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Current Concerns

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

English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

Come down from your high horse!

A review of the Munich Security Conference 2019

by Karl Müller

In the past few days I have read two different types of texts. One is the book "The Putin Interviews – Oliver Stone interviews Vladimir Putin" (ISBN 1510733434, 9781510733435) which was published in September last year. The American director, screenwriter and producer *Oliver Stone* visited Russian President *Putin* four times between July 2015 and February 2017 and recorded interviews with him over several days for a documentary film. Now these interviews are also available in German in book form.

On the other hand, the speeches of numerous politicians at this year's Munich Security Conference, in particular the speeches of the German Chancellor *Angela Merkel* and the German Minister *Ursula von der Leyen,* the British War Minister *Gavin Williamson,* the US Vice President *Michael Richard Pence* and the former US Vice President *Joseph R. Biden* – but also those of the Russian Foreign Minister *Sergei Lavrov* and the representative of the People's Republic of China, *Yang Jiechi.* These speeches are easy to find on the website of the Security Conference (*https://www.securityconference.de/aktivitaeten/munich-security-conference/msc-2019/reden/)*, Joseph R. Biden's speech so far only as a video (*https://www.securityconference.de/en/media-library/munich-security-conference-2019/video/statement-by-joeseph-r-biden-jr-followed-by-qa/).*

Strong NATO instead of UN Charter?

These speeches and the event in Munich as a whole have left the following impressions:

- The initial appearance of the head of the Security Conference, *Wolfgang Ischinger,* in a blue hooded sweater with the EU stars at the front seemed almost grotesque. If this is how the unity of the EU is to be evoked – with a hooded sweater – then the ingenuity truly is no longer great.
- Among the representatives of the great powers, it was only Yang Jiechi, the member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China responsible for foreign relations, who explicitly referred to the Charter of the United Nations. For China, the Charter is the indispensable basis for regulating and shaping international relations. The representatives of the NATO states lacked this reference. They were interested in a military alliance that is as well-equipped as possible and prepared for future conflicts with "competitors" of NATO. The US Vice President as well as the British War Minister expressly spoke of their claim to "leadership" in the world; the representatives

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Peace treaty with the Taliban

Admission of defeat by the USA

by Professor Dr Albert A. Stahel

Albert A. Stahel (picture strategische-studien.com)

After almost 18 years of war, the USA negotiates with the Taliban in Qatar's Doha. In December 2001, they officially ended the Taliban rule over Afghanistan and expelled their leadership team with *Mullah Omar* to Pakistan. Now the American diplomacy under the Afghan-born US special envoy for Afghanistan, *Zalmay Khalizad*, accepts the Taliban as equal negotiating partners. With this so-called peace treaty, the Americans are obviously striving for an unchallenged withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Like the Soviet Union in 1989, the USA has lost this long-lasting war. The dead American soldiers were in vain and the over 1000 billion US dollars spent on warfare were in vain. As in the war of the 40th army of the USSR from 1979 to 1989, the Americans failed because of the topography of the country and the inflexibility of the Afghans. They thus complete the ranks of the great powers that have only suffered defeats in this mountainous country. Before them these were the British Empire and the USSR. Now the USA shares the fate of the defeated great powers in Afghanistan with their predecessors.

At first glance, the failure of the USA seems incomprehensible, since they have used the entire power of their military superiority in this war. Expression of this superiority was the use of long-range bombers *B-1B* and *B-52*. The American bombardments, however, could do little against the primitive Kalashnikovs of the Taliban. On the contrary, by killing innocent people[1] they incited the anger of the Afghan civilian population and eventually drove them to the side of the Taliban.

What will remain of the intervention after the withdrawal of the troops of the USA and its allies? Actually little. Afghanistan will once again fall under the Taliban's rule and the collaborators of the Kabul government, headed by President Ghani, will be settling abroad, especially in the USA. The Afghan population will remain poor and thus even more dependent on the drug bandits.

The American people will take note of this withdrawal, but will not recognise that this withdrawal will be a further step towards the abdication of the imperial status of the USA. Its President *Donald Trump* will at the same time celebrate the US withdrawal and thus this defeat as the culmination of his strategic decisions. He will thus share the fate of other world leaders.•

[1] UNAMA registered 28,291 killed and 52,366 injured civilians only from 1.1.2017 to 31.12.2017. UNAMA, Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Annual Report 2017, February 2018: *https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/AF/ProtectionCiviliansAnnualReport2017.pdf.*

Source*: Institut für Strategische Studien*, 31 Janaury 2019

(Translation *Current Concerns)*

"Come down from your ..."
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of Germany want to lead "multilaterally", but no less against (!) the "competitors". The NATO representatives demanded subordination to a "rules-based order"[1] and very probably have in mind the "rules" they had dictated so far, *not* the UN Charter and international law; for these oblige to renounce the use and threat of force in interstate relations, guarantee the sovereignty of states as well as the right of self-determination of peoples and demand the same rights for all states, large and small.

British War Minister practises Russia-Bashing

- Interestingly, this year the War Ministers of Germany and Great Britain jointly opened the conference. Ursula von der Leyen said nothing new. She conjured up the unity of NATO, promised higher German expenditure for the army, increasing German participation in military activities, an end to the restrictions on arms export policy and generally an end to the German "restraint" that still exists today. That she accused Russia of aggressiveness has become part of her standard – but she did not say much more about Russia. That, by the way, applied to all German speakers. The British politician was quite different. Not only did he talk about the world expecting British "leadership" – which, by the way, was not confirmed by any other speaker – he also drew a very sinister picture of Russian politics and did not spare with threats. Otherwise, he was in complete agreement with his German counterpart. In a commentary *Willy Wimmer,* the former Secretary of State in the German Ministry of Defence, in a commentary reminded of a Royal Navy radio message to Imperial Germany: "Friends yesterday, friends today, friends forever …", a few weeks before the British declaration of war to the same Imperial Germany (*https://de.sputniknews.com/kommentare/20190214323957162-sicherheitskonferenz-verantwortung-konflikt/*).

Von der Leyen annoyed when someone has a different opinion

- Almost more interesting than von der Leyens' speech was her reaction to a question in the short discussion. She said that Russia was trying to divide NATO. According to the Minister, this is apparent in the social networks. Von der Leyen very probably meant that not everyone, and certainly not in Germany, would take part in the "Bogeyman Russia" campaign. The minister was concerned about this, and she also said that she was thinking about what could be done. The British intelligence initiative "Integrity Initiative" (cf. *Current Concerns* No. 3 from 4 February and No. 4 from 21 February) will therefore also be entirely in her interest.[2]
- This year there was the largest US presence to date in terms of numbers. However, they were not representatives of the US government, but of Congress, i.e. the legislature. More than 50 of them attended the Munich Security Conference. In addition, there was the former US Vice President Biden. His speech showed what he was all about: Creating an atmosphere against the incumbent US president and to promote himself and his own political faction, the war faction. His words sounded "mild", the content was not. He promised already now that soon everything would be different in US politics. Generally, one could get the impression that the strong US presence was almost entirely the presence of one political half, namely the anti-Trump faction. Perhaps a meeting to prepare for the fall of the president? At any rate: It was a deliberate affront to the incumbent US administration to allow a leader of the opposition to speak at such length. That was no practise with any other country, not this year and not in the years before.

Angela Merkel presents herself as "leader of the free world."

- The German Chancellor's speech fit in well with this. The fact that she was committed to *Nord Stream 2* may be to her credit. However, that was not her point. She once again set herself apart from the policy of the US President and received "standing ovations" for it. The German-language mainstream media raved how much she would do justice to her *Obama* mission as "leader of the free world", translated into reality: Imperialist globalism.
- Whether the incumbent US Vice President Pence is still on the side of his president or has already changed sides, remains to be seen. The fact is that his speech was intolerable. He divided the world into "the good" and "the bad", saw himself as active on behalf of God, threatened Iran and Venezuela again massively and appealed just as fervently to the other NATO states not only to spend more for their armies, but also to support the (planned) actions against Iran and Venezuela. The media response to him was negative, as he was assigned to the incumbent US president.

On the high horse …

No less important than the contents of what was said, was the attitude of the NATO speakers: Down from the high horse. Do NATO leaders still believe they are the masters (male or female) of the world and have to decide what is good and what is bad, and what should happen on this planet? They all used the same rhetoric. And with their talk of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human dignity, they are committing a terrible abuse with such important words.

… but also outlooks

Yes, unfortunately it has to be said: The only words that brought people together in the relationship between the great powers came from the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Everyone can also read his speech (*www.mid.ru/en/press_service/minister_speeches/-/asset_publisher/7OvQR5KJWVmR/content/id/3520272)*. Lavrov mentioned some unpleasant facts by name, but also pointed out again what perspectives there were for all states and peoples of the Eurasian continent: Namely not that of a bitter competition (this is how it is seen in the NATO states), but a cooperation in as many areas as possible with simultaneous acceptance of the independence and sovereignty of all states and peoples.

And that brings me to the book with the Putin interviews. I highly recommend reading this book. A politician who is demonised by those responsible in the NATO states shows himself to be a statesman who meets his counterpart on equal terms, prudently, moderately, responsibly, knowledgeably down to the last detail and carefully studying – without the enemy images so widespread in our country. This entails a recovery from the Munich Security Conference 2019. •

[1] The explanations of the term "rules-based order" range from a simple translation, i.e. a "rule-based order", to a hegemony under US American auspices. A blogger of the US Council on Foreign Relations wrote on 3 May 2016 on *foreignaffairs.com* ("World Order: What, Exactly, are the Rules?") to explain the concept that "there exists a Western liberal international order whose distinctive values, norms, laws, and institutions were designed to inform and govern state conduct. This order originated in Europe but achieved full expression only with the U.S. rise to global leadership (or hegemony), as the post-1945 United States combined power and purpose to forge a multilateral world order, using a mixture of persuasion, incentives, and coercion to do so." In the English-language edition of *Wikipedia,* the following can be read: "In international relations, the liberal international economic order (LIEO), also known as the rules-based order or the US-led liberal international order, is a notion that contemporary international relations are organised around several guiding principles, such as open markets, multilateral institutions, liberal democracy, and leadership by the United States and its allies. The order was established in the aftermath of World War II, and is often associated with Pax Americana." It is therefore understandable that Russian Foreign Min-

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US and EU bury the INF treaty

by Manlio Dinucci, Italy[*]

Manlio Dinucci (picture ma)

The Pentagon has decided to install medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe, which would turn this territory into a battle-field in case of a war between the two Great Powers. It's no surprise that NATO and the European Union have approved the suicide of the European nations.

The "suspension" of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), announced on 1 February by Secretary of State *Mike Pompeo,* has launched the count-down which, within six months, will count the United States out of the Treaty definitively. As from today, in any case, the USA considers itself free to test and to deploy weapons of the category forbidden by the Treaty ground-based medium-range nuclear missiles (between 500 and 5,500 km).

