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# HEGEMONIALISM

## ON THE CURRENT RELEVANCE OF IMPERIALISM

In Germany as a whole and even on the Left, there is probably no other international conflict that has been publicly discussed in such controversial and emotionally charged ways than the Israel-Palestine, or more broadly, the Middle East conflict. For this reason, this theme has acquired a special place in the educational work of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Foundation within the country as well as abroad. Given how opinions diverge within the Foundation and amongst its associates, we do not consider it our task to present a closed and uniform position, but rather to provide a forum for debate that meets the demands of an emancipatory political education. Moreover, in order to satisfy the requirements of analytical rigour, the RLS is currently involved in a process of systematising its engagement with the topic of the Middle East conflict. A members' workshop in July 2010 formed the prelude to that. The workshop resulted in six papers that will appear in a loose sequence as viewpoints of the RLS. More detailed information on the thematic engagement of the RLS with the Middle East conflict can also be found here: <http://www.rosalux.de/themen/internationale-politik/thema/naher-osten>

Since the middle of the 1990s, there has been a fundamental dispute among individual currents of the Left in Germany with regard to the current relevance and explanatory valence of the theory of imperialism. At times more intensively and at times less so, the fight is taken out into the open by traditional anti-imperialists and the so called anti-Germans. This unresolved dispute has an impact on every political or academic analysis of international relations on the German Left. Particularly with respect to the Middle East conflict, sentiments are extremely divided. Therefore, it seems imperative to look into the question of the virulence of imperialism. This article attempts to do so in a consideration of the necessity of external-political sovereignty of nation states and the related question of the mechanisms of war and peace.<sup>1</sup>

### IMPERIAL INTERPRETATION VERSUS THE CULTURALISATION OF THE POLITICAL

Understanding how the dispute between anti-imperialists and anti-Germans came about requires a brief reconstruction

of the catalytic events since 1989/90 that triggered a process of rethinking among anti-Germans.

At the time of German reunification in 1990, anti-Germans still took to the streets against a feared strengthening of nationalism and imperialist megalomania with the slogan «Germany, shut your mouth». Only a year later, when the Gulf war began and the peace movement in Germany interpreted this war in anti-imperialist terms, accordingly using the slogan «no blood for oil», the writer Hans-Magnus Enzensberger caused a stir when he termed Saddam Hussein the «reincarnation of Hitler» and sharply criticised the peace movement for its pacifism. Enzensberger was supposedly taking an anti-fascist position and sought to justify the war in this way. Wolf Biermann also became a bellicist, legitimising the war as the protection of Israel, and holding Germany in particular responsible, because German firms had supplied poisonous gas to Iraq, their scud missiles plunging Israelis into fear. At that point, the bellicism of both of these intellectuals was still quite an exception, yet it successfully introduced a bellicist-antifascist rhetoric of legitimation endorsed by the likes of Joschka Fischer and the anti-Germans. Nonetheless, in these years the anti-Germans still distributed flyers that read: «Bomber Harris, do it again», and Fischer fulminated that the German state in alliance with NATO was being led into an imperialist war by misplaced humanitarian arguments.

During the escalations of the then disintegrating Yugoslavia, the attitude towards war underwent a change in the case of Fischer and the anti-Germans. Subsequently, the focus became the prevention of a second Auschwitz with the massacre of Srebrenica in the mid-1990s. Fischer distanced himself and the Green Party from pacifism and anti-imperialism, instead demanding compulsory military intervention in cases of

<sup>1</sup> The Middle East Conflict is only ever marginally addressed. The extent to which the Middle East Conflict is still relevant today for theorising imperialism is something the author is sceptical about. <sup>2</sup> It must be noted that Fischer was responding to a blind spot on the anti-imperialist left whose categorical pacifism has often seemed indifferent to genocide, overemphasising the imperialist rationales of military interventions. Likewise, the anti-Germans can also be criticised for being one-sided in disregarding imperialist motives. Moreover, Auschwitz plays an important role in legitimising pacifism. However, what is often overlooked is that the liberation of Auschwitz would not have been possible without the military intervention of the Anti-Hitler Coalition, even if it can be said that this coalition had imperialist motives.

genocide.<sup>2</sup> This retraction took until 1998 to effectively propel the Green Party to government. Fischer used Enzensberger's anti-fascist rhetoric of legitimation, which consequently also became the dominant model of interpretation for the anti-Germans.

The onset of visions of *One World*, as the new world order was initially referred to following the dissolution of bipolarity and the furore over Francis Fukuyama's «The End of History and the Last Man» in 1992<sup>3</sup>, was embarrassing given the reality that was unfolding. Nonetheless, from 1994 onwards this new paradigm became more established, propagated by Samuel P. Huntington as the «Clash of Civilizations». This paradigm promoted a *culturalisation of the political*.<sup>4</sup> It was diametrically opposed to the traditional models of imperialism. On an ideological level, the anti-German milieu was taken in by it.<sup>5</sup> When the terrorist attacks occurred in the USA on September 11 2001, this milieu interpreted them in terms of cultural difference, a «declaration of war against western civilisation» and an attack by «Islamic fascism».<sup>6</sup> As a result, anti-Germans declared their unconditional solidarity with the USA and equated anti-Americanism with anti-Semitism.

