

# Current Concerns

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## Power and World Order\*

by Professor Dr Dr h.c. mult. Hans Köchler

“It cannot be the irrevocable fate of the human species to sacrifice reason – which is given to the *individual* – on the altar of the *collective* action for the preservation and increase of power of sovereign states that see each other as foes (as threats to their existence).”

Another year in the global political struggle to redefine power relations is about to end. Although philosophically *every* day is a day of contemplation – and not just a symbolic date defined by a unit of measure like year, decade or century – I am taking this point in time as an occasion to investigate the background and leitmotifs of actions guided by the “logic of power.” To do so, I am not going to cite the vast literature on the subject – in the sense of *relata refero* [I tell what I have been told, editor’s note] – but develop my own “phenomenology of power.” I will do so in the spirit of *Husserl’s* method, as a description and analysis of what I have learned in my experience dealing with nearly 50 years of global “realpolitik”.<sup>1</sup> I am first of all not concerned with *prescription* but with *description*. To sharpen our vision of how the world is *supposed to be*, we must first know how the world *is*. Wishful thinking blocks our view of reality, making effective action impossible. A phenomenological description of the logic of power naturally accords particular importance to psychological analysis. It attempts to reconstruct the motivations of both individual (i. e. a politician’s) and collective (i. e. a state’s) action.

### Anthropological constant of power

I call things that persist through all historical eras the anthropological constant of power. This refers to the drive for self-assertion (including the need for personal recognition) of the *individual* and subsequently of the *collective* – the state – as an association of individuals for securing first the survival and subsequently the “good life” of its members. A classic

example of this is the modern welfare state. For the state as a legal entity, power is the means of generating the conditions for these goals to be realized by each individual member of the collective.

To this end, the state needs (1) a monopoly on the use of force *towards the inside* (to avoid a free-for-all, and thus fend off anarchy) and (2) the capability to secure the life and survival interest of its represented community *towards the outside*. This gives its meaning not only to the military but to foreign policy and diplomacy in general. In its concrete incarnation, this capability becomes the power (the potency, *potentia*) to express the national interest in a global framework so that the polity is not taken over by other polities and in particular does not become a pawn in the power struggle of third parties. It is all about power as an expression of sovereignty, as the capability of the state to self-determination. This is the *essence* of power in the international domain – as long as power is defined *rationally*, taking into account the fact that the state is *not alone* in its struggle for self-determination but that other collectivities organized as states in principle want the same. Power can thus rationally only be exerted on the basis of a non-absolute understanding of sovereignty.

### The “logic of power” in everyday global politics

We have to confront the *idea* of power in its rational understanding – as a means to self-realization for the state in the context of an international community of equals – with the *reality* of politics, to ensure our analysis is relevant. Indeed, power is even in the present not only exerted in this enlightened sense but according to the traditional mechanisms of power politics – in spite of the provisions of the UN Char-



Hans Köchler  
(picture [hanskoechler.com](http://hanskoechler.com))

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ter and the numerous vows of “friendly relations and cooperation among States” (in the language of the General Assembly of the UN).<sup>2</sup> The “logic of power” in everyday global politics is rather skewed towards securing the national interest in a way that President *Trump* called “America first” not too long ago. This slogan asserts the primacy of one’s own state and – before strategic reflections set in – ignores the principle of reciprocity.<sup>3</sup>

Against this background, the state as an international player assumes the “working hypothesis” that securing the community has to be pursued on a basis of strategic mistrust. It can’t be taken as given that the other players act according to the princi-

\* Speech delivered to the reading circle of the *Zeit-Fragen / Current Concerns* newspaper on 30 December 2021. © International Progress Organization, 2021. All rights reserved including translation.

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ple of reciprocity. It is not the *principle of trust*, but rather the *principle of mistrust* that applies. This explains the prominent role of the secret services, in particular for medium and major powers. Part of the unspoken self-image of the state – basically in the collective subconscious – is the constant struggle to survive when trying to position itself for global competition. Civil servants swore their oath on the well-being of their own community, on their own constitution – and not on the well-being of the global community or even their neighboring states. In this context, lies – as deception of competitors in the struggle to assert interests – traditionally form part of the arsenal of politics, and not only in times of war. That is what the Janus-facedness of intelligence work consists of: *towards the inside* – in terms of information collection for its own community – bound by the truth but signed up for deception and camouflage *towards the outside* whenever it is important to give one's own state an advantage over the others or avoid a disadvantage. This duality naturally comes into particular effect in the defense politics of major powers.

**Perpetual peace through perpetual dominance?**

In this respect, the logic of power competes with the ideal of equal cooperation, based on the principle of trust, which, as history shows us, only makes sense if *everyone* adheres to it. The fragility of trust can be seen in innumerable strategic constellations since antiquity. It can be illustrated, for example, by the erratic alliance politics in the time of *Henry VIII* or, in more recent history, the circumstances of the *Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact* during World War II. Naivety and good faith are no common currency in world politics.

The logic of power – founded on mistrust – means that major powers are (and must always be in their calculation) concerned with perpetuating their advantageous status quo, as it often (but not always) results from war. It is therefore not about "perpetual peace" in a Kantian sense but the absence of war guaranteed by the enduring dominance of one's own state. The motto is thus: Perpetual peace through perpetual dominance!

**Losing touch with reality through insatiable power politics**

This was expressed particularly concisely in *George W. Bush's* "National Security Strategy" of 2002, which stated that the United States should exert every effort so that no other state would ever reach strategic parity, and be equal in strength. Simply put: "We must build and maintain our defenses beyond challenge."<sup>4</sup> Part of

the logic of power is a *making-absolute* of the state's own position. This means that in the case of a unipolar constellation, foreign, defense and economic policies are guided by the sole goal of preventing the formation of a new balance of power, whether bi- or multipolar, for all time – thus expressing in a sense a Faustian "Beautiful moment, do not pass away!"<sup>5</sup> The progress of time can however never be stopped, not even by the current most powerful player. There is no "end of history." Denying reality – losing touch with reality – in such insatiable power politics has always led to a sudden, sobering wakeup. Only the time scale on which this process takes place varies.

**The delusion of power**

There is a loss of reality in two different ways.

1. *Individually*: State leaders who have achieved an unchallenged position in their domain (domestic), suffer a *change of personality* in the short or long term. Sealed off in servile surroundings, they tend to feel irreplaceable. (This is an empiric finding corroborated over several decades of my observation.) The corrective of this

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loss of reality is often not a domestic development but comes from the outside; it is the dynamics of *international* relations that can't be controlled by the affected politician. Through strategic miscalculation – because the delusion of power hides or falsifies facts – the state represented by such a person can suddenly and for the leader unexpectedly lose in the international power struggle, most of the time followed by domestic consequences – all according to the old popular wisdom of pride coming before a fall.

2. Analogous to the individual one is the *collective* delusion of power. A state which tries to perpetuate its position of predominance in the manner described before tends to see its position (wrongly) as indispensable – in a way similar to the spirit of self-estimation of the USA displayed by *Madeleine Albright* in her famous appearance in the *Today Show* of *NBC* (19 February 1998).<sup>6</sup> Such a state legitimizes its actions through a self-proclaimed moral, quasi-eschatological mission as American politicians' rhetoric of "A New World Order" after the end of the Cold War has shown.<sup>7</sup> The apologetics of a strategy guided by such wishful thinking are always fast to react. A typical example for this was – three decades ago al-

ready – *Francis Fukuyama* with his thesis of the "end of history." With his prophecy he turned out to be an – albeit feeble – disciple of *Hegel*, who had seen the embodiment of the "Weltgeist" (world spirit) in the Prussian state at his time.

**"Imperial overstretch"**

In the denial of reality, the struggle for power and dominance has proven to be the *collective delusion of global politics* that has been the cause of war and conflicts through the centuries. Politics guided by the "logic of power" oriented towards the unattainable goal of perpetual dominance is also counterproductive. It continually creates a resistance that finally brings down the hegemon, as it – because of its claim to absoluteness – has to defend itself *everywhere* and *on all sides*. US strategists from the CIA community have coined the expression "blowback effect" for this.<sup>8</sup> *Paul Kennedy* ("The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers," 1988) has characterized this issue with the expression "imperial overstretch." He means the conditions, which – because of their overreaching aspiration – turn power into powerlessness.

**History taught us nothing**

Because of the logic of power, which – as a delusion of power – is always concerned with *maximizing* a state's strength and represses inevitable failure, states gamble away the chance for a new start when a power constellation suddenly changes – a new start that could in the end break the cycle of self-destructive competition for power. The examples are beyond counting. We only have to look at the developments after World War I and II, but also after the Cold War. Instead of upholding the ceremoniously proclaimed right to self-determination, the winners in World War I helped themselves to the debtor's assets or acted in a classical Machiavellian manner according to the motto *divide et impera*. It is enough to refer to the fate of Tyrol or Hungary and especially the consequences for the Arab world (keyword: *Sykes-Picot Agreement*). The two superpowers that emerged from World War II tried to divide the world between them. The proxy wars that were fought to secure the spheres of influence (Korea, Vietnam) demanded an enormous death toll. Nothing was learned from history after the "Cold War" either. After the end of the Soviet Union, in-

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stead of aspiring for a balance between the Euro-Atlantic and the Eurasian areas based on partnership, the superior side bet on an expansion of dominance in the sense of a permanent hedging of its advantageous position by encircling Russia. The logic of power meant in this case that after the dissolution of bipolarity, with the disintegration of the Soviet state and the disappearance of the *Warsaw Pact*, its western counterpart, NATO, did not dissolve. Despite losing its *raison d'être* as an alliance of collective self-defense, NATO reinvented itself as an instrument of global intervention for the self-proclaimed winner of the Cold War. To conceal the transition from the *defensive* and regional concept of the North Atlantic Treaty (1949) to an *offensive* alliance with a global mandate, the euphemism of "non-Article 5 crisis response operations" was coined.<sup>9</sup>

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"The essentially *anarchical* state resulting from the mutual mistrust of nations – and often also their peoples – which has caused innumerable wars throughout history must be replaced by a *cooperative* approach that goes beyond exclusive power politics oriented solely towards the national collective."

