

... out of joint ...

At the turn of the year 2022/2023

At the end of this year, the German Chancellor's remark that we are facing a „*turning point*“ seems quite pathetic and at the same time trivializing. Because the world seems to be out of joint¹.

One crisis follows another:

- There are currently 28 wars and armed² conflicts worldwide and there is war in Europe, not a civil war, but the brutal, criminal war of aggression of a nuclear superpower with the aim of destroying a neighboring state.
- As a consequence, this war has led to a worldwide **food crisis**, an **energy crisis** and **growth losses**, combined with high **currency devaluation**.
- A **pandemic** is slow to let the world out of its grip. It has claimed millions of lives worldwide and damaged the health of many more people in the long term. The virus and its mutants have almost brought down the global market. Supply chains are interrupted, the production of goods has been stopped or massively reduced in many countries of the world for a long time due to lockdowns. The free movement of people has been massively restricted, from curfews to quarantine. Tourism in all its manifestations was frozen for months, cultural events were banned.
- The number of **refugees** worldwide has risen to over 100 million people. More than 800 million people suffer from **hunger**³. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is not the only reason for this food crisis, but it has massively exacerbated it. *Putin*⁴ is not afraid to increase hunger in the world by blocking the export of grain from Ukraine and exposing an entire people to destruction by attacking Ukraine's water and energy infrastructure. *Stalin's* "Holodomor" of 1933/1934 was only 90 years ago...
- The fight against **climate change** is not progressing as the now existential risk to the living conditions of future generations, would require.

It must not be concealed that there are areas in which our world is also getting better⁵: Child mortality has been declining for decades, school education and, above all, literacy are progressing, extreme poverty is steadily declining, the vaccination status of children in particular has been

¹ Government Statement on February 27, 2022 (Protokol 20/19 Bundestag). The Human Development Index (HDI), according to the report of UNDP, has decreased for the first time in two consecutive years.

² According to Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kriegsursachenforschung.

³ According to the UNHCR's Mid-Year Trends Report, the number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide is 103 million (www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de).

⁴ According to Welthungerhilfe, up to 828 million (www.welthungerhilfe.de).

⁵ See also *Steven Pinker*, *Enlightenment Now*, 2018.

rising rapidly since 1945 and the number of people, living in a democracy, is rising⁶. But these improvements are overshadowed by the existential problems of our day.

In this state, our planet, humanity is going into a new year. And in our country, more and more citizens are realizing that once again a „*good old days*“ have come to an end, which seemed to begin for us Germans and Europe in 1989, because the President of the Russian Federation does not want to accept the end of the Cold War and the USSR. But this is not only changing the (security) political situation in Europe, but our entire planet:

We must realize that many **violations of world peace**, which we have been complaining about for decades, do not consist of accidental regional conflicts with a historical background, but are deliberately staged by a nuclear world power that suffers from paranoid existential fear and at the same time massive overestimation of itself:

Afghanistan, Chechnya, Georgia, Moldova, Syria, Mali, and Ukraine were and are bloody "playgrounds" of an upstart from the darkest times of the Soviet secret service, which has made it to the top of the Russian Federation through a series of fatal coincidences and total political failure.

War has been raging again in **Europe** since the Balkan war from 1991 to 1999. But unlike then, this is not a civil war between different ethnic groups, whose historically based tensions have erupted openly again after the end of Yugoslavia. The war in Ukraine is the war of aggression of a criminal aggressor who openly doubts the national sovereignty, indeed the right to exist of a neighboring state and wants to end it by force.

But world peace is not only threatened by the war criminal and mass murderer in Moscow. We must not ignore some forgotten open or latent conflicts, such as Libya, Nigeria, Mozambique, Yemen, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Myanmar. Even after the withdrawal of international troops, there is no peace in Afghanistan, and the People's Republic of China is constantly threatening to bring about military reunification with the mainland, if necessary.

So, there can be no talk of "world peace" at the end of this year. And this situation threatens a "**world order**" which, however, has been eroding since the end of the East/West conflict. It is damaged because its constitutive elements are losing global recognition:

A "world order" without order, leads to disorder. And order can only be created if all parties agree on an order. This presupposes that the rules for dealing with each other in a world community are laid down in a legal system that is binding and sanctionable for all, and that all members of this world community unconditionally undertake to comply with these rules.

However, such a global legal order can only have a binding effect on everyone in all possible situations, if it is based on generally accepted values and the terms that define these values are interpreted in the same way.

Only if there is agreement, for example, on what is meant by "freedom", "humanity", "security", "terrorism", "national sovereignty", "inviolability of borders", "war crimes" or "genocide", can this legal order be a useful instrument for resolving conflicts.

⁶ According to Die Zeit, No. 8, 2020, S. 35.