The Middle East, i. e. Israel, received a special boost within the interpretations of events promoted by anti-Germans: the entire world – and the Arab world in particular – was considered to be anti-Semitic. The USA was the sole power that could reliably protect Israel. Given this understanding, it became paramount for the anti-Germans to pledge their unconditional solidarity with the USA and Israel, irrespective of any of the decisions the two states took. Since then, there has been an intense confrontation between anti-Germans and anti-imperialists regarding the extent to which the Middle East conflict plays a role in the analysis of international relations. The theory of imperialism lies at the core of the dispute. Traditional bourgeois and socialist theories of imperialism<sup>7</sup> assume that the foreign policy of a sovereign nation-state necessarily aims at acquiring, expanding and strengthening an individual state's power. On a strategic level, the state must consider its economic and security interests in the international context. Accordingly, policy is directed at the maximisation of profit and the efficiency of national economies. Resulting disadvantages for other states are not only factored in to strategic calculations, they are intentional. Solidarity among nation-states would therefore seem difficult to realise in a capitalist system. Individual nation-states necessarily compete with one another and in the context of an international power play, they are compelled to assert themselves to this end. Therefore, imperialism emerges as an inevitable consequence. The particular imperialist forms of power deployed in foreign policy result from the economic and military power of the individual states, from their financial and cultural resources, as well as from their international reputation. Conflicts are inevitable, and are generally resolved through diplomatic or military means. The competitiveness that is inherent in the state system necessitates state sovereignty or some form of supranational sovereignty that challenges and constrains the absolute sovereignty of existing states. Consequently, the purpose of a state's military is not only to protect its national borders and citizens, but also and primarily to ensure the income and profits of national and transnational corporations. Thus, the status a nation has is determined by the strike capacity of its military. The sovereignty of a capi-

talist state is premised upon the relationship between the economy, politics and the military, internally and externally.

### GERMANY IN THE BIPOLAR WORLD ORDER

In cases where a state's sovereignty has been abrogated, as was the case with Germany after 1945 (and where the process of regaining of sovereignty was slow), the systemic context outlined above becomes particularly apparent: «It became clear that today politics is only as powerful as the [military] power behind it (...). Without power anything we say is ignored.»<sup>8</sup>

There were restrictions on Germany's sovereignty until 1989/90. Prior to German reunification, Germany had no independence to determine its own foreign policy and had to subordinate itself to the world powers within the international system of alliances. For this reason, many conservatives considered the West German state to be an «economic giant» on the one hand and a «political dwarf» on the other. «The old Federal Republic had two important characteristics. The first was that it could not shape its foreign policy independently, the second was its subordinate role as a military power. Both were expressions of Germany's incomplete sovereignty and its associated dependencies – dependency on the United States in world politics, and on France with respect to Europe.»<sup>9</sup> From this situation one can infer the state's continuous strive to normalise its foreign policy, understood as the achievement of superpower status and political parity<sup>10</sup> with other world powers. This condition can also be termed the German normalisation complex. «Given that political equality was only possible with German reunification, i. e. not through its own strength, to a great extent (...) German politics shifted to the military sphere. However, the mere strategic location at the nexus between the two blocks of the Cold War does

**3** Fukuyama tried to explain the end of imperialism by arguing that it could be empirically proven that «liberal democracies do not behave imperialistically towards one another, even if they are perfectly capable of going to war with states that are not democracies and do not share fundamental values.» – Francis Fukuyama: *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: The Free Press, 1992, p. 24. Yet Fukuyama is blind to the fact that not all imperialist policies result in war and that even for contemporary imperialism war is a last resort because war is not considered a necessary means to achieve imperialist goals. Moreover, Fukuyama overlooks that even after the dissolution of the bipolar world order, the world does not only consist of liberal democracies. **4** «Economic and political struggles over distribution are presented as cultural struggles and their cause explained by the principled incompatibility of different cultures. Instead of negotiation, cooperation and communication, the insistence on cultural identities assumes fundamental traditionalist differences that cannot be negotiated. Conflicts that invoke cultural difference have their own dynamic.» – Tatjana Freytag: *Der unternommene Mensch. Eindimensionalisierungsprozesse in der gegenwärtigen Gesellschaft*, Weilerswist: Velbrück GmbH Bücher & Medien, 2000, p. 134. **5** This thesis was presented at the RLS Members Workshop, «The Left and the Middle East Conflict – Stories and Sensibilities» (July 10 2010). There was not only agreement. Micha Brumlik questioned the extent of coherence amongst proponents of an anti-German interpretation. The author wishes to clarify that there are identifiable qualitative differences between the anti-German milieu, leading proponents and their followers. **6** The terrorist attacks on September 11 2001 painted a different kind of picture regarding patterns of anti-imperialism. The World Trade Centre into which two planes were flown symbolised the economic power of the USA. The Pentagon was also targeted as a symbol of military power. A further plan targeted the White House, the symbol of political power. Why was the statue of liberty, a cultural symbol of the freedom of the West, not targeted by the terrorists? That would have been a more apt target for an attack on western civilisation. **7** The many different theoretical approaches to imperialism make it difficult to provide a general definition of the concept. Nonetheless, an attempt to do so can be undertaken using Jürgen Osterhammel's work: «Imperialism encompasses those forces and activities that contribute to building and maintaining (...) trans-colonial empires. Imperialism also includes the will and the capacity to uphold an imperial centre, defining one's own national interests as imperial and promoting them within the anarchical international system. Imperialism does not simply imply a colonial politics, but a world politics in which colonies are not simply ends in themselves but pawns in a global power game.» – Juergen Osterhammel: *Kolonialismus. Geschichten, Formen, Folgen*, 2nd edition, Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997, p. 27f. **8** Konrad Adenauer cited in David Meinenreis and Frank Renken (eds.): *Krieg und Globalisierung. Der Imperialismus: Vom Kolonialismus zu den Kriegen des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main: Edition Aurora, 2002, p. 52. **9** Andrei S. Markovits and Simon Reich: *Das deutsche Dilemma. Die Berliner Republik zwi schen Macht und Machtverzicht*, foreword by Joschka Fischer, Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 1998, p. 51. **10** Cf. Gregor Schöllgen: *Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Bonn: C. H. Beck, 1999, p. 227.

not fully explain the overwhelming focus of German foreign policy on the areas of security, defence and alliances. Germany also sought to avoid second class status in the region.»<sup>11</sup> From Adenauer to Kohl German security policy concentrated on the less overt question of how to circumvent its second-class status resulting from the restrictions to its sovereignty. Moreover, due to the fact that it was not allowed to possess nuclear weapons, the West German state was forced to play a minor role within the circle of allied countries, which for Franz Josef Strauss was not compatible with his sense of «national honour». During the Cold War, the capacity to deploy the nuclear bomb was *the* «decisive feature of sovereignty».<sup>12</sup> Hence when Strauss was Minister of Defence, he sought to develop West Germany's capacities with regard to the ownership and deployment of nuclear weapons; this was not merely a question of rearmament, but of equal status amongst other western powers, especially in relation to Great Britain and France.<sup>13</sup> Since the mid-1960s, this so-called «German Gaullism»<sup>14</sup> marked the beginning of attempts to diminish dependence on the allied forces. From the beginning of the 1960s onwards under Charles de Gaulles, France rose to become an independent nuclear power and assumed a special status within NATO and vis-a-vis the USA. Strauss and Adenauer hoped for an alliance with France in order to become a nuclear power, or at least to be included in France's nuclear power status. Initially, the French government even showed an interest, but on account of international pressure as well as pressure from the anti-nuclear-movement,<sup>15</sup> these plans had to be discarded. As a result, the French government rescinded on «German Gaullism».

