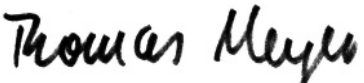
Editorial

Corona is still the word most frequently heard in public debates, and will probably remain so, not least because the richest countries have stuck to their usual modus operandi. When it came to vaccinations, they initially thought about themselves alone; only later – and in small doses – did they start considering the impact of the disease on the rest of the world. The nearly unchecked spread of the virus in poor countries almost certainly will continue to generate new variants that then will penetrate the rich countries in spite of the vaccine fortifications they have built. Only a sustained global campaign of vaccinations financed by those that can afford it will help everyone. Like it or not, this has become the basic law of the thoroughly networked and globalized world of the present age in virtually every respect, whether we are talking about climate change, terrorism, or public health generally and in particular about potentially recurrent pandemics like COVID-19. By now we all have learned that viruses are the cause of the current pandemic and that they can cross the biological threshold into the human world repeatedly, in new forms, and in a variety of ways. Consequently, it is now more advisable than ever to strive for multilateral cooperation in this and other areas of existential importance, and to do so without prejudices, exceptions, and exclusions. Incidentally, comparative studies have shown once again in detail what should have been obvious all along: The system of government in a specific country did not determine how good, bad, or awful its corona policy happened to be; instead, what mattered was the quality of the individual governments in each case. And here the costs of bad governance were truly enormous, contributing to the suffering and death of hundreds of thousands of people.

Two phenomena, especially, stand out in large areas of the West as examples that also may provide a welcome occasion for deeper reflection upon the relationship between culture and politics in our contemporary »multiplex« world. After East Asian countries had made the first successful efforts to stem the spread of the virus by ordering everyone to wear protective medical masks, their efforts were arrogantly dismissed by those in charge in the West who refused to decree similar measures. Since Kant, however, we know that freedom is a reality only where the arbitrary will of the individual is limited by the equivalent liberties enjoyed by all others. At least in Europe, that insight is the foundation of both the rule of law and the social welfare state. It is also the source of limitations upon the freedoms of action and mobility (including the »mask mandate«), to the extent that they are »proportionate.« To denounce such limitations on people's conduct broadly as »intolerable infringements on liberty,« as has happened in many places, has nothing to do with the so-called Western understanding of freedom.



Thomas Meyer
Editor-in-Chief and Co-Publisher

Otfried Höffe

Freedom in the Time of the Pandemic

On this topic our initial response is emotional, but thereafter it makes sense to vent our grievances.

Freedom is humanity's supreme good, since it is the core of human dignity. Whether as a protest against state overreach or as the impetus behind the workers' or women's movements, as in the old SPD song »Brothers, to the sun, to freedom,« the quest for freedom, which has shaped all of human history, has become overwhelmingly important in the modern age. Not least because it has been incorporated into the constitutions of »liberal« democracies (stressing that »liberal« derives from »liberty«), this is a principle that must not be abandoned in difficult times and thus not be sacrificed on the altar of the pandemic.

The most important instrument for preserving freedom and guaranteeing that we have the optimal degree of it during the global COVID-19 plague has proven to be the vaccine developed so amazingly fast by scientists. Still, we can't sugarcoat the truth: the practical implementation of anti-virus measures for which political authorities are responsible has been a mess. Although the German constitution, the Basic Law, obliges this republic to preserve »inviolable and inalienable human rights,« the vaccination policy adopted in its name and therefore in the name of liberty has been a disaster. Even pro-government citizens cannot deny that it has been a fiasco on many fronts. One favorite blame-shifting argument holds that we did eventually grow wiser about the virus, but only after a great deal of time had passed. In many respects, however, that claim does not withstand scrutiny.

