

Regulation Building Measures for Diplomacy and Politics

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

The unspeakable quarreling and suffering worldwide is a tragic dead end in 2024. Diplomatic “confidence-building measures” (cbm) might be an adequate tool, and a civilized prerequisite. However so far, the usual impasse in negotiations is that each party blames the other for the failure. Thereby peaceful rule-building measures get out of reach. For diplomacy and politics, common regulations, such as general laws or special treaties, may be a result of unclear compromise, and exist rather only formally. As long as “valid” regulations are interpreted differently, misused, and applied controversially, disputes arise.

There are "United" Nations, artificial entities with divergent interests. What is missing are United People, with regulations so that are so fair and positively tested, that they are complied with quite naturally. Meantime, as long, as trust cannot be achieved, essential regulations are deficient. Then a diplomatic impasse may become constantly widened, and accordingly attempts toward effective cbm usually fail.

International law already corresponds relatively well to useful regulations. But there is a kind of “customary law” that allows power and violence to be used without interference. Trust is and remains impossible. For example, regarding essential regulations, as long as simple and/or fundamental statements of Islam and Zionism contradict each other, then hardly any peaceful compromise might be achieved. Consistent ethics and honest, ethical people would be helpful. However, challenges and necessities are often more comprehensive. This article examines acute conflicts from the perspective of possible better regulations.

Kenneth Boulding was a famous model builder, investigating arms race, revealing lack of regulation for valid security. Inevitably it has also to do with ethics. He argued, and proposed¹:

“Pushing a button and burning children alive is not the ethics of Achilles and Hector!”

“The United Nations ought to have a spying agency, that spies on everybody and publishes the results immediately.”

Blaming across the board and hardly ever regretting it: the consequences

The structures of ethical and diplomatic impasses are not new. As early as 1958, the "Institute for Mediterranean Affairs in New York" reported on the desperation and powerlessness of the "Palestinian Arab refugees" and the dramatic need for action². It was emphasized:

"For example, it is irrelevant to discuss who is to blame for the current fate of the refugees. The problem is the same whether they left their homes because

¹ Kenneth Boulding: “National Defence through Stable Peace”, Laxenburg: International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, 1983, p. 19, and 6

² Hannah Arendt: "On Palestine", Piper, 2024, p. 31/32

the Israeli forces expelled them, or whether they cooperated with the invading Arab armies or for other reasons or for no reason."

When it comes to common regulations, both a common understanding and intention are essential. Without a joint effort by states to understand each other, cbm remain a long way off. This is particularly revealed and evident, regarding analyses of IALANA, the lawyers' organization "IALANA Germany" (<https://www.ialana.de/>). IALANA attempted to make a contribution "War between Hamas and Israel 2023"³ to the objectification of the disputes; its conclusion:

"Both parties to the conflict are in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. What is therefore required is not unilateral partisanship and arms deliveries, but an immediate end to the armed conflict"

Since the founding of Israel as a state, there has been almost endless arbitrariness on the part of both parties to the conflict. Everyone makes accusations and gives their opponents reasons to make accusations. IALANA emphasized again and again: All this is far from an acceptable kind of "self-defence".

From the perspective of a victim: Varlam Shalamov, a survivor of the Soviet Gulag⁴ :

"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."

It is possible for groups of people to increase their bitterness to almost immeasurable levels. iz3w (<https://www.iz3w.org/>) regularly reports on global suffering: The focal points of the current issues in mid-2024 are: "Multiple crises" and "Genocides"⁵ .

For promoting change, an exemplary understanding for each other on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference 2024 had been achieved, as forward-looking: Charlotte Knobloch (Central Council of Jews in Germany) talked with António Guterres (UN). She did emphasize the suffering on October 7, 2023 and afterwards in Israel, while he illustrated the systematic suffering of Palestinians over 56 years. Both people were highly committed, respecting each other, and responsible with a shared hope for the future! From such an awareness, peaceful cooperation is possible at any time. Usually politicians seldom achieve such a common understanding of reality.

My family had ancestors with Jewish roots. In remembering survivors and victims, I feel solidarity, especially with Israel. As a guest of Palestinians, in Lebanon, etc., I hope with them. Since 1964, my professional job has been conflict resolution, in warfare and beyond. As a rule, they have given up all hope of ending anti-Semitism. In Germany in particular, politicians and experts are pursuing the widespread "chronic alleviation of symptoms" that is financed by the mainstream. A prime example is the "Decoding Antisemitism" project at the TU Berlin⁶: 130,000 user comments from social media have been collected since 2021. It is about distinguishing whether a note is a critical comment on Israel or typical anti-Semitism. Thereby it may be possible to nuance opinions, even to skillfully expose one-sided

³ <https://www.ialana.de/aktuell/ialana-deutschland-zur-aktuellen-diskussion/ialana-zu-konflikten-und-loesungen>

⁴ Varlam Shalamov: "Through the Snow - Tales from Kolyma 1", p. 289, Matthes & Seitz, Berlin, (2010), p. 289

⁵ iz3w / 3rd World Information Center: "Still repairable? - The multiple crisis" (issue April 2024); and: "The darkest hour - genocides" (issue July/Aug. 2024

⁶ Eva Murasov: "Antisemitismus erkennen – Wie man Aussagen zu Nahost einordnet" Tagesspiegel Oct. 31, 2024, p. B 27 / and [decoding-antisemitism.eu](https://www.decoding-antisemitism.eu)

accusations. But the political situation will remain by and large as before. What is missing are forward-looking proposals for essentially helpful regulations.

With this article, I am trying to help to get out of the diplomatic deadlock. I am aware that my comments may be hard for many traumatized Jews to endure. But survival worth living can only be achieved together with all groups concerned.

Expelling yourself from paradise

Shortly after the founding of the state of Israel, the future could have been much better steered, for example in the spirit of Ben Gurion: "We must be strong and just".

It would not have been wrong to try a model of strong cooperation. The fact that it was not even attempted in a diplomatic and respectful form, on a viable scale is the fault of both the Arabs and Israel. Debates about "the bigger" fault are nonsensical.