«German Gaullism» was only a first attempt at determining the extent to which the shackles restricting German sovereignty could be broken.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, the SPD-FDP («Red-Yellow») Government took a different course. In 1969, a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed. CSU leader Strauss was strongly opposed to signing the Treaty and termed it a «Versailles of cosmic proportions». Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt sought to assuage opposition to the Treaty with assurances of its short-term applicability: «If one day a United States of Europe were to be created, then these states would not be bound by the Non-Proliferation Treaty and could become nuclear powers.»<sup>17</sup>

In the context of a power equilibrium within comparable categories of weapons – primarily with respect to nuclear destructive potential between East and West – the nuclear bomb had more of the character of a *political* rather than a military weapon. The nuclear bomb served as a form of deterrence; its existence was supposed to ensure that it would not have to be put to military use.<sup>18</sup> This doctrine of deterrence signalled progress in terms of civilisation compared to the more or less restricted *ius ad Bellum*. According to Gerhard Stuby, although equal parity does not rule out that nuclear powers will continue to seek military superiority, within the logic of deterrence, it creates a sense of credibility as opposed to projections of cold-blooded readiness to use nuclear weapons. «However, the moment one reduces military potential to deterrence, one accepts – at least verbally – the principle of non-aggression, thus conceding that military capacity must remain restricted to defence. In the context here, this means retaliation following a prior attack. A military strategy of *Blitzkrieg*, i. e. of a surprise first attack, can therefore not

be propagated openly.»<sup>19</sup> Yet the phase of nuclear deterrence did not necessarily imply any sustained form of progress with respect to civilisation. This is because the dissolution of the bipolar world order and the end of military parity meant that *ius ad Bellum* was once again prioritised over deterrence. Furthermore, the use of nuclear weapons in the form of *mini-nukes* no longer meant that a nuclear contamination of the whole world would result from the deployment of nuclear force. After 1989/90 and the fall of the Soviet Union, nuclear deterrence lost its impact with the USA remaining the only superpower that asserted its *ius ad Bellum* with NATO and the UN virtually as an exclusive right; the USA does not have to fear any serious counter-attacks because there is no military power that can match it. As long as they are in possession of nuclear bombs, states that feel threatened by the imperialist strategy of the USA – and increasingly also the EU – still use deterrence as a form of defence (for example, communist North Korea). This enables them to negotiate diplomatic relations with the USA, EU etc., instead of being «simply» attacked like Iraq. In these terms, it is rational for Iran to endeavour to develop nuclear capacities.

During the Cold War, German foreign policy was synonymous with «utilising the existing basic conditions within available means»<sup>20</sup> and pursuing a policy of small steps to modify these basic conditions. According to Gregor Schoellgen, Germany has shown a «remarkable balance» in this regard. In complete contrast to the foreign policy of the German Reich, whose principle was to disregard such basic conditions and realise the «impossible»,<sup>21</sup> German foreign policy since 1945 has displayed moderation in its sense of reality and has followed the principle of «making the necessary possible».<sup>22</sup> In the context of foreign policy, what does *necessary* mean to a nation state within global capitalism?

## COMPETITION AMONG STATES AFTER THE DISSOLUTION OF BIPOLARITY

During the Cold War, competition among capitalist states was superimposed by a bipolar system. Despite the dissolution of the bipolar world order, capitalist competition among states has again appeared unbridled. However, states are also increasingly compelled to cooperate with one another because

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 226. <sup>12</sup> Cf. Franz Josef Strauss: Die Erinnerungen, Berlin: btb Verlag, 1989, p. 310. <sup>13</sup> Cf. Gerhard Stuby: Die «gefesselte» Souveränität der Bundesrepublik. Zur Entwicklung der BRD im Rahmen der US Globalstrategie, Heilbronn: Distel Literatur Verlag, 1987, p. 130. <sup>14</sup> Charles de Gaulle sought to establish France's maximum independence from the western allied forces within the bipolar world order. This is the reason why he placed so much emphasis on the national ownership and power to deploy nuclear bombs. Prominent defendants of «German Gaullism» were Franz Josef Strauss (CSU), Konrad Adenauer (CDU), as well as the publisher Axel Springer. – «They merely pre-empted what since then has been occurring step by step, namely the reestablishment of Germany as an independent imperial power.» – Meienreis and Renken (eds.): Krieg und Globalisierung. Der Imperialismus: Vom Kolonialismus zu den Kriegen des 21. Jahrhunderts, Frankfurt am Main: Edition Aurora, 2002, p. 56. <sup>15</sup> Cf. Hans-Karl Rupp: Ausserparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer. Der Kampf gegen die Atombewaffnung in der 50er Jahren, Cologne: Paul Rugenstein, 1980. <sup>16</sup> Cf. Stuby: Die «gefesselte» Souveränität der Bundesrepublik. Zur Entwicklung der BRD im Rahmen der US Globalstrategie, Heilbronn: Distel Literatur Verlag, 1987, p. 216. <sup>17</sup> Franz Josef Strauss and Willy Brandt cited in Volkhard Mosler: An Krieg wieder gewöhnen? Niemals! Die Rückkehr des deutschen Militarismus, Frankfurt am Main: Edition Aurora, 1999, p. 32. <sup>18</sup> Cf. J. Strelzow: «Warum das annähernde militärische Gleichgewicht gwhart werden muss», in *horizont*, 27/1982, p. 10; on military parity, see also Adelbert Weinstein: «Verwirrung in der Allianz. Die NATO und der Atom», in: FAZ April 20 1982, p. 12. <sup>19</sup> Stuby: Die «gefesselte» Souveränität der Bundesrepublik. Zur Entwicklung der BRD im Rahmen der US Globalstrategie, Heilbronn: Distel Literatur Verlag, 1987, p.124. <sup>20</sup> Cf. Gregor Schöllgen: Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Bonn: C. H. Beck, 1999, p. 230. <sup>21</sup> Cf. Kurt Riezler: Die Erforderlichkeit des Unmöglichen. Prolegomena zu einer Theorie der Politik und zu anderen Theorien, Munich: G. Müller Verlag, 1913. <sup>22</sup> Cf. Gregor Schöllgen: Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Bonn: Distel Literatur Verlag, 1999, p. 230.