The nuclear missiles installed in Europe in the 1980's belong to this category – Pershing-2 ballistic missiles, installed by the United States in West Germany, and ground-launched cruise missiles, installed by the United States in Great Britain, Italy, West Germany, Belgium and Holland, under the pretext of defending the European allies from the SS-20 ballistic missiles installed by the Soviet Union on its own territory.

The INF Treaty, signed in 1987 by Presidents *Gorbatchev* and *Reagan,* eliminated all the missiles of this category, including those based in Comiso (Sicily).

The INF Treaty was called into question by Washington when the United States saw their strategic advantage over Russia and China diminish. In 2014, the Obama administration accused Russia, without the slightest proof, of having tested a cruise missile (mark 9M729) belonging to the category forbidden by the Treaty. And in 2015, it announced that "due to the violation of the INF Treaty by Russia, the United States are considering the deployment in Europe of ground-based missiles". This plan was confirmed by the Trump administration. In 2018, Congress authorised the financing of a "research and development programme for a cruise missile launched from a road-based mobile platform". From Moscow's side, they denied that their cruise missile violated the Treaty and in turn accused Washington of having installed, in Poland and Romania, launch ramps for interceptor missiles (from the "shield"), which can be used to launch cruise missiles bearing nuclear warheads.

In this context, we have to remember the geographical factor – while a US medium-range nuclear missile based in Europe can hit Moscow, a similar missile based by Russia on its own territory can reach the European capitals, but not Washington. If we turn the scenario round, it's as if Russia were to install its medium-range nuclear missiles in Mexico.

The US plan to bury the INF Treaty has been fully supported by the European allies of NATO. The North Atlantic Council declared, on 4 December 2018, that "the INF Treaty is in danger because of the actions of Russia", which was accused of deploying "a destabilising missile system". The same Council declared yesterday its "full support for the action of the United States in suspending its obligations concerning the INF Treaty" and told Russia to use the remaining six months to "return to a complete observance of the Treaty"[1].

The collapse of the INF Treaty was also helped along by the contribution of the European Union which, at the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2018, voted against the resolution presented by Russia on the "Preservation and implementation of the INF Treaty", rejected by 46 votes against 43, with 78 abstentions. The European Union of which 21 of its 27 members are also members of NATO (the United Kingdom remains a member while leaving the EU) rallied unanimously to the position of NATO, which in turn rallied unanimously to that of the United States. In substance, then, the European Union has also given its green light for the possible installation of new US nuclear missiles in Europe, including Italy.

On a question of this importance, the *Conte* government, like those before it, has aligned itself with both NATO and the EU. And across the whole political arc, not one voice was raised to state that Parliament should decide how to vote at the UNO on the INF Treaty. And again, no voice was raised in Parliament to ask that Italy should observe the non-proliferation Treaty and adhere to that of the UNO concerning the ban on nuclear weapons, forcing the USA to withdraw from our national territory its *B61* nuclear bombs and not to install, from the first half of 2020, the even more dangerous *B61-12*'s.

Since it has on its territory nuclear weapons and US strategic installations, with the *Muos* and the *Jtags* in Sicily, Italy is exposed to growing dangers as an advanced base of US nuclear forces, and thus a target for Russian forces. A medium-range ballistic nuclear missile takes between 6 and 11 minutes to reach its target. […] •

(Translation *Pete Kimberley)*

Source *Voltaire Network* from 6 February 2019

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[*] *Manilo Dinucci* is a geographer and geopolitical scientist. His latest books are *Laboratorio di geografia,* Zanichelli 2014 ; *Diario di viaggio,* Zanichelli 2017*; L'arte della guerra / Annali della strategia Usa/Nato 1990–2016,* Zambon 2016. *Guerra nucleare. Il giorno prima. Da Hiroshima a oggi: chi e come ci porta alla catastrofe,* Zambon 2017; *Diario di guerra. Escalation verso la catastrofe (2016–2018),* Asterios Editores 2018.

[1] "NATO Statement on Russia's failure to comply with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty", Voltaire Network, 1 February 2019.

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ister Lavrov, in the discussion that followed his presentation at the Security Conference in Munich on 16 February, said the following: "Our Western colleagues use the terms 'international law' and, norms of international law' only rarely these days. Instead, they are talking about a 'rules-based order' claiming that it is the same thing. However, they prefer using their own term rather than 'international law.' As I see it, they do not want to comply with international law as it is sealed in, say, the Chemical Weapons Convention, which has been ratified by all members of the international community. They only want to use the 'rules' which they have invented themselves in order to interpret the convention in violation of its established procedures."

[2] A look at current German textbooks for political education shows just how far the standardisation process has come. Here, there is no longer factual information, but the language regulations of the NATO states are adopted without criticism. For example, in the book "Zeitfragen. Politische Bildung für berufliche Schulen" ("Current concerns. Political education for vocational schools") by the renowned *Klett publishing house* in Stuttgart on page 211 about the Ukraine conflict. One task, for example, is: "For the EU, the integration of the Crimea by Russia is an annexation and violates international law. It imposed economic and political sanctions (punitive measures) against Russia for this step. List arguments with which such measures can be justified." Are German students only allowed to get familiar with NATO's point of view?

Are the US planning to attack Iran?

ds. Under the title "A 'Conference of the Willing' against Iran", the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" reports on 14 February about the "Middle East Conference" in Warsaw organised by the US and Poland. The latter had taken up the cause of "promoting stability, peace, freedom and security for the Middle East" and invited the representatives of seventy states to the Polish capital. Since Iran was not on the guest list, the direction of the meeting was clear, it says: "An alliance should be forged which also includes European countries and which supports the hard course of the Americans against the regime in Tehran". It remains to be seen how far this has been achieved. In any case, the foreign ministers of Germany and France as well as the EU foreign affairs commissioner *Federica Mogherini* were missing. A glimmer of hope?

"The situation," writes the correspondent for the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", "is reminiscent of the year 2003, when the US forged an alliance for its Iraq campaign. Today we know what has become of it". The report of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" is alarming!

At the *Munich Security Conference* from 15 to 17 February American Secretary of State *Mike Pence* attacked Iran once again in the strongest terms and demanded that Germany and France in particular should also break with Iran and join the "coalition of the willing".

Connections and backgrounds

Anyone looking for contexts and backgrounds to the current crisis in the Middle East will find them in *Michael Lüders'* latest book *(see illustration)*. "The current crisis," he writes, "has a long history in which the Saudi connection plays a major role." By this he means the close political and economic ties between the USA and Saudi Arabia, whose business relations to this day are essentially based on the exchange of weapons for oil. This prehistory also includes the Israeli attitude towards Tehran. Lüders is by no means uncritical of Iranian politics, but he warns against dividing the conflict parties into "good" and "evil". Beyond rhetoric, politics is rarely about morality, but about power and influence and the assertion of interests.

On the nature of power politics

"Every war, every military escalation", writes Lüders, "is preceded by the demonisation of the enemy, that was never different." Accordingly, there was a lack of willingness to take once the perspective of the other side. Thereby the peace ability would get lost. "Iranian, Russian, Chinese, Western power politics, follow first and foremost self-interest." That is the essence of power politics. Those who regard the power politics of one side as "more moral" than those of the other, are either naive or propagandists. Those who would believe that only the West's claims to power would be legitimate, those of all other actors, on the other hand, would express "malignancy", would end as warmongers. "Intended or unintentional, this includes those who are subjectively convinced that the West does not actually pursue a self-centred power policy, but that it would pursue humanitarian motives worldwide." (p. 189) Western power politics would like to disguise itself as an effort for freedom, democracy and human rights, says Lüders.

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An attack would be a crime against humanity

Michael Lüders warns the West of an attack on Iran. "But should it come to extremes," he writes, "the result will not be a Western-oriented Iran, but Armageddon in the Orient,"[1] with millions of dead and endless streams of refugees, which especially Europe would have to master.

"The project regime change in Iran is unconditionally contrary to international law. Irrespective of this, any attack on the nation of Iran would be nothing short of a humanitary crime. Whoever participates in this, under any pretext, is complicit in the blame, even though the pleaded motives may still sound so generous." (p. 234) •

[1] The term *Armageddon* appears in the last book of the New Testament in the "Revelation of John" and is there the place of the eschatological battle of the Last Days.

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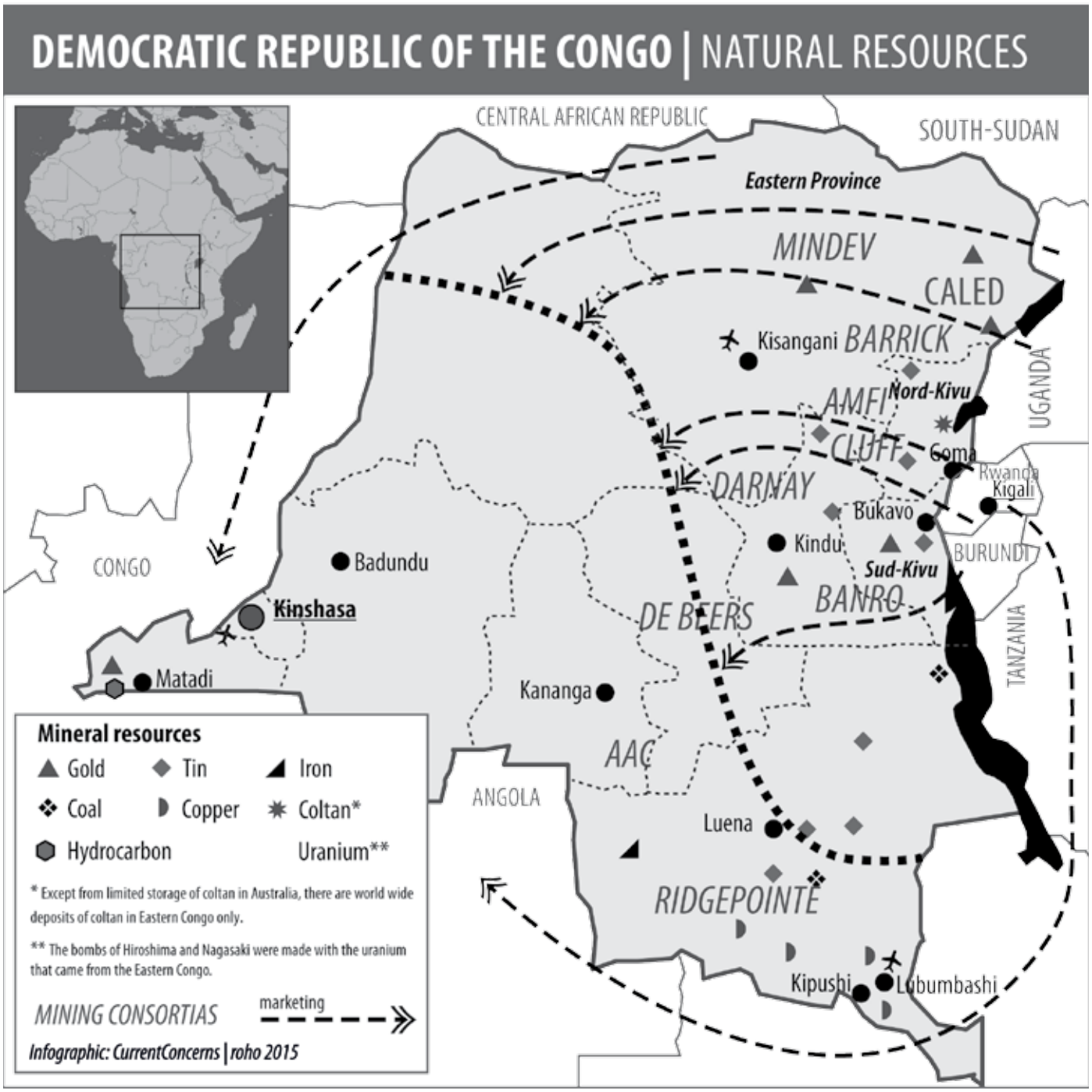
Dubious elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