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**Boundless claim  
to global power – a helpless UN**

In constellations of this type, the insatiable striving for power threatens to give rise to new conflicts. As previously intimated, this is not only proven by the course of history after both world wars, but also after the events of the 1980s. The boundless claim to global hegemony of the single superpower emerging from the Cold War did not only lead to the destabilization of entire vast regions. It also resulted in a type of global anarchy in which the United Nations Organization, created for the maintenance of peace, is reduced to the role of a helpless spectator, capable of no more than admonishments, as it was construed not to get in the way of the powerful due to the will of the dominant players at the time.

Again, this shows how a chance for a geopolitical restart was shortsightedly thrown away. Instead of creating an organization for global peacekeeping based on equal partnership between *all nations*, the victorious powers formulated a statute to permanently protect their reign. In hindsight, this lastingly *destabilized* the global order and *delegitimized* the world organization from the start. This is another example that clearly shows the futility and irrationality of such a strategy. The privileged position of the founders of the United Nations, which they wanted to enshrine in the Char-

ter forever,<sup>10</sup> couldn't stop the course of history. The special statute for the five permanent members of the Security Council (P5) could not prevent the fundamental shift in the balance of powers since 1945, nor the position of strategic submission that some of the former victorious countries now find themselves in.

**"Logic of power" –  
Logic of "hybrid" warfare**

Against the background of historical experience, it could be said that the "logic of power" ultimately means that the state (1) extends its *domestic* (and thus undisputed as being part of the constitutional state) monopoly on the use of force to the *external* domain, meaning the projection of its claim to power onto other states – and in the case of a superpower, the whole world. It also means that the state (2) mobilizes all forces to defend this claim in the name of "national interest" or "national securi-

ty." This comes down to a "total mobilization"<sup>11</sup> exploiting all military-industrial potential<sup>12</sup> including the power of the media. The significance of this under current circumstances can be seen clearly in the already mentioned "National Security Strategy" of 2002. To use a currently widespread term, one can compare this approach to the logic of "hybrid" warfare.<sup>13</sup>

**Dangerous cycle  
of mistrust and exorbitance**

All of this shows the excessiveness of the use of force under the pretext of national security. It is fed by the mistrust between states as sovereign actors as discussed above. Thus a dangerous cycle of *mistrust* and *exorbitance* develops that resulted in, among other things, the "mutual assured destruction" between nuclear powers in the 20th century. As *one actor* assumes being threatened from the beginning by *the other* – who is ultimately aiming to eliminate his competitor to avert a threat himself – *everyone* mobilizes all their forces which in turn requires new steps of mobilization, inevitably further increasing structural mistrust ad infinitum. The paradigm of this vicious cycle of mistrust is the idea developed by *Carl Schmitt* in "The Concept of the Political": In contrast to the personal domain, in the political sphere the *other* is from the out-

set perceived as foe (*hostis* as opposed to *inimicus*), thus as a threat to one's existence as such. The "hostile" in Schmitt's conception is situated beyond all moral categories. In the end it is not about a struggle *between* world views or ideologies. We see what this can mean in the so-called arms race of the Cold War, in which ideologies were only a pretext.

**... leads to an illusion of power**

In the nuclear age the cycle of mistrust and exorbitance – of total mobilization – becomes completely dysfunctional in a way apparently not easily understood by its actors: the drive for power leads to the *illusion of power*. The accumulated potential for destruction which could annihilate the adversary not only once but several times (key word: "nuclear overkill") signifies that an attacker is risking his own existence. In a constellation of "mutually assured destruction" the logic of power reaches its limits. If an accumulation of means of power ultimately signifies the danger of one's own annihilation, and if the only way to avert it is the *rational* (in the sense of self-preservation) behavior of the competitors, then all amounts to nothing. It would simply be more reasonable if everyone could agree on *renouncing* nuclear arms *simultaneously*.

The logic of power prevents this as shown by the fate of the *Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) as well as the continued non-entry into force of the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty* (CTBT) whose "Preparatory Commission" celebrated 25 years of existence last year in Vienna. Concerning the goal of nuclear disarmament in the NPT, apparently no one wants to take the first step. – That some nuclear powers, namely China, India, Israel, North Korea and the United States, whose ratification would be necessary for the CTBT to enter into force, so far decline to consider a general ban on nuclear testing, shows that nuclear weapons remain a strategic option. Structural mistrust between the states appears unsurmountable. It seems that no state that possesses nuclear arms wants to deprive itself of their use as a last resort.

**A guarantee of peace instead  
of "mutually assured destruction"**

You can see how deeply this nearly eschatological drive to self-assertion is anchored in current international thinking through the example of France reserving – by means of an "interpretative declaration" upon ratification of the Rome Statute – that acts of war involving the use of nuclear weapons do not fall under the jurisdiction of the *International Criminal Court* (ICC). (France deposited this effective "nuclear reservation" under the

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guise of an "interpretation" despite the explicit exclusion of reservations at ratification according to the ICC Statute).<sup>14</sup> This proves the intrinsic inconsistency of the politics of power. Everyone agrees that crimes that are committed using conventional weapons can be sanctioned as "international crimes." However, considering the use of weapons of mass destruction as such is supposed to be taboo. The most extreme (international) means of power that a nuclear state thinks of as an assurance of its survival when used as a deterrent is in some way supposed to stand *outside* of law and be *neutral* according to all legal and moral categories.

Missed (or repressed) by those who do not want to reign in the nuclear option – of which France is not the only state – is that because of "proliferation" that has already happened and is still happening, their status as a nuclear power does not grant them a strategic advantage anymore. Instead of the dubious security provided by "mutually assured destruction" the major nuclear powers could, as already suggested, obtain

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"The *realism* in the expression of national interest – to secure the survival of the community – needs the corrective of an *idealism* working towards the survival of humanity. Only the interplay between idealism and realism secures the well-being of *all*, including the most powerful actors."

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a *guarantee of peace* much more cheaply: by renouncing their nuclear potential *simultaneously*. This dilemma seems, however, to be irresolvable at the moment. As long as a mutual (nuclear) disarmament can only be enforced through coercive measures whose threat must be futile simply because of the powers' available potential for destruction, there is no escape from this vicious cycle of disarmament. The doctrine of collective security is doomed to failure.

What I called the illusion of power politics, by reference to the example of nuclear arms, shows itself as well in the fact that with the capacity for nuclear "overkill" there comes no increase in security for the state. This is because at any moment there is the danger of activating the weapons by error or misunderstanding (for example, a faulty interpretation of data) as the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 has shown. For humanity as a whole, it is indeed a regrettable circumstance to have to live under the sword of Damocles, the constant threat of collective self-destruction because of a will to self-assertion exceeding all boundaries of a (still) relatively small number of states. Here the *logic* of power becomes the *folly* of power politics.

**Reason, cooperation and idealism over delusions of power**

What was called the "Tragedy of Great Power Politics" (2014) by American political scientist *John Mearsheimer* should however not lure us into defeatism. It cannot be the irrevocable fate of the human species to sacrifice reason – which is given to the *individual* – on the altar of the *collective* action for the preservation and increase of power of sovereign states that see each other as foes (as threats to their existence).

The essentially *anarchical* state resulting from the mutual mistrust of nations – and often also their peoples – which has caused innumerable wars throughout history must be replaced by a *cooperative* approach that goes beyond exclusive power politics oriented solely towards the national collective. The *realism* in the expression of national interest – to secure the survival of the community – needs the corrective of an *idealism* working towards the survival of humanity. Only the interplay between idealism and realism secures the well-being of *all*, including the most powerful actors.

World order is never possible as a state of anarchy between the currently most powerful, but only based on a balancing of power between sovereign states. In the 21st century, this is also *mutatis mutandis*, the necessary idealist "counterpoint" to the "realist" clinging to the status quo, which is ultimately always doomed to failure. •

<sup>1</sup> Compare my earlier evaluation as well: "The Politics of Global Powers" in: *The Global Community*. Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 173-201.

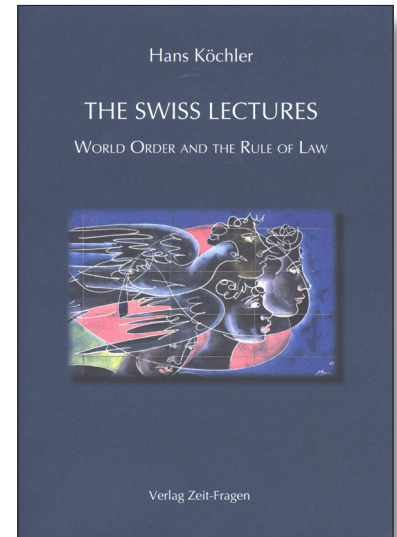
<sup>2</sup> *Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations*. Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, October 24, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> In connection with an appeal to Iran, *Donald Trump* put this principle in his speech in front of the UN General Assembly on 22 September 2019, in a way that is valid for *all* states in the *same* way, which implies an, although unspoken, negotiation of interests in consideration of reciprocity: "Wise leaders always put their own people and their own country first."

