planned Switzerland-EU agreement, which is supposed to be completely different from the failed framework agreement.

Mysterious landing zones

At the same time, the chief negotiators *Patric Franzen* (Switzerland) and *Richard Szostak* (EU) began their talks – about what? According to the responsible EU Commissioner *Maroš Šefčovič* – with whom *Viola Amherd* also shone in the flashbulbs – there is actually nothing left to negotiate: “We have been negotiating for eighteen months to achieve a negotiating mandate. We want to focus on where the landing zones can be.” On 8 March, the Federal Council transformed this “mandate” (which can be found in the “Common Understanding”)¹ into a “Definitive Negotiating Mandate” and supplemented it with a Swiss wish list full of clarifications and exceptions.²

But there will hardly be much room for Swiss wishes in the “landing zones” that Brussels has in mind. “Landing zones” are “regularly set up by the mighty in Brussels”, according to the “*Süddeutsche Zeitung*”: “The constant disagreement of the member states calls for written negotiating principles, which gradually become a compromise; a zone that is reduced in size until the spaceship Europe can just about land on it.”³ How much space the spaceship Europe needs to land in Switzerland will not be decided in Bern.

Let us not be distracted from the essentials!

However, the wrangling about exceptions to the EU legal framework must not dis-

tract us from the essentials. Breaking up the framework agreement into individual packages with different coloured wrapping paper is just a confusing tactic. The EU basic framework – adoption of the “institutional elements” and ban on state aid – remains incompatible with the Swiss state system even with all the whitewashing (see *Current Concerns* of 9 January, 20 February and 5 March 2024).

In a recent newspaper interview with EU Commissioner *Maroš Šefčovič*, it becomes clear that the EU leaders have no idea about the Swiss state model. The democratic process is “not entirely different” in the EU, as the agreement must be approved by the Commission, the 27 heads of state and the EU Parliament, *Šefčovič* said.⁴ You can’t expect an EU Commissioner to understand the fundamental difference to direct democratic decision-making in Switzerland. However, the Swiss media, the Federal Council and its negotiating team must be called upon to finally make the Brussels bureaucrats realise that the two systems are irreconcilable. Then there would be no need to organise yet another mock negotiation at great expense, the outcome of which is already largely clear from Brussels’ point of view and would fail in the referendum at the latest.

No incentives to move to Switzerland?

No other European country has such a high proportion of foreigners as Switzerland. At the end of 2023, 2,313,217 out of 8.9 million inhabitants were foreigners, or around 26% (see box).

When asked by the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”: “Switzerland is one of the fastest growing countries in Europe in this respect [migration]. Do you understand that people are worried?” *Maroš Šefčovič* replied: “It will be guaranteed that EU citizens will not be able to move to Switzerland just to

Sharp increase in immigration in 2023

mw. In 2023, 98,851 more people immigrated than emigrated to Switzerland. According to the Federal Statistical Office, net immigration thus increased by 21.5% compared to 2022.

A total of 181,553 people immigrated to Switzerland in 2023, 71.9% of whom came from an EU or EFTA member state. Immigration from these countries increased by 14.1% to 130,483 people. The increase in immigration from third countries totalled 6.3%. (*SRF News* of 23 February 2024)

gain access to social security. They will come to work.” He added: “There will be no incentives to move to Switzerland. That’s a good example of us listening to our dialogue partner.”

Mr Šefčovič would do well to get off his high horse and take note of the fact that the Swiss resident population has grown from 7.2 million to almost 9 million since the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons came into force in 2002. Everyone knows that there are huge incentives to move to Switzerland, for whatever purpose. The EU Commissioner also ignores the fact that the planned agreement would effectively impose the EU Citizens Directive on Switzerland, a set of rules that is completely alien to our understanding of the law and our state model and would certainly lead to even more immigration. A few vaguely worded exceptions are by no means a “guarantee” that fewer people will immigrate to the Swiss social security system. (*Current Concerns* reported on this on 27 February 2024 under the title “Free movement of persons – one of the mammoths in the room”).

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committed by the Israeli Armed Forces in the Gaza Strip’, focusing on President *von der Leyen* at this stage. We are preparing an *amicus curiae* brief* to support other pending investigations concerning the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

It appears that civil society is now obliged to go public and call for the resignation of EU officials and the initiation of legal action in international courts simply to restore moral rectitude and the adherence to established international legal frameworks.

Unfortunately, your failed policies have so far proven unable or unwilling to prevent a genocide, from occurring in real time and in front of our eyes. We will continue to hold you accountable, and we will continue to demand that you take action and call for an immediate ceasefire until it happens.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan O’Connor – Ireland
Gabriel Galice – France
Gilles Emmanuel Jacquet – France
Cristina Cabrejas – Spain
Soaade Messoudi – Belgium

Guy Mettan – Switzerland
Professor Alfred de Zayas – Switzerland, United States
Tim Clennon – Switzerland, United States
Pierre-Emmanuel Dupont – France

* An *amicus curiae* brief is a written submission to a court in which a person or organisation not involved in the proceedings can present legal arguments and a recommendation for action in a case before the court. (<https://www.ecchr.eu/glossar/amicus-curiae-brief/> European Centre for constitutional and human rights). (editor’s note)

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Protection from excessive immigration – not a negotiating objective!

The Federal Council would therefore like to at least install an emergency brake. With this in mind, the journalists asked: “What about the existing safeguard clause (Article 14.2) of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons? The Federal Council would like to clarify what constitutes ‘serious economic or social problems that allow remedial measures to be taken against excessive immigration.’” With his response, Šefčovič demonstrated that Brussels’ promised “exceptions” are largely smoke and mirrors: “If we want the negotiations to be successful, we have to stick to the common understanding here. I don’t see this problem when I look at the document.”⁵

All right. As I said, it would be wiser to end the negotiations with such “partners” today. We would be better off with the existing bilateral agreements and the 1972 free trade agreement. We will continue to cope with the expected pinpricks from the Brussels bureaucracy. The main thing is that Switzerland can retain its freedom and sovereignty. •

¹ Annex to the Federal Council’s press release of 15 December 2023, “Der Bundesrat genehmigt den Entwurf eines Mandats für Verhandlungen mit der Europäischen Union (EU)” (The Federal Council approves the draft mandate for negotiations with the European Union EU). <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/das-eda/aktuell/newsuebersicht/2023/europa.html>

² <https://www.news.admin.ch/news/message/attachments/86557.pdf>

³ Diesteldorf, Jan. “Aktuelles Lexikon. Landezone”. (Current Lexicon. Landing zone.) In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 15 December 2023

⁴ Imwinkelried, Daniel/Steinworth, Daniel. “Es gibt keine Anreize, in die Schweiz zu ziehen». Interview mit EU-Kommissar Maroš Šefčovič.” (There are no incentives to move to Switzerland. Interview with EU Commissioner Maros Sefcovic.) In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 19 March 2024

⁵ *ibid.*

Security agreement as part of the negotiating mandate: all just a “mistake”?

mw. The fact that the head of the *Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport* (DDPS), *Viola Amherd*, wants Switzerland to join NATO is nothing new. In the negotiations with the EU, however, Bern and Brussels are keeping as quiet as possible about military cooperation. In fact, this has been established for years.