This unity has developed deep cracks for years: Each of the past and present conflicts has shown and proves daily that disagreement over the content of values and the attempt to consciously "revalue" values, leads our world order ad absurdum. The meetings of the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations and their decisions, document this deplorable situation.

In addition, in the daily debates, in national and above all in global politics, the presented "facts" are often very far from the truth or are intended to turn it into its opposite. "Alternative facts" or simply lies, have become the usual tool in conflicts.

If a "world order" loses its ordering function for the reasons described, other actors try to generate a „normative power of the factual" with the power of the factual.⁷ This cannot succeed with global effect if there is no single global power, but various economic or military great powers shape a multipolar world and try to defend spheres of influence.

This leads from the decades-long error of "the end of history" after the end of the East-West conflict back to the age of the "hemispheres". But we are no longer living at the end of the 20th century. There has long been more on our earth than the two spheres of influence into which the geopolitical development after 1945 had led:

After a period of "disengagement" under President *Trump*, the **US** has found its way back into the role of a world power that also claims a clear claim to lead the free world and to shape the future. The clear political commitment in the Ukraine conflict and in relation to the People's Republic of China for national sovereignty, the inviolability of national borders, the rule of law and democracy unmistakably points to the claim of the USA as the leading power of "the West" or the "free world". But this claim is currently far less secure domestically than it was 30 years ago and is not guaranteed for the future.

For years, the **Russian Federation** has been trying to present the geopolitical downgrade from world power to "regional power"⁸ as a massive miscalculation and to remind us of its claim to world power. There is no ideological justification for this, as in the days of the USSR. The President of the Russian Federation is no longer concerned with the world domination of communism, but exclusively with national interests and claims derived from them, for which either highly questionable, sometimes completely absurd, historical arguments or the allegedly existential threat posed by NATO and, above all, its leading power, the United States.

These false arguments are interchangeable and ultimately irrelevant. For *Putin's* claim to world power manages without any legal foundation, indeed openly and aggressively sets itself apart from the rules of international law, which even during the "Cold War" at least still had a relative binding force.

⁷ Georg Jellinek, Allgemeine Staatslehre, 1900.

⁸ President *Obama* on 25.3.2014 after Annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation in The Hague.

For the dictator and aggressor in Moscow, his federation's claim to world power is based on its (supposed) military strength as a nuclear power, its (supposed) conventional armament, its strong position as a supplier of fossil fuels and the sphere of influence that has been growing for years, far beyond its national borders.

Russia's claim to world power is thus based on the power of the factual. The international community is called upon to prevent it from becoming a "normative force" that mocks and undermines international law and definitively abolishes even a minimum of global world order.

At the UN Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt (COP 27) in November 2022, the People's Republic of **China** recently annoyed the other participants by saying that it was still a developing country. This may be right in view of the urgently needed measures for climate protection worldwide. China is still far from "developing" an understanding for climate change.

But China is the second largest economy in the world after the US. As the "workbench of the world", China's economy no longer only manufactures parts of expensive mass products and thus has their final assembly in its hands worldwide. Especially in the electronics sector, but now also in the automotive industry, „*Made in China*“ is on the rise. This means that economic growth worldwide depends crucially on value creation in China. The consequences of the drastic corona policy there, prove this.

The People's Republic of China is now using its economic power massively worldwide to secure access to important rare resources, to gain influence on infrastructure, e.g., ports and airports, and high technology, especially in Europe and the USA.

China is a nuclear power and has the second largest military budget in the world. Unlike Russia, China has so far not shown that it wants to achieve its geopolitical goals by military means. The constant threats against Taiwan can only serve as a counterargument to a limited extent since China views this problem – wrongly – as an internal matter. And this country's attitude to Russian aggression in Ukraine shows that it does not support the assertion of national interests in open violation of international law, at least for the time being.

But China increasingly sees itself as a counterpart to the way of life and governance of the Western world, especially the US, insofar as it is based on democracy and the rule of law. The principle of the market economy has long been integrated into Chinese state capitalism, albeit without its social component. Any debate on fundamental and human rights in their country, such as the treatment of the Uighurs in Xinjiang or their policies in Hong Kong, is forbidden by the People's Republic.

Still in the shadow of the world powers, but with the clear and increasing tendency to engage in world politics, **other nations** appear again and again on the world stage:

- Just a few years ago, no one would have thought of mentioning Turkey in connection with the actors in a multipolar world. But the president of this country has worked

persistently to stress Turkey's willingness to assume international responsibility at every opportunity, not hiding national interests:

The military actions in northern Syria and northern Iraq served and continue to serve exclusively to contain the (alleged) threat to national security posed by Kurdish ethnic groups.

The support of the unity government in Tripoli in the civil war in Libya, is probably mainly due to economic and strategic reasons. With its deployment – including military – Turkey's main aim is to curb the influence of Egypt and the Arab Emirates and to secure natural resources in the region.

