

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*

“That is a world we cannot accept”

“The Memorial”: South Africa Submits Evidence of Israel Genocide to ICJ – a statement issued by the office of the South African presidency.

South Africa has filed its Memorial to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 28 October 2024, in its case on the Application of the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip* (South Africa v. Israel).

In accordance with the Rules of Court, the Memorial may not be made public. The filing of this memorial takes place at a time when Israel is intensifying the killing of civilians in Gaza and now seems intent to follow a similar path of destruction in Lebanon. The action taken by South Africa since December 2023, culminating in the filing of this Memorial has generated overwhelming national and international interest.

The Memorial – the name for the document recording the main case of South Africa against Israel – contains evidence which shows how the government of Israel has violated the genocide convention by promoting the destruction of Palestinians living in Gaza, physically killing them with an assortment of destructive weapons, depriving them access to humanitarian assistance, causing conditions of life which are aimed at their physical destruction and ignoring and defying several provisional measures of the *International Court of Justice*, and using starvation as a weapon of war and to further Israel’s aims to depopulate Gaza through mass death and forced displacement of Palestinians.

The evidence will show that undergirding Israel’s genocidal acts is the special intent to commit genocide, a failure by Israel to prevent incitement to genocide, to prevent genocide itself and its failure to punish those inciting and committing acts of genocide.

The evidence is detailed in over 750 pages of text, supported by exhibits and annexes of over 4,000 pages. South Africa’s Memorial is a reminder to the global community to remember the people of Palestine, to stand in solidarity with them and to stop the catastrophe. The devastation and suffering has been possible only because despite the ICJ and numerous UN bodies’ actions and interventions, Israel has failed to comply with its international obligations.



The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague during the proceedings of South Africa’s genocide lawsuit against Israel (picture <https://www.icj-cij.org/multimedia/203403>)

Last week, the world commemorated the signing of the Charter of the United Nations seventy-nine years ago. The UN was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. To live up to this aspiration, all nations must insist on compliance with the UN Charter and international law. The action taken by South Africa and joined by other states is primarily to stop a genocide in Palestine peacefully, through holding Israel accountable in the institutions set up for this very purpose by the United Nations.

Israel has been granted unprecedented impunity to breach international law and norms for as long as the UN Charter has been in existence. Israel’s continued shredding of international law has imperilled the institutions of global governance that were established to hold all states accountable .

As President *Cyril Ramaphosa* stated in his address to the UN General Assembly this year, “The South African story bears witness to the enduring role of the United Nations in global matters. In supporting our struggle, the UN affirmed the principles of the UN Charter – fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of every person, and the equal rights of nations, large and small”. President Ramaphosa emphasised that South Africa’s action through the ICJ was an attempt to ensure that the same global solidarity

that helped end Apartheid in South Africa should be mobilised to end the Apartheid that Palestinians are experiencing, including an end to the genocide of Palestinians.

The glaring genocide in Gaza is there for all who are not blinded by prejudice to see. South Africa expresses gratitude to the other nations that have filed Article 62 and 63 interventions to join the case that has been initiated at the ICJ.

We reiterate our appeal for an immediate cease-fire in Palestine, in Lebanon and entire region, and the start of a political process to ensure a just and lasting peace.

The Palestinian struggle against imperialism, Israeli Apartheid and settler colonialism is the daily reality of the Palestinian people. Since 1948, they have faced various forms of colonisation, often backed by historical colonial powers and, more recently, by states intent on shaping a world order in their interests. The global fight against settler colonialism persists in some parts of the world, including in occupied Palestine, both in Gaza and the West Bank.

The international community cannot stand idly by while innocent civilians – including women, children, hospital workers, humanitarian aid workers and journalists, are killed for simply being. That is a world we cannot accept.

What Trump's election means – and what it doesn't mean

by Guy Mettan, freelance journalist*



Guy Mettan
(picture ma)

Blindness until the very end! American and European media have persisted until the end in their denial of the people, their inability to perceive and report the expectations of the working classes, and therefore

their shameless bias in favour of *Kamala Harris*. And once again, as in 2016, they have got it shamefully wrong. Let's bet that they will learn nothing from this crushing defeat and that, as usual, they will keep on talking about the "fascism" of *Trump, Orban, Fico* and *Putin*, while praising the so-called defenders of democracy à la *von der Leyen, Macron*, or *Scholz*, who came to power by co-optation (*von der Leyen*) or remain in power against the opinion of 85 percent of their fellow citizens, according to their popularity ratings in the opinion polls (*Macron, Scholz*). Blindness until the very end!

In fact, Trump's victory is not a defeat, but an impressive victory for democracy. First, because this victory is fourfold and indisputable. Victory in the presidential election, victory in the Senate, victory in the House of Representatives, and victory in the popular vote by a margin of more than 5 million votes. The Democrats, having sabotaged Trump's first term of office by claiming false Russian interference,

which was denied by two special prosecutors, and then pushing the issue further with the riots of 6 January 2021, which were immediately presented as a coup d'état, now will have four years to ponder the causes of their defeat and the cost of manipulating public opinion, which no longer has any confidence in established media.

This time, it will be difficult to blame *Putin* and block the appointment of Republican cabinet ministers. America is once again at peace with itself – in theory, at least. The President-elect will be able to govern as he pleases – in theory. If the Democrats and the Deep State subverted Trump's first four years in the White House, at this early moment there is no reason to assume they will refrain from another such operation this time. We must wait and see. In the best of outcomes, Trump will have to take full responsibility for his decisions. All else being equal, at the end of his term, he will be judged by his actions and the competence of his team, not on what a majority of the Democratic opposition in the Senate has imposed on him.

Not a defeat for the neoconservative warmongers ...

Second, this victory signals – at last! – not the defeat of the neo-conservative camp and the warmongers, who have poisoned American policy for decades with their military interventionism, their invasions, and their incessant interference in the affairs of other states, but certainly a blow to the most vocal and aggressive of them. Those who organised the Maidan coup in Ukraine in 2014, the likes of *Victoria Nuland, Robert Kagan, John Bolton* and the worst of them all, *Antony Blinken*, a veritable warmonger disguised as a diplomat, will be getting what they deserve. Even if this highly influential clique will not magically disappear, as the nomination of *Marco Rubio* as secretary of state plainly indicates, its power to cause trouble will be greatly reduced. This is good news for democracy in the United States and beyond.

It will therefore be more and more difficult for the West to keep on claiming that Ukraine is a democracy when the mandates of its president and parliament expired last May and they are continuing to exercise power without any electoral legitimacy. Other justifications will have to be found to fuel the fiction of a "war of democracies against autocracies" in Russia and China.

Similarly, if we accept Trump's victory, we must also recognise the recent victory of the *Georgian Dream* party in Georgia, achieved with 54 percent of the vote despite the countless blackmail campaigns that preceded the elections. Allegations of electoral fraud, an old refrain put forward whenever the result of an election displeases the neoliberal, Atlanticist and interventionist elites, should be considered for what they really are – that is, an abhorrent attempt to push a country into chaos under false pretences by imposing a regime change contrary to the will of the people.

In this respect, it is regrettable that the manipulation of the last elections in Moldova was successful. It should be recalled that the tiny majority in favour of the country's accession to the European Union was achieved with the blatant interference of the European Union in Moldovan affairs. Since 2020, the E.U. has been heavily subsidising nongovernmental organisations close to the outgoing president, *Maia Sandu*. Ten days before the election, Ms von der Leyen hurried to Chisinau to promise 1.8 billion Euro in aid beginning in 2025. And that shouldn't be seen as interference!

Worse still, the final result in Moldova was reflected a long-prepared distortion with regard to the diaspora vote in favour of the pro-European camp and the incumbent president. For example, 234 polling stations were made available to the 500,000 Moldovan citizens of the E.U., while only 2 – and I mean 2! – polling stations were opened for the hundreds of thousands of Moldovans living in Russia, a territory three times the size of Europe! Several Italian polling stations didn't register any voters, due to a lack of residents, while in Russia, voters had to travel thousands of kilometres to get to one of the two polling stations open, and some were unable to vote due to a shortage of ballot papers. Of course, of course, the chorus of European media kept denouncing Russian interference while remaining silent about this gross manipulation of the ballot. The same applied to the second round of the presidential election, wherein the majority of Moldovans in Moldova voting against the incumbent president, before European Moldovans overturned the result to the dismay of the Moldovan diaspora in Russia, who were once again prevented from taking part in the vote.

* *Guy Mettan* is a journalist and member of the Grand Council of the Canton of Geneva, which he chaired in 2010. He worked for "Journal de Genève", *Le Temps stratégique*, *Bilan*, and "Le Nouveau Quotidien", and later as director and editor-in-chief of "Tribune de Genève". In 1996, he founded the *Swiss Press Club*, of which he was president and later director from 1998 to 2019.

"That is a world ..."

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South Africa's case at the *International Court of Justice* is a comprehensive presentation of the overwhelming evidence of genocide in Gaza.

The Government wishes to thank its legal team for their dedication, skill and commitment.

Source: <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/south-africa-delivers-evidence-israel-genocide-icj> of 28 October 2024

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Israel's expulsion of UNRWA in violation of international law

Statement by Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of UNRWA
at the High-Level Meeting of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution

Your Royal Highness, Prince *Faisal Ben Farhan*

Excellencies,

The vote by the Knesset against UNRWA this week is outrageous and sets a dangerous precedent.