With its modern agricultural technology, Israel could have turned the entire Middle East region into a paradise! After its foundation, Israel was able to secure its own use of land more and more militarily and police-wise until 2024. At least there were sometimes seemingly constructive negotiations. But they remained tough and without progress. There was a lack of willingness to trust. Cbm remained uncertain and hesitant. The almost endless back and forth of Yasser Arafat's actions and statements regarding violence⁷ was also damaging. It led to the Nobel Peace Prize, but not to peace. For decades Arab States did refuse to integrate Palestinian refugees as part of their own society.

2019 I wrote⁸:

"We Child Survivors know, when "confidence building measures" with those in power fail, survival may become as difficult and rare, as we have experienced."

When perceiving the omissions, it is important to understand how great the damage and suffering was for people for decades and still exists today. Of course, the "3-D test" provides important information: suspicion of anti-Semitism is tested by watching "de-legitimization, demonization, and double standards⁹". Of course, Israel does not engage in "unprovoked genocide" - but genocide? There are objective criteria for assessment. The question of what can be done effectively when warriors (terrorists? freedom fighters?), such as Hamas operate from schools and hospitals. It must continuously be examined in a differentiated manner.

Anti-Semitism in the form of a subjectively rigid prejudice was and is always unjust and immoral. Regarding individual cases, in certain situations and behaviors, everyone can try to evaluate as good and fair "as possible", given own viewpoints. Disputes are often difficult to resolve. What is objectively (!) ascertainable is how blatantly anti-Semitism harms both perpetrators and victims. What struck me, for example, during my work as a scientist in 1980, was difficult for me to bear. It seemed so absurd to me that after a few days, or a few years, I just couldn't believe

⁷ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jassir_Arafat

⁸ Philipp Sonntag: "Forever Alert – Child Survivors in Action before 1945 and beyond 2019.", (Beggerow, Berlin; 2019; 240 pages); sold out, but is available for free per download at www.philipp-sonntag.de/foreveralert, p. 155

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Ds_of_antisemitism

it, so I rechecked it several times. But the result remained correct, here is my short summary¹⁰ :

"The population increase in Egypt within five years was greater than the total population of Israel! And the dispute was over the limited small territory of Israel. In addition, the costly armaments alone had harmful consequences for Egypt comparable to a war:

Expensive Mirage airplanes (fighter jets from France) were purchased. The armament costs converted per soldier amounted to DM 30,000.-. But there was only one teacher for an average of 78 pupils and practically no teaching materials. Very young pupils had to spend a day looking for pests in the fields for the equivalent of 10 cent. They were driven by older students with a whip. They were exposed to pests and epidemics without medical help."

In response, actually some agreements between Egypt and Israel have been achieved, for instance for a certain arms limitation, as well as for a somewhat reduced willingness to escalate on the part of both states. However, the violence in the Middle East was not overcome. The costs of this failure can currently be seen every day in the global media.

The misery in Egypt in 2024 is still glaring: population growth has remained high and has reached 110 million people. The Nile is heavily polluted, plants and fish are barely thriving. Millions of impoverished families live on very small wooden boats and are exposed to disease and poisoning. Their children have no chance of attending school. Furthermore, considerable military spending still cements the misery, that could have been avoided through cooperation.

Mental preconditions for basic change with common goal-oriented regulations

The characteristic dead end is evident. Only a basic common effort can help, to establish new regulations for valid cbm. "Basic" implies to include several categories, such as diplomacy, power, ethics and/or religion, conflicting interests and balancing of interests. This chapter is included as an excursion, in order to include mental aspects.

The usual violations of ethics are flagrant. In various religious admonitions, they have been emphasized. For Middle East I tried to follow the intention by a recent German article¹¹, its wording in English:

"Who among all of you in the Middle East is without remorse?

Who casts the first stone - every day?"

This English article actually is an update of the German article, extending toward regulation, needed as support for giving cbm a chance.

Where do I get the courage to contribute toward fair solutions? Conflicting interests are part of the adventures of my own life, which has been shaped by experiences related to the Middle East.

¹⁰ Philipp Sonntag: "Aspekte einer Anwendung von statistischen Rechenverfahren auf Rüstungsausgaben, p. 147. In: Rüstung und Ökonomie (ed. Ph. Sonntag), Haag und Herchen, Frankfurt, (1982)

¹¹ Philipp Sonntag: "Wer von euch allen in Nahost ist ohne Reue? Wer wirft den ersten Stein – täglich?" <https://www.netzwerk-zukunft.de/veranstaltungen-publikationen.html> , Oktober 2024, 14 pages)

To explain, I will name four inner voices that I have to balance and integrate within myself on a daily basis:

1. As a child survivor, I am considered a victim of the Holocaust. In fact, my extended family suffered many losses. Therefore, I feel an obligation and a passion to get involved in the security of Jews in general. I visited Israel several times.
2. Starting 1966, I visited Arabic areas in Middle East several times. For example, in 1975 in Beirut I stopped a garbage truck and came to the city's garbage dumps. Nearby was a Palestinian camp and small children were sorting broken glass etc. for recycling. They were in a pitiful state of health. It was despairing, beyond imagination.
3. As a scientist, I published a lot about traumatized children. I became aware, how the bitter impact hurting helpless victims can destroy an entire life, own family and inflicted environment.
4. I have spent decades studying the psychological and social backgrounds of unresolved conflicts. It became clear to me how unnecessary and absurd many of the so often deadly causes are, and furthermore many very bad consequences. What kind of people are we? How could such widespread failure occur? Why is it so difficult to find effective regulations, to design them pragmatically and to deal with them in a trusting manner? How can we get out of the political impasse in order to build effective trust?

We are a society of people who over-load and then over-whelm each other.

This is particularly bad for the children affected. Where "adults" are unable to resolve conflicts sensibly, it is often due to serious disorders and traumata, so they never really grew up as children and adolescents - instead they remained mentally helpless, indecisive, giving up quickly, and they remain children who only grew up physically. This can be so bad that they barely perceive reality, in fact suppress it and only strive for pointless substitute goals.

As soon as precise regulations are indeed broadly respected, as so far for rather pointless goals, they may be strictly obeyed, for instance in sports or music. Quite the opposite may occur for basic goals, all along political quarrels, where regulations often are missing, or not respected.

