

Might or Right

Orientations of European Geopolitics

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Foreword

The U.S. does not acknowledge the International Criminal Court as binding on itself; Russia is waging a war of aggression against Ukraine against all norms of international law, and the People's Republic of China is threatening to *reunify* Taiwan even against the declared will of the people living there - behaviors that can be explained according to the logic of power. According to this logic, only the ability to assert one's own will even in the face of resistance prevails: Power. Dependent people have to adapt to this power or to flee.

This is contrasted with the logic of mutual binding, which can also be understood as the logic of equal rights and the logic of subject matter. According to this logic, people are mutually bound by their humanity, countries by their economic, social, political and cultural interconnectedness, and states by common challenges. Consequently, they respect each other as principally equal and free - the basis of commonly accepted norms and procedures. In the protection of this rule *of law*, conflicts can be managed peacefully and common challenges can be discussed objectively.

In the following, I present these two logics of interaction, central content of the theory of civility developed in recent years (Prittwitz 2018, 2021a, b, c), in more detail, give a corresponding contemporary historical overview, and analyze current conflicts and challenges: the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the relations between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, corona and climate politics. Finally, I draw conclusions for the evolving European geopolitics.

The text is aimed at political actors and anyone interested in political interaction logics.

The logic of power

Power is the ability to assert one's will even in the face of resistance (Weber 1921/1980: 28). Accordingly, only those who have power can be free; those who are powerless, on the other hand, must subordinate themselves, adapt or flee - an all-pervasive logic. Accordingly, socially and politically, the only thing that matters is gaining, maintaining and expanding power or adapting to it.

In a power structure, the ruling law is the law of the rulers. Economy functions imperialistically; the state rules unrestrictedly in an *empire*; religion is ruling religion or else it is suppressed; culture can develop only as ruling culture, which exalts the ruling power, possibly as divine.

But power can also have functional effects. For example, it reduces complexity and can reduce uncertainty, especially its subjective perception. Supported by power, decisions can be made quickly and implemented vigorously, and dangerous conflicts, especially civil war, can be limited or avoided through dominant power.

Accordingly, power has often been exaggerated in the history of political thought as a central principle of relations and action. This was the case with the pioneers of absolutism, such as Machiavelli (1513), Bodin (1576) and Hobbes (1651), and with philosophers of the 19th century. Thus, Hegel (1920) conceived of the state as the moral embodiment of the ability to exercise power or dominion; Marx and Engels, in their Communist Manifesto (1848), propagated the absolute power of the working class (*dictatorship of the proletariat*) as a prerequisite for overcoming the capitalist evils of this world; finally, Nietzsche, influenced by Schopenhauer's philosophy of the will, planned a major work under the title *The Will to Power*, interpreting *power* as the epitome of human freedom of development. Power also appears as central in more recent theories, such as *neorealism* (Waltz 1989).

In a power relationship, however, the dependents have to submit or adapt unconditionally. Those who regard power as the epitome of freedom and life, as natural or God-given, thus presuppose the submission of the weaker or dependent to the will of the powerful. Resistance, deviation, and pluralism appear illegitimate; suppressing and annihilating them appears justified – a legitimization of oppression, violence, and war that can lead to the orgiastic exaggeration of violence. Therefore, power-centered mindsets and milieus are often violent, found in the purest form in fascism.

In a structure of unlimited power, coordination can only take place if the ruler is capable of doing so (as a *Good King*) and is currently willing (has had a good breakfast). Otherwise, it is not governed, unjustly or despotically.

If power logic works its way into the depths of society through unequal law, a large part of the population, mostly women, poorer people and social minorities, is excluded from active independent shaping and decision-making. This gives rise to relatively unproductive pre-modern systems such as privilege rule, class rule, caste rule and slaveholding, but also forms of rule that we still often observe today, such as the rule of the rich (plutocracy). Incompetence easily rises to the top (Peter principle), and it is precisely rulers who exploit society. If power becomes an addiction, it eventually serves only itself – the purest and most devastating form of autocracy.

