

THEORY AND PRACTICE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Hardly any other field has undergone such tremendous upheaval in recent decades as international relations. Whereas a few years ago the prevailing doctrine was that states were the sole actors and that foreign policy had to be regarded as the "domaine réservé" of the head of state, today there are a multitude of actors shaping international affairs; the iron laws of yesteryear have been turned on their head.

Since the Peace of Westphalia (1648), states have been considered sovereign, both internally and externally. Soldiers and diplomats determined international affairs. In this sense, Article 2, paragraph one of the Charter of the United Nations still states: "The Organisation is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all States." This provision in particular shows that fiction is often used in the field of international relations, as the five permanent members of the Security Council are much more "equal" than the others.

Furthermore, in contrast to the provisions on the "sovereignty of states" and the "inviolability of borders," a practice has emerged since the end of the Cold War in the form of "democracy-building," "nation-building" or a "responsibility to protect," which some major powers already regard as a right to intervene. This happened in connection with the West's victory over the Soviet Union. The crucial question was whether the new world order would be unipolar in the sense of sole American hegemony or multipolar.

What are some other significant changes? Especially after the Second World War, international organisations, now estimated to number 3,000, have become very important. International courts have been established. Some multinational corporations achieved greater financial clout and became more powerful than many states. According to a report by Fortune 2024, 139 of the world's 500 largest corporations were American and 128 were Chinese.

In contrast to states, whose governments should have the common good in mind, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are run by individuals who represent particular socio-political, legal, religious or humanitarian interests. Some NGOs have achieved a global reach: Amnesty International is present in 60 countries; Greenpeace employs 2,500 people in 27 national branches and has its own fleet of several ships. Médecins Sans Frontières, in turn, employs 4,000 people and is active in 70 countries.

NGOs have repeatedly exerted a decisive influence on public debate, often with the help of the mainstream media. In 1997, for example, an association of 1,500 NGOs succeeded in pushing through a ban on anti-personnel mines. The establishment of the

International Criminal Court in 1998 can be traced back to NGO initiatives. The Catholic St. Ägidius community mediated in the civil war in Mozambique.

Another extremely interesting development is that in recent years, even individuals such as Julian Assange, Edward Snowden and Bill Gates have had a significant influence on international affairs. By 2023, the Gates Foundation already had assets of \$75 billion. Social media, which can exert enormous pressure, has also become a major player in international affairs. It can influence public opinion across national borders. This has also opened up new opportunities for disinformation and "fake news". This comes at a time when journalists in the mainstream media have become activists.

The rapid pace of these changes can be seen from the fact that all these developments have taken place since the great thinkers of international relations developed their theories a few years ago. Both Hans Morgenthau in his book "Politics among Nations" and Raymond Aron in "Paix et Guerres entre les Nations" assume that international relations are shaped by states. The decisive actors were the nation states.

The following chapters will show how the discussion on international relations has developed in recent years and how it has actually been shaped.

NOTES

- (1) Pascal Boniface; Comprendre le Monde; Armand Colin 2025
- (2) Wendelin Ettmayer ; Old States – New World, Stability and Change in International Relations; Trauner-Verlag 2008

I. STRATEGIES FOR AMERICAN HEGEMONY

HENRY KISSINGER-ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI-GRAHAM ALLISON

All Americans agree that the United States is a chosen nation, at least those who want to be re-elected. Even political enemies such as Joe Biden and Donald Trump agree on this; both believe in "American exceptionalism". For Joe Biden, the United States is "the finest and most unique nation in the world," where religion or ethnicity does not matter, where only the ideal of equality for all people counts. Donald Trump sees his country in a similar light: "America is the greatest and most exceptional nation in the history of the world" ⁽¹⁾.

George W. Bush declared during his presidential campaign: "Almighty God and history have chosen America as a model for the world." He then understood this as a mission to bring American values closer to other countries, even with military pressure. Time and again, patriots have referred to the Puritan

and governor of Massachusetts, John Winthrop, who, referring to America as a "shining city on a hill," spoke of the Bible.
the Bible, as a "shining city on the hill".

Only President Jimmy Carter wanted to shake his fellow citizens awake when he proclaimed a "crisis of confidence" in a major speech. However, he then had no chance of being re-elected: his opponent Ronald Reagan ran in the 1980 elections with the slogan that "providence has made America the greatest country in the world".

Science, too, has repeatedly seen America's identity in "American exceptionalism". Abram Van Engen, for example, in his work "City on a Hill: A History of American Exceptionalism". There are exceptions, such as sociologist Daniel Bell, who wrote about "The End of American Exceptionalism" in 1975. However, more than a generation later, his son David A. Bell, a professor at Princeton, noted that the belief in their special mission has repeatedly inspired his compatriots. Others, such as Seymour Martin Lipset, have even attempted to empirically demonstrate America's special advantages. In 2008, Andrew Bacevich, a historian with a military background, wrote his book on "The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism". But he, too, recognised the extraordinary power of the United States, while warning that belief in providence should not lead to hubris and imperialism.

This treatise is about how leading thinkers in American foreign policy want to preserve or expand their country's special position in a changing world, especially in the face of new circumstances. Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski were primarily fixated on the Soviet Union, while Graham Allison asks whether there will be a war with China for world supremacy.

1. Henry Kissinger – the realist

In his postdoctoral thesis, "A World Restored: Politics of Conservatism in a Revolutionary Age" ⁽²⁾, Kissinger examined how revolutionary France and Napoleon no longer recognised the legitimacy of the existing international order, how this destroyed the balance of power, and what the basic features of a new world order should be. Under Napoleon's rule, European states were no longer able to assert their national interests.

Only those who submitted to Napoleon's will were safe. After his defeat in Russia, it was clear that even he had his limits and that Europe could no longer be ruled by force alone. After the final victory over the Grande Armée, a new balance of power was needed to deter new aggressors. The aim was to restore stability to Europe after the chaos of the Napoleonic Wars.

Kissinger describes very clearly how the aim was to find common ground between the different ideas of the protagonists: Napoleon wanted to create a new order with a strong army. The Russian Tsar Alexander, on the other hand, believed in his divine mission. Both were revolutionaries in their own way because they wanted to overcome the existing order and create a new international system that corresponded to their

own ideas. Kissinger assessed this development very realistically and remained faithful to the "school of realists" throughout his life: a statesman should be neither a conqueror nor a prophet. No country wants to be dependent on another in the long term. On the other hand, ideologies that consider themselves morally superior claim absolute supremacy. Statesmen such as the British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh and Metternich, on the other hand, seek security and stability in the balance of power. The new international order should be balanced between power and morality, between security and legitimacy.

On the occasion of his death, Heinz Gärtnert paid tribute to the life of Henry Kissinger in "International" ⁽³⁾. The article examines the extent to which Kissinger, as the architect of American foreign policy and advisor to various presidents, remained true to his principles as an academic teacher.

As in his postdoctoral thesis, Kissinger then took the view as an academic teacher that politics and diplomacy should be understood as an art and not as an exact science. Reason, creativity and intuition should be combined in a realistic way. Diplomacy is therefore not an exact science in which theories can be applied in a predictable manner. Successful foreign policy must be geared towards using different options in different negotiations. Ultimately, it is always a matter of establishing a balance of power as the basis for stability.

The Congress of Vienna can serve as a model in this regard. In this sense, alliances can also be changed if it is in the interests of one's own country ⁽⁴⁾. Based on such considerations, Kissinger criticised the then prevailing US nuclear doctrine of "massive retaliation" in his 1955 book "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy" because it was geared towards "all or nothing". His opinion was that there must be intermediate stages between nuclear war on the one hand and total restraint on the other. Even though this book met with resistance, Kissinger had established his reputation as an intellectual who was committed to finding flexible solutions.

The fact that jealousy could also exist among Harvard professors became apparent when President John F. Kennedy wanted to bring Kissinger into the White House as an advisor in 1961. His then advisor on national security issues, McGeorge Bundy, who also came from Harvard, ensured that Kissinger remained in a subordinate role. There were also differences of opinion between Kissinger and Kennedy when the latter believed that the construction of the Berlin Wall would reduce tensions between East and West, while Kissinger was of the opinion that a tougher approach would force Khrushchev to back down. Kissinger was convinced that a tougher stance would serve America's credibility and Europe's security better. While Kissinger had a great deal of influence on Nelson Rockefeller and was able to win him over to a moderate stance in foreign policy, he was also able to advocate a tougher approach when he deemed it appropriate. He was also able to differentiate in his personal stance: for example, he publicly supported the war in Vietnam, while telling the American ambassador in Saigon "that we can neither win nor end this war" ⁽⁵⁾.

When Kissinger became a key architect of American foreign policy under President Richard Nixon, first as National Security Advisor and then as Secretary of State, he maintained his realistic stance on the restructuring of the international order. Nixon also had very realistic ideas about what the future world should look like: the aim was to restore America's leading position, which had been damaged by the Vietnam War. In the midst of the Cold War, the basis of international relations was to be a balance of power between East and West. At the same time, however, it was also important to ensure that Moscow's influence in the world did not grow without creating new tensions. Above all, the opening up to China, which was then ruled by Mao Zedong, meant a reorientation of American security policy.

Kissinger was the right man at the right time, with a unique ability to combine all these challenges into an overall strategy that served American interests. As National Security Advisor, his initial task was to coordinate the State Department, the Pentagon and the intelligence services in this direction. This was no easy task, not least because Nixon himself had serious reservations about these huge bureaucratic institutions, which, by their very nature, pursued their own policies. In any case, Nixon found in Kissinger an "intellectual partner and alter ego" in shaping the new American foreign policy.

Kissinger and Nixon were realists. Power was to serve as the basis for their foreign policy. This was to be done within the scope of the possibilities available, i.e. not to an excessive extent, as under Kennedy and Johnson in Vietnam, and not for moral reasons, as would have been in line with Woodrow Wilson's ideals. This was accompanied by a certain scepticism towards public opinion, which could all too easily be manipulated. Kissinger was probably also influenced in this regard by his youth in the Weimar Republic, where elections could ultimately lead to a totalitarian system.

On this basis, Kissinger and Nixon were able to achieve decisive breakthroughs, such as the recognition of the People's Republic of China. This was a double success at a time when strong tensions were developing between Beijing and Moscow. Their own position was strengthened, while that of the Soviet Union was weakened. From Kissinger's point of view, this strengthening of their own position was also necessary because, although the US was able to further increase its own economic and military capabilities, the growth of other countries, which were increasingly recovering from the Second World War, was even greater. This ultimately resulted in a relative weakening of the United States, which had to take this development into account. Kissinger repeatedly emphasised the need to negotiate with America's opponents. Ignoring powerful states would be "reckless and pointless," although a strong military should certainly help to strengthen America's credibility.

With this in mind, Kissinger met regularly, often weekly, with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. These talks took on special significance because both men were convinced that they were the real architects of their countries' foreign policy. In fact, during this period, important agreements

were signed between Washington and Moscow during this period: the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin; the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; disarmament treaties and, above all, the successful conclusion of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in August 1975. The official negotiations (in Vienna or Geneva) were often just a sideshow; the decisions were made during the talks between Kissinger and Dobrynin.

The extent to which realpolitik guided American foreign policy is evident, for example, in Kissinger's statement to Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai that, even in relations with communist countries, it is the country itself that matters to the US, not its ideology. When Zhou replied that non-interference in a country's internal affairs was important to China, while the United States' sense of mission repeatedly led to conflicts, Kissinger agreed with him and said: "We did not seek hegemony in the world, it just happened that way. Our missionary activism has repeatedly led to difficulties" ⁽⁷⁾. Kissinger saw very clearly the limits of American power, which then became the basis of the Nixon Doctrine: distant countries should first make their own efforts to defend themselves. This also made it possible to make American foreign policy much more flexible, because it was no longer primarily about ideological differences, but about national interests.

This also earned Kissinger the opposition of the first neoconservatives, such as Senator Scoop Jackson. Kissinger rejected exaggerated idealism because he was convinced that total victory was not possible in the real world. If you want to enforce Wilson's ideals by force of arms, you forget what your own country's real interests are, Kissinger writes in his memoirs ⁽⁸⁾. In this sense, Kissinger spoke out against interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union and advised President Ford not to receive the prominent dissident Solzhenitsyn. If this policy then led to the CSCE, which in turn contributed significantly to the upheavals in Eastern Europe through the recognition of human rights, this can probably be described as a "trick of history".

But despite all the hostility Kissinger faced, presidents continued to seek his advice even after his time as foreign secretary. He always emphasised that the neoconservatives' idea that one could impose one's own values on others was just as unrealistic as believing that one's own power had no limits. International relations, he argued, require compromise and coexistence. Kissinger expressed this view in countless publications and to American presidents from George H.W. Bush to Barack Obama: foreign policy is successful when negotiations are conducted in such a way that the rights of others are also recognised and armed force is used only as a last resort. With his realism, Kissinger stood for continuity, pragmatic politics, the lessons of history and the fact that goals take time. Ultimately, it is these principles that could bring our world back from the brink of nuclear war, where we now stand.

2. Zbigniew Brzezinski – a balance of power is not enough

Zbigniew Brzezinski had a different idea from Kissinger about how American hegemony in the world could be secured, as he explained in particular in his 1972 treatise "The Balance of Power Delusion". While Kissinger saw the "balance of power" as the basis of his foreign policy, Brzezinski considered it an illusion. His thoughts were then published as a book in various countries, in France for example under the title "Illusions dans l'équilibre des puissances" ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Brzezinski's criticism was aimed at the fact that the conditions during the Cold War did not correspond to those after the Congress of Vienna and that the USA should therefore strive to achieve supremacy, not balance. After the Congress of Vienna, there was genuine multipolarity as the basis for European balance.

This is why this system could be considered stable. The "balance of terror" that existed during the 1970s, on the other hand, was dominated solely by the US and the Soviet Union. They alone determined political, economic and military events. They were superior to all other states in terms of power politics and economics and were not dependent on their approval or disapproval.

Furthermore, the European elites at the time and after the Congress of Vienna were homogeneous, supported by a closed aristocracy and a common ideology. French, as the common language of diplomats, was also a symbol of a community of values. The Cold War, on the other hand, was characterised by a fierce ideological conflict, which was also determined by different economic systems and hostile military alliances. The Cold War was a global conflict in which there was no common ground.

Furthermore, Brzezinski identified a social harmony during the period of the Congress of Vienna and afterwards that made it possible to solve major social problems together. In contrast, the second half of the 20th century was marked by rapid change in a wide variety of areas that a static international system was no longer able to cope with. Brzezinski also discusses this in more detail in his book "Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the 21st Century" ⁽¹¹⁾.

Even if one regards these disputes between Brzezinski and Kissinger as intellectual competition, a significant conclusion can be drawn: Brzezinski accuses Kissinger of having a foreign policy that is not in step with the times and of not taking the necessary tough stance against the Soviet Union. For this reason, Kissinger also failed with his Vietnam policy and did not correctly assess the rise of Japan. America must instead live up to its mission and "carry the torch of freedom to the world". In reality, however, the US had become increasingly alienated from the world, especially from the newly independent states of the Third World. In this context, Brzezinski has harsh words for the US foreign policy elite, such as Secretaries of State Dean Acheson and John Forster Dulles. They failed to understand the changes taking place and instead sought to impose their own values on the whole world.

In any case, the US should take a tougher stance against the Soviet Union. During the nuclear arms race, Brzezinski also advocated dialogue with Moscow, which he considered a matter of survival. But détente, the policy of relaxation, should not be one-sided at the expense of the West, while Moscow intervenes in the Third World and gains considerable territory. Brzezinski's goals were therefore very ambitious: in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate, he wanted to restore the full hegemony of the United States. These ideas met with resistance from those who, like the grand master of American foreign policy, Averell Harriman, advocated better relations with Moscow, but also from those who, like President Carter's administration, were open to negotiations.

Harriman, who was actively involved in the conferences on the restructuring of Europe after the Second World War, said quite openly that someone like Brzezinski, of Polish origin, could not assess Russian-American relations objectively. Brzezinski replied dryly that he understood the Soviet communists at least as well as the capitalist and millionaire Harriman. In fact, Brzezinski repeatedly called for and took a hard line against Moscow, working towards a decisive weakening of Russia ⁽¹²⁾.