It is the latest in an ongoing campaign to discredit UNRWA and delegitimize its role in providing human-development and assistance to Palestine Refugees.

Israeli government officials have openly called for dismantling UNRWA. They made it an objective of the war in Gaza, in defiance of the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and of the *International Court of Justice*, including with a plan to replace UNRWA in East Jerusalem with settlements.

These bills will only deepen the suffering of Palestinians.

These bills are not only against UNRWA; they are also against the Palestinians and their aspirations.

We are witnessing a deliberate attempt to unilaterally shift the long-established parameters for a peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The implications for regional stability and international peace and security are immense.

For decades, Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory have endured the systematic denial of basic rights, segregation, a crippling blockade on Gaza, aggressive settlement expansion in the West Bank, and repeated cycles of conflict.

Over the past year, the efforts to end the possibility of Palestinian statehood have gained terrible momentum.

And with that, the prospects for a two-State solution have gradually receded.

Gaza has been decimated.

Over forty-three thousand people are reported killed, most of them women and children.

Almost the entire population has been displaced multiple times.

Two million people have been trapped in a living hell for more than 12 months.

Most of them are now squeezed into 10 percent of the Gaza Strip, in intolerable living conditions.

Meanwhile, in North Gaza, a hundred thousand people are trapped in a complete siege, waiting for death by either an air-strike or starvation.

Across Gaza, 660,000 children are out of school, living in the rubble.

Many of them are alone, without any surviving family.

They are traumatized and deeply vulnerable to exploitation, including recruitment by criminal gangs and armed groups.

Meanwhile, the occupied West Bank is in the grip of escalating conflict.

Settler violence and military incursions by the Israeli Security Forces are a daily reality.

Public infrastructure is destroyed systematically during military operations, inflicting collective punishment on Palestinians.

The economy is on the verge of collapse, and despair is growing.

Illegal settlement activity continues in defiance of the rulings of the *International Court of Justice*.

What is happening in Gaza and the West Bank is taking us further away from the prospect of peace, co-existence and self-determination.

Instead, it is leading us down a path that will bring endless war and misery to Israelis and Palestinians for generations to come.

Excellencies,

For 75 years, UNRWA has been a beacon of hope for Palestine Refugees.

In anticipation of a just and lasting political solution, UNRWA has worked to give Palestine Refugees a life of dignity premised on access to basic rights, such as education and healthcare.

We have educated generations of students, many of whom have achieved remarkable success in the region and around the world.

Countless alumni have told me about the pivotal role that UNRWA education has played in their lives.

An education that champions human rights and gender equality, and promotes tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.

You know how highly Palestinians value education – the only asset from which they have not been dispossessed.

We are now taking the risk of scarifying an entire generation of children across Gaza and in the West Bank.

For example, failing to bring back 600,000 children to a relatively safe learning environment is to sacrifice an entire generation and will sow the seeds for future hatred and extremism.

Excellencies,

In times of war, UNRWA has been able to rapidly transform into a humanitarian machine.

We have seen this in Gaza over the past year.

Our teachers became shelter managers overnight.

Our clinics were transformed into emergency rooms amid a near-total collapse of hospitals.

Most recently, we played a critical role in the successful first phase of an emergency polio vaccination campaign.

For the past year, UNRWA has been the last remaining lifeline for the population of Gaza.

Despite this, and perhaps because of it, we have paid a heavy price.

At least 237 of our colleagues have been killed, many with their families.

Nearly 200 of our buildings have been damaged or destroyed, killing hundreds of displaced people seeking UN protection.

Our clearly marked aid convoys have been hit and looted by armed actors.

Restrictions on the entry of lifesaving supplies into Gaza mean that aid trucks languish at the border, while people starve a few kilometers away.

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"What Trump's election means ..."

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... and no end to the U.S. pursuit of hegemony

While Trump's clear victory is to be welcomed, there is no room for complacency. As we mentioned in a previous paper, the future will not be rosy. Even as it becomes more isolationist, the United States will not relinquish its hegemony or its desire to im-

pose its leadership on the rest of the world. The arms lobby and the liberal-interventionists are very likely to continue their efforts to counter those anti-war impulses that emerge in the second Trump presidency. In Palestine, with Iran, with China, with the Europeans, too, tensions are likely to escalate. Bombs, missiles, and war crimes will continue to rain down on Palestinian, Lebanese, Syrian, and perhaps Iranian ci-

vilians. The war in Ukraine may subside, but tensions in the South China Sea could well escalate. What is gained on one side may be lost on the other. There are few illusions in this regard.

But in the meantime, let us savour the democratic respite that the Americans have granted themselves and, perhaps, the rest of the world.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

Putin has congratulated Donald Trump on winning the US election

At a meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club in the southern Russian city of Sochi on Thursday, Putin said he “would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his election as president of the United States of America”. Putin noted that Trump had expressed a desire to end the Ukraine crisis and that such a statement “deserves attention at least”. The Russian president then paid tribute to Trump’s behaviour the moment of an attempt on his life in Pennsylvania in the summer of this year, when then-candidate Trump stood up and raised his fist after a bullet grazed his ear, “left an impression on me. He turned out to be a brave man,”, Putin said. “People show who they are in extraordinary circumstances. This is where a person reveals himself. And he showed himself, in my opinion, in a very correct manner, courageously. Like a man.” Hours earlier, the Kremlin had denied reports that Putin had

sent a private message of congratulations to Trump. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov firmly denied this and told reporters that the USA was “an unfriendly country that is directly and indirectly involved in a war against our state”. However, Putin said he was open to a call from Trump and that “it would not be shameful for me to call him”.

Source: *rt deutsch* of 7 November 2024

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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km. The very first sentence of the United Nations Charter of 26 June 1945 states: “We, the peoples of the United Nations – determined, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” This was not only tied to the time, but expresses the timeless and most fervent wish of mankind: to live together in peace and work together for a more just world. Russian President Putin knows this too. And if we recognise the Western demonisation of

this great statesman for what it is, then we can assume that this is also his own most fervent wish. In the past 20-plus years of government, he has been forced several times to use military means as a last resort. This does not change Putin’s desire for peace. When a door opens to end a war, he seizes every opportunity to do so. That is exactly how I judge his public reaction to the election of the new US President Trump. It remains to be seen whether and how the door will be opened by the upcoming US administration. The key question will be whether this door leads to a just peace that takes Russia’s security interests into account on an equal footing – and is not a new US attempt to assert hegemonic interests. In today’s world, this is a Herculean task. Statesmen who will now tackle this task are urgently needed. To express the will for peace clearly and publicly, that is our task as citizens – and the best support for peace. •

“Israel’s expulsion of UNRWA ...”

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Excellencies,

The latest bills passed at the Knesset seek to end contact with the Israeli Authorities, crippling our operations in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The entire humanitarian response in Gaza, which relies on UNRWA’s infrastructure, is at stake.

The failure to push back against attempts to intimidate and undermine the United Nations has set a dangerous precedent.

Look no further than Lebanon and the despicable attacks on UNIFIL.

Let us be clear:

- First, the attacks on UNRWA are attacks against the broader rule-based system inherited from World War 2 and will weaken our global multilateral system.
- Second, the attacks are politically motivated by the goal of eliminating the status of “Palestine Refugees”. But the refugee status of Palestine Refugees exists independently of UNRWA’s services. The refugees will keep that status until a political solution is at hand.
- And third, the future of Palestine Refugees cannot be decided outside of a political framework. If a UN agency with a General Assembly mandate can collapse because one UN member state is defying the international rules-based order, then what remains standing?

Excellencies,

I am encouraged by the international commitment to a political solution demonstrated by this conference.

I sincerely thank His Highness the Foreign Minister for convening it, and for giving UNRWA a prominent platform.

The two-state solution is the internationally agreed framework.

UNRWA is an intrinsic part of a successful and fair transition.

The Agency’s most striking advantage is in education and primary healthcare.

In the absence of a full-fledged state, only UNRWA can fulfil the learning and healthcare needs of Palestine Refugees.

I would like to conclude with three requests:

First, I urge you to use all the political, diplomatic and legal tools at your disposal to reject Israel’s attempts to dismantle UNRWA, sideline the United Nations, and undermine multilateralism. This means that the bills need to be rescinded, or their application be put on hold.

Second, I ask you to safeguard UNRWA’s role today and during the inevitably long and painful transition between a ceasefire and the “day after”.

And for this, we will need your political and financial support.

Finally, through the platform of this Global Alliance, I urge you to determine a viable political path towards a two-state solution, which will finally resolve the plight of Palestine Refugees.

Until then, I urge you to ensure UNRWA continues its indispensable role towards Palestine Refugees.

Thank you. •

Source: <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/statement-philippe-lazarini-commissioner-general-unrwa-high-level-meeting> of 30 October 2024

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Israel and its neighbourhood

A dialogue of Patrick Lawrence with Ambassador Chas Freeman

pl. Why have West Asian nations that long ago pledged their support to the Palestinian cause remained so silent amid Israel's terrorising assaults on Gaza, the West Bank, and now Lebanon? Where have the Russians and Chinese been? Is this not the time for a display of solidarity among non-Western nations? Can we not look to them as a counter to the inexcusable support the US and its clients extend to the Zionist regime? What can we expect, looking forward, of the BRICS whose members [there are now 10, with 13 "partner" nations now added] just concluded a summit in Kazan?

These are my questions a year on from the events of 7 October 2023. On the assumption others may ask them, too, I put these matters to Chas Freeman, the distinguished former diplomat. Who better?