No reason to celebrate

by Dr Peter Küpfer



pk. The map shows the mineral deposits in the east and southeast of the country as well as the main areas where the major international mining companies such as *De Beers* and others are prospecting. But the two invasions of 1996 and 1998 have further complicated and dramatised things. The dotted line traces the official ceasefire line in the 1998 war. It can be seen with the naked eye that the Rwandan-Ugandan invader militias (RCD and MLC) were primarily targeting Congolese mineral resources and not allegedly "securing the border" to Rwanda. To secure the border, this army would not have had to travel more than a thousand kilometres inland. Today, after more than 20 years of terror, the militias of Rwandan and Ugandan observance, which are still active in North Kivu, plunder above all the "wild" coltan mines, the proceeds of which they throw undisturbed onto the world market. Thus Congo "pays" for the war itself, which has its downfall or at least its Balkanisation as its goal, while Rwanda under *Kagame* basks in the glory of an emerging country that has its infrastructure under control.

After the announcement of the election victory of Felix Thisekedi as the new Congolese president, European media published pictures of cheering people on the streets of the big Congolese cities. But in this crisis-ridden country there is no cause for jubilation. This is shown by a brief look at the previous elections. President Joseph Kabila, now stepping down, was brought to power in January 2001 as interim pres-

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ident without democratic legitimacy after his father (see box, note 1) Laurent-Désiré Kabila had been shot dead by one of his bodyguards. Laurent-Désiré Kabila had come to power by force of arms in the 1996/97 war. After two subsequent legitimation elections in 2006 and 2011, which observers described as highly suspect of forgery, his son Joseph, in open violation of the constitution, remained in his position as head of state of this huge African country since 2016. The now held elections have before been postponed three times over the past three years. Finally, they were scheduled for March 2018 and after further short-term postponements they were eventually held on the second last day of the year, on 30 December 2018.

According to official figures, 38.5 million voters took part in the current presidential election. With *Felix Tshisekedi,* whom the official Congolese electoral committee *CENI (Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante)* described as the winner of the current presidential election, the former President *Joseph Kabila* has now been replaced by the son of a long-time opposition figure, the founder of the *Congolese Socialist Party*[1]*, Etienne Tshisekedi.*

According to the official election results, Felix Tshisekedi, the candidate of the Socialists and their electoral alliance CASH, achieved 38% of the votes. However, the opposition's candidate being awarded with the highest chance of winning was another one: *Martin Fayulu* (electoral alliance LAMAKA). According to CENI, he won 34% of the votes, while the candidate of the ruling party FCC (*Front Commun pour le Congo), Emmanuel Shadari Ramazani,* received only 23% of the votes.

Tshisekedi's announced election victory surprised many independent observers. Domestically and abroad, Martin Fayulu was expected to win the most votes. Fayulu was considered by many to be the most resistant candidate to the traps of corruption. He was also considered to be the candidate who mobilised the most people at the election events. He was a hope for many voters and was called the "Soldat du peuple" (soldier of the people). However, Martin Fayulu is a businessman, a Master of Business Administration by training, who made a steep career to the highest administrative levels at the oil company *Exxon Mobile.* In his election campaign he stressed the "new Congo", he declared war on corruption and, unlike his predecessors in office, did not want to put mining rights at the disposal of international mining companies again. According to him, his personal friends include Dr *Denis Mukwege*[2], who recently received the Nobel Peace Prize for his dedicated work in the *Panzi Hospital* in Bukavu, where he has been treating women systematically raped by armed gangs in Eastern Congo for years. However, *Jean-Pierre Bemba* also belongs to his closer circle of friends. He is the former mercenary leader of the *MLC (Mouvement de Libération du Congo)*, who during the annexation war of 1998 terrorised large areas of North Kivu from Uganda, later also Central Africa, with witnesses accusing his troops of terrible war crimes against the civilian population. Bemba was one of the four vice-presidents under Joseph Kabila after the 2006 Sun City Peace Treaty. He was later arrested in Brussels and had to face a long trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. He was sentenced to 18 years in prison for crimes against humanity. His lawyers have now obtained a retrial. The judges referred to procedural deficiencies and subsequently acquitted the Congolese long-time warlord for lack of evidence. However, his conviction for bribery of witnesses remained, so that Bemba could not run for office himself. Taking a politician with such a troubled history on board throws a peculiar light on Fayul's election promise to devote all his energies to a "new Congo" and in particular to the fight against corruption. Immediately after the announcement of the results, Fayulu filed a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court for electoral manipulation, which, surprisingly, has since been rejected.

Well-founded doubts in the legality of the elections

Nevertheless, numerous commentators of the events in the country, in constant crisis since its independence in 1960, suspect that the current election results do not reflect the will of the majority of voters, but (as in the previous elections!) is based on a priorly agreed distribution of power. In cautious formulations, but clearly in the matter, the respected Catholic Bishops' Conference of the country, which itself has put together an army of 40,000 independent election observers, has expressed their doubts, together with the Protestant Church and a civic initiative (*Symocel)*: The figures published by the National Election Commission (CENI) 10 days after the ballot do not match the votes actually cast at the ballot box, the *CENCO (Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo)* announced at the beginning of January. "The true winner of the elections

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Chronological table

30.6.1960: Independence of the former Belgian colony. A few weeks later: Secession of the copper province of Katanga, "civil war" until 1963. "Congo confusion" (until 1965).

17.1.1961: Murder of the elected Prime Minister *Patrice Lumumba* by the Belgian secret service.

24.11.1965: Military coup and seizure of power by *Joseph Désiré Mobutu/Mobutu Sese Seko.*

18.10.1996: Foundation of the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo* (AFDL) under *Laurent-Désiré Kabila* and its invasion of eastern Congo with the support of Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian troops.

May 1997: After Blitzkrieg across the Congo, the AFDL under *Laurent-Désiré Kabila* seizes power.

November 1998: Military intervention of the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD) on the Kabila regime (supported, equipped and controlled by Rwanda and Uganda) with rapid advance far inland. With the military support of Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia, Kabila can stop the advance. The war officially lasts until 2003. Unidentified military forces, most of them controlled by Rwanda, continue to harass the civilian population in eastern Congo to this day.

16.1.2001: Murder of Laurent-Désiré Kabila by one of his bodyguards. As his successor "his son" Joseph Kabila[1] until then unknown in the Congo, is appointed.

2.4.2003: Peace agreement of Sun City (South Africa). Establishment of a transitional government under Joseph Kabila with exponents of the various wings of the RCD (Warlords!) as vice-presidents (such as *Jean-Pierre Bemba).*

29.10.2006: Multi-party elections under international "supervision". According to official figures, Joseph Kabila is elected president with 58% of the votes. The opposition (*Etienne Tshisekedi)* boycotts the election and criticizes irregularities, even massive forgeries.

28.11.2011: Second multi-party election. According to official figures, the ruling President Joseph Kabila received 48.95% of the votes, Etienne Thisekedi (father of *Felix Tshisekedi)* 32.33%. The credibility of this result has been questioned by various commentators.

30.12.2018: Current elections (postponed several times since November 2016). According to official figures, the majority elected President Felix Thisekedi with a clear lead, while the results of the parliamentary and senate elections are said to have produced a two-thirds majority for the government (FCC). The results caused worldwide astonishment, among the opponents of the Kabila regime (by Rwanda's grace) indignation and so far fruitless complaints.

[1] *Whether this is really a son of Kabila is controversial. Joseph Kabila was a confidant of the man who led the Blitzkrieg of 1996, the Rwandan civil war general and later commander-in-chief of the Congolese (!) army (since 1998), James Kabarebe.*

"Dubious elections in ..."
continued from page 6

is known to the Episcopal Conference," was stated in the communiqué, but no name was given. The reservations of national and international election observers regarding the current elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo are mostly identical to those raised in the previous "elections" in that country. They are deeply connected to the structures and living conditions of the people who have been shaken and bled white for so long, whose average income is just over a dollar a day, with a life expectancy of less than 40 years. How on earth should democratic elections be carried out in a country where the majority of the population lives drastically below the poverty line, where schools have been abandoned for years, where in the east a war has been perpetually going on since 1996, sowing fear and terror everywhere, in a country where villages and towns have been hardly reachable for more than twenty years because of the permanent crisis and the dilapidated condition of the streets, where there is no reliable register of the voters and where passports and votes can be bought (if not through blackmailing!)? These issues, having been raised by the Congolese opposition for years, were also raised during the current elections. Doubt was raised in the running up to the elections also about the use of electronic voting machines, in which only the number of the name of one of the three official candidates had to be entered. The government justified the widespread use of the machines by arguing that tons of paper could be saved. Observers objected that, with an illiteracy rate of still more than 30% of the population, electoral secrecy was not respected (Illiterates had to resort to the services of a government-appointed electoral helper who operated the machine for them). Also, such a system is very vulnerable to fraud. Due to the outbreak of Ebola and therefore a general curfew in the Kasai region, millions of voters were not able to cast their votes. Also in these elections the country did not have officially accredited voter registers available.