of increasing interdependencies within world politics and as a result of global economic interrelations («globalisation»). This means that the traditional concept of nation-state sovereignty is less relevant and the principles of national foreign policy have changed. However, foreign policy was never a purely national issue because it always had to react to actions and ambitions of other allied or competing states, either in immediate proximity or in distant regions. However, since the 1990s, the relevance of the traditional theory of imperialism remains unresolved.

After the dissolution of the bipolar world order at the beginning of the 1990s, euphoric visions of «global governance» become fashionable. «Governance (...) [means] the totality of numerous paths through which individuals as well as public and private institutions regulate their common affairs.» It is a continuous process for balancing conflicting and varied interests and initiating cooperative action. Governance encompasses formal institutions and systems of rule with powers of implementation, as well as informal regulations agreed upon or considered by people and institutions to be in their own interest.<sup>23</sup> According to Ines Katenhausen and Wolfram Lamping, governance has gradually become a «linguistically attractive ground upon which to project vague «desired conditions» of new forms of statehood and the fulfilment of tasks through cooperation and participatory processes. Governance defines itself as different from «old» or «traditional» governance.»<sup>24</sup>

Henceforth mankind was supposed to grow together to form a global society and proponents proclaimed a new era of peace and development in *one world of capitalism* that left no space for any alternative. This view was related to the much discussed thesis of the «end of history», understood as capitalism and bringing about the best of all possible worlds. Very quickly this proved to be an illusion. However, beyond the Left, nobody posed the question of whether «impulses for imperialist politics are inherent in capitalism;»<sup>25</sup> moreover, in some sections of the Left, imperialism was considered an out-dated phenomenon and shelved. What does belong to the past, is the imperialism of the 19th century and the ways in which it proliferated two world wars during the first half of the 20th century. Nevertheless, imperial and hegemonic thinking has not disappeared, even if European states compete less and less with one another today; competition occurs more among the European Union, the USA, China and Russia.

## THE OLD IMPERIALISM

The term imperialism (Latin *imperium* = dominance, area of dominance) emerged in the middle of the 19th century and referred to the system of governance under Napoleon III (1853–1870). Some years later, the term also emerged in Great Britain. British liberals used it as «battle cry» against the conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, who at the beginning of the 1870s had declared «the retention and extension of the Empire through confederation and expansion an urgent goal of British foreign policy.»<sup>26</sup> Only at the very end of the 19th century did the term acquire the meaning that is attributed to it today. The context for this is provided by the expansion of European nation-states that from 1881 were embroiled in a «race» to acquire «colonies» (i. e. the not yet occupied regions).

The high phase of imperialism lasted from 1881 to the end of the First World War. The preceding phase initiated by the Vienna Congress is referred to as the epoch of early imperialism (1815–1880). In 1881, the French military occupied Tunisia and in 1882 the British military occupied Egypt. This triggered the rush for a slice of colonisation. Once most of the overseas regions had been divided up among the European powers, they went to war with one another. The German state, which had started «too late» in the colonialism race, was considered to be particularly aggressive in demanding its «place under the sun». At the end of the First World War, Thomas Woodrow Wilson sought to eliminate the conditions for imperialist domination and demanded that the legitimate interests of colonised countries be considered in a reorganisation of international politics. Lenin's «decree on peace» dated 8th November 1917 also has its place in this context. The decree demanded the elimination of colonial domination and the right to self-determination for colonised peoples. In 1920, the League of Nations was founded as an international institution to balance national interests. The process of decolonisation process began, although it only really made headway after 1945.

Yet efforts to overcome the existing imperialist order were not deep-reaching enough. Imperialism cannot simply be overcome by means of political reorganisation and decolonisation. *Immanent* attempts that include forms of state regulation, i. e. interventions into the economy like Keynesianism, are also insufficient. The latter highlights how a decrease in internal demand within a national economy (consumption) leads to a rise in the capitalist compulsion for sales abroad (export of goods and capital). Intensified competition emerges when all countries face this situation. This can only be absorbed in a limited way through comprehensive Keynesian policy-making. However, this does not prevent imperialism.<sup>27</sup> Those who refuse to criticise capitalism should keep silent about imperialism.

Today, as a concept, *imperialism* appears to have limited use as an affective weapon in political science. This is because it has come to encompass a number of different meanings, meaning its analytical distinctiveness is lost. Moreover, the distinction between «formal» and «informal» imperialism has contributed to the loss of analytical distinctiveness. «Whilst formal imperialism refers to the direct political and military control of a territory, its informal variant pertains to the so-called «penetration pacifique», i. e. the peaceful penetration of a region. Whilst the objective here is also control, it is control in an indirect manner, usually through economic means. In-