Brzezinski actively contributed to strengthening opposition movements wherever the aim was to weaken Soviet influence. He later argued that Russia's dominance in Eurasia would be massively weakened if it lost its influence over Ukraine. In any case, Russia should be kept under constant pressure.

When Soviet influence in Afghanistan became very strong in the late 1970s, Brzezinski supported the opposition Mujahideen, first with money, then with weapons. After an interview with Brzezinski in the *Nouvel Observateur*, it was even suggested that this support had lured the Russians into the "Afghanistan trap" in the first place. In any case, the Soviet Union suffered a decisive defeat in Afghanistan, which contributed significantly to the dissolution of the state. Brzezinski later had to defend himself against accusations that his policies had contributed to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Assessing his policies is not always easy: for example, he was once opposed to official diplomatic talks with the Moscow Foreign Ministry, but very much in favour of secret negotiations conducted through him. In any case, it was he who always advised President Jimmy Carter to take a tougher line with Moscow.

As mentioned above, this tougher stance was particularly evident in his support for the opposition in communist countries such as Poland. The aim was to destabilise the communist bloc. Brzezinski had already led covert disruptive operations at the Communist World Youth Festival in Vienna in 1959. Now, as part of a targeted strategy, similar actions were to take place throughout the Eastern Bloc. This policy was also driven by criticism from neoconservatives and Republicans such as Ronald Reagan that the US had fallen behind the Soviet Union as the number two power.

When economic difficulties in Poland led to worker protests and the founding of the Solidarity trade union in the late 1970s, Brzezinski did everything he could to put pressure on the Kremlin. A Soviet invasion like the one in Czechoslovakia in 1968 had to be prevented at all costs. Brzezinski was in constant contact with the leadership of Solidarnosc, the American trade unions (AFL-CIO) were invited to support them, and close contacts were also established with the Catholic Church in Gdansk.

Some of the tough measures taken by President Jimmy Carter were then widely attributed to his successor, Ronald Reagan. Why? Because Carter was divided in his foreign policy: Security Advisor Brzezinski advocated a hard line, while Secretary of State Cyrus Vance favoured negotiations. Anatoly Dobrynin wrote similarly in his memoirs: "There was constant competition among Carter's staff for the president's favour, especially when it came to the Soviet Union. While the American government obviously agreed that entente meant both rivalry and cooperation, there was no consensus on which should be the focus. For the security adviser, the global conflict was always at the forefront, while Vance had his eye on fundamental cooperation" ⁽¹³⁾. This view was also confirmed by Vance in his memoirs, in which he also accused the security adviser of pushing himself too much into the media and the public eye. Ultimately, the Foreign Secretary also resigned from his post prematurely.

In fact, Brzezinski always had his eye on global developments and the associated strategies. He predicted that the most important arena for conflict in the coming decades would be Eurasia, i.e. the area between Lisbon and Vladivostok. This is where it would be decided which country would lead the world in the future, with Brzezinski attaching particular importance to sovereignty over Ukraine. For him, supremacy over Ukraine was the fundamental prerequisite for hegemony in Eurasia. Therefore, everything must be done to prevent an opposing power from dominating Ukraine. Brzezinski can thus be considered a pioneer of the war in Ukraine ⁽¹⁵⁾. He has repeatedly stated quite openly that without Ukraine, Russia is no longer a superpower.

In this sense, Brzezinski saw NATO's eastward expansion as a decisive step towards supremacy in Eurasia. The end of NATO's eastward expansion would mean the end of a comprehensive American policy for the whole of Europe, whereby Ukraine should of course also be included in negotiations with both the European Union and NATO. Ukraine's separation from Russia would be a success simply because it would contradict Russia's sense of mission as the standard-bearer of the entire Pan-Slavic identity. Without Ukraine, Russia has no chance of restoring the Eurasian empire. Furthermore, Russia is now too weak to impose its will on the new states that became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union ⁽¹⁶⁾. In later publications, Brzezinski could well imagine the further disintegration of Russia.

In any case, the Polish-born Brzezinski went much further than Kissinger in his opposition to Moscow. While Kissinger was always keen to establish a "balance of power," Brzezinski initially wanted to undermine the Soviet system and then

further weaken Russia after its collapse. Nevertheless, he too was always keen to maintain a basis for dialogue with Moscow. He also knew that without these contacts, opposition could develop a momentum of its own that would ultimately be detrimental to all.

3. Graham Allison and the coming war against China

In 2017, during Donald Trump's first year in office, Graham Allison published his book "Destined for War: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides Trap?" What is the core theory of this book? 2,500 years ago, Sparta was the leading power in Greece.

The rapid rise of Athens to become the new hegemon had to be prevented by any means necessary

. This policy led to the Peloponnesian War. The "Thucydides Trap" thus consists in the fact that a leading power's fear of a new competitor leads almost inevitably to war, with three factors being decisive: interests, fear and honour ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Allison then analyses 16 cases from the last 500 years in which an emerging power challenged the ruling power; in twelve of these cases, war broke out. Only the transition of leadership from Portugal to Spain in the late 15th century and from England to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century took place peacefully. There were no major military conflicts during the Cold War either, and the struggle for supremacy in Europe between England, France and Germany in recent decades has also been peaceful.

Now, of course, one may ask to what extent Graham Allison's thesis corresponds to the actual course of events or is rather a schematic representation. Hans-Joachim Diesner describes the origins of the Peloponnesian War quite differently: after their victory over the Persians, Sparta and Athens had formed an alliance, which led to a dualism between the two Greek superpowers. Sparta's brusque rejection of Athens' offer of help in suppressing the Helot revolt led to the dissolution of the alliance that had existed since 482 BC and to growing tensions between the two powers. So, increased rivalry due to wounded pride?

In any case, there were then two major alliances in Greece: the Delian-Attic League under the leadership of Athens, whose hegemony gradually became a tyranny. Sparta, on the other hand, had supremacy in the Peloponnesian League. According to Diesner, the antagonism between these alliances also had significant economic reasons. Greece had become too small to allow several expanding powers to increase their control over people and territory at the same time

⁽¹⁸⁾. The struggle for raw materials and sales markets intensified. In order to survive this process, Athens expanded its fleet and the Delian League.

Economic and trade policy considerations thus went hand in hand with military ones. The conflict between Athens and Sparta had already erupted in several limited wars after 460 BC, which were initially fought through allies.

A pan-Hellenic peace project proposed by Pericles failed due to opposition from Sparta, which saw its hegemony over southern Greece threatened. Athens remained the decisive Greek naval power, while Sparta controlled most of the territories of southern and central Greece. Ultimately, it was the allies on both sides who pushed for war

If Hans-Joachim Diesner now has a completely different explanation for the causes of the Peloponnesian War, which finally broke out in 431 BC and lasted until 404, this is not decisive for explaining a future war between the USA and China, because Graham Allison's thesis has found wide acceptance in leading circles in the USA. In fact, Allison presents numerous facts to support his theory that an emerging power poses a threat to the ruling hegemon, using China as an example. In 1980, China's GDP was only \$300 billion (7% of the US GDP), but by 2015 it had already reached \$11 trillion (61% of the US GDP). China's world trade rose from \$40 billion to \$4 trillion over the same period, with Chinese exports already accounting for 151% of American exports.

This is because in the decades after 1980, the Chinese economy grew by 10% annually, which meant that its total economic output doubled every seven years. China has already overtaken the US in key areas: shipbuilding, steel and aluminium production, textiles, mobile phones and computers. In recent years, "new energies", electric cars and artificial intelligence have been added to the list. If China succeeds in increasing its labour productivity in the coming years, this would lead to a GDP that is twice as high as that of the United States. China's rise can certainly be described as frightening. But will this create the conditions that correspond to the "Thucydides Trap"? In my opinion, the issue today is not that China will replace the US as the world's leading power. The United States will probably remain the world's leading political, economic, military and cultural power in the foreseeable future. The "American model" continues to exert a great deal of appeal. So it is not a question of replacing global hegemony, but rather of how far China's increased strength will enable it to play a more significant role in international affairs than before.

As much as China's dramatic rise was initially made possible by huge Western investments, fears soon arose that a new economic superpower China could also pose a military threat. As early as 2012, when China's defence budget was just a quarter of that of the United States, The Economist warned that Beijing could become the world's largest military power in 20 years. This power would then not only focus on defence, but also take offensive ^{action}, for example in relation to Taiwan.

President Donald Trump then declared a trade war in 2018 and imposed tariffs on Chinese imports worth billions. Chinese President Xi accused the US of waging a "boxing match without rules". Joe Biden then not only intensified the economic war, but also added a new dimension to the conflict over Taiwan. Whereas it had been agreed during the normalisation of relations with Beijing that Taiwan is part of China, Biden has now

no longer ruled out military support for an independent Taiwan. In any case, the Biden administration's political, economic and military efforts to contain China's rise have intensified.

The West is also trying to exert constant pressure on China by accusing Beijing of human rights violations in Xinjiang and Tibet, as well as the curtailment of political rights in Hong Kong. China should instead adopt "Western values" and submit to the order established by the US after the Second World War. Beijing, for its part, considers it cynical when the Dutch or Japanese governments are urged by Washington to stop selling semiconductors to China "because of violations of universal values".

In fact, the attempt to impose Western values on the "Middle Kingdom" has already failed once before. When Jesuits attempted to convert China in the 16th and 17th centuries, their efforts were accepted in part because they tried to reconcile Chinese traditions such as ancestor worship and the teachings of Confucius with the Christian faith. Emperor Kangxi was impressed by the Jesuits and even issued an edict of tolerance in 1692 that welcomed the presence of Christian Europeans. However, when Rome ordered that the Christian faith be spread only in its pure, Western form, the project failed miserably. Today, critics accuse the West of applying double standards. China should be judged by its achievements and not by its political system.

The example of the Peloponnesian War clearly shows that various causes can lead to war: political ones, as Graham Allison points out, or economic ones, as Hans-Joachim Diesner describes. But Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski have shown that tough but realistic politics can also succeed in avoiding a major war, even when there are significant political and economic differences. The extent to which absolute American global dominance can continue at a time when the balance of power has changed decisively is, of course, open to question. When the new international order was established after the Second World War under the leadership of the United States, China was not an international player in any field, but today it is. It can be assumed that this development is linked to a growing national consciousness in China itself. The transfer of national trends into foreign policy can be seen as a sign of new strength, but also as an attempt to cover up internal difficulties and uncertainties.

Now, the war in Ukraine has clearly shown that a new system of alliances is emerging internationally. On the one hand, the West, led by the US, insists that the whole world recognise the rules set by the West. On the other hand, there are those states that have enabled Russia to wage war much longer and more intensively than originally assumed. The French finance minister was not the only one to emphatically declare that Moscow had no chance of withstanding the toughest economic sanctions the world has ever seen. The countries of the new alliance, in which China plays a decisive role, can claim success for themselves in that they have managed to withstand enormous political,

economic and military pressure from the West. In this sense, Beijing has already won because of the war in Ukraine, as the US is no longer the sole leading power in the world.

It would therefore certainly be beneficial for the whole world if, in the coming years, cooperation between China and America could be intensified rather than confrontation. This means working together to keep the global economy as stable as possible, protect the climate and prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons. The fight against terrorism and international crime are also areas where cooperation is possible. Ultimately, the goal should be to save the world, not destroy it.

NOTES

- (1) New York Times, 13/14 July 2024; Is America a City on the Hill or a Nation on the Precipice
- (2) Henry A. Kissinger; A World Restored: The Politics of Conservatism in a Revolutionary Age; New York 1964
- (3) Heinz Gärtner; On the death of Henry Kissinger: A far-sighted strategic thinker with dark spots of short-sightedness; International I/2024
- (4) David Milne; Worldmaking—The Art and Science of American Diplomacy; New York 2015
- (5) Martin Griffiths; Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations; London 1999
- (6) Elizabeth Borgwart et al.; Rethinking American Grand Strategy; Oxford 2021
- (7) Memorandum for Henry Kissinger; 29 July 1971
- (8) Henry Kissinger; Years of Renewal; New York 1999
- (9) Barry Gewen; The Inevitability of Tragedy—Henry Kissinger and his World; New York 2020
- (10) Zbigniew Brzezinski; Illusions dans l'équilibre des puissances ; Paris 1977
- (11) Zbigniew Brzezinski; Out of Control—Global Turmoil on the Eve of the 21st Century; New York 1993
- (12) Justin Vaisse; Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist; Cambridge 2018
- (13) Anatoly Dobrynin; In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents
- (14) Cyrus Vance; David S. McLellan; New York 1985
- (15) Justin Vaisse; Zbigniew Brzezinski: America's Grand Strategist; Cambridge 2018
- (16) Zbigniew Brzezinski; The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives; New York 1997
- (17) Graham Allison; Destined for War; London 2017
- (18) Hans-Joachim Diesner; Wars of Antiquity; Military Publishing House of the German Democratic Republic; Berlin 1989
- (19) The Economist; China's military rise, 7 April 201

II. VISIONS FOR A NEW WORLD – WHAT HAS BECOME OF THEM?

In art and culture, science and research, there are always ideas and works, analyses and visions that influence the spirit of the times and trigger intense discussions. As far as international relations are concerned, in recent decades Paul Kennedy with his analysis of "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers" ⁽¹⁾ ; Francis Fukuyama with his theory on "The End of History and the Last Man" ⁽²⁾ and Samuel Huntington with his book on "The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order" ⁽³⁾ have sparked worldwide discussions. It is probably time to attempt to assess the extent to which these statements, most of which were directed towards the future, have come true or not.

1. Paul Kennedy and the future of the USA

As much as Paul Kennedy's work attracted worldwide attention when it was published in 1988, his theses were very soon subjected to extremely critical assessment. This was because his core message was reduced to the "decline of the USA", even though the Berlin Wall fell a year after the book was published and the Soviet Union dissolved a few years later. The United States emerged as the great victor in the Cold War.

In fact, Paul Kennedy's statements were much more nuanced than they were later portrayed. After a comprehensive account of how the Habsburgs initially had to cede their global power to France, he goes on to explain how England was able to assume global supremacy after the Napoleonic Wars. Paul Kennedy shows in detail the influence that wars, economic development and the Industrial Revolution had on these shifts in power. He sees the British Empire's greatest expansion of power around 1900, but also identifies the causes of its later decline: overstretching of military commitments compared to the country's actual economic strength.

Kennedy also applies this reasoning to his criticism of a possible relative decline of the United States. We are still in the Cold War, and the author also points to serious weaknesses in the Soviet Union: even if America's share of global power has declined relatively, the problems of the USSR are much greater than those of the United States. Above all, the United States is far superior to the Soviet Union economically and in areas of technology. Furthermore, American society is, in terms of its dynamism, much better able to adapt to new challenges than the authoritarian regime in Moscow.

While Paul Kennedy notes that the US remains in a class of its own economically and militarily, he also points out that, in the long term, the extent to which military capabilities are in line with global commitments will be decisive. This is particularly important because the economic balance of power in the world is constantly shifting. Kennedy shows how Spain and later the British Empire took on more and more strategic commitments over time, which then became almost impossible to manage.

manageable. This led to an "imperial overstretch": the totality of commitments and obligations could hardly be fulfilled and defended at the same time.

Furthermore, in the past, the leading powers were often not concerned with the security of their own countries, but with commitments made somewhere else in the world, even if the engagement at the time made perfect sense. Paul Kennedy compares the naval bases that Great Britain had around the world at the height of its power with the 800 military bases that the USA maintains today on all continents. While military engagement has steadily increased over the years, America's share of the global economy has declined significantly: from 60% after the Second World War to 24% in 1990.

This can create a gap between political interests and the ability to enforce them militarily. This can easily lead to another problem: high budget deficits and high national debt. In this context, Kennedy points out that the US budget deficit alone rose from \$59.6 billion to \$202.8 billion between 1980 and 1985, while national debt rose from \$914.3 billion to \$1,823 billion over the same period. (In 2022, the US budget deficit was \$1.4 trillion; the national debt had risen to \$30.899 trillion). Paul Kennedy compared the developments of the 1980s with those of France in the 1780s, which, as is well known, led to the French Revolution.

The author also emphasises the positive development of the American economy: the establishment of thousands of companies every year; high investment and enormous expenditure on research and development. Nevertheless, the question arose as to whether all this was sufficient to cover the global commitments that the US had entered into since 1945. The decline in industrial production, caused in part by globalisation, was particularly worrying. In any case, the American economy was in much better shape after 1945, when many commitments were made, than it was four decades later.

