

## Globally Empathetic Policy

Philipp Sonntag <https://www.philipp-sonntag.de/> 6/2024

Theodor Heuss, as former Federal President, admonished Germany after Holocaust and World War II:

"Forgetting is both a mercy and a danger."

Such a balancing act is internally delicate, for a young democracy – and thus for every young or old democrat. An inner willingness to face challenges for tolerable future requires courage, knowledge and confidence. With according wisdom, Heuss played a significant role in shaping the German constitution after 1945. It will remain valid – even though meantime the parliament subjoined almost a hundred supplements.

Meantime global issues become more and more important for local decisions. It is a kind of expansion of interest politics – and virtually a supplement to any constitution. That requires sensitive policy, even a new kind of

„globally domestic policy“,

as an expanded kind of common foreign policy, towards global interests. For instance attempts toward climate control, go way beyond merely local considerations. To this end, Carl Friedrich von Weizsaecker recommended a basic transition from conventional foreign policy to a completely new global domestic policy<sup>1</sup>:

"As far as we know, there has not been world peace for as long as mankind has existed; something unprecedented is required of us. The history of humanity teaches us, that the unprecedented is often realized one day. This does not happen without an extraordinary effort; and if peace is to be humane, the effort must be moral."

### Internal effort

Can we even deal with morality? Are we as humans able and willing to behave in an honorable human way? The results so far tell us: Hardly. Those responsible do not want to admit this, not even to themselves. As a teenager, I protested vehemently against these "lying adults". I felt much the same as the young people today.

How to cope today with the manifold parallel challenges? How might people of all ages try to broadly address their inner self, while looking for solutions? For this purpose, Lutz von Gruenhagen (network future) emphasizes "reasonable conversations" as fundamental; people, even diplomats, who listen to each other carefully are often missing. A common goal should rather begin, and get intensively approached with people listening to each other devotedly<sup>2</sup>.

In a similar way I promote in network future ideas for "Globally Empathetic Policy" by two files in German language<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Carl Friedrich von Weizsaecker: The conditions of peace. Speech on the occasion of the award of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, with laudatory speech by Georg Picht. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1963; p. 8

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.freitag.de/autoren/lvgruenhagen/friedenschaffen-wir-koennen-frieden-schaffen-mit-plausiblen-argumenten>

<sup>3</sup> In 2024 zwei Einträge auf der Webseite:

Much the same is what our "Netzwerk Zukunft" is locally also trying to do with "youth welfare projects" in Berlin-Neukoelln. It happens in sensitive cooperation with – more or less desperate – schools; a head teacher from Neukoelln reports<sup>4</sup> :

"Violence follows emotional poverty. ...

All of the prolific offenders in Neukoelln that I got to know during my time as a head teacher grew up in families where violence and indifference predominated. It was not uncommon for them to have developmental disorders and violence deficits in their early years, which prevented them from entering school life in an age-appropriate manner."

If you listen to young people today, no matter how they express it, you may sense bitterness, such as: "Rents are rising anti-socially; we live in a land of milk and honey for property buyers; no matter how hard I try, I don't see any chance for myself." It is difficult, to help an "inner self", almost lost in a mental desert. And yet social projects can succeed in encouraging young people to find something worth living for - and try to become resilient for it internally. Many children are so restless and dissatisfied that they need help and want support<sup>5</sup>. After all, social workers may create a kind of internally sensitive beingness, and support it.

But "humane" worldwide? It is currently becoming increasingly difficult for migrants and others who, due to their poverty and traumata, try in vain to reach a presumed paradise such as Germany. There are many victims who provide emotional information about their suffering. It is fundamental. Examples are revealed in issue 30 of "ARTS OF THE WORKING CLASS" (AWC), as sold for €2.50 on the streets, in subway trains etc.<sup>6</sup> . A brief outline of the diverse, often equally desperate and empathetically poetic-sounding consternation, at the beginning of page 7:

"We, who are flying around as splinters, raining down as flesh, sincerely apologize to this civilized world, to every individual, to men, women and children, because we appeared in your homes without permission and quite independently, we apologize for the impression our body parts have left in their snow-white memory, we apologize because we have scratched the image of the - in their opinion - natural, perfect human being ...".