<sup>23</sup> Commission on Global Governance: *Our Global Neighbourhood*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 4 – «In particular governance distinguishes itself from government. Whilst the latter describes the institutionalised state-led system of coordination, governance is the regulatory system that coordinates collective action.» – Dietrich Fürst: «Regional Governance zwischen Wohlfahrtsstaat und neo-liberaler Marktwirtschaft», in Ines Katenhausen and Wolfram Lamping (eds.): *Demokratien in Europa. Der Einfluss der europäischen Integration auf Institutionenwandel und neue Konturen des demokratischen Verfassungsstaates*, Opladen: VS Verlag, 2003, p. 9–28; p. 24. <sup>24</sup> Ines Katenhausen and Wolfram Lamping: «Über diesen Band: Demokratie, europäische Integration und Institutionenwandel.» in Ines Katenhausen and Wolfram Lamping (eds.): *Demokratien in Europa. Der Einfluss der europäischen Integration auf Institutionenwandel und neue Konturen des demokratischen Verfassungsstaates*, Opladen: VS Verlag, 2003, pp. 251–267; p. 251. <sup>25</sup> Arno Klönne: «Empire und Empirie. Zum Diskurs über US-amerikanische Globalpolitik», in Rainer Butenschön and Eckart Spoo (eds.): *Töten – Plündern – Herrschen. Wege zu neuen Kriegen*, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2003, p. 126–130; p. 127. <sup>26</sup> Cf. Peter Alter: *Der Imperialismus. Grundlagen – Probleme – Theorien*, Stuttgart: Klett Verlag, 2001, p. 2. Speech of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli to representatives of the constituency organisations of the Conservative Party at Crystal Palace in London on June 24 1872, op. cit., p. 12. <sup>27</sup> Cf. John A. Hobson: *Der Imperialismus* (1902), Cologne/Bonn: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970.

formal imperialism can assume different forms, including (...) Free Trade Agreements and friendship or protection agreements. The most frequent and simultaneously most effective method of indirect control has certainly been to make countries overseas economically and financially dependent on European states to such an extent that indirect forms of control can no longer really be distinguished from direct political control.»<sup>28</sup> The concept of «informal imperialism», Peter Alter writes, «should serve the purpose of covering this period's numerous intermediate forms of political, economic or even cultural dependence of underdeveloped regions vis-a-vis the industrially advanced imperialist powers.» In reality, the ways in which concept has undergone differentiation have actually led to generalisations. Its contours have been blurred to the extent that «all relations between differently developed countries become imperialist. Consequently, for example, economic exchange relationships between states with differing economic power cannot be viewed as distinct from imperialism.»<sup>29</sup> For this reason, Alter advises a restrained use of the concept of imperialism. However, the continued relevance of imperialism goes against this advice. Just as it was possible to designate «colonialism» as the highest phase of imperialism (1881–1917),<sup>30</sup> it should be possible to determine a concise expression for the continuation of imperialism after 1990.

#### THE NEW IMPERIALISM: HEGEMONIALISM

The new phase of imperialism no longer means bringing foreign regions under direct control through the acquisition of particular territories, it means putting other governments under pressure and restricting their sovereignty in order to retain mediated or even direct access, and includes the exercise of power in foreign markets.<sup>31</sup> This phase of imperialism can be termed *hegemonialism*.

In any case, it is a widely spread illusion to assume that imperialism belongs to the past. Proponents of the obsolescence of imperialism argue that with so-called globalisation modern nation-states are no longer concerned with expanding their territories through antagonistic land acquisitions (i. e. war). According to classical theories of imperialism, this is because «land greed» is a characteristic of feudal social relations that are no longer relevant in modern societies. However, just because feudalism has been disbanded in advanced industrial countries, this does not mean modern wars no longer have imperialist rationales.

Today, it is sufficient to control foreign capital in order to realise the interests of national capital, meaning that hostile land acquisitions are not necessary. Nonetheless, war continues to serve as a means of last resort to enforce national interests against foreign countries, in other words the «greed for markets», or as Marx calls it, the «craving for more work». Wars are usually an expression of economic interests. Furthermore, military superiority over other nation-states serves the purpose of enforcing economic interests. This still happens even though the interests of capital are becoming less and less nationally oriented. Since the mid-1980s, the state's «greed for markets» in foreign countries has quantitatively increased, obtaining a new quality captured under the term «globalisation». Globalisation has meant the establishment of massive production centres abroad, exporting capital rather than goods. Since 1985, there has been a gradual increase of the production of goods abroad, and this now dominates over

the export of goods. In 1992, with 5.2 billion dollars, the sales figure of foreign subsidiary companies surpassed the 4.9 billion dollars of world trade. In 2000, the income of subsidiary companies abroad already doubled that of world export volume and the volume of «foreign direct investments» (export of capital) reached 20 percent of the gross world product; in 1980, this figure had still been at five per cent.<sup>32</sup> To describe these trends, the term «transnational capital» was introduced. The focus on capital export constitutes the key qualitative change captured by the term «globalisation». The state's interest in shaping foreign markets has thus increased; this is because capital export relies much more on democratic and capital-friendly infrastructures abroad than the export of goods does. This is not so relevant for the western and transatlantic neighbour states where democratic and capitalist structures are firmly anchored; it is mainly relevant for the lesser developed, pre-modern or half-modern countries of the world that are being increasingly capitalised upon.

The term «globalisation» is a very vague description of the qualitative changes triggered by the transformation processes of the beginning of the 1990s. The reason for this is that globalisation is not an historical novelty that began with the collapse of the bipolar world order, if it means the tendency of capital to spread over the entire globe on account of the «craving for added value», causing the evaporation of all that is standing, adapting any backward social conditions it finds to the modern standards necessary for capital. Already 150 years ago, Marx and Engels brought the political economy of capital's compulsion into focus and there has been no change to this fact.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the term «globalisation» fakes the simultaneity of conditions in which the simultaneity of non-simultaneity forms the driving impulse for modernisation dynamics in less developed societies.<sup>34</sup>