President Erdogan has used his country's heavy burden of refugees from Syria as an argument for financial support to the European Union and its member states.

In the Ukraine conflict, Turkey has secured an important role in the agreement on grain exports from Ukraine, commensurate with its geographical location.

As a NATO member, *Erdogan* is maximizing the possible tolerance for national unilateralism with the announced acquisition of Russian missile systems. However, his – purely domestically motivated – blockade of the NATO accession of Sweden and Finland, puts the tolerance of the members of this defense community in the face of Russian aggression, to a hard test.

- **Iran**, which has been on its way to becoming a nuclear power for years, is increasingly behaving as the leading Shiite power in the Arab world and has been waging a religiously motivated proxy war with Saudi Arabia in Yemen for years. And against the background of brotherhood in arms with Russia in Syria, it is not surprising that the regime in Tehran supports *Putin* with weapons in the war against Ukraine.
- **India**, a de facto nuclear power since 1974, is trying to strengthen its international weight through neutrality against the background of the war in Ukraine: In Russia's war against Ukraine, India, with a few exceptions (Bucha), insists on its neutrality, above all in order not to anger the most important supplier of weapons, oil and gas and a partner of Russia in Arctic affairs. Compared to the US and the EU, India plays its outstanding consumer position with a population of 1.4 billion people – almost on a par with China.

It would be doomed to failure from the outset to squeeze the plethora of **challenges** that this world situation presents us with at the end of this year, into a task book **for** the 365 days of **2023**. Because there are well-known problems that can only be solved in the long or medium term and whose solution has often failed. And there are new, pressing problems that cannot be delayed:

- Those who are seriously concerned about world peace should stop wasting their time calling repeatedly for the total abolition of **nuclear weapons**. It is too late for that. It

will not succeed. Who can imagine that this criminal Russian regime, China, or North Korea would be willing to do so? Nobody! And that's why no one can expect the US, Britain, or France to do without it.

- But those who are seriously concerned about world peace must not despair of rewriting the rules for the **Security Council**. The Second World War ended 77 years ago. The reasons given at the time of the founding of the United Nations to privilege the victorious powers (and later nuclear powers!) as permanent members are obsolete and have already been deprived of their justification with the admission of the People's Republic of China to this "club" in 1971.

The right of veto for permanent members was not justified from the outset and was a clear violation of the principles of the United Nations as a Community of equal states.

Since then, the actual, but unspoken reason for this privilege has been its position as an "official" nuclear power. This could only be justified in terms of security policy if these powers had implicitly committed themselves to the principle of nuclear deterrence, i.e., had never even considered a nuclear first strike – knowing that the second blow would lead to the destruction of the aggressor.

Those rules are audacious and absurd, at least since the president of a nuclear power waging a war of aggression against a neighbouring state openly threatened the use of nuclear weapons for the first time in the history of the United Nations.

Based on the current rules of the UN Security Council, *Putin* could avoid a condemnation by veto after a nuclear attack on Ukraine or even NATO, in practice unhindered by the requirement to abstain in matters in which a state itself is involved⁹.

Thus, the UN tolerates that the most dangerous enemy of world peace goes "unpunished" even in the event of a nuclear attack with which it makes a mockery of the principle of deterrence. This must change!

Because we must not abandon the victims of aggression, genocide, and war crimes in the fight against the mockery of world peace and a world order enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations in the light of the devastating world wars of the 20th century. The courage, the defensive power, and the love of freedom of the Ukrainian people, which cannot be corrupted by anything, are exemplary, but – let us not deceive ourselves – extraordinary. We must not allow these virtues to be overwhelmed.

- As correct and important **sanctions** of all kinds against aggressors such as Russia are, we must free ourselves **from** dependence on partners in world trade for whom contractual agreements are concluded to be able to break them. This applies above all to energy policy, but also to resources of all kinds.

⁹ Art. 27 Abs. 3 UN-Charter.

- A rational energy **policy** must be based on the facts¹⁰: The energy needs of all economies on this earth cannot (yet) be met without fossil fuels. The production of renewable energy requires immense investments and costs energy. Poor countries cannot afford this without gigantic third-party aid programmes, even if, as in Africa, for example, they have immeasurable sources of renewable energy – solar energy.

One way out of this dilemma cannot be the formation of continental or even regional energy markets. This would be another obstacle to global trade, as an energy shortage, wherever it may be, would lead to supply chain disruptions, incalculable delays in deliveries, loss of production sites, and as a sum of these – massive price increases.