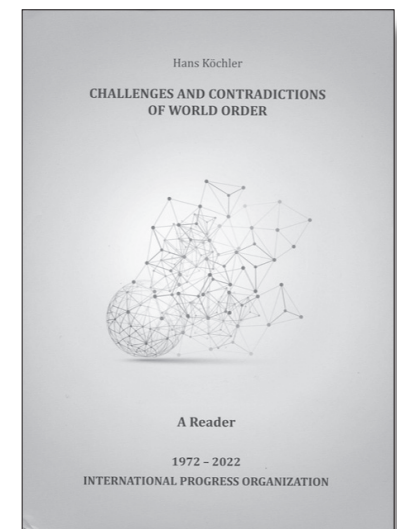
<sup>4</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 17 September 2002, chapter IX: "Transform America's National Security Institutions to Meet the Challenges and Opportunities of the Twenty-First Century."

<sup>5</sup> Goethe, *Faust I*, verse 1700

<sup>6</sup> Madeleine Albright's answer in Matt Lauer's NBC interview has become somewhat proverbial for the delusion of power that always sets in when a country sees itself in a position of unchallenged hegemony:



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on: "[...] if we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us."

<sup>7</sup> See Hans Köchler, *Democracy and the New World Order*. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> See Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty defines the task of NATO in the sense of collective self-defense according to Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

<sup>10</sup> For the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter, see Hans Köchler, *The Voting Procedure in the United Nations Security Council*. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> The term "totale Mobilmachung" was coined by Ernst Jünger, *The Worker: Dominion and Form*, 1932

<sup>12</sup> For the totalitarian aspect see as well Friedrich Georg Jünger (his brother): *The Failure of Technology: Perfection Without Purpose* (written in 1939, released in 1946, translated in 1949).

<sup>13</sup> For the terminology see Hans Köchler, *The New Threat: Hybrid Wars as Tool of Subversion*. Rhodes Forum 2015, [i-p-o.org/Koehler-New\\_Threat-Hybrid\\_Wars-Rhodes%20Forum2015.htm](http://i-p-o.org/Koehler-New_Threat-Hybrid_Wars-Rhodes%20Forum2015.htm).

<sup>14</sup> Hans Köchler, *Global Justice or Global Revenge? International Criminal Justice at the Crossroads*. Vienna/New York 2003, pp. 223ff.

(Translated from the German by *Kaspar Rothenfusser*)  
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# Who is the aggressor?

## NATO and Russia with a view to Germany and Ukraine

by Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Jochen Scholz, Berlin

*The propaganda in the German mainstream press about aggressive Russia is now adopted by many in German politics and society. At best, this shows complete cluelessness. This also applies to the question of why relations between Germany and the Russian Federation are now so desolate. It is therefore necessary to clarify what to make of the military threat to Ukraine posed by Russian troops, as claimed by NATO – just now again at its meeting in Riga – and as recently expressed by the German Lieutenant General (ret.) Brauss.<sup>1</sup> Brauss was NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Force Planning from 2013 to July 2018. Today, he is a "Senior Associate Fellow at DGAP (German Council on Foreign Relations), working in the fields of European security and defense, NATO development, and NATO-EU cooperation."<sup>2</sup>*

Looking at the facts, one can only be amazed at the vehemence with which Russia is held responsible for the security situation in Eastern Europe. One should never forget to ask the question what is action and what is reaction, and above all not to confuse the both.

### Promises of the NATO states ...

Here are a few references to such historical facts:

1. The telephone conversation between President *Bush* and Chancellor *Kohl* in May 1990.<sup>3</sup>
2. The promised implementation (transformarion of NATO into a consultative body) at the following NATO summit in London.<sup>4</sup>
3. The *Charter of Paris* in the same year.<sup>5</sup>
4. And what happened next? With the Wolfowitz Doctrine, also known as the "No-Rivals-Plan", all agreements were turned into their opposite.<sup>6</sup>

All further strategy documents since that time have gone in the direction taken at that time.

### ... and yet NATO eastward expansion

NATO's eastward expansion today sees the alliance on the Russian border. Former US Ambassador to Moscow *Jack Matlock*, who participated in all the reunification negotiations in Moscow, commented, quote: "I'm sure if *Bush* had been reelected and *Gorbachev* had remained president of the USSR, there would have been no NATO expansion during their tenure. There was no way to commit successors, and when *Gorbachev* was deposed and the USSR broke apart, their arrangements became moot."<sup>7</sup>

### US-Neocons and the "Project for the New American Century"

The essence of NATO's eastward expansion was and still is evident from the letter from *Willy Wimmer*, former State Secretary in the German Ministry of Defence and in 2000 Vice-Chairman of the *OSCE Parliamentary Assembly*, to then-Chancellor *Schröder*.<sup>8</sup> He discusses the contents of the Bratislava conference in 2000, which was held on behalf of the State Department by the *American Enterprise Institute*, whose working group "Project for the New American Century"<sup>9</sup> published the strategy paper "Rebuilding America's Defenses"<sup>10</sup> a few months later, to which only neocons contributed. Ten individuals from the working group served in the George W. Bush administration beginning in 2001, including *Cheney*, *Rumsfeld*, and *Wolfowitz*. The implementation of the Bratislava intentions occurred in 2002, and NATO was expanded to include the three Baltic states, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Slovakia.

### Preventing German-Russian coexistence ...

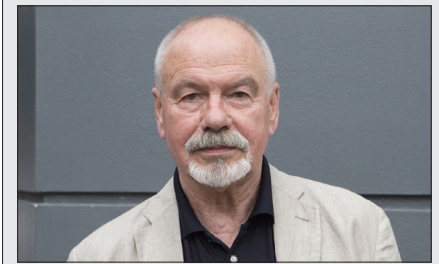
Fifteen years after Bratislava, *George Friedman*, then head of the private intelligence agency STRATFOR, gives a talk at a Chicago think tank, puts on a slide (see map) in the subsequent press conference and declares as a constant goal of American foreign policy to prevent a prosperous German-Russian coexistence.<sup>11</sup>

### ... and "containment" as in the Cold War

A year earlier, *Friedman* had already used the graphic in a STRATFOR article<sup>12</sup> under the title "The new containment", thus reactivating the name for the strategy of containing the Soviet Union, the *Truman Doctrine*<sup>13</sup> which marked the beginning of the Cold War in 1947.

In this respect, one can imagine that after President *Putin's* 2001 speech in the German Bundestag<sup>14</sup> all alarm bells went off on the other side of the Atlantic.

*Friedman's* remarks could be called *Continuity of History and Strategy*, in reference to another term (Continuity of Government) The anti-Russia propaganda complains about the development of Russian hypersonic missiles. Well, who unilaterally terminated the ABM Treaty in 2001 and at the same time started to deploy the AEGIS missile defence system in Eastern Europe and on ships? Should Russia have stood by, exposed itself to the US blackmail calculus? A calculus that US politi-



Jochen Scholz (picture ma)

*Jochen Scholz* was a lieutenant colonel in the German armed forces. As such, he served for several years with NATO in Brussels and then – during the NATO war against Yugoslavia – in the German Federal Ministry of Defence. There he noticed that the official speeches of the responsible politicians about blatant human rights violations by Serbia did not correspond to what he could gather from the reports of the experts on the ground. Because of these lies by the politicians, he left the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in 1999.

cal scientists *Keir A. Lieber* and *Daryl G. Press* describe as follows on page 22 of an analysis as follows,<sup>15</sup> which also appeared in the leading US foreign policy journal *Foreign Affairs*:

*"Although both criticisms are cogent, even a limited missile shield could be a powerful complement to the offensive capabilities of US nuclear forces. Russia has approximately 3,500 strategic nuclear warheads today, but if the United States struck before Russian forces were alerted, Russia would be lucky if a half-dozen warheads survived. A functioning missile defense system could conceivably destroy six warheads. Furthermore, the problem of differentiating warheads from decoys becomes less important if only a handful of surviving enemy warheads and decoys are left to intercept. Facing a small number of incoming warheads and decoys, US interceptors could simply target them all."*

### US missile system to neutralise Russian second-strike capability

To the point: Neutralising Russia's second-strike capability through the missile defence system. When the two authors presented their 2006 study at the *Einstein Forum* in Potsdam in 2007, not a single



With this map (without the German-language inscription on the right-hand side), George Friedman illustrated what he meant by a “cordon sanitaire” separating Russia from Germany.

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journalist from our major national newspapers was present.

**Plans of conquest by the Ukrainian government**

A leap into the year 2021, as far as Russian troops on Ukraine’s eastern border are concerned.

Do you know this decree of the National Security Council of Ukraine from March 2021?<sup>16</sup>

*“On the strategy of evacuation and reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.*

*In accordance with the provisions of Article 4 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine’, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, having considered the draft Strategy of de-occupation and reintegration of the Timorese occupied territory of the Autonomous Re-*

*public of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, has decided:*

*1. recommendation of the draft strategy for de-occupation and reintegration of the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.*

*2. requesting the President of Ukraine to approve the Strategy for Deconcentration and Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.*

*3. the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to develop and approve within three months a plan of measures for the implementation of the strategy for the evacuation and reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.*

*Secretary of the Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council  
O. Danilov.”*

Russia should not be allowed to react to this, especially since one can be sure that such decisions are not made in Ukraine without Washington’s and London’s approval or acquiescence?

