



CONFLICTS

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FOREWORD

At a time characterised by increasing tensions and armed conflicts, we are faced with a crucial question: how can we prevent the escalations that threaten us and could potentially lead to a devastating nuclear conflict? Recent events, be it the attack on Ukraine on 22nd February 2022 or the massacre in the Middle East on 7th October 2023, have made the urgency of this question all too clear.

The world we live in is a world of interdependence and global networking. What happens in one region can have far-reaching effects on other parts of the world. The Ukraine crisis has shown how quickly regional tensions can escalate into international conflicts. The events in the Middle East in turn illustrate how deeply rooted the conflicts in this region are and how difficult it is to find long-term solutions.

In this book, we examine the central aspects of these current conflicts and argue strongly that violence and an increase in arms supplies cannot provide sustainable solutions. Instead, we argue in favour of strengthening diplomatic means and promoting long-term agreements and negotiations to pave the way for lasting peace.

Ukraine: an escalation with global repercussions

22nd February marked a turning point in the Ukraine crisis, when a military attack exacerbated an already tense situation in the region. The parties to the conflict were hostile to each other and the international community was deeply concerned about the possible consequences of an open armed conflict in Europe. The question of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity was raised once again, and the world watched developments in the region with bated breath.

In order to resolve the Ukraine crisis, it is essential that all parties involved return to the negotiating table and make a serious effort to find a diplomatic solution. A military victory cannot bring lasting stability; rather, it could lead to a spiral of violence that not only affects the countries directly involved, but also potentially affects other parts of Europe.

The massacre: a memorial to human tragedy

On 7th October 2023, a massacre took place in the Middle East that shocked the world and highlighted the deep-rooted tensions in the region. The history of these conflicts goes back a long way and is characterised by historical, religious and geopolitical conflicts of interest. The international community was once again faced with the challenge

of how to respond to such acts of violence and how to find long-term solutions to these ongoing conflicts.

A military escalation in the Middle East would have catastrophic consequences not only for the direct parties to the conflict, but also for global security and stability. The region is of strategic importance for energy supplies and has far-reaching effects on the global economy. A prolonged conflict could destabilise the entire region and lead to a humanitarian catastrophe that would not only affect the affected populations but could also trigger international refugee flows.

Diplomacy, negotiations - the key to a solution

History has taught us that long-term peace can only be achieved through diplomatic means and long-term treaties. The Cold War and the subsequent years of disarmament dialogue have shown that even in the most difficult moments, diplomacy can act to avoid nuclear conflict. The signing of treaties such as the INF Treaty or the START Treaty has helped to contain the arms race and reduce the risk of a nuclear catastrophe.

Today, we face similar challenges, and yet we often seem inclined to focus on short-term military solutions that can only temporarily alleviate symptoms but do not provide a sustainable cure. The focus must be on building trust between the conflicting parties and creating mechanisms that ensure long-term stability and security.

International cooperation and multilateral institutions

Another crucial component in overcoming global conflicts is the strengthening of international institutions and multilateral cooperation. Organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union and regional organisations play a key role in mediating and coordinating peace efforts. Their capacities should be strengthened to respond effectively to conflicts and promote dialogue between states.

In addition, civil society organisations and the media must also play a more active role in promoting peace and dialogue and mobilising broad public support for diplomatic solutions. The involvement of civil society is crucial to put pressure on political decision-makers and hold them accountable.

Special attention should also be paid to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Nuclear weapons not only pose an existential threat to humanity, but they also exacerbate existing conflicts by increasing the potential for devastating escalations. Dismantling these weapons and promoting a world without nuclear weapons must therefore be a top priority on the international agenda.

Signing and complying with treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are important steps in this direction, but further efforts are needed to achieve global nuclear disarmament.

A world of peace and security

The current conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East urgently require a new approach. Instead of focussing on short-term military solutions, we must rely on diplomacy, negotiations and long-term agreements to secure lasting peace. Escalation into a nuclear conflict on European soil would not only be a tragedy for the regions affected, but an existential threat to all of humanity.

It is our responsibility to do everything in our power to prevent these escalations. By listening to the lessons of history and focusing on strengthening diplomatic means and multilateral cooperation, we can create a world characterised by peace, security and mutual respect. Each of us has a responsibility to make this vision a reality.

This book is intended to help raise awareness of the urgency of these issues and to initiate a constructive dialogue on how we can work together to create a more peaceful and secure world. May it help to ensure that our voices are heard and that our actions lead to a future in which conflicts are no longer resolved with weapons, but with words and negotiation.

O.M. GRUBER-LAVIN
Chief Representative Lazarus Union

THE FEATHER AND THE SWORD

The idea that the pen is mightier than the sword is an oft-quoted notion that emphasises the power of intellectual and diplomatic efforts over physical force. Yet, enthusiasm for war often seems to have a deeper and broader resonance than peace endeavours. This essay explores the reasons for this and analyses why world history is often characterised by conflict, even though the alternative of peace seems tempting.

The psychology of violence and conflict

Human history is steeped in violence and conflict. Whether it is wars, revolutions, uprisings or individual acts of violence, these phenomena characterise the social, political and economic landscapes of our world. Understanding the psychology of violence and conflict is therefore central to finding solutions to its far-reaching and often destructive effects. In this essay, I will explore the psychological mechanisms behind violence and conflict and highlight the role of identity, power, group dynamics and social conditions.

Aggression is a fundamental human behaviour that can manifest itself in various forms, from verbal confrontations to physical assaults and large-scale wars. The psychological roots of aggression lie in a complex interplay of biological, social and personal factors. In his social learning theory, the American psychologist Albert Bandura emphasised that aggression is learned through observation and imitation. Children who grow up in environments where violence is common tend to adopt violent behaviour.

Evolution also plays a role in explaining human aggression. Evolutionary theorist Richard Dawkins argues that aggression can provide a survival advantage in certain situations. Throughout human history, aggressive individuals have been better able to defend their resources, increasing their chances of survival and passing on their genes. However, this does not mean that aggression is inevitable or unchangeable. Rather, it shows that aggressive tendencies can be activated under certain conditions.

A central aspect of the psychology of violence and conflict is the role of identity. People often define themselves by their affiliation to certain groups, be it based on ethnicity, religion, nationality or ideology. These collective identities can create strong emotional bonds and loyalties. When these identities are threatened or challenged, this can lead to conflict and violence.

The social psychologist Henri Tajfel developed the theory of social identity, which states that people tend to catego-

rise themselves into in-groups (groups to which they belong) and out-groups (groups to which they do not belong). This categorisation often leads to an overvaluation of one's own group and a devaluation of the out-group. This dynamic can encourage the emergence of prejudice, discrimination and hostility towards other groups, which can ultimately lead to conflict and violence.

A prominent example of the role of identity in conflicts is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both sides define their identity strongly through historical, religious and territorial claims. These deeply rooted identities make compromises and negotiations difficult, as each side perceives the existence and rights of the other as a threat to its own identity.

Power is another critical factor in the psychology of violence and conflict. The sociologist Max Weber defined power as the ability to assert one's own will against the resistance of others. Violence can be seen as a means of gaining, demonstrating or maintaining power. In many cases, violence is exercised by those who feel powerless as an attempt to gain control over their environment.

Marxist theory often sees violence and conflict as the result of class struggles. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argued that the history of humanity is a history of class struggles in which the ruling class maintains its power through violence and oppression. This perspective continues to be used in modern analyses of social and political movements

to emphasise the role of structural violence and systemic injustice.

Group dynamics play a key role in the emergence and escalation of violence and conflict. In groups, individuals can perceive their personal responsibility to a lesser extent, which leads to deindividuation. This phenomenon, which has been studied by social psychologists such as Philip Zimbardo, describes the loss of self-awareness and individual responsibility in the group. In such states, people can perform actions that they would never consider doing alone.

A classic example of deindividuation is Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment. In this experiment, normal students took on the roles of guards and prisoners, and the conditions quickly led to brutal and violent behaviour. The experiment showed how quickly people can fall into group roles and lose their individual morals and ethics.

Social and economic conditions can also have a significant influence on the occurrence of violence and conflict. Poverty, inequality, unemployment and social exclusion create an environment in which violence can be seen as a solution to social problems and a means of survival. The sociologist Johan Galtung coined the term "structural violence" to describe the indirect forms of violence caused by unequal social structures and institutions.

Structural violence is often less visible but has a profound impact on society. It can manifest itself in the form of

unequal access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. These forms of inequality can lead to dissatisfaction, resentment and ultimately violent uprisings. One example of this is the Arab Spring, in which social and economic injustices led to mass protests and violence.

An important aspect of the psychology of violence is the cycle of violence. Violence tends to reproduce itself by creating traumas and resentments that encourage further acts of violence. This cycle can be observed on both an individual and collective level. Individuals who have experienced violence, whether in childhood or adulthood, often show a higher propensity to become violent themselves. On a collective level, past conflicts and wars can sow the seeds for future violence by leaving behind deep-rooted hostility and mistrust.

Multidisciplinary approaches are needed to break the cycle of violence and prevent conflict. Educational programmes that promote tolerance and understanding can help to reduce prejudice and hostility. Psychological interventions aimed at trauma and anger management can help individuals find non-violent solutions to conflict.

At a societal level, measures to reduce inequality and social exclusion are crucial. Political and economic reforms aimed at justice and equal opportunities can reduce structural violence and thus create the conditions for peaceful communities.

The psychology of violence and conflict is a multi-layered and complex topic that is deeply rooted in human nature and society. From the biological basis of aggression to the role of identity and power, to the influences of social and economic conditions, there is no simple explanation or solution to violence. It requires a comprehensive understanding of the underlying psychological mechanisms and external circumstances to develop effective strategies to prevent and manage violence and conflict.

By better understanding the psychological factors that lead to violence and conflict, we can find ways to break these dynamics and create a more peaceful and just world. Education, social justice and individual psychological support are essential elements of this process. Only through an inclusive and holistic approach can we address the deep-rooted causes of violence and promote long-term peace and stability.

Political and economic interests behind conflicts

World history is riddled with conflicts whose causes and drivers are often hidden in a complex web of political and economic interests. These interests are often so deeply rooted that they overshadow the obvious triggers of conflicts and require an analysis that goes beyond the surface. The following essay sheds light on the political and economic interests behind conflicts and examines how these interests influence the dynamics and emergence of conflicts.

Conflicts between nations and within states often have a variety of causes. Historically, territorial claims, ethnic tensions, religious differences and ideological disputes have been frequent triggers. However, in-depth analyses show that there are deeper political and economic interests behind many of these superficial reasons. Even in ancient Rome or medieval Europe, wars were often fought for economic reasons, such as control over trade routes or resources.

In the modern context, this dynamic has become even more complicated. Globalisation and the increasing interdependence of the global economy have led to economic interests playing an even greater role in political decisions and thus also in the emergence of conflicts. States and non-state actors do not act in isolation but are integrated into a global network of dependencies and rivalries.

Political interests behind conflicts can often be traced back to the desire for power and influence. States endeavour to maintain or extend their political sovereignty by exerting influence on other states. This influence can be achieved through military interventions, diplomatic manoeuvres or economic sanctions. A classic example of this is the Cold War, in which the USA and the Soviet Union attempted to expand their respective spheres of influence through proxy wars and political interventions.

Another example is the Middle East conflict, in which the geopolitical interests of the major powers play a decisive role alongside religious and ethnic tensions. The support of

Israel by the USA and the simultaneous support of various Arab states by the Soviet Union (and later Russia) are an expression of these political interests. The conflict is therefore fuelled not only by local factors, but also by the geopolitical ambitions of external powers.

Economic interests are often closely linked to political goals and play a central role in the emergence of conflicts. Control over resources such as oil, gas, minerals and water can be a strong motive for conflict. The 2003 Iraq War is an oft-cited example where many analysts argue that US economic interests, particularly control over oil reserves, were a driving force behind the intervention.

Another example is the conflicts in Africa, which are often fuelled by the fight for valuable resources such as diamonds, gold and rare earths. These resources are of enormous importance not only for the local economy, but also for global markets. Multinational corporations and foreign governments often have a strong interest in gaining or controlling access to these resources. As a result, they become directly or indirectly involved in local conflicts.

International organisations and corporations are playing an increasingly important role in global politics and economics and therefore also influence the emergence and course of conflicts. Organisations such as the United Nations or the World Bank often try to defuse conflicts through diplomatic or economic measures. However, they are also often criticised, as their measures and decisions are some-

times influenced by the interests of powerful member states or lobby groups.

Multinational corporations also have a significant influence on conflicts. They can act both as catalysts for conflict by exacerbating local tensions and as actors that seek to promote stability to secure their business. For example, oil companies have played a double-edged role in countries such as Nigeria and Angola. On the one hand, they have contributed significantly to the local economy, but on the other hand, they have also caused social inequalities and environmental problems that have led to conflict.

Ideology and propaganda play a central role in mobilising support for conflicts. Political and economic interests are often legitimised by ideological frameworks and underpinned by propaganda. Ideology serves as a tool to disguise the actual economic and political goals and mobilise the masses.

During the Cold War, for example, the ideological differences between capitalism and communism were strongly emphasised to justify the political and economic goals of the two superpowers. Even in modern conflicts, such as the so-called "war on terror", ideological narratives are used to legitimise military interventions and political decisions.

The intertwining of political and economic interests has far-reaching consequences for international security. Conflicts fuelled by these interests tend to be more complex and protracted, as the actors involved often have deep-rooted

and diverse interests that go beyond simple solutions. The Syrian crisis is a recent example of such a complex conflict, involving a multitude of actors with different political and economic interests.

The international community faces the challenge of developing mechanisms to defuse such conflicts and find long-term solutions. This requires a deeper analysis of the underlying interests and a move away from simplistic explanations. Diplomatic efforts, economic incentives and international co-operation must aim to address the complex dynamics behind the conflicts and promote sustainable peace.

Analysing the political and economic interests behind conflicts shows that these are often the driving forces behind the obvious causes. The desire for power, control over resources and the influence of international players are key factors that determine the emergence and course of conflicts. Ideological and propagandistic means are used to legitimise these interests and mobilise support.

To find long-term solutions to conflicts, it is crucial to recognise and address these underlying interests. This requires a holistic approach that incorporates political, economic and social dimensions and considers the complexity of modern conflicts. Only through such a comprehensive analysis and by promoting international cooperation can sustainable peace solutions be developed.

Media and propaganda: the staging of conflicts

In the modern political landscape, the media play a central role in shaping public opinion and political decisions. The influence of the media on the perception of conflict cannot be overstated, as it is often used as a tool for propaganda to promote certain narratives and suppress others. This essay will critically examine how media orchestrate conflicts and use the mechanisms of propaganda to manipulate public opinion and support political agendas.

Media are omnipresent in modern society and have the power to disseminate information quickly and widely. Through television, newspapers, radio and especially the internet and social media, media organisations can reach and influence large numbers of people. This reach and quick access to information are undoubtedly an advantage, but they also bring challenges, particularly in terms of the quality and objectivity of reporting.

Media can act as a conduit of information, but they are also organisations subject to economic and political constraints. These constraints can influence the way news is presented. The concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few large corporations means that a small number of people have a large influence on public opinion. This can lead to a bias in reporting when certain interests are promoted, and others are suppressed.

Propaganda is the targeted dissemination of information that supports a specific political agenda. It uses various techniques to manipulate public opinion and influence people. Some of the most common mechanisms of propaganda in the media are:

Selective reporting: The media can influence the public's perception by selecting the topics and events they report on. By emphasising certain aspects of a conflict and ignoring others, they can distort reality and support a particular narrative.

Framing: Framing refers to the way in which news is presented. By choosing certain words and images, the media can promote a certain interpretation of events. For example, portraying insurgents as "freedom fighters" or "terrorists" can dramatically change the perception of the same group.

Repetition: By constantly repeating certain information, media messages can penetrate deep into the public's consciousness. Repetition reinforces the perception that certain information is important and true, even if it is not objective or accurate.

Emotionalization: Media often use emotional appeals to attract viewers' attention and manipulate their feelings. Images of suffering and violence can evoke strong emotional reactions and encourage support for certain political measures.

Demonisation of the enemy: By portraying the enemy as inhuman or evil, the media can increase support for military or political action against them. This creates an "us versus them" narrative that simplifies the complexity of conflicts and makes rational discussion more difficult.

Media play a crucial role in staging conflicts by influencing the way these conflicts are perceived. They can dramatize conflicts by exaggerating or simplifying the threat in order to gain public attention and support political agendas.

The Iraq war is a prominent example of the staging of conflicts by the media. Before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the media played a central role in spreading information about alleged weapons of mass destruction and links between Iraq and terrorist organisations. This information was often repeated without critical scrutiny and reinforced support for the war.

Selective reporting and the framing of information led the public to perceive Iraq as an imminent threat, even though many of the alleged facts were later refuted. Emotionalization through reports about the alleged suffering of the Iraqi population under Saddam Hussein's rule and the demonisation of the Iraqi leader increased support for military intervention.

Another example is the conflict in Syria, in which social media played a crucial role. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were used to disseminate information quickly and attract international attention. These platforms

enabled activists and citizen journalists to document the brutality of the conflict and mobilise the global community.

However, social media also brought challenges with it. The spread of unconfirmed reports, propaganda and fake news made it difficult to distinguish truth from fiction. Various interest groups used social media to promote their own narratives and influence perceptions of the conflict. This led to a fragmentation of information and a polarisation of public opinion.

The staging of conflicts by the media has far-reaching consequences for society and international politics. It can shape public opinion, influence political decisions and change the behaviour of states and individuals. Some of the most important consequences are

Manipulation of public opinion: Through the targeted use of propaganda and the staging of conflicts, the media can manipulate public perception and increase or decrease support for certain political measures. This can lead to decisions being made based on distorted or incomplete information.

Increasing tensions: The dramatic portrayal of conflicts and the demonisation of the opponent can increase tensions and reduce the willingness to find diplomatic solutions. This can lead to an escalation of violence and a prolongation of conflicts.

Influencing political decisions: Politicians and decision-makers are often sensitive to public opinion and the media. Reporting on conflicts can generate political pressure and influence the decisions of governments and international organisations.

Erosion of trust in the media: The use of propaganda and the distortion of information can undermine public trust in the media. This can lead to increased scepticism of the news and an increased search for alternative sources of information, which may be less reliable.

The media play a crucial role in the staging of conflicts and the dissemination of propaganda. Through selective reporting, framing, repetition, emotionalization and demonisation, they can manipulate public opinion and support political agendas. The consequences of this staging are far-reaching and affect public opinion, political decisions and international politics.

It is therefore crucial that the public remains critical of the media and endeavours to check and question information from various sources. Only an informed and critical public can limit the power of the media as a tool of propaganda and promote objective and balanced reporting.

The complexity of peace processes

Peace processes that aim to end armed conflicts and create stable, sustainable peace are extremely complex and

multi-layered endeavours. They are not only political, but also social, cultural and economic processes that require profound changes in the societies involved. This essay aims to examine the complexity of peace processes by looking at different dimensions and challenges that characterise these processes. By critically analysing historical and current examples, it becomes clear that peace processes do not allow for simple solutions and that their successful implementation often depends on a variety of factors.