Andrew Bacevich, "the dissident colonel," as I call him, once told me – this was during the 2016 political campaigns – he thought Freeman ought to be the next secretary of state. He is, you will not be surprised to learn, the editor of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* article on "diplomacy".

Our extended exchange via email follows.

Patrick Lawrence: A German newspaper recently published an interview with the Egyptian foreign minister, Sameh Shoukry, who expressed his profound frustration with the Americans as Israel continues its assault in Gaza – and now the West Bank and Lebanon. You can't work with the Americans he complained in so many words. They say one thing, they rarely mean it, and typically do something else altogether.

It prompts my first question in the context of the enlarging crisis in West Asia, please comment on the diplomatic positions of America's allies in the region. What, generally, is going through their minds? Why haven't they reacted more vigorously to the Israeli assault? Are they simply "bought," in one or another way? Or is there more to it?

No more 'diplomatic allies'

Chas Freeman: The United States no longer has any "diplomatic allies" in the region. Popular anger at American support for the Israeli effort to rid Palestine of its Arab population and expand into Gaza and Lebanon makes alignment with Washington too politically costly for Arab rulers to risk.

Israel's depravity has ended any prospect of normalised relations by Arab states with it. Those that have normalised relations with Israel are now under popular

Chas Freeman

Chas Freeman (*1943) is a former Deputy Secretary of Defence, ambassador to Saudi Arabia, deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, chargé d'affaires in Bangkok and Beijing, and director of the Office of Chinese Affairs at the US State Department. He was the principal American interpreter during the late President Nixon's 1972 opening of US relations with China. In addition to his diplomatic experience in the Middle East, Africa, East Asia and Europe, he also served in India. Freeman is the author of five books and numerous articles on statecraft and



the editor of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* article on "diplomacy". (For more see: <https://chasfreeman.net/biography/>)

pressure to suspend or reverse it. More importantly, the Gulf Arabs have declared that they will be neutral in any conflict between Iran, Israel, and the United States. Israel's genocide in Gaza has created a state of war between it and Yemen and fostered a rapprochement between previously estranged Egypt and Turkey.

Hamas – not on religious grounds but in support of Palestinian self-determination.

Can you talk about some specific nations in this context? Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince, asserted just recently there can be no question of a Riyadh–Tel Aviv rapproche-

"The hateful things Israel is doing have made it the most hated society on the planet. *Netanyahu* is seen as the moral equivalent of *Adolf Hitler* and Israel is a pariah everywhere outside the West. No one other than a dwindling band of American politicians now wants to be seen in Israel's or *Netanyahu's* company." (*Chas Freeman*)

Hamis and PLO

It has been said that neighbouring nations had more affinity with the PLO in times past than with Hamas now because the former was a secular organisation, the latter not. Is this accurate, and if so, does the distinction matter now?

Hamas is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist democratic movement. It came to power in Palestine by winning an election in 2006. Hamas's leaders take the position that Arab societies should be governed by those with support at the ballot box rather than by princes, generals, dictators, or thugs. Arab rulers who fall into these authoritarian categories naturally find this position threatening.

Religion is not a major factor in Arab and Muslim states' relations with Hamas. Like Arab rulers, Hamas is Sunni Muslim. The differences of Arab rulers with Hamas are far less than they were with the atheist leadership of the PLO. Iran, which is Shi'a, has been the main supporter of

ment until the Palestinians have a state with East Jerusalem as its capital. What is behind this? Where are the Emirates, Qatar in particular, on the Israel–Palestine question?

The Gulf Arab states all affirm that Palestinians are entitled to self-determination and support a two-state division of Palestine. They face mounting criticism from their publics for having done nothing concrete to advance this goal. The last poll of Saudi opinion on normalisation with Israel that I saw showed 94 percent opposed to it. Most now argue that those Arab states that have established diplomatic relations with Israel should now break them.

The status of Jerusalem is an important issue for the world's two billion Muslims. The intrusions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the calls of fanatic members of the Israeli cabinet for its Judaisation are deeply offensive to Arab Muslims and Christians alike.

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The walkout at the UN

I was very pleased, I admit even delighted, to see a video of the en masse walkout at the UN General Assembly when Netanyahu took the podium at the General Assembly on 27 September. I take this to be a moment of some importance, and so I have a few questions for you about it. How did you read that occasion and what was your reaction to it?

The hateful things Israel is doing have made it the most hated society on the planet. Netanyahu is seen as the moral equivalent of Adolf Hitler and Israel is a pariah everywhere outside the West. No one other than a dwindling band of American politicians now wants to be seen in Israel's or Netanyahu's company. The walkout was a virtual inevitability, only slightly offset by Netanyahu's importation of Israeli fans of his to applaud his many inversions of truth and falsehood.

I wonder, actually, who was in that group. Was it a broad gathering of non-Western powers that walked out? Almost the entire membership of the new "global majority" – the so-called "Global South" – seems to have walked out, leaving only an isolated contingent from the West behind.

Also, UN ambassadors do not generally act without the authorisation of their ministries. Can we assume this was the case with the walkout? It was understood in advance what would be done, perhaps with a measure of coordination? And does this tell us something?

You are probably correct that there was prior consultation with capitals, but Israel is now so thoroughly despised internationally that this would hardly have been necessary. Anti-Zionism has become good politics almost everywhere outside the West.

The West Asian nations

Can you talk about West Asian nations that are neither allies nor clients of the Americans? Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey: How have they responded to the Gaza crisis – or not – and how do you see them reacting as it expands?

Israel's actions in Gaza, Syria, Yemen, and now Lebanon, and its efforts to produce a widening regional war in West Asia, have accomplished the previously impossible. They have united Shi'a with Sunni and consolidated the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement. The greater Israeli cruelty to its captive Arab populations and neighbours, the stronger the coalition against it becomes. [The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic reopened ties, after a lengthy breach, following talks sponsored by the Chinese in March 2023.]

The big question for a lot of people is why there has been so little effective reaction, even diplomatically, to Israel's barbaric conduct since the events of 7 October.

The Arab League has issued some strong statements, but these have not come to much. As Israel's savagery became evident last autumn, a few Latin American nations withdrew their ambassadors or cut relations altogether. The South Africans have gone the legal route, very honorably. But other than this, there's not much going on.

Why the silence, the timidity, whatever you are inclined to call it? It seems a case of "the whole world watching" but the whole world not doing anything. Does this come down to the question of American power?

Why the silence and the timidity?

It is proof, I believe, that, as the saying has it, no one wants to get into a pissing contest with a skunk. That is especially the case when the skunk is backed by a country as powerful and prone to coercive actions as the United States. The supporters of Zionism have a well-deserved reputation for the vicious slander of their critics and determination to ostracise them. This intimidates most people and governments.

Tactically, with a few honorable exceptions, countries have opted to wring their hands while sitting on them. But the strategic (i.e., the long-run) implications of Israel's self-delegitimation will be far-reaching. International law and the global majority may have temporarily been set aside by risk-averse governments, but tolerance of Israel by their publics as a practitioner of evil is clearly wearing ever thinner.

There is a widening gap between entrenched political elites and outraged mass opinion that is destabilising politics in democratic and undemocratic societies alike. Demands for the re-democratisation of Western societies, as well as punishment of Israel, are becoming ever louder. The "BDS" movement – boycott, disinvest, and sanction – is gaining ground, much as it eventually did against the far milder form of apartheid earlier condoned by the West in South Africa.

The Europeans

Turning to the Europeans, especially the British, French, and Germans: Do we have to conclude these nations are simply vassal states, or is there more complexity to their positions?

Each is different. The Germans are consumed with guilt for their conduct of the antisemitic Holocaust and overcompensate by conferring immunity on Israel, which came into being as a result of that European atrocity. The British and French, like the United States, have politics that are policed by very effective Zionist lobbies and media that self-censor in

favor of Israel. Ironically, some European countries with fascist, antisemitic pasts and current affinities for xenophobic authoritarianism see contemporary Israeli political culture as similar in some respects to their own. And Islamophobia is a rising factor in European Christendom.

BRICS, China and South Africa

We come to the big non-Western powers: The Russians, the Chinese, the Indians, if you want to include them the Brazilians. I would have expected more of them by now. The Chinese convened that meeting of various Palestinian factions – this shortly before Ismail Haniyeh's assassination on 31 July. It struck me as a typical gesture of the nation purporting to live by Zhou Enlai's Five principles.

What are your thoughts on how the major non-Western powers have so far responded to the West Asia crisis?

These countries are engaged in building an alternative to the increasingly impotent United Nations structure and its side-lined regulatory agencies, like the WTO. The BRICS group began as a protest movement against American and G-7 global primacy by major non-Western powers. It is now developing the potential to convene ad hoc assemblies that can make rules outside the UN framework, pending the reform and reorganisation of the UN to restore its effectiveness.

Chinese efforts at peace-making in West Asia and Eastern Europe have the backing of its fellow members of BRICS. It is significant that South Africa – the "S" in BRICS – brought the cases against Israeli genocide in both the *International Court of Justice* and the *International Criminal Court*. We are seeing the gradual growth of willingness on the part of decolonised countries to hold the West to its hypocritically professed ideals.

What do you see out front on the diplomatic side? One is forced to wonder, the Israelis having opened a new front in Lebanon and no sign the Western powers will respond any differently, whether we are looking at what I've taken to calling limitless impunity, impunity with no end. What influence, what impact, can other nations have on the West Asia crisis at this point?