The first and presumably even the most egregious fiasco derives from the fact that, for many months, sufficient quantities of vaccine were not available. At the beginning of March in Israel, 105 doses of vaccine were available for every 100 residents. In Great Britain the relevant number was 35, in Chile 30, and in Serbia 26, whereas in this country we had, disgracefully, only 10 doses per 100 inhabitants. While in Germany enormous restrictions on freedom were imposed – supposedly because only the state is in a position to discharge certain tasks associated with liberty such as the protection of public health –, the European Union, supported by the Federal Chancellor, was carrying on a policy that elsewhere was pilloried as cold-hearted market behavior: bargaining over the cheapest prices. If you are going to do that sort of thing, then of course you should be able to take the long view like any good entrepreneur. But as a matter of fact, the cost savings are exponentially less than the financial follow-up costs resulting from the exceedingly slow rollout of the vaccine. To those must be added the immeasurable social, economic, cultural, and emotional burdens, plus the enormous educational expenses. Last but not least, the lack of vaccine will jeopardize the health of the citizenry for a much longer time while prolonging the restrictions upon their freedom.

Here are some examples of the cumulative follow-up costs. Although it is no more than a sample, the list is still too long to be dismissed as petty cash. In society social contacts are vitally important, yet they are eroding. The life of associations,

once so variegated, is fading away while inner cities become ever bleaker. The fact that businesses large and small, as well as cafes and restaurants, are more or less visibly going broke has disastrous consequences, and not just in an economic sense. The opportunities for self-actualization associated with those small businesses also wither on the vine, while previously rich lifestyles and social cultures languish. Something analogous is happening with movies, theaters, concert halls, and opera houses, not to mention art galleries. Here, too, it is not just the culture or lifestyle associated with them that is disappearing, but the social life as well. Meanwhile, freelance creative types are losing their livelihoods. The regnant corona policy continues to deprive children and youth of opportunities for learning, mobility, and making contacts. The desire for closeness goes unfulfilled while the exchange of social, intellectual, and psychic energies that usually happens when people are together evaporates. Furthermore, parents, especially those with several children living in cramped quarters, are driven to the verge of exhaustion as they devote themselves to (often inferior) homeschooling even as they do their own work at home. Finally, there are enormous emotional burdens in all of these spheres, intensified by a government policy that is de facto supported by most media. When the focus is on the number of infected persons and those who died either of or with corona, it is too often forgotten that, judging from past experience, in Germany some 250 people a day – roughly 90,000 a year – succumb to sepsis and blood poisoning. So instead of inspiring a bit of confidence, the statistics instead evoke fear, which in turn amounts to an emotional deprivation of freedom. To be sure, people become more compliant – and their psychic problems become even bigger. In poetic terms, the soul hungers and thirsts.

Unfortunately, the vaccine disaster turned out not to be the only problem. At first there was a lack of protective masks, then they were the wrong ones. Tests that were required in many places were unavailable or else could not be performed. Health departments operated too slowly and with quite a few glitches. Those who registered for testing but eventually gave up once they saw how long they would have to wait in line, might receive a notice two days later that they did not test positive. Another bizarre anecdote: In Ulm, in the state of Baden-Württemberg, people could go out until 8:00 PM, but once they crossed the Danube and entered Neu-Ulm in the state of Bavaria, they could spend an extra hour with their friends. If people went shopping during the day, hopefully they brought along not only the Baden-Württemberg-mandated so-called medical mask, but also the FFP2 mask required in Bavaria. Anyone who finally made it into the charmed circle of those entitled to be vaccinated often had to spend hours on the phone trying to register for an appointment – only to find out on, say, a Monday that nobody could register until the following Monday. When they called back as instructed on the next Monday, they might be told that no appointments or registrations would happen until the following Friday. Finally, it is widely known that businesspeople are supposed to receive compensation. Yet the associated regulations are so complicated that even experienced tax advisors don't understand them.

Another problem lies in the separation of powers instituted in democracies to protect freedom and the rule of law. In representative democracies such separation implies that the legislative branch – i.e., the parliament – will exercise the supreme

power. In this context, freedom is jeopardized in a different way. While it is true that parliaments are still asked for their views, consultation with them is being held to a minimum, which is inconsistent with their responsibilities. Instead, supreme power is drifting over to the executive branch. Or has the latter usurped it? Its superior power position is evident to anyone who watches, reads, or listens to the news. Most reports focus exclusively on the chancellor and cabinet and/or the public appearances of individual minister-presidents or their actions collectively. Not much is reported about parliamentary debates, whether in a quantitative or qualitative sense, because they don't take place very often and prove to be rather brief and even toothless, tame affairs.