Political murder in close succession

Encouraged by Western industrial powers, truly democratic conditions have never been aimed for so far by the hitherto powerful in this country. The first and only truly democratically elected Prime Minister after the Independence Celebration (June 1960), bearer of hope *Patrice Lumumba,* had not been in office for three weeks when the American secret service, together with its British and Belgian offshoots, launched a war of secession that lasted for three years and robbed young democracy of its vital forces. It started in the resource-rich province of Katanga, whose treasures (copper, gold, diamonds, uranium and rare earths) the West wanted to secure for the future, enforced by means of a brutal proxy war with mercenary armies. In its bloody course Lumumba was (as we know today: with the approval of the then American President *Dwight Eisenhower)* brutally murdered by Belgian military just a few months after the warlike secession of Katanga.[3] The plane, with the then UN Secretary-General *Dag Hammarskjöld,* who was desperately striving for a diplomatic solution to the so-called Congo turmoil and on his way to the crucial secret conference venue (in today's Zambia on the Katangian border), with an elaborate truce proposal in his pocket, was shot down by a military aircraft, as recently reported in relevant reports in respected media. The General Secretary and the entire crew were killed.[4] This political murder was declared an accident and went down in history as such (among other "accidents" of the kind). As a "solution" to the long-standing Congo confusion, the secret services mentioned then magically pulled *Sese Seko Mobutu,* at that time colonel of the Congolese army, out of their pockets. In fact, his military coup was prepared a long time ago. This solution drove the Congolese people betraying all their hopes, into a leaden dictatorship lasting until 1997 with the blessing of the Western economic powers and correspondingly profitable mining rights. Then a so-called "rebellion", also fomented by Western intelligence forces and equipped militarily and logistically by Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, put an end to the Mobutu regime in a blitzkrieg. With the two Kabilas (*Laurent-Désiré Kabila* and Joseph Kabila), two figures had been sitting at the head of the country for almost 30 years who had participated in the war controlled by Rwanda (it was in fact an intervention intended and supported by the West, which was to lead to the Balkanisation of the country) of 1996/97 and who carried a heavy share of responsibility for the atrocities in Eastern Congo caused in these years. Both were not rooted in the country and were regarded by insiders as well as by the vast majority of Congolese themselves as puppets of the new powerful American man in Africa: Rwandan President *Paul Kagamé.* He has been called a war criminal by numerous observers for years, based on incriminating facts. Under his command, his troops fired at the huge refugee camps in North and South Kivu in 1996. Hundreds of thousands of helpless refugees were killed, either directly or indirectly, as a result of these actions, thereby brutally violating international martial law. Nevertheless the USA, the EU and many European governments, including Germany, pay homage to Paul Kagamé as a wise African statesman of a "new generation".

Analysis of a meritorious patriot

After the announcement of the election results *Honoré Ngbanda,* President of the Congolese Patriotic Movement *Apareco (Alliance des Patriotes pour la Réfondation du Congo)*, has issued a public appeal to the Congolese people, urging them not to be blinded by the manipulated play of the Congolese nomenklatura.[5] The new rulers of post-mobutist Congo around father and son Kabila were forced upon the Congolese by the military alliance of Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian troops. The opposition had already allowed itself to be blinded, came to arrangments with the new regime and received concessions in return. This had now been repeated with Felix Tshisekedi, the new president. A strong indication of this is to be found in Tshisekedi's speech after the announcement of his election victory. There Tshisekedi said the remarkable sentence: "We must no longer regard Joseph Kabila as an enemy, but as a partner". Like Bemba, Joseph Kabila was involved in the war actions that turned the whole of Eastern Congo into an insecure zone and led to its de facto Balkanization. As president, both he and his father obstructed and then stopped investigations by the UN into the atrocities committed by the so-called "rebel troops" among the civilian population, first by the ADLC under Laurent-Désiré Kabila and then by the *RCD (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie)* among various warlords mainly controlled and equipped by Rwanda. If the newly elected president calls military leaders, responsible for the events of the recent two Congo wars, partners, there is little hope for the birth of a "new Congo" by these elections.

Also above the new government the sword of Damocles of the previous camarilla, complying with the new strong man of Central Africa, Paul Kagamé since 1997, is hanging. According to Ngbanda, the citizens of the plagued republic should not be confused by the election spectacle: There cannot be free elections in an occupied country. The current elections in Congo are not an expression of a real change of power, but of a redistribution of existing power relations that has not been publicly declared. In Ngbanda's clear words: by shuffling and by fraud ("… le résultat des imposteurs").•

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1 *UDPS Union for Democracy and Social Progress,* Foundation at Mobutus times

2 cf. Küpfer, Peter. Dangerous aggravation of the situation in the Congo. On the urgent appeal of Dr Denis Mukwege, in: *Current Concerns,* No 20 from 24 August 2017

3 De Witte, Ludo. Regierungsauftrag Mord. Der Mord an Lumumba und die Kongo-Krise, Leipzig 2002

4 As for example in the German magazines "*Die Zeit"*, "*Der Spiegel"*, et al.

5 "Honoré Ngbanda invite le peuple congloais à tirer les leçons des élections"; *www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTjcSgv37JA*. *Honoré Ngbanda* was minister with changing dossiers in recent years of *Mobutu*. In his book "Crimes organisés en Afrique centrale. Révélations sur les réseaux randais et occidentaux" (Paris 2004), he meticulously traces the dramatic events, which culminated in the two annexation wars of 1996/97 and 1998/99 of allied states against the Congo and led to its de facto occupation and exploitation. Today, he is a prominent and recognised critical voice on the new Congo confusions.

Yellow Vests – prelude to new forms of representation

Interview of the monthly magazine "Ruptures" with Etienne Chouard, France

Etienne Chouard (picture ma)

Etienne Chouard, who made a name for himself in France in 2005 in the no-campaign on the EU constitution, is the father of the "Référendum d'initiative citoyenne" (RIC) [nationwide votes based on popular initiatives, ed.] and plays an important role in the yellow vests movement. Here is a condensed version, jointly updated with the author, of the video interview Etienne Chouard gave to the electronic edition of "Ruptures".

Ruptures: What impressed you most about the roundabouts occupied by Yellow Vests?
Etienne Chouard: One of the common features is displeasure at the outrageous contrast between the difficulties experienced by millions and the demonstrative wealth displayed by a minority of the wealthy. These citizens have gone out of their homes and discovered that they were by no means alone with their difficulties in mastering life. They have stopped watching television, some have discovered a new family and so have joined together to form a "new society". Another feature of the movement is the desire to banish political discord.

A rejection of politics?
In reality, it is a rejection of the political class, its fruitless role-playing game and its disputes. Unity is a great advantage of the movement. Divisions, especially between those classified as extreme left-wing or extreme right-wing, would be fatal.

Have you also been receptive to the demands made?
From the outset, many yellow vests have concentrated their complaints on essential aspects. For example, the demand to abolish the CICE, [tax advantage in order to reduce costs for companies, ed.] this inappropriate 40 billion subvention to companies, or the demand to stop selling and privatising public goods and services.

These demands are not necessarily new ...
What is new is that these complaints, which were initially addressed "from below" to the "elected representatives from above", led to the emergence of the RIC […], which spread like wildfire. This extraordinary aspect changes the role of the actors: it is no longer just a question of demanding this or that law, but of demanding a completely different type of legislation. This is the beginning of a historic breakthrough: until now, those who made the decisions were addressed – the elected representatives. It is now a question of no longer submitting to the goodwill of the latter: It is the people who must decide.

But does not the Constitution give the elected representatives the power to enact these laws?
That is exactly what needs to be changed! The Constitution, which lays down the forms of representation, was written by these very representatives, and not by those who would be the only legitimate ones: those represented. And that is why the idea of the RIC is so valuable, because it demands that the people really take power and decide on every law. So far, voters have been, in a sense, children who are required to entrust their powers to those who have the knowledge and think for them. In this respect, the status of the voter is degrading, in fact he is required to appoint his masters at regular intervals. Now the time has come for emancipation and growing up.

On the part of the government, however, receptiveness is expressed to the principle of the RIC …
It is illusory to imagine that the masters will readily return power. They may take up the idea of a referendum, but they will equip it with all kinds of barriers: Thresholds, control authorities, restrictions on topics … What is needed is a RIC for all topics. We ourselves must establish our own political power! And this idea can take shape more quickly than we think … As *Victor Hugo* said, nothing is stronger than an idea whose time has come.

Are the laws desired by the citizens capable of gaining a majority?
Of course, legislative debates and disputes will continue to be necessary. But today, the main thing is that the people establish themselves as a political power. And this idea can be shared by citizens who have very different, even conflicting beliefs. Some have drawn parallels with the "Nuit debout" movement [Spring 2016]; but in "Nuit debout" people from the right or extreme right were excluded from the outset. This movement could not succeed because the division to some extent was already in its genes. In contrast, one of the characteristics of the yellow vests movement is that it does not exclude anyone. Let us recall the time of the occupation: very opposing political forces were able to unite in the resistance, from the communists to the Maurrassians [followers of the Catholic-conservative *Charles Maurras* classified as right-wing extremist, ed.] …

Is the parallel to the time of occupation appropriate?
Every historical period is different. But let us take the "European project": it is clearly a project for the expropriation of nations and thus of peoples. With the transfer of national sovereignty to the European level, our representatives have sold our most valuable asset, although they were by no means its owners. This is, in fact, a betrayal. And since our Constitution does not provide any punishment for this crime, they continue. In reality, the European Union is an occupation project conceived and implemented by the leading American forces at the end of the war, as *François Asselineau* (President of the UPR) has already often explained. In short, we must leave the EU, that is obvious.

Emmanuel Macron, on the other hand, wants "European sovereignty" ...
This concept is an oxymoron (association of two incompatible terms). Or one must speak of the sovereignty of banks and multinationals – they are the ones who rob people of their sovereignty. And it is certainly not the European Parliament that is going to change that, that is a complete fallacy. In this sense, the forthcoming European elections would be an illusion if certain people imagine making it an extension of the yellow vests movement. I would also reiterate that elections are a process of political expropriation. No emancipation of the people can result from this!

Aren't they a source of legitimacy after all?
No! What constitutes the great wealth of the yellow vests movement is the prelude to new forms of representation, as they have been developed at the roundabouts: no representatives to decide for us; in the case of representations, precise definition of mandates, clear instructions as well as possibilities of monitoring and recall; transparent negotiations. Today's technologies make it possible: when a negotiation takes place, it can be transmitted via a simple telephone, and the representatives are under control at all times and in real time.

How do you see the future of this movement?
For the time being, the movement remains unified, determined, persistent and peaceful. If all this is preserved, history will sometimes experience unexpected accelerations. And when more and more sections of the population are won over – including the public forces of law and order – the government will appear to be what it is – naked – and will have to make way. Priority will then be given to a constitutional process of the people. •

Source: ©*Ruptures* No. 82 of 31.1.2019
(Translation *Current Concerns)*

Institutional framework agreement as an instrument of European state-building

Prominent Swiss personalities on the framework agreement with the EU (Part 2)

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

In the Current Concerns edition of 19 February, a number of personalities from the fields of science, economy and politics presented several serious concerns about the planned framework agreement between Switzerland and the EU, ranging from the lack of clarity, as to which treaties should be subject to the agreement, to the threat to our social partnership, that has been functioning for decades, and to the unsatisfactorily regulated settlement of disputes, and from the false assertion that legal certainty would be increased to the massive restriction of our direct democratic rights.