The qualitative change in political economy has more to do with the fact that the 1990s saw the universal history of the law of value freed from some biting inhibitions. For the first time ever, the perpetually precarious unity of national economy and nation-state was eroded, leaving behind an increasingly disempowered state vis-a-vis transnational capital. Capital no longer has a home country, although it is not completely detached from it: capital knows many home countries and one is as good as the other, as long as the conditions for optimum capital accumulation are provided by such «locations». The capitalist state feels obligated by this process, whilst at the same time it has to ensure that the conditions of «its» national capital find good business conditions abroad. Obviously, capital plays one home country off against another in order to accelerate the modernisation process in individual states.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Gregor Schöllgen: Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Bonn: C. H. Beck, 1999, p. 39. <sup>29</sup> Cf. Peter Alter: Der Imperialismus. Grundlagen – Probleme – Theorien, Stuttgart: Klett Verlag, 2001, p. 3. <sup>30</sup> «The terms imperialism' and colonialism thus do not denote same thing. To some extent imperialism is broader, meaning that colonialism seems to be more of a particular case.» – Osterhammel: Kolonialismus, Geschichten, Formen. Op. cit. <sup>31</sup> «[H]egemony (gr.) denotes the (military, economic, cultural etc.) superiority or dominance of one state over one or more other states.» – Klaus Schubert, Martina Klein: Das Politlexikon, 4th edition, Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 2006. <sup>32</sup> Cf. Le Monde Diplomatique (ed.): Atlas der Globalisierung, p. 30, p. 26f. <sup>33</sup> Cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: «Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei», in: MEW, Bd. 4, Berlin 1959. <sup>34</sup> For a further critique of globalisation see (with some reservations) Christiane Grefe, Matthias Greffrath and Harald Schuhmann: attac. Was wollen die Globalisierungskritiker? Berlin: Rowohlt, 2002; for a more comprehensive and foundational critique, see «Globalisierungskritik» in Michel Chossudovsky: Global Brutal. Der entfesselte Welthandel, die Armut, der Krieg, Frankfurt and Main: Zweitausendeins, 2002.

According to classical Marxist analysis, the state is the executive that organises the interests of capital. Yet, rather than the particular interests of individual capitalists, the state organises the general interest of collective capital, meaning that the politics of the state can often come in conflict with individual capital fractions. The inevitable competition among necessarily myopic individuals endangers the welfare of the «ideal collective capitalist» that has to ensure that the long-term goals that are in the interest of capital accumulation are pursued. In other words, it has to mediate between the different particular interests and take decisions that could often generate resistance from individuals. On the whole, the general interest of capital is safeguarded through the far-sightedness of the state, yet as a rule, individual capitalists will fight the power of the state and fight for more freedom of movement. Accordingly, corporations are dependent on strong nation-states whose diplomacy and military strength remain the background for expansion.

The Chicago School that formed around Milton Friedman and coined the term neoliberalism, has provided the corresponding ideology of free trade since the 1970s – first as a model in Latin America, then also in the USA and in West Europe, and after 1989 in the former countries of «really existing socialism». The theory of free trade was a challenge to market-protectionism with which states had tried to make their national economies more resistant to the world market. There had to be a stop put to this mental block against western capital.

After the end of the Cold War, the USA began to consolidate its superpower status as part of its globalisation strategy. The restructuring of the international and supranational institutions of «global governance» for the enforcement of a neoliberal world economic order were directly related to the end of system confrontation.

«The United States is in the process of methodically altering the architecture of international politics in such a way that its economic and military hegemony will no longer be subject to any kinds of restrictions, corrective powers or veto. This includes the ability to rise above another nation-state's right to sovereignty, as well the authority to label certain states or organisations as terrorist and belligerently «silence» them if required also as a preventive measure. As a result, the function of both the United Nations and NATO has changed. Traditional requirements of international law become obsolete in the wake of a new architecture of world order.»<sup>35</sup>

With the role of supranational institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), neoliberal concepts are given a strong penetrative power, combining credit grants with a «freeing» of the «third world» from debts to rich western industrial nations in exchange for structural adjustment, which essentially means giving up protectionism (opening of national markets to foreign capital, relaxing trade barriers, tying the national currency to the Dollar and Euro, the reduction of inflation rates by saving on state expenditure primarily in the social sector, the dismantling of labour rights, the weakening of trade unions etc.). Dependent countries end up under the direct influence of the «first world», meaning that they are restricted in their sovereignty with regard to domestic and foreign policy.

Through «supervision» and «consultations», the IMF controls currency and financial policy in almost all countries of the world and regulates the provision of international wealth. The

G8-states alone have over 50 per cent of the voting rights within the IMF. This means that they dominate in ways that the remaining states of the world can hardly stand up. The World Bank gives around 30 billion US-dollars a year in aid to developing countries in the form of credit.<sup>36</sup> The IMF and the World Bank draw up policies for currencies, finance and structure. The neoliberal criteria for allocating credit loans mean that they actively intervene in the domestic and foreign policy of other countries. Since 1994, the WTO has succeeded the organisation of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade); its job entails the regulation of international trade with the objective of its total liberalisation (relaxation of trade barriers and other obstacles to trade); it has 142 member states. Meanwhile, international regulation and the «balance of interests» function largely without any exercise of direct force; the hegemony of the law is generally recognised. «Although no open use of force is necessary, the ruthless implementation of economic reforms nevertheless represents a form of warfare. Generally, war and globalisation are not separate problems. (...) At the beginning of the third millennium, wars and «free» markets go hand in hand. War is to a certain extent the multilateral investment agreement of the latter instance. It physically destroys whatever has not yet been destroyed by deregulation, privatisation and enforcement of «market reforms». (...) Today's «rocket diplomacy» repeats the cannon boat diplomacy which in the 19th century served the purpose of enforcing «free trade».»<sup>37</sup>

States that defy international regulation and do not recognise «western norms» are exposed to the risk of becoming targets for military aggressions (for example Iran). The western values of pluralism, individualism and private property should be universally recognised and should have validity worldwide as norms of social coexistence. If this normative basis is questioned or cannot be ensured, heavy-handed exercises of power enter into politics or are even triggered by it. «The power of the USA has (...) presently no equally weighted competitors worldwide, but there are states that do not have the intention of recognising the USA as the imperial centre even though at the moment they cannot defy its economic and military supremacy. (...) From all of this one can conclude: the era of imperialism is not over.»<sup>38</sup> However, it would be fatal not to recognise that the virulence of imperialism is not limited to the USA. In almost every region – be it the EU and Russia in Europe, China or India in Asia, Iran or Israel in the Middle East – powers strive for regional hegemony. Failure to acknowledge this, instead merely charging the USA with imperialism, could rightly give rise to the suspicion of undue anti-Americanism.