Further suggestions in issue 30 of AWC focus primarily on "camps" (Editorial, p. 3), on camps worldwide, including mass camps and even concentration camps. Only there, nowhere else are children so blatantly shaped into future overly violent individuals as there. This applies regardless of the political context and legally "well-founded" justifications. For Germany, this should mean that Palestinians and Jews alike must be supported, to delete all and any racism (p. 8). Many poetic contributions in the magazine make the misery palpable, for example now in the "Shatila" camp in Beirut (p. 24).

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<http://www.netzwerk-zukunft.de/index.php/veranstaltungen-publikationen.html>  
nämlich zur "Welt-Innerlichkeits-Politik"; und zum "Umgang mit Erbitterung" (sozusagen zur Welt-Innen-Politik des Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker).

<sup>4</sup> Detlef Pallowek: "Neukoelln principal - 'Violence follows emotional poverty'". Guest article in: Tagesspiegel, 10. 4. 2024, p. B 21

<sup>5</sup> Hans-Lebrecht-Schule (ed.): "ABTAUCHEN UND AUFTAUCHEN - texts and drawings by children and young people"

<sup>6</sup> Ghayath Almadhoun (a Palestinian poet born in Damascus, emigrated to Sweden in 2008, currently living in Berlin & Stockholm): "EXILE IS A HARD JOB"; in: ARTS OF THE WORKING CLASS (AWC) , issue 30 (March 2024), p. 7; translated from Arabic by Larissa Bender; see <https://artsoftheworkingclass.org/about>

In Beirut in 1975, I stopped a garbage truck and got invited to join while they were driving to the garbage dumps. Immediately after arrival, I was almost run over by a bulldozer. The small children, who came from the camp nearby, collected broken glass, scraps of metal etc. for recycling. There, cows ate badly moldy orange peels. Thus my local orientation began tentatively, hesitantly, and I no longer liked milk with my coffee in Lebanon. At the time, I was amazed that improvised warehouses had existed for decades. Today 8-storey "residential buildings" are there.

A characteristic of the Middle East is that local and global rulers have been actively impeding any CBMs (confidence-building measures) for decades. This way they damage their own chances of survival. Out of drastic "fake perceived responsibility", they create a lot of expensive armaments and provoke violence. This is the exact opposite of global domestic policy. This of course also applies to the armaments that are causing too much damage in Europe. But how to overcome?

Lacking is a common diplomatic, globally valid, internal policy. Basic cause is an according missing inner attitude. In a similar way, we are allowing a devastating climate to come our way. Thus an exploding amount of armament, all along a common framework with former enemies, even as new friends, destroys the common future. After 1945, a certain degree of reconciliation became gradually achieved between France and Germany, which had previously been almost unimaginable. I took part in the student exchange, I was near Montpellier, aged 15. Shy and uncertain, we students tried together to imagine a peaceful Europe.

The first thing to internalize is that "something unprecedented is being asked of us". We still have to work hard to find out what a successful global domestic policy can look like. In the following, I will give three points of reference for the first steps towards a confident inwardness.

### **Confidence from social research**

From 1979-1986 I had a job at the "International Institute for Comparative Social Research; Science Center Berlin" (Internationales Institut für Vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung“, Wissenschafts-Zentrum Berlin; WZB), There I was able to experience how my inwardly benevolent director Karl W. Deutsch tried to plan a just and peaceful world. The major tool were interdisciplinary mathematical models. I was familiar with such models, and added "societal meaning" as seemed fit. Back then, I was still confident that I could improvise my own social science contributions - with little training in social science. That is long gone. I am now impressed by the empirically precise, evidence-based answers to critical questions at WZB. Today this is a good way to internalize a certain confidence, even amidst horrific crises<sup>7</sup>:

"In this December 2023 issue of WZB-Mitteilungen (Newsletter), we wanted to know: Where are there positive approaches in our research fields? Where are potentials – rather than just only crises, deficits and problems? Have there been any pleasant surprises recently, such as "plausible" negative assumptions, that could be refuted? What is encouraging? Where are the silver linings on the horizon?"

Results were illustrated in the newsletter by findings from employees on topics such as:

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<sup>7</sup> Jutta Allmendinger: "Silberstreifen", WZB Mitteilungen, Quarterly Journal of Social Research, 4/2023, p. 3

"Lennart Schürmann: "From the streets to the parliament (Bundestag). The local Fridays for Future protests are having a strong impact."

