

**On the war in Ukraine and beyond
Ukraine**

**A voice for the primacy of
reason**

The working group
Common European Home
The C.F v. Weizsäcker societies of
Germany, Austria and Switzerland

**On the war in Ukraine and beyond Ukraine, the power of pictures and words,
particular interests, the sufferings and crimes of war, the foreseeable and as yet
unforeseeable consequences, a voice for the primacy of reason.**

On the war in Ukraine and beyond Ukraine,

the power of pictures and words, particular interests, the sufferings and crimes of war, the foreseeable and as yet unforeseeable consequences, a voice for the primacy of reason – in the sense of: **Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker**

- given the developments in modern weapons technology and the duty to eliminate “the institution of war”: “not the elimination of conflicts but the elimination of a certain way of settling them is the unavoidable peace of the technical world”.
- “I have long considered that every political, economic or environmental problem of our present and our future could basically be solved by the collective application of reason.”

So that the lights in Europe do not go out for ever.....

The guaranteed capacity for a second nuclear strike is probably the essential reason why another "World War " has been averted - **so far**. But this, “balance of terror” is highly unstable. Constantly ongoing technical developments offer no guarantee that technology will not fail, nor that regional conflicts will not escalate, nor against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and technologies, nor against human error or human madness¹, nor, finally, against the temptation, in tacit connivance about the equivalence of current or future weapons, to run the risk, at the end of the day, of using tactical nuclear weapons.

The war in Ukraine and beyond Ukraine has brought real warfare back to Europe. However, war cannot and must not replace politics **The duty of politicians** is to do everything in their power to ensure that the war in Ukraine and beyond Ukraine does not escalate or push them into a “Third World War” but rather, to paraphrase Clausewitz, to bring the war to an end by forging a viable basis for the reconciliation of conflicting interests in conditions of peace. **Time is running out!**

Time horizons

- A) Long-term: the elimination of the institution of war²
- B) Medium-term: prevention of wars
- C) Short-term: humanisation

On C:

This concept **should not be understood in its usual meaning**, as defined in agreements with the Red Cross for instance and in the development of international law. The essential meaning of humanisation here is contained in Clausewitz’s concept of the primacy of politics in which the end of a war should be sought by settling its root causes. In this case, the war in Ukraine and beyond Ukraine should not be ended in a way that sows the seeds of another war, in other words, should not give rise to another Versailles.

On B:

The dilemma of the current situation is that Europe’ past is a possible mirror image of its future, maybe **the** future of Europe: constant conflicts over national interests or zones of influence with the permanent danger of escalation into another “World War”. Preventing wars today requires a **comprehensive security architecture**, starting with **The Common European Home. Without** Russia, “Europe will have moved no further than where we stood after the First World War - in the trenches” (Hubert Seipel)

1) Memorandum: “In the crises of our times” 2015, p.2

2) Ethik der Moderne (*Ethics of modern times*) Fundamental considerations of the C.F v. Weizsäcker societies.

On A):

Elimination of war as an institution: this does **not** mean the elimination of conflicts, as v. Weizsäcker was always at pains to emphasise, but “the elimination of a certain way of settling them”, that is “the unavoidable peace of the technical world”, precisely because “modern technology can transform war into a total catastrophe”. Elimination of war as an institution means the task of eliminating war as a recognized means of settling conflicts – *a task, whose failure would reduce to futility, before the event and in its aftermath, any attempt at humanity or any attempt to safeguard the planet.*

Context

A), B) and C) are examples of how global tensions and crises are intertwined, like the energy crisis, the overexploitation of natural resources, climate change, terrorism and worldwide refugee flows, the still unresolved financial crises etc. as illustrated by the new configuration of East-West conflicts, (China-USA) or regional tensions like those in the Middle East, Taiwan, the South China Sea etc.. All this increases the need for reason in political action, and ultimately the need for **political will** to apply reason in negotiations which inevitably take place within the tangle of the “unpredictability of consequences” (Hannah Arendt) in which processes once begun can no longer be retrieved³.

The unpredictability of consequences does not however release us from striving for “the collective application of reason” (v. Weizsäcker) nor the non-retrievability of processes once begun from the duty to weigh up the prospective outcomes of political action. Both require sound prospective judgement and, on that basis, to chart and embark upon a course in which short-term action enables and does not hinder or prevent medium and long-term action. Taking Russia, Ukraine and Europe as an example, action that is liable to restore, build and stabilise trust, in the same way that the conditions were created for the successful negotiation of the “Charter of Paris for a New Europe”, and that does not squander that trust.

And yet, as long ago as 2015, Mikhail Gorbachev issued a stern warning: “We are at a crossroads in the relationship between America and Russia. What is at stake is the trust that we have worked so hard to build up” *Today that trust has been, to a large extent, squandered.*

The first task

The war in Ukraine and beyond Ukraine has sharply focused human consciousness once again on the first task of political action: **the elimination of the institution of war** as a recognized means of settling conflicts. And **following from that, the prevention of wars and, last but not least, their humanisation**. This means, to paraphrase Clausewitz, that once a war has been started, *if we have the courage to tackle the task, it should be ended by thinking through what its outcome would be if it were to escalate into the more or less global use of nuclear weapons.*

- The first task is not sufficient in itself but a **necessary pre-condition** for any further political action to save a humane society or humane societies, in which the links and relationships between people, to quote Merleau-Ponty, “undoubtedly depend on legal relationships but also on forms of work, on ways of loving, living and dying” but equally too on the answers to questions as yet unsolved like those of “war and peace” but also “poverty and wealth, man and nature, democracy and global politics”. (C. F. v. Weizsäcker).
- The first task in relation to the subsequent tasks does not entail “either-or” but on the contrary, a simultaneous “not only but also”, in practical action according to focus and awareness of “foreground and background”. The courage to think through the consequences of an always possible escalation of a war into the more or less global use of nuclear weapons cannot hide the stark fact that *failure of the first task makes any attempt at humanity and the safeguarding of nature’s creation futile, not only after the event but indeed from the very beginning.*

We repeat

The guaranteed capacity for a second nuclear strike is probably the essential reason why another “World War ” has been averted - **so far**. But this “balance of terror” is highly unstable. Constantly

3) Zukunft der Politik (*The future of politics*) fundamental reflections of the Carl Friedrich v. Weizsäcker societies

ongoing technical developments offer no guarantee that technology will not fail, nor that regional conflicts will not escalate, nor against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and technologies, nor against human error or human madness⁴, nor, finally, against the temptation, in the tacit connivance on the equivalence of current or future weapons, to run the risk, at the end of the day, of using tactical nuclear weapons.

The war in Ukraine and beyond Ukraine has brought real warfare back to Europe. Times of crisis require more than any other, verbal restraint and even “disarmament” and for the functioning of diplomatic conversations, at least moves towards existential trust. War cannot and must not replace political action; the duty of politicians is to do everything in their power to ensure that the war in Ukraine and beyond Ukraine does not escalate or push them into a “Third World War” but, to paraphrase Clausewitz, to bring it to an end by forging a viable basis for the reconciliation of conflicting interests in conditions of peace. **Time is running out!**

May 1st, 2022

Justus Frantz General (ret.) Harald Kujat Dr. Bruno Redeker Professor Dr. Horst Teltschik