A look at history shows that peace processes are rarely straightforward. A striking example is the peace process in Northern Ireland, which culminated in the Good Friday Agreement (1998) in the 1990s. This process was the result of years of negotiations and the commitment of various actors, including the British and Irish governments as well as local political parties and paramilitary groups. Despite its eventual success, the region remains characterised by tensions to this day, demonstrating that peace processes are often only the beginning of a long road to genuine reconciliation and stability.

Another example is the peace process in South Africa, which opened a new chapter in the country's history with the end of apartheid and the election of Nelson Mandela in 1994. The transition to a democratic state was the result of intensive negotiations and compromises between the ruling white minority and the oppressed black majority. But here too, the persistent social and economic inequalities show

that the conclusion of a peace agreement alone is not enough to resolve deep-rooted conflicts.

The political and institutional challenges of peace processes are enormous. A central problem is the question of legitimacy and representation. Peace negotiations must involve all relevant actors to be sustainable. However, this is often difficult, as many conflicts are characterised by many groups with different interests and goals. The exclusion of important actors can lead to agreements not being honoured and the conflict flaring up again.

Another political problem is power sharing. In many cases, peace agreements require complex power-sharing arrangements to ensure that all groups are fairly represented, and their interests are safeguarded. However, such arrangements can be unstable and lead to political deadlocks, as is the case in Lebanon. The Lebanese political system, which is based on confessional proportional representation, helped to end the civil war of 1975-1990, but it has also led to political paralysis and repeated crises.

The economic dimension of peace processes is also of great importance. After a conflict, the reconstruction of the economy is crucial for the stabilisation of peace. Economic inequalities and poverty can easily lead to renewed tensions and jeopardise peace. An example of this is the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina following the Dayton Agreement in 1995. Although the agreement ended the war,

the country remained unstable due to a lack of economic development and high unemployment.

International support can play an important role here. Development and reconstruction aid can help to create the economic foundations for sustainable peace. However, this is not a simple solution either. Donor countries and international organisations are often driven by their own interests, which do not always coincide with the needs of the affected population. In addition, aid projects can be ineffective if they are not well coordinated or do not take local structures and cultures into account.

The social and cultural dimensions of peace processes must not be neglected either. Peace requires not only the end of violence, but also the healing of the social wounds caused by the conflict. This includes reconciliation, building trust and promoting a collective memory that recognises the pain and trauma of the past.

A prominent example of the importance of social and cultural aspects is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. The TRC played a central role in the transition to democracy by providing a platform for victims and perpetrators to tell their stories and take responsibility. However, such processes can also be controversial and perceived differently. In South Africa, the question of justice and reparations remains a central issue, as many victims of apartheid are still waiting for compensation today.

Peace processes are often not only national but also international affairs. The role of international actors such as the United Nations, regional organisations and powerful states is crucial. These actors can act as mediators, exert pressure on the conflict parties and provide financial and logistical support. At the same time, however, their interests and interference can also be counterproductive and complicate the process.

One example of the international dimension of peace processes is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite numerous international mediation attempts, including the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, the conflict remains unresolved. This is not only due to the deep-rooted differences between the parties, but also to the differing interests of international players, who often pursue their own geopolitical goals.

Civil society plays a crucial role in peace processes. Non-governmental organisations, religious groups, women's organisations and other civil society actors can build bridges, promote dialogue and exert pressure on political decision-makers. Their participation is often crucial for the legitimacy and sustainability of peace processes.

A positive example of the role of civil society is the peace process in Colombia. Women's and human rights organisations played an important role in the negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC rebels, which led to a peace agreement in 2016. These organisations

campaigned for the rights of the victims and for a just and inclusive peace solution.

The complexity of peace processes is reflected in the numerous challenges they face. These challenges are not only of a technical or political nature, but also concern profound social structures and values. There is no magic formula for success, and every peace process must be adapted to the specific circumstances and needs of the society concerned.

At the same time, peace processes also offer opportunities for far-reaching changes. They can pave the way for democratic reforms, economic development and social justice. However, to utilise these opportunities, a comprehensive approach is required that takes into account the various dimensions of peace and conflict.

The complexity of peace processes makes it clear that peace is far more than the absence of war. It requires the simultaneous overcoming of political, economic, social and cultural challenges. Historical and current examples show that peace processes can be lengthy and difficult, but also offer transformative potential. Sustainable peace requires commitment, patience and the willingness to initiate far-reaching changes. Only through a comprehensive and inclusive approach can we succeed in overcoming the complex challenges and pave the way to a more peaceful world.

Cultural narratives and historical memory

The relationship between cultural narratives and historical memory is a complex and multi-layered issue that is deeply embedded in the political, social and cultural structures of societies. This essay examines how cultural narratives are shaped, what role they play in historical memory and how they are used to influence political power and social cohesion. It also addresses the dangers associated with the manipulation of historical memories and emphasises the importance of a critical and reflective engagement with the past.

Cultural narratives are the stories that a society tells about itself. They include myths, legends, historical events and symbolic figures that together shape the identity and self-image of a community. These narratives serve as collective memory aids and influence how individuals and groups perceive and interpret their past.

Cultural narratives do not emerge in a vacuum; they are the product of social and political processes. They are conveyed and perpetuated through education, the media, art and official historiography. Power structures play a central role in the establishment and dissemination of these narratives. Ruling elites use them to legitimise their position and promote social cohesion, often by creating a common enemy image or an idealised image of the past.

Historical memory is the collective process by which past events are remembered and interpreted in the present. It is selective and often subjective, as it is characterised by the current needs and interests of society. Historical memory is therefore never neutral or objective, but always a construction.

One example of the construction of historical memory is the way in which different countries remember the Second World War and the Holocaust. In Germany, the confrontation with the National Socialist past led to deep reflection and a strong commitment to the culture of remembrance. This is reflected in the erection of monuments, memorials and educational programmes. In other countries, such as Japan, the memory of the Second World War is often characterised by national narratives that relativise or conceal war crimes.

Political actors play a crucial role in shaping and controlling historical memory. They use it to shape national identity, gain legitimacy and advance their political agenda. This can be done by promoting certain narratives and marginalising or suppressing others.

One example of this is the memory of the American Civil War in the United States. For a long time, the so-called "Lost Cause" narrative, which glorified the Confederacy and portrayed slavery as a side issue, dominated the US South. This narrative was promoted through monuments, textbooks and public commemorations and served to justify

racial segregation and white supremacy. It is only in recent decades that a critical examination of this narrative has begun, contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive culture of remembrance.

The manipulation of historical memory can have serious consequences for society. It can lead to a distorted perception of the past, which undermines social cohesion and exacerbates conflicts. When historical facts are distorted or suppressed, it becomes difficult to learn from the past and achieve sincere reconciliation.

One example of the dangers of manipulating historical memory is the denial of the Holocaust. Holocaust denial is a form of historical revision that aims to relativise or deny the crimes of National Socialism. It often serves anti-Semitic and far-right ideologies and undermines efforts to achieve justice and reconciliation. Denying and trivialising historical crimes can undermine trust in democratic institutions and the rule of law.

Given the dangers of manipulating historical memory, it is crucial to promote a critical and reflective culture of remembrance. This requires recognising the complexity and multi-layered nature of history as well as the willingness to acknowledge uncomfortable truths and learn from the past.

A critical culture of remembrance should include different perspectives and make marginalised voices heard. It should not be limited to heroic narratives but should also address the dark chapters of history. This requires an open

dialogue and an examination of controversial topics that are often painful and conflict laden.

To further illustrate the role of cultural narratives and historical memory, it is helpful to look at specific case studies. Germany, South Africa and the USA offer three different contexts in which confrontation with the past has taken place in different ways.

Germany is an example of a country that has come to terms intensively with its burdened past. The memory of the Holocaust and the crime of National Socialism is deeply rooted in German culture and politics. Memorials such as the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, educational programmes and the work of institutions such as the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" contribute to the preservation of this memory.

This debate has not always been easy and is the result of a lengthy process characterised by public debate, political decisions and the commitment of civil society. Despite these efforts, there are still challenges, as the rise in right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism shows. This emphasises the need for an ongoing examination of the past.

In South Africa, the reappraisal of apartheid provides another example of the importance of historical memory. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) played a central role in documenting the crimes of apartheid and promoting reconciliation. The TRC's approach, which focused on truth-seeking and reparations, was recognised

internationally and regarded as a model for other post-conflict societies.

Despite these efforts, the memory of apartheid remains controversial. Many South Africans feel that the TRC has not brought sufficient justice and that economic and social inequalities persist. This shows that dealing with the past is an ongoing process that requires continuous effort and commitment.

The United States faces the challenge of confronting the history of slavery, the oppression of indigenous peoples and racial segregation. The movement for the removal of Confederate monuments and debates about critical race theory in schools are examples of the ongoing examination of these issues.

The memory of the civil rights movement and the progress that has been made since then are central components of the national narrative. At the same time, there is considerable tension and division in society over the interpretation of this history and the resulting political implications. This shows how deeply rooted narratives influence the present and how important it is to critically scrutinise and develop historical memory.

Education and media play a crucial role in the communication and shaping of historical narratives. School curricula, history books, films, television programmes and digital media all contribute to how people perceive and interpret the past.

A balanced and critical historical education can help to challenge stereotypical and simplified narratives and promote a nuanced understanding of the past. The media has a responsibility to present historical events accurately and to consider different perspectives. This is particularly important at a time when fake news and disinformation are widespread.

Dealing with cultural narratives and historical memory is of central importance for understanding the present and shaping the future. Historical memory is a dynamic and conflict-laden process that is characterised by power structures, political interests and social dynamics. A critical and reflective culture of remembrance requires a willingness to acknowledge uncomfortable truths, to listen to marginalised voices and to learn from the past.

Given the challenges and dangers associated with the manipulation of historical memories, it is important to remain vigilant and advocate for an open and honest engagement with history. Only in this way can we create a fairer and more inclusive society that learns from the mistakes of the past and strives for a better future.

The role of diplomacy and international institutions

In an increasingly globalised world, diplomacy plays a central role in shaping international relations. At the same time, international institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank and the World Health Organisation

(WHO) are indispensable actors that form the framework for global cooperation and governance. However, considering the current geopolitical challenges, the question arises: Are diplomacy and international institutions still able to shape the world peacefully and solve global problems effectively? This essay will critically analyse the role of diplomacy and international institutions to shed light on their strengths and weaknesses and discuss possible reforms.

Diplomacy, understood as the art and practice of negotiation between representatives of different states, has a long history. It is an instrument for avoiding conflict and promoting cooperation. In the modern world, diplomacy has evolved to include not only state actors, but also non-governmental organisations and multinational corporations.

Diplomacy makes it possible to overcome differences through dialogue and negotiation. Historically, it has helped to prevent wars and promote peace. Examples of this are the negotiations that led to the end of the Cold War and the diplomatic efforts that made the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty possible. However, diplomacy can also fail, as the recent conflicts in Syria and Ukraine show.

A critical examination of diplomacy shows that it is often dominated by the interests of powerful states. This hegemonic diplomacy can lead to the interests of smaller states or the global community as a whole being neglected. This raises the question of justice and fairness in international diplomacy.

International institutions were founded to solve collective problems that go beyond the capabilities of individual states. The United Nations (UN) is the most prominent example, but other organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) also play a crucial role.

The UN was founded in 1945 to promote peace and ensure international security. However, its structure and conflict resolution mechanisms, such as the Security Council, are often criticised. The Security Council reflects the balance of power after the Second World War and not today's geopolitical reality. The veto power of the five permanent members (USA, Russia, China, Great Britain and France) can block decision-making and leads to injustices and imbalances.

The World Bank and the IMF were founded to promote economic stability and development. However, they have often propagated neoliberal economic policies that can compromise the sovereignty of recipient countries. Such policies have in many cases led to social inequality and political instability, which calls into question the legitimacy of these institutions.

The WHO has a central role in global health surveillance and intervention, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown. However, the pandemic has also revealed weaknesses in international health cooperation and coordination, includ-

ing reliance on voluntary contributions from Member States and influence from powerful countries.

One of the greatest challenges for diplomacy and international institutions is the increasing polarisation and fragmentation of the international community. The return of nationalist tendencies and the rise of authoritarian regimes threaten the principles of multilateral cooperation. This is reflected in the undermining of international agreements and the disregard for international norms.

In addition, international institutions face the challenge of ensuring legitimacy and accountability. Many of these institutions are perceived as elitist and opaque, which undermines the trust of the global population. Decisions are often made by a small circle of powerful states or stakeholders, while the needs and voices of poorer and weaker countries are ignored.

Another problem is the efficiency and effectiveness of international institutions. Bureaucracy and the often-slow decision-making processes can impair the ability to respond to crises and challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of rapid and coordinated action. The delays and lack of a coherent global response have exposed the weaknesses of the current system.

In view of these challenges, a reform of diplomacy and international institutions is necessary. One possibility is to democratise the structures and decision-making processes of these institutions. This could be done through a fairer

representation and distribution of votes that better reflects today's geopolitical reality.

Strengthening the transparency and accountability of international institutions is also crucial. This can be achieved by involving civil society actors and promoting open dialogue. Institutions must be accountable to the people they are meant to serve to restore trust.

Another important reform measure is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of international institutions. This could be done by introducing clear mechanisms for crisis management and reducing bureaucratic hurdles. Technological innovation and better use of data can also help to speed up decision-making and improve responsiveness.

Furthermore, diplomacy should be conducted in a more inclusive and co-operative manner. This means that all states, regardless of their size or power, have a voice and their interests are considered. Diplomacy should be understood not only to pursue national interests, but also to promote the global common good.

Diplomacy and international institutions play an indispensable role in shaping international relations and solving global problems. However, they face significant challenges and criticisms that compromise their effectiveness and legitimacy. Comprehensive reforms are needed to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Democratising decision-making processes, improving transparency and accountability and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of international institutions are essential steps towards restoring trust in global governance. At the same time, diplomacy must be made more inclusive and cooperative to create a fairer and more peaceful world.

It is the responsibility of the international community to tackle these challenges and implement the necessary reforms. Only through a determined and coordinated effort can diplomacy and international institutions fulfil their role as guardians of peace and global justice.

The way forward: strengthening peace endeavours

The world today faces a multitude of challenges that threaten the fragile fabric of peace. Wars, civil conflicts, economic inequality, climate change and social injustice are just some of the many problems that undermine peaceful coexistence. In this modern era of global interconnectedness and interdependence, strengthening peace endeavours is not only a noble task, but an urgent necessity. This essay examines current approaches to peacebuilding, analyses their weaknesses and strengths and outlines ways in which sustainable peace can be achieved in the 21st century.

Historically, peace efforts have taken many forms, from diplomatic treaties and international organisations to grassroots movements and personal peace initiatives. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 ended the Thirty Years' War and

established principles of state sovereignty that still characterise the international system today. In the 20th century, we saw significant progress with the founding of the United Nations and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But despite these achievements, peace remains a fleeting commodity.

Today, we are facing a new kind of challenge. Asymmetric warfare, terrorism and transnational criminal networks have changed the way conflicts are conducted. At the same time, climate change and resource scarcity are creating new centres of conflict. The digital revolution also brings both opportunities and risks: while social media and the internet can bring people closer together, they can also spread hatred and disinformation.

Current approaches to peacebuilding include a variety of strategies implemented by international organisations and national governments through to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local communities. These approaches can be broadly divided into three categories: preventive diplomacy, humanitarian intervention and development aid.

Preventive diplomacy aims to prevent conflicts before they escalate through negotiation and mediation. The United Nations plays a central role in this by deploying peacekeeping missions and serving as a platform for international negotiations. While these efforts have been successful in many cases, such as avoiding a full-scale war on the Korean

peninsula, they are often ineffective when the parties involved are unwilling to compromise or when geopolitical interests prevail.

Humanitarian interventions involve the use of military force to protect human rights and prevent humanitarian disasters. These missions are controversial as they are often seen as a violation of state sovereignty and have the potential to further destabilise the situation. The NATO mission in Libya in 2011, for example, was intended to protect civilians from the regime of Muammar al-Gaddafi but led to a power vacuum and continued instability.

Development aid and economic support aim to eliminate the structural causes of conflict by addressing poverty, inequality and lack of education. Programmes such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their successors, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), rely on an inclusive approach to promote peace and prosperity. However, there is criticism that many of these programmes are ineffective as they are often poorly coordinated and focused on short-term success rather than sustainable, long-term change.

Despite the multitude of existing approaches, the world is still a long way from stable global peace. It is therefore necessary to critically scrutinise existing strategies and explore new paths.

One of the greatest challenges in peacebuilding is the balance between state sovereignty and the principle of col-

lective security. The traditional notion of sovereignty needs to be reconsidered to reflect the reality of the globalised world. A stronger mandate for international organisations such as the United Nations, coupled with a reform of the Security Council, could improve the effectiveness of collective security measures. However, this requires the willingness of member states to give up some of their sovereignty, which is politically difficult to achieve.

Peace can only be sustainable if it is based on the principles of inclusivity and justice. This means that all affected communities and groups must be included in the peace process. One example of this is the participation of women in peace negotiations. Studies have shown that peace agreements that include women are more sustainable, as women often bring a different perspective on conflict resolution and reconstruction. Similarly, young people need to be more involved as they are often the most affected and at the same time the least heard group.

While international and national efforts are important, more support should be given to local peace initiatives. Civil society plays a crucial role in promoting peace by fostering dialogue and understanding at the community level. Local NGOs and grassroots movements often have a better understanding of the specific causes of conflict and can therefore offer more effective solutions. An example of this is the "peace committees" in Kenya, which have successfully contributed to conflict resolution in ethnically divided communities.

The digital revolution offers new opportunities to promote peace. Social media can be used to build bridges between hostile groups and combat disinformation. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have already been used successfully to promote dialogue and understanding. However, the other side of the coin must also be considered: The spread of hate speech and extremist propaganda online poses a significant threat to peace. It is therefore necessary to develop mechanisms that prevent the misuse of digital technology without suppressing freedom of expression.

Climate change poses an increasing threat to global peace. Resource scarcity and environmental disasters lead to new conflicts and exacerbate existing tensions. Climate protection measures must therefore be an integral part of any peace strategy. This includes both preventive measures to combat climate change and adaptation strategies to strengthen the resilience of affected communities. International agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement are a step in the right direction but must be implemented more consistently.

Promoting peace in the 21st century requires a holistic approach that considers the complex and diverse causes of conflict. Historical experience and current challenges show that no single approach is sufficient to ensure sustainable peace. Instead, a combination of preventive diplomacy, humanitarian interventions, development aid, local peacebuilding and technological progress is needed. It requires political will, international cooperation and the commitment

of all social actors to realise the vision of a more peaceful and just world.

Only through such an inclusive and holistic strategy can the way forward be paved, and peace efforts strengthened. The future of peace depends on our ability to address these challenges and work together to find solutions that address the roots of conflict and create a more just and inclusive world.