If you would, please consider the non-West in particular. Can we expect anything more of these nations than we've so far seen? The question is especially important, it seems to me, because it bears on the larger matter of "a new world order" and just what any such notion may or may not eventually mean.

The 'rise of the rest' is a reality

I do see the world beyond the West becoming more insistent on respect for glob-

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“Israel and its neighbourhood”

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al norms by the West as it becomes more powerful and prosperous. The “rise of the rest,” as *Fareed Zakaria* put it, is a reality. The global centre of gravity has left the Euro-Atlantic region.

Middle-ranking powers are becoming more independent and assertive in defence of their own interests and less deferential to the club of imperialist powers that makes up the G-7. And, while the politics of formerly colonised countries are often dominated by the tremors of post-colonial hangovers, their demands, like their struggles for independence, have been inspired by ideas they absorbed from the West.

For the most part, they seek to affirm rather than dispense with the global norms enacted in the period of Western dominance. Thus, they do not seek to overthrow the inherited order but to restore compliance with its ideals. The US perception that they are “revisionist” has a basis, but US antagonism to their demands is founded on a desire to retain a hegemonic role in the global political economy and the ability to use force to override the very norms Americans helped compose and still claim to support.

The political impotence of the UN

Just one more question in this line. There is renewed talk now of fundamental reform at the UN, and, while this is hardly a new topic, the discourse seems more serious now – more promising. You had a plain and simple demonstration of one big problem at the General Assembly this past week: The G.A. can recommend, but all executive authority lies with the five Security Council powers. This, a structural flaw if you like, goes back to the UN’s founding.

Richard Falk and Hans-Christof von Sponeck, two authoritative figures with long experience as senior UN officials, just published “Liberating the United Nations: Realism with Hope” (Stanford). I count this an important book.

Can you think out loud about the spreading crisis in West Asia and what might be done about it in the context of this new movement for UN reform?

A bit of diplomatic imagination is much needed. There is nothing in international law that would prevent the ad hoc gathering of like-minded countries to concert policies and practices without regard to the United Nations. The UN is demonstrating a level of political impotence that resembles that of the League of Nations in the face of fascist actions in the 1930s in China, Ethiopia, and Central Europe. We must hope that the reform or replacement of the UN will not require a world war, which is what it took to replace the League with a new

“Chinese efforts at peace-making in West Asia and Eastern Europe have the backing of its fellow members of BRICS. It is significant that South Africa – the ‘S’ in BRICS – brought the cases against Israeli genocide in both the *International Court of Justice* and the *International Criminal Court*. We are seeing the gradual growth of willingness on the part of decolonised countries to hold the West to its hypocritically professed ideals.” (*Chas Freeman*)

and – for a time – more effective organisation.

As I suggested, the BRICS seems to be developing into an institution that might give birth to new and more just systems of global governance. But whether it does or not, the need to focus on shared objectives and devise collective measures to pursue them is pressing. Falk and von Sponeck are onto something important.

As it happens, the BRICS just concluded a summit in Kazan, along the Volga in southwestern Russia. I found the timing suggestive, if only vaguely, of a world order to come as it prepares to replace a declining order. The Western press coverage, was, of course, almost farcically resentful, and I always read this kind of thing as a measure of the West’s insecurities. Do you have a read on the summit and its significance?

The big news that was supposed to come out of the Kazan gathering – so I thought, anyway – was a formal announcement of a strategic partnership, maybe even an alliance, between Russia and the Islamic Republic. This would have huge implications for the West Asia crisis. But I didn’t see anything on the Moscow–Tehran relationship. Do you have a thought on this?

The BRICS – instead of military deterrence, diplomatic dialogue and cooperation

Those with militarised foreign policies not surprisingly think of the BRICS as a “bloc” like the G-7 or a potential alliance like NATO, but it is neither. It is an alternative to Western domination of international institutions and rulemaking, but it is a forum, like the United Nations, not an anti-Western coalition. Treating it as anti-Western could, however, provoke it to become anti-Western.

If Russia and Iran wanted to formalise their defence relationship, the BRICS meeting at Kazan would have provided a place to do so, but the timing was not opportune, given the uncertainties created by Israel’s threats to attack Iran to restore escalation dominance and thus achieve the regional hegemony to which it aspires. Russia does not need a formal alliance to

be able to help Iran or others in the region to defend themselves against Israeli aggression. It will do so to the extent this serves Russian interests, as it has in Syria. Iran will continue to sell drones and transfer technology to Russia in return.

One important difference between the fading world order post–Cold War and the new international system toward which we are transitioning is the diminished role of alliances and the return of classic diplomacy. The emerging system is one dominated by *ententes* (limited partnerships for limited purposes) based on common interests, some of which may be transient, rather than by alliances embodying shared values as well as interests.

All five of the original BRICS member states are nonaligned and regard “alliances” as liabilities rather than unalloyed strategic assets. They are prepared to defend their own interests, which they privilege above those of other nations. They will agree to help others defend themselves when contingencies make this expedient but not otherwise.

The reasoning behind this view is straightforward. Commitments to defend other sovereign states subject those who make them to the risk of becoming embroiled in fights that are not their own to advance interests they may not share. *George Washington* understood this well, which is why he counselled Americans to avoid entangling alliances as well as passionate attachments to other nations. Our current leadership does not understand the wisdom of such a self-interested and flexible approach to foreign affairs. It seems incapable of realising that the BRICS member states are prioritising diplomatic dialogue and cooperation over military deterrence. BRICS members seek to safeguard their sovereignty not just by freeing themselves from Western hegemony but by enhancing cooperation among each other based on give and take that serves common interests. •

¹ “Scores of diplomats walk out in protest of Netanyahu’s speech ...” *Middle East Eye* of 29 September 2024

The BRICS summit should mark the end of neocon delusions

by Jeffrey D. Sachs



Jeffrey Sachs
(picture ma)

Simply put, the majority of the world does not want or accept US hegemony, and is prepared to face it down rather than submit to its dictates.

The recent BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia should mark

the end of the Neocon delusions encapsulated in the subtitle of Zbigniew Brzezinski's 1997 book, "The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives". Since the 1990s, the goal of American foreign policy has been "primacy," aka global hegemony. The US methods of choice have been wars, regime change operations, and unilateral coercive measures (economic sanctions). Kazan brought together 35 countries with more than half the world population that reject the US bullying and that are not cowed by US claims of hegemony.

In the Kazan Declaration, the countries underscored "the emergence of new centres of power, policy decision-making and economic growth, which can pave the way for a more equitable, just, democratic and balanced multipolar world order." They emphasised "the need to adapt the current architecture of international relations to better reflect the contemporary realities," while declaring their "commitment to multilateralism and upholding the international law, including the Purposes and Principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (UN) as its indispensable cornerstone." They took particular aim at the sanctions imposed by the US and its allies, holding that "Such measures undermine the UN Charter, the multilateral trading system, the sustainable development and environmental agreements."

Time has run out on the neocon delusions, and the US wars of choice.

The neocon quest for global hegemony has deep historical roots in America's belief in its exceptionalism. In 1630, *John Winthrop* invoked the Gospels in describing the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a "City on the Hill," declaring grandiosely that "The eyes of all people are upon us." In the 19th century, America was guided by "Manifest Destiny", to conquer North America by displacing or exterminating the native peoples. In the course of World War II, Americans embraced the idea of the "American Century," that after the war the US would lead the world.

"American strategists should heed the ultimately positive message coming from Kazan. Not only has the neocon quest for global hegemony failed, it has been a costly disaster for the US and the world, leading to bloody and pointless wars, economic shocks, mass displacements of populations, and rising threats of nuclear confrontation. A more inclusive and equitable multipolar world order offers a promising path out of the current morass, one that can benefit the US and its allies as well as the nations that met in Kazan."

The US delusions of grandeur were supercharged with the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. With America's Cold War nemesis gone, the ascendant American neoconservatives conceived of a new world order in which the US was the sole superpower and the policeman of the world. Their foreign policy instruments of choice were wars and regime-change operations to overthrow governments they disliked.

Following 9/11, the neocons planned to overthrow seven governments in the Islamic world, starting with Iraq, and then moving on to Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Iran. According to *Wesley Clark*, former Supreme Commander of NATO, the neocons expected the US to prevail in these wars in 5 years. Yet now, more than 20 years on, the neocon-instigated wars continue while the US has achieved absolutely none of its hegemonic objectives.

The neocons reasoned back in the 1990s that no country or group of countries would ever dare to stand up to US power. Brzezinski, for example, argued in "The Grand Chessboard" that Russia would have no choice but to submit to the US-led expansion of NATO and the geopolitical dictates of the US and Europe, since there was no realistic prospect of Russia successfully forming an anti-hegemonic coalition with China, Iran and others. As Brzezinski put it:

"Russia's only real geostrategic option – the option that could give Russia a realistic international role and also maximise the opportunity of transforming and socially modernising itself – is Europe. And not just any Europe, but *the transatlantic Europe of the enlarging EU and NATO.*" (emphasis added, Kindle edition, p. 118)

Brzezinski was decisively wrong, and his misjudgement helped to lead to the disaster of the war in Ukraine. Russia did not simply succumb to the US plan to expand NATO to Ukraine, as Brzezinski assumed it would. Russia said a firm no, and was prepared to wage war to stop the US plans. As a result of the neocon miscalculations vis-à-vis Ukraine, Russia is now prevailing on the battlefield, and hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians are dead.