Vanessa Boese-Schlosser: "Democratization also drives the economy forward"

Thamy Pogrebinschi and Mariana Borges Martins da Silva: "Fighting fake news - civil society must and can work against political disinformation"

Susannah Ellis: "Good press. Disinformation meets resistance in Germany"

Jonas Seufert: "It could all be very different. A plea for critically constructive journalism"

Daron Acemoglu (in an interview): "We can mobilize for shared prosperity".

### **Literally imaginable confidence**

Five years ago, I outlined an initially utopian application of "world interiority" in my book "Forever Alert"<sup>8</sup>, a short conclusion:

"Many migrants become proper German citizens. We could welcome them more warmly. We should only expel criminals, whether migrants or not. It would be relieving to quickly expel the many (German and other) racists, plus beyond doubt evident "spiritual terrorists" and those who are overly violent. Such a project, especially for criminals, can be carried out fast and with limited stress, without much bureaucratic fuss.

AI is happy to help (virtually internally). The risk: anyone who is not "ki-reasonably" modern and democratic, might then no longer be treated as tolerable in Germany - even legally. Of course such actions would immediately endanger freedom, democracy and other values. Also worrying is what democrats are allowing themselves to overlook, what society is even becoming astonishingly accustomed to globally, namely allowing mor and more right-wing and fascist parties with their destructive "opinions" and actions. Regarding justice, those who would frivolously delete migrants, should be candidates for being deleted.

But to expel anybody is problematic, and needs according tact with high democratic awareness. I am more of a futurist than a futurologist when I suggest drastic procedures in symbolic terms, such as: Putin is certainly happy to help with an island north of Siberia. There, anyone can hunt animals with simple weapons such as bows and arrows. Even tanned hides can be a useful currency. In this way, expatriates can easily practice a practical world internal politics with many, soon to be genuinely like-minded people. After just a few years, they may be able to make a convincing case for asylum in Germany."

### **Pragmatic confidence, already tested with Robert Jungk**

Robert Jungk first became well known for describing dangerous developments including heavily suffering victims, in drastic reports starting already 1952. At the same time, he also repeatedly was offering encouragement<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, during the same period he invented and tested socio-political tools, in particular his "future

<sup>8</sup> Philipp Sonntag: "Forever Alert", Beggerow Verlag, Berlin (2019), p. 219-220

<sup>9</sup> Robert Jungk: The future has already begun. Dehumanization - the danger of our civilization. Goldmann, Bern/Stuttgart (1952).

workshops", as a tool for fair, and mostly local decisions, ending at best with pragmatic conflict resolution. People with very different interests (for instance: shall we get an airport in our region?), but good willing intention, took part.

The results of such "future workshops" were often perceived as fair by the participants. The computer scientist Norbert R Müllert noted (in brief)<sup>10</sup> :

"At the end of future workshops, there are project ideas, project proposals or projects that are conceived or found in a social problem-solving process, in large and small group work with a lot of imagination and ingenuity. ...

1. First, the range of unease, criticism, reservations and fears about the problem area at hand is explored ...
2. On this basis, positive, desirable perspectives are invented, fantasies and visions are developed in order to make the discomfort, the main points of criticism, irrelevant ...
3. Finally, the question of how to achieve what is desired is raised by working out demands, inventions and project proposals through feedback to the real conditions ...

In detail, the characteristics of acceptable social inventions are:

- socially oriented and charitable
- improving quality of life and meeting people's needs
- cost-effective and ecological
- simple and replicable,
- disseminable and assertive
- innovative and imaginative
- appealing and fascinating
- durable and forward-looking
- requiring little time
- new approaches can emerge and become realized, may be even on relatively short notice."

In order to attain such goals, we shall have the courage to get involved! Even regarding global affairs, we may strive and hope. There is an intensive commitment for arms control at the "Pugwash Meetings", where experts coming from antagonizing nations over and again achieve mediating talks: Together they forwarded results, which turned out to be of interest for cooperation of these nations.

As well Esperantists might achieve constructive mediation, by coming together as Israelis, Arabs, Iranians, Germans and others, while applying Homaranismo (their common understanding of human values) – and unwavering engagement for peace in middle East. Along our experience as network future along several future workshops we could verify and realize, that as soon as participants really listen to each other, and strive together, the result may be valuable, effective solutions.