Another of Kennedy's core theses was that the competitiveness of an economy can be weakened in particular by an arms race, which carries the risk of too much money being spent on unproductive weapons systems. This is why no world power in the past has been able to maintain its leading position forever. And the same could happen to the United States. However, due to its strength, the US will not suffer the fate of the Netherlands or Spain, which have largely disappeared from history, or break apart like Austria-Hungary, but will remain a decisive power factor in a multipolar world. The loss of power by the US is therefore only relative, and it will depend on Washington's skill in integrating the country into the new world order and correctly recognising its opportunities and limitations.

Paul Kennedy wrote these sentences a little over a generation ago. While they may have sounded too pessimistic to some at the time, they are very apt when applied to today's international relations.

2. Francis Fukuyama – a great optimist

Francis Fukuyama took a decidedly optimistic view of the future, speaking of the "end of history" because liberal ideas of democracy and market economy had finally prevailed everywhere. Like another important student of Hegel, Karl Marx, Francis Fukuyama believed that history unfolds almost like a law of nature in certain periods: However, while Karl Marx believed that the final stage, after the socialisation of the means of production, would be a communist social order, Fukuyama was convinced that, after the West's victory in the Cold War, liberalism would prevail: in the political sphere as democracy, in the economic sphere as capitalism.

Hegel had already spoken of the end of history when he believed that Napoleon's victory over Prussia in the Battle of Jena (1806) would now realise the ideas of the French Revolution. The Russian-French philosopher Alexandre Kojève (1902-1968) then made a decisive contribution to the rediscovery of Hegel. Like Hegel, he sees the end of history in Europe after the ideas of freedom and equality, on which modern states could be built, had prevailed. Fukuyama also adopted Kojève's theory that self-confidence and the need for recognition are important for every human being. Fukuyama now says that it is these character traits that underlie man's pursuit of liberalism and freedom in politics and economics. These are the essential driving forces behind the course of history.

Fukuyama was then able to point out that after the collapse of communism in Europe, former communist states became democracies, i.e. countries in which the population was given the right to elect their own government. At the same time, driven by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, economic liberalisation took hold worldwide. Fukuyama largely believed in the parallel development of liberal democracy and liberalism in the economy. The philosophical question here is whether this development can be seen as "universal history," ultimately culminating in a "realm of freedom" at the peak and end of history.

These theories, put forward by Francis Fukuyama, were enthusiastically embraced by the neoconservatives who had established themselves as the dominant force in foreign policy in Washington. They saw them as confirmation of "American exceptionalism", i.e. the belief that the United States is a chosen nation, destined to lead the world. This belief was already deeply rooted in the thinking of the American founding fathers and goes back to Puritan Calvinist thinking. Oliver Cromwell had already spoken in 1656 of an "axis of evil" against which England must fight in the name of God. The good thing about this was that God's will and English interests were one and the same.

If, as Francis Fukuyama pointed out, the course of world history leads to greater freedom and democracy as a law of nature, then wars that support this development can only be just wars. From this, one could even derive a mandate for the United States to carry out "humanitarian interventions" all over the world;

"democracy building" and "nation building" could be established as specific foreign policy goals.

"Regime change" and "colour revolutions" could be justified as means to achieve these goals. Thus, the United States' own law could also be used as a weapon beyond its borders, and economic competitors had to bow to its laws when it came to enforcing American interests. In this sense, Bill Clinton's first Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, declared: "Blessed by God, the American nation has a duty to anchor the values of democracy throughout the world" ⁽⁴⁾. Victory in the Cold War reinforced the conviction that anchoring American values and interests throughout the world could only lead to greater peace and security.

This is linked to another thesis by Francis Fukuyama, namely that democracies do not wage war against each other. George W. Bush in particular invoked this to justify his wars ⁽⁵⁾. It is therefore worthwhile to fight for freedom and democracy throughout the world if this can become the basis for a peaceful world in the future. However, this raises at least two problems: even an armed conflict between a democracy and an authoritarian state is a war. And if wars are constantly being waged until the last country is democratic, there will be no long periods of peace in between.

The optimism expressed by Francis Fukuyama has inspired another project that the US has repeatedly pursued: the creation of an alliance of democracies.

President Joe Biden has taken up this idea again and made the "fight against autocrats" a priority of his foreign policy. The aim of this alliance is probably to support American hegemony in the world, and above all to legitimise the use of military force where the United Nations is not prepared to do so. Specifically, it is about isolating Russia and China and supporting US economic sanctions against these and other countries. When President Biden says that the aim is to contain China as a rising power "because its policies are aimed at replacing liberal democracies with authoritarian dictatorships around the world," the question arises as to whether this is actually true. After all, it is precisely these guiding principles that are used to arm against other countries. But is Beijing really training subversive forces that are planning "regime change" in other countries, or is China primarily interested in doing business?

This is a serious question, because introducing an ideological dimension into international relations also serves to justify armed conflict.

In any case, the thesis of the "end of history" had a tremendous influence on the shaping of American foreign policy. But how can the thesis of eternal peace be reconciled today with the wars in Ukraine, the Middle East and the tensions in the Far East? In fact, even after the West's victory in the Cold War, the power-political aspirations of the major powers continue to exert a strong influence on their foreign policy. And when Fukuyama argues that self-confidence is a driving force for human action, this probably applies not only to individuals but also to nations. If a market economy leads to greater prosperity, this can certainly mean more freedom of choice for individual

citizens, but also greater self-confidence, which leads to stronger nationalism.

Furthermore, in the chapter "Empires of Resentment, Empires of Deference", Francis Fukuyama also explains how people from other cultures and with different ways of life could resist and defend themselves against adopting the Western model of democracy and capitalism. In particular, he describes the reaction of Islamic fundamentalism and the countries of Asia against Western-sponsored modernity.

As far as the Islamic world is concerned, it never adopted the Western model as thoroughly as Japan did during the Meiji Restoration. Even the Western ideologies adopted under Atatürk in Turkey and Nasser in Egypt were largely supported only by certain elites. With the Iranian Revolution of 1979, however, revolutionary fundamentalists prevailed, romanticising the past and propagating it as a model for the future. Fukuyama sees a similarity with fascism in Europe. In his view, the success of this movement can be explained by the fact that Islamic countries were humiliated in the past, but also failed to keep pace with modern developments.

As far as Asia is concerned, Fukuyama writes that societies there are quite capable of combining a market economy with a politically authoritarian tradition, with Japan and Singapore in particular in mind. The strong work ethic that exists there is the basis for their economies' ability to compete in the modern world. The recognition of authority, rooted in the teachings of Confucius, promotes a performance-oriented mindset in the economy, but not individual, personal engagement in politics. The result is systems such as the decades-long rule of a single party in Japan or Lee Kuan Yew's presidential system in Singapore.

Fukuyama was well aware of the problem of how far Western values can be universal values at the same time. In his

"Global Civilisation Initiative" in March 2023, when he demanded that "governments should not impose their values and institutions on other countries". But even *The Economist*, which is very much in favour of Western dominance in the world, expressed a similar opinion in a lengthy article on the subject of "Western values are steadily diverging from the rest of the world" ⁽⁶⁾. It argues that attitudes towards religion, authority, family, individuality, sexual minorities and democracy are shaped by the respective culture and can therefore vary greatly. In any case, Francis Fukuyama has become known in the public consciousness as the "herald of a better world," while he himself saw the situation in a much more nuanced way. Nevertheless, his political influence is largely based on the fact that official American foreign policy found justification for its actions in his theories.

3. Samuel Huntington and the wars of the future

In contrast to his student Fukuyama, Samuel P. Huntington believed that the future of international relations would be marked by a "clash of civilisations" that would form the

basis for a new world order. Since the Peace of Westphalia, according to Huntington, emperors and kings have faced each other in wars. The French Revolution, in which the French king was beheaded, made nations sovereign and led them to fight each other in bitter wars. In the 20th century, these wars also gained an ideological basis.

Now, he writes in the chapter "The Cultural Reconfiguration of Global Politics," driven by modernisation, cultural differences will determine the global politics of the future. People and countries with similar cultures will come together. People and countries with different cultures will drift apart.

While during the Cold War, ideologies and associated relationships with a superpower determined a country's foreign policy orientation, in the future, culture and civilisation will be decisive. Political boundaries will increasingly coincide with cultural boundaries: ethnicity, religion and civilisation will be decisive. Cultural communities will replace the bloc system of the Cold War. Therefore, the fault lines between civilisations will be the decisive dividing lines between conflicts in the future. For example, belonging to Islam will determine a country's identity more strongly than Western institutions, which a state has often only superficially adopted.

Whereas "international relations" or "international order" in our history have almost exclusively been about the relations between Western states, in the future we will live in a multipolar world in which other civilisations will also be decisive. Modernisation does not have to be synonymous with Westernisation. There will be no universal, uniform culture, nor will all non-Western societies adopt the Western model.

The balance of power between civilisations will change, and the influence of the West will decline in relative terms. On the other hand, the civilisations of Asia will increase their economic, military and political strength. In Islamic countries, population growth will explode, which could destabilise both their own states and neighbouring countries. In the process, non-Western civilisations may focus more strongly on their own values.

The new world order will be shaped by the affiliation of individual countries to a particular civilisation. Societies will cooperate more closely on the basis of their shared cultural affiliation. Efforts to anchor societies in a civilisation other than their traditional one will have little success. This is because states will group themselves around the leading nation in their respective civilisations.

In any case, Huntington predicts that the West will increasingly come into conflict with other civilisations, such as the Chinese or Islamic civilisations, if it wants to remain the sole dominant force worldwide. Regional wars may break out at the fault lines between civilisations, with one civilisation establishing a kind of "kinship bond" among those who profess allegiance to it. This bond then extends

national borders, for example when a country acts as a protective power for "its citizens" abroad.

In doing so, the West must acknowledge that its culture is not universally adopted by all other civilisations. For the West's belief in the universal validity of its culture is false, immoral and dangerous. There is cultural diversity in the world, and to believe that "Anglo-Saxon values" must prevail globally is simply wrong. The belief that non-Western peoples must adopt Western values and institutions is immoral because it can only be the result of Western imperialism. This contradicts the right to self-determination and is therefore profoundly undemocratic, Huntington explains.

To what extent do the analyses of the three authors apply to today's international events, for example Paul Kennedy's theory that "global overstretch" and large debts lead to the decline of a great power? In the 16 May 2024 edition of the New York Times alone, the following article can be read: "The U.S. is building a military arc in the Pacific". According to this article, the United States is expanding its armed forces in Japan, the Philippines and Australia. Under the headline "To aid Ukraine, West eyes Russian assets", the article explains how there are plans to use Russian assets to provide greater support to Ukraine. If we add to this the American involvement in the Middle East and Africa, this could be what Paul Kennedy meant by "military overstretch", i.e. "overstretching of its own military capabilities". In any case, Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell has stated: "We have expanded our overseas alliances in ways that would have been unimaginable a few years ago" ⁽⁷⁾.

At the same time, friendly media outlets are reporting that the US finances are "a disaster" ⁽⁸⁾. The national debt has risen to 96% of GDP (2023), compared to 46% in 1992. And the budget deficit in recent years has amounted to 9% of GDP. Even the International Monetary Fund has warned that "US debt could jeopardise the stability of currencies worldwide". So has Paul Kennedy misjudged the situation again? Only the future will tell.

Now, the "golden age" that Francis Fukuyama believed in has not dawned either. He was largely right in that the whole world has committed itself to one form of capitalism or another. But the introduction of a market economy does not necessarily mean that democratic institutions will be established. On the contrary, the introduction of capitalist structural elements into their economic systems has also strengthened autocrats. This has led to new political and economic challenges for the United States in a multipolar world.

Nevertheless, there are still very strong forces within the US foreign policy elite who want to maintain their country's absolute leadership role in the world. In his recent article "The self-doubting Superpower" ⁽⁹⁾, Fareed Zakaria argued that it was the US that established a new international order in 1945, bringing peace and prosperity to many parts of the world. He added that the US continues to occupy a leading position in the world in key areas, citing the following examples:

citing the following examples: American per capita income is 54% higher than that of Japan and 32% higher than that of Western Europeans. The American economy is almost twice as strong as that of the euro zone. Nine of the ten largest corporations in the world are American. Fareed Zakaria's conclusion is that the US should continue to maintain its leading role in the world and in the international order.

But as undisputed as America's claim to leadership was after the Second World War, the world is no longer the same as it was in 1945. At that time, India was still part of the British Empire and Africa was still divided between the colonial powers. It is not a question of the US relinquishing its claim to leadership in a multipolar world, but rather of adapting the new system to the shifts in power politics. It should be in everyone's interest that this adaptation is achieved not through war, but at the negotiating table.

As for Samuel Huntington's theories on the "clash of civilisations", entire libraries have been written about how far they are true or not. It is fair to say that he may have argued too rigorously in his claim to absoluteness when he said that global power claims would be obsolete in a future world. According to this view, the new world order would only be determined by one dominant factor within or between civilisations.

This argument underestimates traditional power-political aspirations. These continue to be decisive forces in the politics of the major powers.

Huntington correctly predicted that we are entering a multipolar world order, i.e. a world with multiple centres of power. It is also very true that "international relations" today encompass the whole world and not just the West. When Western politicians meet today and refer to themselves as the "international community", they represent just 10% of the world's population. The "Global South", however heterogeneous its composition may be, has repeatedly demonstrated its political relevance. Without the support of these countries, it would have been virtually impossible for Russia to survive the extremely rigorous Western sanctions.

Both in the war in Ukraine and in the Middle East, a picture is emerging that is reminiscent of a "West against the Rest" constellation. Especially now that the West is demonstratively trying to compensate for its dwindling power with moral superiority, this argument is also meeting with resistance from others. Too often in the past, Western powers have claimed moral high ground when it came to power politics, and they continue to do so today. No wonder some in the Global South point to double standards. In this sense, Samuel Huntington is well worth reading, as are the two other authors who have attempted to envision a new world.

NOTES

- (1) Paul Kennedy; The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000; Lexington Books 1988
- (2) Francis Fukuyama; The End of History and the Last Man; Penguin Books 1992
- (3) Samuel P. Huntington; The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order; Simon & Schuster 1997
- (4) Alexandre Del Valle & Jacques Soppelsa; Vers un choc global?; Paris 2023
- (5) Stephanie Lawson; International Relations; Cambridge 2003
- (6) The Economist, 3 August 2023
- (7) The New York Times 16 May 2024
- (8) The Economist 4 May 2024 "America's fiscal outlook is disastrous"
- (9) Fareed Zakaria; Foreign Affairs January/February 2023

III. WORLD POWERS THROUGH HISTORY – WILL CHINA BECOME THE NEW LEADING POWER?

1. The system of states at the beginning of the modern era

Since the beginning of the modern era, the world powers that have determined the international order have repeatedly replaced one another. All issues that are regulated domestically by a constitution are determined internationally within the framework of a world order; that is, who has which powers, how power is divided, what rules there are, and who determines these rules. It is obvious that the major powers set the goals. It is also interesting to note that fundamental decisions were usually not made in accordance with international law, but rather that power politics were decisive in determining what was considered international law.

Wars have repeatedly played a decisive role in determining the position of states, including their respective positions as world powers. Foreign policy was power politics. Power was primarily military power. This, in turn, was related to a country's population, economic strength, resources and state of technology. In this sense, Wolfgang Windelband wrote that the independence of states and the struggle between them was the basis on which the European state system was created ⁽¹⁾.

From the very beginning, it is possible to trace who created and continues to create international law and for whom. If every law is, to a certain extent, a balance of interests, then international law is, to a very decisive extent, an expression of power relations, from the emergence of "state sovereignty" to the decisions of the United Nations Security Council. Time and again, powerful states have established new rules for themselves. In this sense, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, also declared before the organisation's last General Assembly: "The international financial system was created by the rich for their own interests"⁽²⁾. Institutions of international law

usually only prevailed once the realities of realpolitik had already been established.

In the Middle Ages, European Christianity believed in universal monarchy. The emperor and the pope were God's representatives on earth and, as such, had to be recognised by princes and subjects. In this sense, Charles V (died 1558) still saw himself as a universal ruler. He did indeed create an empire "on which the sun never set", but his rule was challenged in numerous wars, particularly by the French king Francis I.