In power systems, information usually accumulates below the top of the power structure, making it easily overloaded (*information overload*), while the dominated have relatively little information and find it difficult to motivate themselves to perform independently. Therefore, in power systems, performance often has to be externally motivated, and possibly forced. Since deviations are not allowed, objective criticism and innovative impulses are lacking. In the long term, power systems therefore tend to be weak in innovation, institutionally cumbersome and senile.

In the face of (perceived) resistance, those in power eventually tend to resort to violence. Therefore, the logic of power easily combines with the friend/foe logic of war. Accordingly, in terms of the logic of power (Clausewitz 1815), war is considered to be at least ultimately a regular form of politics. Political, power and friend/enemy thinking merge (Schmidt 1932) - an amalgamation that characterizes in particular totalitarian systems of power that operate with boundless violence (Arendt 1955).

In view of this, the question arises of an alternative to the logic of power. This consists in the logic of mutual commitment.

The logic of law

If actors are mutually dependent on each other, they can only achieve goals together. Accordingly, they respect each other and may even develop empathic interest in each other. Moreover, they act consciously of their responsibility for the whole, since they can only be successful individually if they succeed together – attitudes in the sense of the logic of mutual commitment, which is referred to as *multilateralism* (literally *versatility*), particularly in international relations.

In the case of mutual commitment, the parties involved must agree on the content or on a jointly recognized procedure by which they resolve conflicts among themselves. Such procedures can be understood as procedural law, while valid substantive norms are the content of substantive law. In this way, the logic of mutual commitment gives rise to jointly recognized and thus generally valid law: the guiding concept of *the rule of law*.

Multilateralism and its corresponding legal forms are more complex than one-sided power structures (unilateralism); for legally all participants are on an equal footing, so emerging action situations are not closed by power from

the outset, but are open to decision – a challenge, stimulus and potential for achievement.

Two independent dimensions interact: the rule dimension of rules recognized by all participants, and thus independently valid, and the operational dimension of free action. Thus, free elections must be conducted independently in the sense of valid rules, and the operational participants must be free to choose or to stand for election. Only when these two independent dimensions interact does fair coordination emerge. This two-dimensional type of coordination serves the good of all participants in different ways:

- The parties involved are mutually protected from encroachment (protection and peace function).
- All participants can act freely within the framework of the commonly recognized law, which makes different thinking legitimate (freedom and pluralism function).
- Individual preferences are transformed into jointly recognized decisions (collective decision-making function).
- Common challenges can be mastered in a coordinated manner (management function). For this purpose, factual communication and decisions can be made (policy function).
- Coordination is open-ended, an enormous incentive for performance and innovation, because it rewards operational performance (performance responsiveness and motivational function).
- With higher operational motivation, operational performance increases, which in turn increases general welfare (performance and welfare function).
- Open processes often run in a surprising and dynamic way, i.e. entertaining (entertainment function).

- Two-dimensional coordination systems can be corrected and consciously developed further via the rule level (correction, innovation and learning function).

The logic of mutual commitment and the resulting rule of law make factual communication or policies possible. In this respect, policy research (currently for many authors: Capano/Howlett 2020) frames its subject according to the logic of mutual commitment. This is especially true for the entire discussion on environmental policy and sustainability.

An overview of contemporary history

In the *short 20th century* (1914 to 1989) there were serious power-logical upheavals. Thus, Germany, Austria, France, Russia, England and other European countries fought each other in the First World War motivated by power logic – with more than nine million dead, with all the suffering that a war of extermination lasting for years entails for soldiers and civilians, and the structural weakening of the countries involved in favor of the USA as the new world power.

From the weakening of power and friend/foe logic, totalitarian systems of thought, organization and state developed, which took the logic of power to the extreme. Stalinism, for example, ruled the Soviet Union in a state-terrorist manner from the 1920s to the 1950s, killing many millions of people, especially independent peasants (kulaks) and the politically committed. National Socialism, which came to power in Germany in 1933 and spread worldwide, propelled into World War II with some 70 million dead, planned and implemented the systematic genocide of Jews and other social minorities.