An equally serious issue arises from the circumstance that the principle of freedom acquires specific, concrete forms in a range of distinct liberties, among which no single one may claim absolute priority. Undoubtedly, health ranks very high among human goods. To the extent that it is a matter of public rather than personal responsibility, the protection of health constitutes one of the state's most important remits. Toward that end, the familiar DHM rules (social distancing, paying attention to hygiene, and wearing a mask when in public places) are well-founded. In a word, because they represent fairly minor infringements on freedom, they are relatively reasonable. By the same token, to fend off such restrictions by citing the slogan »corona dictatorship« just doesn't make sense. Nevertheless, a liberal democracy allows us to protest against them. But it does have the right and even the duty to prevent demonstrations against health-related restrictions – or at least to take action against violations of the relevant rules – when such protests are likely to get out of hand. Theories of democracy and freedom do not justify the courts' failure to assign enough weight to that reasoning, nor do they support the responses of public authorities in such cases when the latter cite the disparity of forces to explain away their inefficient interventions. Why should a right – the right to demonstrate – that is not even expressly named in the Basic Law (although it can be derived from the right of assembly) override the protection of public health, otherwise a sacred element of corona policymaking? On the other hand, while the protection of health is indeed a highly esteemed good, it lacks the status often assigned to it by our current corona policy: the rank of a trump card that outweighs every other liberty with the exception of the right to demonstrate. Consequently, we need to balance goods against one another such that the weight of the other basic freedoms is not permitted to sink toward the zero point.

Undoubtedly there are other aspects of the German corona disaster. For example, there is the enormous new indebtedness that climbed to a total of 240 billion euros in March and grants to the federal government an additional 80 billion in credits. There is no question that this will impair the financial freedom of our children and grandchildren and contradict the principle of generational justice which has been cited so frequently in recent years. However, the omissions, obstacles, and mistakes already mentioned should suffice to make those responsible admit that their policies have not even come close to exhausting the options for serving the interests of the citizens in public health and freedom. The policymakers should apologize to their citizens rather than casting themselves as the masters of eloquent excuses.

The pandemic has proven to be a stress test revealing both strengths and weaknesses. Pharmaceutical research here in Germany has demonstrated its strength as BioNTech was amazingly quick to develop a vaccine while a second one is expected soon from Curevac. By contrast, politics stands out for its weaknesses: poor decision-making, a narrow focus on incidences, restrictions on freedom that lacked nuance and flexibility, disorganized health departments, long-delayed and error-prone hard- and software for online instruction, and the inability to loosen rigid bureaucratic rules.

The balance sheet presented here, while clearly still preliminary, must return to the emotional responses of the early stages. Because human dignity lies in freedom and the legitimacy of the power of the state consists in granting and guaranteeing freedom, politics should no longer follow the rule of »in dubio pro securitate« (»when in doubt, opt for safety«: the so-called »precautionary principle«). Sweeping justifications for restricting liberties, such as that X measure would reduce the numbers of contacts, are unacceptable here. Political decision-makers bear the burden of proof for every restriction upon freedom that they impose. To cite just one example, when rules governing distancing, hygiene, mask-wearing, and rapid-testing requirements are strictly enforced in theaters, concert halls and opera houses such that no significant infections take place there, then it would be difficult to justify shutting down such institutions. Nor should the judiciary make things too easy for itself through a sweeping reliance on the principle of equal treatment before the law. When differential risks of infection can be demonstrated, distinctions can be drawn in deciding which institutions should be allowed to open and which ones not. In any case the regnant principle should be »in dubio pro libertate« (»when in doubt, opt for liberty«). In cases where political decision-makers cannot show conclusively that certain restrictions upon freedom are indispensable for maintaining an optimal level of overall freedom, freedom deserves to be given priority.