Problems that are difficult to solve can be the case with fundamental goals that are important for survival, such as political disputes, where rules are often missing or ignored. In these cases, the content of the rules is controversial. Ethics are suppressed. Strict command force innocent people to use violence. Repression is reinforced and harms future generations. It is often unclear, even with animals: what kind of violence should one use against arbitrary perpetrators of violence? How should each person deal with their own doubts? The nature of the challenge is unfortunately unclear.

The way clear tasks are dealt with is completely different, where enormous human abilities are revealed and there are many examples of high and highest achievements.

Engaged in sports, people can climb up very high mountains, succeed as "iron men", performing pirouettes on an ice surface means risking serious injuries in team sports.

However, members of a team may be chatting to each other in a bored manner during a break, superficially mentioning vaguely suspected causes of war without

ever having made the effort to investigate the facts. They prefer to argue superficially and suppress important clues so as not to waste energy arguing. This can be a common behavior - although naturally there can of course be exceptions for individual athletes. It may be similar, when a team is excluded from a competition for political reasons.

Lawyers can "help" to polarize a political dispute. On the other hand, referees in sports would quickly lose their jobs if they cause one-sided decisions, for example while being watched closely by tens of thousands of spectators, in a football stadium.

How then could Daniel Barenboim succeed in forming a perfectly peaceful orchestra with members from Israel and Palestine? With musical notes there is not the slightest doubt about which notes are involved, at what time period, and with the conductor indicating adequate emotion. With such a regulation it is impossible for "possible enemies", to argue about an interpretation. Otherwise it would be as if the players of a soccer team were fighting against each other during a game, with one of their own strikers taking the ball away from their own libero...

Considering now my "four voices", each with a commitment to specific interests, I return to the objective challenges in the Middle East. None (!) of the interests shall be dominant. A viable solution must be fair and lasting, which can only be achieved with clear regulations. International law "already" is potentially a valuable aid, as long as it is not abused for special interests.

Preventive violence destroys security and cements misery

Before 1948, the Arabs in Palestine had little political power. But they did have a basic, meagre and yet highly valuable homeland. Their pent-up, always emphasized bitterness is directly related to their behavior up to the atrocity of October 7, 2023. It may "explain" the violence somewhat, but it can never justify unlawful acts and it will hardly ever be effective. For Israelis this means that if one considers the violence on October 7, 2023 as terror without recognizing the former history and terror, remarkably, also essentially recognizing how tragic it must be for Palestinians, then one is being dangerously dishonest. Any kind of justifying own "counter-terror" after October 7, 2023 is against recognized international law.

For Palestinians, this means that if one believes that past suffering "allows" actions outside of international law, one is being much the same dangerously dishonest. "Taking the law into one's own hands" may be Wild West romanticism, but it is not productive. Both parties will be damaged by growing bitterness well into the future.

The Jewish bitterness after 2,500 years of anti-Semitism and ultimately the Holocaust must be understood and respected. But there is no way it might "explain", how the Israeli intention of destroying Hamas is being stubbornly maintained. It does not appear to be effective either. For it is happening even though it is clearly recognizable how many future terrorists (later called Hamas or otherwise) are being raised among the children of Palestinians in Gaza. There will be more of them than can be killed by Israel, now and/or later. A real and absurd tragedy! It is clear how this process leads to a worldwide consolidation of anti-Semitism. This is happening particularly among young people, right down to "pro-Palestine" students at German universities. For another 2,500 years? In any case, approaches to cbm are at an all-time low.

A purely mechanical insistence on "German raison d'état" can only make the disaster worse. There were shortcomings even in political science, which of course should have been objective. If the "reparations" after 1945 had been honest, if old Nazis had been avoided in the authorities, then the "German raison d'état" could have succeeded sensibly, with a sense of proportion and - yes, with goodwill. Healthy regulation, with much less hatred of Jews, would have been possible. An indication of how messed up the situation is is the "need" to "bring in" police officers (!) to protect Jews and Jewish arguments at events at universities in the middle of a democracy.

By politically polarizing Zionism and Islamism, a dead end is solidified and tied down. Then all and any solutions to a conflict are systematically (!) excluded. No "God" (de facto no self-proclaimed representative of god) has a right to enforce arbitrary decisions. An "officially criminal god" should immediately be recognized as a truly blasphemous fake, and as absurd. In fact, he would not be a God. It should always be detected and refused, when someone praises his God's alleged arbitrariness, even of one-sided partisanship. Even his own god! The political goal and result then will be a one-sided partisanship. A typical "human" consequence can be to perceive and "declare" one's own violence as quasi "permissible".

However, this has so far perpetuated the disaster: because competitors and opponents see their own (and only their own) violence as "necessary". Even the "United Nations" can in such cases hardly move anything in the direction of peace. The global reality is therefore all too often at odds with international law. What Cold as well as Hot Warriors demand, will trigger absurd situations, I imagine such as:

"From then on, every state would be 'allowed' to commit genocide as an everyday phenomenon. Violence would be as boundless as it is unrestrained. Objective human rights, as harbingers of civilization, would be excluded from then on. Peace, civilization, even mutual compromise would become unattainable. The existential costs would increase even more than before. At the same time, the longing for civilization would grow strongly. The result would be even more violence."

Globally, similar behavior is already in many cases quite common. Almost as if it would be a customary law that "applies": But then violence is followed by a backlash, with further escalating violence. That may happen to the extent, that factually insecure politicians seem to be able to do so for a short time. A number of "visibly factually obsessive" advisors might emphasize further one-sided behavior. Meanwhile, damage and bitterness grow. Because blind polarization is a diplomatic dead end for reconciliation.

The evidence is blatant and clear. One indication is when Hamas goes into a blind blood frenzy on October 7, 2023, with or without any declared military goal. Another indication is when Israel does plan for enormous civilian casualties in order to kill a few terrorists - even though the actions ultimately breed more resistance over the years than IDF forces might eliminate. And globally, they breed lasting anti-Semitism when they even kill UN soldiers and journalists.