Jean Bodin (died 1596) took this development as the basis for his doctrine of "sovereignty of states". According to this doctrine, every ruler could exercise supreme power within his borders. Furthermore, all states are equal and no longer subject to any higher authority. This was a very significant difference from the Middle Ages, when only the emperor and the pope represented the highest authority.

This development was also enshrined in law in the Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648. Within the Holy Roman Empire, a myriad of sovereign principalities were created, which could form alliances and wage war on their own initiative. War was thus, in the words of Carl von Clausewitz, "the continuation of politics by other means".

Other characteristics of international relations, such as realpolitik and *raison d'état*, also came to the fore during the Thirty Years' War. Although this war was, to a large extent, a struggle between Protestants and Catholics led by the Habsburg emperor, France, ruled by the Catholic Cardinal Richelieu, fought on the side of the Protestants. In the spirit of *raison d'état*, it was national interests that determined foreign policy, not faith. And when it came to the interests of the state, different laws applied: killing became a heroic deed and destruction an essential part of victory. In the realm of realpolitik, values are reversed: behaviours that are strongly condemned in the private sphere are honoured when they serve the power of the state. Even though these behaviours already appeared in the heroic epics of antiquity, the emerging international law codified them at the beginning of the modern era.

Another principle of international law that emerged at that time is also based on power politics: the right of "free navigation", which Hugo Grotius enshrined in his book "*Mare Liberum*" in 1609. According to this principle, the sea was an international territory open to every nation. The English and Dutch were now to have free access to trade on the oceans, not just the Spanish and Portuguese, between whom the Pope had previously divided the world in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494).

2. Seven major wars create a new world order

Over the last 300 years, there have been seven decisive wars, some of which were fought as world wars on three or more continents: the War of the Spanish Succession; the Great Northern War; the Seven Years' War; the Napoleonic Wars; the First World War; the Second World War; and the Cold War.

There were various reasons for these wars: when a state's claim to power could no longer be enforced through diplomatic channels; when a ruler attempted to assume supremacy in the region or over the entire community of states; when revisionist forces rose up against the existing balance of power. The wars were followed by peace conferences. A new international order established a new balance of power between states. Soldiers and diplomats replaced each other in shaping the balance of power.

As long as realpolitik and the concept of balance characterised the wars and the subsequent conferences, a compromise was sought between the parties, between the victors and the vanquished. Wars were also the "game of kings". The French Revolution replaced the king with the people as sovereign. This gave the wars, now driven by nationalism, an ideological dimension. Now, every warring nation made every effort to destroy its opponent. It became much more difficult to find a balance after a war. With a mortal enemy, the embodiment of absolute evil, compromise was no longer possible.

The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) was a model of a war to maintain the balance of power in Europe. While this balance was being established on the continent, England was expanding into a maritime power and a world power.

What was it all about? With the death of Charles II in 1700, the Spanish line of the Habsburgs died out. The Emperor in Vienna, Leopold I, now wanted his son Charles to inherit the Spanish throne, while his son Joseph was to take over the Austrian throne. Louis XIV advocated for his grandson Philip of Anjou as the new Spanish king.

England and Holland initially supported the Habsburgs against France, with the English Parliament expressly approving funds for the war "to maintain the European balance of power". The aim was to prevent France from further expanding its supremacy on the continent.

But then the following happened: Leopold I died in 1705, and as planned, his son Joseph I inherited his Austrian inheritance. However, when Joseph died in 1711, a completely new situation arose. Now Spain and the Austrian hereditary lands would have been in the hands of Charles. This new situation was unacceptable to England, which now changed sides and supported France. With the Peace of Utrecht (1713), the French candidate Philip V became King of Spain; however, Spain was no longer a great power and had to cede its supremacy on the oceans to England. A characteristic feature of English foreign policy became clear: the fight was always for values and ideals. After the Battle of Höchstätt (1704), the victorious English commander, John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, declared, "We did it for the Liberty of Europe". After the war, however, the English also gained a monopoly on the transatlantic slave trade.

The Great Northern War (1700-1721) saw Sweden replaced by Russia as the major power in Eastern Europe and the Baltic region. The war was also a personal conflict between the Swedish King Charles XII and Tsar Peter I. After initial Russian losses, the Tsar was victorious in 1709 in the decisive battle of

Poltava in 1709. The ambiguous position that Ukraine took in this conflict was still evident in the 1990s. In front of the museum erected on the battlefield stood a larger-than-life statue of the Tsar who had won the battle. During the guided tour of the museum, however, Mazeppa, the leader of the Cossacks who had fought alongside the Swedes with his men, was portrayed as the hero. The extent to which this war shaped living conditions in Russia is evident from the fact that 82% of state revenue was spent on the war at that time. The reforms carried out by the Tsar were aimed primarily at increasing his country's military power.

In the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), Austria and France fought on one side against England and Prussia. The peace treaties of Hubertusburg and Paris led to decisive shifts in power in Central Europe and North America. Prussia gained Silesia and rose to become a great power, while France lost all its possessions in Canada. England owed its victory to the superiority of its fleet on the seas; Austria lost 303,000 men and 82,000 horses in this war. Both in North America and in Europe, the course was set for a new world order.

After the Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars, the Congress of Vienna (1814/15) brought about a new order in Europe. Initially, the French Revolution had led to unexpected victories. The new self-confidence of the citizens greatly strengthened national consciousness and led the French armies to unexpected victories. The "wars of kings" became wars between nations. Then Napoleon thoroughly shook the European balance of power. He succeeded in transforming the French army, which in 1789 consisted of only 180,000 men, into an army of over 1 million soldiers.

At the Congress of Vienna, under the leadership of Austrian statesman Clemens von Metternich, it was agreed to restore the European balance of power, which then lasted until the Crimean War in 1853, but ultimately until the First World War. In addition, Metternich succeeded in establishing Austria as the leading power in both the German Confederation and Italy. What he did not succeed in doing was to bring the world to a standstill with the help of the "Holy Alliance". Democratic movements were to be crushed wherever they arose. The revolutions of 1848/49 demonstrated that these efforts had failed.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, most of those involved, stuck in old ways of thinking, believed that the war would solve the problems at hand. The Entente powers mobilised mass armies with 40.7 million soldiers, the Central Powers with 25.1 million soldiers. On both sides, warfare, shaped by the nationalistic spirit of the times, was aimed at the destruction of the enemy.

In 1916, American President Woodrow Wilson campaigned on the slogan that he wanted to keep the United States out of the war in Europe. However, when German victories threatened the repayment of war loans granted to England, the United States entered the war on the side of the Allies in 1917. Officially, however, this was not because of the loans at risk, but "to end all wars" and "to make the

world safe for democracy." The British and Americans always fight for values, for good against evil.

The First World War shook the existing world order: Europe was greatly weakened; the centre of Europe was destroyed. In contrast to the Congress of Vienna, the losers were no longer involved in the peace negotiations. The evil ones were to be punished and not sit at the negotiating table. This meant that the system of collective security established within the framework of the League of Nations could not function. This would have required everyone to participate and bear appropriate responsibility. John Maynard Keynes already asked the critical question at the time of how successful conferences could be in the media age when the main focus was on propaganda, short-term interests and the next elections.

The current world order dates back in its essential features to the end of the Second World War, when the Allies, led by the United States, were able to set new goals. In a very inspiring atmosphere at Dumbarton Oaks, an elegant country estate in the upmarket Georgetown neighbourhood of Washington, D.C., they considered how world peace could be secured in the future. Following the experience of the New Deal, which showed how an economic crisis could be overcome, the United Nations was created not only as an organisation to secure peace, but also, with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, as institutions to serve economic development. In addition, the GATT was intended to regulate international trade relations. In 1948, following the moral shock of the atrocities of the Second World War, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

At that time, the United States of America accounted for 60% of global economic output, and the dollar became the world's reserve currency. For us in the West, this system brought prosperity and enabled reconstruction; the USA had the advantage of being able to print the money it needed. However, it soon became apparent that the ideals enshrined in the United Nations Charter could not be implemented in this form. The Cold War broke out, dividing Europe into East and West; NATO was founded in 1949.

3. The new world order after the Cold War

The USA won the Cold War outright: in 1989, the Berlin Wall fell; in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed; the West's victory was absolute. Frances Fukuyama spoke of the end of history because Western values of democracy and market economy had prevailed everywhere. In this sense, President Bush (senior) proclaimed a "new world order" in which the USA laid down the rules and determined the laws of action. This was not only about shaping international relations, but also about how the internal affairs of states should be organised. With various initiatives regarding "regime change" and "nation building", a country's internal affairs could now also lead to military intervention.

Then two opposing developments occurred that continue to dominate today: globalisation gave rise to new centres of power. Countries that had previously played only a subordinate role became stronger. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the BRICS countries, are examples of this development. At the same time, the neo-conservatives established themselves as the dominant force in American foreign policy. Their central demand was and is that the US must do everything in its power to maintain its sole leadership in the world, including by military means.

But why should the newly emerging states adhere to a world order that, as the composition of the Security Council shows, was formed at a time when India was still a British colony and the whole of North Africa was occupied by France? At that time, China accounted for just 2% of global economic output; today, it accounts for 20%. And at the end of 2022, the economic output of the BRICS countries, at 32.7% of global production, was already higher than that of the G7, the seven largest Western industrialised countries. And while New York, London and Paris were the world's largest cities after the Second World War, today no American or European city appears among the world's 10 largest cities with over a million inhabitants.

4. Will China become the new leading power?

In its 12 May 2023 issue, The Economist asks whether China has already reached the peak of its development and at the same time revises predictions made in previous years that the "Middle Kingdom" would overtake the US, especially economically, in the coming years. Whatever one's opinion of this new assessment of China, the fact is that the country has experienced an impressive upswing over the last four decades. Even though the US and Europe have also grown strongly economically over the same period, they have fallen behind China in relative terms. This dramatic rise is based on economic development, but it also has an impact on military strength and progress in research and development.

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping began to modernise the country, with Western models very much in mind. He proclaimed the renewal of China in five areas: industry and agriculture; science and technology; and the strengthening of national defence. Deng proclaimed openness to the outside world, instead of the self-sufficiency practised under Mao. In memory of the humiliations the country had suffered at the hands of the West in earlier times, it was to enter into a relationship with other major powers on an equal footing. These reforms have led to the emergence of a middle class and a civil society in China, without the country adopting the democratic institutions that some in the West had believed it would. Overall, it can be said that China has become more self-confident and nationalistic.

It is significant that Beijing now has a distinctly power-conscious president in Xi Jinping, who is also General Secretary of the Communist Party and Chairman of the Central Military Commission. His awareness of power is also reflected in the fact that the previous rule that a president could only be re-elected once has been abolished. At the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party, Xi declared that China should become the leading power in the world by 2049.

China's economic rise can be easily demonstrated with figures: just 20 years ago, its share of global production was only 3.6%; today it is 20%. The development of exports has been correspondingly dramatic. In 2000, they amounted to \$253 billion, in 2021 already \$3,553 billion, and in 2024 \$3,960 billion. The trade deficit between the United States and China reached a record \$419 billion in 2018 and then fell to \$296 billion by 2024. This year, Chinese exports accounted for 20.7% of its gross domestic product. This made China the most important trading partner for 128 countries around the world. In 2000, the Chinese National Bank's dollar reserves amounted to only \$200 billion, compared to \$3.2 trillion in 2024. China has replaced Germany and the United States as the world's leading exporter and also became the European Union's most important trading partner in 2021.

The effects of economic development within China were also dramatic. Hundreds of millions of people were lifted out of poverty; in 2000, the average annual income of a Chinese person working for an international corporation was 3% of that of an American in a comparable job; in 2019, it was 16%. Today, there are 473 billionaires living in China, which represents one-fifth of this income group worldwide. Their combined wealth is equivalent to the GDP of South Korea.

Chinese companies are already market leaders in key areas such as e-commerce, solar energy and electric cars, and are very strong in robotics and artificial intelligence. China's new economic strength is reflected in the gigantic "New Silk Road" project, the "One Belt, One Road Initiative".

Through huge investments in infrastructure, railways and roads, and the expansion of ports, China aims to connect itself to large parts of the world via sea routes and roads. This also involves stronger economic cooperation with more than 100 countries, the removal of customs barriers and the coordination of economic policy. Some even see this project as an attempt by Beijing to build its own global empire. Even if such a gigantic project is bound to encounter setbacks, for example when participating countries are unable to pay their debts, it is still likely that the momentum generated by the "New Silk Road" will open up a new dimension of international economic relations for China.

As far as the country's military strength is concerned, China has been arming itself heavily in recent years. Although military spending of \$300 billion in 2025 is still well below the \$900 billion of the American military budget, it demonstrates a willingness to take on military challenges. And there are quite a few of those. The fact that the mainland and Taiwan form a single state is not a communist invention. After his defeat in the civil war, Chiang Kai-shek fled to the island and insisted that the entire country continue to be represented in the parliament in Taipei. The seat at the United Nations was also linked to the claim that Taiwan represented the whole of China.

China has been a nuclear power since 1964. In January 2014, the People's Liberation Army tested its first supersonic missiles, and in recent years it has also built aircraft carriers

. Beijing is participating in the arms race in space and launched more rockets into space in 2021 than the US.

Since Washington recognised the government in Beijing in 1971, several developments have taken place: Taiwan has increasingly developed into a country with greater independence, more national consciousness and impressive economic strength. The US is promoting this development. At the same time, however, Chinese President Xi emphasises that he is striving for full reunification and that the full integration of Taiwan is a national priority. It is unclear how far US military support will go, but it is very clear that the dispute over Taiwan is a decisive event in the development of a new world order.

The dispute in the South China Sea is about the use of islands as military bases, but above all about sovereignty over the sea surrounding the islands. An arbitration ruling handed down several years ago went against Beijing on the grounds that the disputed Spratly Islands are not islands at all. This raises the question of when a strip of land can be called an island. An international law expert explained that this question can be answered quite simply: "My rock in the water is an island, yours is just a pile of stones." Legal disputes in the region and the associated tensions are therefore likely to continue in the future.

Since President Barack Obama announced his "pivot to Asia" policy, political and military interest in the entire Indo-Pacific region has increased enormously. While military spending in Asia and the Pacific accounted for just 17.5% of global military spending in 2000, it had risen to 27.7% by 2021, excluding North Korea. For its part, the US has responded with military alliances with the Quad countries and within the framework of AUKUS. In any case, the reorganisation of the world will also take place to a very decisive extent in the Indo-Pacific region.

The intensity of the technology war was recently highlighted in the New York Times under the headline "The tech cold war is upending wireless carriers" ⁽³⁾. The article reported that a "rip and replace" programme had been decided upon in the US, whereby the

Federal Communication Commission has been tasked with ensuring that mobile phone providers in the telecommunications sector everywhere remove Chinese products and replace them with others. However, the \$1.9 billion allocated for this purpose is far from sufficient, which is causing considerable delays in the operation. It is perhaps a coincidence that on the same page, under the headline "In China, another consulting firm raided", it is reported that the Chinese government is making it difficult for foreign companies to store data. This is, of course, also for security reasons.

Overall, it can be said that the US remains the world's strongest political, military and economic power. Without America, the world's problems cannot be decided and cannot be solved. But on the other hand, in our multipolar world, the US is no longer in a position to solve all problems on its own. Nevertheless, one

, the impression is repeatedly given that it insists on this sole claim to leadership. This is also repeatedly expressed in the language used when referring to the "international community" where Americans and Europeans make decisions. In fact, however, the West now accounts for only 10% of the world's population. The crucial question now is how long other countries will continue to accept this dominance.

In any case, China has greatly expanded its influence worldwide, supported by its new economic strength. Beijing has the largest network of diplomatic missions and has taken on a leading role in both Africa and Latin America.

While trade with African countries amounted to only \$12 billion in 2000, it had risen to \$282 billion by 2023. This made China the largest trading partner for most countries on the continent. Since 2009, Beijing has built 6,000 km of roads and railways, 20 ports, 80 power stations, 130 hospitals and 45 stadiums in Africa. The big difference between Chinese and Western investors is that the Chinese do not interfere in internal affairs. While Europeans attach great importance to "good governance" and Americans, prior to Trump, also linked their development aid to socio-political ideas, China emphasises that it is only interested in the economic aspects of cooperation. Given China's strong dominance, it is obvious that concerns about neo-colonialism are also being expressed.