**Transatlantic one-size-fits-all sauce**

I could go on citing a plethora of documents that refute your claims of Russia’s aggression. I also recommend reading Horst Teltschik’s book “Russian Roulette” and reading Zbigniew Brzezinski’s book “The Grand Chessboard”; then it will become clear why things have turned out the way Teltschik laments.

And: Forget about reading in the “Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung” comments and articles by journalists Kohler, Frankenberger, Vesper, Busse, Friedrich Schmidt, Ross, Sturm, if they deal with Russia. In other major daily newspapers, too, you will be served exclusively transatlantic one-size-fits-all sauce. The times when Karl Feldmeyer<sup>17</sup> could still write editorials are long gone. Only now and then can one still find enlightening things

continued on page 7

**"Who is the aggressor?"**

continued from page 6

in the feuilleton, as these two examples show: an article by Reinhard Merkel and one by Hans-Christof Kraus, the only German scholar who understood the basis of any US strategy with regard to the Eurasian continent.

**Minsk agreements are sabotaged**

In the light of current events, let us take another look at the situation in Ukraine. If it has not been possible – so far at least – to admit it to NATO, one cannot help thinking that the unresolved conflict over Donetsk and Luhansk should also remain unresolved from the point of view of some Western countries. For then a means is always at hand with which the Russian Federation can be accused of an aggressive policy. The most recent example is the failure to hold a meeting in the so-called *Normandy format*,<sup>18</sup> which was planned for 11 November and for which the German and French foreign ministers blamed Russia in a joint statement,<sup>19</sup> without citing its reasons.

If the matter were not so serious, it could be dismissed as a farce. Foreign Minister *Lavrov's* collar has probably burst. Because after prior announcement to his partners, he made the diplomatic note exchange available to the international public.<sup>20</sup>

It is clear from it that the German and French sides had no intention to influence Ukraine to finally comply with its obligations under the *Minsk II Agreement*<sup>21</sup> of 2015 (!), which is applicable international law<sup>22</sup>. This primarily concerns points 9, 11 and 12.

In this respect, Russia does not consider a meeting to be purposeful and thus obsolete. In *Lavrov's* words, "One gets the impression that this is also an attempt to create conditions for a radical revision of the Package of Measures in order to please Kiev, which has been refusing to comply with it in an official and public manner."

**The failure of the German generals**

Final remark with regard to the German generals, for which Lieutenant *General Brauss* quoted above stands *pars pro toto*. Since the war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, which was contrary to international law, it has been clear that the gold-braided Generals have surrendered their obligations under the German *Soldiers' Act* in Washington and sin

against *Stauffenberg*<sup>23</sup> every year on 20 July in the Bendlerblock<sup>24</sup> [today the seat of the German Ministry of Defence] with unctuous words. The prospect of being retired with a decent pension is more unbearable for this group of people than the prospect of being shot was for the officer who tried to kill *Hitler* in 1944.

When will these functional elites, when will our politicians and scientists in the "think tanks" understand that German and European interests must be directed toward peaceful, orderly conditions on our Eurasian continent, instead of subordinating themselves to Anglo-American interests, which want to prevent just that? •

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article235313842/Nato-Generalsekretaer-Jens-Stoltenberg-Koennen-nicht-annehmen-dass-dies-nur-ein-Bluff-ist.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://internationalepolitik.de/de/user/24884/heinrich-brauss>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/6935350/National-Security-Archive-Doc-18-Memorandum-of.pdf>. Quote President Bush: "He [*Gorbachev*] was also very interested in how NATO might change its doctrine, and I read him Article 2 of the NATO Charter, which *Brian Mulroney* had brought to my attention, just to show him the political nature of NATO. I think it will be crucial that we take steps at the NATO summit to convince him [*Gorbachev*] that NATO is changing in a way that does not threaten Soviet security."

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c900706a.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/189558/21543d1184c1f627412a3426e86a97cd/charta-data.pdf>; <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/6/39516.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/us-strategy-plan-calls-for-insuring-no-rivals-development.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://jackmatlock.com/2014/04/nato-expansion-was-there-a-promise/>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.nato-tribunal.de/blaetter\\_wimmer.pdf](http://www.nato-tribunal.de/blaetter_wimmer.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project\\_for\\_the\\_New\\_American\\_Century](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_for_the_New_American_Century)

<sup>10</sup> <https://archive.org/details/RebuildingAmericas-Defenses/mode/2up>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab11v9PXpI>; The graphic shown by *George Friedman* from the subsequent press conference was edited by the authors for clarity with the yellow statements, the graphic appears from minute 11:10.

<sup>12</sup> <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/estonia-azerbaijan-american-strategy-after-ukraine>

<sup>13</sup> <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truman-Doktrin>

<sup>14</sup> <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21340>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/is3004\\_pp007-044\\_lieberpress.pdf](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/is3004_pp007-044_lieberpress.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1172021-37533>. It was announced on 26 February by President *Zelinskyy*.

<sup>17</sup> *Karl Feldmeyer, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 23 November 2002, p. 1 "Das Ende der alten NATO" (The end of the old NATO), quote: "Whatever else may be said about the behavior of the

German government on the Iraq issue, the behavior of the German people on this issue has also made it clear that the opening of NATO to a policy of military intervention can create specific problems for Germany. They are based not only on the Basic Law's statement that the Federal Republic maintains armed forces 'for the purpose of defense', but on the imprint of national history. Two world wars have contributed to a very narrow interpretation of the term 'defense'. What may be considered 'preemptive intervention' elsewhere may turn out to be an attack in the eyes of the Germans – and that is forbidden by the UN Charter and the Basic Law. Even *Bismarck* refused to 'praevénire'. The Germans do not need to apologise for this attitude, certainly not to their allies who were once victims of German attacks." (translated by the author)

<sup>18</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normandy\\_Format](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normandy_Format)

<sup>19</sup> <https://kiew.diplo.de/ua-de/aktuelles/-/2496302>

<sup>20</sup> <https://bit.ly/317XTVk>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.bpb.de/201881/dokumentation-das-minsker-abkommen-vom-12-februar-2015>

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/05/minsk-conundrum-western-policy-and-russias-war-eastern-ukraine-0/minsk-2-agreement>

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.un.org/depts/german/sr/sr\\_14-15/sr2202.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/german/sr/sr_14-15/sr2202.pdf); [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_res\\_2202.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2202.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Claus-Graf-Schenk-von-Stauffenberg>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.slowtravelberlin.com/widerstand-berlins-german-resistance-memorial/>

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# Might makes right – for how much longer?

## Important research results on the topic of NATO East enlargement

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

The following is recorded from the weeks before the beginning of the NATO war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was contrary to international law: At a meeting in Belgrade, a US general urged a high-ranking Serbian politician to stop listing terrorist attacks on civilians or even police and military emanating from Kosovo. His reasoning: “For Serbian policy, it’s the American perception of reality that matters, not reality as such.” The example expresses very vividly what it means when might makes right in international relations.

That might has long preceded right in international relations is an open secret. But when might makes right, those who prioritise might cannot speak as openly in public as the US general in Belgrade did. So, they try to choose their public words in such a way that it sounds as if they only want what is “right”. History is full of such official bending of words. So is our present.

### Contradictory assertions on NATO’s East expansion

Here we will pick out just one current example that plays an important role in the ongoing negotiations between the USA and NATO on the one hand and Russia on the other: The Russian leadership claims that during the negotiations on German reunification, the Soviet leadership was promised that there would be no eastern expansion of NATO. The USA and NATO claim the opposite: there was never such a promise, it was only about Germany, but above all there is no written agreement on such a promise. ... Moreover, the claim is that Russia had contractually accepted eastern expansion of NATO in 1997.

One of the many prominent NATO voices arguing this way is the head of the *Munich Security Conference* and former German diplomat *Wolfgang Ischinger*. Thus, in an interview with *Deutschlandfunk* on 10 January 2022, one can read:

“*Deutschlandfunk*: Mr Ischinger, Moscow argues time and again that the West promised that NATO would not expand further eastwards – after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 89, then in 90 as well. [...] Is there nothing to this?”

*Ischinger*: No, there is no truth in it. It is true that at the time, in connection with the negotiations on the 2+4 Treaty, there were talks and a verbal exchange about the restrictions that would be accepted by the West. It was about the inclusion of the former GDR in the Federal Republic

of Germany, about unification. It was about the question of NATO membership and so on. [...] This whispering about broken promises has been completely off the table since 1997 at the latest, because in 1997 [...] the Russian Federation officially accepted NATO enlargement as a principle and negotiated the modalities of NATO enlargement with the West. The *NATO-Russia Founding Act*<sup>1</sup> is the document by which Russia accepted in writing NATO enlargement now 25 years ago.”

What is to be made of this?

### In 1997 Russia was still doing what the USA and NATO demanded

Russian President *Boris Yeltsin* had already called the NATO expansion eastward “illegal” in a letter to US President *Bill Clinton* in September 1993 and repeated this again at a meeting in Helsinki in March 1997. In vain! In fact, in the 1990s the Russian political leadership had to orient itself largely to the guidelines from the USA in almost all policy areas. The USA and NATO were obviously more powerful at that time; Russia had to come to terms with the transition from the Soviet system and the “shock doctrine” (*Naomi Klein*) imposed on it by the West. 1997 – the year in which the *NATO-Russia Founding Act* was signed by Russia – is also the year in which *Zbigniew Brzezinski*’s book “The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives” – was published. In the spring of 1997, US neoconservatives founded the *Project for the New American Century* (PNAC) in Washington, D.C., with the aim of promoting US global leadership.<sup>2</sup> In 1997, the USA and NATO did not regard Russia as an equal negotiating partner – even the partly “nice” formulations in the *NATO-Russia Founding Act* cannot hide this fact. To put it somewhat bluntly: the USA and NATO set the guidelines ... and Russia had to accept them.