Part 2 is about awakening the forces of resistance that are present to a rich degree, not only in the Swiss economy, but also in our population and politics. Here, too, I will use a number of encouraging statements to remind us of what we stand to lose with a closer integration into the EU; and that Switzerland is best off if it cooperates with other countries on an equal footing.

We have always been able to hold our own if we only wanted to

The Swiss negotiators should not forget that they are dealing with a "partner" who starts flexing his muscles whenever something does not suit. The EU does the same with its member states if they do not toe the line: Hungary, Austria, Poland … And it is particularly rabid in its dealings with the UK, since this is willing to leave – so that other member states will not dare getting a taste for it, too! What kind of club is it that tries to keep its members and its contractual partners together by means of coercion and threats instead of awakening in them the joy that joint action and progress can give?

Switzerland, as a flexible and innovative small state, certainly does not need to stare at Brussels like a hypnotised little rabbit, because those gentlemen might once again come up with some means of harassing us. Is this not just this expectation which activates our powers of resistance? In this sense, *Oliver Zimmer,* Professor of Modern European History at Oxford University: "What the protagonists of the EU are striving for is no secret. Whether they will get it, remains uncertain. In this situation, it is not in Switzerland's interest to place its faith in anticipatory obedience. Pressure and attempts at intimidation cannot be equated with coercion. You have to choose between legitimate alternatives."[1]

Rudolf Strahm, who was price supervisor and SP National Councillor for many years, is convinced that the Swiss economy is not as weak and dependent as one might think in view of several association leaders' agitation: "Somehow we have always been able to hold our own; we have exploited regulatory niches, and I think we still have room for manoeuvre there." And he continues: "Contrary to the threats of decline, for example 26 years ago before and after the EEA referendum – when it was believed that Switzerland had really messed things up – the economy nevertheless proved to be extremely exportable, productive and networked and was able to maintain its high level of prosperity."[2]

Even today, according to Strahm, the Swiss economy is in good shape, especially because of our strong dual vocational training system: "We are at the forefront of innovative countries in world production. In my opinion, this is due to a mixture of top scientists and top specialists, thanks to our vocational training system. Many major powers have engineers and university graduates. But many of them do not have skilled workers, who can quickly put their knowledge into practice, and develop marketable products. [...] I believe that competitiveness can survive, that it will survive. Quality work, niche production and specialisation are possible despite high wages. The Swiss economy is geared towards specialty production, not mass production but expensive products that are in demand because of their quality."

(*mw:* However, this positive assessment only applies if we, as quickly as possible, ensure that we go back to learning something sensible in our schools, so that after nine school years the young people will again have mastered the basics of what enables them to become top specialists …).

Rudolf Strahm is therefore of the opinion that – today, as in 1992 – Switzerland should not accept an inadequate agreement in a hurry: "We need some time and also some equanimity, we need to know that we have to arrange ourselves. But we don't have to get into fever attacks about this short-term draft treaty."

"A plan B is needed for every area"

Finding niches and mobilising counterforces against possible harassment from Brussels or from elsewhere is part of our resilience, not only of Swiss companies, but of the Swiss model as a whole.

Rudolf Strahm: "The Federal Council must develop a Plan B for every area. This means that if we come under pressure at short notice, as a result of sanctions or retaliatory measures – or, one could say, as a result of pestering – we must be able to react and know what we are doing."[3]

• The example of *Erasmus+*

By means of an excellent Plan B, the federal administration has already overcome the exclusion from the *Erasmus+* student exchange programme (after our "yes" to the Immigration Initiative in February 2014): with an independent, lean organisation, which is much cheaper than integrating into the monumental Brussels bureaucracy – so that the federal government has decided to continue holding the reins:[4] "Since 2014, *Switzerland has no longer been an Erasmus+ programme country,* but a partner country. To ensure that Swiss institutions can continue to participate in cooperation and mobility activities with the Erasmus+ programme countries, the Federal Council has adopted an interim solution financed with Swiss funds […]"[5] [emphasis added by *mw*]. Switzerland is faring far better as an autonomous "partner country", and so a "transitional solution" is converted into a patent remedy!

• The example of temporary stock exchange equivalence

A great deal of unrest was triggered by the EU Commission's announcement in December 2017 that it would only grant recognition of the equivalence of Swiss stock exchange regulation for the limited period of one more year, i.e. until the end of 2018. This meant that EU securities traders would no longer be allowed to trade Swiss shares on Swiss stock exchanges if they were also traded on EU stock exchanges. This applies to almost all shares of larger Swiss companies (the shares of smaller companies are not traded on stock exchanges).

The *Swiss Bankers Association* stated in June 2018: "Since the competent EU authorities have reviewed the Swiss stock exchange regulation and considered it to be equivalent, the decision of the EU Commission is purely political"[6].

By treating Swiss companies less well than companies from other financial centres outside the EU – such as Singapore or Hong Kong – Brussels wanted to put Switzerland under pressure, so that the Federal Council would sign the framework agreement. Interestingly, the EU has now extended recognition of Swiss stock exchange regulation, although it is unlikely that the InstA will be signed in the near future. Because the Swiss

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hedgehog has extended its spines: There is also a Plan B for the stock exchange, which has already been legally anchored.

Federal Councillor *Ueli Maurer,* head of the Federal Department of Finance, has, so to speak, used the cunning of the small state against the force of the great power. According to an emergency ordinance of the Federal Council dated 30 November 2018, as of 1 January 2019 Swiss shares may only be traded on foreign stock exchanges recognised by the *Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (Finma)*. However, this recognition will only be granted to exchanges which grant reciprocal rights in turn.[7] This means that Swiss shares will only be traded on Swiss stock exchanges – unless another country allows all traders to trade all shares in Switzerland.

The Swiss economy reacted with relief to this regulation, which is limited to three years: "Gasp of relief in the Swiss economy on Friday: The Federal Council's emergency measures in stock trading would ensure the survival of the Swiss stock exchange – even if the EU were to make it more difficult for its stock traders to work in Switzerland."[8]

Plan B is therefore also very promising in this case. It will not be difficult for Swiss authorities to find further similar regulations – as soon as they are prepared to extend their spines. In this sense, *Hans-Ulrich Bigler,* director of the Swiss Union of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, answered the question what he expected from the Federal Council: "I expect them to consider at what level talks with the EU can be continued and how Switzerland can prepare itself for retaliatory measures. The Department of Finance has already set a good example by developing countermeasures to the withdrawal of stock market equivalence."[9]

Removing the nebulousness from the concept of the Swiss model

"Which kind of state is it to be? …" The British-Swiss historian Oliver Zimmer, Professor of Modern European History at Oxford, asks this question, not only for Switzerland: "How should state action and state organisation legitimise themselves? What are their driving forces? Is it about the executive politicians in association with civil servants, who see European policy as a technical-legal balancing exercise? Or is it about the citizens in a tough dialogue with their democratically elected representatives? What kind of state-building should we participate in as citizens, with our commitment and our taxes? The question of the power, meaning and legitimacy of the state presents itself more relentlessly than ever in Europe today. When political scientists recommend politicians to replace the concept of sovereignty by the term 'competence transfer', we should not simply carry on with the agenda."[10]

"… framework agreement as an instrument of European state-building"

With regard to the framework agreement between Switzerland and the EU, Oliver Zimmer comes to the following conclusion: "What was known at the latest since the Treaty of Lisbon became a certainty with the Brexit. The European state-building of the present time has as a prerequisite the dismantling of national statehood. It is obvious that this is achieved at the expense of democratic autonomy.

The framework agreement sought by the EU belongs in the same problem area. Anyone who calls the treaty a compromise is either engaging in window-dressing or has lost his democratic-political compass. From a formal point of view, the framework agreement is an agreement between equal states. But seen in a sober light, it is an instrument of European state-building."

"A culture shock" (Zurich Professor of Constitutional Law Andreas Glaser)

"The framework agreement means a risk for Switzerland […]. We can see incredible opportunities in it, for example for economic liberalisation, for social opening, for lower consumer prices. But this imponderability strongly contradicts the Swiss political culture […]" – namely to negotiate compromises in changing coalitions – it would be a real "culture shock".[11]

Ultimately, the question for us is whether we want to surrender ourselves to the EU or whether we want to continue to determine our own affairs.

"Result of the negotiations must be compared with the overarching values in Switzerland"

Walter Müller, National Councillor of the FDP and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee FAC-N: "If the so-called experts contradict each other, we must ultimately make a political decision, i.e. compare the outcome of the negotiations with the overarching values in Switzerland, in particular sovereignty and direct democracy."[12]

"Freedom, the rule of law, direct democracy and federalism are indispensable qualities of our country and force us to keep sufficient sovereignty, even in a complex and interconnected world". (*Konrad Hummler and Tito Tettamanti)*

(Konrad Hummler is former chairman of the board of the newspaper "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", today partner of *M1AG,* a think tank for strategic current issues; Tito Tettamanti is former member of the cantonal government of Ticino, today lawyer and entrepreneur).

"It does exist, this Swiss substance, and it differs from the historically largely untested substance of the EU to such an extent that further integration would inevitably mean our self-abandonment of what is typically Swiss. We are a bottom-up state; the rest of Europe is of a more or less authoritarian nature. For Switzerland, the term "nation state" is not really apt; rather, it is a unique, subsidiarily intended form of organisation in which many tasks of societal, social and economic policy can obviously be solved very well. Switzerland has always made closeness to citizens, cost-efficiency and cultural diversity possible.

The prerequisite for this is sufficient differentiation and demarcation: Freedom, the rule of law, direct democracy and federalism are indispensable qualities of our country and force us to keep sufficient sovereignty, even in a complex and interconnected world.