Nor – and this is the plain message from Kazan – did US sanctions and diplomatic pressures isolate Russia in the least. In response to pervasive US bullying, an anti-hegemonic counterweight has emerged. Simply put, the majority of the world does not want or accept US hegemony, and is prepared to face it down rather than submit to its dictates. Nor does the US anymore possess the economic, financial, or military power to enforce its will, if it ever did.

The countries that assembled in Kazan represent a clear majority of the world's population. The nine BRICS members (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa as the original five, plus Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates), in addition to the delegations of 27 aspiring members, constitute 57 per cent of the world's population and 47 per cent of the world's output (measured at purchasing-power adjusted prices). The US, by contrast, constitutes 4.1 per cent of the world population and 15 per cent of world output. Add in the US allies, and the population share of the US-led alliance is around 15 per cent of the global population.

The BRICS will gain in relative economic weight, technological prowess, and

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Russia and the West: A thousand years of war

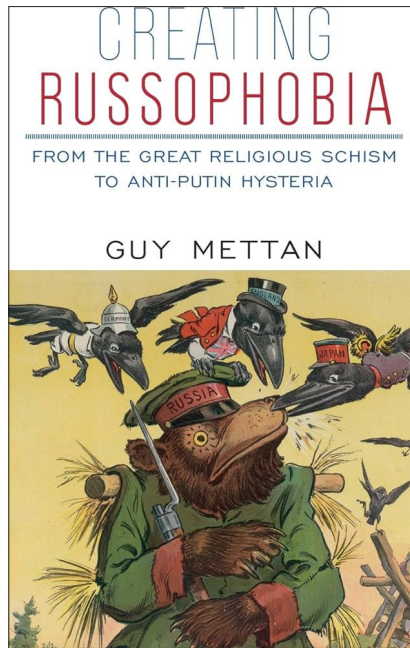
Russophobia from Charlemagne to the Ukraine crisis

by Urs Graf

The Geneva politician and journalist Guy Mettan does not follow the mainstream. He describes the events of our time with prudent objectivity and without distancing himself from people.

His books are still not published in German language. There is an English translation of the first edition of the book "Creating Russophobia: From the Great Religious Schism to Anti-Putin Hysteria" (2017, Clarity press). The following text is not a translation, but rather a reproduction of the new edition of the French book according to the reader's (Urs Graf) understanding. His own comments are marked in square brackets.

In my presentation of Guy Mettan's book the analogy (*contre-mythe*) of the fairy tale of Snow White is missing: The beautiful Russia, who is always in danger of being fatally tricked by her jealous mother (Europe).



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In his 2023 reissued book "Russie-Occident. Une guerre de mille ans. La russophobie de Charlemagne à la crise ukrainienne" Guy Mettan explores the question of how it was possible that in our western European countries an anti-Russian sentiment so quickly could get out of hand, right up to the willingness to marginalise everything Russian. This went so far that in France the tomb inscription of Queen Anne de Kiev, a granddaughter of King Vladimir, who married French King Henri I in 1051 (p. 116), was changed in 1991 at the instigation of the Ukrainian ambassador in Paris. From then on, "Anna, Reine de France, princesse de Russie"

was to become "... princesse d'Ukraine" (p. 242), even though that name for the borderland did not exist at that time.

"Divide and rule"

Mettan's journey through the chequered Russian-European history makes it abundantly clear that on the basis of the UN Charter of 1945, by respecting the dignity and equality of all people and peoples, many things would have taken – and could – a very different course than the disastrous one that is now being initiated. He shows that the current hostility to-

"The BRICS summit ..."

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military strength in the years ahead. The combined GDP of the BRICS countries is growing at around 5 per cent per annum, while the combined GDP of the US and its allies in Europe and the Asia-Pacific is growing at around 2 per cent per annum.

Even with their growing clout, however, the BRICS can't replace the US as a new global hegemon. They simply lack the military, financial, and technological power to defeat the US or even to threaten its vital interests. The BRICS are in practice calling for a new and realistic multipolarity, not an alternative hegemony in which they are in charge.

American strategists should heed the ultimately positive message coming from Kazan. Not only has the neocon quest for global hegemony failed, it has been a costly disaster for the US and

the world, leading to bloody and pointless wars, economic shocks, mass displacements of populations, and rising threats of nuclear confrontation. A more inclusive and equitable multipolar world order offers a promising path out of the current morass, one that can benefit the US and its allies as well as the nations that met in Kazan.

The rise of the BRICS is therefore not merely a rebuke to the US, but also a potential opening for a far more peaceful and secure world order. The multipolar world order envisioned by the BRICS can be a boon for all countries, including the United States. Time has run out on the neocon delusions, and the US wars of choice. The moment has arrived for a renewed diplomacy to end the conflicts raging around the world.

Source: <https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/brics-summit-2024> of 2 November 2024

wards Russia is based on an age-old resentment that the "West" has never come to terms with because it has instrumentalised it for power politics – regardless of the facts. Our attitude is characterised by a double standard: Hypocrisy and dishonesty in the judgement of Russia's history compared with that of the Western powers through the centuries.

Long before the Ukraine war, for example the reporting in the case of the plane crash near the German town Überlingen or the massacre of schoolchildren by Caucasian Islamists in Beslan show disdain towards the Russian people. Even major sporting events such as the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and the 2018 Football World Cup 2018 in Russia were also distorted by Russophobic media. Disrespectful comments and even gross untruths were published even after corrections from [the few remaining] Western sources and were generally not retracted.

Cultural history of an enemy image

Mettan characterises 'Russophobia' as a state of mind (*état d'esprit*). He presents it in front of our eyes by adding it to the reporting on events in Russia in this country that can only be avoided by circumventing all logic, as our opinion-leading elites do. [One could regard this as a curious eccentricity – but its consequences, the countless victims of war and the danger of the destruction of all human life, are unfortunately real. Therein lies the heavy responsibility of intellectuals]. Historically proven lies could have been corrected long ago.

They range from the forged Constantine Donation (p. 124) from the 9th century and the 1756 forged legacy (p. 150) of Peter the Great up to the present days and impressively document the dishonesty in the West towards Russia and the effect of Russophobia, from Charlemagne to Louis XV, Napoleon, and in the 20th century from Harry Truman, Winston Churchill, and George Kennan right up to the present day. Despotism, barbarism and backwardness (p. 56) remained the defining terms in the anti-Russian discourse to this day, the era of Vladimir Putin.

Travellers from Western Europe, since the Renaissance, often described Russia as an incomprehensible foreign culture, Russians as slaves escaped from Mongol rule who dreamed of world domination. Ever since Peter the Great was able to free Russia from the yoke of invaders from Asia and Europe, he and his successors were accused of having imperial ambitions.

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"Russia and the West ..."

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Theorists of liberalism, but also socialists such as *Karl Marx* and *Friedrich Engels*, and even monarchists, all equally used the cliché of despotism and backwardness with regard to Russia.

With the rise of economic liberalism came the ideology that cultural progress could only be achieved through private economic success alone. The socialist economy of the Soviet era was therefore seen as a sign for the backwardness of Russia; post-Soviet privatization, on the other hand, finally as a sign of progress.

View of the rivals

In the 19th century, starting from France and Great Britain, the ideology of the 'gradient culturel', the Atlantic arrogance of superiority towards the East of Europe consolidated.

The British utilised Russophobic resentment in their power struggle for the Eurasian continent ("Le Grand Jeu"), the expansion of their empire to India and the Ottoman Empire. The ocean power Great Britain regarded the Russian Tsarist Empire as a rival on the coveted continent. The British colonial elite used the press to a long-term, systematic propaganda campaign in order to manipulate the members of parliament, to give a free hand to the colonial barons. The much-maligned despotism of the Tsars served them as a frightening image to justify the alleged lack of alternatives of the desired British world domination.

Meanwhile, the Anglo-American oceanic empires began to impose their su-

premacy on the other nations by all means (p. 212). Between 1815 and 1900 the Atlantic powers increased their colonial empires by a hundred times more than the supposedly imperialist Tsarist Empire did in the same period.

Mettan points out the contradiction that serfdom was scourged in Russia although the colonial regimes of France, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the USA were no better in terms of oppression and exploitation. There double standards were applied. First, the press then further media up to Hollywood popularised Russophobia. This included also fantasy literature with irrational, violent, and perverse content, such as by *Bram Stoker* (1847–1912) the oeuvre "Count Dracula" about a Wallachian prince named *Vlad*, full of all the anti-Russian prejudices. Imperial politics dominated the public opinion.

Alliances and rivalries in Europe

Over the course of the 19th century, Russia was federated into the "Triple Entente" alliance by the Atlantic powers—France and Great Britain—against the emerging Germany.

But British Russophobia remained constant to this day. It was only briefly interrupted in 1904–1917 and 1941–1945, when Russia's services against the threat of the German Empire and later of the Nazi Empire were readily employed. On March 5, 1946, Prime Minister Churchill lowered the "iron curtain" against Eastern Europe again in his Fulton speech.

In Germany, after long years of alliance between Prussia and Russia, this resentment only developed after the founding of

the Empire. After the wars of unification, the Pan-Germanic "Drang nach Osten" ("push eastward") conflagrated. The ideological foundations of this new geopolitics were laid through corresponding content in history and geography textbooks (p. 255), which floated in the intellectual wake of British world hegemony. "The white man's burden" was now applied to the Slavic peoples. This mood was also fuelled by the press, where warnings about "pan-Slavism" began to appear in the run-up to the First World War.