Finally, during the Cold War from 1947 to 1989, the power struggle between the U.S.-led West and the Soviet-

dominated East took on systemically exaggerated features. This resulted in a series of proxy wars (Vietnam, Cambodia, civil wars in South American, African and Asian countries) and an arms race that led to the brink of a nuclear inferno for mankind.

However, not all people could be defined in terms of power logic: from individuals who helped persecuted Jews to oppositionists under *Real Socialism* to critics of the arms mania in the East-West conflict. And other relations also developed between the main actors, at least for a time, such as East-West trade from the 1960s to the 1980s and space policy cooperation between the United States, the Soviet Union, and other countries since the mid-1960s. Willy Brandt's *New Ostpolitik* and Gorbachev's reform approaches of *perestroika* and *glasnost* opened up new opportunities. Finally, the propagandistically and militarily charged power struggle between East and West ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, German reunification in 1990, and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the logic of mutual commitment dominated, especially in Europe (including Russia) and North America, but countered and simultaneously accentuated by the confrontation with Islamist terrorism. This terrorism (via al-Qaeda to the Islamic State) developed on the basis of the ideology of political Islam that had emerged since the Khomeini revolution in Iran (1979), the rise in oil prices that gave oil states power resources, and U.S. foreign and security policies that led to *failed states* such as Libya and the Syrian war.

Instead of using the window of political objectivity opened by the collapse of the Soviet Union to structurally overcome the power-logical constellations of the Cold War, the United States behaved hesitantly toward Russia and kept it at a distance despite its offers of cooperation. Russia was invited to the G-7 summits, thus creating a G-8 format, but it was not to be allowed to join NATO (as a potential ene-

my), and in other respects, too, the country was met in various contact groups instead of being integrated.

Parallel to this international integration failure, authoritarian patterns of thought and politics emerged in Russia since the 2000s and increasingly in the 2010s; Russia reverted from a state of fragile democracy to an authoritarian, now even increasingly totalitarian country in which the political opposition and critical journalists are treated as enemies – a development supported by Russia's resurgence as an oil and gas power, but underestimated or overlooked in Western states, especially Germany.

China, too, has regressed in recent decades from an attitude of mutual interest ties toward power-logical patterns of thinking and economics (*New Silk Road*). Thus today, mainly China (under Xi Jinping) and Russia (under Putin) stand for ruling power logic. But other actors also think and act in terms of power logic – see Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, who dreams of re-establishing the Ottoman Empire, and the Brazilian right-wing populist Bolsonaro. But anti-democratic forces have also grown significantly in the U.S. since the 2000s, including religious sects, so-called conservative movements such as the Tea Party movement, and finally Trumpism, which has already conquered large parts of the Republican Party and is increasingly openly seeking to impose an anti-democratic order.

Today, however, these narrowly unilateral, primarily power-logical thought patterns and movements are opposed by strong forces that stand up against racism, for vital democracy and for the protection of international law according to the logic of equal and fair justice. Thus, the logic of power and the logic of law clash confrontationally not only in individual countries but also internationally, culminating in the Ukraine war.

The Ukraine war

Today Ukraine is an independent republic with more than 40 million inhabitants, the second largest country in Europe and the largest whose territory lies entirely within Europe. This independence is historically legitimized by the founding of the Ukrainian People's Republic in 1917, the fact that Ukraine has been an independent member of the United Nations since its founding in 1945, and, above all, that Russia, the United States, and Great Britain recognized the country's sovereignty in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. Ukraine's sovereignty and existing borders were formally recognized in return for its renunciation of the Soviet nuclear weapons stationed on its territory – an exemplary process of combining valid law with the logic of mutual commitment.

In addition to these historical preconditions, despite partial limitations due to corruption and the influence of Russia and Western states, there is strong evidence that the state of Ukraine functions independently. See independently conducted democratic elections to parliament and the presidency, a current president who prudently coordinates and represents his country, forms of cultural development in many areas and a strong international representation of the country, for example, in the areas of music and sports.