If UNRWA has 13,000 personnel in Gaza, how many would inevitably be from Hamas or similar groups? Perhaps a thousand - in any case it would be difficult to control. One report put the figure at a hundred, which suggests that there is reasonable control. Nevertheless, the population in Israel, perhaps for justifying own actions,

clings to a “necessity” to prohibit UNRWA access to Gaza.¹² Much-needed relief supplies are not reaching the victims in Gaza.

But such arbitrary behavior is not only happening in the Middle East. It is equally important to honestly expose such damage everywhere in the world, instead of denying it.

Peace efforts then remain - often for months/years, largely without any prospect of sustainable success. The effects are devastating (literally), both economically, socially, ethically/religiously, acutely ecologically, "humanly" overall. Lasting compromises are becoming structurally impossible.

Polarization in negotiations is harmful. This happens in Germany, for example, when people deny themselves and others any criticism of Jews, including Israel, out of quite obvious, "explainable" feelings of guilt after the Holocaust. And after the Holocaust, the Jewish attitude is also "explainable" because it is immediately comprehensible: “Against anyone who attacks us, we will defend ourselves with all (!) means”. Unfortunately, wherever they (Israelis, and/or even other Jews) violate the law, they make themselves vulnerable.

In itself, arms deliveries from Germany to Israel are directly plausible as long as they are for existential security and comply with international law. But where is the line between existential self-defense and excessive power politics? This is always politically controversial. How, if at all, can one remain "on the safe side" (one's own conviction), practically at least on a reasonably safe side, in the unavoidable balancing of pragmatic and ethical considerations?

The conditions for a "NEVER AGAIN"

The acute challenge: an appeal such as "NEVER AGAIN" can actually destroy itself in Israel and in Germany. It may happen to the extent that Israel, as a party to the conflict may be protected (according to German “raison d'état”), definitely now commits the kind of crimes behind "NEVER AGAIN" itself - for far more than self-defense. For self-defense to be justified, it would have to serve as a necessary defense against a present and unlawful attack. This definition, as a clear, globally recognized limitation, should have nothing to do with the preventive destruction of an opponent. As soon as such basic principles are disregarded, certain German arms deliveries may become questionable, quite unlike in the past.

Crimes alike committed by Hamas, also going beyond self-defense, do not change the facts of Israeli behavior (going beyond self-defense). If such evidence is not dealt with honestly, if the dilemma is not even named honestly, if doubts are quasi automatically suppressed, then the dangers of destruction and the extent of anti-Semitism grow. This is an extremely difficult challenge. It must be taken into account, even if a certain "preventive destruction" of enemy forces with preventive intentions succeeds - it is difficult to assess the extent to which a strong reconstruction of enemy forces will occur. Basic: Whenever there is a dead end with sheer endless violence, then former cbm are missing, and literally always on both sides. Then new, powerful cbm are really hard to be built up. But mostly there is no other remedy!

Even the work of "anti-Semitism commissioners" can reach a dead end in that it does not prevent or reverse the current growth of anti-Semitism. It is therefore of existential

¹² Mareike Enghusen: „Palästinenser Hilfswerk – Warum das Verbot in Israel so populär ist“, Tagesspiegel 31. 10. 2024, p. 8

importance to what extent these commissioners succeed in having an awareness of the problems and possible undesirable developments. They can always provide most welcome consolation in cases of lamentation and suffering. But as long as anti-Semitism is growing, something has to change. Historically, anti-Semitism was often in such a dead end, that those bitterly affected were unable to do anything about it. The establishment of the highly innovative IDF was initially the right response to this.

Israel meantime (by clearly and repeatedly violating international law) is making it difficult even for the nations that support it, to further engage emotionally and practically for a NEVER AGAIN without hesitation. This was clearly stated in the NYTI, in a short note¹³ :

"It happened when pagers (radio message receivers and sometimes transmitters) and walkie-talkies were rigged with explosives by Israeli intelligence prior to delivery to Hezbollah and then detonated remotely by surprise. It was done by bringing down multi-story residential buildings with bombs so powerful that Hezbollah leaders were killed in massive bunkers under the building."

How can Israel be so technically superior? It has enormous advantages in terms of infrastructure and the ability to provide high-quality education. Since the founding of the state in 1948, women have been consciously and consistently involved in education, training and taking on responsibility at school and in the workplace. But in the surrounding countries this is completely impossible. A main cause is missing, namely valuable early childhood education. Any positive change in the future will require strong commitment and enormous time. After a peace treaty with trust, Israel with its modern capabilities could help decisively a lot in poor Arabic countries.

The consequences of poor training

In Lebanon, as in Iran, Gaza, etc., critical characteristics are often very pronounced among young people:

- Their high proportion of the population
- Their outrage against their own suffering and helplessness. Their "murderous jubilation" after the terrorist action in Israel on Oct. 7, 2024 might indicate: Many "previously outraged young people", may join Hamas.

The comparatively low level of training and education of young people in general should be noticed by dictators as a nuisance for their own power. The time is over when dictatorships with "simple" soldiers, prison guards, without human rights activists etc. could be safe, and remain powerful in the long term (!). With such deficiencies, dictators cement the helplessness of their future soldiers and terrorists. There can only be a few highly trained fighters of all kinds, who know what they do and cause, as long as the education of children is poor.

Nevertheless, it is possible to build underground tunnels, for example, with extreme effort - and this was successful against the USA in Vietnam. But in most cases, it is impossible to do more than complicate the countermeasures of modern opponents who are willing to sacrifice their lives. This also reveals the great importance Israel attaches to killing the leaders of its enemies - they might hard to replace.

¹³ Michael Walzer: Pager bombs don't belong in a just war". In New York Times International, Sept. 23, 2024, pp. 1 and 13

Strong emphasis on education can be very successful, now and later. One modern example is India. Accordingly, young people in Israel are subject to a high performance principle, comparable to (or higher than) that in Germany. Even despite a number of failures, one conclusion applies, see issue 3/2024 of the WZB¹⁴: performance is not only demanded and assessed, it is also controlled and achieved. The prerequisites are costly, while high investments in education are inevitable. In poor countries, especially those that have been destroyed, almost all prerequisites are lacking; the tragedy of children and young people in the Middle East outside Israel is, that many would also be fit for many tasks in this area, but hardly ever get a chance. This is an example of the military-political impasse that outdated training and preparations can lead to. And it exemplifies the enormous emotions that need to be controlled in the event of change.