We firmly believe that it is precisely these qualities – in the broadest sense the Swiss capital stock and our ability to preserve and accumulate it – that make us so attractive globally."[13] •

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1 "Welcher Staat soll's denn sein? – Which kind of state is it to be?" Guest commentary by Oliver Zimmer. *NZZ-E-Paper* of17 December 2018

2 "A plan B is needed for every area". Interview with Rudolf Strahm. SRF News, *Echo der Zeit* of 28 December 2018, by Samuel Wyss

3 "A plan B is needed for every area". Interview with Rudolf Strahm. SRF News, *Echo der Zeit* of 28 December 2018, by Samuel Wyss

4 cf. "Scrutinise your contract partners first! Or: What does "Erasmus" have to do with the mass immigration initiative? by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich *Current Concerns* No. 1 of 14 January 2015

5 *www.movetia.ch/programme/schweizer-programm-zu-erasmus/* (German text)

6 "Börsenäquivalenz: Der Schutz des Finanzplatzes (Stock market equivalence: The Protection of the Financial Centre". insight of 28 June 2018, *www.swissbanking.org/de/services/insight/insight-2.18/zum-schutz-der-schweizer-boerseninfrastruktur)* (German text)

7 "*Ordinance on the Recognition of Foreign Trading Venues for the Trading of Equity Securities of Companies with Registered Office in Switzerland"* of 30 November 2018, Article 1

8 Börsenäquivalenz – Wirtschaft atmet auf (Stock market equivalence – economy breathes a sigh of relief)". *SRF-News* 1 December 2018, Author: Philip Meyer

9 "Dieses Resultat muss man weiterverhandeln – This result must be further negotiated". Interview with SGV Director Hans-Ulrich Bigler. "*Neue Zürcher Zeitung"*, 21 January 2019. Authors: Christina Neuhaus and Michael Schoenenberger

10 "Welcher Staat soll's denn sein? (Which kind of state is it to be?)" Guest commentary by Oliver Zimmer. *NZZ-E-Paper* of 17 December 2018

11 "Ein Kulturschock (A culture shock)." Interview with Zurich professor of constitutional law Andreas Glaser. "*Weltwoche"* No. 05.19 of 31.1.2019, Author: Katharina Fontana

12 "Umstrittenes Rahmenabkommen – Ja oder Nein zum Abkommen mit der EU? Experten sind sich uneinig (Controversial framework agreement – Yes or No to the Agreement with the EU? Experts disagree)". Public hearing of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council. *Television SRF* of 15 January 2019

13 "Die Schweiz und die EU: Substanz statt Performance – Switzerland and the EU: substance instead of performance". Guest commentary. Konrad Hummler and Tito Tettamanti. "*Neue Zürcher Zeitung"* of 3 July 2018

The EU – a stocktaking exercise 2019

How 512 million people are being managed

by Robert Seidel

There is a lasting silence in the Swiss media regarding the problems of the European Union, as Dieter Sprock had to state in Current Concerns No. 3 of 5 February. The problems of the EU do not concern small cosmetic developments, but serious, partly inherent systemic aberrations.

Many Swiss are currently wondering whether the problems of the EU have disappeared since the Federal Council negotiated about closer ties with Brussels as they can no longer read or hear anything about them in the media. The following is a brief reminder of some of the problems of this supranational construct.

In recent years it has become evident that in the EU the decisions are made within the power centres of individual powerful states (the EU states Germany, France and extrinsic by the USA) and the smaller ones have to defer to the decisions. These decisions are not brought about democratically, but are based on power and influence. If the course of an individual country doesn't suit the more powerful, then massive pressure is built up (as on Austria in 2000/2001, Hungary since 2010, Greece 2010–2015, Italy since 2018, Poland since 2005, Great Britain since 2016).

80 % of the national laws of a member state are decided in Brussels. The only thing left for the national parliaments to do is to nod off these decisions from Brussels. A relevant influence of the citizens on their matters is becoming less and less at the national and member state level, and it does not exist at all at the EU level. The EU does not acknowledge any popular rights to be taken seriously.

The *EU Parliament* is restricted in its rights, its composition is not democratic, and in recent decades it has increasingly given the impression that it has degenerated into a self-service shop for its parliamentarians and their parties (cf. Hans Herbert von Arnim. *Die Hebel der Macht*, 2017, Levers of Power).

If national decisions are contrary to the EU, they are reversed by the *European Court of Justice (ECJ)* or by the own government on behalf of the EU, however democratic they may have been done. Through its conduct, the EU destroys remaining democratic decision-making leeway at national or regional level.

Undemocratic juggernaut

It is a truism that the EU is neither a democracy nor acting democratically. Not any citizen could in any way have a say in who becomes a member of the *EU Commission*. This remains reserved for the heads of government of the EU states (*European Council*). Perhaps 5% of the inhabitants of the EU may know its EU Commission President *Jean-Claude Juncker* or the "EU Foreign Minister" *Federica Mogherini*, but hardly anyone knows other commissioners like *Frans Timmermans, Andrus Ansip, Maroš Šefcovic, Valdis Dombrovskis, Jyrki Katainen* or *Günther Oettinger.* The "sciatica" suffering of President Juncker in July 2018 (*gloria.tv/video/n7pCZZaEnTm72dN6bURXdD7PK*) or his appearance in June 2015 (*www.20min.ch/ausland/news/story/EU-Chef-Juncker-ohrfeigt-Regierungs-chefs-12300484*) remains as a lasting memory of the qualities of this leadership. It probably also reflects the condition of the EU as a whole.

A normal citizen has basically no influence on the subordinate EU administration with its huge authorities, which hardly anyone knows – not to mention control possibilities. All the more vigorously Brussels regulates, bureaucratises and restricts the lives of the individual people. About the proverbial curvature of the banana to the forced feeding food contaminated with harmful pesticides, Brussels bureaucrats (32,000 employees, according to its own figures) decide.

Unscrupulous lobbying

One of the biggest problems is still and increasingly the uninhibited and comprehensive lobbying in Brussels. A large number of international corporations, banks and foundations with an estimated 25,000 lobbyists are active in Brussels in order to bring about decisions in their favour. Far away from any state control, not to mention any control by the citizen, possible decision-makers are pushed onto the right track in the conference rooms of hotels or in the branch offices of corporations. In this way, decisions that were or could be taken at national level and that are more factual and closer to the citizens are circumvented, anticipated or annulled. Of course, it is obvious that syndicates or criminal structures, such as the N'drangeta or Mafia, are also trying to expand their influence in this opaque environment.

State socialism à la Bruxelles

EU centralism promotes nothing less than corruption and nepotism through the massive redistribution of taxpayers' money (EU funding programmes, but also the Cohesion Fund). The construction of motorways or railway lines with the help of EU funds is proverbial: motorways that end in nothing, railway lines and airports that cannot find passengers. The EU is thus a prime example of the opposite of meaningful, lean federalism and is more reminiscent of the planned and nepot economy of communist times.

Adventurous financial policy

The financial policy of the EU and the *European Central Bank (ECB)* has been a disaster from the very beginning. As a result of the forced binding of the individual national economies to the euro, the individual states are no longer in a position to conduct independent financial and economic policies. This criticism is not new, but was formulated before the introduction of the euro by renowned scientists (*Hankel, Nölling, Schachtschneider, Starbatty,* 1997). Not only Greece, Italy and also France's economy suffer massively today from this forced connection. They are no longer able to devalue their currency sensibly in order to remain competitive. The creeping impoverishment of the population not only in these countries is a long-term consequence.

The money supply of euro money has risen irresponsibly since 2008 and continues to rise. There is no change in monetary policy in sight. Here, too, the warnings of renowned experts (e.g. *Jens Weidmann*, 2019) fell on deaf ears outside the gates of the ECB. How the exit from this "quantitative easing" can take place without an economic crisis, inflation or war remains unclear. Meanwhile, the rigorous zero-interest policy is melting people's assets and pensions.

Is it because of ECB President *Mario Draghi* (whose reputation is more than doubtful due to his previous activities at *Goldman-Sachs* Bank in connection with Greece's admission to the euro zone and the subsequent generous assumption of Greece's sovereign debt by the EU – to the benefit of those very big banks) that financial policy tends to follow the interests of the global big banks?

The liability union (EFSM, ESM) is now forcing all EU states to shoulder the debts of one or more bankrupt Euro states. And this can happen very quickly these days. In the final consequence, the debts are paid off with the assets of the citizens – the saying of "deposit protection" becomes spoilage.

In budgetary terms, the EU remains a "black box". While in the 2000s the miss-

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ing millions or how taxpayers' money disappears or is squandered were still criticised (*Paul van Buitenen, 2004*), it has become conspicuously quiet about this issue in recent years …

The citizen as a culprit – Orwell sends his regards

With regard to authoritarian and undemocratic action, the decisions of the EU, its guidelines and the rulings of the ECJ in the field of domestic policy are more than questionable: the EU is in the process of establishing and expanding a monitoring system that observes, stores and treats individual citizens like criminals. The entire collection of data, the creation of personality profiles – also within the framework of Schengen/Dublin – takes place almost unhindered. The situation is similar concerning access to the Internet and freedom of the press. Critical reporting on the EU is increasingly restricted by the term "fake news" or "hate speach".

The legal system is being squandered

The EU suffers from an autocratic squandering of the legal system. One highlight was the German Chancellor's arbitrary decision to allow all migrants to enter the Schengen/Dublin area of the EU or Germany. This was contrary to applicable law and all legal treaties (Schengen-Dublin). All other EU states and also the associated states, such as Switzerland, had to succumb to their actions.

Otherwise too, the EU legal system suffers from lack of transparency and remoteness from citizens. The *European Court of Justice*, which has to decide in the final instance, is staffed by judges from 28 different countries from different legal systems and legal traditions, who hardly know the problems of the other states, but speak very far-reaching judgments about them. They regulate the daily lives of 512 million inhabitants – far from reality.

EU as a peace project?

The advertising message that the EU is a "peace project" can be assigned to the field of modern fairy tales with a brief look at its armament, its close connection to NATO (Pesco) and the many military adventures of its individual member states. Any military action by an EU state falls back on all member states. Keywords: Kosovo, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Ukraine, Mali. The neutral states inevitably lose their credibility (Sweden, Austria, Ireland). The aggressive approach also includes foreign policy conduct, which is closely tied to the USA and provokes a confrontation with Russia and China.

On the transatlantic leash

The US-American intelligence service NSA spies unhindered and end to end on the individual EU states and in particular Brussels. Political, military and economic decisions can never be made without a connection to the power centres in the USA. – These centres of power do not always correspond to the official government.

Werner Wüthrich describes in detail that "European unification" was not at all a European unification, but – contrary to the Brussels hagiography – corresponded to Washington's wish after the Second World War to be able to control Europe via one telephone line, using the key person *Jean Monnet* as an example (cf. *Current Concerns* No. 31 2011, *Current Concerns* No. 4 2012).

No recovery in sight

The state of the EU and its impact on individual member states is worrying. This supranational entity develops into an autocratic form of government with a largely incapacitated population. Despite all assurances by the EU to introduce more democratic elements, these remained unfulfilled.

The facts collected here are publicly accessible and can be studied by anyone. They must be taken into account and included in any decisions that may be taken, such as closer integration into the European Union. •

(Translation Current Concerns)

Letter to the Editor

On the institutional framework agreement

The mere fact that such a unilateral agreement could get on the table for the purpose of internal consultations, is a damning indictment of the Federal Council's policy. Well aware of the arrogance of EU leaders and negotiators (greetings from Brexit), Switzerland must also look at home, because:

– it is becoming increasingly clear that the Swiss negotiators seem to be overwhelmed and are ripped off in some naïve manner;
– in such negotiations, which are important for Switzerland's existence, there is a lack of necessary self-confidence and courage;
– as overwhelmed and incompetent, the Swiss EU negotiating delegations appear to be staffed wrong and one-sided;
– one looks in vain for preambles with premises which, as a basic condition, unambiguously and unrestrictedly guarantee, for example, state sovereignty, independent judiciary, social partnership, right of initiative, full referendum right, etc.;
– there is a lack of indicators of what will be bindingly excluded, such as the most dangerous Citizens' Rights Directive.