As a result of Germany's humiliating defeat in the First World War, with the rise of National Socialism, cultural supremacy transformed into a nationalist-racist one. After the collapse of the Nazi state, whose campaign of extermination against the Slavic Soviet peoples had failed, ethnic Russophobia in early post-war Germany transformed into anti-communist Russophobia. The Federal Republic of Germany, within the fold of the EEC-EC, was now one of the "democracies" of the West and could stand with them against the totalitarian communist regimes of Eastern Europe.

With the change of 1989, the states of the dissolved Warsaw Pact joined this alliance. Their elites began to shirk responsibility by portraying themselves as victims of Russian Bolshevism, as "satellites of Moscow". But when the Soviet Union was dissolved and its state-totalitarian form of communism disappeared, all the crimes of Bolshevism from 1917 to 1991 were blamed on the "Russians".

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Monastery near Bogolyubovo on the Nerl, Oblast Vladimir. (picture Urs Graf)

“Russia and the West ...”

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Historically, this is not tenable because the Central Committee of the CPSU was multinational throughout the Soviet period, from the Pole *F. Dzerzhinsky* (founder of the *Cheka*) to the Georgian *J. Dzhughashvili* (alias *Stalin*) to the Ukrainian *E. Shevardnadze*, [last Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union], to name just a few.

In post-communist states such as Poland, the Czech Republic and especially in the Baltics, a culture of remembrance (“concurrency victimaire”) was established that was entirely limited to the victims of the Soviet era and ignored their own share in Bolshevik and Nazi crimes.

North Amerika

In the USA, the old world’s reservations about the Tsarist Empire hardly played a role. There, Human Rights only applied selectively, because blatant racism was evident in the treatment of the native Americans and the abducted slaves from Africa, as well as in the migration policy. [The immigrants were strictly allocated according to their ethnic and cultural origins. One of the lowest legal quotas applied to Russians, i.e. the number of immigrants was strictly limited. (see Rolf Winter, “Ami go home”, Hamburg 1989, pp. 157)]

During the succession to England in the 20th century it was about militarily enforced freedom of trade across the oceans—and across the “Heartland” (p.258). In addition to *Mackinder’s* old theory, *Spykman* added his “*Rimland*”-theory in 1940, concerning the peripheral areas around the Eurasian continent. What both approaches had in common was the claim to global dominance by the Anglo-Americans and the suspicion of Russia and the Russians because they inhabited this coveted land. So the Cold War started much earlier and was only interrupted from 1941-1945 during the alliance against Nazi Germany and Japan. Afterwards, the policy of containment, as George Kennan described it in an article in *Foreign Affairs*, continued. Based on this doctrine, which assumed Soviet Russia’s own intentions, the anti-communism of the *McCarthy* era was unleashed in the USA from 1945 onwards. The slogan was “for freedom and democracy against communist dictatorship”. The latter also included all liberation movements against colonial rule, which were often only supported by the Soviet Union. [Dictators in Latin America, Africa and the countries surrounding the Soviet Union, on the other hand, were considered their own “sons of a bitch”—as long as they served US interests.]

After the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, there was a short break during which the CSCE was founded in Helsinki. The final act of this conference, with



King Vladimir in the city of Vladimir. (picture Urs Graf)

its ten sections, essentially contained a confirmation of the UN Charter. However, the US administration at the time (*Carter*) placed the emphasis only on “human rights” and “fundamental freedoms” in order to denounce the Soviet Union for its treatment of its dissidents. The Soviet Union had clearly a propaganda disadvantage and was also increasingly weakened by the trap laid by *Brzezinski* in the Afghanistan War. In the further course, starting with the era of *Margaret Thatcher* and *Ronald Reagan*, the much-praised “freedom” was reduced to a brutal market-radical deregulation under the label “globalisation”.

The neoliberal turnaround

When the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991 the classic anti-communists saw themselves to be at the finish. Privatisation in the neoliberal style led to the plunder-

ing of state property and of state-owned national assets and to the impoverishment of the population. President *Boris Jelzin* supported by the USA crushed an initial uprising of the parliament in Moscow with cannons, but in 1996 with the newly elected Prime Minister *Primakov* he had to introduce a change in economic policy. From this moment on, the old Western propaganda started all over again. The “backward” Russia stood up against the salvation bringing globalisation.

Old anti-Russian spirits like *Brzezinski* and *Albright* relentlessly pursued the project of the neoconservative Straussian *Paul Wolfowitz*, who did not want to tolerate any more rivals of the USA on the territory of the former Soviet Union. Their ideology gained great influence on the government policy from *Bill Clinton*, *Bush jr.*, *Obama* and *Trump* to *Biden*.

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"Russia and the West ..."

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Presidential adviser Brzezinski formulated an uncompromising announcement of war (1997) to Russia. His bestseller "The Grand Chessboard" was published in many languages. The expansion of NATO against every promise followed this announcement. Under the banner of "pluralism" and "democracy" began a violent reorganisation of all countries that opposed the radical market liberalism of the USA, by NGOs or NATO – depending on their potential for resistance. In addition to economic pressure and military force, all means and channels of communication were put at the service of American supremacy. Military power was supplemented by a civil society manipulated by moulding of perception.

The world's only superpower

From 1989, the USA embarked on the path of so-called unilateralism. Since then, the UN has lost authority, and international law was only respected à la carte according to the interests of the only world power. Its "Full Spectrum dominance" spread across the unlimited global market. After the second Chechen war, which was fuelled by *covert actions* of the CIA (p. 282), the image of the violent oppressor Russia could be held up again in the US press. After the rude awakening by 9/11 in Manhattan the propaganda had to pause for a short time, especially since Vladimir Putin offered support to his counterpart George W. Bush in the fight against Islamist terrorism, even though he had warned him previously in vain of its instrumentalization.

But in 2003 at the latest, when Russia opposed the US invasion of Iraq, the fight against "despotism" in Russia was resumed. In the Western media, opposition politicians and criminal oligarchs were portrayed as "persecuted by the Kremlin", with US politicians such as *Hillary Clinton* and *John McCain* speaking out in their defence to great media fanfare.

Russia was to be a subjugated supplier of raw materials, a "petrol station that believes it is a nation", as McCain put it. With the defence against the Georgian foray on its protection forces and the population of South Ossetia, Russia began to defend itself, and by preventing the planned regime change in Syria, it definitely stood in the way of Western geostatisticians.

Manual for Russophobia

In the third part of his book, Mettan presents a compilation (*mode d'emploi*) of the systematic fabrication of the negative image of Russia through:

- the choice of words to create a black and white pattern without obvious lies,
- the selection of sources to support the desired narrative for feeding it into the media market,
- the positioning of the initial information to predetermine the direction of the subsequent discussion,
- the creation of an emotional distance between "them" and "us" [camp mentality].

Andrey Tsygankov describes examples of media campaigns discrediting Russia, and *Ezequiel Adamowski* lists the linguistic elements that create a trench between "them" and "us" (p. 311ff.).

In order to defend against this "discourse hegemony" counterstrategies are presented. The most effective of these, the "complexification", consists of placing the events in a new context and to analyse them with additional facts from a broader perspective in which the previously ignored is included again – a titanic labour, as he calls it.

This can be realised time after time in small areas, just like respecting alternative points of view.

Categorising good and evil

The aggressive transatlantic geopolitics continues to need an enemy image and a myth to justify it. It needs a pseudo-religion to calm people's consciences. Just as

the Pope's theologians a thousand years ago needed the Orthodox Moscow as an image of the enemy for an identity formation for the later Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, today the "postmodern theologians" potter around the myth of a Euro-Atlantic union against the threat of the Russian "bear". This in the hope to be able to keep up the predominance of the West against the "rest" of the world a little longer.

A line is drawn from Tsar *Ivan IV*, the Terrible, via Stalin to Putin, which is supposed to represent an ancestral line of evil rulers, [while the good rulers known to exercise their power by the "Divine grace", as it was imprinted in *Franco's* time on Spanish peseta coins].

Belief in the devil remains necessary. To illustrate the demonisation of Vladimir Putin, Mettan refers to the *Google Images* website, where you can find hundreds of front pages depicting his distorted portrait.

There is a revealing parallelism here to the popular fantasy world ranging from "Dracula" to "Lord of the Rings" (p. 324): The Manichean categorisation of people into good and bad. A pseudo-religious conceit seduces those who think they are chosen to escalate war as a decisive end-time battle between good and evil, and seems to absolve them of any responsibility for the *bonum commune*.

Others try their hand at the art of psychodiagnostics, by picking up on a remark of Chancellor *Merkel*, according to which the Russian president lives 'in a different world'.

All in all, Mettan documents in his book a persistent refusal to engage in dialogue, which was no longer thought possible since the abolition of the ecclesiastical index of banned books. This continues to pursue the original goal of geopolitical dominance by fuelling an irrational fear of the "foreign" Russia.

["Divide and rule" leads to war. – Tracing and strengthening the ties that bind people together is true peace work]. •

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A book on Syria – reread

by Renate Dünki

When I listen to the news, I can hardly bear the reports of the suffering of thousands of people in the Middle East, but neither can I bear the way we report. Neighbourhoods are being wiped out, we are told of efforts to achieve a ceasefire, and Western governments continue to supply state-of-the-art weapons – all without comment. Admittedly, this is not with the consent of the majority of the world and many citizens. It is not easy to withstand the official silence in this country and stick to it: Without monstrous regional and international power interests, while respecting the simplest principles of humanity, peaceful coexistence would be possible.