This was recently recalled by the “*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*”: “Amherd and the secret plan. Suddenly a security agreement with the EU – all just a typo?” was the headline of the domestic edition (“*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*” of 19 March 2024). It discovered a “cooperation agreement in the area of security” in the Federal Council’s press release of 18 March on the Swiss-EU negotiating mandate. The DDPS excused itself by saying that “unfortunately a mistake had been made when drafting the press release”. What was meant was a co-operation agreement in the area of health. A security agreement was really not intended.

That’s the final straw! Firstly, such an agreement has existed for a long time. And secondly, a few lines further down in the same press release, the “expansion of security policy cooperation” is announced.

“Agreement on armaments cooperation” with the European Defence Agency (EDA)

The “Bilateral agreements and cooperation from 2004”, i. e. in addition to Bilaterals I and II, include the “Framework for Cooperation” with the *European Defence Agency* (EDA), which Switzerland signed on 16 March 2012.¹ Every second sentence emphasises that the cooperation is “not legally binding”, “not an obligation” and that Switzerland decides “ad hoc” or “independently” where it wants to participate. In terms of content, however, there is a lot in EDA: The agreement “enables Switzerland to cooperate multilaterally in

all of EDA’s fields of activity, including research, development, armaments, education and training.” Example: “Federal Council approves participation in EDA’s Helicopter Exercise Programme” (11 December 2020). The trick: because EDA is “not legally binding”, the Federal Council did not have to ask Parliament!

“Expansion of Swiss-EU security policy cooperation”

Returning to President *Viola Amherd*’s visit to Brussels on 18 March 2024, she spoke at length about security, according to a press release: “The situation in Europe, Switzerland’s and the EU’s commitment to peace [!] and the expansion of security policy cooperation, as decided by the Federal Council in September 2022, were also discussed on Monday. The Swiss-EU consultations on security and defence were upgraded to a structured dialogue in November 2023”.

There is also a press release (dated 21 November 2023) entitled “Foreign and security policy cooperation: State Secretary *Alexandre Fasel* meets his counterpart at the EU, *Stefano Sannino*”. At this meeting, “Switzerland and the EU decided to strengthen their dialogue on security and defence policy. *Alexandre Fasel* and his counterpart confirmed this agreement today in Brussels.” The planned consultations are intended to address “all areas of security cooperation between Switzerland and the EU” and ensure “coherent follow-up of the various dossiers” (which dossiers?). In passing, the reader learns: “Switzerland is heavily involved in these two regions [the Gaza and Ukraine wars] and *is working closely with the EU in these areas.*” (emphasis mw)

All just a typo? •

¹ <https://www.eda.admin.ch/europa/de/home/bilateraler-weg/bilaterale-abkommen-nach-2004/zusammenarbeit-eva.html>

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America's claims to Eurasian hegemony

by Dr Dr h. c. Arne C. Seifert*

“European self-determination can take place only as emancipation from America.” (Egon Bahr)



Arne C. Seifert
(picture ma)

At *Atlantik-Brücke* in Berlin in December 2021, the director of the US “Defence Program” at the *Centre for a New American Security* in Washington, Elbridge Colby, explained America’s insistence that NATO must partic-

ipate in a “great power competition” between the USA, Russia, and China and with what goals: “If NATO did not already exist, it would have to be created now.” It is essentially a security alliance and, with 29 member states, is very broadly based. But, Colby added, “I am not sure whether it is sufficiently cohesive. [...] What it lacks is a real threat, like that of the Soviet Union. [...] If Europe shouldered more responsibility towards Russia, it would allow the United States to focus even more on China.”¹



Eurasia: An object of desire for US interests. (Wikipedia)

‘Allied partners’ to control the Eurasian landmass

For the US, there was and is no question that it is eager to integrate other “allied partners” into NATO. According to the Congressional Research Service, in January 2021, “US alliances and partnerships, including NATO, which was created to prevent the Soviet Union (now Russia) from becoming a regional hegemon over Europe”, are regarded as bases for “large-scale, long-term US military operations against China and Russia”.²

It is obvious against this background that this is the basis of an American effort, as earlier mentioned, to control the Eurasian landmass with the help of NATO’s expansion eastward across Eurasia.

Construction of a ‘threat’: Russia

Colby’s insistence that Russia is a “real threat” strikes a chord in Germany. The *German Council on Foreign Relations* (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik) presented a “Strategic Reassessment of Russia” on 8 November 2023. The DGAP, which receives 27 per cent of its funding from the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of Defence, and the European Commission, consistently beats the drums of war against Russia. “The question for NATO and Germa-

ny is no longer whether they will ever be able to wage war against another country, but only when they will do so”, the November report reads. “In its new strategic concept, NATO describes Russia as the greatest and most urgent threat to the security of its 31 allies and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. In contrast to earlier analyses, the alliance no longer rules out an attack by Russia. [...] The clock will start ticking as soon as the fierce fighting in Ukraine comes to a halt”.

Egon Bahr: ‘Our self-determination stands alongside and not against America’

What a monstrosity! What a blow to the “peace identity” of European states, with which they started the EU and later the process represented by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe after the Second World War. Also brushed aside are *Egon Bahr’s* visions, dating to 1990, of European self-determination. The prominent Social Democratic politician articulated these visions at the Cold War’s end. “At that time, the realisation began to grow that European self-determination after the end of the Soviet Union could take place only as emancipation from America”, Bahr said in a keynote

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* Dr Dr h. c. Arne Clemens Seifert, (born 1937 in Berlin), former ambassador, Senior Research Fellow, *WeltTrends Institute for International Politics*, Potsdam. Studied at the *Institute of International Relations*, Moscow, specialising in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, graduated 1963. Doctorate at the *Institute for International Labour Movement*, Berlin, 1977. Dr h. c. at the *Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences* 2017. Functions in the Foreign Ministry of the GDR 1964–1990: Arab States Division, worked in Egypt, Jordan; Sector Head Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan; Research Assistant to the Deputy Minister for Asia, Africa; Ambassador to the State of Kuwait 1982–1987; Head of Department 1987–1990. After 1990: OSCE Mission to Tajikistan; Central Asia Advisor at the Centre for OSCE Research (CORE), *Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy* at the University of Hamburg, specialising in OSCE and Central Asia research – civil conflict prevention, transformation, political Islam, secular-Islamic relations, political processes. Recent publications include “Dialog und Transformation – 25 Jahre OSZE- und Zentralasienforschung” (Dialogue and Transformation – 25 years of research on the OSCE and Central Asia), *Nomos*; “Islamischer Aufbruch in Zentralasien – Spezifika religiöser Radikalisierungsprävention” (Islamic revival in Central Asia – Specifics of prevention of religious radicalisation), *OSCE Yearbook* Vol. 24, 2018; “Friedliche Koexistenz in unserer Zeit – Der neue Kalte Krieg und die Friedensfrage (Peaceful coexistence in our time – The new Cold War and the question of peace)”, *WeltTrends*, 2021; “‘Regelbasierte internationale Ordnung’ versus post-koloniale Emanzipation – Grenzen und Sackgassen eines globalen Hegemonieprojekts” (“Rules-based international order” versus post-colonial emancipation – limits and dead ends of a global hegemony project), *WeltTrends* 2022.