The strength of Chinese influence can also be seen in many ways in Latin America. One third of Brazilian exports go to China, which also accounts for one third of direct investment in Brazil.

Another important factor is that Beijing can exploit the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East to strengthen political cooperation with the "Global South". The West is accused of applying "double standards". Massive sanctions are being imposed on Russia, and Moscow is being criticised for actions that are tolerated and in many cases even supported when taken by Israel. The future will show what political impact the sanctions and punitive tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump on countries around the world will have. If the aim of these measures is to secure American hegemony worldwide, the result could well be quite different.

Initially, Sino-American relations developed very favourably for both sides after Beijing opened up: Chinese economic growth was able to build on the fact that Chinese goods were sold in huge quantities in the US; China, in turn, bought US Treasury bills, which in turn supported the dollar. George Bush (senior) wrote to Deng Xiaoping that he recognised the differences between the political systems. His successor, Bill Clinton, even spoke of a "constructive strategic partnership". Under Barack Obama's presidency, there were already reports of G2 rule, i.e. joint Chinese-American leadership in the world.

A change occurred when Obama began to talk about a "pivot to Asia". Some people got the impression that the American public was being prepared for a confrontation with China. In fact, China had already replaced terrorism as the greatest threat to the US during Trump's first presidency. Trump blamed Beijing for the fact that Chinese exports to the US were three times as large as American exports to China. He also blamed the "Middle Kingdom" for the deindustrialisation of his own country.

Donald Trump has the support of large sections of the American public in this dispute. In 2018, Senator Marco Rubio declared that the United States had never had such a powerful adversary in its entire history as China is today. And William Burns, as director of the CIA, agreed when he said that China wanted to establish a new international order in all areas. As with most wars, the outcome of the economic war that has now been ignited is uncertain.

In any case, the battle for the future has already begun, for example in the field of energy policy. The New York Times published a comparison showing how strongly China is focused on renewable energies, while Donald Trump continues to rely on oil, gas and coal. The US is the world's largest oil producer and also exports the largest quantities of natural gas.

In 2024, China produced more wind turbines and solar panels than the rest of the world combined. Chinese companies are building electric cars and battery factories in Brazil, Thailand, Morocco, Hungary and beyond. At the same time, President Trump has put considerable pressure on Japan and South Korea to sell American natural gas to Asia. And General Motors has abandoned a plan to build electric cars in Buffalo and will instead produce \$888 million worth of diesel engines.

In total, China has sold \$65 billion worth of ion batteries and \$40 billion worth of solar panels to other countries. In the same year, American oil exports amounted to \$117 billion and natural gas exports to \$42 billion ⁽⁴⁾.

China is therefore focusing on electricity from solar and wind power, partly because air pollution in the country has become unbearable, but also because it does not want to be dependent on other countries for its energy supply. At the same time, China still burns more coal than the rest of the world and pollutes the air more than America and Europe combined. This is another reason why the speed with which new energy sources are being developed is understandable. For the Trump administration, too, energy policy has a strong security dimension. Another factor is the desire to clearly differentiate itself from the policies pursued under President Biden. Given that 80% of the world's energy supply still relies on fossil fuels and that this figure will still be 60% in 2050, it is safe to assume that competition in this area will continue for some time to come.

For Europe, the question arises as to what extent our countries should participate in the US war against China. Now that America has been able to achieve long-sought goals through the war in Ukraine, such as stopping energy imports from Russia to Europe, voices are already being raised to apply the same approach to China. Taiwan is being armed, military bases around China are being strengthened, and

at the same time, Europeans are being urged to reduce economic ties with China "for security reasons". Professor Stephen Kotkin of Princeton University is one of the spokesmen for this policy, which is gaining increasing support in the US.

In fact, in the past, the transition from one world order to another has always been marked by wars and conflicts. The crucial question, therefore, is whether we are now facing another major war.

NOTES

- (1) Wolfgang Windelband; The Foreign Policy of the Great Powers in Modern Times (1494-1919) Berlin 1925
- (2) Le Monde diplomatique; Who makes international law?; May 2023
- (3) The New York Times; 11 May 2023
- (4) The New York Times; 10 July 2025

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION AND CULTURE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Religion and culture have always played an essential role in international relations and have also had a decisive influence on them throughout entire eras. From the Crusades to the religious wars, religion was a driving force behind the conflicts.

From the Persian Wars in ancient times to the Habsburgs' struggle against the Turks, wars have determined which cultural sphere individual peoples belong to.

Religion and culture also shaped thinking during the Cold War. Today we know that the "Documenta" was deliberately located in Kassel, near the GDR border, so that the freedom of art documented here would radiate to the East. In the 1950s, US Secretary of State John Forster Dulles emphasised the importance of the Christian faith in the fight against the Soviet Union. Until the end of the Cold War, the fight against communism was repeatedly portrayed as a "crusade against evil". This article aims to show how globalisation has given religion and culture a new dimension.

In September 2024, Pope Francis travelled to four countries in Southeast Asia. The aim of the trip was to motivate the Catholic community to promote understanding between religions and peace in the world. The Pope visited a "tunnel of brotherhood" in Jakarta's largest mosque and called on Muslims and Christians worldwide to work together for peace and dialogue. In fact, representatives of different religions have repeatedly worked together, such as at a conference on climate protection held at the Vatican in October 2021 under the motto "Faith and Science".

1. Radicalisation in Islam

On the other hand, it has been noticeable in recent decades that many people have come to regard globalisation as a threat driven by the West and have therefore turned more strongly to their own culture and traditions, and thus also to religion. As a result, we have seen the influence of religion grow in the politics and society of various countries around the world, both in terms of domestic policy and relations with other countries.

A decisive role in this has probably been played by the fact that fundamentalist forces have gained the upper hand in various strands of Islam: in 1979, the corrupt and authoritarian regime of the Shah, which was supported by the West, was overthrown in Iran. Under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran became an "Islamic Republic". This revolution had a strong impact throughout the Middle East and beyond. In the same year, the religious fanatic Dschuhaiman al-Utaibi carried out the attack on the Grand Mosque in Mecca. This revolt was brutally suppressed, killing several hundred people. In 1981, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was shot dead by Muslim Brotherhood members during a military parade.

After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the Shiite militia Hezbollah gained strength and waged a jihad against Israel and the West. In 1983, a US Marine barracks was bombed, a TWA aircraft was hijacked and Western hostages were taken in Beirut. The religiously based conflict reached a new peak in the controversy over Salman Rushdie's book "The Satanic Verses". A bounty was placed on Rushdie's head and Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa sentencing him to death. After the FIS (Front Islamique du Salut) party won the general elections in Algeria in 1991, the army intervened and a bloody civil war ensued. Attacks in Egypt were directed not only against the regime of Hosni Mubarak, but also against foreign tourists.

With the Intifada of 1987, the confrontation with Israel reached a new peak when Hamas and Islamic Jihad intervened in the fighting. In Afghanistan, Islamic fighters against the Soviet Union were supported by the USA. After the Taliban's victory, the entire country had to follow the strict rules of Islamic law. In Bosnia, too, militant Muslims fought against Serbs, and NATO bombings led to Kosovo's independence in 1999. Also in 1999, the invasion of militant Islamists in the Indian part of Kashmir led to a war between India and Pakistan. In Saudi Arabia, Egypt and North Africa, militant Islamists repeatedly attempted to destabilise the respective regimes, with Osama bin Laden's troops making repeated appearances. The efforts of Muslims from Nigeria to the Philippines to enforce Islamic law led to tensions with both Christians and governments that did not support this course.

This list could go on. Since the Hamas attacks on 7 October 2023, the wars in the Middle East have taken on a new dimension. In addition to religion, power politics and geopolitical factors undoubtedly also play a role. But

precisely because some believe they are fighting "in the name of God," the conflicts have reached a new level of radicalism.

2. How did this new radicalism come about?

The great poet Alexander Pushkin expressed the opinion that violence was urgently needed in order to become like the West. Similarly, there is a conviction that violence must be used in order not to become like the West. After decolonisation, the Western model of economic development was presented to the "developing countries" as the golden rule. Many experts believed that a uniform global standard could be achieved within a few decades of development. Little consideration was given to the fact that this progress could often be associated with painful changes, the abandonment of traditional customs, and even uprooting. In the course of urbanisation, masses of people moved from their rural homes to the big cities,

"where they ultimately directed their anger at the modernising West and its representatives in Muslim countries" ⁽¹⁾. As an example of this, Pankaj Mishra cites a young man from Cairo's lower middle class, Mohammed Atta. For him, the destruction of the skyscrapers in New York became a mission to demonstrate the power of Islam.

In any case, the models of development aid designed during the Cold War have not been nearly as successful as experts had hoped. In his novel "Westoxification," Iranian intellectual Jalal al-e Ahmad argues that imitating the West is detrimental to Islam and leads to a loss of Islamic culture. Religion was often the only way for the opposition in an authoritarian country to stand up against its own autocrats and against Western influences.

This was undoubtedly the case in Iran. In contrast to the modernisation propagated by the Shah, the lives of the people in the slums of Tehran were characterised by uprooting and poverty. From various United Nations reports on human development, we know that the quality of life in Islamic countries, especially Arab countries, is severely lacking in a wide range of areas. Max Weber, in turn, highlighted the connection between religion on the one hand and industrialisation and economic development on the other. In any case, Francis Fukuyama, who once proclaimed the end of history, asks whether there is something about Islam that makes Muslim society particularly resistant to modernity ⁽²⁾.

Since Montesquieu wrote his "Persian Letters", numerous thinkers have examined how the largely Islamic Orient differs from the Christian West, our society and our way of thinking. It is interesting to note that, especially in this age of globalisation, many people are striving to return to their roots (in Latin

"radix"). The wars that broke out in the Middle East with the founding of Israel in 1948 probably played a significant role in this. While politics on both sides was originally shaped by nationalist ideas, further radicalisation occurred as decision-makers on both sides increasingly invoked their religion to determine policy. Where everyone follows the "word of God", the use of violence is justified and compromises are difficult to achieve.

3. Religion as a political force

Samuel Huntington was right in his theory of the "clash of civilisations" insofar as the Cold War's dominant conflict between ideologies in different parts of the world has been replaced by a politics that mixes religion with nationalism and power politics. One does not have to go far back in history to identify religion as a driving force behind political struggles. In the 1960s, Catholic theologians supported the "liberation ideology" in South America. Guerrilla fighters in Colombia, Nicaragua and El Salvador invoked it.

Religion also played a role in various crises in Buddhist countries, such as Sri Lanka, in the civil war between Buddhists and separatist Tamil Hindus. In Burma, a military junta defends Buddhist nationalism against religious minorities, especially Muslims.

In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal is to catch up with the most powerful countries and achieve a special position for his country internationally. India's power and size should be recognised. In doing so, he relies on Hindu nationalism, which invokes past achievements and presents India today as the "teacher of the world". After centuries of servitude under Muslim and British rule, India has found a new self-confidence by drawing on its own traditions.

But why should India lag behind when other major powers emphasise their special role with religious zeal? In the United States, "American exceptionalism", the belief that Americans are a people chosen by God, dates back to the founding fathers. Moscow has repeatedly seen itself as the "Third Rome" in order to underpin its own claim to power. After Rome and Byzantium, it was therefore Moscow's turn to inherit a universal legacy. Thus, the ban on the Moscow-oriented Orthodox Church in Ukraine was entirely politically motivated. And when China refers to itself as the "Middle Kingdom," it is obviously because the country sees itself as the centre of the world. These ideas are either religiously based or initially convey a quasi-religious sense of mission.

So if religions play a decisive role in determining the identity of nations and thus emphasising the differences between states, one should also mention a completely different role they play: their humanitarian commitment.

Numerous Christian and Jewish organisations are active in charitable fields or attempt to mediate between disputing parties. Islamic aid organisations are actively working to improve the living conditions of believers, sometimes in conjunction with the implementation of political programmes ⁽³⁾. Representatives of different religions repeatedly take a united stand against war, violence or the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

But overall, it is fair to say that the state of the world, with wars and crises on every continent, does not correspond to what the various religions strive for as their ideal.

4. The political influence of evangelicals

Throughout the history of the Christian churches, there have been periods in which people have sought and found a special personal relationship with God. In this sense, evangelicals have also come to the fore in recent decades. This special encounter with Jesus, often seen as conversion, was then the basis for a special, messianic sense of mission. The Bible was interpreted literally, and religious zeal was directed both at converting others and at achieving socio-political and even international goals.

Some sources estimate that a quarter of all Christians worldwide, or half a billion people, are evangelicals ⁽⁴⁾. In fact, evangelicals can be found in various churches, including the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Latter-day Saints. The decisive factor is their commitment to their faith and the direction of politics. Here, too, there are a wide variety of movements. While some focus on private piety, others focus on political engagement. Since evangelicals are scattered across different continents, their influence often depends on the personalities who lead the local churches.

In this sense, Billy Graham, for example, found a strong response among millions of people as a "revivalist" in the United States and far beyond. In Washington, he advised several American presidents and was considered a moral authority. David Yonggi Cho founded a "megachurch" in South Korea, drawing inspiration from the ideas of the early Christians. David Oyedepo founded a "megachurch" in Nigeria decades ago, acquired Dominion Publishing House and has served as an advisor to various African presidents.

The political influence of evangelicals in the United States has been decisive time and again in recent decades. George W. Bush, for example, believed he had been called by God after overcoming his addiction to alcohol. When asked whether he had sought advice from his father, George Sr., before invading Iraq, his clear answer was: "I only ask my Father in Heaven for advice." The influence of Christian Zionists became very clear throughout Donald Trump's term in office. The relocation of the Israeli capital to Jerusalem, the termination of the nuclear agreement with Iran, the recognition of the settlement policy – all these decisions were in line with this thinking. International relations have certainly not been made any easier by leading politicians invoking the will of God in their decisions.

5. The religious nationalism of Narendra Modi

Today, India is the most populous country in the world with over 1.4 billion inhabitants. 80% of the population are Hindus, 13.4% are Muslims. Although the subcontinent was divided along religious lines when it gained independence in 1947, the 170 million Muslims in India still constitute the second largest Islamic community in the world after Indonesia. After bloody fighting that resulted in 10 million refugees and 1 million casualties, Muslims established an "Islamic Republic" in Pakistan. Since then, India has been considered the "most populous democracy in the world". Independence from Britain was

on the one hand by the Indian National Congress and on the other by the All-Indian Muslim League.

In a book published in 1923, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar coined the term "Hindutva", whereby his aim was to unite all Hindus under the same nationalist banner. Savarkar initially came into conflict with the law and was imprisoned for his radical theories, but his teachings gained more and more followers over the years. India should only be a home for devout Hindus, was the radical message of this religiously influenced nationalist. India was then ruled by the Congress Party during the first decades after independence, and in 1998 the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) won the elections for the first time. This party has included "Hindutva" in its official party programme.

Even in 2014, Prime Minister Modi continues to lead the Indian government on the basis of this religious nationalism. Muslims and Christians are oppressed, often with violence. There are paramilitary associations that have followers throughout the country. They fight for the protection of sacred cows, which also affects the Muslim community economically. The militias also act as a morality police, ensuring that everyone behaves in accordance with Hindu rules. Ultimately, the aim is to win back those whose ancestors, it is assumed, once had this faith.

In any case, Prime Minister Modi has fulfilled many of his supporters' wishes. He has built a Hindu temple in Ayodhya, where a mosque once stood. Regions with a Muslim majority have lost their autonomy. India can continue to count on the full support of the West, as the country is seen as a counterweight to China in the global power struggle.

6. Cultures in a global world

If people's attitudes towards the effects of globalisation are significantly influenced by their religion, the question arises as to how globalisation has affected different cultures. On the one hand, people have been brought closer together, with global stars finding followers in the most diverse corners of the earth; on the other hand, this has created new challenges for traditional customs and ways of life. This raised the question of what could be preserved in a culture and what was lost. In addition, some strive for a multicultural society, while others retreat to traditional values and reject multiculturalism. While Western culture dominated other continents for centuries, there are now counter-movements because other cultures have been strengthened by economic growth in their countries. Multiculturalism can mean that several cultures coexist in one region, but it can also mean that people from different cultural backgrounds live together in one place.