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<sup>10</sup> Norbert R Müllert: "Zukunftswerkstätten, soziale Erfindungen und der lange Atem", in: Die Triebkraft Hoffnung . In honor of Robert Jungk, Beltz, Weinheim and Basel (1993); p. 93 and 97

But why is it especially difficult for many visibly anxious politicians and diplomats, to start applying a value-and-goal-oriented world domestic policy? Are they too rigidly concerned with interest politics? Is there too much revenge, too much desire for recognition, too much fear, depression, doubt or uncertainty, altogether too much caution on their job from themselves? Is there a lot of useless effort, false quarrel, or even painful confusion?

Such danger is what Thomas Curran deplors. He recommends<sup>11</sup> :

"You have every right to love your magnificent self with all its flaws and fill it with self, as well as our magnificent, imperfect planet. Fight for it."

Looking at common controversies on this planet, a "peaceful fight" is indispensable. The peaceful spirit has to deal with manifold challenges.

### **Dealing with raging bitterness**

All along a broad evolution, most living beings became effective survivors. They know what it means to cheer or suffer, to eat or be eaten, to fight or relax. They are resilient survivors. An open question is, how well may they deal with it internally? Anyway they try to overcome, soul and body. As top effective survivors, human beings want to get further „ahead“. They surprise themselves by creating evidence of common unnecessary suffering, and thus causing desperate bitterness for all involved.

"Unnecessary?" We have to cope with a global phenomenon, which is certainly unnecessary. It should be avoidable, along CBM. A responsible human being will ask: "Who am I to let something like this happen, to me – and to so many others?"

A further challenge on the individual level: This harasses and persecutes them until they may deny and repress their own role. Such a mental sleaze especially has a bad effect upon children, whose identity is just emerging. Their essential inner identity is disturbed. Thus it becomes difficult for every single person growing up to find an acceptable kind of "own self", from which to act. Finally those who are too insecure, may become vulnerable to orders. The consequence are uncontrollable circumstances, such as current global violence, injustice, and finally climatic destruction.

Those who are informed are fully aware of this. The misinformed may become conspiracy theorists, and/or a number of obsessive-compulsive experts. They will allow themselves to resign, until they are trapped by similar premonition, all along an addiction for fake news, powered by desperation about a felt own lack of understanding.

Recently some AI software programs go even further toward uncontrollable circumstances, hiding along a marketing hype claiming better understanding and control. They "want" to have their say, "naturally" without any emotional acrimony of their own. This also increasingly applies to extensions of AI in the direction of AE (Artificial Emotion). One example is "affective computing", which already captures emotions<sup>12</sup> - and may soon become able to actively, in forms more directly than expected, influence decisions. Something like this can trigger further, even new forms of bitterness in people.

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Curran: "Never good enough. The fatal consequences of perfectionism - and how we can free ourselves from the pressure to self-optimize", Rowohlt/Polaris, Hamburg (2023), p. 294

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Brandstetter: "Wie KI Gefühle erfasst (How AI captures emotions)". In Gehirn&Geist, 05/2024, p. 66-71

There has long been more than enough pressure for social change - not least due to growing bitterness. We need a 2nd Enlightenment<sup>13</sup>. We need to change the way we deal with bitterness:

- In dealing with more and more disasters, there is a growing alert attention, but at the same time often resigned bitterness
- At the same time, the number of new mentally ill rulers, who are virtually bred (effectively caused) by acrimony in disasters, is growing.

Globally, even in democracies, there is a certain tendency to get used to crazy politicians, even clowns. Efforts towards better education and co-determination are increasing, while not yet strong enough.

The dangerous psychopathology of rulers has long existed among our ancestors. Shakespeare portrayed this dramatically and convincingly. Jane Goodall studied the phenomenon in great apes and identified the causes<sup>14</sup>:

"Isolation, cruelty and neglect lead to long-lasting, often lifelong social and psychological impairment. Once the animals are adults, they are no longer suitable for their role. Animal keepers will not release them into the wild. They are often caged, suffer a lifetime of psychological disorders and become very aggressive."

### **The breeding of bitterness**

Many human children and young people are suffering under cruel conditions. It is possible that anti-Semites, including terrorists, are being "bred" in GAZA more effectively than ever before. Who is the cause? Opponents are bitterly arguing about this. Could someone help mediate in the face of such bitterness? A conclusion by Varlam Shalamov, who survived the Kolyma I camp in Russia, is<sup>15</sup>:

"I have realized that man retains bitterness the longest. The flesh of a hungry man is only enough for bitterness - he is indifferent to everything else."