"America's claims ..."

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speech to the *German-Russian Forum* in Berlin. As he elaborated,

*Our emancipation from America becomes self-evident and irrefutable. Our self-determination stands alongside and not against America. [...] If American behaviour can give the impression of their wanting to bring Russia to its knees, then I share Horst Teltschik's** opinion that this is sheer madness; Napoleon and Hitler have already tried it. Kissinger and Gorbachev, Kohl and Schmidt have issued warnings for our present time. [...] We cannot give up Russia just because America does not like it.*

Forgetting history:**The new German war apologists**

Among the many things the new German war apologists have forgotten are the immediate warnings against an eastward expansion of NATO, which the USSR issued at the beginning of the two-plus-four negotiations for the *Treaty on the Final Settlement with regard to Germany* on 5 May 1990. (Do not forget this date!) *Hans-Dietrich Genscher*, foreign minister at the time, recorded in his memoirs the words with which *Eduard Shevardnadze*, then the Soviet foreign minister, admonished a united Germany and its trans-Atlantic allies. He warned against extending NATO eastward, "For us, NATO is what it has always been, a military bloc facing us with a doctrine of a certain orientation and subject to the precondition of being able to deliver the first nuclear strike. [...] If attempts are made to corner us in matters relating to our security, this will – and I say this quite openly – lead to a situation in which our political flexibility is abruptly restricted."

Restriction of political flexibility

It remains to be seen how a state's leadership will think after a lengthy period during which hostilities are unfurling. However, it can be held true that the most dangerous component of such a period is that an enemy's desire for peace cannot be easily predicted. In the case of Russia, the question of whether a lack of predictability will lead to war remained unanswered for decades, which means it was not unfounded: A nation's disposition to fight can be greater than the process of fighting itself, as long as there is no certainty to the contrary.

The US has openly formulated its claim to hegemony

America has not concealed its political intentions towards Russia, nor the attendant

executive role of NATO. President Biden confirmed these intentions in the "US National Security Strategy" of October 2022:

Our enduring role: [...] Although the international environment has become more controversial, the United States remains the world's leading power [...]. The most pressing strategic challenge facing our vision comes from powers that combine authoritarian governance with a revisionist foreign policy [...] and export an illiberal model of international order.

The final phrases refer to Russia and China as opponents and enemies. This goes back to the years immediately after the end of the East-West conflict. What lends this its global importance is the fact that the nuclear powers Russia and US confronted each other; the US developed this line of confrontation regardless of the dissolution of system antagonism; the US has to this day continued this clearly hegemonic strategy of military encirclement of Russia, involving its regional allies, with the eastern expansion of NATO, and it has expanded this encirclement territorially in Eurasia.

A chronicle of power politics

Timeline: in 1991, President *George Bush Sr.* interpreted the peaceful end of the Cold War together with the crisis in the Soviet Union as opening the way for his change of strategy towards a unipolar world order. An order, as the *Austrian Military Journal* of the Federal Ministry of Defence quoted Bush, "in which the US shapes the rest of the world instead of reacting to it". He elaborated at the time, "The American armed forces were given the task of defending the unipolar *Pax Americana* and ensuring that no regional hegemon on any continent jeopardises the global leadership role of the USA".

In turn, *George Bush Jr.* presented his "Greater Middle East" strategy at the G8 summit at Sea Island in June 2004 as a practical forward strategy. He understood it as a political agenda to restructure that region by "promoting peace, democracy, human dignity, the rule of law, economic opportunity and security". He declared the fall of *Saddam Hussein* to be a prerequisite for the "democratisation" of the Greater Middle East region. It is particularly notable that the US and Britain went on to wage a war of aggression without having been threatened themselves.

Their "disposition to fight", to return to my earlier thought, thus became a reality, any "certainty of the contrary" dispelled. This was also the moment when access to the Eurasian landmass was initially envisaged.

In June 2006, US Secretary of State *Condoleezza Rice* extended Bush's geostrategic plan to Central Asia, parts of South Asia (Pakistan, Kashmir, West India), and the Persian Gulf. In doing so, she opened up paths for the US up to Russia's southern neighbours. The new geostrategic constellation was to enable the US to advance from the Middle East via Afghanistan and Pakistan into the immediate vicinity of the states of Central Asia (the former Soviet republics) and neighbouring China. The Russian Federation, to be noted, regards the Central Asian states as its "near abroad". At that time, the US failed to realise Rice's plans because the pertinent Middle Eastern states declined to cooperate.

Today it is called 'the rules-based order'

We find the manifestation of this strategic thinking, three decades later, in Washington's current claims to global hegemony disguised as the defence of a "rules-based international order". Thus, the US Congress postulated in Report No. 117-667, Part I, on 30 December 2022:

The United States leads the free, open, and rules-based international order.

The United States, European Union, the United Kingdom, and other European countries are close partners, sharing values grounded in democracy, human rights, transparency, and the rules-based international order established after World War II. (emphasis A. S.)

This assembly of American allies is none other than NATO, an integration that serves America's global hegemony. In the following I will trace how NATO and its pact system fit into the US strategy towards Eurasia/Russia/China within the framework of the new great power competition. This concerns a phase of American geostrategy to control the Eurasian landmass by integrating Eurasia into the trans-Atlantic sphere by way of NATO's European eastward expansion. This effectively transformed NATO's expansion project such that the alliance carelessly and provocatively burdened itself with the adventure of a NATO-Eurasia "continentalisation".

What is more, Biden's 2022 National Security Strategy sets its sights on the Global South as the external hinterland of Russia and China. "We will influence their behaviour and compete with them", this document reads. Disguised as a fight against terrorism, Biden's declared objective is at once reflected in a NATO Strategy 2030, which was issued on 14 June 2021. A "reflection group" appointed by

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"America's claims ..."

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NATO Secretary General *Jens Stoltenberg* and chaired by the German politician and former federal minister *Thomas de Maizière*, proposed that the trans-Atlantic alliance should substantially expand its geostrategic operational area:

NATO has long been aware of the fact that, in addition to threats from the "East", there are also dangers and diffuse risks to the security of the Alliance from the "South". However, a clear separation between these two flanks is becoming less important: the South and the East are linked at the seams (and geographically through the Western Balkans) with regard to Russia, which is playing an increasingly important role in the Mediterranean region. In the next ten years, a 360-degree security concept in which the South gains in importance for NATO will therefore be a must.

Counteracting the emergence of 'hegemons in Eurasia'

The US Congressional Research Service (CSR)³ reflected on the Eurasia question as follows. The following passage is notable for its forthright clarity:

A specific key element of the traditional US role in the world since World War II – one that US policymakers do not often state explicitly in public – has been to oppose the emergence of regional hegemons in Eurasia.

This objective reflects a US perspective on geopolitics and grand strategy developed by US strategists and policymakers during and in the years immediately after World War II that incorporates key judgments.

Although US policymakers do not often state explicitly in public the goal of preventing the emergence of regional hegemons in Eurasia, U.S. military operations in World War I and World War II, as well as numerous US military wartime and day-to-day operations since World War II (and nonmilitary elements of US national strategy since World War II), appear to have been carried out in no small part in support of this goal.