### Open letter from the USA warned against NATO East expansion

And how does it fit with Mr Ischinger’s statements that one month after the signing of the *NATO-Russia Founding Act*, in June 1997, there had been an open letter to US President *Clinton* urgently warning against NATO-East expansion<sup>3</sup> signed by 50 former US senators, government officials, ambassadors, disarmament and military experts including Senate defence expert *Sam Nunn*, Senators

*Gary Hart*, *Bennett Johnston*, *Mark Hatfield* and *Gordon J. Humphrey*, as well as Ambassadors to Moscow *Jack Matlock* and *Arthur Hartman*, *Reagan*’s disarmament negotiator *Paul Nitze*, former Defense Secretary *Robert McNamara*, former CIA Director Admiral *James D. Watkins*, Admiral *Stansfield Turner*, diplomat *Philip Merrill*, scientists *Richard Pipes* and *Marshall D. Shulman*, and US President *Eisenhower*’s granddaughter *Susan Eisenhower*. The letter described NATO’s membership offers as a “political mistake of historic proportions” and pointed out, among other things, that in Russia NATO’s eastward enlargement is opposed “across the political spectrum”. Moreover, Russia was not a threat to any of its neighbours.

But already in July 1997, two months after the signing of the *NATO-Russia Founding Act* and one month after the open letter from the USA, the first three candidates for membership – Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary – were offered membership negotiations. NATO’s East enlargement had been decided long before, so it was not the result of negotiations with Russia. And the few concessions made to Russia – as has been evident for a few years now – were easy to undermine.

### Study by a US university: NATO East enlargement against promises made

In November 2020, *Marc Trachtenberg*, professor of political science at the *University of California* in Los Angeles, presented a 50-page study that, 30 years after 1990, once again examined the question of what the Soviet leadership had been promised verbally in the negotiations on German reunification with regard to NATO membership for a united Germany, but also with regard to a conceivable NATO expansion to the East.<sup>4</sup> The title of the study is: “The United States and the NATO Non-extension Assurances of 1990. New Light on an Old Problem?”

The well-documented result of the study is: Contrary to what is widely claimed in the West and by Mr Ischinger, the assurances given to the Soviet leadership very much included that there should be no NATO expansion to the East – beyond East Germany. The negotiating politicians of the USA, Germany and the Soviet Union were already aware during the negotiations on German reunification that the Warsaw Pact might soon



**"Might makes right ..."**

continued from page 8

dissolve – in fact it did not dissolve until 1 July 1991 – and that some of the former member states might seek membership in NATO. It was precisely for this reason that the then German Foreign Minister *Hans-Dietrich Genscher* – with the agreement of his US counterpart *James Baker* – made the promises mentioned above. And these, although only given verbally, were also binding.

At this point, the study by Marc Trachtenberg will not be reproduced in detail. With the recommendation to read the entire text, only one process (pp. 15ff.) is to be referred to here.

**Genscher and Baker 1990: No intention to extend the NATO towards the East**

In a press conference held together with James Baker on 3 February 1990, one week before decisive negotiations with the Soviet leadership in Moscow, German Foreign Minister Genscher said:

*"Perhaps I might add, we [Baker and Genscher] were in full agreement that there is no intention to extend the NATO area of defense and the security toward the East. This holds true not only for GDR, which we have no intention of simply incorporating, but that holds true for all the other Eastern countries. We are at present witnessing dramatic developments in the whole of the Eastern area, in COCOM, and the Warsaw Pact. I think that it is part (of) that partnership in stability which we can offer to the East that we can make it quite clear that whatever happens within the Warsaw Pact, on our side there is no intention to extend our area — NATO's area — of defense towards the East." (p. 15)<sup>5</sup>*

At the meeting in Moscow on 9 and 10 February 1990, this was also reiterated to the Soviet negotiators once again. On 10 February Genscher told the Soviet Foreign Minister *Shevardnadze*:

*"For us, it's a firm principle: NATO will not be extended toward the East. [...] Furthermore, with regard to the non-extension of NATO, that applies in general." (p. 19)*

It is also noteworthy that the US Secretary of State had called on 9 February 1990 for the membership of the united Germany to the Soviet President *Gorbachev* with the argument that a Germany as it was before the Second World War could be hindered.

**What is "clever"?**

Later, Genscher and Baker qualified their statements of February 1990. They

claimed that was not meant in the way it was said. They had "wanted to 'help the Soviet leadership over the hurdle' of joining a reunited NATO member Germany".<sup>6</sup> Even US president *Bush senior* no longer wanted to know anything about such promises. At the end of February 1990, he told German Chancellor *Kohl*: "We are going to win the game, but we must be clever while we are doing it." (p. 40)<sup>7</sup>

The fact that the US government already in 1990 did not seek a real consensus among negotiating partners is made clear by various research papers. In 2018, *Christian Nünlist* published a synopsis of this research, "Krieg der Narrative – Das Jahr 1990 und die Nato-Ost-Erweiterung" (War of Narratives — The year 1990 and NATO's eastward expansion,<sup>8</sup> an article that otherwise defends official NATO position). Thus, in connection with European proposals for the development of a pan-European peace order with greater significance of the CSCE (from 1995 the OSCE), it says: "But the USA ultimately resisted against a new peace order based on collective security and a pan-European CSCE solution." Internal files of the US Bush administration had shown, "that in 1990, instead of a new cooperative security structure including the Soviet Union, it deliberately opted for a NATO solution and thus an exclusive security order (without Moscow), which was based on the continued US military presence in Europe and which would thus confirm US dominance in Europe even beyond the Cold War. [...] Bush's 'New World Order' was [...] not based on the idea of a partnership with the Soviet Union". Various researchers – Nünlist continues – have made it clear that the Bush administration, "in 1990, had implemented a triumphant US foreign policy which, on the one hand, strengthened the US military presence in Europe and the dominance of NATO in the changing European security architecture and, on the other hand, excluded the Soviet Union out of the post-Cold War order in Europe as far as possible". (Translation of quotes by Current Concerns).

**"Foul play"**

*Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin* had written already in 2016 in an article for the journal *International Security*<sup>9</sup>:

*"... the United States used guarantees against NATO expansion to exploit Soviet weaknesses and reinforce U.S. strengths in post-Cold War Europe. [...] the United States floated a cooperative grand design for post-war Europe in discussions with the Soviets in 1990, while cre-*

*ating a system dominated by the United States. [...] By extension, the U.S.-Russian dispute over NATO expansion may be less a product of Soviet/Russian misrepresentation or misinterpretation of what happened in 1990, and more the result of the divergence between the cooperative approach that the United States presented to the Soviet Union and the United States' quieter efforts to maximize its power in Europe." (p. 11f.)*

So, the question remains how well this kind of "cleverness", which is still being used today, for international relations, for justice and for peace – and how long this kind of "cleverness" will continue to be accepted. Today, when the governments in the NATO countries claim that they are concerned about the peace order in Europe, the sovereignty and integrity of Russia's neighbours, while at the same time calling on Russian policy-makers not to continue to be so aggressively and threaten its neighbours, but to seek the path of dialogue, this sounds like a mockery and turns the history of the last 30 years upside down. •

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>2</sup> [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project\\_for\\_the\\_New\\_American\\_Century](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_for_the_New_American_Century)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1997-06/arms-control-today/opposition-nato-expansion>

<sup>4</sup> The text dated 25 November 2020 can be downloaded from the internet: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/cv/1990.pdf>. The shortened version which appeared in the journal *International Security*, Winter 2020/21, o. 162–203, is also available from the internet but at a cost.

<sup>5</sup> Trachtenberg, Marc "The United States and the NATO Non-extension Assurances of 1990 New Light on an Old Problem?", UCLA, Political Science Department, 25 November 2020

<sup>6</sup> According to the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" of 19 April 2014, thus, for example, *Hans-Dietrich Genscher* later justified his promises made in the first half of February 1990. ("Ost-Erweiterung der NATO. Das grosse Rätsel um Genschers angebliches Versprechen") (NATO's eastward expansion. The great mystery surrounding Genscher's alleged promise")

<sup>7</sup> Marc Trachtenberg quotes the US President on page 33 above, referring to an article by *Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin* published in 2016. "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion". In: *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Spring 2016, pp. 7–44 ([https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/publication/003-ISEC\\_a\\_00236-Shiffrin.pdf](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/publication/003-ISEC_a_00236-Shiffrin.pdf)), where the quote on p. 40 is given with citation.

<sup>8</sup> <https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/siris-2018-4007.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin. «Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion». In: *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Spring 2016, pp. 7–44, ([https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/publication/003-ISEC\\_a\\_00236-Shiffrin.pdf](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/publication/003-ISEC_a_00236-Shiffrin.pdf))

# What Putin really wants in Ukraine

## Russia seeks to stop NATO's expansion, not to annex territory

by Dmitri Trenin, Director of the Carnegie Moscow Centre\*



Dmitri Trenin

(picture Svetlana TB, wikimedia.org)

Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, has been with the center since its inception. He also chairs the research council and the *Foreign and Security Policy Program*. He retired from the Russian Army in 1993. From 1993–1997, Trenin held a post as a senior research fellow at the Institute of Europe in Moscow. In 1993, he was a senior research fellow at the *NATO Defense College* in Rome. He served in the Soviet and Russian armed forces from 1972 to 1993, including experience working as a liaison officer in the external relations branch of the Group of Soviet Forces (stationed in Potsdam) and as a staff member of the delegation to the US-Soviet nuclear arms talks in Geneva from 1985 to 1991. He also taught at the War Studies Department of the *Military Institute* from 1986 to 1993.