This makes it difficult to build new trust for future reconciliation. Furthermore, how could opponents even perceive each other as constructively enough, for both sides to feel that they will be treated fairly? There is a long way to go, although there is no other precondition for survival.

A tentative attempt was made on the fringes of the Munich Security Conference (February 16-18, 2024), when António Guterres (current Secretary-General of the United Nations) was able to communicate with Charlotte Knobloch (President of the Jewish Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria since 1985) in a good to cordial manner. Guterres took a deliberately and justifiably neutral stance<sup>16</sup>:

"Guterres also spoke of a "collective punishment" of the Palestinians in Gaza as a result of the Israeli military strikes. He literally said in November: 'The

<sup>13</sup> Rolf Kreibich: "Die Menschheit zukunftsfähig machen - Plädoyer für eine Zweite Aufklärung und Nachhaltige Entwicklung", NOEL Verlag, Oberhausen, [www.noel-verlag.de](http://www.noel-verlag.de) (2021)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.janegoodall.ch/welche-online-inhalte-schaden-den-menschenaffen/#:~:text=Direct%20interactions%20between%20chimpanzees%20and,k%C3%B6nnen%20die%20beide%20gef%C3%A4hrden>

<sup>15</sup> Varlam Shalamov: "Through the Snow - Tales from Kolyma I"; Mathes & Seitz, Berlin (2007)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/politik/habe-die-plakette-immer-in-meiner-manteltasche/>; April 5, 2024 Jüd. General

Palestinian people have suffered for 56 years under an oppressive occupation. But the grievances of the Palestinian people cannot justify the horrific attacks by Hamas. And these horrific attacks cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people."

Any kind of dangerous imprinting of cruelty in childhood and adolescence, will afterwards cause damage. It is from such bitter impact, that a number of rulers will emerge, who will be responsible for handling genocidal weapons. This is "nothing new", but currently the impact may be more absurd and kafkaesque than usual. For example with Donald Trump<sup>17</sup> :

"In December 2018, the Washington Post's fact-checking department introduced a new category, the bottomless Pinocchio, for statements that have been proven false but that a politician nevertheless repeated at least twenty times. Until then, Trump was the only politician to ever meet such criteria, while most other politicians did not repeat proven lies."

### **Risks from bitter rulers**

When I investigated violence and nuclear disasters in 1981, I had little hope of experiencing a year like 2024 alive. But for the population, the dangers remained more abstract, almost unreal, barely tangible – for both civilian and military. Today, on the other hand, my impression is that risks are perceived more vividly, especially thanks to realistic reports on television. This applies, for example, to violence, to growing climate damage and – with according further consequences – to a number of obviously crazy politicians.

The population currently fears a greater threat than in 1981. Humanity senses, how it is provoking a chaotic future. But to really verify the complex imminent challenge, and then cope in time in order to avoid chaos, we would need an enormous combination of both expertise and good will.

Perhaps this may give us hope: it is enormous what kind of crazy politicians we have survived! How crazy? Since 1981, the psychopathology of those in power has been widely researched. Sensible politicians, constructive experts and other committed people from all walks of life have always been able to take countermeasures to achieve survival. We suspect that we are a society of overburdened people, but we have a chance to cope.

In 1981, I found it necessary to examine the state of mind of those in power when dealing with the risks of nuclear disasters. I was interested in their awareness and influence, concerning both the risks of escalation and the potential extent of damage. At that time, there were reports on the psychopathology of US presidents. For their decisions under stress, I studied data and asked questions such as<sup>18</sup>:

"Is a blackmail threat to detonate a nuclear bomb credible? How can this be assessed, and dealt with?"

"What impact might a nuclear demonstration provoke, along a conventional war with heavy losses? Will this succeed in ending the war or will it trigger a further devastating escalation?"

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<sup>17</sup> Wikipedia 2024 on Donald Trump

<sup>18</sup> Philipp Sonntag: Prevention and mitigation of nuclear disasters. Osang Verlag, Bonn (1981), page 101



If, after a nuclear disaster, the local authorities and relief forces are restricted in their ability to act by foreign or local power – as happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and thereafter in the region of Chernobyl – what can be the impact? What is important, to ensure that as much of the population as possible can survive? If local and/or foreign authorities try to cover up the extent of a disaster, what impact can this have on the extent of the damage?"