What is on the table should be disposed in the shredder of history, sooner rather than later. The dissatisfaction of the people is increasing across all party lines. To stop the exercise and a well thought out, early and broadly supported new beginning is necessary. The upcoming elections must not be a leitmotif.

The Federal Council ought to be clear by now that he is on the wrong track. Anyone who has watched the public hearing of the Foreign Policy Commission on television and read the treaty has had his eyes opened. If the Federal Council continues to hesitate, he will increasingly lose his credibility. Therefore, I call out to him: Lead and act quickly!

There is no doubt that we need a predictable agreement with the EU, which should not correspond to the logic of a "marriage contract", not to say a "colonial treaty", rather the logic of a loose partnership in mutual respect.

Hans-Jacob Heitz, MLaw UZH, Advokat & Mediator SAV, former judge of the Federal Administrative Court and former cantonal councillor

(Translation *Current Concerns)*

The lonely tractor or some thoughts on education

by Dr Eliane Perret, curative teacher and psychologist

When I recently drove home at dusk, my eyes caught a small tractor on the side of the road. A toy to sit on and ride around, as many a child fancies. I imagined how it had been unwrapped with shiny eyes on his birthday. Now the vehicle had already had a few runs. I could not get the tractor out of my mind and it made me think.

Good habits – a treasure chest for life

Why was the tractor standing on it's own beside the road? And how will it get back home again? Someone had to feel responsible for it, just as with many other things in life. Some children crossed my mind. We are working and need a pair of scissors. "Where are my scissors?", is the immediate question. I have to suppress the impulse to let my eyes wander. And indeed, now the child asking becomes active and begins to look for its things itself and thinks about where it had used the scissors last. Soon they it is found and the work can go on. Very good, because these supposedly small and unimportant situations lay the foundation for age-appropriate independence and self-responsibility (as is so often demanded from children in the wrong places today). What about the tractor? Was the little owner of the vehicle not used to looking after his own property, treating it carefully and treasuring it, to fulfil his tasks, also in play? A helpful habit that can also be reverted to later in life! It is made of fine tram threads that can be twisted into a strong thread and thus provide safety and support. How could he or she have come to learn that?

Supporting hand

On their way into life small children are dependent on the care of their parents. Does this mean to remove all the obstacles from a child's path? Or should they not be encouraged and empowered to tackle the challenges of their age and stand on their own two feet? This is how they become strong and courageous! Admittedly, the boundary between parental care and pampering that inhibits development is not always easy to find. Of course, you do not want to expose the child to any danger and you do not want to ask too much either. It is natural that a child gradually expands its radius of action and increasingly wants to make its own decisions. The new tractor has to be taken along everywhere, even on walks and to the playground. A great idea! But what if the child's legs get tired and the tractor becomes a nuisance? Who will take care of it now? Each of us has seen and experienced different variations: A screaming child and a desperate mother pulling the tractor and the child, or a child with bright red cheeks – encouraged by the mother – who pedals along and then – proud of itself – arrives at the destination. This is demanding for the educators. They must develop the sensitivity to distinguish defiant crying with which a child wants to impose its will from crying that expresses a genuine need. This is often challenging. Parents must not only be able to assess what their child is capable of, so as not to demand too much, but also not to demand too little. They may also have to endure the (false) feeling of being uncaring parents if they do not respond immediately to every (supposed) SOS call of the child.

It is these situations – and life holds a multitude of them in store – that enable the child to become self-confident. It learns to think ahead, to divide its energy, to plan and to struggle through for a bit when the situation calls for it. This requires a supporting hand so that the child can raise mentally and physically and thus make the experience that the effort is worthwhile. Not only the muscles develop!

Growing through tasks

With their upbringing, parents introduce their child to life. It should feel able to meet the demands of life. This includes age-appropriate, meaningful tasks with which a child can participate in the everyday life of its family. Even if this is not as easy in today's everyday life as it used to be, many things can still be done in joint responsibility. Even a two-year-old child can tidy up his or her toys, perhaps together with his or her mum or dad initially. Or it takes over the dusting when cleaning - even if it is not as clean as it would be when done by the mother herself. Later on, it can take part in drying the dishes or watering plants, and a school beginner can already fold towels, peel vegetables or handle a vacuum cleaner. Everything can be done at a more leisurely pace. Why not in a world where people keep calling for "deceleration"? These small everyday tasks bear the seeds of a later successful life. Even a child's moaning that it is bored does not have to be an invitation to parents to organise an entertainment programme immediately. Boredom can make you creative and give you the opportunity to once again pick up your colouring pencils and drawing paper, build a cosy "hut" with your bed or immerse yourself in a role play with your siblings or friends.

An illusory world of unrelatedness

The desire for social inclusion is a basic human need. Starting the day off with a breakfast together not only promotes a sense of security, but also provides the children with a good physical base for their kindergarten or school day. It does not take big events to shape everyday life together. Often it is the small incidents staying in our memory. The walk in the woods, the lizards on the warm wall, a card game on a rainy Sunday afternoon, reading a story in the evening and many other experiences in the shared real world. On the other side one's heart might freeze when watching babies in digitally equipped prams and car seats, engaged with their shut-up toys with game apps and countless short films which are given to them as a substitute for smiling and chatting with their mothers.

The relationship of parents are irreplaceable! Unfortunately, life in front of the screen becomes a normal case at an early age. Children at this young age cannot estimate the consequences for them. For one, it deprives them of the opportunity to explore the world calmly, to observe nature, to discover connections and to develop patience. Even if you keep hearing, the educationally veiled arguments, that today computers are necessary in every profession and children had to learn to deal with them early on. They don't stand up to closer inspection! But parents are misguided in their everyday family life and accompany their children unintentionally in an illusionary world of un-relatedness.

The challenges of life as chance to develop

Well, actually it is clear: In order to achieve something, you must do something for it. You cannot purchase success in the shopping centre. You have to be able to deal with failures constructively. The tower with the building blocks has collapsed, the cat drawn on the picture does not look as good as that of the bigger brother, the math test has not scored the top grade. Actually no reason to get upset, for tears or a tantrum. It is of no use to put the blame on the others either. Mama is not guilty if I have cold fingers because I did not wear the gloves: But what could I do better next time?

In early childhood, the course is set for emotional reactions that are not favourable and that can be become set without correcting these hindering behavioural patterns. This is an emotional maturing process. Those who learn early to reflect on their own actions, grow in their personality. Learning to walk is a good example for

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this. Children learn that it is worthwhile to practice with patience and perseverance and to make an effort. Human development takes place just outside wellness zones where relaxation and idleness lead to success. The adults are also required to be in the situation with inner peace, goodwill and feeling certain. It is part of the normal circumstances of life, to endure states of tension. It doesn`t help anybody, if you want to protect the children from disappointments, even if this is often part of everyday life in the upbringing today. By this, children are deprived of the opportunity to grow on challenges and overcome a short-term need or disappointment in favour of a higher goal. Media and advertising often delude the children (and not just them) to thinking that life can be handled with a simple click and those who do not want to believe it are losers. It is no coincidence, many children and adolescents dream of becoming a superstar, blogger or influencer and spend hours on digital media, *Netflix* series and in social networks. Genuine and sustainable success and inner satisfaction are the result of a long-term and exhausting process, tied to your own efforts. As adults, we support them and show them their way in an age-appropriate and empathetic way.

The gold treasure in the cabinet

Let's get them out of the cabinet where they were banished by the zeitgeist: Diligence, reliability, gratitude, decency, consideration and honesty. It is these virtues (or social-emotional competences, as they are called today) that help to shape a fulfilling life among fellow human beings.

Today, many children live in privileged situations. In contrast to previous generations, daily life is secure. Parental upbringing is often lead by the wish that one's own children should have it better than they had. This does not mean, however, that the children should become indifferent to the life achievements of their ancestors. It is up to us to pass on this sense to the children. It promotes solidarity with one's fellow men, compassion for the fate of others and the desire to contribute something yourself.

Are politeness and decency really outdated? The magic words "please" and "thank you" -– are they not an expression of attentiveness and care in dealing with each other? Shared meals are a good learning field for this. Children not only practice the common table manners, but also experience the conversation culture in the family. Listening to each other, thinking along the thoughts of others and refining them, instead of always putting oneself in the centre, are important experiences. Compassion and sympathy can grow. And what about honesty? It is a precious asset and the basis of prestige and trust among fellow human beings. Lies are common practice in the illusory world of digital media. One puts beautified photos of oneself on the net, takes on another identity with a nickname and presents the sunny sides of life on *Facebook* or in other "social" media. In real life, such habits lead to the end of friendships, marriages, work relationships, etc., and to great disappointments that are often difficult to overcome.

It is up to us adults to find the courage to guide the children so that these seemingly out-dated virtues take the place they deserve in their emotional world.

The endless final exception

In recent years, many values, attitudes and behaviours have gradually changed. This can be regarded as normal and any concerns can be brushed aside as completely outdated. Thereby one becomes absolved from having to do something about it. It saves you of conflicts, even if exactly these frictions can produce (interpersonal) warmth and help everyone to reconsider an inner position. An excuse is at hand right away: "Alright, I'll make an exception, but this will be the last time". Yet, for how many times? Those, however, who stay firm in that certain developments in the children's behaviour could endanger their future life, must take action at the risk of contradicting themselves, others and social trends. The children are careful observers. They sense exactly where the other person retreats and where it stops inwardly. This becomes a model for them. For example at school, where not every task is fun, perhaps at times even a bit boring and requiring perseverance. A sense of satisfaction and pride after work is completed will be the reward. Those who have experienced this most probably will be less hesitant and more confident in their next task, because their self-esteem has grown. Resistance and conflict can become an incentive to find a solution, and children are capable do that, too.

Last but not least

The following day the tractor no longer stood beside the road. Yet, how did it get home? Perhaps, its owner had remembered and set off again to get the vehicle. Let us hope so! Then he would have made progress in his development. If he continues along this path, he will be a valued fellow human being as an adult who tackles his life's tasks with confidence and is courageously committed to the interests of his fellow human beings and society. •

Among others, the following books have inspired me to write this article and have accompanied me in my writing:

Adler, Alfred. *The Education of Children*. United States 2011, ISBN 978-1614279952

Druckerman, Pamela. *Parenting Secrets from Paris. French Children don't throw Food*. Munich 2013. ISBN 978-0552779173

Müller, Andreas. *Schonen schadet. Wie wir heute unsere Kinder verziehen (Pampering is harmful. How we are spoiling our children today)*. Berne 2018 ISBN 978-3-0355-1088-1

Seif, Leonhard/Zilahi, Lad. *Selbsterziehung des Charakters.* (Self-education of the character). To Alfred Adler for his 60th birthday, dedicated by his students and staff of individual psychology. Leipzig 1930

Events of the cooperative *Zeit-Fragen/Current Concerns* on the Leipzig Book Fair

Leipziger Buchmesse

Leipzig liest
March 21 – 24, 2019

At this year's Leipzig Book Fair, Current Concerns will be represented, as well. The booth is located in Hall 4, booth A102. In addition, Current Concerns, invites you to five events at the fair and one evening lecture with discussion in the context of "Leipzig liest".