Despite all this, the Russian ruler Putin does *not* regard Ukraine as a *real state*, as he has publicly stated on several occasions. Rather, he initially implicitly laid claim to power in the country and pursued an aggressive annexation policy, at first covertly, but then increasingly openly (launching Russia-oriented politicians, annexation of Crimea, war of separation over parts of eastern Ukraine, war of aggression against Ukraine, openly displaying the goal of a *change of system*).

This power-led policy includes systematic propagandistic name-calling, such as claiming that Ukraine is a *NAZI regime*, that Ukraine committed genocide against the Rus-

sian population in the Donbas, and that its leadership is a drug-addicted bunch (Putin on 2/25/2022). These insults have consistently proven to be inane slanderous and discredit the insulter himself: While Ukraine has formed its parliament and government essentially freely, Russia has dismantled the democracy it has won in the meantime step by step under Putin. While Ukraine lived and would like to live in peace with all its neighbors and has meanwhile even been recognized as a candidate for accession to the European Union, Russia today forms a highly authoritarian state without a free political public sphere, which has now been waging a war of aggression on Ukraine for more than half a year: Russia, not Ukraine, is the state that is grossly violating the norms of international law.

Putin's exclusively power-logical thinking is also demonstrated by his notorious accusation that NATO has illegitimately expanded into Central/Eastern Europe; for sovereign countries can, from a legal-logical point of view, apply completely freely for membership in an international organization. Those who do not want to grant them this freedom, or who want to take it away again, show nothing else than their own claim to power over them. The formula of the (illegitimate) *eastward expansion of NATO* thus means Russia's renewed claim to power over all Central/Eastern European countries: independent states are to be deprived of their freedom and sovereignty – contrary to valid international law and contrary to all goals of freedom and democracy.

Putin's term *special action for the Russian war of aggression* also makes sense only in terms of power logic; for a ruler does not wage war in his sphere of power, but merely acts in a police capacity – in cynical contradiction to the reality of endless suffering for those attacked, but also for the Russian soldiers and their families deployed in the war.

Putin's actions against the internal Russian opposition and democracy correspond to this cynicism: Since he sees democracy as a curtailment of power, he has eliminated and

dissolved it step by step. He has journalists who report critically on his striving for power and the associated corruption networks eliminated, even killed, if this seems opportune to him.

Putin, Lavrov, Medvedev and others thus act internally and externally in a rigorously power-driven manner – sanctioned and supported by the Orthodox Christian Church. In doing so, they pursue the goal, beyond Russia's immediate spatial environment, of enforcing the logic of power as universally valid, even exclusively valid. Suppression and war are again to become common and openly valued means of international relations and domestic politics. Thus Putin tries to enforce his power and violence calculus also in other parts of the world, so Africa, among others, with his Wagner troops. Here he allies himself as president of a war-terrorist acting state with the cruelest, most inhumane systems of the earth.

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe that became sovereign after the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, as they have repeatedly made clear, do not want to come under the thumb of Russian rule once again – an endeavor that Finland and Sweden have also reportedly joined after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And Ukraine has been defending itself self-sacrificially and almost heroically against Russian aggression for more than half a year now – a defensive struggle that is fundamentally different from the proxy wars of the Cold War, because here a country is fighting for its independence, freedom and democracy with all means at its disposal.

If this struggle is successful, it should benefit all democracies, especially small and medium-sized constitutional states; for it would visibly and momentarily overcome the power logic of the 19th and 20th centuries: Anyone who breaks fundamental norms of international law encounters strong national and international resistance, such strong resistance that he ultimately has to withdraw and suffers

severe disadvantages in all conceivable areas (politics, economy, science, culture and sport).

This resistance of a relatively small democracy against a powerful autocratic aggressor is historically new (perhaps apart from the Finnish War of Independence against Russia). It is discredited by anti-democratic forces in and outside Western countries, but it should encourage and inspire the commitment of all who work for fair and peaceful coexistence.