*As 2021 came to a close, Russia presented the United States with a list of demands that it said were necessary to stave of the possibility of a large-scale military conflict in Ukraine. In a draft treaty delivered to a US diplomat in Moscow, the Russian government asked for a formal halt to NATO's eastern enlargement, a permanent freeze on further expansion of the alliance's military infrastructure (such as bases and weapons systems) in the former Soviet territory, an end to Western military assistance to Ukraine, and a ban on intermediate-range missiles in Europe. The message was unmistakable: if these threats cannot be addressed diplomatically, the Kremlin will have to resort to military action.*

These concerns were familiar to Western policymakers, who for years have responded by arguing that Moscow does not have a veto over NATO's decisions and that it has no grounds to demand that the West stop sending weapons to Ukraine. Until recently, Moscow grudgingly acceded to those

terms. Now, however, it appears determined to follow through with countermeasures if it doesn't get its way. That determination was reflected in how it presented the proposed treaty with the United States and a separate agreement with NATO. The tone of both missives was sharp. The West was given just a month to respond, which circumvented the possibility of prolonged and inconclusive talks. And both drafts were published almost immediately after their delivery, a move that was intended to prevent Washington from leaking and spinning the proposal.

If Russian President *Vladimir Putin* is acting as if he has the upper hand in this standoff, that's because he does. According to US intelligence services, Russia has nearly 100,000 troops and a great deal of heavy weaponry stationed on the Ukrainian border. The United States and other NATO countries have condemned Russia's moves but simultaneously suggested that they will not defend Ukraine, which is not a NATO member, and have limited their threats of retaliation to sanctions.

But Moscow's demands are probably an opening bid, not an ultimatum. For all its insistence on a formal treaty with the United States, the Russian government no doubt understands that thanks to polarisation and gridlock, ratification of any treaty in the US Senate will be all but impossible. An executive agreement – essentially an accord between two governments which does not have to be ratified and thus does not have the status of a law – may therefore be a more realistic alternative. It is also likely that under such an agreement, Russia would assume reciprocal commitments addressing some US concerns so as to create what it calls a “balance of interest.”

Specifically, the Kremlin could be satisfied if the US government agreed to a formal long-term moratorium on expanding NATO and a commitment not to station intermediate-range missiles in Europe. It might also be assuaged by a separate accord between Russia and NATO that would restrict military forces and activity where their territories meet, from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Of course, it is an open question whether the *Biden* administration is willing to engage seriously with Russia. Opposition to any deal will be high in the United States because of domestic political polarisation and the fact that striking a deal with Putin opens the Biden administration to criticism that it is caving to an autocrat. Opposition will also be high in Europe,

where leaders will feel that a negotiated settlement between Washington and Moscow leaves them on the side lines.

These are all serious issues. But it's crucial to note that Putin has presided over four waves of NATO enlargement and has had to accept Washington's withdrawal from treaties governing anti-ballistic missiles, intermediate-range nuclear forces, and unarmed observation aircraft. For him, Ukraine is the last stand. The Russian commander-in-chief is supported by his security and military establishments and, despite the Russian public's fear of a war, faces no domestic opposition to his foreign policy. Most importantly, he cannot afford to be seen bluffing. Biden was right not to reject Russia's demands out of hand and to favor engagement instead.

### Putin's redlines

There is significant asymmetry in the importance the West and Russia ascribe to Ukraine. The West did extend the prospect of NATO membership to the country in 2008, but without a formal timetable for admittance. After 2014 – when Russia took over Crimea from Ukraine and began supporting pro-Russian militants in the country's Donbas region – it became difficult to see how the US government would allow Ukraine to join NATO. After all, there would be little public support in the United States for deploying troops to fight for Ukraine. Washington is saddled with a promise to Kyiv that both sides know it cannot keep. Russia, by contrast, treats Ukraine as a vital national security interest and has professed its readiness to use military force if that interest is threatened. This openness to committing troops and geographic proximity to Ukraine give Moscow an advantage over the United States and its allies.

This does not mean a Russian invasion of Ukraine is imminent. Despite the Western media's predilection for depicting Putin as reckless, he is in fact cautious and calculating, particularly when it comes to the use of force. Putin is not risk-averse – operations in Chechnya, Crimea, and Syria are proof of that – but in his mind, the benefit must outweigh the cost. He won't invade Ukraine simply because of its leaders' Western orientations.

That said, there are some scenarios that could prod the Kremlin to dispatch troops to Ukraine. In 2018, Putin publicly declared that a Ukrainian attempt to regain territory in the Donbas region by force

### “What Putin really wants in Ukraine”

continued from page 10

would unleash a military response. There is historical precedence for this: in 2008, Russia responded militarily to a Georgian attack on the breakaway republic of South Ossetia. Another Russian redline is Ukraine’s accession to NATO or the placement of Western military bases and long-range weapons systems on its territory. Putin will never yield on this point. For now, however, there is almost no support from the United States and other NATO members for letting Ukraine join the alliance. In early December 2021, US State Department officials told Ukraine that NATO membership for that country is unlikely to be approved in the next decade.

If NATO were to build up its forces in the eastern member states, that could further militarise the new dividing line in Europe running along the western borders of Russia and Belarus. Russia could be provoked into placing more short-range missiles in Kaliningrad – the non-contiguous, westernmost part of Russia that is sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania. A closer military alliance with Belarus could put even more pressure on Ukraine. Moscow could also recognise the self-proclaimed “people’s republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk and integrate them into a new geopolitical entity with Russia and Belarus.

The geopolitical implications of these developments could reverberate beyond Europe. To counter more drastic Western economic and financial sanctions, either in anticipation of a Russian incursion into Ukraine or as a consequence of it, Moscow may need to lean on Beijing, which also finds itself under increasing US pressure. Presidents Putin and Xi Jinping are already discussing financial mechanisms to protect their countries from US sanctions. In that case, Putin’s scheduled visit to China for the Winter Olympics in February 2022 might turn out to be more than a courtesy call. The United States could then see the current Chinese-Russian entente turning into a tighter alliance. Economic, technological, financial, and military cooperation between the two powers would reach new levels.

#### Blame Game

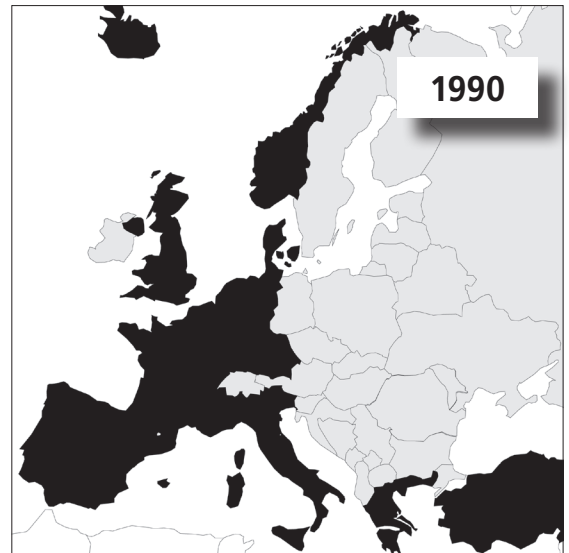
Putin’s threat to resort to force comes from his frustration with a stalled diplomatic process. The Kremlin’s effort to entice Ukrainian President *Volodymyr Zelensky* to strike a deal on Donbas – which seemed promising as recently as late 2019 – came to naught. Zelensky, who won the presidency in a landslide running as a peace candidate, is an exceptionally erratic leader. His decision to use armed drones in Donbas in 2021 ratcheted up

tensions with Moscow at a time when Ukraine could not afford to provoke its neighbour.

It’s not just Ukrainian leadership that Moscow sees as problematic. France and Germany have dubbed efforts to strike a diplomatic resolution to the Russia-Ukraine stalemate. The Europeans, who were the guarantors of the Minsk agreements of 2014 and 2015 that were supposed to bring peace to the region, had little success pushing the Ukrainians to strike a deal. German President *Frank-Walter Steinmeier*, then foreign minister, could not even get Kyiv to accept a compromise that would have allowed for elections in the Donbas region. Last November, the Russians went so far as to publish private diplomatic correspondence between their foreign minister, *Sergei Lavrov*, and his French and German counterparts to demonstrate how the Western powers fully sided with Ukrainian government’s stance.

And although the focus in the West has been on the Russian troop build-up near the Ukrainian border, this came as NATO countries expanded their military activities in the Black Sea region and in Ukraine. In June, a British destroyer sailed through territorial waters of Crimea, which London does not recognise as belonging to Russia, provoking the Russians to fire in its direction. In November, a US strategic bomber flew within 13 miles of the Russian border in the Black Sea region, infuriating Putin. As tensions rose, Western military advisers, instructors, arms, and ammunition poured into Ukraine. Russians also suspect that a training centre the United Kingdom is constructing in Ukraine is in fact a foreign military base. Putin is particularly adamant that deploying US missiles in Ukraine that can reach Moscow in five to seven minutes cannot and will not be tolerated.