Conclusion

The quote "The pen is mightier than the sword" is widely used in modern political literature and in general discourse. It emphasises the power of the written and spoken word over physical force. This essay explores the implications and validity of this quote in various historical and modern contexts. It critically examines both the strengths and weaknesses of this idea.

The expression "The pen is mightier than the sword" comes from the play "Richelieu; Or the Conspiracy" by Edward Bulwer-Lytton from 1839. Cardinal Richelieu, the title character of the play, utters these words to emphasise the superior power of diplomatic and intellectual influence over military force. This idea has its roots in ancient philosophy and literature. Greek and Roman thinkers already emphasised the importance of knowledge and the power of persuasion. Plato, for example, spoke of the power of ideas over the material world.

History offers numerous examples of the transformative power of words. The French Revolution is an outstanding example of how writings and speeches can mobilise the masses and bring about social upheaval. The works of philosophers such as Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu inspired the people and laid the ideological foundation for the revolution. Another example is the American independence movement, in which the writings of Thomas Paine and the Declaration of Independence played a central role.

In modern history, the civil rights movement in the USA impressively demonstrates the power of the word. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech mobilised millions and ultimately led to significant legal and social change. Mahatma Gandhi in India also used words and ideas to fight against British colonial rule and ultimately achieve India's independence.

Despite these impressive examples, the limitations of the quote "The pen is mightier than the sword" must be recognised. Words alone are often not enough to overcome deeply entrenched systems of power and oppression. There are numerous historical examples where the use of force was seen as necessary to achieve social justice. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, for example, required both ideological conviction and military force to overthrow the Tsarist regime.

In authoritarian regimes, the possibilities of the written word are often severely restricted. Censorship, propaganda

and repression make it difficult to disseminate oppositional ideas and bring about change. A current example is the People's Republic of China, where the government exercises strict control over the internet and the media to suppress dissenting opinions. In such contexts, the power of the word can only be effective if it is supported by other forms of resistance.

A key point in the discussion about the power of words and violence is the realisation that the two are often in a symbiotic relationship. Ideas and words can serve as a catalyst for action, while action often creates the space in which ideas can be heard and realised. The independence movements in Africa during the second half of the 20th century show how words and armed resistance went hand in hand to drive out the colonial powers.

The Arab Spring offers a modern example of this symbiosis. Social media and digital communication played a crucial role in mobilising people and drawing the world's attention to the protests. At the same time, these movements often relied on physical resistance to fight government oppression.

The power of the word is particularly evident in democratic societies. Free media and public discourse are essential components of a functioning democracy. Journalists, writers and activists could uncover grievances, initiate public debates and bring about political change. An outstanding example of this is the Watergate affair, in which investiga-

tive journalists played a key role in uncovering the scandal and ultimately leading to the resignation of President Nixon.

In the modern digital era, the reach and influence of the written word has continued to grow. Social media provides platforms where individuals and groups can raise their voices and reach a wide audience. Movements such as #MeToo show how digital communication can be used to promote social change and denounce institutional injustices.

With great power comes great responsibility. This is especially true for those who use the word as a weapon. Words can manipulate, divide and destroy just as well as they can build and unite. The spread of disinformation and fake news shows the dark side of the power of words. In recent years, political actors and interest groups have repeatedly attempted to influence public opinion and undermine democratic processes through targeted disinformation.

A well-known example is the role of fake news in the Brexit referendum and the 2016 US presidential election. These cases show that the pen, when used unethically, can cause immense damage. It is therefore crucial that writers, journalists and all those who give public speeches are aware of their ethical responsibilities and uphold truth and integrity.

The quote "The pen is mightier than the sword" is both a recognition of the transformative power of words and a reminder to use this power wisely. Historical and modern

examples show that words can bring about profound social change by spreading ideas, creating awareness and mobilising people. At the same time, it is important to recognise that words alone are often not enough to overcome systems of oppression, and that in many cases a combination of intellectual and physical resistance is required.

Modern democracy provides a fertile terrain for the power of the word by creating the space for free and open discourse. But this freedom also brings with it the responsibility to use words wisely and ethically to promote the common good. Ultimately, the analysis shows that the pen can indeed be mightier than the sword, but only if it is wielded with integrity, wisdom and a deep understanding of the complexity of human societies.

CONFLICTS

Actors in conflicts and conflict resolution

In today's globalised world, international organisations and nation states play a central role in the management of conflicts, whether through mediation and conflict resolution or as parties to international agreements. This article examines the historical development of these actors and their multifaceted role in international conflicts, with a particular focus on asymmetric conflicts as they occur in various regions of the world, including Africa and in Europe with groups such as the IRA or ETA.

International organisations are a product of the 20th century, which was marked by two world wars and a strong need for international cooperation and peacekeeping. The League of Nations after the First World War and later the United Nations after the Second World War were responses to the need to prevent conflicts and solve global problems.

Nation states, on the other hand, have a much longer history and have long been the dominant actors in international relations. Their role has varied from conflict instigators to peacemakers, depending on their political interests

and historical context. Historical examples such as the European colonial powers in Africa or the European states among themselves show how nation states can both fuel conflicts and end them through diplomatic negotiations.

A central feature of modern international organisations such as the United Nations is their role as mediators in international conflicts. Through diplomatic channels and the deployment of peacekeeping forces, they endeavour to contain violence and promote long-term solutions. A notable example is the UN's efforts to end the civil war in El Salvador in the 1990s or its involvement in South Sudan since its independence.

Africa, a continent with a history of colonialism and post-colonial conflicts, offers numerous case studies for the role of international organisations. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU), has sought to resolve conflicts such as the civil war in Liberia or the genocide in Rwanda. However, its efforts have often been hampered by limited resources and the complexity of ethnic conflicts.

Asymmetric conflicts, in which state actors fight against non-state groups, are a growing problem in the international security landscape. Groups such as the IRA in Northern Ireland or the ETA in the Basque Country not only challenged state authority but were also supported by international actors such as Libya or the IRA of Irish Americans.

The response of nation states to these challenges varied greatly. While some, such as Spain in the case of ETA, relied mainly on police and judicial measures, others, such as the UK in the Northern Ireland conflict, tried to combine both military and political strategies. The role of the international community in peacebuilding in these conflicts was also significant, with attempts at mediation and political leverage being used to end violence and encourage negotiations.

Another important aspect of international relations is the importance of treaties and agreements in the regulation and settlement of conflicts. National and international laws and human rights agreements play a key role in creating a framework for peace negotiations and conflict resolution.

Examples such as the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which ended the conflict in Northern Ireland, show how international mediation and the signing of agreements by all parties involved can be decisive. Such agreements not only offer legal guarantees, but also create political room for manoeuvre for the transition from conflict to peace.

Despite the progress made in international cooperation and conflict resolution, international organisations and nation states face considerable challenges. The increase in asymmetric conflicts, particularly in the age of terrorism and global networking, requires new approaches and strategies.

Africa remains a critical region where the international community is called upon to support sustainable peace

solutions and understand local conflict dynamics. The role of the AU and regional organisations such as ECOWAS in West Africa shows that local actors are often better able to respond to complex conflicts when they are strengthened by international support.

For nation states, this means that they will increasingly have to deal with global security issues that extend beyond their own borders. The fight against international terrorism requires increased cooperation and the exchange of information between states as well as the strengthening of international legal frameworks.

International organisations and nation states are key players in the management of international conflicts. Their role ranges from conflict initiation, mediation and peace-making to the signing and implementation of international agreements. While they are often confronted with challenges, they also offer the opportunity to contribute to long-term solutions through co-operation and diplomatic negotiations.

A historical analysis of these actors makes it clear that conflicts and their solutions are often closely linked to political and social developments. The future will show whether international organisations and nation states are able to adapt to the changing security landscape and develop effective strategies for conflict prevention and peacekeeping.

The political madness

Throughout the history of mankind, political leaders have repeatedly made the decision to bring about a definitive turnaround on the battlefield. These decisions have often been characterised by a mixture of pressure, ideology and the desire for a quick victory. But what happens when this urge for decisiveness leads to political madness? How does this affect not only the political actors themselves, but also the societies they represent?

There are numerous examples in political history of attempts to resolve a political situation through a military decision. The First World War provides a particularly striking example, when European political and military leaders believed that a quick military victory would provide the solution to complex political problems. The battles of Verdun and Somme are examples of how the desire for a quick decision led to massive human casualties without a clear political solution in sight.

This urge to make a quick decision on the battlefield can be seen as political madness if it outweighs rational analysis and strategic planning. The desire to overwhelm the enemy and achieve one's own goals can lead to a blindness that ignores the long-term consequences.

Political leaders who succumb to the political madness of forced decision-making on the battlefield often jeopardise their political capital and the future of their country. An

example of this is Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union during the Second World War. The urge for a quick victory led to an expansion of the conflict and ultimately to the collapse of the Nazi regime. Such decisions can end political careers and plunge entire nations into disaster.

The personal consequences for the political actors are often enormous. They have to bear the responsibility for failed military endeavours that not only cost the lives of soldiers but can also shake the confidence of the population and the international community. The psychological stress of such decisions can have long-term negative effects on the health and well-being of political leaders.

The social consequences of political madness that seeks to force a decision on the battlefield are far-reaching and often serious. In wars and armed conflicts, innocent civilians suffer the consequences of such policies. Economic resources are mobilised for military purposes while important social programmes are neglected. Public opinion can quickly turn against the political leadership if people feel that their sacrifices and deprivations are not justified.

One example of the social consequences of political madness is the Vietnam War. The USA pursued a policy of enforced victory to contain communism, which led to a protracted and costly conflict. The social division in the USA was enormous and the war triggered a wave of protests and social unrest that had a lasting impact on the country.

The question of how long a society can tolerate a policy of forced decision-making on the battlefield is of crucial importance. Public support for military operations often dwindles quickly when the costs become too high and successes fail to materialise. The political pressure on leaders increases when the population begins to question the legitimacy and strategic rationale of military action.

A notable example of this is the Iraq War, which was launched by the USA and its allies in 2003. The attempt to use military power to bring about a decision and determine the political course in the Middle East led to many years of conflict, political tensions and considerable human loss. Public support in the US and other countries declined rapidly as the costs of the war became clear and the hoped-for political objectives were not achieved.

Popular science literature often focuses on the irrational decisions and far-reaching consequences that can arise when political leaders suffer the political madness of trying to force a decision on the battlefield. These decisions not only have a direct impact on the military and the political elite, but also shape the future of the societies they represent.

Political madness can lead to devastating consequences, both for the political leaders themselves and for the societies under their leadership. The historical and current examples show that humanity must learn from the mistakes of the past to avoid similar tragedies in the future. It is up to polit-

ical leaders and society to promote rational and long-term orientated policies aimed at diplomatic solutions and the protection of global security, rather than going down the path of political madness.

In a world characterised by complex geopolitical challenges, it is crucial that political decision-makers heed the lessons of history and make their decisions with the utmost sense of responsibility. After all, the price of political madness on the battlefield is often far too high for any society to bear in the long term.

Symmetrical & Asymmetrical Conflicts

Since the end of the Second World War, the world stage has changed dramatically, but man seems to fall into the trap of violence again and again. Conflicts between states and asymmetrical disputes characterise global events and raise serious questions about the nature of war, diplomacy and human morality. The events in Ukraine and Russia and the ongoing tensions between Israel and Hamas are particularly striking.

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia since 2014 has shaken up the global public and at the same time challenged the boundaries of international legal norms. What began as a crisis quickly developed into an armed conflict that continues to this day and has caused deep divisions in the region. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014

and the subsequent armed conflict in eastern Ukraine heralded a new era of geopolitical tensions.

Russia's aggressive policy under President Vladimir Putin has called into question the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty, which have been the cornerstones of international law since the end of the Cold War. However, the reactions of Western states, including sanctions and diplomatic isolation, have not brought a lasting solution, but have merely led to a hardening of the fronts.

A central point of controversy is the role of NATO and the question of the security of Eastern Europe. For Russia, which feels threatened by NATO's eastward expansion, Ukraine represents a geopolitical buffer that it is trying to keep under control. The Ukrainian government, on the other hand, sees its right to self-determination and territorial integrity threatened.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, an asymmetrical conflict is taking place that is difficult to grasp in its complexity and humanity. The relationship between Israel and Hamas, which has been caught in a cyclical pattern of violence and ceasefires for years, came to a bloody head in October 2023, when an assassin carried out the largest massacre of Jews since the Shoah on 7th October.

This event not only marked a tragedy for the families affected, but also a turning point in the public perception of the conflict. The world watched in horror as violence and hatred escalated on both sides, while at the same time ques-

tioning the future of the Middle East and the possibility of a lasting peace solution.

Hamas, an Islamist organisation in power in the Gaza Strip, and Israel, a democratic state that must constantly defend itself against terrorist threats, are locked in a seemingly insurmountable conflict. Hamas uses rocket attacks and terrorist attacks as a means of destabilisation, while Israel uses its military superiority to protect its citizens while providing humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population.

To understand the development of these conflicts, it is essential to analyse their deep-rooted causes. In Ukraine, historical, cultural and geopolitical factors are intertwined and have a direct impact on current events. The collapse of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's subsequent independence led to a fragmentation of society and tensions between pro-Russian and pro-Western forces. Russia's attempt to re-establish its sphere of influence is a reaction to the sense of threat posed by Western expansion and the losses suffered during the collapse of the USSR.

In the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is strongly characterised by historical unrest, religious tensions and a struggle for territory and self-determination. The creation of the state of Israel after the Second World War triggered a flood of conflicts that are still unresolved today. Hamas, a rejection of the Oslo peace processes and

Israel's settlement policy, uses armed resistance as a means of political pressure and mobilisation.

The international community has reacted to these conflicts with mixed reactions. While the United Nations and many Western states have condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine and imposed sanctions, there are also voices calling for a diplomatic solution and negotiations on the security architecture of Eastern Europe. About the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the international community remains divided between support for Israel's right to self-defence and criticism of its treatment of the Palestinian civilian population.

The development of conflicts since 1945 clearly shows that human conflicts often have deeper political, social and economic causes that go beyond the obvious military events. Conflicts between states such as Ukraine and Russia and asymmetric conflicts such as that between Israel and Hamas are complex phenomena that cannot be resolved by simple solutions or military victories.

It is crucial that the international community continues to strive for peaceful and just solutions based on dialogue, respect for human rights and international legal norms. Only through comprehensive diplomacy, the involvement of civil society actors and the dismantling of prejudices can long-term solutions be found that do justice to all parties involved.

The path to sustainable conflict resolution requires courage, determination and a willingness to look beyond national interests. Humanity is at a crossroads where it must decide whether it wants to break the cycle of violence and suffering that has been going on for decades. It is our responsibility to create a world in which conflicts are not resolved through weapons, but through understanding, empathy and the common search for peace and justice

CONFLICT MODEL

Friedrich Glasl's conflict model is a theoretical approach to analysing and managing conflicts that is widely discussed in organisational and management literature. Friedrich Glasl, an Austrian organisational consultant and conflict researcher, developed his model to better understand and constructively resolve complex conflict dynamics in companies and organisations. His approach differs fundamentally from traditional models of conflict management in that he describes the dynamics and escalation stages of conflicts in detail and proposes specific interventions that can be adapted depending on the degree of escalation.

Conflict is ubiquitous and permeates every facet of human life, from personal relationships to professional interactions to international political tensions. They are unavoidable and often necessary for progress and change. But just as important as recognising conflict is understanding its dynamics and being able to manage it effectively. An excellent model for analysing conflicts and their escalation is the nine-stage escalation model. This model provides deep insights into the development of conflicts and offers valuable approaches for their management.

Conflicts arise when two or more parties have different interests, needs or values and these appear irreconcilable. In political literature, conflicts are often seen as drivers of change and innovation, but also as sources of violence and destruction. A comprehensive understanding of conflicts therefore requires a multidimensional approach that integrates psychological, sociological and political aspects.

Conflicts can be constructive in that they promote creative solutions and improve social dynamics. At the same time, they can become destructive if they escalate uncontrollably and lead to violence or serious social divisions. Effective conflict management is therefore crucial to harness the positive aspects of conflict and minimise its negative consequences.

Glasl's escalation model

Glasl's escalation model is a detailed framework that describes how conflicts can develop from simple differences of opinion into intense disputes. Glasl identifies nine escalation stages, each of which is characterised by specific behavioural patterns and dynamics. The model serves both as a diagnostic tool and as a guide for interventions.

Hardening: The conflict begins with a hardening of positions. Differing opinions become clear, but communication remains largely objective. There is an opportunity to resolve the conflict through dialogue and negotiation.

Debate and polemics: Points of view harden further, and communication becomes more aggressive. A competitive mindset develops in which each party tries to convince or outdo the other.

Actions instead of words: The parties to the conflict begin to react through actions instead of words. Distrust grows and the first strategic manoeuvres are made to strengthen one's own position.

Coalitions and image battles: parties are looking for allies to strengthen their position. The conflict widens and becomes increasingly publicised. Enemy stereotypes and intense image battles emerge.

Loss of face: The parties try to humiliate and publicly discredit their opponent. The focus is on damaging the opponent, even if this entails disadvantages for themselves.

Threat strategies: The conflict becomes existential. Threats and intimidation become the main means of conflict. The parties are prepared to take high risks to achieve their goals.

Limited destructive strikes: The aim is now to inflict lasting damage on the opponent. The conflict takes on destructive forms and targeted attacks are launched.

Fragmentation: The destruction of the opponent is considered necessary. The conflict escalates to a point where each party is prepared to destroy the opponent at any cost.

Common abyss: Both parties no longer see any possibility of a solution and are prepared to take the conflict to the point of mutual destruction. This is the most destructive stage, in which no way back seems possible.

Analysing the escalation levels

Hardening

Hardening is the starting point of many conflicts. This is where different opinions meet and there is still room for discussion and compromise. The art of conflict management in this phase is to keep communication open and respectful. Mediators can play a decisive role here through targeted dialogue and moderation.

Debate and polemics

In the second stage, the tone becomes sharper, and the parties try to defend and strengthen their positions. There is a danger that rational arguments take a back seat, and emotional reactions take over. Effective conflict management here requires recognising the emotions and bringing the discussion back to a factual level.

Actions instead of words

When words are no longer enough, the parties' resort to action. This stage is particularly critical as it marks the transition from verbal to non-verbal confrontations. Preventive

measures such as clearly defined communication channels and transparent decision-making processes can help to prevent this escalation stage.

Coalitions and image battles

The formation of coalitions intensifies the conflict dynamics. It is important here to understand the group dynamics that arise and to intervene in a targeted manner to reduce polarisation. Conflict managers should try to work out common interests and form alliances for positive change.

Loss of face

When the conflict reaches the point of humiliating the opponent, it becomes difficult to rebuild trust. In this phase, intercultural competence and empathy can be decisive in supporting the process of reconciliation.

Threat strategies

Threats and intimidation are signs of a deeply escalated conflict. The parties often see no way out and resort to aggressive tactics. The introduction of neutral third parties can help to bring the conflict parties back to the negotiating table.