China and Taiwan

Relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan (Republic of China) have historically developed in a complex process. In this process, actors (ruling at times) from the Kuomintang Party and the Republic of China later formed from it, the Communist Party of China and the People's Republic of China met historically in various constellations. Other actors, especially Japan (in the 1930s and 1940s) and the U.S., and even the people of Taiwan (formerly Formosa) also exerted or/and continue to exert influence.

In recent years in particular, however, the conflict has been strongly structured in terms of power logic: The People's Republic of China regards Taiwan as a breakaway part of its state. President Xi Jinping even announced before the People's Congress the firm intention of a foreseeable reunification with the breakaway republic. In contrast, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen and other members of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which constitutes the current governing majority, emphasize that Taiwan is determined to preserve its independence, its pluralistic society and its democratic system and would defend these achievements against political and military annexation attempts. China could thus force its plans for *reunification* with Taiwan only in a war of aggression.

China's power-logical view is contradicted by the fact that Taiwan is coordinating very successfully on its own. For example, the small island state of Taiwan is highly technologized, strongly intertwined with the global economy and ranks 22nd in the world according to the criterion of gross domestic product (Wikipedia). China, the world's second largest economy, is Taiwan's most important trading partner, but is also dependent on Taiwanese technology. It currently has to import about 70 percent of the microchips it needs, about half of which come from Taiwan. In this respect, the logic of reciprocal ties seems far more realistic than the logic of power.

Unlike Ukraine, however, Taiwan has not been a member state of the United Nations since 1971, when the People's Republic of China (with the support of the United States) succeeded in ousting Taiwan as a representative from the United Nations. Following China's consistent One-China policy, Taiwan today is not officially recognized as a state by almost any other state – a fundamental change in the situation from the first decades after the Chinese civil war, when Taiwan even claimed overall representation of China for itself.

In recent years, the People's Republic of China has been pursuing a forced power policy domestically, for example toward the Uyghurs in the northwest of the country – an approach toward an Islamic population (of unequal rights) that has met with moral criticism in Western countries according to criteria of equal rights. But China is also making growing territorial claims to the outside world, a policy that, like Russia's turn in power politics, has significance beyond the narrowest regional sphere of claims: China (together with Russia) wants to make recognizable power logic once again the sole principle of world political order.

In this situation, providing massive symbolic political and financial support for Taiwan's independence, as the U.S. is doing – see the demonstrative visit of Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U.S. Democrats in the U.S. House of Representa-

tives, to Taiwan in August 2022 – appears immediately as an expression of a great power conflict. But it also has regulatory aspects in an international context. Addressing these is above all in the interest of small and medium-sized states around the world that want to remain independent and free.

Corona Policy

Perceiving and managing health hazards and risks is an objective challenge. This is fundamentally in tension with the logic of power, because those who are primarily interested in power will only perceive and address such dangers and risks to the extent that this benefits their power ambitions and fits into their power-logical worldview. Above all, however, health policy can only be as effective as the respective power system allows.

Thus, the perception of the Corona pandemic well into January 2020 was blocked, and in some cases even punished, by China's ruling power apparatus as possibly unsettling the population. Responsible health scientists who pointed out the danger of a pandemic at an early stage and analyzed the virus were muzzled – in breach of valid procedural requirements of the World Health Organization, according to which potentially pandemic diseases must be reported to the WHO within one day. As a result, many weeks, as far as can be seen today even months, were wasted during which there was a chance to avert or at least limit the pandemic.

Even after the official perception of the pandemic, the Chinese power apparatus continued to struggle for many days to redirect itself in the direction of effectively combating the epidemic; for example, the Chinese New Year was held only with weak controls and essentially in the traditional manner, thus spreading the virus across the entire country. However, once the fight against the pandemic became an urgent task for the power apparatus, a second

power-logical pattern of action became dominant: the unlimited power of action of the system's leadership and power apparatus: China's no-covid strategy is aimed at not allowing a single case of illness and is therefore rigorous, a form of totalitarian health policy: Not only acutely affected persons, but also potential victims of infection are locked in their homes or in central facilities for many months—without regard for the respective costs of this procedure for the affected persons and for third parties.