Regarding Iran as an example: The solidarity and commitment of the exiles against the mullahs in Iran is strong. I think the emphasis on a well-networked "organization" (in Iran and with us) is right. The confidence that there will be a liberating change in Iran is admirable. In Germany a committed group is considering human rights, especially for migrants, see: <https://menschenrechtsverein.org/>

The mullahs would have to be weak, as a precondition to bring about the desired change. Exiles have been waiting for such weakness for decades. There have always been reasons for weakness, but the mullahs never seemed impressed enough to quit alike the former shah.

State terrorism is generally more penetrating, more severe and more broadly lethal than private terrorism. But now in September 2024, there was a striking weakness: after the killing of terrorists in Tehran by Israel, the Revolutionary Guards, rulers, media and public spectacularly announced revenge and retaliation. But nothing spectacular of the sort happened, at least up to November 2024.

The opinions on this, from experts and similarly from laypeople, cover a broad spectrum. One assumption is that those in power thought they could finally "save Iran's honor" with the population even with a limited attack. At the same time they may not have realistically calculated the extent of their own weakness, especially the low impact of damage in Israel. On the one hand, the youth in Iran become incited by every frustration, so future terrorists are virtually "bred". Enthusiasm for democracy and an idea of how to achieve own competence are hardly ever kindled. On the other hand, nevertheless, the weakness of the mullahs may ignite new, unexpected hope for change. The mullahs may be:

- full of fear, when things get tough for them, regarding attacks from Israel, and also fear of one's own, largely young population.
- while at the same time being smart to some extent, with hopes of at least limited cbm (confidence-building measures) to avoid escalation; in this sense, they may be perhaps more prudent than Israel, at the moment.

Both signal a preliminary stage of willingness to negotiate. The existentially most important thing is to avoid a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Historically, for most nuclear powers, their own nuclear bomb has led to more caution, beyond religious or other inflexibility (evident exception: North Korea). But by no means it led to "security". Deterrence is always liable to cause escalation.

¹⁴ WZB (Social Science Research Center Berlin), Mitteilungen - Quartalsheft für Sozialforschung, Issue 185, September 2024, Topic: "Performance / Effort, Success, Justice", 59 pp.

Difficult commitment to human rights

What to do? With new hope and further prudence, global human rights organizations can recharge their batteries with new confidence. However, all involved and concerned must by no means become reckless: From his experience in the Soviet gulag, Varlam Shalamov can give us pragmatic pointers for striking a balance between courage and caution (here is an excerpt from pages 289-293 of his book¹⁵:

"What I saw and recognized in the camp:

1. The extraordinary fragility of human culture and civilization. Man became a beast within three weeks, along hard labor, cold, hunger and beatings.
4. I realized, that man retains his bitterness for the longest time ...
6. I realized that Stalin's "victories" were won, because he killed innocent people - an organization, ten times smaller in number, but an organization, would have swept Stalin away in two days.
12. that beatings are almost irrefutable as an argument ...
43. that I understood what power means and what a man with a gun means.
46. that the writer must be a foreigner in the matters he writes about - otherwise, if he knows the material well, he will write in such a way that no one will understand him."

Such experiences are roughly comparable in Iran and just as difficult to endure. Germans can assume the aforementioned role of "foreigner". Some are academics, like me, and quite a few are human rights activists and/or historians. I might try to support the people of Iran as a writer. I have a Kafkaesque, ghostly, grotesque impression of the society as a whole in Iran. That is exactly what I would try to write down, but I have not enough information. On October 26, 2024, as a guest of the Human Rights Association for Iran, as I recognized "many sad faces", it had this effect on me: at first sight depressing, then full of desperate resistance.

One thing applies to all of us human beings, as soon as we are affected in a similar way:

< We preserve our bitterness, and our bitterness preserves us >

That applies, be it until own death or until joint success. Success will finally come politically and it will be like a new birth for those affected. USA then might no longer be "the great Satan" and Israel "the little Satan" for Iran. What might such a basic change imply for dealing with anti-Semitism in Germany, in the future?

The historian Wolfgang Benz, former director of the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism at TU Berlin, has published well-researched, tolerantly sensible writings on anti-Semitism for decades. He called for arguments instead of affects, clearly distinguishing and specifying which arguments in the bitter dispute over Palestine were recognizably anti-Semitic - and which were not¹⁶. He of course knew what was going on, but even he did not initially specify how and to what extent Israel (and Hamas anyway) violated international law and human rights. Therefore, he did not address which actions could be effective for a peaceful future. This is certainly the

¹⁵ Varlam Shalamov "Through the Snow - Tales from Kolyma I", publisher Matthes & Seitz, Berlin (2013, written around 1960); pp. 289-293

¹⁶ Wolfgang Benz: "Universities and anti-Semitism", Tagesspiegel of February 26, 2024, p. B20

most difficult challenge of the intention “NEVER AGAIN” after the holocaust. Students may perceive such caution as incomplete or one-sided in light of the images from Gaza. Many students are bitter - but not anti-Semitic, unless they were before. I suspect Wolfgang Benz will continue to contribute diplomatically to the survival, by means of cbm.

Against this backdrop, it should come as no surprise how desperately reticent the official representatives of Jews in Germany were, until around the beginning of August 2024. Initially, there was not a single page in the June/2024 issue of the journal "Juedische Allgemeine" (Jewish General Newspaper), that even hinted that Israel might have made mistakes in Gaza. At most, some reservations, not real remorse or pangs of conscience were evident, regarding the damage. This reticence probably happened in the hope of being able to continue a self image as innocent as possible".

President Josef Schuster, whose sensitivity to the fate of victims is beyond any doubt, has written an excellent article on page 4/5 of this issue of "Juedische Allgemeine" about the bitter fate of admirable Jewish doctors during the Holocaust. But alike Wolfgang Benz, he carefully avoided any violation of the blanket taboo of a "German raison d'état" for Israel.