According to the corresponding document from the US Congressional Research Service, updated in 2023 (<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R43838/95>), the US is pursuing the following intentions with this strategy:

Geopolitics. "Given the amount of people, resources, and economic activity in

Eurasia, a regional hegemon in Eurasia would represent a concentration of power large enough to be able to threaten vital U.S. interests"

Political intervention. "Eurasia is not dependably self-regulating in terms of preventing the emergence of regional hegemons, meaning that the countries of Eurasia [...] may need assistance from one or more countries outside Eurasia to be able to do this dependably".

Geostrategic-military intention. "The goal of preventing the emergence of regional hegemons in Eurasia is a major reason why the U.S. military is structured with force elements that enable it to deploy from the United States, cross broad expanses of ocean and air space, and then conduct sustained, large-scale military operations upon arrival in Eurasia or the waters and airspace surrounding Eurasia. Force elements associated with this goal include, among other things, an Air Force with significant numbers of long-range bombers, long-range surveillance aircraft, long-range airlift aircraft, and aerial refueling tankers, and a Navy with significant numbers of aircraft carriers."

Time horizons: The "Open End". The generic term "era" is used in US doctrine for "international relations under conditions of long-term strategic rivalry" after the end of the Cold War ("Post-Cold War Era of International Relations", available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov>). This de facto amounts to an "open end". The US locates the beginning of this era in the "seizure and annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014", its "actions in eastern Ukraine", and "China's actions in the East and South China Seas". They see these events as a "threat to core elements of the international order shaped by the US". In other words, the era of "long-term strategic rivalry" is already a reality and characterises America's positioning in the Ukraine conflict and far beyond.

Europe's impasse

Engaging with America's Eurasian ambitions, showing solidarity, or even "joining the fight" would prove to be an impasse for Europe, as with Biden's declaration of his intent to influence the behaviour of the Global South as the immediate hinterland of Russia and China, Central Asia is moving into the OSCE area.

Central Asia comprises the centre of the European-Asian subcontinent. Its states – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – form a huge block bordering Russia and China.

With its 2,724,900 square kilometres, Kazakhstan alone is the ninth-largest country in the world by area and stretches across two time zones. Central Asia, especially its largest state, Kazakhstan, plays

a key role in Eurasian regional transport and its communication systems with Russia, China, the Caspian Sea area, Iran, the Caucasus, and Europe. China's transit to Europe runs via Kazakhstan. The latter can be considered one of the "new powers of the South". In 2023, it held the chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which accounts for around 40 per cent of the world's population.

This can be considered a Euro-Asian geopolitical centre of gravity. As with the BRICS, it is one of the dynamic international forces that provide the impetus for fundamental changes in the global balance of power in a new multipolar world. The trans-Atlantic West resists these changes and collectively endeavours to break up these opposing forces. Central Asia, and in this case Kazakhstan, is a focal point. Particularly in the context of the conflict in Ukraine, it is being besieged and blackmailed with the "question of loyalty": "Us or Russia and China?"

In summary, it can be said that a largely common denominator is emerging among the Central Asian states, China, and the Arab Gulf states in terms of international political expectations, principles, behaviour, agreements, and coordination.

Similar or even analogous developments can be observed in economic policy. The summit meetings, agreements, and orientations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation contain an enormous number of common contemporary economic, social, cultural, national, transnational, and cross-border projects.

Conclusion

EU-Europe should immediately revitalise its potential for the "civilizing" of conflicts, for war prevention, and peaceful coexistence. Its Eurasian position must be developed with foresight for mutual benefit. The latter is of central importance in terms of perspective, as no one else can enjoy a similar continental neighbourhood in emergent multipolar centres such as China, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe. A relationship of peaceful coexistence and cooperation could develop them together into a global economic centre of gravity. Nothing can be expected from America and NATO in this direction at present. •

** *Horst Teltschik* is a former German political official and business manager. He was a close confidant of *Helmut Kohl* and worked in the Federal Chancellery. He chaired the *Munich Security Conference* from 1999 to 2008. (editor's note)

¹ Colby, Elbridge. *The number one national security priority is great power competition*, *Atlantik-Briücke* of 21 December 2021

² "US Role in the World: Background and Issues for Congress", p 4, updated 19 January 2021, *Congressional Research Service*, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R44891.pdf>

³ *Congressional Research Service*, "Defense Primer: Geography, Strategy, and US Force Design", updated 19 April 2022 and 2023.

The political movements in Switzerland and their significance for the development of direct democracy (Part 3)

Early socialism and direct democracy

by Dr phil. René Roca, Forschungsinstitut direkte Demokratie (Research Institute for Direct Democracy, www.fidd.ch)

Over the past 200 years, the citizens of Switzerland have developed democracy into a model that is unique in the world. Direct democracy is an integral part of the political culture and the decisive foundation for the country's economic success. The article "Historical research and direct democracy" (see *Current Concerns*, no. 16 of 8 August 2020) summarised the research to date. This was followed by a succession of articles that explored the research findings in greater depth on individual topics. This began with an article on the topic of Catholicism and its significance for the history of democracy in Switzerland (see *Current Concerns*, No. 2 of 5 February 2021). This was followed by an article on the significance of liberalism for the emergence and development of direct democracy in Switzerland (see *Current Concerns*, no. 18 of 17 August 2021). The series examining political movements will now conclude with an article on the significance of early socialism. Later on, articles on the theory of direct democracy will be published, specifically examining the cooperative principle and natural law.

Early socialism in Switzerland

The Swiss federal state from 1848 onwards was not only the fruit of the liberals; the Catholic conservatives also contributed a great deal to this constructive decentralised solution after the Sonderbund War, particularly with their insistence on cantonal sovereignty. It is significant, for example, that in Switzerland the expansion of the popular veto into a modern mandatory referendum was promoted in 1844 in the conservative canton of Valais (see Part 1) and later adopted in modified form by other cantons.

Early socialists in Switzerland also made decisive contributions to anchoring direct democracy in the political culture and developing it further. In the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, they increasingly brought Switzerland's federalist model into the European debate. Direct democracy was also a recurring theme. Early socialist ideas in connection with direct democracy were first introduced in the Vaud revolution of 1845. *Henri Druey* (1799–1855) postulated the obligatory referendum, which had already been introduced in conservative Valais in 1844. Although he did not succeed with this, he was able to push through two further important democratic innovations for

the constitution in the canton of Vaud. On the one hand, Druey placed residents (*Niedergelassene*) and long-established inhabitants (*Eingesessene*) on an equal footing in terms of voting rights – a first in Swiss history – and, as a further pioneering act, enshrined the legislative initiative in a cantonal constitution for the first time.

In addition to federalism and direct democracy, the early socialists in Switzerland also promoted the cooperative movement, which was based on the cooperative principle of the *Ancien Régime*. In doing so, they created an important basis for linking the political instruments of direct democracy with the cooperative idea and for strengthening democratic culture in Switzerland. Various early socialist theoretical approaches were important here.

