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The Western Fiasco

Failure in Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the children of Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine. In all innocence, they are caught up in a life marked by violence and war. They are the victims of the global struggle for power and influence that afflicts their homeland from outside. Let us hope that this experience does not turn them into warmongers themselves who inflict suffering on the next generation, but that they manage to escape hardship and lead a life of peace and fulfilment.

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Preface

This book is about the conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine - and more! It is also about the global mechanisms of power that prevent - or do not prevent - wars. All three countries exemplify the callous principle of proxy wars, in which the power games of the superpowers unfold in regions that happen to serve as "venues". The Vietnam War and the division of Korea were the most prominent "proxy tragedies" after the Second World War; Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine are the most recent ones.

This development is even more deplorable because since the Second World War, the community of states has in fact had a global organisation in the form of the United Nations to resolve conflicts around the globe peacefully. Perhaps not always in friendship, but without military confrontation - and above all without the endless suffering of the civilian population as a result of the war. This book is therefore also about the power, or rather the impotence, of the United Nations in international disputes, in the crucial questions of war and peace. So, it is also about the failure of the UN - not only of the "West".

In any case, it needs to be clarified to what extent the term "the West" will still be appropriate in the future, how sustainable the political friendship between Europe, or more precisely, the European Union, and the United States of America will be. Let us remember it was the intergovernmental military alliance, NATO that was

responsible for Europe being suckered into the US revenge campaign against Afghanistan after 9/11. And it was a US president who vociferously demanded that Europe should contribute more to the costs of NATO - so vociferously and over such a long period that a European head of state introduced the idea of an independent European army into the public discussion. This could be an approach to decouple Europe at least a little from the proxy wars of the three big superpowers.

Answers to all these questions are to be found when it comes to the failure of the West in Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine. This book claims to make a significant contribution to the discussion while providing a whole series of answers.

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Proxy wars: Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine

In all three countries - Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine - doom has set in due to the clash of geopolitical power blocs. And in all three countries, proxy wars have led the population to disaster. Therefore, in a book about the failure of the West in Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine, the decades-long failure of the international community of states far beyond these three countries in all attempts to bring peace to the world deserves mention at the very beginning.

Peoples' right to peace

The idea of a peaceful community of states is not new. The term "international law" was first mentioned in 1625 in the book "On the Law of War and Peace" by the Dutch legal scholar Hugo Grotius. In 1795, the philosopher Immanuel Kant advanced the idea of a "consistently peaceful community of peoples" in his philosophical essay "Project for a perpetual peace." The Enlightenment brought about the first international peace movement in the 19th century, which led to the Hague Peace Conferences in 1899 and 1907.

The aim was to develop principles for the peaceful settlement of international conflicts. The idea behind it is great: the abolition of war as a means of dispute between peoples and instead the establishment of a legal process to

resolve conflicts. It did not work back then, the League of Nations founded after WW I failed, and with around twenty wars a year today, it is difficult to argue that the UN has been more successful. But, despite all the criticism, one should pause for a moment to appreciate the greatness of the idea of legal process replacing war, which was the aim of all these efforts.

At the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899, twenty-six states met, and at the second conference in 1907, forty-four countries came together to work out an international legal order. It was agreed to set up a court of arbitration in The Hague, but they were not able to establish any binding force for the court rulings of the newly created institution. As early as then, the core question became clear: how much sovereignty do states want to relinquish to submit to a kind of "supranational world order"? The possibilities of enforcing court judgements have already also been discussed, i.e. the question of an international executive arm, as represented by the UN's "Blue Helmets" today.

At that time, the binding force was to be determined at a third peace conference, initially planned for 1914 and then 1915, and was institutionalised in the League of Nations as collective security.¹ The International Court of Justice (ICJ), which is now part of the UN, is the highest judicial organ and is decisively based on the work of the Hague Peace Conferences.

Failure of the League of Nations

The idea of creating a worldwide organisation that would serve as a neutral platform for understanding between states was revived after the First World War. To this end, the victorious powers convened the Paris Peace Conference, at

which the Treaty of Versailles was signed, and the founding of the League of Nations was decided.

It is difficult to deny that the Versailles Peace Treaty made a significant contribution, at least in argumentation, to the rise of Hitler and thus to the outbreak of the Second World War. Even then, simple lines of argument were lacking: The Versailles Treaty unduly subjugated Germany and the population suffered. Nevertheless, we not only tolerated this but defended ourselves - this is how the popular sentiment against the Treaty of Versailles in Germany at the time can be summarised.

These are the facts: Germany had to cede Alsace-Lorraine to France and Poznań and West Prussia to Poland, the Memel Territory came under French control, the Hlučín Region went to the newly recreated Czechoslovakia (which much later split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia), the Saar Basin, Danzig and the German colonies were subordinated to the League of Nations.

On the one hand, these comprehensive measures were apparently not enough to keep Germany permanently small, but, on the other hand, they gave the National Socialists substantial arguments to defend themselves against what they called the "imposed peace." The French Marshal Ferdinand Foch provided an excellent analysis of the Versailles Treaty: "This is not peace. This is a 20-year truce."²

It was already evident then - as it was later with the founding of the United Nations - that the formation of an alliance of states after a world war in which there are winners and losers has a fundamental flaw: the winners dictate the conditions. This problem continued when the United Nations was founded as the successor organisation

to the League of Nations. In very simplified terms, the UN consists of the Security Council as a reflection of the balance of power at the time, a flexible, military reaction force under the leadership of the Security Council, a group of sub-organisations for practically all subject areas of humanity, an all-encompassing network of aid organisations and a gigantic bureaucracy built around it.

Back to the League of Nations: As a result of the Paris Peace Conference after the First World War and based on the "14-Points" put forward by US President Woodrow Wilson, the League of Nations, based in Geneva, began its work on 10 January 1920. The objective at that time was just as lofty as it was later at the UN: lasting peace through a system of collective security, international disarmament and the settlement of possible disputes between states through an arbitration tribunal.

In contrast to the UN, the Constitution of the League of Nations provided for an obligation of all member states to provide military aid "immediately and directly" in the event of a military attack by a country against a member state. True to the principle of "nip it in the bud," this was intended to prevent delays caused by consultation in committees. In an emergency, however, none of the member states adhered to this requirement but operated at their own discretion. Consequently, when the UN was later founded, this obligation was rescinded, apart from resolutions by the UN Security Council. The opinion prevailed that it is better to make non-binding declarations than binding ones that are not implemented.

With the outbreak of World War II, the failure of the League of Nations was sealed. On 18 April 1946, the thirty-four remaining member states decided to disband the League of Nations with immediate effect. But the idea