On page 2 of this "Juedische Allgemeine" (June 2024) it says: "The suffering of the 140 hostages, who are presumably still alive, is always present". This is probably how all Jews around the world feel. However, no realistic responsibility is taken for the almost 40,000 dead and over a million suffering in Gaza. Their fate is attributed (on page 6) by members of the community entirely to Hamas as a terrorist organization. For example: "... like many of my friends, I am convinced that Israel has no choice but to do everything in its power to completely disarm Hamas and its accomplices in order to protect its own population." At the same time some awareness is rising, that , "Israel's existence is threatened", by rising global opposition. Also it became clear, hat "the reputation of our army has been deeply shaken after October 7".

Realistic policy

What happens in the future will depend heavily on own behavior. That implies for Israel pragmatically and sensitively, own actions should be in the spirit of Ben Gurion: "we must be strong and just". It was precisely with this in mind that Josef Schuster used his sense of proportion to specify the many influences on anti-Semitism in Germany and Europe, showing how one can strive for a more objective view of Israel's current behavior and from which democratic attitude a comprehensive new security for Jews could be built.¹⁷

For Near East a gigantic range of possible developments have to be taken into account. Later, after evidence what happened will be clear, then often “facts” will become ultimately described by experts as "realistic" in retrospect. Forecasts are hardly possible. Predictions are not even possible for the behavior of irrationally bitter opponents.

¹⁷ Josef Schuster: „Deutschland ist unsicherer geworden, ohne Zweifel“, Tagesspiegel Sept. 17, 2024, p. 16/17“. Schuster in this article refers to Jews being definitely less safe in Germany: "Germany has become more insecure, without a doubt".

Even just developing "reasonable forecasts" can be vague. Or one would have to limit oneself largely to sub-areas. For example, professional German futurology provides precisely considered options for the civilian sector¹⁸. But military aspects are hardly mentioned in the summary. However, an AI evaluation of the entire study, included as part of the study, does provide some clues:

"The report "New Horizons 2045 - Missions for Germany" addresses armaments and war in the context of geopolitical developments and the security architecture. It emphasizes that the international security architecture, in particular NATO, has begun to falter, as illustrated by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 in violation of international law. This has fundamentally called into question the European post-war order and the international security architecture.

The report emphasizes that Germany and Europe must make a greater contribution within the framework of existing security systems, in particular to protect critical infrastructures. It also points out that internal security should be guaranteed by the assertiveness of the state and the high level of acceptance of rules in society.

In summary, the report emphasizes the need for a robust security architecture and the importance of international alliances such as NATO to meet the challenges of armament and war."

The AI perspective provides useful initial indications for planning and control in Germany, and perhaps suggestively for Europe. However, "politics" in the Middle East is still a long way from being rational and attaining feasible regulations.

Anyway, to the extent that the idea of one's own mistakes is excluded, and thus any remorse, injustice is pre-programmed. As a result approaching cbm appears to be virtually unattainable now. Security, through "necessary" violence, causes enormous destruction. There is no understanding for onlookers such as German pupils and students, most of whom know little of the historical background, while they see atrocities in Gaza on television every day. Their reflex is completely understandable. They hear the justification that it would be "necessary" to destroy Hamas. A Hamas which, after months of war, still seemed to be ready for a lot of action! The "successes against terror" announced by Israel early on as quickly achievable are missing. This has a profound effect. While young people around the world in particular find images of the destruction in Gaza intolerable, it would have been appropriate to make an honest and self-critical statement in accordance with international law accusing Jews of being at least partly responsible. Otherwise, anti-Semitism will continue to be strengthened worldwide to an almost immeasurable extent. As long as Zionism is officially taken seriously by Israel as a justification for a "God" having "designated" a piece of land exclusively for Israel, the globally common peaceful regulation by international law is and will remain impossible.

Although: Since the middle/end of September, there have been a number of success stories from Israel in the fight against and killing of key leaders in Hamas and Hezbollah. Such surprising turns for many may change the global mood on Israel and anti-Semitism somewhat, while there are always many civilian casualties, both planned and actual. While the crimes against human rights remain undeniably blatant, it seems also that the actions are militarily rather pointless, in that the

¹⁸ D2030 - Rethinking Germany e.V.: D2045_Neue-Horizonte-Studienreport.pdf on https://www.d2030.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/D2045_Neue-Horizonte-Studienreport.pdf

strength of Hamas and Hezbollah could be - and currently often is - rebuilt to a relevant extent at any time. New at the end of September 2024 were strong, locally targeted attacks by Israel in Lebanon and Iran. Initial assessments in the USA emphasize and relativize the possible effects. David French emphasizes, among other things¹⁹:

"Hamas killed more civilians than the large armies of Egypt, Syria and other allies in the 1967 and 1973 wars. But as then, Israel was able to gain the upper hand, after initial losses through intensive efforts. Of 24 battalions, 22 were destroyed, with 17,000 casualties among Hamas fighters, compared to less than a thousand Israeli soldiers. In September Hezbollah suffered 500 casualties and thousands of rockets were destroyed. Hezbollah's retaliation was weak. As with Hamas and other jihadists, fighters and young people were severely demoralized, especially after the death of Hassan Nasrallah. The bitterness is and remains high."

Overall, the following applies: In the short term, Israel has fended off attacks, as in the past. Predictions are not really possible - the range of possible developments goes as far as over and again expecting renewed military dominance by Israel²⁰. If such dominance will go on, speculation will run rampant as to what will happen in the surrounding area - from social collapse to revolutions. Just in case these were to lead to a kind of democratization (even in Iran), young people and/or adults could create completely new forms of social restructuring and even reconstruction - again with unforeseen positive and/or negative consequences for Israel and the Middle East as a whole.

All ideas of feasible security may collapse as soon as missiles (interceptor missiles and/or attack missiles) become technically better and cheaper due to technological progress. This is a critical balance, that might be disturbed at any time according to a large variety of influences. .

In the short and long term, mutual acrimony and the destruction of cbm will make any lasting peace more difficult. All along the costs to the opposing parties are very high: Military expenditure, destruction with consequences for infrastructure, the economy, industry and agriculture, as well as training. In Israel, a country with high technical and generally innovative organizational capabilities, the amount of destruction and reconstruction is quite different in comparison to those in the surrounding countries. Peaceful cooperation would be ideal for all involved. But the extreme acrimony, its intensification rather than reduction, has high costs. The Hamas attack on October 7 2023 is not the end and final result of the conflict, but rather just tragic example of ongoing military confrontations.