The ideas of the early French socialists *Étienne Cabet* (1788–1856), *Henri de Saint-Simon* (1760–1825) and *Charles Fourier* (1772–1837) were relatively widespread in Switzerland. There are less explicit references to *Robert Owen* (1771–1858), but his cooperative approaches flowed into the trade union movement and later into the *Social Democratic Party*. The only important early socialist who was active in Switzerland for some time was the German journeyman tailor *Wilhelm Weitling* (1808–1871). His "The Gospel of the Poor Sinners", which combined early communist ideas with the New Testament, was printed and propagated in Bern from 1845. Weitling fell out with *Karl Marx* (1818–1883) and *Friedrich Engels* (1820–1895) in 1846, as he wanted to use other methods to put communism into political practice. Weitling was one of the first socialists to call on workers to become active themselves and fight for a fairer social order.

After 1848, the ideas of Marx and Engels also gained increasing support in socialist circles in Switzerland. Marx and Engels brought the experiences of the English labour movement into the discussion and, in contrast to many early socialists, explicitly supported strikes and other political actions. Marxist theory was initially only selectively accepted in Switzerland and was unable to gain acceptance for a long time.

Contrary to Marx's assertion, the early socialist movement with its ideas was an important prerequisite for the later Marxist doctrine in the first half of the 19th century. However, Marxist and some Western historiography adopted Marx's defama-

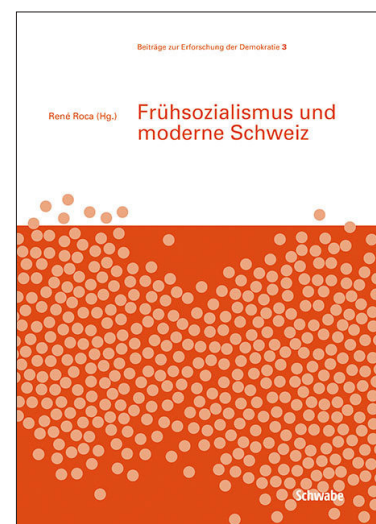
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“The political movements ...”

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tory dictum that the early socialists were merely “utopians” and “petty bourgeois” and that only they – Marx and Engels – had founded “scientific socialism”.

Grütli Association and Democratic Movement

In Switzerland, in contrast to Marxism, the “Grütli Association” was more important for the workers’ movement and, above all, for the social and national integration of the working population. According to the founders, the name “Grütli Association” was chosen with the perspective “that something great could one day emerge from this association of Swiss people without distinction of cantons, just as Switzerland once emerged from the Grütli [Rütli]”. As the first permanent organisation of the Swiss labour movement, the Grütli Association was founded in Geneva in 1838 as a patriotic association, which adopted national structures in 1843. The central concern of the organised journey-men – more and more workers joined over time – was the idea of education in addition to sociability and mutual help. The establishment of common funds was intended to support the education and further training of craftsmen and workers and to secure and improve their profession. The Grütli associations were the “pioneers of socialism” in Switzerland and formed an important basis for the later founding of trade unions and the *Swiss Social Democratic Party* (SPS). They also played a central role in the *democratic movement* of the 1860s and 1870s with their concept of solving the social question on the national basis of the Swiss republic with the help of direct democracy.

The two early socialists, *Karl Bürkli* (1823–1901) from Zurich and *Emil Remigi* (1803–1889) from Basel, supported the *democratic movement* and ensured the expansion of direct democracy in their cantons (Frey for Baselland). In Switzerland, they also promoted the introduction of the optional referendum (1874) and the constitutional initiative (1891) at federal level and ultimately made independent contributions to the international debate on questions of democracy and the rule of law. In this sense, there were no actual early socialist schools in Switzerland; the Swiss were too much “doers” and not theorists or ideologists.

The transitions between radicalism and socialism were fluid in Switzerland (see Part 2). Wherever popular rights were extended in the cantonal constitutional revisions that rapidly followed from 1830 onwards, the radicals and early socialists always focused on the idea of a cross-class national community rather than a class-struggle attitude.

Anarchism in French-speaking Switzerland

As a French early socialist, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (1809–1865) advocated a libertarian approach and campaigned for federalist structures that would distribute political power in a decentralised form. In Switzerland, he found such structures in the federal state of 1848, which he used as a model to discuss with other early socialists in Switzerland and the rest of Europe. The consequence of Proudhon’s theory of federalism, in addition to his approach of cooperative socialism, was the principle of direct democracy, even if Proudhon did not explicitly refer to the Swiss model of democracy, but to an anarchist-influenced council model. He saw political organisations in the form of federations (“federation of communes”) as the basis, which would make state powers and laws superfluous, wanted to promote the “progressive federation” as an interweaving of politics with the economy in Europe and ultimately transform the whole world into “confederations”. For Proudhon, the Swiss federal state was the practical proof that his idea of federation could be implemented.

Despite the fact that Marxism was also gaining popularity in Switzerland, Proudhon’s ideas fell on fertile ground here. The Swiss anarchist and writer *James Guillaume* (1844–1916) was strongly influenced by Proudhon and his ideas. When the *International Labour Association* (ILO), founded in London, issued a call for all workers to unite in 1864, support committees were also established in French-speaking Switzerland, mainly by watchmakers from the Bernese and Neuchâtel Jura. Guillaume laid the basis for a section in Le Locle together with like-minded people in 1866 and promoted the merging of individual sections to form the so-called “Jura Federation” (*Fédération jurassienne*) in 1871. The members of this federation initially saw themselves as radicals and free thinkers, and in the years that followed they moved ever closer to collectivist and anarchist positions. However, this also resulted in a growing opposition to the authoritarian ideas advocated by Karl Marx in the IAA. Finally, in 1872, Guillaume was expelled from the IAA along with other like-minded people. He then founded the anti-authoritarian International in St. Imier together with other national federations, which from then on had its centre in the Jura. Yet, the International soon disintegrated into individual sections and was unable to achieve much impact.

Swiss Social Democratic Party (SPS) and direct democracy

One reason for this disintegration was that the *Social Democratic Party of Switzerland* (SPS) was founded in 1888. It initially sought reforms and only later commit-

ted itself to Marxist principles, such as the “class struggle” in the second party programme of 1904 and the “dictatorship of the proletariat” in the third of 1920. However, the programmes always took into account the Swiss conditions of direct democracy and contradicted Marxist doctrine on this point. For example, point 1 of the working programme, an appendix to the second party programme of 1904, states: “Expansion of democracy: Proportional electoral procedure. Election of legislative, administrative and judicial authorities by the people. Compulsory referendum. Legislative initiative. Decentralisation of the federal administration. Autonomy of the municipality.” The working programme as being part of the third-party programme of 1920 was then titled only “Development of Democracy” under point 1 and significantly omitted the “Mandatory Referendum” and the “Autonomy of the Commune”. In 1921, the party left split from the SPS and founded the *Communist Party of Switzerland* (KPS). The SPS subsequently developed more into a reform-oriented party and supported the continuation and further expansion of direct democracy. The current party programme states: “We consider direct democracy to be the appropriate form of government for Switzerland. We defend it against those who characterise it as inefficient, too slow or even unsuitable for the future.”