In Canada, for example, multiculturalism is an unofficial state ideology. The country is proud that people from over 100 nationalities live together in Toronto, for example.

Officially, everyone has the right to immigrate to Canada. The country's cultural diversity is also reflected in its political institutions. This diversity does indeed exist in Canada, but the question arises as to how far multiculturalism in

practice goes beyond a folkloric tradition. According to the laws in force, only those who meet the precisely defined requirements can immigrate, and it goes without saying that everyone must learn an official language, i.e. English or French, from the first day of their stay.

Far beyond Canada, numerous international organisations and countless NGOs have contributed to the enforcement of uniform standards worldwide. In 1992, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation have issued similar regulations for their respective areas.

The World Bank has also established provisions for the protection of minorities. Regional organisations, led by the Council of Europe, have also issued guidelines for the protection of ethnic groups, migrants, women and children. Although the extent to which these agreements have legal force is controversial, overall they have helped to hold governments accountable for their compliance with established standards. ⁽⁶⁾

The multicultural way of life has become established above all in the major cities, from New York to Moscow and from London to Berlin. However, the riots in the United Kingdom in the summer of 2024 showed that immigration can be an issue even in traditional democracies and that local incidents can trigger unrest throughout the country. However, given the very different demographic and economic developments around the world, it can be assumed that large-scale migration will continue. This will be accompanied by a spread of cultures across continents.

7. Regional cultures with a global reach

If some people believed that globalisation would lead to a single global culture, this idea has proven to be incorrect. It is true that a superstar like Taylor Swift can fill several stadiums during a concert in Vienna. But it is also true that regional and even national cultures have succeeded in finding followers on all continents thanks to global networking. Artists and musicians, actors and singers have suddenly found audiences in the most diverse parts of the world.

One example of this is K-pop, the South Korean form of pop music. But South Korean health novels have also taken the world by storm. These are books about burnout and how to overcome it. Due to the Covid epidemic, these novels have become bestsellers throughout the Anglo-Saxon world. Afrobeats, West African pop music, has also spread far beyond the continent to Europe. Romantic films produced in India have also found fans worldwide. Pop culture has become multipolar.

Cultural centres with a global reach have formed in various parts of the world. A study conducted by The Economist paints the following picture: in 2020, OECD countries imported only 25% of their films, radio and television programmes from the United States, compared to 40% in 2010. As for songs

streamed on Spotify between 2017 and 2021, a majority of 47% were still in English. But in countries with their own strong music industries, such as India, Indonesia and South Korea, the proportion of English-language songs fell from 52% to 31%. In Spain and South America, there was a decline from 25% to 14%. Local artists and musicians performing in Spanish have displaced others.

How was this possible? Countries were able to assert themselves economically on a global scale and became richer. Within this framework, more money was also spent on local culture for films and music. More artists became involved and gained more self-confidence. The internet has contributed to the emergence of completely new opportunities to reach new audiences through global networking. Global media companies such as Netflix and Spotify have played a decisive role in breaking down barriers.

8. Can Western values prevail worldwide?

In view of this development, whereby religion and culture can promote the independence of governments or nations in some parts of the world, the question arises as to whether it is possible to impose "Western values" worldwide. This raises another question: Can human rights, the new religion of the West, be spread everywhere in the form desired by the West, for example through "humanitarian interventions"? In Asia, for example, it has been repeatedly emphasised that the economic successes in Singapore, Malaysia and other countries are due to a performance-oriented mindset based on "Asian values".

It has also been shown time and again that attempts to implement Western ideas "from above" in other cultures have had only limited success. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk succeeded in modelling Turkey on the Western state after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. But now, almost 100 years later, we can see that a "religious revival" is also taking place in Turkey. Gamal Abdel Nasser wanted to build Egypt in the spirit of "Arab socialism" and persecuted the Muslim Brotherhood, even executing some of its members. However, after the "Arab Spring", this religious group won a majority in the parliamentary elections. The Americans' attempts to establish Western systems in Afghanistan and Iraq through "state-building" or "democracy-building" have also failed.

The Western view of democracy, separation of church and state, individualism and pluralism is clearly not fully shared by Chinese culture, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. Undoubtedly, there are also people in these cultures who profess the Western way of life. But, as the electoral successes of fundamentalists repeatedly show, this is often only a minority. The fundamental differences in understanding are too deep, for example with regard to this world and the hereafter, the role of men and women, of state and society, of authority and family. Behaviour patterns that have developed over centuries are very difficult to change.

The significance of religions in the world today and in the future also depends on demographic developments. These indicate that the proportion of Islam is growing.

In 2020, Christians made up 31 per cent of the world's population, Islam 25 per cent and Hinduism 15 per cent. By 2050, the balance of power will shift so that Christians will continue to represent the majority at 31.4%, but Muslims will already account for 29.7% and Hindus 15%, even though their numbers will rise from 1,161 million in 2020 to 1,384 million 30 years later. In 2050, there will be 854 million more Muslims in the world than today, representing an increase of 45%. The number of Christians will increase by 22% over the same period, which corresponds to the average growth of the world population ⁽⁹⁾.

As far as the formative power of religions is concerned, both migration and the very different degrees of religious freedom in individual countries play a role.

Millions of Muslims have moved to countries with a traditional Christian heritage. There, they are not only free to practise their religion, but can also largely shape their lives according to their own legal concepts of Sharia law. Conversely, however, practising their faith in an Islamic country can be life-threatening for Christians.

This is a development that began decades ago. Christian minorities in the Middle East have been decimated; Jews have been expelled from Arab countries; while at the same time, the Islamic population in the West has grown significantly. Overall, it can be said that Islam is gaining geopolitical influence due to demographic developments on the one hand, supplemented by migration movements on the other. Even if the proportion of Christians remains largely the same, it must be noted that the West is becoming increasingly secularised.

Under these circumstances, the question arises as to how far Western values are accepted by people from other cultures. This, in turn, depends on whether or not the West acts in accordance with the standards it has set for itself. If different standards are applied too often, or if different standards are applied at all depending on political expediency, then it should come as no surprise that

"Western values" lose their appeal. In any case, everyone should strive to convince others through their own actions, as Europe has done for the longest time with its peace project. It would be appropriate to return to this peace project.

NOTES

- (1) Pankaj Mishra; The Age of Anger: A History of the Present; Frankfurt am Main, 2024
- (2) Francis Fukuyama; The Beginning of History, Paris 2012
- (3) DIPLOMACY April-May 2024; Geopolitics of religions; The place of religion in international relations: a lasting return
- (4) Diplomacy No. 48; January/February 2011; The Soldiers of God Geopolitics of Evangelicals
- (5) Diplomacy No. 93; July/August 2018; Wars of Religion – Myth or Reality
- (6) Will Kymlicka; Multicultural Odysseys; Oxford 2007
- (7) The Economist; Capitals of Cool—How pop culture went multipolar; 8 October 2022
- (8) John Baylis & Steve Smith; The Globalisation of World Politics; Oxford 2001
- (9) DIPLOMACY April–May 2024; Geopolitics of religions

V. WHAT BECAME OF GLOBALISATION?

From cooperation to confrontation

The decisive result of globalisation, which began after the end of the Cold War, is arguably the new world order that has now emerged. Throughout history, there have been repeated developments that have brought the world closer together, from the great discoveries around 1500 to the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. But when Harvard professor Ted Levitt used the term "globalisation" in 1983, he was referring to the worldwide opening of financial markets and the rapid increase in international trade. A dramatic political change, the dissolution of the communist bloc, went hand in hand with tremendous technological innovations.

New technologies enabled entirely new forms of communication, transport costs fell dramatically and foreign direct investment reached new highs, from \$310 billion at the beginning of the 1990s to \$1,003 billion in 2023.

As a result of this globalisation, the world of 20th-century states initially showed a strong tendency towards a world state, only to then give nationalist tendencies a One could almost speak of a "dialectic of globalisation". Globalisation gave some states a tremendous economic boost, giving them new momentum and making them no longer willing to accept the existing international order created after 1945 in the usual way. This gave rise to new confrontations.

This was particularly because leading circles in the USA, such as the neoconservatives, wanted to consolidate and expand American world domination after victory in the Cold War. At the same time, however, China became an economic world power, which also had political ambitions. After the Second World War, when the current world order was created, the USA alone produced 60% of the world's economic output, while China produced only 1%. Today, both countries account for around 20% of global GDP. In 2000, the United States and its allies still accounted for around three quarters of global industrial production, while China accounted for only 6%. In the meantime, China has become the "workshop of the world" and will generate 45% of global industrial production in 2030, far more than the United States and its allies combined. Whether we like it or not, a new world economic order already exists.

Other developments have also had a decisive impact on the state of our world: in 1950, 28.5% of the world's population lived in Europe and North America, compared to only 9% in Africa. In a generation, a quarter of humanity will live in Africa, compared to just 10% in Europe and the United States.

However, there is also already a new political order in the world. While the United Nations, created in 1945, and the associated economic organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were still dominated exclusively by the West, it is no longer acceptable today that the world's most populous country, India, does not have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, nor does any African state. Over the last few decades, the US has tried, inspired by

"American exceptionalism", to extend its value system worldwide through "regime change", "democracy building" or "humanitarian interventions". In fact, however,

a situation has increasingly emerged that could be described as "the rest against the West". Without the support of the "Global South", Russia would hardly have been able to survive the sanctions imposed on it in recent years

. And when the West today refers to itself as the "international community," one must be aware of the fact that it represents just 10% of the world's population.

A new cultural order has also emerged in the world, strongly reminiscent of Samuel Huntington's theory of the

"Clash of Civilisations" by Samuel Huntington. When economic globalisation took hold with full force, some believed that the whole world would also adopt the Western value system, i.e. the ideas of individual rights, personal freedom and the role of women and the family in society that emerged after the Enlightenment. In fact, only experts influenced by Western culture participated in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

But as countries became economically stronger and politically more self-confident as a result of globalisation, they also rediscovered their own traditions and value systems. In China, there has been a renaissance of Confucianism; in India, Prime Minister Modi has established a movement that is strongly based on the Hindu religion. Islam has become a powerful political force, which has also come to bear in Western countries as a result of migration. In countries of the the "Global South", people are increasingly rediscovering their own history.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, a new era of international relations began. The Cold War ended, and in the context of a new globalisation, there was a massive intensification of worldwide contacts in the fields of economics and finance, technology and communication. A global information society emerged. Many hoped that humanity would master its destiny together in the future.

This new development was often associated with a great deal of optimism. Francis Fukuyama spoke of the "end of history," but he was not alone in believing that Western values of democracy and market economy had now finally prevailed. This new development was largely due to the policies of American President Ronald Reagan, who sought to privatise the economy and deregulate the economic framework. From Reagan's point of view, this should, of course, be done under American hegemony.

Other countries also benefited from this development. China's share of world trade was only 1.2% in 1985; by 2014, it had risen to 12.3%. In absolute terms, China's exports increased from \$18 billion in 1980 to \$2.2 trillion just 33 years later.

The optimism concerned economic development as much as political development. The prevailing opinion was that American consumers could raise their standard of living with cheap products from China. In China itself, this would enable millions of people to overcome poverty. In many areas, globalisation strengthened the trend

towards global standardisation in many areas. Technological development was expected to bring people around the world closer together. Globalisation brought new opportunities for many people ⁽¹⁾.

A generation later, it is clear that international relations are marked by wars and economic conflicts, by a struggle for global supremacy between China and the US, and that fundamental issues such as climate change and migration have perhaps not even begun to be resolved. How did this happen?

1. The change in attitude among Americans

Although there has always been criticism of globalisation, this became particularly apparent in the 2016 presidential election campaign and ultimately led to the election of Donald Trump in 2016. But even a candidate from the Democratic Party, Bernie Sanders, was extremely critical of the development of the global economy. According to Sanders, it is led by an elite that does not care about the fate of the people. The result: the 62 richest people on our planet own as much as the bottom half of humanity, i.e. 3.6 billion people combined. The richest one per cent owns as much as the remaining 99 per cent. "Some live in unimaginable wealth, while billions of people are exposed to poverty and unemployment and cannot afford housing, education or clean drinking water." ⁽²⁾

While these figures may sound somewhat abstract in terms of global development, the negative effects of globalisation on the American middle class became increasingly apparent: low wages in China led to numerous businesses being outsourced and American workers' wages stagnating, while raw material prices rose significantly due to strong demand from China. China was rapidly developing into a major producer of solar panels and electric cars. Fierce competition in the high-tech sector was looming.

It was no coincidence that in the 2016 elections, many of those without a college degree voted for Donald Trump. When Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama emphasised that they would invest more in education to enable more young people to advance their careers in the future, this meant little help for those who were already in the workforce.

Moreover, it placed the blame for their difficult situation on individual workers, not on the system or globalisation. The political elites initially demanded that people adapt to global developments. But that was pure theory. From 1979 to 2016, the number of jobs in US industry fell from 19.5 million to 12 million. At the same time, the gap between the salaries of CEOs in the largest companies and average wages widened dramatically, from a ratio of 1 to 30 to 1 to 300. This development affected white workers in particular, who were already on the defensive. In 2010, the number of white babies born in the US accounted for less than half of all births for the first time.

In 1960, the white population still accounted for 85% of the total population; by 2060, it will be only 45%.

However, the victims of globalisation in the world of work not only suffered material disadvantages, they also lost the appreciation of their environment and their self-esteem (3). It was then President Donald Trump who saw the huge trade deficit with China as the main cause of these difficulties and set about taking measures to counteract them.

2. The US economic war against China

China's economic rise in recent decades has been spectacular. While China's GDP was only 7% of that of the US in 1980, by 2015 it was already 61%. China became the world's workshop, working closely with large Western corporations. Today, more workers are employed in industry in China than in all OECD countries combined. With the Belt and Road Initiative, China has launched a project that aims to bring large parts of the world closer to China by expanding ports and infrastructure. After all, this project encompasses 65 countries on three continents, representing 70% of the world's population and 75% of the world's energy reserves. What's more, it means that many governments no longer have to turn to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the institutions of the West, when they need money; there is now an alternative.

This marks the emergence of a classic scenario in international relations, where an emerging power attempts to challenge the ruling superpower. At least, this is how it is perceived by large parts of the US, with the huge trade deficit with China being blamed in particular for the country's own difficulties.

President Donald Trump, who had campaigned on the slogan "America first," set about imposing tariffs on imports from China, which soon escalated into a full-blown economic war. As much as Joe Biden criticised this policy during the 2020 election campaign, as president he very soon developed his own China doctrine under the slogan "China is our enemy, indeed a threat to civilisation throughout the world" (4). This is a decisive break with the China policy that Washington has pursued since the establishment of diplomatic relations under Richard Nixon almost two generations ago. This also severely undermined one component of globalisation, namely the optimism associated with it.

This is particularly true because Biden's China policy is an essential part of his "alliance of democracies," which is directed against the rulers in Beijing and Moscow. While the initial aim is to isolate China politically, Washington has also taken decisive measures to halt China's economic development, for example in the areas of semiconductors, batteries for electric cars and

"rare earths," microprocessors and memory chips. The aim is not only for the US to keep pace with developments in China through its own efforts, but also to force friends and foes alike to support American policy under threat of sanctions. Allies are being urged to

to sever or at least restrict trade relations with China. If no other arguments are available, human rights violations against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang are cited as justification. Ultimately, the aim is to secure jobs in the US.

This has led to the peculiar situation in which Beijing advocates open trade relations and compliance with WTO rules, while Washington pursues a protectionist course. In this spirit, the US left the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2016, while China is now seeking membership.

President Biden's policies are supported by science and think tanks. For example, Rush Doshi, a member of the National Security Council, argues in his book "The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order," that everything must be done to contain China. Whereas previously the aim was to reshape the world together with China, under American leadership of course, the strategy has now shifted to one that characterised the Cold War, namely "containment", China should not be given the opportunity to further expand its power. Although there are no signs that China wants to impose its political system on the world, the US wants to contain China's influence wherever possible, through sanctions and by preventing business ties with companies such as Huawei. At the same time, efforts are being made to promote competitiveness, including through protectionist measures such as the United States Innovation and Competition Act passed in 2021. This provides for subsidies of \$52 billion for semiconductor research and \$29 billion for research in the field of artificial intelligence. A myriad of other programmes are aimed at standing up to China.