This also applies to the attacks by Iran against Israel, for instance on October 1st. They made young people and Revolutionary Guards rejoice, but hardly any damage was done in Israel. Consequently, Israel might now be able to carry out the long-considered attack against Iran's nuclear facilities without hesitation. It might attempt to further hinder the construction of nuclear bombs. Israel has conventional bombs that can strike very deep into underground bunkers. Very different potential developments must be taken into account for own military planning. The outcome remains unpredictable, mainly due to emotional factors.

¹⁹ David French: "The losses are adding up for Iran", NYTI, Sept. 30, 2024, pp. 1 and 13

²⁰ Thomas Seibert: "Reorganization of the Middle East? Israel now wants to create facts"; in: Tagesspiegel October 1, 2024, p. 7

Dangers changed by bitterness, also in the area of nuclear weapons

In July 2024, the US Secretary of State Blinken reported that Iran was in a position and in the process of producing enriched uranium capable of producing nuclear weapons in just a few weeks²¹. This can be made more difficult by the West, but cannot be prevented - except by another dangerous military operation. Iran's temporary military restraint can possibly be explained by the fact that Iran - possibly following the example of North Korea - is determined to become capable of deterrence through nuclear weapons itself, and wants to remain undisturbed, until it succeeds.

Experts are aware of the various risks. If for example, Israel uses powerful conventional bombs to destroy military production facilities "secured" deep in bunkers, it cannot be ruled out that radioactivity will be spread into the atmosphere and then further in the corresponding wind direction. Thus it might even contaminate areas over a hundred kilometers away, including some in Israel. But according to experience with Chernobyl and calculations, what could arrive at a distance of around a thousand kilometers - including in Israel - would be by and large rather limited. And civil defense preparations in Israel are outstanding, in comparison to preparations in the surrounding nations. But again irresponsible behavior must be taken into account.

2019, when Iran was threatening to sink American ships, I wrote (in my book "Forever Alert"; p. 222):

"Arms control basics allow to investigate the danger of fatal escalation. My impression is: an "angry" reaction from the U. S. can trigger Iran's extreme reaction, which might want to destroy the "little Satan, "Israel, on the way to what would be its disastrous downfall "anyway". For such a purpose, of course, they will not even need nuclear bombs because the amount of radioactivity, they could spread into all areas and directions, would be by far too much. Israel is prepared in the best possible way, with its combination of powerful military deterrence with the best possible modern Civil Defense. ...

The best way for Israel to look for survival is to prepare for more than mere destruction. Rather they should pay attention to

"Confidence-Building Measures"

which seem, for me, to be the only way and hope to avoid future disaster. This option needs more investigation. Only true Cold Warriors would flatly deny such options – and they have often been wrong in historical terms."

Current evidence is: "Cold Warriors are still hot!"

Even now, without a nuclear weapon, for example with "dirty bombs" that contain some radioactivity along with the usual explosives, Iran, Hezbollah - or anyone else, possibly undetected - can try to cut Israel into several separate territories. Israel, which is currently in military turmoil, might react with a strong counter-attack. But it must be evident, who launched the attack. In any case, it would be incalculably dangerous to attack surrounding countries on suspicion. The dilemma would be a maximum risk of escalation with a minimum of trust and diplomacy.

²¹ <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/ausland/blinken-iran-atomprogramm-waffen-100.html> (20. 7. 2024)

Since 1964, I have continuously and intensively studied the structure of escalation dynamics²². The structure of risks has always been a major theme, and is still assessed similarly, see a recent detailed overview of the extreme escalation risks, by Annie Jacobsen.²³

At SIPRI²⁴ there is a wealth of research on the risky impact of AI on cyber warfare and thus on attempts at military technical and political control, which increase complexity and thus potentially the demands on control as well as the risks of disruption.

Globally, I mean that whoever breaks the taboo and is the first to use a nuclear weapon in war is a candidate to go down in the history of mankind as the utmost criminal of all time. This includes the fact that he himself (and/or his predecessors in his position of top power - I don't expect a woman here) brought his own nation to an existential abyss in the first place. In short, this may be due to the fact that, in the absence of cbm, the bitterness in the conflict, possibly on both sides, will have become "inhumanly strong". There will be no excuse at all for the very "greatest criminal", neither the insinuation that a god would have approved of any escalation, nor an argument that one has been criminally traumatized, nor any kind of ideology.

Everyone worldwide (!) should be an expert on this point: Breaking the taboo, by the first use of a nuclear weapon, can trigger a global escalation. First use would be the maximum crime in every respect.

How dangerous can nuclear armament become in the Middle East against the backdrop of a conventional exchange of blows with heavy losses? Should Iran succeed in building its own nuclear weapon, including delivery systems, a new situation would arise that is not acute at the moment and has hardly been assessed realistically for the time being - it may never happen, but it could happen in a short term. Unfortunately, a possible escalation with nuclear weapons could depend heavily on the acrimony on both sides. Pre-emptive strikes against production sites can at best postpone an intended construction - and they could increase the bitterness immeasurably. That might imply a completely reckless willingness, never seen before, to use violence,

The influence of acrimony also applies to the risks of conventional escalation. So far: the achievements of the Israeli secret services in the selective killing of "high-ranking criminals" in Lebanon and Iran from the beginning of August to the end of September are impressive. It is a deterrent, and at the same time, unfortunately, it may increase the bitterness of the opponents enormously. In any case, it is dangerous when Yoav Gallant, Israel's defense minister, declares that "his troops would bomb Lebanon 'back to the Stone Age' if necessary"²⁵. Such a provocation should have been withdrawn immediately by the Israeli government.