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P.O. Box 247 CH-9602 Bazenhaid

Phone: +41 (0)44 350 65 50

Fax: +41 (0)44 350 65 51

E-Mail: CurrentConcerns@zeit-fragen.ch

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The unifying power of music

The American conductor Kent Nagano and his dream

by Winfried Pogorzelski

Music awakens and inspires the inexhaustible creativity of man. It creates moments of happiness, brings people together, and enables them to better cope with life. Across all continents and cultures classical music does this the most. To a lesser extent, folk music does the same.

Classical music, generally highly subsidised by the state, is under increasing economic pressure and must therefore accept a certain loss of status. The American conductor Kent Nagano is tirelessly committed to its preservation, cultivation, and dissemination. He dreams of a world in which every person has the chance to find access to classical music. Nagano also encourages and cultivates exchanges between musical traditions of different cultures.

'The sounding fishing village'

An American with Japanese roots, *Kent Nagano* studied music and sociology in Santa Cruz and San Francisco under the tutelage of *Pierre Boulez*, *Leonard Bernstein*, and *Olivier Messiaen*, with whom he became friends. His work has taken him to the most important concert halls and opera houses in the world, including Montreal, Boston, New York, Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Salzburg, Zurich, and Milan. He is one of the most sought-after representatives of his profession.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Nagano grew up in a fishing village called Morro Bay on the West Coast of California, where immigrants of different ethnic origins – including Swiss – had settled. At the local school, *Wachtang Korisheli*, a dedicated Georgian musician, was working as a pianist and music teacher. Korisheli had ended up there after escaping the turmoil of the Second World War. His goal was to create an orchestra. In the morning hours before school, and in the afternoons after school, every pupil received instrumental lessons. The evenings ended with an orchestra rehearsal.

Under the guidance of their dedicated teacher the students learned to read music. Importantly, they also learned to listen to each other. At the beginning, the pupils were able to play a few marches quite passably. With his ever-improving orchestra, the community of Morro Bay transformed into a "village of sound"¹ (p. 15). The many conflicts between people from different backgrounds subsided. "Music held us together, installed a sense of community, was a place to encounter. And it set a common goal: the next concert, toward which all of us worked together in

order to give the audience a unique experience." (p. 22)

The nature and effect of classical music

For Kent Nagano, the classical music of the last 1000 years is "a universe that expands as soon as you enter it" (p. ix). It contains "our entire Western tradition, the great concept of development up to the modern age and the canon with its works from the various epochs. The never-ending human creativity is lying in it, producing incessantly new musical works in this art". In music – as in all fine arts – there is an infinity; for one is never finished with a work of art, it is never fully realised, grasped, understood.

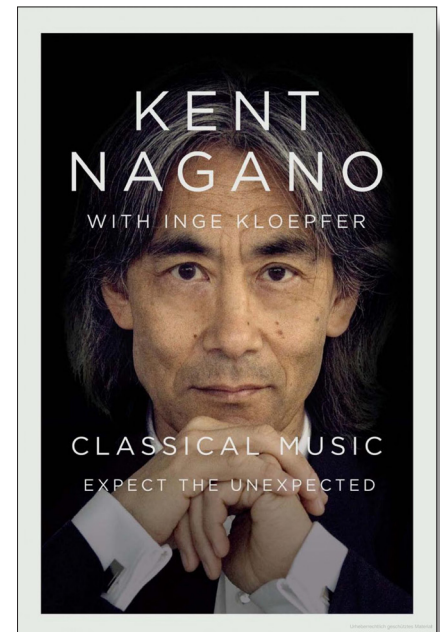
Playing music always goes hand in hand with human encounters, with a shared experience of all those involved, in classical music just as in folk music. Everyone involved – on the podium as well as in the auditorium – is deeply touched. Their social skills, their ability to concentrate, and their aptitude for life are strengthened. In this context, Nagano refers to *Friedrich Schiller* and his words about the "aesthetic education of the human being", because the "fine arts" are a "necessary condition for humanness".

Coping with extreme human situations through music

There are many examples of how people, with the help of music, are able to maintain courage in extreme situations and get through the emergency. Thus, Nagano also states that serious music or other artistic activities play an important role "when we are confronted with almost unbearable situations in life [...]. Why did prisoners in *Hitler's* concentration camps draw, sing, if they had the opportunity make music in their inhumane barracks?" (p. 24)

Or why, he asks, did French composer *Olivier Messiaen* (1908–1992) succeed in 1940 in composing the masterpiece *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (Quartet for the end of time) in the German prison camp, which he premiered there in 1941 together with prisoners of war?

We know of other examples of this phenomenon: during the Leningrad blockade (1941–1944), the population – including 400,000 children – was exposed to the violence of war, hunger, and extreme cold. Over one million civilians fell victim to it, with 90% of them starving to death. In 1942, the will of the inhabitants to resist was decisively strengthened by the fact that the 7th Symphony by *Dmitri Shostak-*



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ovich – composed especially for this purpose – could be heard in the whole city by use of loudspeakers. Even the German soldiers could not escape the effect of this music.

There is the impressive example of the Austrian pianist *Alice Herz-Sommer* (1903–2014) from Prague, who gave concerts in the ghetto of Theresienstadt. It is no coincidence that she chose the 24 etudes for piano by *Frederic Chopin*, because they all express the basic patterns of human feelings and are among the most important and virtuoso works of the piano musical literature. They present exceptionally high technical, psychological, and physical demands on the performer. For *Alice Herz-Sommer*, they were the perfect choice to help her deal with the despair caused by the deportation of her elderly mother to a concentration camp. Overcoming the artistic challenge gave her the strength to get through this difficult phase of her life, and this strength was conveyed to the inhabitants of the ghetto.

With music against a meaningless society

According to Nagano, highly developed societies are in a crisis of meaning and identity. This was shown, for example, by the financial crisis of 2008, followed by the global recession. It can be traced back to the fact that man had lost his grip on reality and fallen prey to utilitarianism. In order to be immune to such developments,

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The importance of the teacher

ds. The book "I shall not hate", which was discussed in *Current Concerns* No. 4 of 27 February 2024, is moving. In it, Palestinian doctor *Izzeldin Abueleish* talks about his childhood in a Palestinian refugee camp, that was not a real childhood, like the childhood of most Palestinians. When he was seven years old, as the eldest son, he was already expected to help the family by earning money. He talks about the misery he grew up in, the dirt and poverty, the constant threat of war, about his family, life in the Gaza Strip, his education and his work in an Israeli hospital. Three of his eight children were killed by Israeli tank shells. But despite all the suffering he has experienced, he remains adamant: "I shall not hate".

According to Izzeldin, hate is a disease that prevents healing and peace. "We need something like an immunization program that injects people with respect, dignity and equality, one that inoculates them against hatred", he writes (p 197). He is certain that the majority of Israelis and Palestinians want to live side by side. But they are determined by extremists on both sides, and given the misery in which people live, it is easy to incite them.

For Izzeldin, there is no difference between Palestinian and Israeli new-borns. He is convinced that the mothers who gave birth to the children can do a lot to find a common path.