Karin Leukefeld reports quite differently from the Middle East. She is familiar with the centuries-old culture of tolerance in this region. Hardly anywhere else have I found such a humane view of people living together, integrated into their families, their community, history and culture – a view at eye level that always respects the dignity of the other person. This is precisely why I read her book “Syrien zwischen Schatten und Licht. Menschen erzählen von ihrem zerrissenen Land”, Zurich 2016 (Syria between shadow and light. People talk about their torn country) just now. In it, she reports on the history of the country for the last 100 years. Of course, the author does not use the correct wording of the mainstream media. She is committed to the truth of the people there. Karin Leukefeld is a regular visitor to Syria and Lebanon. She knows the “side roads” of these countries and visits many places and people there again and again. She learns from them how they stick together – under the most difficult circumstances – and try to cope with everyday life. Syria, 15 years ago an up-and-coming country with an increasingly modern infrastructure, one of the poorest countries in the world after the devastation of war, has now disappeared from the headlines, as has its “regime”, which is blamed for the devastation of the country and its cultural assets. A country that was once part of the “Fertile Crescent”, the cradle of human civilization and advanced civilizations.

Karin Leukefeld’s basic concern of investigating the living conditions, goals and hopes of the various ethnic and religious groups in Syria and giving the people a voice leads to the book being divided into chapters, each of which contains a historical section and a second section portraying a personality or picking out a group. This history of the region, which struggles for self-determination and is

constantly coming into the firing line of global power interests, is vividly portrayed against the backdrop of years of research. The author begins with the barbaric division of the country after the First World War, which caused all the subsequent unrest and violence.

The policy of the colonial powers

Karin Leukefeld begins by addressing the double game played by the colonial powers Great Britain and France, who after 1918 played the region’s ethnic and religious minorities striving for independence off against each other. They did not help to build a viable state of their own, as would have been their task as a mandate power.

In the *Sykes-Picot* secret agreement of 1916, England and France divided up the lands of the collapsing Ottoman Empire between them with a ruler. The events and their consequences are well known today. Karin Leukefeld focuses on the work of the King-Crane Commission of 1919, which was commissioned by US President *Wilson* to find out what the people of the region wanted for their future. The results of the survey were to be recorded in a report and presented at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 in the spirit of self-determination. What were the ideas? (p. 24)

- 1 “The Syrians will not accept a French mandate.
- 2 The Zionist programme can only be enforced by force.
- 3 The Arab national movement [...] is worth supporting.
- 4 The general will of the population is a united Syria.”



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Deraa

rd. Deraa was the starting point of the first protests against the government of *Bashar al-Assad* and became the trigger for the violent unrest in Syria. In February 2011, 15 young people were arrested in Deraa and accused of having painted anti-government slogans on the school building. The parents of the young people reported that their children had been abused in prison. This led to protests in the area of the Al-Omari Mosque in March 2011 and the subsequent storming of the mosque by security forces. Several people were killed and injured. This triggered demonstrations throughout the country.

However, the Paris Peace Conference ignored the promise of an independent Arab state, the commission’s report went unnoticed and the region was partitioned. “... centuries-old family, cultural and economic ties were severed”. (p. 25) This “peace treaty” in the spirit of the new mandate powers France and Great Britain ended peace in the region. The foreign armies only withdrew after the Second World War. With its policy of “divide and rule”, France had not promoted a path of joint reconstruction for the multicultural region. It had to be laboriously achieved.

In addition to the informative presentation of the historical processes in Syria on the way to more independence, the main gift of this book to me is the depiction of the lives of representatives of various political or religious currents, e.g. the lawyer *George Jabbour*, member of the Baath Party and as a government advisor an ambassador of religious tolerance. “We all felt part of the Syrian fabric” (p. 103), is how he assesses his career. Another contemporary witness, *Ali Boray*, engineer, son of a Circassian immigrant family, was born on the Golan. “Fifteen percent of the people on the Golan Heights were Circassians, the others were Bedouins, Christians, Druze, Turkmen. We lived like one big family,” recalls *Ali Boray*.” He knows what it is like to lose one’s homeland to war. (p. 135)

One of Karin Leukefeld’s participatory conversations with people or groups of people should be singled out. On the situation from 2011 onwards, the author reports on a circle of friends of young Syrians (p. 280 ff.). For five friends, one woman and four young men, their different religious backgrounds did not matter;

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"A book on Syria – reread"

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they were interested in dialogue, tolerance and respect:

Amer, a Christian Syrian, had worked successfully as a professional translator.

Jihad, the son of a Palestinian family, is a Muslim and has high hopes for education.

Julia, a student, dressed in western clothes, is an Ismaili and belongs to a community of Shia Muslims known for their liberal attitudes.

Salim, an actor in his spare time, lives in a Christian neighbourhood in Damascus.

Safwan, an intellectual through and through, is a Druze. His father is a religious scholar who sets an example of tolerance.

Their meetings were held to exchange ideas and assessments of the situation in Syria. "Everyone wants political change in Syria, everyone was against violence when we first met." (p. 281). The author shares the lives and thoughts of the young people as a close observer of the situation, without judging their statements.

Beginning as a civil war

The interviews create a nuanced picture of society in which a wave of violence broke out following the unrest in Deraa in March 2011 which was initially accompanied by sympathy. At the beginning of the unrest, many took to the streets to express their solidarity with the young people of Deraa. President *Assad* tried to mediate, admitting he had made mistakes. But the violence spread. In Turkey, deserters from the Syrian armed forces founded a "Free Syrian Army". Many Syrians warned of the escalating violence and growing foreign interference in the internal Syrian conflict. As a result of the fighting, projects initiated with Germany were cancelled. Thousands of Syrians lost their jobs. *Amer* was also affected; nobody needed his translations anymore. When bombs finally exploded in Damascus, the embassies closed. There were political reforms, but they were not far-reaching and many remained dissatisfied. After a brief ceasefire, armed groups attacked Damascus and Aleppo again and the army and security forces had to fight back. How did things look for the friends, one year after the beginning of the conflict?

2012: *Julia* had lost her home and was internally displaced. She was not even allowed to clean out the flat she and her fiancé had furnished; the police station, now controlled by the "Free Syrian Army", did not give permission, probably because they were Ismailis. Her family suffered a lot.

The friends, affected by the account, had been sceptical about the violence from

"Karin Leukefeld's report is highly topical. Syria, as a country that does not want to become a vassal and preserve its own culture, is paying a high price. Parts of the country are still occupied; the country is under sanctions and daily bombings do not provoke international protest. Nevertheless, there is still the will to follow its own path."

the outset, classifying the armed groups in Damascus as terrorists. Now there was fighting everywhere, the citizens no longer left their homes, shops closed, and many fled to Beirut. Everyone lived in a climate of fear, especially in the large Palestinian refugee camps near Damascus.

The young people were still openly discussing their sometimes-differing points of view. The opposition was made up of very different groups, Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood were gaining influence. *Amer* feared a proxy war between regional and international forces. He was afraid that political Islam would prevail. 65 per cent of the population were Sunni Muslims and it was easy for the Islamists to mobilise them. The friends rejected the violence in Syria. "I will never take up arms, and I will defend a political solution to the end," said *Jihad* (p. 290).

Escalation

The conflict escalated in summer 2012. The five friends did not remain inactive; they became involved in refugee aid, in reconciliation committees and in a newly founded cultural association. But the violence continued. The humanitarian activities of the young people, including their meetings, became very difficult. *Julia* wanted to get married soon. No one was sadder than her about the situation, but life had to go on.

In 2013, after a long break, a meeting with *Jihad* took place. With his family, he had been forced to flee from the camp where he had grown up. 150,000 Palestinians and 700,000 Syrians had lived there. "It was a tragedy, and we re-lived what had happened in 1948, the diaspora." (p. 293) Again, the family had lost everything and was torn apart. *Jihad* rarely saw his friends. All had lost the optimism of the beginning. The revolutionaries' goal was power, not freedom and democracy. The Syrians had been used and incited from abroad. He wondered how people would be able to live together in future.

Autumn 2013: What had become of the upheaval of the early days after a year and a half of war in the country? Did the demand for more freedom and political change still exist? *Safwan* explained, most Syrians were just watching, they could no longer do anything to improve the situa-

tion. The atmosphere was determined by the war. *Safwan* was still working in a reconciliation committee.

In March 2014, the friends had lost sight of each other. *Amer* said that many had left the country. The future was bleak. In autumn, he also left for the Netherlands. He had been threatened and dared to make a new start in a foreign country. *Jihad* had also set off on the dangerous journey to Europe with his mother and sisters.

The author's report describes the lives of a generation in war. Initially, the friends actively help to make the consequences of the war more bearable. However, their hopes are not fulfilled, so that often the only option is to go abroad. These are descriptions that bring the reader very close to the events, always determined by the dialogue with the people who, as contemporary witnesses, take over the interpretation themselves.

* * *

Following your own path

Karin Leukefeld's report is highly topical. Syria, as a country that does not want to become a vassal and preserve its own culture, is paying a high price. Parts of the country are still occupied; the country is under sanctions and daily bombings do not provoke international protest. Nevertheless, there is still the will to follow its own path. In 2023, the Presidential Republic of Syria was readmitted as a member state of the Arab League – a glimmer of hope for the future.