Limited destruction strikes

If the conflict takes on destructive forms, swift action is required. Conflict managers must intervene in a targeted manner to prevent further escalation and minimise damage. This can be achieved through de-escalation strategies and the deployment of peacekeepers.

Fragmentation and common abyss

In the last two stages, the conflict has escalated to such an extent that a peaceful solution hardly seems possible. In such cases, it is often necessary to consider external intervention by international organisations or peace missions to prevent complete destruction.

Political and social implications

Glasl's escalation levels not only offer insights into personal or organisational conflicts but can also be applied to political and social levels. Historical and current political conflicts often show similar patterns of escalation, which are described in the model.

Examples of this are numerous international conflicts that are characterised by similar stages of escalation. The latest political tensions in various parts of the world, such as the Ukraine conflict or the conflicts in the Middle East, illustrate the relevance of Glasl's model in political analysis.

Glasl's escalation model offers valuable insights into the dynamics of conflicts and provides important pointers for

effective conflict management. A deep understanding of the escalation stages can help to take appropriate measures at an early stage and prevent destructive developments.

For practitioners in the field of conflict management, this means

Early detection and prevention: Identifying conflicts at an early stage and targeted interventions to prevent escalation.

Promote communication: Encourage open and respectful communication to manage misunderstandings and emotions.

Mediation and negotiation: Use of mediators and negotiation strategies to resolve conflicts on an objective level.

De-escalation strategies: Development and implementation of de-escalation strategies in advanced stages of the conflict.

Intercultural competence: Promotion of intercultural competence to understand and manage the complex dynamics in international conflicts.

Peacekeeping and external interventions: In extreme cases, such as in the final stages of escalation, external interventions and peacekeeping missions may be necessary to prevent complete destruction.

Analysing and applying Glasl's escalation model can therefore make an important contribution to conflict research and conflict management, both at an individual and societal level. Through a deep understanding of escalation dynamics and targeted interventions, conflicts can be used constructively and their destructive potential minimised.

WORLD POLITICS

The background: The chessboard

Zbigniew Brzezinski, former security advisor under President Jimmy Carter, is not only known as an expert on international relations, but also as the author of influential books on the world order and the role of the USA in it. His 1997 work "The Grand Chessboard" has attracted widespread attention, as it not only accurately predicted future developments but also disseminated controversial views on US imperial policy. This analysis is dedicated to the critical evaluation of Brzezinski's theses, especially in relation to the strategic goals of the USA in Europe and Russia, which he sees as long-term endeavours since 1917.

Brzezinski's "The Grand Chessboard" presents a vision in which the US acts as a dominant superpower whose primary geopolitical goal is to control Eurasia, especially the lines of communication between Europe and Asia. He argues that the US must maintain its dominance by retaining hegemony over key regions such as Eastern Europe and Central Asia. His analysis of geopolitical dynamics emphasises the strategic importance of these regions, particularly in terms of energy sources and geopolitical stability.

Brzezinski sketches a picture in which the US must use skilful diplomacy, economic influence and military presence to ensure that no single power or alliance dominates Eurasia and thereby jeopardises its own global position. This vision is not only a description of the current reality, but also a guideline for future US political decisions in the international arena.

To adequately understand Brzezinski's reasoning and vision, it is crucial to consider the historical context of his time. The book was published shortly after the end of the Cold War, when the United States remained as the sole superpower and found itself in a unique position to redefine its foreign policy goals. The geopolitical landscape changed dramatically as former Soviet republics gained their independence and new dynamic power relationships emerged.

Brzezinski argues that Eurasia, especially its Central Asian and Eurasian regions, is the key to US global supremacy. He uses the metaphor of a chess game to illustrate that control over Eurasia is not only strategically important, but also crucial to America's security and prosperity. These regions harbour rich resources, important trade routes and geopolitical hubs that are crucial for security and access to markets.

Brzezinski also argues that control over Eurasia enables the USA to assert its political and economic interests on a global level. He emphasises the importance of the Central

Asian republics and Eurasian states such as Russia and Ukraine as key players in this geopolitical chess game.

Point of criticism: Brzezinski's focus on dominance over Eurasia could be interpreted as neo-colonialist, as he may neglect the sovereignty and self-determination of Eurasian nations. His emphasis on American supremacy could lead to tensions with other regional powers and increase the risk of conflict.

For Brzezinski, geostrategic imperatives are the driving force behind US foreign policy. He argues that the US must ensure that no single power or alliance gains control of Eurasia, as this could shift the global balance of power to the detriment of the US.

Point of criticism: This view could lead to a policy of interference and destabilisation to ensure that no regional or global competition arises. In the long term, this could lead to mistrust and hostility towards the USA and make international cooperation more difficult.

Brzezinski is in favour of multilateral cooperation to secure American supremacy. He emphasises the importance of alliances and partnerships to achieve common goals and combat challenges such as terrorism and weapons proliferation.

Point of criticism: His emphasis on multilateral cooperation could be interpreted as a tactical manoeuvre to consolidate US hegemony instead of striving for genuine partner-

ship relations. This could undermine trust in international institutions and lead to a unilateralist American leadership style.

One of the central questions raised by Brzezinski's book concerns the ethical and moral implications of his geopolitical strategy. While he sees the security and prosperity of the US as top priorities, his analysis leaves little room for consideration of the impact on the sovereignty and well-being of other nations.

Brzezinski's emphasis on control over Eurasia could be interpreted as a disregard for the sovereignty and self-determination of the nations concerned. His strategy could be potentially destabilising and lead to the suppression of local aspirations by increasing external interference and geopolitical manipulation.

Brzezinski's geopolitical priorities are strongly focussed on strategic and military objectives. However, the needs of the people in the affected regions, such as the promotion of human rights, economic development and social justice, could be neglected in the process.

The realisation of Brzezinski's vision of the Grand Chessboard poses several challenges and potential consequences that need to be carefully considered. These include:

Geopolitical instability: The pursuit of a policy of American supremacy could lead to tensions with other global

powers and regional players, which could lead to an increase in conflict and instability.

Erosion of global cooperation: A unilateral American leadership role could undermine trust in international institutions and multilateral cooperation, which could lead to a long-term decline in global cooperation and an increase in unilateral actions.

Moral and ethical concerns: Neglecting ethical and moral considerations could lead to human rights violations and social injustices in the regions concerned, which could damage the international reputation of the USA.

Zbigniew Brzezinski's "The Grand Chessboard" is undoubtedly a major work of geopolitical literature, offering a comprehensive analysis of American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. However, its emphasis on securing American supremacy through control of Eurasia raises important ethical, moral and practical questions that need to be carefully considered.

While Brzezinski has identified important geostrategic challenges and opportunities, it is critical that policymakers and the international community critically scrutinise this vision and consider alternative approaches to promoting peace, stability and prosperity on a global scale. A comprehensive geopolitical strategy should take into account not only the security interests of a nation, but also the needs and aspirations of people around the world.

In an increasingly globalised world, where interdependence and cooperation are becoming ever more important, it is essential that geopolitical strategies are based on a solid foundation of ethical principles and universal human rights. This is the only way to ensure long-term peace, justice and sustainable development for all people on earth.

RESOLVED CONFLICTS SINCE 1945

Since the end of the Second World War, the world has experienced numerous conflicts that were considered unsolvable and have claimed countless lives. Nevertheless, there are remarkable examples where seemingly irreconcilable differences and long-lasting conflicts have been resolved through diplomatic negotiations and treaties. These examples shed light on the possibilities and challenges of the peace process in a world that is often characterised by violence and confrontation. The conflicts in Indochina and Vietnam, which represent iconic turning points in the history of international diplomacy, take centre stage.

The insolubility of the conflict in Indochina

After the end of French colonial rule in Indochina, which comprised the countries of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, complex and violent conflicts broke out. In Vietnam in particular, the conflict between nationalist forces led by Ho Chi Minh and the French colonial troops came to a head. What initially began as a struggle for independence soon devel-

oped into a proxy war in the Cold War between the super-powers USA and USSR.

The Vietnam War: a seemingly insoluble dilemma

The Vietnam War, which lasted from the 1950s to 1975, was one of the longest and most devastating military conflicts of the 20th century. It saw the involvement of not only the USA and the USSR, but also other regional powers and groups such as China, North Vietnam, South Vietnam and various communist and anti-communist factions. The intensity of the conflict and the opposing ideologies seemed to make any form of peaceful solution impossible.

The USA, initially supporting South Vietnam and later intervening directly, tried to stop the advance of communism by military means. Massive bombing, ground troops and complex warfare were used to defeat the North Vietnamese army and its allies. At the same time, the North Vietnamese army, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and supported by communist ideology and Soviet arms supplies, fought for the reunification of Vietnam under communist leadership.

Change through diplomatic negotiations

Despite the initial irreconcilability and the seemingly endless violence, the Vietnam War was eventually ended through diplomatic negotiations. A decisive moment was the Paris Peace Conference of 1968, which paved the way for a political solution. A peace agreement was negotiated

and signed under the auspices of the United Nations and with intensive negotiations between the parties to the conflict, in particular the USA and North Vietnam.

The Paris Peace Agreement of 1973

The Paris Peace Agreement of 1973 marked a milestone in the history of international diplomacy. It led to the end of the US military intervention in Vietnam and established the framework for the withdrawal of American troops. In addition, the formation of a provisional revolutionary government in South Vietnam and the recognition of Vietnam's territorial integrity were agreed. Although the agreement did not bring lasting peace, it paved the way for further negotiations and ultimately the reunification of Vietnam under communist rule in 1975.

The Vietnam War and its resolution through the Paris Peace Agreement are a lesson in how even the bloodiest and most hopeless conflicts can be resolved through negotiation and compromise. It was a lengthy process that involved years of suffering and destruction, but ultimately proved that political solutions are possible despite seemingly irreconcilable differences.

Further examples of conflict resolution through treaties since 1945

In addition to the Vietnam War, there are other significant examples in which seemingly insoluble conflicts were resolved by diplomatic means and treaties:

The Korean War and the armistice agreement of 1953

After the Korean War, which raged between 1950 and 1953 and divided the Korean peninsula into two hostile states, an armistice agreement was signed. Although no formal peace treaty was reached and a state of war still technically exists today, the agreement has halted hostilities and maintained a degree of peace on the peninsula.

The end of the civil war in El Salvador (1992)

The civil war in El Salvador, which lasted from 1979 to 1992 and raged between the government and left-wing guerrilla groups, was settled by the signing of the Chapultepec Peace Agreement. The agreement created a framework for political reforms that laid the foundations for a lasting consolidation of peace.

The Dayton Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995)

The Bosnian war, which raged between 1992 and 1995 and was one of the worst ethnic conflicts in Europe after the Second World War, ended with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. This treaty divided the country into two entities and created a complex institutional structure that still characterises the political landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina today.

The hope for peace through diplomacy and treaties

The examples of the Vietnam War, the Korean War, the civil war in El Salvador and the Bosnian War show that seemingly insoluble conflicts can be resolved through diplomatic means and agreements. These experiences emphasise the importance of patience, perseverance and the will to find compromises in international diplomacy.

Despite the successes, however, the challenge of securing long-term and sustainable peace remains. Implementing peace agreements, overcoming deep-rooted hostilities and dealing with the consequences of violence and destruction require continued commitment at local, national and international level.

In a world that is often characterised by conflict and tension, these examples offer hope and inspiration. They show that, despite all obstacles and setbacks, the path to peace is

possible if people and nations have the courage to resolve their differences at the negotiating table and find common solutions.

ESCALATION AND DESTRUCTION

In the current geopolitical landscape of the world, one issue is increasingly coming to the fore that threatens the stability and security of humanity as a whole: the conflict with Russia. Since the end of the Cold War, tensions between the West and Russia have repeatedly come to a head, raising the question of whether we are approaching a new era of confrontation that not only has political and economic repercussions, but also harbours the risk of an uncontrollable escalation that could threaten our very existence.

To understand the current tensions between the West and Russia, it is essential to look back at the past. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War brought hope for an era of co-operation and peace. However, these hopes have often been overshadowed by mistrust, misunderstandings and power politics in recent decades.

Russia, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, has pursued a clear agenda that includes seeking to restore national greatness and influence in the former Soviet satellite states. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and support for separatist movements in Ukraine deeply alarmed Western countries and led to comprehensive sanctions. These events marked a

turning point in international relations and led to a deeper mistrust between Russia and the West.

In geopolitical terms, the conflict with Russia is at the centre of a global power play that revolves not only around political zones of influence in Europe, but also around strategic interests in other parts of the world. Russia has strengthened its presence in the Middle East by intervening in the Syrian civil war, leading to a close alliance with the regime of Bashar al-Assad. These actions have re-established Russia's role as a geopolitical actor and emphasised its willingness to use military means to assert its interests.

For the West, particularly NATO member states, Russia's growing presence close to their borders has raised serious security concerns. NATO's expansion into the Baltic states and the inclusion of former Warsaw Pact countries have led to a direct confrontation that threatens Russia's strategic interests.

One of the greatest dangers associated with the conflict with Russia concerns the nuclear dimension. Both Russia and the United States have an extensive arsenal of nuclear weapons that pose an existential threat to all of humanity. Despite the reduction in strategic nuclear weapons since the end of the Cold War, the potential for a nuclear exchange of blows remains.

Nuclear deterrence, which saved the world from direct armed conflict during the Cold War, is now at stake. New

technologies, such as the development of hypersonic weapons and the modernisation of strategic nuclear forces, have led to a new round of the arms race. The concept of "nuclear superiority" has re-emerged, leading to a dangerous game of deterrence in which the margin for error is minimal and the consequences can be catastrophic.

In the face of these serious threats, the role of diplomacy and international co-operation is crucial. The withdrawal of the United States from international treaties such as the INF Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty has further undermined trust between the parties and hampered the prospects for future disarmament negotiations.

The European Union and other international players have tried to promote a diplomatic solution and support de-escalation measures. However, pressure on Russia through sanctions and diplomatic isolation has so far failed to bring about a sustainable solution. The importance of confidence building, and constructive dialogue cannot be overemphasised as they are the only way to break the spiral of confrontation and create a common security architecture for the future.

In today's interconnected world, the role of the media and public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of the conflict with Russia. Media reports and political commentary can influence public opinion in both the West and Russia and contribute to a further escalation of tensions.

The media must play a responsible role by reporting the facts and providing objective information about the complex geopolitical events. Raising awareness of the risks of armed conflict and the need for a diplomatic solution is essential to ensure broad support for de-escalation measures.

The prospects of the conflict with Russia are uncertain and worrying. While there is still hope for diplomatic solutions, the signs point to confrontation and escalation. The challenges range from securing borders and defending the sovereignty of states to avoiding a nuclear nightmare that could destroy everything that humanity has built up over the past centuries.

It is imperative that the international community, led by the world's major powers, finds a common language to defuse tensions and promote peaceful coexistence. Disarmament negotiations, conflict resolution mechanisms and building trust are urgently needed to save the world from a catastrophe that no one could survive.

The conflict with Russia harbours the risk of an uncontrollable escalation that could not only have political and economic repercussions, but also threaten the entire human race. From the nuclear threat to the geopolitical power play, the risks are high and the challenges immense.

It is time for a level-headed and prudent approach to these challenges. Humanity is at a crossroads where the wrong decisions could have devastating consequences. It is

our responsibility to use the lessons of history to shape a better future for all, free from the threat of a global conflict that could destroy us all.

THE MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER AND ITS CHALLENGES

In the turbulent waters of international politics, the image of the world order has changed dramatically since the end of the Second World War. From a bipolar world order characterised by the Cold War between the USA and the USSR, through a phase of unipolar dominance by the USA in the 1990s, to the current multipolar reality characterised by the emergence of new geopolitical players, we are experiencing a period of profound upheaval and conflict.

The Cold War period was characterised by a deep ideological divide between the West, led by the USA, and the communist Eastern Bloc, led by the USSR. This bipolar world was characterised by strong mistrust, ideological confrontations and an arms-based security doctrine. The conflicts spanned all continents, from Korea to Vietnam, from Angola to Nicaragua.

The climax of the Cold War manifested itself in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, when the world was on the brink of nuclear war. This period was characterised by strong black-and-white thinking in international politics, which placed national security above all else and influenced the

development of many regions of the world through local conflicts and proxy wars.

There are few eras in human history that have had such a profound impact on the global order as the Cold War. This era, which lasted from around 1947 to 1991, defined international politics, economics, culture and even everyday life in a way that continues to have an impact today. The term "bipolar world" aptly describes the dominant geopolitical pattern of the time: a struggle for power and influence between two superpowers, the USA and the Soviet Union.

The Cold War was the result of deep mistrust and ideological opposition between the capitalist West, led by the USA, and the communist East, led by the Soviet Union. After the end of the Second World War, these two power blocs faced each other as the only remaining superpowers, and their different political systems and ideologies made direct coexistence impossible. What followed was a period of tension, arms races and ideological confrontation that divided the world into two camps.

During the Cold War, influence was not only fought for with weapons and the military, but also with propaganda and ideology. Both sides tried to portray their respective political systems as superior and to convince people in their countries and in other parts of the world of their point of view. This led to a strong polarisation of global opinion and influenced many aspects of life, from art to science to education.

The USA emphasised its democracy and market economy as guarantors of freedom and prosperity, while the Soviet Union propagated communism as the path to equality and social justice. These ideological differences were reflected in everything from architecture to literature, from the media to science. The competition for ideological supremacy also characterised the education systems of both sides, with each trying to instil its values and beliefs into the minds of the younger generations.

One of the most threatening consequences of the Cold War was the arms race, particularly in the field of nuclear weaponry. Both superpowers developed an arsenal of nuclear weapons capable of destroying entire cities. The fear of nuclear war was omnipresent and characterised people's attitude to life in this era. Films, books and works of art reflected these fears and often served as an outlet for the collective fear of an apocalyptic scenario.

The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 emphasised the seriousness and potential consequences of a direct confrontation between the superpowers. Nuclear war was only narrowly avoided, but tensions remained high and continued to dominate international politics.

The influence of the Cold War was not limited to the direct parties to the conflict but extended to the entire world. Many countries were drawn into the conflict and had to choose which side they would take. This often led to internal tensions and conflicts that continue to have an impact

today. The East-West conflict influenced the development and foreign policy of many countries and promoted the rise of dictatorships and authoritarian regimes that relied on one of the two superpowers.

The Third World was particularly hard hit, as it often became the theatre of proxy wars and ideological disputes. In many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the USA and the Soviet Union supported rival political groups and regimes, which led to instability and conflicts that often persisted long after the end of the Cold War.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of the Cold War and heralded a new era in international relations. The Iron Curtain fell, and many former Eastern Bloc countries turned to the West. The world seemed to be striving towards a new state of harmony and peace, free from the threat of global conflict.

However, new challenges and problems soon emerged because of the aftermath of the Cold War. In many former Eastern Bloc countries, economic turbulence and social unrest led to political instability and the rise of nationalist movements. Russia, as the greatest heir to the Soviet Union, tried to find its place in the new world order, while the USA sought to consolidate its role as the only remaining superpower.