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The COVID-19 Pandemic and Orientalism

Coronavirus affects our lives in a variety of ways. We really don't know when this pandemic will end. Still, many scholars say that the post-corona society will be a profoundly different one. I wonder whether that is true. It seems to me that European countries will revert to older, deeply rooted patterns of behavior rather than preparing themselves to change in some fundamental ways.

South Korea was particularly effective in preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the early stages. It did so without imposing rigid restrictions upon the public

and the economy as was done in China, Europe, and the USA. South Korea was able successfully to contain the spread of COVID-19 because the government quickly enacted a coherent package of measures. During the second wave at the end of 2020 the German public and the media began to question their government's strategies and measures. During that phase, awareness of the accomplishments of the governments in East and South Asia also improved somewhat. A slew of articles began to appear addressing the »lessons from Asia« and especially the »lessons from Korea.«

To interpret these trends, we should notice some odd parallels with the mid-90s, when the so-called four tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) proved that they were capable of generating dynamic development in their respective economies. A common pattern emerged in which attempts were made to explain these achievements by reference to so-called »Asian values,« which included discipline, obedience, and collectivism. Moreover, Asian values were portrayed as undermining »Western values« such as individualism, freedom, and democracy.

When Western media today consider and try to explain East Asia's corona strategies, they fall back on these Asian values once again. The achievements of these countries are traced back to their supposedly authoritarian and collectivist traditions and cultures. Indeed, ideas such as these became widely accepted as early as 300 years ago at a time when Europeans first were becoming acquainted with East Asia. But today this version of orientalism is undergoing a revival in the political discourses of the West. It is easy to recognize that even the threat of the epidemic is seen through orientalist eyes. So, it is difficult to dismiss the impression that »plague orientalism« has become an important component in German and other Western discourses.

In contrast to those discourses, an unbiased view of the COVID-19 measures adopted by the Korean government, for example, suggests that they acted in a down-to-earth way, simply following the recommendations set forth in the WHO manuals. The Korean Center for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC), having been taken unawares by the epidemic of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), thoroughly revised the measures to be implemented in case of another epidemic emergency. The necessary legal groundwork was laid, while the role of public health institutions was bolstered, and health care personnel were given more training in how to deal with various types of emergencies. All of this was done on the basis of guidelines issued by the WHO and in cooperation with it.

Although the KCDC made it clear nearly every day that it essentially was following the WHO guidelines, the German media – astonishingly – preferred to use Confucian culture to explain Korea's success story. Not only that, but this orientalist argument also was turned on its head and used as a justification for why Western countries, with their alleged respect for personal freedom and the private sphere, were unable to implement anti-corona strategies as effectively as Korea and other East and Southeast Asian countries could. The argument holds that Korea was able to defeat the coronavirus epidemic only because its culture and politics permitted violations of freedom and the private sphere. Thus, acknowledgement of South Korea's accomplishments was tantamount to a denigration of its traditions and

political culture, while confirming in a backhanded way the West's deeply-rooted sense of its own superiority.

Evidently, non-European societies continue to be evaluated by Europeans in the context of their own self-perception. As Jürgen Habermas said, now that we know with great precision that we know nothing about the corona virus, fear of what we do not know is then transferred to an outsider in Asia. As has been amply demonstrated, the violence latent in the marginalization of the alien sometimes assumes the form of physical violence against people who are perceived to be East Asians. Being an East Asian myself, a satirical commentary in the February, 2020 issue of the magazine *Der Spiegel* does not seem very funny to me in which it is said of the outbreak of the corona virus in China: »A little racism is okay now.«

The way in which Europe is now responding to the corona crisis does not differ essentially from the reactions we have known since pre-modern times. During the Black Death, popular rage was vented against Jewish minorities which were seen as having caused that epidemic. Currently, we can observe that humanity and cosmopolitanism have been overshadowed by a competition between countries to obtain vaccines against the coronavirus. The present epidemic seems to have encouraged nationalistic aspirations and rival nationalisms. Will that be the »new normal?«

If we look at the raw numbers, we are struck immediately by the fact that the East and Southeast Asian countries were far more successful in their battle to contain the virus. It certainly would have been worthwhile to understand the pros and cons of the strategies adopted by these countries. Yet amazingly, even when the number of newly-confirmed positive cases in Germany last fall exceeded 10,000 a day, the predominant topic in the media here was that Germany had been more successful than other countries in combatting the coronavirus.