In this book, Karin Leukefeld shares her in-depth knowledge of the region, providing an insight into the background of the people's current conditions of life. She had to switch from being a journalist who wanted to build bridges between cultures to her main activity today, war reporting. And yet, even today, she knows how to let the people of the region speak for themselves in their dignity, their humanity and their willingness to help and rebuild.¹ Who would not finally wish peace for the country and the personalities that Karin Leukefeld brings to our attention? ●

¹ see the article by C. and J. Irsiegler on this book in *Current Concerns* No. 16 of 29 July 2016, regular reports on the horrible events today and their political and legal classification by Karin Leukefeld in *Current Concerns*, also at *Global Bridge* or *Zeitgeschehen im Fokus*

Who is the bravest?

A strong input on the lamentable state of education

by Eliane Perret

I recently leafed through a picture book written by *Lorenz Pauli*, lovingly and skilfully designed with smart drawings by *Kathrin Schärer*. It came to my mind that this book should be available to all (educational) leaders in our country during further training for creative input and food for thought. (Perhaps not meant entirely seriously, or yet?) “Brave, brave” was written on the cover. A clever title for a story, and a clever title for a training programme! I liked the profound story with a mouse, a snail, a frog and a sparrow as protagonists. They could all become role models when it comes to making courageous decisions! Yes, and I think in view of the lamentable state of education in our primary schools, courageous decisions need to be taken. Of course, all those involved are very much challenged, because realising you have made a mistake and having the courage to try something new are not the domain of every man – or every woman. However, it could be the beginning of a way out of the debacle at our primary schools in the foreseeable future. But let’s follow the four protagonists.

Input A: Who is the bravest?

Mouse, snail, frog and sparrow sit together on the bank of a pond and don’t know what to do. Finally, the frog suggests a competition to find out which of them is the bravest. His friends think it’s a good idea, a very good idea, even a fantastic idea, and clap with their paws, wings and antennae.

Pause for thought 1: Broadening the horizon

Who is the bravest? Wouldn’t that also be a challenge for those responsible for education in training centres and education authorities? They would have to step out of the confines of their everyday lives and jobs and broaden their horizons in the process (and hopefully realise that they are on the wrong path). But then the task becomes more challenging. They would have to think about brave ideas on how to correct the senseless and irresponsible school reforms that have ruined our education system in recent decades.

Input B: A brave endeavour

The mouse takes a bold step forward. It decides to swim to the other shore and back again without surfacing from the water. But oops, the frog quickly dismisses the mouse’s plan: “What a quack. That has nothing to do with courage! It’s just for fun!” Sure, swimming is part of the frog’s main business, but for a mouse it



Mouse, frog, snail and sparrow broaden their horizons and discover new fields of activity. Brave, brave! A model not just for education managers? (picture screenshot)

really is a brave endeavour. Will the project of our little heroes come to nothing?

Pause for thought 2: The first realisation

Now it could be that one or two fearless education politicians – I apologize, this always includes fearless female education politicians – have a first insight and a clever idea (like our mouse). He seriously wants to try something new. He wants to create clarity and remove educational rubbish from our class rooms. Would he receive a positive response from those around him? (Or are there some frogs there too?) Would the idea have to come from the relevant political environment to get attention? Or are his colleagues frozen in their own ideology, spellbound by the pressure of the education lobby and fear for their own sinecures? And therefore: too little courage to jump into the cold water?

Input C: You’re great ...

The four different friends, however, are unafraid. The sparrow settles the conflict and the mouse takes a deep breath. It dives into the water and comes back snorting and gasping. Yes, and the frog even has the courage to congratulate the mouse and help the mouse out of the water: “Brave, brave! You’re a great diver”. And everyone claps with their webbed feet, antennae and wings.

Pause for thought 3: A new education concept

Let’s imagine that after a sleepless night, the director of a university college of teacher education (or, I apologize, always a female director as well) were to go to the education authorities and present a new training concept. At the same time, he would hand over a long list of politically wrong decisions “thanks” to which the education of young people has gone in the

wrong direction in recent years. Would the numerous education “experts” from politics and academia thank him shamefully for being the first to have the courage to name and admit the mistakes made? If so, they would surely come up with a bouquet of ideas on how the hopeful and often very committed teacher trainees could be provided with the pedagogical, psychological and didactic tools they need for their demanding profession. Some would even know that one of the causes of the reform cascades of recent decades was *Milton Friedman’s* neoliberal concepts of privatisation and economisation of the education system, in view of a new lucrative market in which primary schools should only offer easily testable subjects as basic education (the rest should be bought by parents as an investment for their children’s future). “I see”, one of his colleagues would now say, “it’s all about the children’s ‘human capital’ ... about self-organised learning ... at the expense of all children ... This is supposed to be so-called educational justice ... How condemnable! With the result that nowadays a quarter of the young people who leave school do not understand and read German sufficiently and a fifth of them do not fulfil the minimum requirements in maths and science!”

And if his colleagues do not have the courage to realise this? Would they tell him that this is nonsensical and that he is mourning yesterday’s ideas, as they have been advised to do as a discussion blocker?

Input D: The grouch becomes courageous

But there is a faint hope, just like the frog who takes on a new challenge. Previously a grouch, it is now infected by the courage of the mouse. Today it doesn’t want to eat a measly mosquito or a nimble fly, but a large water lily, it announces. Initial-

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"Who is the bravest?"

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ly it too is met with opposition, this time from the snail, for whom such an endeavour is an everyday occurrence. But supported by the mouse, who knows what a test of courage means, it chokes down the water lily with stump and stalk. Even the snail jumps over its shadow and begins to praise the frog. "Brave, brave! That really is something very special", it dares to say.

**Pause for thought 4:
Support and thinking along**

If, after at least one sleepless night, an equally courageous person responsible for education were to suggest to its fellow decision-makers that the timetable should be cleared of the (mostly useless) early foreign language lessons and that the German language should be prioritised again! As a historically aware contemporary, he would also remind them that *Bill Gates* travelled around the world at the end of the 1990s and offered many governments to give them his software free of charge. This was the case in 1998, when he paid a visit to Switzerland and had a meeting with Federal Councillor *Villiger*. By doing this he found supporters also in Switzerland. Leading the way was the then Director of Education of Zurich, *Ernst Buschor*, who accepted an invitation to attend a symposium in Boston and then wrote the basic concept for a reform that had an enormous impact on today's schools. The long-standing head of education was able to report this, and he suggested to his colleagues that they finally put a stop to the digitalisation of schools, which then was in full swing at great cost.

From then on, teachers should be able to use the devices (voluntarily) as a supplementary didactic tool. Also, he restored the children's right to guidance and allowed the teachers to provide again community-building classroom lessons and to establish a secure relationship to their pupils, in line with the latest research findings. Of course, digital media would also continue to be available for pupils to work with – where they actually add value to analogue work. For example, in upper secondary school for writing applications for apprenticeship training positions. If this were the case, then the support and thoughtfulness of those responsible for education would be a step in the right direction. What happy parents and children! And what positive dynamics could start from there.

Input E: A step forward

The snail feels the same way. It decides – despite the sparrow's scepticism – to

come out of its house and crawl around its shell. It finally wants to take a careful and detailed look at her surroundings and return to her house with this new experience. Her courageous actions are supported by the enthusiastic echo of the mouse and the frog (and the sparrow too). They all clap their wings, webbed feet and paws enthusiastically (even if the house is now a little crooked).

**Pause for thought 5:
Out of the snail shell and ivory tower**

A snail shell as a place for retreat – doesn't that remind us of the ivory tower of education authorities and teacher training colleges, trapped in unrealistic concepts, far removed from practice? Or are there still some courageous people who venture out of their bubble of eternal approval and applause and take a close look at the educational debacle that has been created at primary schools in recent decades? By the way, this is an absolute must for Switzerland, the former country of education, whose primary school education is one of the most important foundations of its direct democracy!

Conclusion: That's brave!

Mouse, snail and frog are eagerly awaiting the sparrow's test of courage. It will be particularly brave and cheeky, they think, just like sparrows are. It trips back and forth until he finally announces: "Well, I'm not taking part." The reader is left wondering why. The same goes for its friends, who ponder his an-

swer in a somewhat perplexed way before cheering: "Yes, that's brave!" (I think so too!)

Let's switch to our education managers in the final phase of their advanced training. In the usual feedback round, some of them dare to say: "It's not ideology, but pedagogy that should become the basis of primary school again! That is my goal." Almost everyone agrees. Only one does not. He steps out of the line and suggests: "We should take the Danish Minister of Education, *Mattias Tesfaye*, as an example. In an interview, he apologised to the young people of Denmark for turning them into guinea pigs in a digital experiment, the extent and consequences of which could not be foreseen". Unexpectedly, he met with a positive response: "We will give this book to all those responsible for education so that their eyes can be opened". The applause from his fellow campaigners is unexpectedly huge (and the frog, mouse, snail and sparrow are happy to join in and clap their webbed feet, paws, antennae and wings).

PS: Book reference:

Lorenz Pauli and Kathrin Schärer's picture book, with its versatile and sensitively told story and beautiful pictures, has many young and old readers and viewers in families and schools.

Pauli, Lorenz/Schärer, Kathrin. *mutig, mutig*. (brave, brave) Zurich: Atlantis, 2006, ISBN 978-3-7152-0518-2