This approach began to have a positive effect after a few weeks of absolute catastrophe, during which the number of COVID-affected people, especially the dead, was concealed and manipulated: China got the pandemic under control more quickly than many other countries and was already able to operate largely without problems again in the fall of 2020. However, the Chinese no-covid strategy operates indiscriminately with respect to different COVID variants and severities, making it extremely disproportionate and inflexible as the lethality of the virus tends to wane. In 2022, for example, Shanghai, a metropolis of 15 million, was completely subjected to a lock-in for many months after several cases of the more contagious but less lethal omicron variant of COVID emerged there, and again in August 2022, affected individuals of whom the authorities became aware were at risk of being locked up for many months – a pattern that has led to frantic forms of escape (Spiegel August 2022)

Other political and governmental systems also showed weaknesses in dealing with the pandemic. For example, the disease was often recognized too late and first combated with bureaucratic delays; it was fought too little intensively, incompletely and inconsistently; and, above all, it was often suppressed or glossed over in a populist manner. The claim that the Chinese way of combating the pandemic was exemplary and optimal is, however, based on the actual course of policy in China, untenable propagan-

da. Here, too, the logic of power was and is in strong tension with the logical requirements for action.

Climate policy

What is commonly referred to as *climate change* is the overheating of the Earth due to anthropogenic greenhouse gases, a catastrophe in progress that may spell the end of humanity. This catastrophe has been the subject of local, national and international governance efforts for half a century (since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Environment), with targets such as mitigation, *climate neutrality* and *sustainability*.

Despite all these efforts, possibly also because of their future-oriented governance framing and the expertise related to it (for very many: Kulovesi/Oberthür 2020; Oberthür/Grön 2020; Jacob/Töller 2022), unilateral thinking and behavior continue to dominate globally – with the result that atmospheric concentrations and even global emissions of greenhouse gases continue to rise in a largely monotonic fashion. According to analysis by the International Energy Agency (IEA), energy-related carbon dioxide emissions in the world increased by 6% in 2021 to a historic record of 36.3 billion metric tons (Time online March 8, 2022). It is therefore to be expected that the effects of *climate change* that have already occurred and are occurring, such as the greatly accelerated melting of the polar ice caps and glaciers, spreading wildfires, floods and storms, are only the beginning of something far worse – an emergency situation that has not yet been taken seriously as such (Prittwitz 2019).

A unilateral logic that reinforces and perpetuates the global increase in greenhouse gas emissions is the logic of power, because those who think in terms of power logic are primarily or exclusively interested in gaining, maintaining and expanding power. Measured against this, factual challenges such as the climate problem appear to be insig-

nificant or of secondary importance – a pattern of thinking that can be exemplified by actors operating according to power logic, such as Xi Jinping, Trump & Co or Putin:

- Over the past half century, China has gone from being a country of bicycle riders with an extremely low ecological footprint to the largest emitter of greenhouse gases on earth. While it is pushing climate-friendly technologies such as solar and wind energy, it also continues to rely heavily on fossil fuels such as coal and oil. Above all, however, the Chinese Communist Party led by Xi Jinping is planning decades of strong growth for China and is pushing ahead with its global growth and power strategy (*Silk Road* project and others) – an almost devastating prospect for the world's climate; because without effective global regulation, produced economic resources will become climate-relevant regardless of the environmental technology used in each case, for example through exports and forms of consumption in gray areas.
- In the world of Donald Trump and other populists like Jair Bolsonaro, global factual problems, especially the climate problem, do not fit; because in strictly unilateral thinking along the lines of, *America First!* there are no factual problems. Accordingly, Trump & Co deny and suppress the climate problem, also by trying to ridicule their perception.
- Putin's claims to power and his war against Ukraine are materially based on the exploitation of Russian mineral resources, especially fossil fuels. Accordingly, Russia extracts coal, oil and natural gas to the best of its ability without any restriction in terms of climate considerations. For example, Russia is currently flaring natural gas that is not consumed due to sanctions, with corresponding greenhouse gas emissions (Spiegel online, 29.8.2022).