We therefore need a global energy market that ensures the reliable supply of affordable energy to all regions of the world. And we need this market now, if we do not want to risk deep slumps in global growth, even a worldwide recession. For the time being, this market must not exclude certain energy sources for any region of the world, either for ideological or environmental reasons. This includes the worldwide use of nuclear energy. Anyone who sets ideological or ecological limits on energy supply will risk regional, even continental blackouts and does climate protection a disservice. The economies affected by this will defend themselves and increasingly take refuge in the easy-to-handle fossil energy.

- In the context of the debate on climate change, militant and quite unfriendly activists repeatedly demand that humanity should refrain from eating meat. They would save gigantic amounts of energy and water and reduce the production of polluting gases, e.g. of methane. The qualitative side of this argument may be shared if one shares the ideological basis. Quantitatively, however, this argument is contradicted by considerable doubts: We will not save the earth as a habitat for us humans by no longer eating meat.

But one argument is missing out on this debate: we feed more than 60% of the maize grown, 90% of soya meal and more than 35 % of the grain worldwide to animals that we raise, fatten, then slaughter and eat, while 800 million people on this planet are starving and millions of them are dying from it.

It must spoil our appetite for roast pork, vitello tonnato, rump steak and lamb chops if we have deprived hundreds of thousands, even millions of people of their food supply.

We must remember the very simple connections of human existence. The Old Testament's exhortation to "*subdue the earth*"¹¹ could never be misunderstood as subordinating all other creatures to man but taking responsibility for this entire universe.

Those who are unfamiliar with this religious approach come to the same conclusion in a very practical way: "*We are all in the same boat*". And that brings us back to the

¹⁰ These Facts have been known for decades: The Climate Summit 2006 already has all the risks named in detail. Based on this report, the *author* 2007 at a University Colloquium in Istanbul on the topic „*Providing Energy as a Transnational Obligation*“ elaborated the crucial need for action (www.kurt-schelter.eu).

¹¹ Genesis 1, 28.

narrative of the Bible: Noah's Ark¹². However, this rescue attempt would require a "deluge". This does not yet exist, although similar disasters are imminent. And escaping onto a ship, or into another shelter, would not save us, but would make us powerless observers of the self-inflicted catastrophe.

This means that if we want to prevent the living conditions for all creatures on our planet from deteriorating *further*, we must change our **way of life**. And this can also include eating less meat and using the resulting contingent of agricultural products for the direct nutrition of humanity.

- The active change of our way of life is also urgent, because otherwise the circumstances force us to take measures that do not belong to our liberal legal system. One of these changed circumstances is that the short phase of the worldwide proclamation of the **globalization** of economic activity, has been ended. Yes, this principle has not called itself into question or proven to be wrong, it has been trampled underfoot by the autocrat in Moscow, coolly calculated.

This will have serious negative consequences not only for global economic cooperation. Almost all areas of life today have a global dimension: the threat to the environment and external security, the fight against terrorism and international crime, monetary and financial policy and the security of electronic data processing and transmission have a global dimension.

This idea was deprived of the necessary framework conditions. This includes trust, reliability, courage, sustainability, and the unspoken agreement that a monopoly position of any kind, must not be misused as a weapon. And this taboo has been broken consciously and intentionally.

This puts globalization under scrutiny. It would be irresponsible, for example, to trust that the supply of essential medicines will continue to be guaranteed if an autocrat decides to use this trade as a weapon.

Confidence in a worldwide market must therefore be first developed again and can lead to the preliminary result that one or the other previous partner in global trade must be further isolated. And this critical view of globalization must conclude that participation in a globalized market must and can mean that in certain areas which are existential for the security of the national economy and for strategic autonomy, the degree of self-sufficiency must be rebalanced.

And so, the ritual repeats itself:

At the end of last year, we had to assume that *"next year will also be determined by the old problems: climate change, pandemic, migration, extremism and terror, energy supply and*

¹² Genesis 6-9.

prices. And the reference to the problem areas „China with Hong Kong and Taiwan, Iran, Syria, Ukraine and Belarus" has been surpassed by reality.¹³

But the time of waiting and weighing is over, at a time when the world threatens to go off the rails. We must now tackle and solve every single problem that has been identified.

There must not be competition in priorities: the fight against climate change is important because it is about preserving people's living conditions. But all the measures that are necessary, considered and to be implemented must not ignore what is necessary to control and solve other problems which also threaten our living conditions.

If we do not focus with the highest priority on the restoration of world peace and a new world order with order, we may no longer need to worry about the consequences of climate change for future generations. This will then be the problem of a new species, which will no longer be "human".

In fact, we need a "new enlightenment" so that we can meet the challenges ahead and thus our future with reason, based on science, in the spirit of humanism and in confidence in progress¹⁴ in human coexistence.

Anyone who behaves as a "*last generation*", even pretends to be, has not understood the meaning of our lives and the duties associated with it...

¹³ www.kurt-schelter.eu.

¹⁴ Steven *Pinker*, a. a. O. (Fn 5).