For Russia, the escalating military threats were unmistakable. In his articles and speeches, Putin may emphasise the unity of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, but what he cares most about is preventing NATO expansion in Ukraine. Consider what he said in March 2014 after sending forces into Crimea in response to the overthrow of Ukraine’s president, *Viktor Yanukovich*. “I simply cannot imagine that we would travel to Sevastopol to visit NATO sailors,” he said of the famous Russian naval base in Crimea. “Of



The expansion of the NATO area from 1990 to 2020. (Graphic Current Concerns)

course, most of them are wonderful guys, but it would be better to have them come and visit us, be our guests, rather than the other way round.”

Putin’s actions suggest that his true goal is not to conquer Ukraine and absorb it into Russia but to change the post-Cold War setup in Europe’s east. That setup left Russia as a rule-taker without much say in European security, which was centered on NATO. If he manages to keep NATO out of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, and US intermediate-range missiles out of Europe, he thinks he could repair part of the damage Russia’s security sustained after the Cold War ended. Not coincidentally, that could serve as a useful record to run on in 2024, when Putin would be up for re-election. •

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2021-12-28/what-putin-really-wants-ukraine> of 28 December 2021

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From *Current Concerns* No 1 of 18 January 2022

# NATO expansion to the East is up for discussion after all

by Ralph Bosshard

A few days ago, the eagerly awaited talks on the security guarantees demanded by Russia took place. In the heated atmosphere, the protagonists dampened expectations before the talks. For the Western part, the time pressure to hold comprehensive consultations had indeed been high. The climate for talks was apparently not as bad as occasionally portrayed, even if one apparently did not get beyond an exchange of opinions.<sup>1</sup> Those who had expected much more were probably not quite realistic.

If Russia cannot get the security guarantees it is seeking, then it will ask itself why it should grant them to Ukraine. The latter, in turn, had complained for years that Russia had violated those guarantees it had given at the OSCE summit in Budapest in 1994.<sup>2</sup>

In the corresponding draft treaties, there is a mixture of cabbage and turnips: it almost seems as if in mid-December someone in the Russian Foreign Ministry or perhaps also in the presidential administration listed the acute problems and formulated proposals for their solution.<sup>3</sup> Although the two draft treaties with NATO and the USA address the same problems over long stretches, the formulations and also the order in which they are mentioned differ. This may be interpreted as an indication that different offices in Moscow were involved in the drafting and that there was not enough time to compare the contents. In many areas there is still considerable need for clarification with regard to implementation, and the problem areas addressed are probably material for various discussion formats and platforms. For example, efforts to avoid dangerous incidents as well as to ensure transparency in large-scale military exercises are typical topics for the *Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe* OSCE, which has great experience in these areas.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, arms control issues are probably more the subject of bilateral talks, where the OSCE can provide organisational rather than substantive support.<sup>5</sup>

## Danger in delay

It is disturbing that problems of a non-urgent nature are coupled with those that need to be solved quickly. The danger of air incidents in particular must be eliminated quickly now, before another incident like the one in December, in which a Russian passenger plane was endangered by a US reconnaissance plane over the Black Sea, occurs again.<sup>6</sup> Such incidents could recur over the Baltic, where air traffic has

become denser as a result of the EU sanctions against Belarus, the Black Sea or the East Mediterranean – with fatal consequences. In this light, it would be desirable if progress could be made quickly. For this to happen, this point must at best be decoupled from the others.

## Disappointment

For the time being, the Russian government expressed disappointment at the results of the bilateral talks with the USA in Geneva, the meeting of the *NATO-Russia Council* in Brussels and the meeting of the Permanent Council of the OSCE in Vienna.<sup>7</sup> How far this is a negotiating tactic can hardly be assessed at present. It is standard practice for negotiating parties to present their maximum demands in pithy words at the beginning of a negotiation process and later to make compromises in those areas where concessions are possible. It is clear, however, that Russia expects a written response to its initiative, which, depending on the situation, could indeed also contain counter-proposals. There would indeed also be room for additions and clarifications.

However, Russia will expect a package solution and will not allow a “choose-and-pick” in which the West takes up the points it likes and ignores others. Such a package would have to be put together according to the principle of “do-ut-des”<sup>\*</sup> and, if necessary, contain proposals with which the West accommodates Russia if it wants to reject or weaken individual points of the Russian draft treaty.

It will also be clear to the Kremlin that NATO cannot, for formal reasons alone, grant Russia the right of co-determination on NATO membership. In this context the parties would have to agree on a solution that takes Russia’s security interests into account and allows NATO to keep up appearances.<sup>8</sup> However, Russia has probably already achieved an intermediate goal: the young states “in between” must have realised by now that joining NATO would not increase their security but could, on the contrary, put them on Russia’s target list. *This means that after all a possible enlargement of NATO to the East is de facto up for disposal.* And Kiev, too, should gradually have realised that no immediate military help can be expected from the West to reconquer the rebel republics in the Donbass and Crimea. After years of torpedoing the Minsk agreements brokered by France and Germany, Kiev cannot expect these countries to agree to NATO membership now or in the future.



Ralph Bosshard studied General History, Eastern European History and Military History, completed the Military Command School of the ETH Zurich and the General Staff Training of the Swiss Army. This was followed by language training in Russian at the Moscow State University and training at the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Russian Army. He is familiar with the situation in Eastern Europe from his six years at the OSCE, where he was, among other things, Special Advisor to the Swiss Permanent Representative.

## Options for action

What options for action remain? The talks at expert level will certainly continue. The permanent threats of the USA with further political and economic sanctions against Russia only show that the Americans have hardly any military options for action.<sup>9</sup> Not even arms deliveries to Ukraine are a sensible option, because it would be easy for Russia to respond in kind.<sup>10</sup> Apart from more victims and greater damage, not much can be expected from such an approach. Washington and Brussels must also be aware that Russia is no more willing to negotiate “at gunpoint” than the West is in the face of a Russian military threat against Ukraine. It is certainly all the easier for the US government to threaten Russia with economic sanctions if it knows that it is primarily Germany that would have to pay for it.

It would be foolish for Russia to directly increase military pressure on Ukraine, because that would only create a pretext for Western intervention. NATO troops in Ukraine, that is the scenario the Kremlin wants to prevent. With the Russian troops currently standing between Smolensk and Rostov-on-Don, an invasion of Ukraine will hardly be possible, even if Western think tanks never tire of claiming just that.<sup>11</sup> Russia can, however, refuse to revise the *Minsk agreements*, which the Ukrainian government wants so much. That would be enough of a signal. In the diplomatic sphere, Russia can escalate further up to diplomatic recognition

## Situation on the Ukrainian state border

### Further personal comments and reflections on the current situation (25 January 2022)

rb. Despite reports about rail traffic in Belarus being obstructed by a hacker group, the deployment of troops for the "Allied Resolve" exercise in Belarus continues:

- A Russian convoy was observed driving from Minsk towards Gomel;
- In Yel'sk near Mazyr, 20 km from the Ukrainian border, reactive artillery with multiple rocket launchers of the "Grad" type may have arrived.<sup>1</sup>
- Based on Russian Army operational procedures, I assume this formation will remain in the Yel'sk area.

Yel'sk is the last major railway station in the south of Gomel Oblast and seems to be a railway station that is important for cargo handling.<sup>2</sup>

The size of the city and the train station do not really fit together, the number of daily passenger trains is modest.<sup>3</sup>

This means Yel'sk is most likely to be used as a supply station for a battalion combat group stationed near the border (Russian Batalionno-tacticheskaya Gruppy, Батальонно-тактическая Группа BTG).

The Republic of Belarus has long criticised the stationing of a US armoured cavalry regiment in Pabradė near Vilnius in Lithuania, 8 km from the Belarusian border. Lithuania is a NATO ally who might not have wanted a comparable formation on the border. But there is less restraint towards the would-be ally Ukraine. Perhaps Russia and Belarus are trying to create bargaining chips by putting a BTG on the Ukrainian border. In a personal conversation with me last week, the Belarusian ambassador criticised that Ukraine had moved volunteer battalions to the border with Be-

larus. The louder the Ukrainians now protest about the BTG, the higher the price for their withdrawal will be. Even after the Allied Resolve exercise, the Belarusian army can station troops from Babruysk or Minsk in Yel'sk on a rotational basis.

- Meanwhile, the secretary of the Ukrainian National Security Council, *Oleksii Danilov*, sees less a military threat to Ukraine than a possible destabilisation of the government.<sup>4</sup>
- He is implicitly saying that the Zelenskyi government needs help to destabilise the country. I would like to doubt that. The mood in the country seems to be bad and Zelenskyj has lost his glamour in the meantime: It is slowly becoming obvious that he cannot solve the country's problems either.
- In Kiev, places in civil defense facilities have already been assigned, and my friends have received corresponding letters. From Lviv in western Ukraine I received an inquiry as to whether they should leave the city. One may wonder what will happen if there will be no Russian shelling.

#### Situation in the Donbas

- In the past few days, the level of activity on the contact line in eastern Ukraine has increased slightly after being relatively low for over a month. While the number of ceasefire violations remains low and the use of heavy weapons rare, the surge in electronic interference suggests rising tensions. Radio interference experienced by the Special Monitoring Mission drone in the area west of Krama-

torsk suggests that the Ukrainians are loading heavy equipment at the Kramatorsk and Kostiantynivka supply stations. This, together with radio interference on the north-western edge of Donetsk and the area between Donetsk and Kramatorsk, indicates that troops are being moved here.

- Increased levels of activity are also recorded east of Mariupol. On the "DNR" side, activities to counteract Ukrainian reconnaissance are probably under way (radio jamming)
- The Popasna area has been restless for a long time.