I asked such questions after the explosion of the power plant in Chernobyl. The cover-up there increased the suffering and other damage enormously. What is currently relevant is how Germany should prepare itself with civil defense - including training in schools. Even in the event of a nuclear war in which Germany would not be involved, a considerable amount of radioactivity could reach and contaminate our country, way beyond hundreds of kilometers.

In the midst of chaos, good preparation can be helpful. In Israel, for example, medical care facilities conduct regular exercises based on disaster scenarios. Brigadier General Prof. Elon Glassberg, Commander of the Medical Corps of the Israeli Armed Forces, reported on his experiences<sup>19</sup> :

"The only thing that worked on October 7 was the medical care protocols."

### **Diagnosis crazy, mission impossible**

However, the topic of civil protection remains hotly debated, not least because we cannot assess the repercussions for mentally confused rulers. There is wild conjecture about the future behavior of Russian ruler Putin, even though there is a great deal of scientific uncertainty.

On the other hand, American presidents were already being investigated in a purposeful manner up until 1981 - as can best happen in a democracy with reliable data. Rentschnik and Accoce examined the medical histories of American presidents and other political leaders. They documented<sup>20</sup> :

- “- the diseases of a person;
- the type of mental disorders, dangerous emotions or irrational behaviors that are likely to be associated with such an illness;
- the person's obvious faults that match the person's illnesses and emotions.

They found a high level of agreement.

For example, President Eisenhower was diagnosed with anosognosia after his heart attack. This means a lack of understanding of one's own illness, functional disorders of the brain, including limited alertness, reduced drive, impaired orientation and slowed thought processes. Accordingly, Eisenhower did not trust himself to make decisions in a crisis such as the one in Lebanon - but he did about a world war with Russia."

For according conclusion, I include an abridged excerpt from my book 1981<sup>21</sup> .

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<sup>19</sup> Elon Glassberg, quoted in the report by Paul Schubert: "Multi-day blackout as a super disaster - critical infrastructure exposed to multiple dangers"; in *Behörden Spiegel* / April 2024, p. 35

<sup>20</sup> Rentschnik P. and P. Accoce: "Ces malades qui nous gouvernent", Stock, Paris(1976)

<sup>21</sup> op. cit. p. 100-114

"A neurologist diagnosed Woodrow Wilson with a brain disease. ... Henry Kissinger wrote about Richard Nixon that he was never more dangerous than when he believed he was no longer free to make decisions... ."

This raises doubts as to how reasonable or wrong political decisions can be. The military experts have strategic thinking models for escalation, that have been rationally expressed. Such models can be either helpful or misleading, in times of preparation. Anyway, sometimes even after internalizing such models, reality can develop completely differently.

The diagnosis of borderline and beyond craziness is broadly applicable not only to those in power, but also to the grassroots, to the victims, to people responsible for infrastructure, to teachers etc. Already a few people with such a diagnosis can cause or enlarge a tremendous destruction.

### **"First aid" for bitter rulers**

One of the intellectual fathers of today's doctrine of arms control in the field of nuclear weapons was Thomas Schelling. When I met him about 50 years ago, I had the impression that he was outstanding, both knowledgeable, and alert. He emphasized that the USA was planning a strategic force that was particularly suited to adopting a

"wait-and-see attitude" in crises,

surviving a surprise attack and punishing an attacker after its action. This way, a hasty, thoughtless escalation might be avoided. It was immediately plausible for me that Schelling was moderating realistic "war games" for senior politicians in Washington. But what remains with those in power? In the five decades since then to the present day, I have often had the impression that such experts and senior military officers appear calmer and more level-headed, more suitable for responsible reactions, than many politicians in power.

Furthermore: Only in the rarest of cases would a ruler be prepared to undergo regular physical and mental health checks in order to resign from office in the event of a questionable diagnosis. One exception was 70-year-old President Reagan in 1980. But would he have agreed to this if he had been examined by neutral medical experts?

There are currently constant press reports on the two presidential candidates Biden and Trump about how healthy they are - and how unhealthy their opponent is.

I find it difficult to assess how pragmatically resilient both US presidential candidates would react under stress, or indeed how they could react at all. The challenge becomes particularly clear when measured against a United Nations definition mentioned by Dr. Wolfram Geier, who is directly responsible for civil protection<sup>22</sup>:

"Resilience, as it is understood in a security policy sense and thus also in a population protection-specific sense, describes the ability of a system, a community or a society to resist, absorb, adapt, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner."