Since 1945, there have been well over 150 wars in the world. The USA, Great Britain and France have been either directly or indirectly involved in most of these with their own troops or arsenal. Only Germany cannot be accused of using its military means for the enforcement of national interests. Twice in its

<sup>35</sup> Arno Klönne: «Empire und Empirie. Zum Diskurs über US-amerikanische Globalpolitik», in Rainer Butenschön und Eckart Spoo (eds.): Töten – Plündern – Herrschen. Wege zu neuen Kriegen, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2003, p. 126–130; p. 129. <sup>36</sup> Cf. «Real existierende Strukturen internationaler politischer Regulierung», in: Ulrich Brand et al.: Global Governance, Münster: Westphälisches Dampfboot, 2000, p. 89–128. <sup>37</sup> Cf. Chossudovsky: Global Brutal. Der entfesselte Welthandel, die Armut, der Krieg, Frankfurt and Main: Zweitausendeins, 2002. <sup>38</sup> Klönne: «Empire und Empirie. Zum Diskurs über US-amerikanische Globalpolitik», in Rainer Butenschön und Eckart Spoo (eds.): Töten – Plündern – Herrschen. Wege zu neuen Kriegen, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2003, p. 126–130; p. 33f.

attempts to grab world power, Germany inflicted terrible wars on the world and was responsible for Auschwitz. As a result, Germany was deprived of its sovereignty by the allied forces and liberating powers. In the international power play, the West German state on account of its restricted sovereignty over a period of 50 years had a «location disadvantage». «Germany had to accept the role of a junior partner, not to mention the GDR which had subordinated itself to the Soviet Union.»

### THE NORMALISATION OF GERMANY

Germany was permitted only very tentative steps towards its own foreign policy within a strict regulatory framework.<sup>39</sup> In the process of normalising German foreign policy, first the *ius ad Bellum* had to be created again.<sup>40</sup> *Ius ad Bellum* is considered to be the most important external criterion of state sovereignty on the basis of the imperialist world order of 1914 and within the logic of capital accumulation, which the conservatives were the first to take up after the Second World War.

The normalisation of the unified German states' foreign policy was directed primarily at the *ius ad Bellum*, whose reform was not merely a problem of the past and of bilateral diplomatic relations, but was also a structural problem related to German armed forces. According to the German military and the makers of German foreign policy, these armed forces were certainly capable of defence but not of war; after 1989/90 the German armed forces were not considered to be capable of forming any alliances in a context where NATO had «emancipated» itself from its obligation of defence. As a result, normalisation in the sphere of foreign policy meant developing the capacity to deploy German armed forces in wars («war capability») as well as developing an equally significant «alliance-capability».

However, any integration into collective security or defence systems (UNO, NATO etc.), in which the right to wage war is restricted or even denied to member states, had to be interpreted by the conservatives as an unreasonable restriction of state sovereignty. For Germany, it also meant that through the integration into collective security systems with the resulting obligations placed on Germany due to its alliances, a strict refusal of the *ius ad Bellum* could only be partly circumvented.<sup>41</sup> After the allied forces granted Germany restricted sovereignty, the conservatives were compelled to interpret this as «chained sovereignty»; particularly as Germany was incomplete, only encompassing half of the territory of the previous German Reich.<sup>42</sup> Initially, the establishment of the *ius ad Bellum* for the entire German state was an important issue for conservative elites, yet always had to come to terms with NATO and, following German reunification, increasingly also with the creation of a common European Defence and Security Policy within the framework of EU integration. After the Second World War, it was not only Germany that lost its sovereignty, the whole of Europe did: the old powers had lost their independence. The spheres of influence shifted in favour of the new superpowers USA and USSR; the British Empire was dissolved, leading to bloc formations, confrontation and the Cold War. At the beginning of the 1990s, the spheres of influence began to be reorganised. The USSR lost out on account of its abrupt dissolution and in the process of EU integration the USA successively lost its hegemony over East and West Europe.

### STATE SOVEREIGNTY

State sovereignty in the traditional sense follows Carl Schmitt's definition, according to which sovereign is the one who can command the state of exception within a country and abroad.<sup>43</sup> The two important potentials of the sovereign state with the power to command the exception are an «independence» to do so as well as the «ability» to do so.<sup>44</sup> This aspect of sovereignty functions as a traditional standard of what constitutes the normal. However, it is subject to a dynamic that moves in in both directions and thus cancels itself out: within the country, state sovereignty according to the «western standard» becomes the inalienable property of the people (people's sovereignty), even though exercising this sovereignty is delegated to state institutions and the ruling elite gathered there. Michael Jäger writes: «Even though in these western societies the state stands above society, the state derives from an abstraction. This abstraction implies that the people themselves took over the state in order to divide into instances of the state and of society, to which the mediations of parliamentarianism testify; this take-over of the state occurred through certain incidents and in the struggle to obtain specific goals. The definitiveness of these events and the associated aims fed this abstraction of the state and impacted upon its concretisation.»<sup>45</sup>

State sovereignty is less democratised externally than within a country. Whenever one speaks of a «raison d'état», the specific content of state policy is more or less withdrawn from democratic control. Foreign policy is not merely the summation of individual decisions and actions – there is a principle behind it. Foreign policy is the result of an overall strategy that does not always – in fact very rarely – exists entirely in the open. The overall strategy is hardly ever laid down democratically but is determined by the governing elite. This tradition harks back to an era of monarchic power and continues right up to the present. Ruling elites view public opinion as either an obstacle or an exploitable factor. Ruling elites like to draw on public opinion to legitimise foreign policy decisions. In reality, public opinion has very little influence on foreign policy. There is no more than the suggestion of the possibility of a democratic decision-making process. If public opinion and foreign policy correspond, public opinion is instrumentalised for the purposes of legitimation. In the case where there is a divergence, public opinion becomes the object of propagand-