All this indicates that the statements made by the spokesman for the armed forces of "DNR" *Eduard Basurin* that the Ukrainian army was bringing in troops are not entirely unfounded. However, it remains unclear, whether it is a question of reinforcements or replacements.

Conclusion: There is still no discernible connection with the tensions on the Ukrainian border and the Donbas. But the situation is becoming increasingly volatile.

<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/MotolkoHelp/status/1485582113562894337>

<sup>2</sup> <https://railwayz.info/photolines/station/120>

<sup>3</sup> <https://tochka-na-karte.ru/Railway-Stations/2290-Elsk.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-wants-to-destabilize-ukraine-not-invade-it-says-kyiv-security-chief-11642680656>

<sup>5</sup> <https://dan-news.info/en/defence/basurin-ukraine-prepares-to-invade-donbas-deploys-uragan-and-smerch-mlrs-to/>

<sup>6</sup> On the incident before Sochi, see <https://twitter.com/attilaXT/status/1467150527368728580>

<sup>7</sup> See interview with Russia's Permanent Representative to the OSCE; Ambassador *Alexander K. Lukashevich*, online at <https://ria.ru/20220113/obse-1767713301.html>.

<sup>8</sup> See an article by *Samuel Charap* of the *Rand Corporation* proposing a compromise solution regarding Ukraine's NATO membership: <https://on.ft.com/3qpc5Cp>

<sup>9</sup> In particular, with the refusal to commission the *Nord Stream 2* gas pipeline, see <https://sputniknews.com/20220117/berlin-warns-of-appropriate-measures-against-nord-stream-2-in-event-of-escalation-over-ukraine-1092318122.html>

<sup>10</sup> It should be recalled that the border between Russia and the rebel areas of the LNR and DNR in eastern Ukraine is not clearly marked over long distances and is not under Ukrainian control. There is an OSCE observer mission at two border crossings: <https://www.osce.org/observer-mission-at-russian-checkpoints-gukovo-and-donetsk-discontinued>.

<sup>11</sup> The latest elaborate in this series comes from *Seth G. Jones* and *Philip G. Wastelowski* of the *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, see <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-possible-invasion-ukraine>. This is not least to lobby for the US arms industry: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/08/us/politics/think-tanks-research-and-corporate-lobbying.html>.

<sup>12</sup> The *Vienna Document for Confidence- and Security-Building Measures* determines upper limits for troops and weapon systems above which military exercises must be announced to OSCE participating States and above which they can be inspected.

\* "I give, so that you may give", ancient Roman legal formula for mutual contracts or exchanges (Editor's note)

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### "NATO expansion to the East ..."

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of the Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics. This would close the door to talks with Ukraine for decades. This is probably only an option in an extreme emergency.

Considering its economic inferiority to the West, it would be clumsy of Russia to allow itself to be drawn into a new arms race. The pattern of the late 1980s is unlikely to be repeated.

In the military field, Moscow can act precisely in those areas that appear in the draft treaties for security guarantees, for example, with the stationing of short and medium range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. Other possibilities include the implementation of patrols or patrol flights of ships and long-range bombers with strategic weapons. This area also includes tests with strategic weapons of all kinds. Another variant is the conduct of military exercises close to the borders of NATO allies, with a number of exercise participants just below the reporting threshold of the *Vienna Document*.<sup>12</sup> In principle, Russia has more freedom of action outside Europe, for example in Syria, Iraq or in Africa and Latin America in general. Rus-

sia enjoys particularly much freedom vis-à-vis all non-state allies of the West.

Despite the pithy words currently being uttered by Russian officials, Moscow will carefully examine its options, avoid unnecessary time pressure and proceed in a considered manner. In the past, the Russians sometimes appeared to be a little coarse-minded, but 2014 at the latest showed that they can also proceed in a very fine-tuned manner if necessary. ●

<sup>1</sup> The former OSCE Secretary General and current Director of the *Geneva Centre for Security-Policy*, *Thomas Greminger*, contradicted the prevailing pessimistic assessments in an interview with *Swiss Radio SRF*: <https://www.srf.ch/news/international/usa-ukraine-russland-mit-der-pistole-auf-der-brust-laesst-sich-nicht-verhandeln>. (<https://www.srf.ch/news/international/usa-ukraine-russia-with-a-gun-on-its-breast-cannot-be-negotiated>.)

<sup>2</sup> See on the Budapest summit [https://www.osce.org/event/summit\\_1994](https://www.osce.org/event/summit_1994)

<sup>3</sup> See the draft treaties on the homepage of the Russian Foreign Ministry in English at [https://mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en&clear\\_cache=Y](https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en&clear_cache=Y) and at [https://mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en](https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en).

<sup>4</sup> The *Vienna Document for Security and Confidence Building Measures* is available online at <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/e/86599.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Thus, the INF Treaty on intermediate-range nuclear missiles was a bilateral treaty between the USA and the Soviet Union.

# Constructive steps for negotiated solutions

## Switzerland wants to strengthen the OSCE with its Action Plan 2022–2025

by Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

In the same week that the talks between Russia and the USA in Geneva, the dialogue between Russia and NATO in Brussels and talks with Russia within the framework of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna as well as other talks have taken place, Switzerland is taking constructive steps and offering a hand. This shows once again that Switzerland can go its own independent way.

Firstly, unlike the governments of other Western countries, the Federal Council will participate in this year's Winter Olympics in China, depending on the pandemic situation.\*

Secondly, on 12 January 2022, the Federal Council announced that Switzerland and Russia intend to expand their cooperation in the agricultural sector. The focus will be on three areas: bilateral trade, plant health and veterinary matters. A declaration of intent is to be signed by both countries by spring. Russia is the sixth largest export market for agricultural products from Switzerland. Exports of agricultural products to Russia amount to about CHF 250 million per year. Pro Memoria: Switzerland has not joined the sanctions against Russia, but has merely stated that it will ensure that Switzerland is not used to circumvent the sanctions.

### Action Plan 2022–2025

Thirdly: On 13 January 2022, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, FDFA, presented its "Action Plan 2022-2025" to strengthen the effectiveness of the OSCE. This took place on the occasion of Federal President Ignazio Cassis' inaugural visit to his counterpart Alexander van der Bellen in Vienna, the seat of the OSCE. Cassis also met with the current Chairman of the OSCE, Polish Foreign Minis-

ter Zbigniew Rau, and the Secretary General of the OSCE, Helga Schmid, and presented the Action Plan to them as part of the Foreign Policy Strategy 2020-2023. This at a time when the security situation in Europe has recently been steadily deteriorating. This mood has also been reflected in the OSCE since 2014. The Action Plan states: "Forums for discussion and negotiation, such as the *Permanent Council* or the *Forum for Security Co-operation*, are today used less for substantive debate and developing appropriate solutions than they are for 'megaphone diplomacy' and sterile exchanges of statements. This runs counter to the spirit of dialogue, which is the OSCE trademark." (p. 19) Switzerland now wants to counteract this. For, as President Cassis rightly writes in the foreword: "It is only possible to ensure peace and security in Switzerland if peace is also maintained in Europe and beyond."

### Loss of trust prevents solutions

With its action plan "Switzerland is committed to preserving and reviving the OSCE's achievements". This is intended to restore and strengthen the OSCE's room for manoeuvre, which has become increasingly limited in recent years, mainly due to the loss of trust between states.

Specifically, Switzerland plans "participating in building a dialogue process ahead of Helsinki 2025, strengthening arms control and thus trust between participating states, and increasing capacities for conflict resolution".

### High credibility

That this is to be done at the level of a concrete strengthening of the OSCE is not coincidental, for, as the chapter "Security and Trust in Europe" of the Action Plan states: The OSCE is the only regional security organisation that brings together East and West. It includes Russia and the United States *on an equal footing* [emphasis *ef*], making it the natural forum for dialogue and confidence-building". (p. 12)



The Swiss President of the Confederation Ignazio Cassis at the talks at the OSCE Headquarters in Vienna. (Picture OSCE/Micky Kroell)

For Switzerland, the OSCE has always been a cornerstone of the European security architecture; it is the only country so far to have held the OSCE Chairmanship twice, in 1996 and 2014. Within the OSCE, Switzerland enjoys a high degree of credibility as a bridge builder. In the tradition of its Good Offices, it was already able to contribute to solutions between the blocs as a neutral state during the Cold War or, as since the conflict in eastern Ukraine, to initiate important dialogue and negotiation processes. In the 1970s and 1980s, Switzerland also frequently cooperated with other "neutral and non-aligned states".

\* Unfortunately, on 26 January, the Federal Council had to forgo its participation due to the uncertain pandemic situation in Switzerland.

Sources:

OSCE Action Plan 2022–2025 of 13 January 2022, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA, [www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch)

FDFA media release of 13 January 2022

Federal Council media release of 12.1.2022

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### CSCE and OSCE

*ef.* The year 2025 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act. On 1 August 1975, the heads of state and government of 35 countries of the Western and Eastern blocs signed the Final Act on the *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe* (CSCE), including Switzerland. The CSCE was founded at that time as a multilateral forum for dialogue and negotiations between East and West. After the end of the Cold War in 1994, it was renamed the OSCE (*Organisation on Security and Co-operation in Europe*). Today, the OSCE comprises 57 participating States around the world.

*cc.* *Current Concerns* has been published since 2000 and is a bi-weekly journal for the English-speaking world. It is published by the Swiss cooperative *Zeit-Fragen*. The colleagues of the cooperative and the journal work on a voluntary basis. All articles in the English-language edition (*Current Concerns*, as pdf) and the French-language edition (*Horizons et débats*) are first published in the German-language edition *Zeit-Fragen*.