This was expressed accordingly in the German "Defense Policy Guidelines" of 2023 and is central to "Critical Infrastructure (KRITIS)".

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<sup>22</sup> Wolfram Geier, Head of the Risk Management, International Affairs Division at the BBK (Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance), in the "editorial" to issue 1/2024: Civil protection : "Resilience", p. 1

No medical "first aid" is effective beyond a brief moment, unless there is well prepared "second aid" from a powerful medical infrastructure. The same applies acutely to Gaza in medical terms: as long as the hospitals are not functional beyond improvised first aid (bandaging blood, etc.), then inevitable many will die and the bitterness in the surrounding area will increase enormously.

### **Exploring bitterness**

In both domestic and foreign policy, it is all too common for opponents to accuse each other of incompetence and sometimes even malice - whether consciously or unconsciously. This opens the door to further risks. What has changed for futurology since 1981 are psychologizing studies on types of people and their networks. But findings are only of limited use in terms of application. One example is<sup>23</sup> :

"A dangerous alliance of ingenuity and malice has recently been investigated in more detail. How do sinister plans develop, and what happens in the brain in the process?

For some years now, scientists have been investigating the fact that some people deliberately use their creative powers to inflict psychological or financial damage on other people - for example with creative acts of revenge or original crimes."

When it comes to the German army (Bundeswehr), to its task and engagement, it shall be strictly defense oriented, effective as politically needed, and altogether promote peace. As expected, it is common to argue that soldiers are acting out of a noble sense of responsibility, and seek precision. Nevertheless, soldiers in any army might become obsessive. Therefore democratic and pragmatic control is all along indispensable.

Thomas Curran distinguishes between self-oriented, other-oriented and socially oriented perfection<sup>24</sup>. All three forms can drive an individual, as well as a group, into pathological, even egomaniac reactions: An emotion and intention along "America First" can be anywhere between either perfectly adequate, or fake with tragic liability for immense destruction.

### **Grassroots approaches to avoid future forms of acrimony**

Given the abundance of risks, it should come as no surprise: There are always perpetrators and victims, both globally and locally. There is serious damage potential and people become affected accordingly. The stress never stops. Awareness of the impasse in which humanity finds itself is growing. The cry for justice and peace, especially at grassroots level, is fundamental, loud and clear.

A common feeling is that damage and stress, no matter under what circumstances, should be as well under control controllable as possible. Evidently, precision is not feasible. We must cope with the reality, and there will always be various failures.

In some cases correction may take too long. Then protests, of young people in particular, are quite natural and easy to understand. It is precisely there that we can try to fundamentally understand acrimony and enable positive experiences for

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<sup>23</sup> Corinna Perchthold-Stefan and Christian Rominger: "The dark side of creativity", in: Gehirn und Geist, 3/2024, p. 26

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Curran: "Never good enough", rowohlt (2023)

dealing with risks in the future. Where this succeeds, it is diplomatic, living democracy.

Projects in Neukoelln's youth social work, as forwarded and guided by Netzwerk Zukunft, shall provoke, trigger, and establish resilience. We ourselves are often just as much the learners as the young people. We often have to deal with frustrated, angry young people who have experienced all kinds of discrimination, especially poverty, war and violence. The first step is always to understand frustrations, issues, fears and desires, then to recognize interests and concerns, to encourage engagement, to create adequate low-threshold opportunities to cope in the neighborhood. It is essential to enable young people to form alliances, while enduring reactions such as unreliability, anger and setbacks, which is always a new challenge: for the young people - and for us.

It would be interesting to have a project in which all the problems mentioned could be taken up and implemented for new computer games, by role play etc. Young people and we might support creative computer scientists. That might become one way among others for the reduction of bitterness. In order to avoid future violence and grief, modern tools shall be pre-structured and visualized.

On a local as well as global basis, getting "used" to crazy politicians and their bitter impact is not a game, but rather definitely serious. Today even any "modern" society over and over again can get stuck in the dead end of its "chronic alleviation of symptoms". Hope arises, where empathic youth work succeeds. It may occur, where bitterness is dealt with fairly at eye level with the young people. There, a "second enlightenment" is naturally prepared, initiated - and vividly imaginable.