Now the according structure is nothing new, not even for nuclear weapons and their deterrence logic. What is new - and difficult to assess - is a certain habituation and a mental repression. The main and realistic features of the dangers have long been clearly known, as a German general wrote²⁶:

²² <https://www.philipp-sonntag.de/bibliografie.html>

²³ Annie Jacobsen: "Nuclear War: A Scenario", Dutton, 2024"

²⁴ In the SIPRI Yearbook 2024" and further at www.sipri.org

²⁵ Tagesspiegel from July 4, 2024, p. 11

²⁶ Schmückle, Gerd: "Die Wandlung der Apokalypse", in Christ und Welt, January 26, 1962

"The effect of nuclear weapons against targets generally populated by civilians is terrible, but against certain military targets it is relatively small. To put it more clearly: the terrible effect against cities and similar targets is inversely proportional to the effect against armored formations, floating units, underground command and missile posts, mobile and widely dispersed formations.

This changes the relationship between the military and its civilian objects of protection with a radicalness that cannot be surpassed. ... Nuclear weapons largely destroy everything that constitutes the concept of a nation for both the attacker and the defender: the human, cultural and economic substance."

The challenge and scope of reason

Calculation models 1964-1971²⁷ showed both the extent of the damage and the risk of escalation in the event of a nuclear war in Germany. After escalation has started, humans will hardly achieve and control a limitation of desperate violence. Politicians and military leaders, in power and in charge, even when experienced, well meaning and on top levels in power, will hardly be able to avoid escalation. Attempts to control it will succeed neither technically, nor militarily and certainly not politically.

The same result is valid for 2024. Annie Jacobsen has explained in detail, how 2024 the leaders in charge (with whom she has excellent contact) cling to prepared military options, built up with billions of dollars etc., while trying to be "on top" along all and any levels of escalation²⁸.

1981 I tried to include human behavior²⁹ (in my German book on "Preventing and Mitigating Nuclear Disasters"), particularly in a chapter entitled "The Influence of the Human Factor". I applied the logic of escalation also to the Middle East. What currently applies to Iran was structurally similar already 50 years ago. Considerations of experts about a potential Arab build up and then later threat of first use of nuclear weapons (ibid. p. 75), were taking into account: Israel was and is quite different in terms of population and area, as it is more vulnerable than the Arab states – which explains its nuclear deterrence, so far unique in Near East.

Especially relevant are threats based on bitterness. For example, it had been considered whether an "elimination", an extensive destruction in/of Israel, could be worth "the cost of an Israeli counterattack" to the attacker. No sane person would consider such scenarios - but there are crazy politicians.

The danger was mentioned that nuclear weapons could pass from "prudent" hands into the control of those who would be eager to totally destroy Israel. In October 2024, Iran's restraint after the killing of terrorists by Israel showed that, as long as further provocations remain limited, there can be a somehow "actually prudent" restraint, as well as a "rampant delusion" about its own capabilities - or both at the same time - even among enormously bitter politicians.

²⁷ Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker (ed.): "Kriegsfolgen und Kriegsverhütung. Hanser Munich, 1971

²⁸ Annie Jacobsen: "Nuclear War: A Scenario", Dutton, 2024"

²⁹ Philipp Sonntag: "Verhinderung und Linderung Atomarer Katastrophen.", Osang Verlag, Bonn, May 1981, esp. p. 100 ff.

Striving for worthwhile regulations

In the history of humanity there had been many initially utopian hopes in the midst of despair, from which solid regulations emerged, in which firm trust was finally established quite naturally. Such capability is a basic condition for survival!

What is realistic? A humanity that harms itself enormously due to a lack of fair regulations? Then "Dark Ages" have not yet been overcome. Current permanent failure annihilates any and all trust. As long as cbm are stuck at a low point, global survival is liable to fail in literally any respect whatsoever. An according dead end such as anti-Semitism could sustain 2.500 years. 1945, after the holocaust, Germany failed to follow strict regulations, to delete all and any anti-Semitism. But fascistic features re-emerged, and along weak jurisdiction there were endless, ridiculous negotiations about which fascist symbols neo-Nazis were allowed to use and which they were not. What was missing was a simple, dedicated and strict regulation! Trust would have ensued, and cbm a glory. A peaceful world needs to create well established regulations, along rising mutual trust, so effective cbm might ensue.

Globally, an adequate structure shall emerge for finally and effectively limiting and avoiding deadly arms races. An example, which might explain the usual costly nonsense of failure, of neglected chances: China has to cope with – avoidable – losses and challenges. But imagine, after dealing fairly with the Uyghurs and Hong Kong, China might then possibly cooperate better with Taiwan, in a far more peaceful and enormously cost-saving way. If both sides were really civilized, then Taiwan might even actually join China voluntarily as a province. That sounds at first site utopian and might be ideologically alien to the current phase of the regime. It may seem fundamentally unimaginable, as long as for evident experiences the Uyghurs would deny any trust whatsoever. For Taiwan including moral considerations might seem to be naïve. A realistic, historically closer look reveals, there have been major, "previously unthinkable" changes.

Such a rapprochement with civilization has been plausible in Chinese legends for thousands of years, with a pronounced awareness of endearing human rights. Avoiding such a kind of progress cannot be realistic, as long as opposite behavior can trigger global annihilation. Valuable and plausible regulation must be politically feasible and desirable. It could, and in fact should, contribute to a skillful, purposeful approach to the future of the planet.

Any assessment of China is difficult and controversial - at least from a democratic perspective. Nevertheless, a current initiative is not "only" self-serving, but broadly charitable, in this sense classified by IALANA as highly responsible:

"At the 2nd preparatory meeting for the 11th NPT Review Conference in July 2024, the Chinese representative has now proposed that all five official nuclear weapons states - the USA, Russia, China, France and the UK - should renounce the first use of nuclear weapons by treaty. ..." ³⁰

With a - now or whenever - highly civilized China (or similar powerful state), global improvements in the quality of life may become politically better conceivable and attainable. Corresponding initiatives by any state - distinguished by reason in the sense of Immanuel Kant - can and should contribute to a skillful, diplomatically purposeful approach to the future of the planet.

³⁰ <https://ialana.de/aktuell/ialana-deutschland-zur-aktuellen-diskussion/ialana-zu-abc-waffen/2894-chinas-initiative-zum-voelkervertraglichen-verzicht-auf-den-ersteinsatz-von-atomwaffen-aufgreifen>