However, the negative effects of power logic on climate protection are relativized by the extent to which actors have natural resources at their disposal: The main drivers of the climate catastrophe are the large consumer states and economic growth drivers, such as the USA, Europe and China. By contrast, if actors have few resources, power logic has little climate impact. Thus, pre-modern actors with unequal rights, such as the Islamist Taliban, who cannot even secure basic supplies for the population, contribute far less than proportionally to the overheating of the earth. However, power-logically structured states with a particularly high availability of resources, such as Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern oil states, have a particularly large ecological footprint (with the USA) (Footprint Network 2022).

In summary, the climate balance of power logic is predominantly negative: If power logic prevails, it makes factual communication and action more difficult, and thus climate protection. If narrow-minded power logic leads to poverty, it loses relevance for climate protection; if it is combined with high resource availability (as in the oil-exporting countries, especially rich oil states), it has a particularly strong negative impact on the climate.

European Geopolitics

What follows from the considerations and findings presented above for a European geopolitics?

Geopolitics conventionally refers to the actions of great powers within the framework of a global power and interest strategy (*geostrategy*) – a power-logically framed concept of so-called neo-realism (Waltz 1979). The European Union, however, does not see itself as a conventional great power; rather, it is an association of states with common interests, values, and institutions that also represents certain fundamental values vis-à-vis third parties. Nevertheless, or precisely for that reason, it has to proceed from

recognizable realities, i.e. to be realistic. Thus, in view of Russia's brutal power and war policy, Europe must be ready and willing in its own interest to defend itself effectively against possible military attacks.

However, European realpolitik is not limited to this; rather, it also has value-oriented goals, such as the protection of international law and the protection of the ecological survival of mankind. It is precisely these goals, which serve the survival of humanity, that are existentially realistic. European foreign policy is therefore not only military and power-oriented, but also problem-oriented realism. This is how I interpret Chancellor Scholz's Prague speech, in particular the passage:

Realpolitik in the 21st century does not mean putting values aside and sacrificing partners in favor of lazy compromises. Realpolitik must mean involving friends and value partners, supporting them in order to be stronger in global competition through cooperation (Scholz 29.08.2022).

European geopolitics, however, extends beyond intra-European relations - a view expressed by the German chancellor in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on September 20, 2022. Here, he combined criticism of Putin's actions against Ukraine with a plea for a multilateral global peace order with the guiding idea: Our world has clear rules (Scholz 2022b).

In accordance with the logic of law and factual politics, I believe that some normative principles of geopolitics emerge that can have an orienting effect beyond the individual case:

- If a state is attacked by another state in violation of international law, it is entitled to be supported militarily and politically by the international community in such an effective way that the attacker withdraws back to the previously valid borders – a fundamental norm that should pro-

protect all states on earth from attack, the principle of defensible international law.

- Anyone who breaks international law must submit to the International Criminal Court and is subject to the sentence it imposes.
- Overt and implicit threats of aggressive war, especially threats of nuclear war, should also be sanctioned as contrary to international law.
- Factual communication, especially communication about the progressive overheating of the earth, must be freely possible globally and made visible. This includes commonly accepted criteria of verifiable truth. All restrictions on this freedom of communication should be declared illegal under international law.

Geopolitics in this sense challenges NATO in new ways: Whereas NATO's role in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was primarily power-logical (on the side of the United States), now, as NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg pointed out (Stoltenberg 2022), it is about protecting the rule of law against attack. It is about a global order that protects peace according to commonly recognized law and serves the survival of humanity.

Should NATO, for example under the influence of the USA, not be able or willing to protect this orientation in favor of global legal logic, global institutions of defensible international law would have to be discussed – a perspective for action that is particularly in the interest of the approximately 190 small and medium-sized states of this earth. But even the great states of the world, led by the USA and China, ultimately cannot ignore the common survival requirements of mankind, a global legal order of secured peace and joint capacity to act.

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