Today, more than three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the effects of the Cold War are still being felt. International politics remains characterised by geopolitical

tensions that are often based on the legacy of the Cold War. New conflicts such as the war in Ukraine and the conflict in Syria show how deep the traces of this era still run.

The role of the USA in the world has also changed. While it was initially regarded as the undisputed superpower after the Cold War, it is now faced with new challenges such as the rise of China and an increasingly multi-polar world. Russia, on the other hand, under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin, is trying to reassert its influence in Eurasia and assert its place as a major geopolitical power.

The Cold War was a time of extremes that shaped the world in a way that is difficult to overestimate. It not only changed international politics and economics, but also influenced social consciousness and cultural production. The memory of this era should remind us today how dangerous the confrontation between two superpowers can be and how important it is to seek diplomatic and peaceful solutions to international conflicts.

The world we inhabit today is the legacy of the Cold War. It is a world characterised by the achievements and mistakes of that era. To shape the future, we must learn from history and endeavour to overcome the ghosts of the past, while defending the values of freedom, democracy and peace that were so often threatened during the bipolar world of the Cold War era.

With the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, it seemed as if the world was entering an era of peace and American hegemony. The 1990s were described by many as the "end of history", in which liberal democracy and the capitalist market economy triumphed as the dominant ideologies.

The USA, as the undisputed superpower, was decisively involved in international conflicts, be it in the Gulf War of 1990-91 or in humanitarian interventions in the Balkans. The idea of a unipolar world order was propagated by the United States and accepted by many, while other nations endeavoured to integrate themselves into this new order or rebelled against it.

To write a critically argued popular science essay on the topic "The Unipolar World: The Dominance of the USA in the 1990s", we first need to understand what a unipolar world order means and how the USA acted as a hegemonic power in the 1990s.

The 1990s marked a remarkable period in international political history, characterised by the end of the Cold War and the rise of the United States as the undisputed superpower. This era is often referred to as the unipolar world order, in which the USA occupied a prominent position both militarily and economically. However, this dominance was not uncontroversial and raises important questions about power, politics and global stability.

The 1990s began with the collapse of the Soviet Union, leaving the USA as the only remaining superpower. This status gave the United States considerable advantages in the global arena: economic prosperity, military superiority and cultural influence. Economically, the US benefited from unprecedented growth and dominance in international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Militarily, the unchallenged superiority of the USA ensured the enforcement of its interests and the stabilisation of many regions worldwide - often at a high price for the sovereignty of other states.

US foreign policy in the 1990s was characterised by a mixture of multilateral cooperation and unilateral intervention. Under presidents such as Bill Clinton, the USA sought a balance between international cooperation - for example through NATO and the United Nations - and direct military action, as seen in the Kosovo war or in operations in Iraq and Somalia. These strategies were intended to promote global stability, but often came into conflict with the national interests of other states and the principle of sovereignty.

Despite the apparent advantages, the unipolar world order also attracted considerable criticism. Opponents argued that the global dominance of the USA led to a hegemony that undermined international institutions and contributed to the emergence of new conflicts. The unilateral interventions in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan were often seen as an encroachment on national sovereignty and a disregard for international law. Critics accused the USA of

making global decisions at its own discretion without taking sufficient account of the diversity of global interests.

Despite its undeniable strength, the USA also faced several challenges in the 1990s. The rise of new economic powers such as China and the resurgence of Russia as a regional player undermined its former unipolar dominance. These developments forced the USA to adapt its foreign policy and develop new strategies to safeguard its interests. The global financial crises and terrorism after 11 September 2001 placed additional burdens that revealed the limits of American hegemony.

The 1990s may be considered the high point of the unipolar world order, but its legacy is controversial. The US left behind a complex legacy of global dominance that has been both admired and criticised. Its role in promoting democracy and human rights is often praised, while the costs and side effects of its foreign policy decisions are debated.

The unipolar world order of the 1990s was an era of undisputed American hegemony, but it was not without its challenges and controversies. US dominance not only shaped international politics, but also raised fundamental questions about power, sovereignty and global stability. As we move forward into the 21st century, an increasingly multipolar world order is emerging in which the US plays a significant role but is challenged by rising powers and complex global challenges.

In retrospect, analysing the unipolar world order of the 1990s provides a deeper insight into the complexity of international relations and the dynamics of global power. Its effects can still be felt today and offer important lessons for shaping a just and stable world order in the 21st century.

However, the beginning of the 21st century brought with it an increasing fragmentation of global power structures. New emerging powers such as China and Russia, as well as regional players in the Middle East and elsewhere, began to play a more significant role. This multipolar reality is characterised by a complex web of international relations in which various actors with different interests and world views compete and cooperate with each other.

The Ukraine crisis since 2014 is a key example of the challenges posed by this new multipolar world order. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbass, the region has become a focal point of tension between Russia and the West. The US and the EU support Ukraine, while Russia claims to be defending the interests of its Russian-speaking population and opposing NATO's eastward expansion.

In the world of international politics and economics, a remarkable change is emerging that challenges the traditional model of unipolar or bipolar power constellations. Since the end of the Cold War, when the United States was the only remaining superpower, the global balance of power has gradually changed. Today, we are in transition to a

multipolar world order characterised by an increasing diversity of power centres.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the assumption prevailed in many parts of the world that the USA would dominate unchallenged as the only remaining superpower. This period was often referred to as the "unity moment", in which the West consolidated its hegemony under the leadership of the USA. The belief in the superiority of the Western democratic model and the neoliberal economic order seemed unshakeable.

However, this phase of unipolar dominance was not to last. In the new millennium, new dynamic forces began to emerge that challenged the global balance. The economic rise of China, Russia's resurgence under Putin and the strengthening of other regional powers such as India, Brazil and the Gulf states marked the beginning of a transition to a multipolar world order.

A multipolar world order is characterised by the existence of several equal or almost equal centres of power. In contrast to the bipolarity that existed between the USA and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, multipolarity means greater diversity and complexity in international relations.

The most prominent feature of the transition to multipolarity is undoubtedly the rise of China. With a population of over 1.4 billion people and a rapidly growing economy, China has acquired a global presence that cannot be ignored. Since the economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping in

the late 1970s, China has evolved from an agrarian society to a modern industrialised nation. Today, it is the second largest economy in the world and plays a central role in global trade flows, investment and technological innovation.

However, China's rise is not only economic in nature. The Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping has also pursued an expansive foreign policy agenda, which manifests itself in initiatives such as the "New Silk Road" (also known as the Belt and Road Initiative). This initiative aims to create trade routes over land and sea to connect China with Europe, Africa and the Middle East. It represents a challenge to traditional Western dominance in global infrastructure and development co-operation.

Alongside China, Russia has risen to become a key player in the multipolar world order under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin. Following its economic decline in the 1990s, Russia has stabilised its economy and rebuilt its military capabilities. Putin has pursued a policy of regional influence, particularly in the former Soviet republics and in the Middle East, where Russia has strengthened its presence through military interventions in Syria and close relations with countries such as Iran and Turkey.

Russia also uses energy exports, particularly natural gas and oil, as a geopolitical tool to secure its interests in Europe and beyond. This has led to tensions with Western countries, particularly in connection with the Ukraine crisis and sanctions imposed by the EU and the US.

In addition to China and Russia, there are several other emerging powers that are shaping the multipolar world order. India, with its rapidly growing population and economy, aspires to a greater role on the global stage and maintains close relations with the US, Europe and Asian neighbours. Brazil, as South America's largest economy, plays a key role in regional integration and has ambitions to strengthen its presence in global forums such as the United Nations.

The Gulf states, in particular Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have become increasingly important globally thanks to their wealth of oil and gas as well as targeted investments in the economy and infrastructure. They play a decisive role in the stability of the Middle East and are important players in international energy issues.

The multipolar world order brings with it both challenges and opportunities. An increasing diversity of power centres could lead to increased geopolitical instability as different states pursue different interests and rival alliances could form. This could lead to an increase in conflicts, whether in the form of trade disputes, cyberattacks or even military confrontations.

On the other hand, the multipolar world order also offers opportunities for greater flexibility and diversity in international relations. Small and medium-sized states could play a greater role, as they can mediate between the various power blocs and represent their own interests. This

could lead to a greater democratisation of international relations and open up the possibility of innovative solutions to global challenges such as climate change or the fight against pandemics.

The multipolar world order is here to stay. It is the result of a global transformation that has fundamentally changed the geopolitical landscape. While the US continues to play a significant role and act as one of the world's leading economic powers, it is increasingly confronted with a variety of challenges resulting from the rise of other powers.

To promote a stable and sustainable multipolar world order, closer cooperation and dialogue between the various centres of power is essential. This requires both the willingness to find compromises and the ability to resolve conflicts constructively. International organisations such as the United Nations play an important role here as a forum for multi-lateral diplomacy and cooperative decision-making.

In a multipolar world, states must increasingly rely on soft power and diplomatic skill to promote their national interests. The ability to navigate between different power blocs while addressing global challenges will be critical to shaping a peaceful and prosperous future.

The return to diverse centres of power in international politics and economics is not only a reality, but also an opportunity for a fairer and more balanced world order. By recognising and respecting the diversity of global actors,

together we can shape a future based on cooperation, understanding and sustainable development.

The conflict in Ukraine:

In the tangled web of international politics, Ukraine has been a focal point for years, challenging not only geopolitical interests but also cultural identities and historical narratives. The conflict that erupted in Ukraine in 2014 has left deep scars and has become a symbol of the clash between regional powers and global actors. In this popular science article, we will take an in-depth look at the origins, the actors and the effects of this conflict.

To understand current developments, it is essential to take a look at history. Ukraine has always been a crossroads of different cultures and interests. After centuries under the rule of various great powers, including the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary and Tsarist Russia, Ukraine gained its independence in 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

However, this independence was fragile from the outset. Ukraine was confronted with deep internal divisions, particularly between the western-oriented regions, which cultivated close ties with Europe, and the eastern-oriented regions, which favoured stronger ties with Russia. This division was reflected not only in political preferences, but also in cultural and linguistic differences.

The Maidan uprising and the Crimean crisis

In February 2014, the Maidan uprising shook Ukraine and marked the beginning of a series of events that not only changed the country's domestic political situation, but also triggered a geopolitical crisis of considerable significance. The Maidan, which initially began as a protest movement against the government of President Viktor Yanukovych, quickly became a symbol of the fight for democracy and against corruption. However, behind the scenes of this revolution, international actors played an important role, above all the United States of America under the leadership of Victoria Nuland, a central figure in the diplomatic process.

The events on Maidan Square in Kiev were not only an uprising against the Yanukovych government, but also a symbol of the deep-seated tensions within Ukrainian society. The protests, which began in November 2013, were characterised by growing dissatisfaction with the government, which was perceived as corrupt and undemocratic. The brutal suppression of the protests by security forces at the end of February 2014 escalated the situation further and ultimately led to the overthrow of President Yanukovych.

For many Ukrainians and supporters of the Maidan, this was a moment of hope for a new beginning, away from the post-Soviet era and towards a more European and democratic future. However, the role of the USA and other Western states in these events was criticised and controversially discussed from various sides.

Victoria Nuland, at the time Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs at the US State Department, played a key role in supporting the pro-Western forces during the Maidan uprising. Her famous statement "Fuck the EU" in a wiretapped telephone conversation with the US ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, came to symbolise open American interference in Ukraine's internal affairs.

The US actively supported the opposition forces on the Maidan, both financially and through political support. Organisations such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) played a significant role in funding and supporting NGOs and media supporting the Maidan. This led to accusations that the US was trying to bring about regime change in Ukraine to further its own geopolitical interests.

Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, shortly after the Maidan uprising, significantly exacerbated geopolitical tensions and led to one of the most serious crises in relations between Russia and the West since the Cold War. Russia claimed that Crimea had been democratically annexed through a referendum, while the West condemned the annexation as a violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and international law.

The USA and the European Union responded with sanctions against Russia, which led to a deterioration in economic relations and a new Cold War-like situation between East

and West. The Crimean crisis clearly demonstrated the limitations of Western influence in the region and emphasised the ongoing tensions between the USA and Russia.

The events on the Maidan and the subsequent Crimean crisis raise important questions about the role of the USA and other Western states in Ukrainian politics. While many see the Maidan as a legitimate uprising for democracy and freedom, there is also criticism of the interference of the US and its allies in Ukraine's internal affairs.

Critics argue that the USA's support for the Maidan was not exclusively motivated by democratic motives, but also by geopolitical interests aimed at removing Ukraine from the Russian sphere of influence and bringing it closer to the West. The publication of wiretapped conversations, such as that of Victoria Nuland, reinforced the impression that Western states were trying to influence the political landscape in Ukraine.

The Crimean crisis and the ongoing tensions between Russia and the West have led to fears that a new phase of the Cold War could develop. The US and Russia are engaged in various international conflicts and Ukraine has become a symbol of the clash between Western and Russian interests.

In this mixed situation, it is important to critically scrutinise the actions and motives of all actors involved. The USA and Victoria Nuland are exemplary of the complex role of Western states in the Ukraine crisis: on the one hand as

supporters of democracy and human rights, and on the other as actors with their own geopolitical interests and strategies.

The Maidan uprising and the Crimean crisis have shown how strongly geopolitical interests can play a role in the modern political landscape. The role of the USA and Victoria Nuland in these events was of crucial importance and is still the subject of intense political and academic debate today.

While some see American support for the Maidan as legitimate, others see it as an attempt to control Ukrainian politics and limit Russia's sphere of influence. The future of Ukraine and its relations with Russia and the West depend primarily on the ability of all actors involved to find diplomatic solutions and respect the legitimate interests of the Ukrainian people.

Overall, the history of the Maidan and the Crimean crisis shows how complex and multi-layered international relations can be and how important it is to take a balanced and critical perspective on the actions of the actors involved to promote long-term stability and security in the region. The conflict in Donbass: proxy war or civil war?

While the annexation of Crimea attracted international attention, a bloody conflict began in the east of Ukraine in the Donbass. Separatist groups supported by Russia took the initiative and declared independence from the Ukraini-

an authorities. This led to an armed conflict between the separatist forces and the Ukrainian army.

The situation in Donbass has since become a symbol of the complexity and brutality of modern war. On one side are the pro-Russian separatists, backed by Russia, which provides both military and political support. On the other side are Ukrainian forces fighting in defence of the country's territorial integrity, supported by Western countries providing economic and military aid.

The question of whether the conflict in Donbass a proxy war between Russia and the West or within Ukraine a civil war remains controversial and complex. While Russia claims that it is only defending the rights of the Russian-speaking population, critics argue that Russia is actively promoting destabilisation in Ukraine to achieve its geopolitical goals.

The conflict in Ukraine is far more than just an internal conflict. It is a microcosm of the geopolitical rivalries and interests that characterise the modern world order. On the one side are the Western countries, in particular the USA and the EU, which see Ukraine as a pillar of democracy in the region and are endeavouring to strengthen its independence and sovereignty.

On the other side is Russia, which views the collapse of the Soviet Union as a serious geopolitical defeat and is endeavouring to re-establish its sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union. Ukraine plays a central role here, as it

is not only an important transit country for energy, but also acts as a bridge between East and West.

For Russia, the security of its borders and control over strategically important regions such as Crimea is of crucial importance. Western countries, on the other hand, see Russia's actions as a violation of international norms and a threat to security and stability in Europe.

The USA and the EU have responded to the conflict in Ukraine with a mixture of economic sanctions and military support. The US has increased its military presence in Eastern Europe and supported arms deliveries to Ukraine to strengthen its defence capabilities. The EU, for its part, has imposed economic sanctions against Russia while trying to support Ukraine economically and promote its rapprochement with the European Union.

NATO also plays an important role, although the question of Ukraine's NATO membership remains a sensitive issue. While Ukraine is seeking closer military co-operation with NATO and has shown aspirations for membership, Russia sees this as a direct threat to its security interests and has protested it.

In addition to the geopolitical and military aspects, the conflict in Ukraine is also characterised by a severe humanitarian crisis. Thousands of people have died, and hundreds of thousands have been displaced or are internally displaced within the country.

There are numerous reports of human rights violations and war crimes from both sides of the conflict, including targeted attacks on civilians, forced displacement and the use of landmines. These violations of international humanitarian law have led to international condemnation but have not yet led to an effective solution to the crisis.

Despite the ongoing tensions and conflicts, various international players have tried to find diplomatic solutions. The so-called Minsk agreements, which were signed by Russia, Ukraine and the separatist groups, aimed to achieve a ceasefire and initiate a political process to settle the conflict.

Unfortunately, these agreements have so far made only limited progress, as neither side has fully complied with the terms of the agreements and violent clashes continue to occur in the Donbass. The international community, including the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), has continued to call for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The conflict in the Middle East

The multipolar world order is also reflected in the Middle East, especially after the Hamas massacre on 7 October. This event, which marked an escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, shows the complexity of regional dynamics and the role of external powers such as the USA, Russia, Turkey and Iran.

Israel, traditionally a close ally of the US, is increasingly facing regional challenges, particularly from non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which are supported by Iran. At the same time, Russia and Turkey are trying to expand their spheres of influence and penetrate regional conflicts, leading to a further escalation of tensions.

The Middle East, a powder keg of geopolitical tensions, has had a grip on the world stage for decades. A mosaic of cultures, religions and interests, characterised by a complex history, this part of the world is increasingly being shaped by regional powers and global players. From the decades of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to recent developments in Syria and the rise of Islamic extremism, the dynamics of this conflict have changed time and again. In this article, we examine the key players, their motivations and the impact on the region and beyond.

To understand today's conflict in the Middle East, it is essential to take a look at historical developments. The region, which was once the centre of great civilisations such as the Sumerians, Babylonians and Persians, experienced a reorganisation by the Western colonial powers after the First World War. The Ottoman Empire, which had ruled the region for centuries, collapsed, leaving a power vacuum that was filled by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 between Great Britain and France. The borders drawn at the time often ignored ethnic and religious realities, which contributed to tensions and conflicts in the region.

One of the most protracted and complex conflicts in the Middle East is undoubtedly the Israel-Palestine conflict. It is rooted in the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent wars with its Arab neighbours. For Israel, security and survival as a Jewish state is of existential importance, while the Palestinians are fighting for self-determination and an end to the occupation. This conflict is not only a domestic issue, but also has an impact on the entire region, as it has formed geopolitical alliances and exacerbated tensions between Israel and its neighbours such as Lebanon and Syria.

Another significant factor in the modern Middle East is the rise of Islamic extremism, which has radically changed the political landscape of the region. Organisations such as al-Qaeda and later the Islamic State (IS) have exploited the instability and power vacuum in states such as Iraq and Syria to advance their agenda of violence and terror. These groups not only operate locally, but also attract foreign fighters and support, making the conflict a global security problem.

In addition to global players such as the USA and Russia, regional powers also play a decisive role in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Iran are fighting for supremacy in the Gulf region and supporting rival groups and governments in the process. The Yemeni civil war is an example of this regional power struggle, in which Saudi Arabia is leading a coalition against the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. The Turkish intervention in Syria and the resulting tensions with

Kurdish militias and the Syrian government also show how regionally controlled interests are further complicating the conflict.