The Palestinian mothers are heroes. They are the ones who make survival possible. They feed everyone before they take anything for themselves and never give up. "My mother", he writes, "was like a lioness when it came to protecting us, but she never relented on how much she demanded of us. She expected me to give as much as she did to the effort of improving our situation, and when I failed, I paid for it with beatings". (p 47)

Izzeldin started school at the age of six. He realised early on that a good education was the only way for him to escape the circumstances he was living in. He spared no effort to achieve this goal, but without teachers who opened doors for him and encouraged him again and again, he would not have reached his goal. He repeatedly returns to what school and teachers meant to him. He writes:

"That first year at school, I had three different teachers. One sat on a chair and passed out textbooks for us to read, and another gave us music lessons, which I liked a lot. The third was a man who acted as though he'd discovered a student in me. He paid so much attention to me that by the end of the year he had thoroughly convinced me, a first-grader that I could learn anything I wanted to learn and become anything I wanted to become. He was an extraordinary man.

The school was crowded. We sat three to a desk with sixty kids in every class, but I could hardly wait to get there every morning. I loved being at school, enjoyed the challenge learning new things, and when the teacher asked a question, my energy level shot up as I raised my hand to answer. New information was like a gift to me". (p 42)

He continues: "I was growing up, but today I look back and am thankful for getting through it at all, thankful for the teachers who daw a brighter future for me. I was lucky that so many of my teachers reached out to help me. They are the ones who boosted my energy and gave me the self-confidence to carry on. It was the teachers rather than my parents who opened doors for me and let me know there was a future apart from the grinding poverty in which we lived." (p 46)

When he looks back and thinks of his mother, he sees the woman who demanded that he succeed despite all the obstacles in his way. And he thinks of *Ahmed Al Halaby*, the first-grade teacher who made him feel like anything was possible. "I learned from both of them that I was on the right path, and I cherish and honour their memories". (p 68)

Abueleish, Izzeldin. *I shall not hate*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London, ISBN 978-1-4088-2209-8

"The unifying power of music"

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man must once again be thoughtful, value-oriented, disciplined, and capable of judgment in human and ethical aspects. This opportunity is given to him in the "confrontation with the arts, with music, literature, philosophy, painting" (p. 87). This path is best initiated with children who are the most receptive, especially in elementary school, where music lessons are increasingly neglected.

The masterpieces of great composers are complex. They have a lot of substance and depth, like life itself, and convey positive attitudes and values. *Beethoven's* nine symphonies, for example, stands for the confrontation with the great humanistic ideas.² Contrary to widespread opinion, classical music was not only created solely for educated enthusiasts, but for everyone.

If young people do not come to the music, then the music must come to them. This is Nagano's motto. So he came up with the idea of bringing music to the people, regardless of their age or country of origin. If people cannot come to the concert hall or to the opera house, he takes great works of classical music to them. In Montreal, where people are poor and lack-

ing education, Nagano founded the project "La musique aux enfants" (music for children), a music program for prekindergarten and kindergarten, which he attends regularly.

[In this program children receive a minimum of one lesson in rhythm and choral singing per week putting them in contact with music and musicians. (Editor's note)]

Nagano performed Beethoven's famous 5th Symphony in the local ice hockey stadium. The audience – including the ice hockey players of the *Montreal Canadiens* – thanked him with thunderous applause. He visited the Inuit in the Canadian Arctic to get to know their traditional music and to incorporate it in joint performances with Central European classical music. In Hamburg and Berlin, he included young musicians and singers in an opera production. At Potsdamer Platz, he repeatedly organised open-air classical music concerts with young people, which enchanted both actors and passers-by alike.

Kent Nagano will not run out of ideas when it comes to musical performances and venues. In 2015, he conducted the *Hornroh Modern Alphorn Quartet* in the Zurich Tonhalle with a contemporary piece by the Austrian composer *Georg Friedrich*

Haas. He will undoubtedly continue to organise many moving events, providing listening pleasure for his audiences and thus continue to make important contribution to the humanisation of society.

¹ Kent Nagano with Inge Kloepfer. "Classical Music – Expect the Unexpected", McGill Queens University Press, 2019

² Salathé, Nicole. Klassik gegen Krise: Stardirigent Kent Nagano verspricht Wunder (Classical music against the crisis: star conductor Kent Nagano promises miracles). <https://www.srf.ch/kultur/musik/musik-klassik-gegen-krise-stardirigent-kent-nagano-verspricht-wunder>

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Voices in favour of negotiations and peace in Ukraine

Pope Francis has spoken out again

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

More than 10 years after the start of the war in Ukraine, after hundreds of thousands of dead and injured, after major destructions, there are lighthouses of our time, lighthouses in the roaring seas of Western threats of escalation. Yes, they do exist: public voices, personalities swimming against the tide and wanting to end this war as quickly as possible through negotiation.

In an interview with US commentator *Tucker Carlson*, Russian President *Vladimir Putin* had declared his willingness to negotiate.

But the mainstream of Europe, which follows US policy, has ignored this. Even though on 14 March 2024 an important German politician, the leader of the SPD parliamentary group in the German Bundestag, *Ralf Mützenich*, said in parliament: “Isn’t it about time that we not only talked about how to wage a war, but also thought about how to freeze a war and end it later?”

What has the “EU peace project” come to?

And Ralf Mützenich is not the only “well-known person” voicing such ideas. In a recent article¹, former senior German UN diplomat *Michael von der Schulenburg* expressed his indignation at the failure of EU governments to initiate negotiations: “The deteriorating military situation in Ukraine and the United States increasing withdrawal from this war created a situation in which the EU is now pushed into the forefront in dealing with this problem.” Probably for the first time since the end of the Second World War, the EU would thus have the opportunity, independent of US geopolitical considerations, to take a lead in determining Europe’s fate in such a crucial issue as war and peace in Europe. And further: „One would hope that the EU that was once created as a European peace project, would use this opportunity to pursue a policy for finding a peaceful solution to ending the Ukraine war.” Troublingly, however, that this is not the case. Instead, ruling politicians in the EU and almost all its member states were getting caught up in “a policy of intensifying the war with senseless military posturing”.

Russia must not be allowed to win, they say – implying that the whole of Europe would be threatened after a Russian “victory” in Ukraine. This is a complete distortion of what Russia is primarily striving for (see also box) and has always openly



Carl Blechen – “Stormy sea with lighthouse”. (picture Wikimedia Commons)

declared: a denazification and demilitarisation of Ukraine, protection of the ethnic Russian population there, neutrality of the country and a European security order that also takes Russia’s security interests into account.

At the end of the article, it says: “The EU sets itself up for a massive failure if it continues its current path of seeking solutions through ever more weapon deliveries and sanctions. In its own interests, the European Union urgently needs a change of strategy that must aim at a pan-European peace and security order based on the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe and that must include Ukraine and Russia”.

Questioning the course of the war

Even in the mainstream media, there are voices here and there who question the current course towards war. For example, *Rüdiger Lüdeking* in a guest commentary² for the “*Süddeutsche Zeitung*” on 29 February 2024. Lüdeking has been a member of the German Foreign Service from 1980 to 2018 and was Germany’s Permanent Representative to the UN and the OSCE in Vienna. Regarding the EU, he writes: “The thread of political dialogue and the understanding for necessary compromises have been lost. Hardly anyone seems to have retained a sense of proportion and sober realities [...]” And he demands: “The diplomatic possibilities for ending the war or achieving a secure ceasefire must finally be explored and tackled.”