Reading – the royal road to the formation of the mind "Mein liebstes Lesebuch (My favourite reading book)", for the 2nd and (new) 3rd grades
Speakers: Renate Dünki (CH), Rita Brügger (CH)
The two volumes of "Mein liebstes Lesebuch" are intended for primary school children. Essentially, the reading books contain what literature is able to achieve later. They let children participate in people's thinking and feeling; they train their empathy for other people; they broaden their understanding of the environment, and they are also linguistic role models – this is how you can tell a story! Many positive everyday stories give the children role models with whom they can compare and identify. The stories, poems, game instructions or puzzles offer a variety of reading material from the children's world of experience for all seasons of the year. Children enjoy language games or rhymes, they develop a feeling for the rhythm and sound of the language. Feedback shows that many parents, relatives or teachers also like to tell stories, read them together or use them in school.
Thursday, 21 March, 12 – 12:30 pm
Forum Children – Youth – Education, Hall 2, Stand B600

Digitisation is no solution – It's the teacher who counts!
Speakers: Josef Nyari (DE), Urs Knoblauch (CH), Dr Manfred Strankmann (CH)
The benefits and possible consequences of digital media (PCs, notebooks, tablets or smartphones) in schools have been the subject of controversial debate since their introduction. The aim of digital "learning" programs is to replace the teacher and to steer and permanently control pupils as they learn. Teachers are degraded to learning companions and social coaches. Is this good teaching able to succeed? For most pupils, an active, helpful teacher who leads a didactically well structured lesson with clear work instructions and learning tasks that have to be mastered is indispensable for successful learning. What importance the teacher plays in the learning process? What is a good lesson? Which teaching methods are particularly effective? The ethical dimension of digitisation is likely to be the key issue. We would like to discuss these questions with you.
Thursday, 21 March, 1 pm – 2 pm
CCL, multipurpose area 2

To be able to give trust in our time
Speaker: Moritz Nestor (CH)
Trust is a precious commodity. It is a great responsibility for everyone, wherever they live, to build up mutual trust and shape it on a daily basis without unnecessarily jeopardising it in the often fierce political disputes of our time. With too many people around, it is endangered or even destroyed. And it often is a long way to win it back so that despite adverse circumstances humanity and solidarity can flourish again. Only if we meet the other in honest equivalence trust can really sprout up again.
Thursday, 21 March, 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm
Die Brücke – Begegnungshaus, Zollikofer Strasse 21, Am Volkmarsdorfer Markt, 04315 Leipzig

Peter-Sodann-Bibliothek – GDR literature from 1945 to 1990 – becomes a cooperative
Speakers: Peter Sodann (D), Dietmar Berger (D)
Peter Sodann, born in 1936, is a well-known actor, theater man and cultural creator from the GDR and United Germany. To many, he is also known as "Tatort"-commissar *Ehrlicher.* But also well known is his collection of GDR literature from 9 May 1945 to 2 October 1990. When in 1990 books were again destroyed in Germany for ideological and political reasons, not in public places like after 1933, but in waste incineration plants or power stations, it was Peter Sodann who did not want to come to terms with it. He began to collect and preserve books and writings from the "accession area" and to make them accessible to the public step by step. At first, an individual initiative with own money, it became a stock of around 2.5 million books. Although there are some supporters and helpers, the burden of the institution still lies with Peter Sodann and his wife. Peter Sodann has a far-reaching view. What will become of his second life's work when he can no longer work for it on a daily basis? What will become of this, his inheritance? A cooperative society. "What you cannot do alone, team up with others who want the same thing." *Schulze-Delitzsch*'s sentence is the guiding principle for the newly founded cooperative, "Peter-Sodann-Bibliothek eG – Wider dem Vergehen" which was founded on 17 November 2018 by more than 50 founding members. From now on, it will deal with the future of the book collection and thus continue a large part of history, culture and science of the GDR as part of German history for the generations to come.
Friday, 22 March, 10:30 am – 11 am
Reading Island Non-fiction + Book Art, Hall 3, Booth B600

We are the community! Direct democracy must be built from the bottom up.
Speakers: Dr René Roca (CH), Stephan Lausch (I), Michael von der Lohe (D), Dr Christian Machek (A), Dr Peter Neumann (D)
Direct democracy is on everyone's lips in Europe and worldwide. The issue of direct democracy can be found on the political agenda of parties of different provenance. Many proponents of direct democracy are addressing the Swiss model, which has clear advantages: Direct democracy achieves a high level of satisfaction among the population with state institutions at the expense of powerful parties and the political elite.

The "Research Institute for Direct Democracy" (*www.fidd.ch)*, founded by *René Roca* five years ago, aims to reappraise this form of democracy historically. Initial research results show that direct democracy must be built from the bottom up, integrated into a federalist, subsidiary political system. The cooperative idea played a central role in this process in Switzerland. The cooperative principle first matured at community level and decisively advanced direct democracy. Next came the cantons, which in the 19th century introduced the direct-democratic instruments of referendum and initiativ: which, at the end of the 19th century finally succeeded at the national level as well. The event aims to discuss such research results with speakers from Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland.
Saturday, 23 March, 11 am – 12

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CCL, multipurpose area 4 Fachforum 4

Erlangen/Jena and Vladimir – an example of a living civil partnership. German-Russian Town Twinning – A contribution to international understanding and peace
Speakers: Leonhard Hirl (D), Wolfgang van Biezen (CH)
German Russian town-twinnig is an important basis for the ongoing dialogue between both countries. In a civil society manner – as dialogue from person to person – it will help to find alternatives to any confrontation course. Very often individual citizens are able to set the ball rolling. An example is the town twinning between Erlangen and Vladimir. Today, it is a special feature of this town twinning that an East and West German town is trilaterally shaping the partnership with Vladimir. The town twinning lives by a very strong civic commitment. *Leonhard Hirl*, who was awarded the City of Erlangen's social letter of honour for his commitment to the partnership, will present the full implications of the partnership. Promoting international understanding and peace are one of the main concerns of the Swiss newspaper *Current Concerns*. Our event at the Leipzig Book Fair 2019 is intended to remind people of the importance of town twinning and calls for such partnerships – especially in this time and age – to be deepened and expanded also to cities in Russia.

Saturday, 23 March, 4:30 pm – 5 pm
Reading Island Non-fiction + Book Art, Hall 3, Booth B600

About the aberration of a "digital education"

Event of the parents' initiative Baden-Wuerttemberg

by Tankred Schaer

There can be no "digital education". That was a conclusion from the lecture of *Peter Hensinger,* head of science of the consumer organisation "Diagnose-Funk e.V.", which works for the protection against electromagnetic fields of mobile telephony. The parents' initiative *School Education Future* (*www.elterninitiative-schule-bildung-zukunft.de)* of Baden-Wuerttemberg had invited on 9 February to Stuttgart and over 70 participants had come. The speaker referred to years of literature studies on this topic and confirmed the statements of recently published books with the titles "Kein Mensch lernt digital" (*Ralf Lankau)* and "Die Lüge der digitalen Bildung" (*Ingo Leipner* and *Gerald Lembke).*

Why then this event when everything is clear and unambiguous? During the discussion, it became obvious that despite the clear research results, digital media have to be introduced in schools under great pressure. This includes the agreement in the Mediation Committee of the "Bundestag" and "Bundesrat" on a questionable amendment to the German Basic Law on 20 February, which is to be followed by 5.5 billion euros in federal funding for schools within the framework of a so-called digital pact.

Those who advise caution are defamed as anti-progressive and put on the same footing as those who warned against the introduction of the railway two centuries ago. This is not at all about the demonisation of digital media.

At the beginning of his lecture, Peter Hensinger clarified what is meant by "digital education":

> *"This does not mean that teachers use digital media and software at their own discretion as useful tools in the classroom, for example that students learn Word, Power Point or Excel [...]. Nor is 'digital education' about educating people to become responsible in their use of media, something that schools today undoubtedly have to do. On the contrary: [...] The digital educational reform is about a reorientation of the educational system. Just as in Industry 4.0 robots control production independently, computers and algorithms should control educational processes autonomously."*

What does this mean for daily teaching? Peter Hensinger cited from a *Bertelsmann Group* brochure:

> *"The software 'Knewton' scans everyone who uses the tutorial. The software meticulously observes and stores what, how and at what speed a student learns. Every reaction of the user, every mouse click and every keystroke, every right and wrong answer, every page view and every abort is recorded".*

They are actually working on this terrible scenario. At the *German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence* in Kaiserslautern, for example, student observation systems such as eye-tracking and speech and gesture recognition are being developed for the "classroom of the future". By measuring the facial temperature using infrared cameras, the stress on learners can be determined. The combination of such data sources with intelligent algorithms such as deep-learning methods provides completely new insights into "individual and group-dynamic learning processes".

How can such developments be prevented? There was an intensive discussion about this among the participants. The intention of the organisers was to give the parents affected a voice and a forum, to make demands on schools and society from the parents' point of view, but also to clarify for themselves the situation at the schools. The introduction of networks, learning programs and the necessary hardware is a billion-dollar business. Research results that could support the introduction of this creepy technique do not exist. Nevertheless, the media are repeatedly used to persuade us that our future as an educational nation can only be secured through the comprehensive digitalisation of schools. The opposite is true.

Consequences have already been drawn in other countries. The audience was astonished to learn that all highly acclaimed "Steve Jobs Schools" in the Netherlands have been closed. They were considered as a model for the "exit from the Cretaceous period". In 2012 in Australia, after a decline in the Pisa ranking, around 2.4 billion Australian dollars were invested in laptop equipment for schools. They were collected again since 2016. The students have done everything but study. Similar things are happening in South Korea, Thailand, the USA and Turkey.

Even in Germany, no school is legally obliged to set up a WLAN. No teacher can be committed to using media he does not want to use. Parents can ask about the pedagogical concept at the parents' evenings if the computer programs are to take the lead in "self-directed learning".

It's high time we reversed this trend. At the beginning of his lecture, Peter Hensinger cited from a study on changes in leisure behaviour among young people. Within just 5 years, smartphone usage increased by 75 %. Over the same period, other activities decreased: playing with children by 13 %, meeting with parents/grandparents by 19 %, meeting friends at home by 29 % and inviting/being invited by 42 %. The damage caused by the ill-considered introduction of digital media, forced solely by financial interests, is obvious. Parents and teachers who want to prevent this have all good arguments on their side. •