Will this make it possible to halt China's further rise? Can China be prevented from spending more on research and development and on the military? This is why Rush Doshi is calling for China to be confronted now in the South China Sea, in Taiwan and wherever Beijing makes claims. In the economic sphere, this means export controls wherever American products could promote China's rise. In the political sphere, it means confronting China in the United Nations and other international organisations.

Even though trade between the US and China still amounted to \$690.6 billion in 2022 (\$153.8 billion in US exports; \$536.75 billion in imports), Jake Sullivan, President Biden's National Security Advisor, has previously spoken out against the idea that "more trade is always the answer". And the CIA stated in its 2023 annual report that "China is the greatest threat to the United States in the field of high technology (5). This is unlikely to change in the coming years. But so far, the measures imposed by Washington have not had the desired effect: in 2024, China exported goods worth €3.5 trillion, an increase of 5.6% over the previous year. This resulted in a trade surplus of €992 billion.

3. The Covid pandemic and the weaknesses of globalisation:

A lack of solidarity, difficulties in supply chains and deindustrialisation quickly became apparent as weaknesses of globalisation after the outbreak of the Covid pandemic. The Covid pandemic, which broke out at the end of 2019, played a decisive role in prompting countries to focus on solving the difficulties within their own national frameworks. Back in 2007, I wrote a publication entitled "From the world of states to the world state and back" (6) as part of the series of publications by the National Defence Academy. So, as much as it was and is in the nature of globalisation to cause a backlash, the pandemic has contributed to this to a very significant extent. Initially, there were unilateral national responses, then the European Union approved an aid package of \$850 billion. Businesses in difficulty received massive support, as did artists who had lost their jobs, with governments running up huge debts. But there was another important factor: to combat the pandemic, masks, vaccines and medical equipment were needed. Suddenly, it became apparent that globalisation had led to far-reaching deindustrialisation, even in vital areas such as vaccines. Supply chain difficulties heightened awareness of how dependent developed countries were on China and India (7).

The pandemic also had the effect of slowing down global trade. At the same time, there was a growing awareness that international interdependence and dependence on China had gone too far. Furthermore, relations between China and the United States were further damaged. President Donald Trump deliberately referred to a "China virus" to emphasise the Chinese responsibility for the origin of the disease. Beijing, in turn, wanted to prove that its own political system was better able to cope with the challenges posed by the pandemic. A new Cold War was increasingly taking shape. In any case, it became clear that even in a globalised world, the solidarity needed to jointly overcome a state of emergency is not available in an emergency.

Although Chinese President Xi Jinping embarked on a course of "mask diplomacy" and supplied Chinese vaccines to Asia, Africa and Latin America, the pandemic has caused a global economic crisis that has exacerbated the existing economic war. The fact that large corporations such as Amazon, Microsoft and Google have made massive additional profits as a result of measures taken in connection with the pandemic, such as lockdowns and working from home, has strengthened many people's distrust of the driving forces behind globalisation (8).

At the same time, the pandemic has triggered a huge surge in medical research, leading to a new power struggle between China and the United States. Overall, it can be said that Covid-19 has counteracted the ideals of a global world.

4. Export controls and government subsidies around the world

It is not only the Covid pandemic that has contributed to countries now making greater efforts to align their economic policies with national priorities. Many governments have decided to generously subsidise the transition to renewable energies. Large sums of money have been spent to promote high-tech production, research and development in their own countries. The US alone has provided \$465 billion in support for "new energies", electric cars and semiconductors. Support is granted on the condition that production takes place in America. At the same time, export bans have been imposed on sensitive products. According to President Biden, this is to ensure US dominance in the field of high technology. Leading politicians in America and Europe have promised to rebuild rebuild industry in their own countries. "Reindustrialisation" became the buzzword of the hour.

Of course, this was associated with the danger of a "spiral of protectionism". While some promised direct aid, others enticed with tax breaks. Indonesia banned the export of nickel, while other countries set about controlling the production of lithium in their countries. Political considerations always played a major role alongside economic ones. The US feared that China's dominance in chip production would cause it to fall behind in the development of artificial intelligence. This, in turn, could have decisive consequences for the military sector in the future.

If the US had been at the forefront of the global economy, science and technology for decades, it was because its own achievements in these areas were better than those of others. Now, however, a different policy was being pursued: competitors, especially China, should be prevented from overtaking America. With this in mind, laws such as the CHIPS Act were passed, providing \$52 billion in support for the semiconductor industry. \$52 billion. There was also the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which provides \$400 billion in support for the domestic environmental industry in order to reduce dependence on China in this area.

The United Nations has found that over 100 countries, representing 90% of global economic output, are in the process of supporting their domestic industries at the expense of foreign competitors. The G7 countries alone tripled their economic subsidies between 2016 and 2020 (9). The production of semiconductors is being promoted in the same way as that of batteries for electric vehicles. Australia and Canada are spending billions of dollars to support their own mining industries. In the US, only electric cars that have been manufactured there may be sold. This has naturally strengthened those voices in the European Union that are calling for similar measures in Europe.

In addition to subsidies, controls on foreign investment have also been tightened to promote domestic economies. UNCTAD has found that by 2022, 63% of all foreign investment will have been subject to review, a huge increase compared to previous years. The US in particular does not hesitate to ban foreign investments that pose unwanted competition to its own economy

as a "threat to national security". Today, 60% of all companies listed on American stock exchanges may fall under this category. There is broad consensus in Washington that "American capital" must not be used to strengthen the technological capabilities of competitors.

In contrast to the early years of the wave of globalisation, subsidy policies, investment controls and export restrictions have become prevalent in developed economies since the end of the Obama presidency. President Biden, and even more so Donald Trump, saw the advantages of a protected national economy rather than a free global market without borders.

Donald Trump's first term in office, which was dominated by the slogan "Make America Great Again" (MAGA), was already opposed to globalisation. The president attributed his country's decline to the fact that global networking had harmed his country. He claimed that the trade deficits were a clear sign that the US was being "ripped off" by other countries. A wall was built on the southern border of the US to stop illegal immigration; Chinese products were subject to tariffs; membership in international organisations was terminated.

If America is to become great again, it also means that it is in decline. According to the MAGA movement, this decline was caused by the ruling elites led by Democratic presidents. Already under the first Trump administration, the US withdrew from UNESCO, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Iran agreement concluded in Vienna. European allies were called upon to pay more for their own security.

In his second term, Donald Trump became even more explicit. He declared 2 April 2025 "Liberation Day". On this "day of liberation", Trump announced the liberation of his country in the Rose Garden of the White House by imposing massive tariffs on imports from dozens of countries. Tariffs were imposed and then revoked, but the pressure worked, and deals favourable to the US were concluded with the United Kingdom, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, the EU and other countries. These trading partners often accepted unilateral tariffs, promised to purchase huge amounts of energy from America and to invest in the US.

Whatever the future impact of this tariff policy may be, the previous system of free trade established under US leadership after the Second World War has been turned upside down. However, Trump's actions against Brazil show that he is using tariffs as a weapon not only for trade policy reasons, but also for power politics. Tariffs of 50% have been imposed on this country because former President Jair Bolsonaro, a friend of Trump's, is to be charged. And sanctions have been imposed on the judge presiding over the case.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has loudly proclaimed that he will not simply accept the American approach. Other countries, such as China and India, are also unwilling to accept American policy without resistance. The only consequence can be that the unrestrained globalisation that has been in place for decades

, will be limited by national interests. International competition will continue under new conditions.

The intervention in Brazil has also made one thing very clear: Donald Trump is not an isolationist. He is very interested in shaping the fate of the world and relations with individual countries according to his own ideas, but no longer in the traditional sense. Previous American administrations wanted to dictate to the whole world how to live their lives and how to organise their internal affairs. Democracy-building and nation-building were the result. Donald Trump overlooks this as long as American interests are safeguarded under the motto "America first".

5. How have the wars affected globalisation?

After the collapse of communism, the US had sole supremacy in the world. It also intended to maintain this, particularly due to its military strength. A "Defence Policy Guidance" from 1992 stipulated that the military leadership of the US must not be challenged by any other country in the world. The use of the military became an integral part of American foreign policy, according to the motto "Foreign policy without the backing of the military is like a baseball game without a baseball bat". There was also a very open desire to use "humanitarian interventions", "regime change" or "nation-building" to install American-friendly governments all over the world. The "global war on terror" provided further leverage for this.

Without analysing the full extent of the outcome of these wars, we will first address the question of how these wars have affected globalisation, the political context in the world and, ultimately, the supremacy of the US and a new world order. It is obvious that the world has become more divided, Russia has been separated from the rest of Europe and driven into the arms of China, and the "Global South" has taken a stand against the West. The political will to confrontation was stronger than the modern technologies that form the basis of globalisation.

On 24 March 1999, NATO, under American leadership, began bombing Serbia. The aim of the attacks was to achieve independence for Kosovo, a province of Serbia that was largely inhabited by Albanians but had special significance for Serbs due to its history. The attacks were successful in that the leadership in Belgrade was forced to accept the withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo. These were replaced by NATO peacekeeping forces. However, this Western-led war had an extremely negative impact on relations with Russia. Moscow saw that the stronger party could use its weapons to achieve political goals, even in violation of international law. And: the victor determines the rules and can, if it wants, also change national borders.

The US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 initially met with broad international approval, as it was intended to punish the terrorists responsible for the attacks of 11 September 2001. However, the war then lasted 20 years, during which it was obviously not possible to achieve the political goals set by military means

. The hasty withdrawal of American troops, which was not even agreed with the allies, could only be seen in Beijing and Moscow as a defeat for the West and thus as a further step towards a multilateral world order.

The first Iraq War in 1990/91 also found support from numerous countries. After all, it was about punishing the "aggressor Saddam Hussein". The war was even presented as a model of a just war within the framework of the new world order. The situation was different when the US invaded Iraq again in 2003, officially to take away Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. This war was a disaster for the US and the entire region. The invading American troops were not welcomed as liberators, as predicted by exiled Iraqis. The country did not develop

into a "flourishing democracy," as US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld believed, but descended into chaos. This was the breeding ground for the development of the "Islamic State." And the fall of Saddam Hussein and his Sunni upper class strengthened Iran, where Shiite religious fanatics had established their regime.

After the "Arab Spring", new geopolitical courses were set in the region. In the context of the civil war in Syria, Russia was able to distinguish itself as the protective power of the official government, on the same side as Iran. Turkey also pursued power-political interests in Syria. In 2024, President Bashar al-Assad was forced to flee to Moscow. New alliances will emerge, but probably not in the sense of greater global unity. However, Turkey's support for Azerbaijan in the war against Armenia also allowed it to demonstrate its weapon systems and power later on. After the Muslim Brotherhood won the elections in Egypt in 2011 with Mohammed Moisi, the Saudis supported General Al-Sissi's coup two years later to prevent a "new theocracy". In Libya, the overthrow of long-time dictator Mohammed Gaddafi with the help of NATO has led to chaos and often opaque coalitions in a civil war. France and Qatar, for example, support different sides there, even though the two countries cooperate very well in other areas and maintain good relations. In any case, the chaos in Libya has led to the entire Sahel region being flooded with weapons, terrorists gaining strength in the region and new waves of migration.

The proxy war being fought in Ukraine will have a major impact on the future political and economic constellation in the world. As early as 2022, President Joe Biden declared that with Ukraine's help, Russia would be brought to its knees and a "regime change" would be brought about in Moscow. Others even spoke of dividing up the whole of Russia after a Ukrainian victory. In any case, the West acted from a position of strength. NATO expansion was pushed forward to the Russian border. Russian security concerns were "not even ignored," as NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg proudly announced. At the same time, however, it was also clear that Russia was only able to wage war despite massive Western sanctions because many parts of the "Global South" were going their own way, which differed significantly from Western ideas.

The war between Israel and Hamas, which began in October 2023, undoubtedly represents a further escalation of the ongoing tensions in the Middle East. The reactions of governments, demonstrations and votes in international bodies show that there are supporters and opponents on both sides, not only among states, but also within individual countries. On the one hand, parties, trade unions, religious communities and NGOs have called for solidarity rallies with Israel.

On the other hand, there have also been pro-Palestinian rallies, which have been strongest in countries with large Muslim immigrant populations. While the US fully supports Israel, with certain reservations, it is clear that the

"Global South" shows a preference for the concerns of the Palestinians. In any case, this war will also do more to hinder than promote the political globalisation of the world.

It is clear that after all these wars, the world is more divided than united. The wars have created more problems than they have solved. This raises the question of why the United States, with its enormous armed forces, has not been more successful in imposing its policies worldwide. We have in mind those generals and military experts who repeatedly predicted on television and talk shows that success was "just around the corner". How did this happen? One explanation could be that these generals are not speaking as soldiers, but as "politicians in uniform". Another factor is which arms companies they work for as consultants. In any case, they want to win votes or stir up public opinion. Time and again, experts also fall victim to their own propaganda. It was said that the terrorists in the Hindu Kush had to be fought so that they would not come to us, but the war in Afghanistan has created new terrorists.

The question is also whether it makes sense to demonise Russia to such an extent that it seems right not to grant the country its own security interests.

Obviously, there are limits to what can be achieved through the use of weapons and war. The level of military spending cannot be the only yardstick for measuring how security can be achieved. Mao Zedong said, "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." Yet it is precisely China that has gained power and influence worldwide through its tremendous economic boom in recent decades. This probably means that diplomacy, confidence-building measures and mutual support play an extremely important role in international relations. Neutrality has been a very positive basis for Austria's foreign policy. This could also have applied to Ukraine. Diplomacy unites, wars divide the world into hostile camps. Even if the technical achievements that have led to globalisation continue to exist, the wars of recent years have contributed significantly to changing the world order.

The fact that politics is often driven by wishful thinking can be seen in the example of the sanctions imposed in recent years by the US against friends and foes alike, and by the European Union against Russia. The following chapter will explain the effects of this policy in more detail (10).

6. Sanctions – who is isolating whom?

Sanctions can be very brutal. When US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was asked how she felt about the fact that US sanctions against Iraq had caused the deaths of 500,000 children, she replied dryly: "That's the price you have to pay." French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire also believed in the effectiveness of tough sanctions when he declared on French television: "With economic sanctions the likes of which the world has never seen, we will bring Russia to its knees." This is precisely the concept that the RAND CORPORATION, an American think tank, recommended in a study back in 2019: Russia must be forced to invade Ukraine. There, its troops would bleed to death. Massive economic sanctions, combined with the forced shutdown of NordStream1 and 2, combined with economic sanctions, would destroy Russia. A desirable side effect: the Americans could then sell their liquefied gas to Europe.

The sanctions imposed on Russia by the US and the European Union in March 2022 were expected to have a decisive impact on Russia's military strength. The sanctions were also seen as a "victory for multilateralism" because Europe and the US were acting together (11). Furthermore, the US demanded that all countries around the world comply with the measures imposed by Washington. To this end, the Commerce Department was tasked with ensuring global compliance. Soon after Russian troops invaded Ukraine, headlines such as "US casting global net to cut off goods for Russia" (12) began to appear. What was not taken into account, however, was that the West no longer dictates the rules of the game alone.

As early as 2010, a third of humanity was living under US sanctions (13), as Nicholas Mulde writes in his book "Economics as a Weapon". The book also describes how sanctions can work and what effects they have: as early as 1935, the Bank of England deprived Italian corporations of the ability to finance their imports. However, the result was also an alliance between Rome and Berlin. By August 1941, Japan had been largely cut off from world trade, losing 90

% of its oil supply and 70% of its export earnings. These sanctions then also contributed significantly to the Japanese generals' decision to attack Pearl Harbor.

In fact, the sanctions against Russia had serious economic consequences, but also in the West. Cheap energy imports from Russia were cut off, oil and gas prices rose dramatically, and inflation was the result. This led to headlines such as "Stagnating exports weigh on Germany", which reported that German exports to Russia had fallen by 40% and to China by 8.7% in 2023.

At the same time, there are countless reports of how sanctions against Russia are being circumvented. One can read about how goods are reaching Russia unhindered via the United Arab Emirates (14) or how Russian oil is being exported via "camouflaged ships" (15). It was to be expected that Russia would imitate products from Western companies leaving the country. In addition, imports of Western goods from neighbouring countries have increased massively (16). In 2022, exports from the

European Union to Turkey will have risen by 222%, those to Kyrgyzstan by 345% and those to Armenia by 165%.