The role of global players in the Middle East is diverse and often characterised by strategic interests. The USA traditionally has strong ties to Israel and supports it militarily and politically, which leads to tensions with Arab states. Russia, on the other hand, has positioned itself as a decisive player in recent years, particularly through its military intervention in Syria, which has not only influenced the Syrian civil war but has also reorganised the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East.

Finally, the conflict in the Middle East has caused one of the biggest humanitarian crises in recent history. Millions of people have been displaced within their home countries, while millions of others have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The Syrian refugee crisis has triggered political and social tensions, particularly in Europe, and shows the global impact of a regional conflict.

The future of the Middle East remains uncertain and characterised by many uncertainties. Resolving this conflict requires a complex balance between regional and global players who are prepared to prioritise common interests over personal ambitions. The path to peace requires not only political negotiations and diplomatic efforts, but also profound social change based on tolerance, understanding and respect for all ethnic and religious groups.

Overall, the conflict in the Middle East is not just a local issue, but a global concern that will continue to challenge the international community. The clashes between regional powers and global actors reflect the complicated nature of modern politics and highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution that considers both historical and contemporary perspectives.

The current multipolar world order offers both challenges and opportunities for the international community. On the one hand, it enables greater diversity in international relations and potentially promotes a fairer distribution of global power. On the other hand, it increases the likelihood of conflict as different powers compete for influence and resources.

Going forward, it is crucial that the global community finds ways to manage these new geopolitical realities and develop comprehensive solutions to global challenges such as climate change, pandemic response and economic inequality. Effective multilateral diplomacy and a strengthening of international institutions could help to mitigate the risks of a fragmented world order and maximise the opportunities for cooperation and peace.

Overall, the world is facing a time of uncertainty and opportunity. Shaping the multipolar world order will be crucial for overcoming the global challenges of the 21st century and for securing a peaceful and stable future for all nations and peoples.

THE NEW PLAYERS IN THE WORLD ORDER: BRICS

The world order has changed rapidly since the turn of the millennium. Formerly dominant powers such as the USA and Europe now share the stage with emerging powers, which are often summarised under the acronym BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China and, more recently, Iran. These countries have not only gained economic importance but are also playing an increasingly important role in global politics and security.

In the modern political landscape, the BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - have established themselves as a major alliance on the global stage. These emerging economies represent not only an economic counterpart to traditional Western dominance, but also a new era of geopolitical influence and co-operation. The rise of the BRICS group (now with the suffix "I" for Indonesia) is having a profound impact on the international system, the global economy and political dynamics.

The idea of the BRICS group was born at the beginning of the 21st century out of the realisation that the global balance of power was in a state of upheaval. Brazil, Russia, India, China and later South Africa, previously regarded as emerging markets, began to seek closer co-operation to promote their common interests at international level. These states were united by their growing economic power, popu-

lation size and geopolitical ambitions, which made them important players on the world stage.

A key aspect of the BRICS group is its economic importance. Together, they represent a significant proportion of the world's population and global gross domestic product (GDP). China and India are at the head of this alliance with their gigantic economies, followed by Brazil, Russia and South Africa, which also have considerable growth rates. These countries have not only established themselves as important trading partners, but also as sources of investment and economic integration in other regions of the world.

The BRICS group has developed various mechanisms to promote trade and economic co-operation, including the creation of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the BRICS Monetary Fund. These institutions aim to reduce dependence on existing Western financial institutions and provide alternative sources of funding for infrastructure projects and economic development.

In addition to their economic strength, the BRICS countries are also striving for a greater political role in international affairs. They emphasise the principles of a multipolar world order and the sovereignty of states, which is often perceived as a counterweight to the unilateral dominance of Western powers. Through joint declarations and positions on global challenges such as climate change, terrorism and

international security, the BRICS members have created a platform to represent their interests at a global level.

One example of the political dimension of the BRICS group is their attitude towards reforms of international institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These institutions are often perceived as being dominated by Western states, which is why the BRICS states are campaigning for fairer representation and decision-making within these organisations.

Despite their common goals and interests, the BRICS countries also face challenges that could jeopardise their cooperation and cohesion. Different economic structures, political systems and geopolitical ambitions can lead to tensions, especially when it comes to strategic issues such as border conflicts, trade disputes or international alliances.

One example of this is the tension between China and India on their common borders or the different approaches of Russia and Brazil to international security issues. These differences can impair the BRICS group's ability to act together and prevent it from pursuing a unified political agenda.

The future of the BRICS group depends on various factors, including its ability to sustain economic growth, overcome political differences and expand its co-operation into new areas. Developments in the individual member countries, such as political changes, economic reforms or social

challenges, will also have a significant impact on the dynamics within the BRICS group.

At a global level, the BRICS group is expected to continue to play an increasingly important role, not only as an economic power, but also as a geopolitical actor that challenges the global order and norms. Their influence on international institutions and their efforts to create a multipolar world order could fundamentally change the existing balance of power and create new opportunities and challenges for international cooperation.

Overall, the BRICS group marks a significant turning point in the global politics and economy of the 21st century. Its rise as an alliance of emerging powers reflects the increasing diversity and complexity of global power relations and challenges existing assumptions about international relations. While it faces challenges, the BRICS group also offers opportunities for new forms of cooperation and global engagement that could go beyond traditional Western dominance and promote a more diverse, multipolar world order.

Brazil: The rise in South America

Brazil, the gigantic country at the heart of South America, has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent decades. From political turmoil and economic instability to a growing role on the global stage, Brazil has become a key player in the region and beyond. This evolution has been

marked by challenges, triumphs and profound changes that have affected not only the country itself, but also its neighbours and the international community.

Brazil's rise to regional power did not begin without obstacles. In the early years of the 20th century, the country was characterised by political instability, military governments and economic crises. The era of the military dictatorship (1964-1985) was particularly characterised by repression, censorship and political persecution. These turbulent times left deep marks on Brazilian society and the political landscape.

With the return to democracy in the 1980s, Brazil slowly began to consolidate its political institutions and introduce economic reforms. The 1988 constitution marked a turning point in Brazilian history by paving the way for democratic institutions, social rights and environmental protection. Nevertheless, corruption remained a persistent problem that undermined the government's efficiency and the population's trust in political institutions.

While political reforms were important, it was the economic transformation that made Brazil an economic heavyweight in the region. The liberalisation of the economy in the 1990s and the introduction of structural reforms helped to open the market and encourage foreign investment. In particular, the agricultural sector, mining and the emerging technology industry contributed to economic expansion and helped to reduce poverty.

Despite this progress, Brazil remains a country of social inequality. A wide gap between rich and poor characterises the country's social fabric, with a significant proportion of the population living in poverty and lacking adequate access to education, healthcare and other basic services. The challenge of overcoming these inequalities remains a key task for the Brazilian government and society.

Brazil is not only known for its economic and political development, but also for its rich natural environment. The Amazon rainforest, often referred to as "the lungs of the world", plays a crucial role in the global climate system. Despite international concerns about deforestation and environmental degradation, Brazil has often failed to take effective protective measures. The government's policies on environmental issues remain controversial and have led to international criticism.

In recent years, Brazil has consolidated its role as a regional leader in South America. Through active diplomacy, economic co-operation and political alliances, the country has strengthened its presence both on the continent and globally. Brazil's membership in international organisations such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and its efforts towards regional integration through organisations such as Mercosur (Common Market of the South) reflect its ambition to become a global player.

Despite its rise, Brazil faces numerous challenges. Tackling corruption, reducing social inequality, promoting sus-

tainable development and improving infrastructure are just some of the pressing tasks that the country must overcome. The political instability and economic fluctuations of recent years have shown that the path to a stable and prosperous future will not be without obstacles.

Brazil's future depends heavily on the ability of its political leadership to make the right decisions and tackle the country's deep-rooted problems. An active civil society, an independent judiciary and transparent governance are essential to strengthen the confidence of the population and drive sustainable development.

Brazil's rise to regional and global power has a complex and often contradictory history. From political instability and economic crises to economic boom and international recognition, the country has undergone an impressive development. Brazil's future will depend on how it manages to tackle the challenges of social inequality, environmental degradation and political corruption.

In an increasingly globalised world, Brazil remains a key player whose decisions and developments influence not only its own population, but also the entire region of South America and beyond. The eyes of the world are on Brazil as it consolidates its place as an emerging economic and political leader while facing the many challenges that lie ahead on the path to a sustainable and equitable future.

China: The global superpower of the 21st century

China has developed from a manufacturing centre into the world's second largest economy and is striving to become a global leader. With the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has launched an ambitious infrastructure project that not only promises economic benefits, but also increases geopolitical tensions. China's increasing presence in international organisations and its strategic alignment in the South China Sea are sources of tension with other global players.

In the 21st century, a new chapter in the global political landscape is emerging, characterised by the increasing dominance of China. For a long time, China was seen as an emerging economic power, but today it is more than that - it is a superpower that is exerting ever greater influence not only economically and militarily, but also politically and culturally. This development raises a multitude of questions and challenges, not only for China itself, but also for the rest of the world.

China's rise to global economic power began in the late 1970s with the policy of economic opening under Deng Xiaoping. Since then, the country has undergone an unprecedented economic transformation that has made it one of the largest economies in the world. Today, China is not only the world's largest exporter, but also a major player in many industries such as technology, manufacturing and infrastructure.

A key factor in China's economic rise has been its ability to utilise global trade relations while promoting its own industries. Through government support, targeted investment in education and research and a controlled currency policy, China has been able to achieve tremendous growth and reduce its dependence on exports.

In addition to its economic strength, China has also made considerable progress in the field of technology and innovation. Companies such as Huawei, Alibaba and Tencent are globally recognised and play a significant role in areas such as telecommunications, e-commerce and artificial intelligence. China's massive investment in research and development has led to the country being a leader in many key technologies and has even made great strides in areas such as renewable energy and space technology.

This technological strength goes hand in hand with China's ambitious global ambitions. The country has positioned itself as a proponent of the "New Silk Road", an ambitious infrastructure project that aims to improve trade routes between Asia, Europe and Africa. However, critics also see this as an opportunity for China to gain political influence and expand its geopolitical power.

China's economic and technological rise has also given rise to several political challenges. International tensions over trade, intellectual property and human rights have become central issues in relations between China and other countries. The US and Europe have taken increasingly re-

strictive measures against Chinese companies while trying to protect their own technology industries.

There are also tensions within China, particularly regarding human rights, freedom of expression and the role of the party in public life. The Chinese government has exercised tight control over the internet and media, which has led to international criticism. At the same time, China is trying to strengthen its political and cultural soft power through initiatives such as cultural exchange, educational diplomacy and international co-operation.

The question of China's future as a global superpower is complex and multi-layered. On the one hand, there are enormous opportunities and possibilities associated with China's economic and technological rise. On the other hand, the geopolitical risks and challenges cannot be overlooked. The growing rivalry between the USA and China, the competition for technology and influence as well as questions about global standards for trade and human rights will characterise the future of international relations.

China will play a central role in the 21st century, but how this role will be shaped - through co-operation or confrontation, through innovation or restriction - remains an open question. The international community faces the challenge of finding a way to deal with China's rise that considers both China's interests and global interests.

In this new era of global politics and economics, China will undoubtedly continue to play a key role. The dynamics

between China and the rest of the world will not only shape the political and economic landscape, but also influence cultural and technological development. It is up to political leaders, diplomats, scholars and citizens worldwide to work together to find sustainable solutions to overcome the challenges and opportunities associated with China's rise as a global superpower.

Russia: The geopolitical player with energy influence

Russia, rich in natural resources, especially energy, remains a major player in global politics. Under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin, Russia has aggressively pursued its military and geopolitical ambitions in Ukraine, the Middle East and other regions. Russia's role as an energy supplier to Europe and its strategic partnership with China have implications for the global security architecture.

In the complex world of geopolitical powers and their influence on the global energy market, China and Russia occupy a prominent position. Both countries have considerable resources at their disposal and use their position skillfully to pursue their geopolitical goals and secure their economic stability. However, behind the scenes of energy policy lie profound strategic and ethical issues that go far beyond economic interests.

Energy is not only an economic resource, but also an important geopolitical tool. Access to energy sources and control over their transport and distribution have the poten-

tial to influence and even destabilise the international power structure. In this context, China and Russia are particularly influential, as they have extensive reserves of raw materials and serve large parts of the global energy markets.

As the world's largest energy consumer, China is heavily dependent on external energy sources, particularly fossil fuels such as oil and gas. To support its economic expansion and secure energy supplies, China has developed a strategic energy policy based on diversification and securing supply routes. This has led to China's increased involvement in various parts of the world, from Central Asia to Africa and Latin America.

Russia, on the other hand, is one of the world's largest producers and exporters of oil and gas. The Russian economy and government revenues are heavily dependent on energy exports, particularly supplies to Europe. This dependence has given Russia unique geopolitical leverage, which it has skilfully used in recent decades to exert political influence and strengthen or weaken strategic alliances.

A central element of the geopolitical strategy of China and Russia is the development and control of energy infrastructure, especially pipelines. Pipelines are not only physical connections for the transmission of oil and gas, but also political tools that enable the countries to reduce their dependence on certain transit countries or expand their sphere of influence.

One example is the Nord Stream pipeline, which connects Russia directly with Germany and diversifies Russian gas supplies to Western Europe. However, this pipeline has also become a political bone of contention, particularly in the context of tensions between Russia and Ukraine and energy security in Europe.

China, on the other hand, has financed and built many pipelines and seaports in Asia and Africa in recent years to satisfy its hunger for energy and strengthen its strategic presence in these regions. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a key element of this endeavour as it links infrastructural developments with trade and energy projects to expand China's sphere of influence and transform the global supply chain.

Despite their economic and geopolitical advantages, China and Russia's energy relations are not free of ethical and moral issues. Both countries are under increasing international pressure due to their human rights violations and environmental problems in connection with energy production and utilisation.

China is one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases in the world and faces the challenge of making its energy consumption more sustainable while maintaining its economic growth trajectory. China's reliance on coal as its primary energy source has made it one of the world's leading contributors to air pollution and climate change, with global implications.

Russia, on the other hand, is known for its use of fossil fuels and the associated environmental problems such as oil spills and gas leaks. In addition, concerns have arisen regarding the rule of law and respect for human rights in Russia in connection with major projects such as the Nord Stream pipeline and other energy infrastructure projects.

The international community has begun to respond to the geopolitical and ethical dimension of energy relations, particularly about China and Russia. Sanctions, diplomatic pressure and public attention have contributed to both countries rethinking their energy policies and adopting more sustainable practices.

Prospects for China and Russia in the global energy business depend on a variety of factors, including technological innovation, geopolitical changes and the development of international energy treaties and agreements. The increasing importance of renewable energy and the need for a global transition to low-carbon technologies could fundamentally change both China's and Russia's energy policies.

Overall, the role of China and Russia as geopolitical players in the global energy business remains a central and controversial issue. While both countries want to pursue their economic interests and strengthen their national security, they also must face the challenges of sustainability and international norms. The future will show how their energy policies will develop and what influence they will have on the global geopolitical landscape.

Iran: Between regional power and international isolation

Iran is caught between regional influence in the Middle East and international isolation due to its nuclear programme. The country plays a central role in conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Yemen and is an important player in the global energy trade. Iran's relations with Russia and China have a significant impact on geopolitical stability in the Middle East and beyond.

Iran - a country that moves between worlds, between a rich cultural history and a geopolitical reality characterised by tensions and conflicts. For decades, Iran has been at the centre of international attention, not only because of its strategic location in the Middle East, but also because of its nuclear ambitions and its role as an actor in regional conflicts. This article examines the challenges and opportunities that Iran faces and sheds light on the complex dynamics that influence its political and economic development.

Iran, ancient Persia, can look back on a history that is well over 2,500 years old. Once the centre of a powerful empire that stretched from the Achaemenid dynasty to the Sassanid dynasty, Iran has cultivated a cultural and intellectual tradition that extends to the present day. Persian art, literature and architecture have influenced and inspired the world, and Iranian culture remains one of the oldest and richest in the world.

Yet despite this historical splendour, modern Iran faces challenges that define its role in the world. Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, the country has embarked on a course that has led it into conflict with the West and its own internal tensions.

In the geopolitical context, Iran is a key player in the Middle East, a region known for its instability. With a strategically important location between the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, Iran has the potential to be a dominant force in the region. However, this has also led to tensions with its neighbours and global powers, particularly the United States.

A central element of Iran's international isolation is its nuclear policy. Despite international sanctions and pressure, Iran has pressed ahead with a controversial nuclear programme that is seen as a threat by many countries. The negotiations on the 2015 nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), were an attempt to address these concerns and de-escalate the situation. Under the agreement, Iran committed to limiting its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of sanctions.

At a national level, Iran faces the challenge of finding a balance between reform and conservatism. The Islamic Republic is characterised by a dual political system that includes democratic elements such as elections and parlia-

mentary institutions on the one hand but is also controlled by religious leaders and institutions that have ultimate authority on the other.

In recent years, there have been movements in Iran in favour of political and social reforms, which are particularly supported by the young population. The desire for more personal freedoms, economic prosperity and an end to corruption has led to protests and demonstrations, which have often been met with repression by the government.

In economic terms, Iran is rich in natural resources, particularly oil and gas. These have provided the country with considerable income but have also increased its dependence on commodity exports. International isolation and sanctions have placed a heavy burden on the Iranian economy by restricting access to international financial markets and technologies.

Despite efforts to diversify and modernise the economy, Iran remains vulnerable to fluctuations on the global market and political unrest. Unemployment, especially among young people, remains a serious problem that jeopardises the country's social stability.

Socially speaking, Iran is a country in transition. Traditional values and customs meet the challenges of a modern, globalised world. Iranian society is young - most of the population is under 30 years old - and increasingly networked through social media and global communication technologies.

This has led to a cultural shift, with young people developing new lifestyles and views on religion, politics and social norms. At the same time, conservative forces remain strong and endeavour to preserve traditional values and religious identity.

Despite the challenges and tensions, there is also hope for a better future for Iran and its relations with the international community. The resumption of negotiations on the nuclear agreement and the efforts at diplomacy are positive steps towards a possible easing of tensions and a reduction in international isolation.

For Iran itself, the future lies in the balance between its regional power and its ability to maintain constructive relations with the world. Promoting internal stability, economic diversification and social progress will be crucial to securing the country's long-term development.

Overall, Iran remains a fascinating and challenging country that plays a key role in the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. Its history, culture and political choices will continue to influence the global stage and demonstrate how complex the balance between regional power and international isolation can be. Iran's future will be shaped not only by its leaders, but also by its people and the global actors that follow its development.

Despite their differences, the BRICS countries face similar challenges, including social inequality, environmental problems and geopolitical tensions. Cooperation between

these countries could be crucial to tackling global problems such as climate change or resolving regional conflicts. At the same time, the different interests and power positions of these countries are also sources of potential conflict and tension on the international stage.