An interview with Pope Francis

This article will focus on Pope *Francis*, who commented on the issue of war and peace in an interview with Italian-language *Swiss Radio and Television (RSI)*³ regarding Ukraine and Palestine.

What did the Pope say?

In the beginning, he is asked: “In Ukraine there are those who call for the courage of surrender, of the white flag. But others say that this would legitimise the strongest. What do you think?” The Pope replies: “It is one interpretation, it’s true, but I think that the strongest one is the one who looks at the situation, thinks about the people and has the courage of the white flag, of negotiating. [...] The word ‘negotiate’ is a courageous word. When you see that you are defeated, when things are not going well, you have to have the courage to negotiate. [...] Negotiate in time, look for some country that can mediate. [...] Don’t be ashamed to negotiate before things get worse.” After a second question, he adds: “Negotiation never is surrender. It is the courage not to lead the country to suicide.”

What war means ...

The Pope illustrates what war means using the example of children: “So many innocent people cannot grow up, so many children have no future. Often, Ukrainian children come here to greet me; they come from the war. None of them smile; they don’t know how to smile. A child who doesn’t know how to smile seems to

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“Voices in favour of ...”

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have no future. Let’s please think about these things. War is always a defeat, a human defeat, not a geographical one [i.e., not a question of whether you win or lose land and where exactly the borders are].”

... and the powerful of the world

The Pope is asked: “How do the powerful of the world respond when you ask them for peace?” His answer: “Some say, sure, that is true, but we need to defend ourselves... And then you realise that they have an aircraft factory to bomb others. Defend us – no, destroy us. How does a war end? With death, destruction, children without parents. There is always a geographical [see above] or historical situation that triggers a war [...]. But behind a war is the arms industry, and that means money.” He adds: “The more power someone has, the greater the risk that they will not understand the mistakes they make. It is important to have a self-critical relationship with your own mistakes [...]. If a person feels secure because he has power [...] then he is tempted to forget that one day he will beg, beg for youth, beg for health, beg for life ... it’s a bit like the temptation of omnipotence. And this omnipotence is not white.” The Pope uses the word “white” to symbolise peace.

A long tradition of peace endeavours

In an interview with German-language *Swiss Radio and Television* (SRF)⁴, Lebanese-born *Antoine Abi Ghanem*, currently a priest in a Swiss parish, explained the

Pope’s position and brought it in a broader context. Abi Ghanem was the Vatican’s diplomat for disarmament and security issues at the UN. He is astonished at the widespread Western polemics against the Pope, even in Switzerland, a country usually standing for a culture of dialogue and compromise.

According to Abi Ghanem, the Pope has a long tradition of advocating dialogue and peace. The Pope is aware of the consequences of war. Everyone can see the thousands of dead and injured, the extent of destruction. “And in the end, there is only one way. How will this war end? Only through a negotiation. The sooner, the better.”

The Pope has given an ethical answer, an answer “that is in harmony with the long-standing position of the Holy See and the popes” of the last 150 years. The Pope’s answer is also not unrealistic: “The Pope lives in this world. He meets all the responsible people on this earth, he knows the realities and the details.” Antoine Abi Ghanem adds: “But I believe that politics must also be determined by ethics from time to time. Otherwise, we are in a cynical world. What does politics mean? Politics is [action] in the service of the common good. Not for the interests of individuals or groups and so on. The common good must always come first.”

No, the Pope will never say when and how and who will negotiate. But the Pope is calling on us to do the obvious: “This will save us so many victims, so much destruction, so much hatred and so on.” One cannot fight endlessly. “This is a step to-

wards peace. Peace – you can’t just say it will come by itself at some point. It will never come by itself. You have to be creative. You also must be humble sometimes. The small steps, the world will never become a paradise all at once. We must work for this peace every day.”

Peace and development

Later in the interview, he adds another reason why all the popes after the Second World War have spoken out in favour of peace and disarmament, quoting Pope *Paul VI*: “He said one word, the other term for peace is development. And that is the policy of the Holy See. In other words, what does peace really create? Political participation, human rights, justice, opportunities for children and young people, education, healthcare. All these components create peace much better than weapons.” Armament and the arms race, on the other hand, are a dead end that never ends in peace.

When asked again about the Pope’s critics, Antoine Abi Ghanem replies: “Of course, NATO does not have the same position as the Pope. And I can understand that. Those who want to sell weapons don’t have the same position as the Pope either. And those who have other political goals don’t have the same position as the Pope. And that’s why I don’t think we should be so naive.”

“Europeans also need the other cultures”

According to the interviewer, the Pope is also accused of being Argentinian and therefore having no sympathy for Europeans. The answer to this: “Why should everyone think like Europeans? That is the question, actually an important question. The question of universalism and universal values. And we need them. We have to think somehow universally. But that doesn’t mean thinking only in terms of one group of countries. Europeans also need other cultures. And we should also take something from other regions of the world. Europeans do what they do best, and so do the others. Thus, we get a universal idea of peace, of living together.”

“No imperial ambitions”

“The conventional wisdom in the West is that *Putin* started the war because he’s basically an imperialist or an expansionist. Specifically, he’s said to be interested in creating a greater Russia, which means he is determined to conquer all of Ukraine. And then he’s going to conquer other countries in Eastern Europe and create a new Russian Empire.

My argument is that this view is wrong; what Putin was doing when he attacked Ukraine was launching a preventive war. He did not have imperial ambitions. He was not committed to creating a greater Russia. His decision had everything to do with the fact that he viewed NATO expansion into Ukraine as an existential threat to Russia and he was determined to prevent that from happening.

So, I have a view that is directly at odds with the conventional wisdom in the West. You asked me, how would I show that I’m right and the conventional wisdom is wrong? The answer is sim-

ple. There is zero evidence to support the conventional wisdom. There is no evidence that Putin wanted to create a greater Russia. There is no evidence that he wanted to conquer all of Ukraine. And there is certainly no evidence he wanted to conquer other countries besides Ukraine.

On the other hand, there is an abundance of evidence that shows he was motivated by NATO expansion into Ukraine, or more generally, he was motivated by the West’s efforts to make Ukraine a Western bulwark on Russia’s border. He said on numerous occasions that this is unacceptable. I think all the available evidence shows that my position is correct, and the conventional wisdom is wrong.”

John Mearsheimer in an interview with the “Global Times” of 24 February 2024.

John Mearsheimer is a professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago and one of the most renowned representatives of the realist school of US foreign policy thinking.

¹ <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=112606> of 19 March 2024

² <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/meinung/ukraine-russland-genscher-nato-kommentar-luedeking-1.6407540> of 29 February 2024

³ The interview was done on 9 March 2024 but not published until 20 March and can be listened to and read in Italian at: <https://www.rsi.ch/info/mondo/Conflitto-a-Gaza-%E2%80%9C-Ucraina-%E2%80%9C-Cil-coraggio-della-bandiera-bianca%E2%80%9D--2091038.html>.

⁴ <https://www.srf.ch/audio/tagesgesprach/antoine-abi-ghanem-der-papst-und-die-weisse-flagge?id=12558317> of 19 March 2024. The spoken word has been slightly adapted to the written language.