<sup>39</sup> Stuby: Die «gefesselte» Souveränität der Bundesrepublik. Zur Entwicklung der BRD im Rahmen der US Globalstrategie, Heilbronn: Distel Literatur Verlag, 1987, p. 11. <sup>40</sup> Elsewhere, I provide a comprehensive analysis of this process of normalisation, See Marcus Havel: Die normalisierte Nation. Vergangenheitsbewältigung und Außenpolitik in Deutschland, foreword by Moshe Zuckermann, Hannover: Offizin Verlag, 2007. <sup>41</sup> See Dieter S. Lutz: «Das Grundgesetz fordert Friedenspolitik. Zum Streit um unsere sicherheitspolitische Zukunft,» in Dieter S. Lutz (ed.): Deutsche Soldaten weltweit? Blauhelme, Eingreiftruppen, «out of area» – Der Streit um unsere sicherheitspolitische Zukunft, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1993, p. 43. <sup>42</sup> Cf. Stuby: Die «gefesselte» Souveränität der Bundesrepublik. Zur Entwicklung der BRD im Rahmen der US Globalstrategie, Heilbronn: Distel Literatur Verlag, 1987, p. 10. <sup>43</sup> Cf. Carl Schmitt: Politische Theologie – Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, p. 11. <sup>44</sup> Stuby: Die «gefesselte» Souveränität der Bundesrepublik. Zur Entwicklung der BRD im Rahmen der US Globalstrategie, Heilbronn: Distel Literatur Verlag, 1987, p. 10. With reference to Hermann Jahrreiss, we can make a critical comparison of the historical development of the concept of sovereignty: Die Souveränität der Staaten. Ein Wort – mehrere Begriffe – viele Missverständnisse. In Hanns Hermann (eds.): Die Entstehung des modernen souveränen Staates, Cologne/Berlin (West): Kiepenheuer & Wietsch, 1967, p. 35 ff. – Jahrreiss endorses the imperialist tradition. «We cannot expect anything different from a proponent of international law who was an expert witness for the defence in the Nuremberg Trials and who doubted the binding force of prohibitions of aggression. – Cf. Stuby: Die «gefesselte» Souveränität der Bundesrepublik. Zur Entwicklung der BRD im Rahmen der US Globalstrategie, Heilbronn: Distel Literatur Verlag, 1987, p. 76. <sup>45</sup> Michäl Jäger: Probleme und Perspektiven der Berliner Republik, Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1999, p. 76.

dist campaigns that seek to wed public opinion to the directions of foreign policy. In other instances, public opinion in other states is used for the purposes of legitimation in order to exert pressure on one's own public. It would therefore be a reasonable demand to subject foreign policy decisions to democratic control influence.

### RESTRICTED SOVEREIGNTY

With regard to foreign policy, the sovereignty of the state is being increasingly abolished through inter-state institutions. Modern international law restricts the foreign policy of states and subjects it to certain rules. However, adherence to these rules depends on whether states generally accept the voluntary codes of conduct. This is because there is still no developed supranational authority that could effectively impose sanctions in cases of non-compliance. Nevertheless, there are attempts to form a supranational authority, a form of civilisational progress that retracts from Schmitt's dictum. The Geneva Conventions emerged from the idea of domesticating wars through international law. After the First World War (in 1920), there was an attempt to use the League of Nations to impose sanctions on countries that waged wars in breach of codes of justice. For the first time with the Briand Kellogg Pact (1928), wars of aggression were explicitly outlawed and a restriction imposed on sovereign states with regard to an *absolute Ius ad Bellum*. The UN-Charter permits state violence against other states (members of the UN) only when it can be considered a case of defence against armed aggression.<sup>46</sup> Relatively speaking, states are no longer absolutely sovereign with respect to foreign policy. The legal regulation of inter-state violence in modern international law is three-fold; one differentiates between *Ius ad Bellum* (the right to war), the *Ius in Bello* (right in war) and the *Ius Armorum* (right to armament).<sup>47</sup> In the «right to war», yardsticks of justice are laid down. Only «just» wars can be waged. «Unjust wars» are outlawed.<sup>48</sup> The «right in war» is meant to regulate the use of weapons in order to achieve «justice» in war, for example through «humane» treatment of victims and prisoners of war.<sup>49</sup> At least in the «international law of war», there is an advanced understanding that all those affected by war are victims. However, it is difficult to track down the aggressor and the guilty, because under the moral primate of renouncing violence, aggressors designate their aggression as defence, meaning that only «defence wars» are waged from both sides (pre-emptive strike). The «right to armament» regulates the possession of weapons (for example, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty 1968, B-Arms-Convention 1972, C-Weapons-Convention 1993). At least the means, i. e. the precondition for war, can be partly restricted through the influence on state armament programmes, even if the structural reasons for war are not eliminated. Confidence-building measures such as arms control, non-proliferation treaties, transparency of industries etc. can at least contribute towards preventing a dangerous arms race, or could even bring about mutual disarmament.

All these more or less obligatory restrictions ensured by international law demonstrate that traditional imperialism can never again become an effective force (in spite of the temporary tendency to ignore international law). This is because networked interdependence within world order has changed significantly. The imperialist mechanisms are compelled to

transformation through the standards of modern international law, the norms of «global governance», the existence of supranational institutions (UNO, IMF, World Bank, NATO etc.), and last but not the least on account of a higher dependence of states on one another, not only during crisis phases of global capital but also in the transnationalisation of originally national capital. However, transformation does not mean disappearance. These mechanisms remain effective precisely because they are superseded in the processes of transformation.

Wherever something is superseded in the dialectical sense of the word, a new term has to emerge. Imperialism has not been the last stage of capitalism. Rather, imperialism (like capitalism) passes through different phases. Each of these phases is dependent on the dynamics of structural change within capitalism itself. Therefore, if we shelve the term, we dispense with a relevant way of understanding of the world we live in. Accordingly, the reverse of the aforementioned dictum also applies: those who do not want to criticise imperialism should remain silent about capitalism.

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Charter of the United Nations, Art. 51, archived at: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml>. <sup>47</sup> Cf. Stefan Brunner: *Deutsche Soldaten im Ausland. Fortsetzung der Aussenpolitik mit militärischen Mitteln?* Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1993, p. 119–128. <sup>48</sup> «The differentiation between just and unjust wars had to fail because justice was uncovered as the obfuscation of power, responsible for ideologising war.» – *Ibid.*, p. 119. <sup>49</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

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