The role of the BRICS countries in a multipolar world

The BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - have increasingly gained political and economic influence over the last two decades. These states, once considered emerging economies, have become key players in a changing global order. Their role in a multipolar world is often debated and controversial. This essay critically examines how the BRICS countries are positioning themselves in this new world order and what impact this is having on the international system.

In an increasingly multipolar world, the BRICS countries must define their role and harmonise their interests with the existing global powers. Their economic strength, population size and geopolitical position make them key players in the 21st century. How they interact with the US, the EU and other traditional powers will be decisive in shaping the global order in the coming years.

A key point when considering the BRICS countries is their relationship to multilateralism. While traditional powers such as the US and the EU are often seen as advocates of multilateral institutions, the BRICS countries have a mixed

record in terms of their participation in global institutions such as the United Nations and the WTO. China and Russia tend to take unilateral decisions, while Brazil, India and South Africa tend to favour multilateral approaches. These tensions are reflected in geopolitical dynamics and have a significant impact on global governance.

Each BRICS country claims a certain regional leadership and influence. China dominates in East Asia, India in South Asia, Brazil in South America and South Africa in Africa. These regional leadership claims are crucial for geopolitical stability and have a direct impact on international relations. The question of how these countries reconcile their regional ambitions with global commitments is of great importance for future development.

The economic development of the BRICS countries has been impressive but has slowed down in recent years. China remains the driving force behind the BRICS economic bloc, while Brazil and Russia are facing economic challenges. India and South Africa show potential but face structural obstacles. The question of economic sustainability and global integration remains crucial for their long-term role in the multipolar world.

The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Mechanism (CRM) by the BRICS countries poses a challenge to the existing Western-dominated financial architecture. These institutions aim to support developing countries and reduce dependence on

Western financial institutions. However, their effectiveness and long-term significance are still controversial and raise questions about governance and transparency.

The demographic diversity of the BRICS countries - from the highly developed Chinese society to the social challenges in India and South Africa - characterises their social and cultural priorities. Tackling inequalities, promoting education and health and ensuring social justice are fundamental challenges that will influence their future development. Dealing with these internal social tensions is crucial for its international credibility and stability.

The promotion of cultural diplomacy is playing an increasingly important role for the BRICS countries. They use their rich cultural heritage and artistic exchange programmes to strengthen their soft power and promote a positive international image. This contrasts with Western countries, which often use traditional political and economic channels. However, the effectiveness of these cultural endeavours and their impact on the global perception of the BRICS countries is difficult to measure.

The BRICS countries have undoubtedly gained influence in a multipolar world but remain confronted with a number of challenges. Their role in global governance, their economic stability and their internal social challenges will be decisive for their future development and their ability to act as a collective force. The path to a stable and sustainable multipolar world order requires a balanced consideration of the

interests and ambitions of the BRICS countries and their relationship with other global actors.

Overall, the future of the BRICS countries in a multipolar world is still up for debate. Their collective ability to overcome political differences, tackle economic challenges and reduce social inequalities will be crucial to their long-term relevance and role in shaping the global future.

The BRICS countries have the potential to shape the global dynamics of the 21st century. Their economic and political development will not only influence their own societies but will also determine the course of international relations. From economic cooperation to geopolitical conflicts, these countries face a complex and challenging future that harbours both opportunities and risks.

SOLUTIONS

The illusion of victory

In the history of wars, there are few events as drastic as the First World War. It marked the end of the romantic belief in quick and glorious victories and the introduction of a new era of industrialised mass murder. The trenches, the trench warfare and the devastation it brought with it stand as a memorial to the inability of the military leadership of the time to deal with the new technologies and tactics.

Today, in the 21st century, the world seems to be entering a different phase of insecurity. The existence of nuclear weapons has changed the face of war and redefined the dynamics between states. Nuclear powers such as the United States, Russia, China and others are equipped with an arsenal capable of destroying entire regions. In this modern reality, the question arises: could a classic positional war, like that of the First World War, even be successful against a nuclear power?

Classic positional warfare, as seen in the First World War, was characterised by static fronts, extensive trench systems and the use of massed infantry and artillery. Tactics

often consisted of forcing a breakthrough to bypass and isolate or overrun the enemy. This tactic assumed that territorial gains would bring a decisive advantage and ultimately secure victory.

In contrast to the times of the First World War, the introduction of nuclear weapons has brought an unimaginable dimension of destruction to the world. Nuclear weapons are not only tools for destroying people and infrastructure, but also pose an existential threat. The ability to destroy entire cities with a single warhead has fundamentally changed traditional warfare.

Deterrence is a central aspect of nuclear strategy. Nuclear weapons are not only intended to be used in the event of a direct attack, but also to deter potential adversaries from launching an attack in the first place. This concept, known as "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD), is based on the idea that the use of nuclear weapons would result in such a devastating retaliation that no rational governing body would ever take such a step.

Territorial gains vs. annihilation: In the First World War, the aim was to achieve territorial gains to weaken the enemy and strengthen one's own positions. In the case of a war of position against a nuclear power, any territorial gains would be threatened by potential annihilation through nuclear retaliation. Even if small areas could be conquered, a nuclear response could completely undo the progress made and any advantage gained.

Logistics and supplies: The classic trench warfare was heavily dependent on logistics and supplies. Supplying the troops in the trenches was a major challenge. In a conflict with a nuclear power, however, logistics would not only be a question of supplying resources, but also of survivability. The targets could potentially be jeopardised by nuclear attacks, which would significantly restrict the movement of troops and resources.

Nuclear deterrence and strategic targets: nuclear weapons are not only suitable for the defence of one's own territory, but could also be used to destroy strategic targets of the enemy. This could go far beyond military installations and include economic and civilian targets. An attacker in a classic war of position could quickly realise that any aggressive action could have serious and catastrophic consequences that go far beyond the battlefield.

International reaction and isolation: The use of nuclear weapons would not only escalate the direct conflict but could also lead to international isolation and condemnation. The global rejection and diplomatic consequences could severely weaken and isolate the attacking state, even if it initially achieves territorial gains.

History teaches us that military strategies and tactics must adapt to available technology and geopolitical realities. The First World War was a brutal reminder that old tactics are often ineffective in a new era of war and can come at a high cost. In today's world, where nuclear weap-

ons pose an existential threat, the risks of a classic positional war against a nuclear power are far greater.

Waging a classic World War I-style war of position against a nuclear power would not only be strategically unwise but could also have catastrophic consequences. The existence of nuclear weapons has fundamentally changed traditional warfare and ushered in a new era of global deterrence. Any attempt to wage such a war would carry the risks of total chaos, unimaginable human suffering and possibly even the end of civilisation itself.

In a world where annihilation is just a push of a button away, the real challenge for the international community is to find ways to prevent conflict before it escalates and to promote diplomatic solutions to achieve peaceful resolutions. The reality of nuclear deterrence reminds us that the only way to win such a war is to never let it start.

Contracts? No alternative!

The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 marked a turning point in European history, ending the Thirty Years' War and laying the foundations for the modern system of sovereign nation states. This peace treaty is not only a historic event, but also a key example of how treaties can act as an alternative solution to the total annihilation of the enemy. At a time when wars were often fought on a devastating scale, the Peace of Westphalia represents an early paradigm for dip-

lomatic solutions based on the principle of mutual recognition and the balance of power.

The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) was one of the bloodiest conflicts in European history, sparking religious, political and territorial conflicts across the continent. The negotiations in Münster and Osnabrück, which ultimately led to the Peace of Westphalia, demonstrated for the first time that warring parties could achieve peaceful coexistence through negotiations and treaties. This peace established the principle of the sovereignty of states and laid the foundation for the modern world of states, in which international law and international treaties play a central role.

The alternative to the total annihilation of an enemy, as was practised against Germany and Japan in the Second World War, was and is often provided by treaties. These make it possible to establish peaceful coexistence and set common rules for living together. The Peace of Westphalia and later treaties such as the Congress of Vienna in 1815 or the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 show that treaties can help to end conflicts and lay the foundations for long-term peace.

Today, especially in the context of wars against nuclear powers, as they have potentially been since the end of the Second World War, the scenario has changed fundamentally. Nuclear armament brings with it a new dimension of destructive capability that makes a direct military confrontation an existential risk for all involved. In a war scenario

with nuclear weapons, there are no winners, only destruction and loss on an unprecedented level.

In the face of the nuclear threat, treaties and international agreements have become even more important. Treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and bilateral disarmament agreements between nuclear powers play a crucial role in reducing tensions and avoiding nuclear war. These treaties establish trust mechanisms, transparency rules and safeguards that can help to avoid misunderstandings and confrontations.

History teaches us that treaties and diplomatic negotiations are effective means of resolving conflicts and securing peace. They allow states to protect their interests while finding common solutions based on mutual recognition and respect. In the 21st century, we face new challenges such as asymmetric wars, cybercrime and climate change, which require global cooperation and treaties to find effective solutions.

The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 showed that treaties are not only a means to end wars, but also to secure peace and build a sustainable international order. In the modern world, where the threat of weapons of mass destruction is omnipresent, treaties and international agreements are indispensable for securing world peace. They provide the framework for trust, co-operation and conflict resolution at a global level, and their role is becoming increasingly im-

portant in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

The Peace of Westphalia therefore stands not only as a historical event, but also as a timeless example of the power of diplomacy and treaties in overcoming conflicts. May humanity learn from this history and use the instruments of diplomacy and treaties to promote a peaceful and just world order that is equal to the challenges of the future.

CONFLICT TERMINATION:

In today's geopolitical landscape and in the context of modern warfare, the issue of ending wars and in particular the confrontation with nuclear powers is of crucial importance. The question of whether wars can be ended solely by treaty and whether war against a nuclear power can in fact not be decided on the battlefield raises complex and profound considerations. This essay critically examines these questions and argues that traditional battlefields and conventional warfare have their limits in confrontations with nuclear powers and that diplomatic and treaty means are indispensable in such conflicts.

The history of war shows a clear development away from traditional battles towards asymmetric conflicts and modern warfare. In the past, wars were often decided by battles and direct military confrontations. But with the development of weapons and technologies, especially nuclear weapons, the nature of war has changed radically. Nuclear

weapons have a destructive power that goes far beyond conventional weapons and can threaten the existence of entire societies.

Nuclear deterrence, as practised during the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union, makes it clear that the use of nuclear weapons would lead to a complete disaster, which both sides want to avoid. In this sense, "victory" in a war against a nuclear power cannot be achieved in the traditional military sense, as the consequences of such a conflict would be catastrophic. The threat of nuclear annihilation leads to a stalemate in which diplomacy and treaties become the only reasonable option to end conflicts.

Treaties play a central role in international politics, especially when it comes to ending wars and reducing tensions between states. They provide a legal framework for the obligations and agreements between the parties to a conflict and can provide mechanisms for de-escalation and conflict resolution. The Treaty of Versailles after the First World War or the treaties to limit strategic weapons during the Cold War are examples of how treaties have been used to end or at least contain wars.

Looking at historical case studies, it becomes clear that many significant conflicts have only been resolved through treaties and diplomatic efforts. The Korean War was ended by an armistice agreement in 1953, which still regulates tensions on the Korean peninsula today. The Vietnam War also ended with the Paris Peace Accords of 1973, which

provided for the withdrawal of US troops and a political solution to the conflict.

Despite the importance of treaties and diplomatic efforts, there are challenges and limitations, especially when it comes to nuclear weapons. Nuclear powers such as the USA, Russia, China or even smaller nuclear states such as North Korea or Pakistan cannot always be controlled through traditional diplomacy. The idea that nuclear conflicts can be resolved through treaties alone is often at odds with the reality of nuclear deterrence and the unpredictable dynamics of international relations.

International organisations such as the United Nations play an important role in promoting treaties and monitoring compliance with them. The United Nations Security Council can pass resolutions and impose sanctions to promote compliance with treaties and ensure international security. Nevertheless, its options are limited, especially when veto powers such as the USA, Russia or China place their own interests above global norms.

In the 21st century, we are facing new challenges in terms of ending wars and dealing with nuclear threats. Cyber warfare, hybrid warfare and the use of information technologies have expanded traditional battlefields and created new dimensions of conflict management. At the same time, the threat of nuclear weapons remains and continues to require a robust diplomatic and treaty-based response.

To summarise, wars against nuclear powers cannot be decided on the battlefield, as the consequences would be catastrophic and nuclear deterrence would create a stalemate. Treaties and diplomacy therefore play a crucial role in preventing such conflicts and ending wars. Despite their limitations and challenges, they are the best tools to promote international security and maintain peace. The future requires greater international co-operation and the strengthening of multilateral institutions to respond appropriately to the complex security challenges of the 21st century.

UN peacekeepers, a solution?

The issue of finding solutions to the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East under the control of the United Nations (UN) and through the deployment of peacekeeping forces such as UNDOF in the Middle East or IFOR in the Balkans is one of immense complexity and urgency. These conflicts have not only regional but also global repercussions, affecting political stability, economic development and, above all, the lives of millions of people. To meet these challenges appropriately, a profound analysis of the historical, geopolitical and socio-cultural dynamics fuelling these conflicts is required.

Firstly, it is crucial to understand the nature of the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. In Ukraine, the conflict is mainly between the Ukrainian government and separatist groups in the eastern regions of the country, which are

supported by Russia. The origins of this conflict lie both in historical tensions between Russia and Ukraine and in Russia's geopolitical interests regarding its sphere of influence and security concerns.

In the Middle East, on the other hand, the situation is much more complex. The region is characterised by various conflicts, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the civil war in Syria, the conflict in Yemen and the instability in Iraq and Libya. These conflicts are characterised by ethnic, religious and political tensions, which are often exacerbated by external actors, whether through direct intervention or by supporting parties to the conflict.

The United Nations has deployed peacekeepers in various conflict zones throughout history, including UNDOF in the Golan Heights and IFOR in the former Yugoslavia. These missions have had varying track records, from limited success to partial failure, due to a variety of factors including mandate clauses, operational conditions, resource constraints and, most importantly, political hurdles.

The implementation of similar peacekeeping missions in Ukraine and the Middle East under the auspices of the UN faces considerable challenges. One of the biggest challenges is that it requires the consent of all parties involved, which is often difficult to achieve, especially when some parties to the conflict enjoy external support or prioritise their own interests over the stability and peace of the region.

Another problem lies in the effectiveness and limitations of peacekeeping forces themselves. UN peacekeepers are often severely constrained in their ability to operate effectively, whether due to mandate restrictions, lack of support from member states or limited resources. As a result, they may not be able to provide the necessary security or persuade parties to a conflict to reach a sustainable settlement.

Another critical issue is the question of the neutrality and impartiality of peacekeepers. The perception or reality of bias can undermine their credibility and affect their ability to gain the trust of the parties to a conflict. This is particularly relevant in conflicts where there are deep ethnic or religious divisions, where any perceived injustice or bias can further exacerbate tensions.

Another crucial aspect is the question of long-term political solutions. Peacekeepers can contribute to de-escalation in the short term, but long-term peace requires political processes that enable a sustainable solution to the underlying causes of the conflicts. This includes promoting dialogue and a willingness to negotiate between the parties to the conflict, supporting institution building and promoting the rule of law, as well as addressing social and economic inequalities.

The role of the UN in such conflicts is also heavily dependent on the support of the member states. Financial, logistical and personnel support as well as political backing are crucial for the success of peace missions. If member

states are not prepared to provide adequate support to UN missions or if they pursue conflicting political objectives, this can significantly impair the effectiveness of the missions.

Another problem is the operational challenges faced by peacekeepers. These include security risks for personnel on the ground, difficulties with communication and coordination in complex environments and logistical challenges, particularly in areas with limited infrastructure or under conditions of civil war.

Despite these challenges, the United Nations remains one of the most important institutions for promoting world peace and security. Its potential for mediation and conflict resolution and for promoting development and human rights is enormous. However, to be more effective, the UN and its member states need to work together to secure funding and support for peacekeeping missions, maintain the independence and neutrality of missions and promote long-term political processes to resolve conflicts.

In Ukraine, a UN peacekeeping mission could potentially help to stabilise the security situation and create a framework for negotiations between the Ukrainian government and the separatists, if Russia and other external actors are willing to support such efforts and that a sufficiently strong mandate and resources are available.

The situation in the Middle East is more complex, but here too, targeted UN peacekeeping missions in various

conflict zones could contribute to de-escalation and create a platform for political negotiations. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular, an increased UN presence could help to build trust between the parties and pave the way for a long-term political solution.

To summarise, United Nations peacekeeping missions are an important tool for conflict resolution and peacekeeping, but they are not a panacea. To be effective, they must be equipped with broad international support, clear and robust mandates, sufficient resources and strong political backing. Long-term peace, however, requires far more than a military presence. It requires the promotion of dialogue, institution building, social justice and economic development to address the roots of conflict and ensure sustainable stability.

ESSAYS

THE SUMMER OF 1914: A WORLD ON THE BRINK

The summer of 1914 showed Europe at its most splendid and at the same time most disastrous. While the sun shone dazzlingly down on the golden beaches and blooming meadows, no one suspected that this sparkling spectacle of nature would soon be darkened by the shadows of war. In the seaside resorts and summer retreats, people experienced the unclouded joys of existence, the carefree enjoyment of the beauties and pleasures that life has to offer. But this seemingly cheerful carefree attitude concealed a dangerous ignorance and naivety towards the gathering storm clouds that would soon cover the continent.

The gentlemen in their elegant linen suits and the ladies in their airy summer dresses strolled along the promenades, drank lemonade and chatted about trivial news, while in the background the political intrigues and diplomatic entanglements were already taking their ominous course. A gloomy prelude to an infernal symphony, the first bar of which would be marked by the thunderclap of the outbreak of war on 1 August.

Blinded by the radiant beauty of the summer, people forgot the smouldering conflicts and underestimated the deep animosity that had built up between the nations in recent decades. People thought they were living in a Europe of peace and stability, without realising that this supposed security rested on a fragile foundation that threatened to collapse at any moment. It was as if people had been caught up in a collective illusion that caused them to block out reality and lose themselves in an idyllic mirage.



The newspapers of the day were full of reports on social events, sporting competitions and cultural highlights. You read about the latest fashions, the glittering receptions in the

Summer residences of the nobility and the frivolous escapades of the bohemians, but hardly a word was said about the political crisis that was brewing in the diplomatic parlours and embassies. People were more interested in the headlines about the glittering balls and the latest theatre premieres than in the gloomy warnings of the few voices that foreboded the impending war.

It was a Europe in delirium, a continent in a staggering dance, oblivious to the abyss that was opening beneath its feet. The urban elites celebrated themselves, bathed in their prosperity and complacency, while the rural population went about their daily work unaware that the seeds of war had already been sown.

The world of summer holidays was a microcosm of this ignorance. The rich and beautiful of Europe enjoyed themselves as if there was no tomorrow in fashionable seaside resorts such as Biarritz, Deauville or Ostend. They had dived into the water, soaked up the sun and savoured the seductive pleasures of idleness. The salons of the grand hotels were filled with lively conversation, laughter and the clinking of champagne glasses. No one spoke of war, because war was an unpleasant reality that did not fit into this carefree paradise.