Despite all the difficulties in assessing the impact of sanctions, one thing is clear: the success desired by the West has not materialised. Initially, the impression was given that tough economic sanctions could prevent a major war. However, in December 2023, the Swiss bank UBS stated that "Russia became richer last year despite the war in Ukraine, while the West lost trillions of dollars" (17).

So were the sanctions against Russia in vain? An article on this subject in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* notes that the impact of the sanctions on everyday life in Moscow has been limited (18). But the impact on daily life in Russia and on the ability to wage war at all is one side of the coin. The other side is the geopolitical impact. This has been enormous. Russia was thrown into China's arms, the BRICS countries were able to demonstrate their political weight, and Europe was massively weakened.

Given that, despite the war in Ukraine, decision-makers in Washington still regard China as the main enemy of the US, it is no wonder that Moscow and Beijing are moving closer together. At the same time, President Biden has departed from the long-standing US policy on Taiwan, according to which the island, despite its special status, is considered an integral part of China. The Biden administration in Washington has repeatedly taken steps that Beijing considered provocative. In any case, the primacy of Asia in American foreign policy can also be interpreted as meaning that confrontation with China is at the forefront. Why then should Moscow and Beijing not move closer together?

The new ties between China and Russia encompass official policy as well as bilateral trade and contacts between the citizens of both countries. Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin have repeatedly described the relationship between the two countries as a "strategic decision" based on "the fundamental interests of both peoples." Trade between the two countries has already exceeded \$230 billion in 2024, and Chinese car manufacturers have replaced Mercedes and BMW, which have been forced to withdraw. If Russian oil and natural gas now have to be sold to China at favourable prices due to sanctions, this will give the Chinese economy a further competitive advantage.

Clearly boosted by coverage in the state media, Russia has become more attractive to many Chinese. According to the *New York Times*, young people are flocking to the Chinese border town of Harbin to pose in Russian clothing in front of a former Russian cathedral. In any case, China has been a big winner from the sanctions imposed on its large neighbour (19).

The political and economic isolation of Russia has also given the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) an important role to play. At the summit meeting in Johannesburg in August 2023, this group of countries was heavily criticised for being too incoherent and disoriented. That may be true.

But by providing political and economic support to Russia in its conflict with the West, the BRICS countries have made a decisive contribution to Moscow's ability to hold its ground. In doing so, they have also significantly raised their profile and ensured that the "Global South" must be seen as a new factor in international relations.

The BRICS is not a traditional international organisation; there is no presidium or permanent secretariat. Each year, a different country holds the chairmanship and organises the annual summit. Decisions are taken unanimously, including the admission of new members, which include Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia and Iran. This will make the BRICS an economic power in the energy sector, controlling 54% of global oil production (20). The largest deposits of "rare earths" are also located in Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa.

But it is not only their involvement in overcoming Western sanctions against Russia that shows that the BRICS countries are playing an extremely important role in the emerging international order. China, for example, maintains close relations with Ethiopia, which is an important link in the New Silk Road in Africa. Beijing has also played a decisive role in resolving the long-standing conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In doing so, China wants to present itself as a peacemaker, in contrast to the US, which it accuses of wanting to use its power through its 800 military bases around the world.

One clear goal of the BRICS is to reduce the power of the US dollar. As the American currency is repeatedly used as a weapon, the BRICS are striving to conduct their trade in a national currency. This is certainly no easy task. Replacing the US dollar with another currency has been compared to attempting to replace English as the international lingua franca. Even die-hard nationalists probably find it easier to say "good morning" in English than in Mandarin or Hindi.

After all, the BRICS countries have amassed enormous gold reserves since 2010, with Russia, China and South Africa among the largest gold producers. The massive use of the dollar weapon in the sanctions against Russia and Russia's exclusion from the SWIFT system have contributed significantly to countries making efforts to switch to their national currencies in their own trade relations. So far, China, Russia, Brazil, Iran, and even Australia and Japan have stipulated in trade agreements with these countries that they will conduct their trade in national currencies.

This raises not only the question of what sanctions achieve, but also who is actually isolating whom? The war in Ukraine in particular has shown that war can give rise to new alliances. The sanctions imposed by the West have not succeeded in cutting Russia off from the rest of the world, either economically or politically. When the US and the European Union repeatedly refer to themselves as the "international community", they represent just 10% of the world's population. The remaining 90% often think differently.

7. What has changed, and what has not?

The question remains: why has the desire for a better world, which many spoke of at the beginning of the new phase of globalisation, not been fulfilled? While capitalism, undoubtedly in various forms, has certainly prevailed worldwide, the same cannot be said of peace and democracy. So if Francis Fukuyama was at least partly right, the "one world" that Thomas L. Friedman had in mind when he wrote "The World is Flat" has not come about. Based on his travels to India, China and the Middle East, he was convinced that the new technologies that had spread across the globe would connect humanity like never before. This "one world" would be a "force for good" for the economy, for the environment, indeed for all people (21).

Why did this not happen? One reason is probably that a development that brings advantages for some can have disadvantages for others. A factory that is outsourced to China may create jobs in the "Middle Kingdom," but it may also create unemployment in Europe and the United States. Even in a "global world," economic development can vary greatly and create new inequalities, both within and between individual countries.

Although the USA has remained the strongest economy in recent years, accounting for over 20% of global production, countries such as China and India have significantly increased their share. According to new calculations, the total GDP of the BRICS countries, accounting for 33% of global production, has already overtaken that of the G7. The development of the world population is similarly dramatic. While Europe and North America accounted for 28.5% of the world's population in 1950, this figure will decline to 11.8% by 2050. At the same time, Africa's share will rise from 9.1% to 25.5%, while Asia's will remain fairly stable at 55%. Changes in economic power or population structure can be the basis for shifts in power in the political or military sphere. New alliances create new opportunities, and a new sense of self-confidence can tempt countries to seek to regain their former greatness in a new era.

However, the following is also crucial: despite greatly changed conditions, people retain their habitual behaviours. This applies to social policy, political systems and international relations. In countries that have been shaped by tribal societies for centuries, it will be difficult to implement the model of a Westminster democracy in a short period of time. In Europe, we had a political development that perhaps began with the Magna Carta in 1215 and continued through the Enlightenment, liberalism and numerous revolutions until we arrived at a system we call democracy. Countries with a different history are accustomed to living in other political systems, which makes democracy building extremely difficult.

"Change through trade" can alter material living conditions, but at the same time leave personal character traits untouched. Before the First World War, there was already a period of strong economic interdependence. At the same time, however, many decision-makers were convinced that war was the solution to the problems and

and subordinated everything else to this conviction. Even strengthened trade relations could not save the peace. Although the wars of recent decades have all ended in disaster, the opinion has recently gained ground in Europe that the peace project, which has been successful since the Second World War, must be abandoned and rearmament pursued. One factor that has significantly influenced the outcome of wars in recent decades should not be overlooked: in the secularised states of the West, the attitude towards "death on the field of honour" is very different from that in countries where religion and belief in a "better afterlife" still play a role. While some seek above all "happiness on earth," others are much more willing to die for their ideals. Those who believe that the solution lies in ever-increasing arms deliveries to Ukraine should also bear this in mind. It is time to give diplomacy another chance. The conditions created by globalisation can be put to good use in this regard.

The question now is how Donald Trump intends to shape the further course of globalisation or deglobalisation. After all, he has vowed to re-establish the US as the world's leading power and to halt the decline of recent years, which was probably only relative. The promotion of key domestic industries and tariffs to protect against unfair competition from abroad are to play a special role in this.

Without being able to look into the future, it is safe to say that Donald Trump will find the following framework conditions for his policies:

"The business of America is business." That was said 100 years ago by then-President Calvin Coolidge. America must always strive to do business. In this sense, Senator Lindsey Graham also said about the war in Ukraine: "The Russians are dying. It's the best money we ever spent."

The fact that the bosses of the tech giants were all present at Trump's inauguration is also a tradition. Large corporations have always sent their representatives to the government in Washington. This is precisely where the essential difference in the structure of government between the United States and Central European countries becomes apparent: in our countries, the administration, the state apparatus, forms the backbone of the state. Our "high priests" were traditionally the section heads and court councillors; in the USA, on the other hand, they are the managers and major shareholders. The core of the USA is the large corporations. They can afford to send representatives to the federal capital.

There are also numerous examples of Donald Trump's economic policy and customs policy: the economist Henry Carey (1793-1879) was already a strong advocate of high customs duties and protectionism in the economy. At that time, it was also possible to massively promote the industrialisation of the USA, for example in the iron and steel sectors.

The question now is what challenges this policy poses for us. Perhaps we could take a leaf out of the Chinese book. The New York Times of 23 December 2024 reported the following: The Chinese name for Donald Trump is "Chuan Jian guo", which means "nation builder". The more the American side tried and continues to try to restrict China, the greater its own efforts have become.

efforts. In fact, despite all the measures imposed by Washington, China has gained economic strength in recent years through its own efforts.

This could also serve as a guide for Europeans. Even if the US attempts to promote its own interests by making trade relations with other countries more difficult or imposing sanctions, the modernisation of the world and the associated globalisation will continue. However, this would no longer happen under Western leadership, but rather through those countries that determine the dynamics of development.

NOTES

- (1) Wendelin Ettmayer; Globalisation of Economic Policy and Law; Favorita Papers 01/2016
- (2) New York Times; 30 June 2016
- (3) Michael J. Sandel; The Tyranny of Merit-What's Become of the Common Good?; Penguin Books 2021
- (4) The Economist 17 July 2021 Biden's new China doctrine
- (5) The CIA World Factbook 2023, page 12
- (6) Wendelin Ettmayer; From the world of states to the world state—and back again; Publication series of the National Defence Academy 17/ 2007
- (7) Ian Bremmer; The Power of Crisis—How Three Threats and Our Response Will Change the World; New York 2022
- (8) Alexandre Del Valle/Jacques Soppelsa; Towards a global clash? Dangerous globalisation; Paris 2023
- (9) The Economist, 14 January 2021
- (10) Alexandre Del Valle et al. Page 147
- (11) New York Times, 18 March 2022
- (12) The Economist, 19 February 2022
- (13) Die Welt, 6 November 2023
- (14) New York Times, Goods flow unhindered to Russia via brokers, 12 May 2023
- (15) Financial Times, 24 December 2023, Russian copycat start-ups rush to fill gaps left by exodus of western brands
- (16) Alexandre Del Valle et al.
- (17) Business International 25 July 2023
- (18) Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 12 July 2023, Were the sanctions against Russia in vain?
- (19) New York Times, 28 December 2023, How China cashes in on Russia's isolation
- (20) Le Monde diplomatique, October 2023
- (21) Thomas L. Friedman, The World is Flat; Penguin Books 2006

VI. THE NEW WORLD ORDER ALREADY EXISTS

Time and again, we hear that "Putin wants a new world order" or that Chinese President Xi wants to replace the "rules-based international order" that has existed since the Second World War with a new power system. Now, it is quite likely that both Russia and China are striving for an international system in which the circumstances correspond more closely to the actual balance of power than is currently the case. But whether these and other countries want it or not, the new world order already exists. Political, economic and strategic conditions have changed so significantly compared to the situation after the Second World War that, in practice, these new circumstances must be taken into account.

There is no doubt that the world order created after 1945 under the leadership of the USA was well thought out and, especially for us in Austria, also valuable. As early as 1944, prominent figures met in Dumbarton Oaks, a suburb of Washington, to draft concepts for a new post-war order. The result in the political sphere was the United Nations system, which was given responsibility for peace and security. Economic reconstruction and development were to be ensured by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. After the start of the Cold War, military security was entrusted to NATO.

The European integration project launched by the Council of Europe in 1949 was particularly successful. Old enmities, such as those between Germany and France, were settled, warfare became welfare, and confrontation became cooperation. Whereas foreign policy had been power politics for 1,000 years, it was now to be geared towards promoting the welfare of citizens in the foreign policy of European countries. As will be shown, the Americans and Europeans have departed from this concept of order in recent years. The US has replaced international law and the UN Charter with a "rules-based order" under which it alone could set the rules.

The Europeans, particularly through the war in Ukraine, have transformed their peace project into a war alliance.

In fact, the course for a new world order was already set with the West's victory in the Cold War. In the US, the neoconservatives prevailed, convinced of "American exceptionalism", i.e. that the US is a chosen nation. After the victory over communism, people believed in the "end of history". According to this view, democracy and capitalism had prevailed worldwide and should remain so under American leadership. To this end, new rules were invented, which were now to form the basis of American foreign policy and the "rules-based international order": a right of intervention under the motto "democracy building" or "nation building"; and the right of the US to impose sanctions on enemies and friends alike. Whereas previously "foreign affairs" had been about judging countries on the basis of their willingness to contribute to international peace and security, now the internal affairs of a state could also become a reason for intervention or war. The war in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq were the result.

John Vinocur summed up this basic political stance very well in an article in the New York Times on 2 January 2008, when he wrote: "The United States must remain the world's sheriff. It has the right to take unilateral military action. The United Nations Security Council should not have veto power over American options."

In contrast, countries such as China and the "Global South" adhered to the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country as laid down in the United Nations Charter. And while Hillary Clinton declared that "the era of spheres of interest is over" – a somewhat peculiar statement for the foreign minister of a country that maintains 800 military bases around the world – Russia and China insist that every country can have legitimate security interests.

But after the Cold War, another tremendous upheaval took place that would shape the new world order: globalisation. Already under the policies of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, international trade barriers were torn down, China opened up and was integrated into the capitalist economic system. The result: while China accounted for less than one per cent of global economic output when the current international order emerged after the Second World War, it now accounts for almost 20 per cent. And while the US generated 60 per cent of global GDP at that time, it now accounts for only 22 per cent.

There have also been tremendous upheavals in other areas. At the time when England and France were granted permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council, India was still a British colony, as were almost all African states. Today, Africa has more than twice the population of Europe; India is the most populous country in the world; and the "Global South" already has greater economic power than the G7, i.e. the western industrialised countries.

Even in terms of strategic thinking, a decisive change has taken place. Whereas it was originally the US that promoted free world trade as an essential element of the order it established, China has now taken the initiative in this regard. Donald Trump's decision to raise tariffs on goods from China to 145% is the culmination of a trade war that has been raging for years. However, Beijing has also prepared for this. While Chinese exports accounted for 33% of China's GDP in 2005, by 2020 this figure had fallen to just 20%. The share of Chinese exports to the US in the country's total exports fell from 19% to 14.7% over the same period. At the same time, Chinese exports to both the ASEAN countries and those along the "New Silk Road" have risen enormously. This has also led to a significant decline in American influence in these regions. The economic development of the world thus shows very clearly that conditions have changed enormously since the creation of the world order after the Second World War. As a result, the US's desire to lead a unipolar order after its victory over the Soviet Union had to give way to the realities of a multipolar world.

The proxy war in Ukraine and the wars in the Middle East have created new fronts and thus a new constellation for a new world order. The Biden

administration initially believed that it could use Ukraine to massively weaken and isolate Russia, this war has had a very different geopolitical impact. Russia has been driven into the arms of China, and while the EU elites hoped that Putin would be branded an outsider worldwide, it is now clear that Europe is economically, politically and diplomatically isolated. Without massive aid from the "Global South," Russia would never have survived the massive Western economic sanctions. And as for the wars in the Middle East, even the extremely pro-Western Economist noted, based on UN votes, that the dividing line in the world today is "The West against the Rest".

Even if Brussels and the United Kingdom are now trying to halt the course of history through constant summit meetings and other token activities, there is no getting around the realities of the situation. These are based on the fact that today's world is neither politically, economically nor strategically the same as it was in 1990, let alone 1945. We now live in a multipolar world with several decision-making centres that want to have a say in shaping international relations, and indeed must have a say.

() **Dr Wendelin Ettmayer**; born in 1943, grew up in Neukirchen am Walde; 1960/61 Pacelli High School in Austin, Minn. 1962 Matura at the Humanistic Gymnasium in Linz; studied law at the University of Vienna, graduating in 1966; 1966/67 Sciences Politiques in Paris; 1969, after graduating from the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, entered the diplomatic service; former Austrian ambassador to Finland/Estonia; Canada/Jamaica and to the Council of Europe; member of the National Council; author. www.wendelinettmayer.at*