Summer holidaymakers flocked to the Alps and the lakes to enjoy the clear mountain air and the peaceful tranquillity of nature. Hikes, boat trips and picnics were part of the daily programme. The postcards sent to those back

home showed pictures of idyllic landscapes, blooming alpine meadows and crystal-clear lakes. The summer of 1914 presented itself in all its splendour and innocence, and nobody wanted to believe that this harmony would soon be plunged into bloody chaos.

The political leaders of Europe, the monarchs and their ministers, also spent their summer holidays far away from the explosive affairs that took place in the offices of their capitals. They enjoyed the comforts of their summer residences, held hunting parties and socialised with their families. In the meantime, the diplomatic wires were running hot, but the urgency of the situation did not reach them. They relied on existing alliances and agreements, diplomatic customs and the common sense of the other powers. War seemed a relic of bygone times, a barbarism that no longer had any place in the civilised world.

But the deceptive appearance was soon to be shattered. On 28 June 1914, when the Austrian heir to the throne Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were murdered in Sarajevo, the clockwork of disaster began to tick. The murders were initially perceived as a tragic but local affair, far removed from the holiday resorts and daily lives of most Europeans. But the mechanisms of power and revenge were inexorably set in motion, and while the summer visitors continued to enjoy their holidays, the great war was being prepared in the chancelleries and cabinets.

July 1914 was a month of waiting and uncertainty. The political and military leaders of Europe were feeling their way in a dangerous game, each step a careful weighing up of possibilities and consequences. The diplomatic notes that travelled back and forth between the capitals were full of threats and appeasements, ultimatums and concessions. It was a time of nerve warfare, in which every decision could influence the fate of the continent. But the public remained unsuspecting, blinded by the summer bliss and the belief in the unshakeability of peace.

Then, on 1 August 1914, the war shattered the summer idyll like a mighty thunderclap. Mobilisation began and the men were torn from their holidays and from their families to go to the battlefields. The streets filled with soldiers in uniform, the trains became means of transport for the war, and the summer resorts turned into deserted ghost towns. The war that nobody had thought likely had suddenly become a cruel reality. The peaceful Europe of seaside resorts and summer holidays had disappeared, and in its place was a continent in a blaze of destruction and suffering.

The summer of 1914 will go down in history as the last great deception before the storm, as the deceptive paradise before the fall from hell. It will remind us how careless and blind we can be to the signs of disaster, how much we lull ourselves into the illusion of eternal peace while the forces of destruction are already doing their work in secret. May this reminder remind us not to forget the lessons of history

and to remain ever vigilant against the dangers that lurk behind the façade of normality.

THE GREAT WAR AND DYING IN THE TRENCHES

The world entered the year 1914 as if it were heading towards an unalterable fate, like a sleepwalker unconsciously approaching the abyss. The seemingly unstoppable advance of modernity, driven by industrial progress and nationalist fervour, led to the greatest catastrophe that humanity had ever seen. The Great War, which soon spread across Europe and beyond, was more than just a military conflict; it was a profound wound that tore at the soul of an entire generation.



In the trenches of Verdun, Somme and Ypres, the soldiers found themselves banished to a desolate hell of mud, blood and rats. Here, in these damp, gloomy ravines, where the screams of the dying were the only echo of human life, faith in humanity was put to the hardest test. Every day was a battle against death, not only from enemy fire, but from the merciless nature of the trenches themselves. The mud dragged the men down into the depths as if the earth itself had decided to swallow them up and end their suffering.

People spoke of a "generation of tremblers", and in fact this was no poetic exaggeration. The physical and psychological strain on the soldiers was so great that the after-effects of this war were still being felt decades later. Shell-

shock, as it was called, came to symbolise the shattered psyche of those who survived the horror. It was not just the physical pain that plagued them, but the indelible images of friends being torn to pieces, of poison gas eating away at their lungs and of endless, senseless attacks on fortified positions.

Verdun, this name alone, stands as a memorial to what mankind can do to itself. The battle raged for over 300 days, in which more than 700,000 people lost their lives without the front line shifting significantly. It was a bloody stalemate, a desolate back and forth of human lives on the chessboard of death. The French and German soldiers were not only fighting against each other, but also against the absurdity of their fate. Humanity was crushed in the mills of the machinery of war, and all that remained was the bitter taste of despair.

What drove the nations into this madness? A misguided belief in honour and glory, emanating from the salons and cabinets of Europe, found its fulfilment in the mass graves of the Western Front. The ruling elites, blinded by arrogance and a desire for power, had no idea of the consequences of their policies. While they discussed strategies in comfortable offices and well-laid tables, the ordinary soldiers suffered under the most inhumane conditions.

The art and literature of the time reflected this grim reality. The works of authors such as Erich Maria Remarque and Wilfred Owen gave a voice to the dead and showed the

true nature of war: senseless, horrific destruction. Karl Kraus himself, a sharp-tongued critic of his time, recognised the hypocrisy and cruelty of those who fuelled the war. In his monumental work "The Last Days of Mankind", he documented the insanity and absurdity of this era with unsparing precision.

The Great War lasted four years, and in those four years not only were millions of lives extinguished, but also the trust in progress and the reason of mankind was deeply shaken. The war had left a world steeped in grief and bitterness, and the "generation of tremblers" carried the scars of that time into their old age. The war was over, but the wounds remained, and the humanity that had been washed away in the trenches of Verdun seemed irretrievably lost.

So, we are left with a reminder: that the path of violence never leads to renewal, but only to destruction. That in the trenches of war, the true greatness of humanity lies not in killing, but in survival, in preserving that last spark of humanity that characterises us as a species. May we never forget that the Great War was not only a military but a moral catastrophe, the shadow of which still hangs over us.

FROM THE SUMMER OF PEACE TO THE SUMMER OF WAR

June 1914 marked the last summer of peace before Europe was plunged into the First World War. Back then, the world was still naive to the horrors that lay ahead. A similar

sense of inevitability envelops us today in June 2024, as we stand once again on the brink of global conflict. These parallels are not coincidental, but the result of policies that have failed to learn the lessons of history. German social democracy, which supported the war credits in 1914 and wants to go to war again today, remains a central symbol of this tragedy.

The summer of 1914 was characterised by a deceptive calm. The European capitals experienced a final upswing in cultural and economic prosperity. Vienna, Berlin and Paris were centres of progress and enlightenment. But behind this glittering façade, nationalist tensions, militaristic ambitions and colonial jealousies were simmering.

German Social Democracy, the strongest socialist party in the world, was faced with a decisive choice. It had the power to put a stop to the war drive. But the SPD, once regarded as a bulwark against militarism, failed. On 4 August 1914, it voted in favour of war credits in the Reichstag, thereby betraying its pacifist principles. The words of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who protested vehemently against the war, went unheard. The SPD legitimised the war and thus contributed to the catastrophe that befell Europe.

Today, a century later, we are back on the brink. June 2024 has once again brought us to a point where the world threatens to plunge into war. The enmity between NATO and Russia has reached its peak. War rhetoric dominates

international relations and the German Social Democrats, now part of a coalition government, are talking about a "special fund" to support the war effort against Russia.

The term "special assets" may sound technocratic, but its meaning is clear: billions of euros for weapons and ammunition to open a new front in the East. This development is a bitter irony of history. Once again, the SPD is responsible for a decision that could plunge the world into a devastating conflict.

The most tragic similarity between 1914 and 2024 is the inability of the political elites to learn from history. In the First World War, militarism led to the destruction of Europe and laid the foundations for the horrors of the Second World War. Today we see the same short-sightedness. The idea that military might, and economic sanctions could solve political problems has led us down a blind alley.

German social democracy, which once stood for peace and social justice, has once again chosen the path of war. The lessons of 1914 have been forgotten. Instead, the illusion prevails that modern wars can be won through technological superiority and economic strength. But reality shows us that violence only begets more violence and that wars rarely have clear winners.

Another aspect that links the two periods is the role of society. In 1914, there was widespread popular support for the war, fuelled by nationalist propaganda and a false sense of duty. Today we see a similar dynamic. The media and

political leaders fuel fear and hatred, while critical voices are marginalised.

But there is hope. Then as now, there are people who oppose war. The peace movement that emerged after 1914 shows that resistance is possible. Today we must build on this tradition and raise the voice of reason against the madness of war. It is the responsibility of every individual to oppose a policy that only brings destruction.

The comparison between June 1914 and June 2024 shows us how little the world has changed. Human nature, driven by the pursuit of power and fear, repeats the same mistakes. But this cycle can be broken. We must learn from history and find the courage to stand up for peace and justice. German social democracy has the chance to pay its historical debt by opposing the war this time. Only then can we hope that the summer of 2024 will not go down in history as the beginning of a new global conflict, but as a moment when humanity finally came to its senses.

OATHS OF WAR AND WAR-MONGERING

Germany's post-war history is characterised by a central promise: "Never again must war break out from German soil." This pledge, born out of the ruins of the Second World War and the devastation that Germany had wrought on Europe and the world, was more than just a political phrase. It was a moral compass that guided the Federal Republic of Germany in the decades that followed and significantly

shaped its foreign policy. But today, in the face of current geopolitical developments, this promise seems to be in doubt. A government consisting of Social Democrats and Greens, parties that were once in favour of leaving NATO and against arms deliveries to crisis areas, is now pursuing an aggressive foreign policy aimed at the military defeat of Russia. How did this come about?

The SPD, once the party of peace and social justice, has often put its finger in the wound when it comes to military interventions. The Greens, as the party of the peace movement of the 1980s, went even further: "Never again war" and "Get out of NATO" were key demands. But the political reality has changed. Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022 marked a turning point. Suddenly, the principles of German foreign policy were put to the test.

The decision to supply weapons to Ukraine was a turning point. The government argued that it was a matter of helping a sovereign state in its self-defence. This position was widely supported by the population, who had images of the destruction and suffering of the Ukrainian civilian population before their eyes. At the same time, however, there was growing concern about an escalation of the conflict and a possible direct confrontation with Russia. A growing number of citizens began to question the wisdom and moral justification of this new policy.

It is ironic that the very parties that once stood for disarmament and peace are now at the forefront of a policy of

military support. The Greens, who had long spoken out against any German military involvement, justify their U-turn with the argument of human rights and the need to oppose dictatorships. But is this really the only way? The question of alternatives often remains unanswered, and criticism is quickly dismissed as naive or unpatriotic.

Another area of tension arises from the internal divisions in German society. While the government is trying to prepare the population for harsh cuts, resentment is growing. Rising energy costs, inflation and the fear of an economic recession are weighing heavily on many people. At the same time, the population is being confronted with socio-political projects that many see as ideologically driven and rushed. Projects that are often pushed through against the will of the majority and further fuel the already tense social atmosphere.

The accusation that the government is pursuing a policy against the interests of its own citizens is nothing new. But in the current situation, it has taken on a new dimension. It is not just the economic burden that worries many people. It is the fear of an approaching war, of an escalation that could once again place Germany at the centre of a military conflict. These fears are deeply rooted and are reminiscent of the horrors of the Second World War, which live on in the nation's collective memory.

The question arises as to whether the current policy is in line with the post-war oath or whether it betrays it. The

demand for military support for Ukraine is often justified with the argument of Germany's historical responsibility. But this responsibility must also be seen in the context of the promise of peace. Can Germany not fulfil its responsibility in another way? Through diplomatic efforts, humanitarian aid and a policy of de-escalation?

The answers to these questions are complex and require an honest and open debate. A debate that considers not only the short-term political and military goals, but also the long-term moral and ethical implications. A debate that takes the fears and concerns of the population seriously and does not dismiss them as a hindrance to political goals.

It is important that politicians get closer to the people again, that they make their decisions transparent and comprehensible. The population must have the feeling that their concerns are being heard and considered. This is the only way to restore trust in politics. Trust that has been increasingly eroded in recent years.

The result is the realisation that the challenge facing Germany requires profound reflection. A reflection on our own values, our own goals and the means to achieve them. It is a task that requires courage and foresight. Courage to rethink old positions and break new ground. And the foresight to consider the long-term consequences of one's own actions and not just keep an eye on short-term political gain.

Germany is at a crossroads. The post-war oath was a promise that has guided the country for decades. It is now

time to reinterpret this promise in the current geopolitical situation and remain true to it. Not through blind actionism, but through a level-headed and responsible policy that keeps an eye on peace and takes the fears of its own population seriously.

THE ILLUSION OF NEUTRALITY

Austria, known for its perpetual neutrality, is now at a crossroads that calls into question its political and moral integrity. Recent geopolitical crises, in particular the war in Ukraine and the Hamas massacre on 7 October, have revealed the shortcomings and complete failure of the Austrian government to fulfil its constitutional role as a neutral state. Instead of pursuing an active policy of neutrality and positioning Austria as a central place of encounter and dialogue, the country is hiding under a missile defence shield that offers more protection from moral responsibility than from actual threats.

Austria's policy of neutrality was once a model for diplomacy and peacebuilding. The Federal Constitution stipulates that Austria is a neutral state, which means that it should stay out of military conflicts and not support warring parties. This neutrality should enable Austria to build a bridge between conflicting parties and act as a mediator. But the reality today is very different.

In the Ukraine war, Austria's reaction has shown that the principles of neutrality are increasingly giving way to a

pragmatic, if not opportunistic, policy. Although Austria is not supplying weapons to Ukraine, as some other European states are doing, its political stance is anything but neutral. The sanctions against Russia, the declarations of solidarity with Ukraine and the rhetorical support for the Western position have effectively placed Austria on one side of the conflict.

The failure of neutrality policy becomes even clearer in the reaction to the Hamas massacre on 7 October. The Austrian government has clearly sided with Israel, which may be a legitimate political decision, but is difficult to reconcile with the principle of neutrality. Federal Chancellor Karl Nehammer and Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg have repeatedly emphasised unreserved solidarity with Israel, neglecting the need for a differentiated and balanced approach.

This one-sided stance has not only undermined Austria's position as a neutral mediator but has also further fuelled tensions in the region. Instead of offering a platform for dialogue and understanding, Austria's government has deepened the rifts by taking sides. An active policy of neutrality would have meant recognising Israel's legitimate security needs as well as defending the human rights of the Palestinians and advocating a peaceful solution.

A central aspect of neutrality policy is the promotion of dialogue and understanding. Austria would have had the unique opportunity to position itself as a central meeting

place where discussions rather than sanctions take centre stage. Vienna, once known as a neutral ground for diplomatic negotiations and international conferences, could have played an important role in de-escalating the conflicts.

But instead of actively assuming this role, Austria has hidden under a missile defence umbrella. This shield symbolises not only physical protection from possible attacks, but also mental protection from the responsibility that comes with an active policy of neutrality. It is easier to hide behind sanctions and declarations of solidarity than to take on the complex task of mediation and dialogue.

Austria has a historical and moral responsibility that goes beyond simply maintaining its neutrality. As a country that consciously chose the path of neutrality after the Second World War, it should be aware of its obligation to actively contribute to the promotion of peace. This means not only taking clear and principled positions in times of crisis, but also developing long-term strategies for conflict resolution and reconciliation.

However, the Austrian federal government has failed to fulfil this responsibility. Through its unilateral political decisions and its passive attitude towards global challenges, it has not only undermined confidence in its neutrality, but has also damaged Austria's credibility on the international stage.

Conclusion: A new vision for neutrality

It is time for Austria to rethink its neutrality policy and develop a new vision for its role in the world. An active policy of neutrality that focuses on dialogue and mediation instead of sanctions and partisanship could make Austria a central player in international diplomacy once again. However, this requires courage and determination on the part of the political leadership to face up to the challenges and take responsibility for a more peaceful world.

The Austrian Federal Government must recognise that neutrality is not synonymous with passivity. It must act proactively to resolve conflicts and build bridges instead of hiding behind political and military shields. Only in this way can Austria fulfil its constitutional role and make a real contribution to the international community.

In a world increasingly characterised by conflict and division, Austria could be a beacon of neutrality and peace. It is up to the government to seize this opportunity and pursue a policy that fulfils both the principles of neutrality and the needs of a complex and ever-changing global landscape.

THE FAILURE OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA DUE TO KREISKY'S LEGACY

When reflecting on Bruno Kreisky's legacy and current political events in Austria, it is important to look beyond a purely political analysis. Kreisky's legacy as Austrian Chancellor from 1970 to 1983 undoubtedly left a formative mark on Austrian political history. His commitment to social

justice, his international pragmatism and his visionary leadership not only characterised his era, but also left behind a legacy that is still being discussed and evaluated today.

But what about the present? The current Austrian federal government and the political climate leave room for profound criticism and analysis. The supposed failure and lack of direction that many citizens and intellectuals perceive raise urgent questions. In particular, the lack of a critical intelligentsia that feels obliged to scrutinise developments and point out new paths is a central problem.

Kreisky was often praised for his pragmatic policies, which built bridges where others saw trenches. Today, political decisions seem to be characterised by tactics and short-term interests, while long-term visions and social responsibility often take a back seat. The gap between political leadership and the needs of the population is widening. This is not only evident in Austrian debates but is a Europe-wide phenomenon.

The role of the intelligentsia in society, especially the critical intelligentsia, is a key aspect. In times of political polarisation and popular rhetoric, it seems that many intellectuals either fall silent or sink into ideological rifts. Kreisky's legacy of openness and dialogue seems to have been lost at a time when politics is dominated by division and simplistic solutions.

The media landscape plays a decisive role in this context. Where once there was a broad spectrum of opinions

and well-founded analyses, today there is often a superficiality that leaves little room for complex debates. The emergence of social media has also changed the dynamic by fragmenting and polarising public opinion.

Another aspect that needs to be analysed is the role of education and research. Kreisky invested heavily in education and science, recognising their importance for the future viability of a nation. Today, educational institutions and research institutes are often confronted with financial bottlenecks and political influence that threaten their independence and innovative strength.

The lack of critical intelligence that not only scrutinises policy but also offers constructive alternatives is alarming. At a time when complex global challenges such as climate change, migration and economic inequality need to be tackled, forward-looking and responsible policies are crucial. But instead, many governments, not only in Austria, seem to be caught up in short-term crisis management that neglects long-term solutions.

It is time for the intelligentsia to rediscover its role and realise its responsibility. Not as an elitist group, but as a critical compass for society. It should challenge the leadership, develop ideas and promote a broad public debate that goes beyond party political interests.

The memory of Kreisky's legacy should not just be a nostalgic reminiscence, but a reminder to reflect on the fundamental values of democracy, social justice and international

cooperation. A renewed commitment to a policy of change and responsibility is needed. Today's generation of leaders and intellectuals must rise to this challenge to ensure the future viability not only of Austria, but of the entire European community.

At a time when the world is facing increasing uncertainties, Bruno Kreisky's legacy could serve as a guiding star, reminding us that politics is the art of the possible, but also the obligation to take a long-term perspective and be the voice of reason and humanity.

In a world characterised by constant conflict and war, this book offers an introduction to the complex subject of modern conflicts. It sheds light on the background and causes of conflicts, analyses the effects and shows ways in which peace and stability can be promoted. With clear explanations and illustrative examples, this book is aimed at anyone who wants to better understand the dynamics of today's conflicts and actively contribute to a more peaceful world.