In these discourses East Asia was held up as a mirror to prove the excellence of Germany. Right after the COVID-19 outbreak in China in January of 2020, it became known as the »China virus.« The equation corona = China gave fresh impetus to the narrative that China is still not a civilized country. The perception that the civilized »we« might be threatened by this uncivilized China virus stoked the suspicion that Chinese people living in Germany posed a risk since they might spread it. Thereafter, people who looked Chinese or East Asian noticeably became targets of hate-filled rants. At the same time, the media – including even Germany's public broadcasting networks – gleefully criticized China's »dictatorship« because it allegedly reacted so late to the corona crisis and tried to cover up its mistakes. It is regarded as self-evident that the virus would not have spread beyond China's borders if the Chinese government had responded quickly and appropriately. Yet at the same time, however contradictory it may sound, there is a tendency to accuse China of having overreacted by adopting far too radical measures in combatting the virus.

It may not be possible to establish a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the China-bashing of the German media and the rising number of violent acts against people who are perceived by their attackers to be East-Asians. But neither can we say with certainty that such incidents have nothing to do with anti-Chinese stories.

Historically speaking, whenever epidemics have occurred, scapegoats for them have been found. Those scapegoats, generally minorities such as the Jews, then became the victims of discrimination and hatred. Both the form and the content of such scapegoating often have drawn on long-standing prejudices that could be mobilized on such occasions. In the venom and discrimination directed against Chinese and East Asians, it is apparent that persistent ideas such as that of the »yellow peril« have been revived.

As soon as the »China = corona-narrative emerged at the beginning of 2020, ordinary citizens started to make fun of East Asians by calling them »corona viruses« themselves. Such acts of verbal violence were tolerated. In downtown Berlin even spraying the faces of Asians with disinfectant was regarded as a trivial offense. For all intents and purposes, protests against these assaults were ignored. Paradoxically, wearing masks came to be seen as a typically Asiatic characteristic and became the target of caricatures portraying the alienness of East Asians.

Most of the »East Asians« living in Germany must have been pretty astonished when, around the beginning of 2020, some German epidemiologists insisted that wearing masks would not contribute to the prevention of corona infections. Furthermore, they stressed, it was morally right that the general public should not buy masks so as not to disrupt the supply of masks needed by medical institutions. Wearing masks was portrayed as a kind of »psychological self-deception« and as irrational and shameful behavior for healthy people without pre-existing conditions.

Once South Korea had attracted international attention as a poster child for how to implement a successful corona strategy, the argument then was deployed even more emphatically that Germany could not learn from or emulate South Korea's experiences due to cultural differences. Prominent politicians, experts, and journalists characterize South Korea as an authoritarian or even totalitarian state. They claim that, in South Korea, cellphone apps can trace every movement the people make and that the state, unconstrained by democratic checks, can exploit the information gathered in this manner. It is further argued that the country's supposed »surveillance system« operates without any major pushback on the part of the citizenry. The next allegation is less surprising: that such a system cannot and should not be established in a democratic, freedom-loving country like Germany. Unproven and ridiculous claims such as these were passed off by the media as self-evident truths.

The East Asia correspondent of the influential German daily, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, stated quite bluntly that when it comes to protecting the private sphere, Korea is a nightmare that is supported by a digital infrastructure in thrall to the government.

On the other hand, in contrast to Korea's, the German corona app is supposed to protect fully the user's sphere of privacy. For the German ego that must sound like a good thing, even though in the meantime it has become clear that the app tends to be useless. But that is another story. As long as a person's private sphere is protected, it will continue to be deemed a success.

There is no doubt that the quarantine methods embraced by the South Korean government protect individual rights much better and interfere much less in those

rights than the ones chosen by Germany and other European countries. To put it simply, the strict lockdown methods for which Europeans have opted quite clearly entail serious violations of political liberties and individual rights. Nevertheless, European stuck in the mental pattern »East Asia = Confucian culture = authoritarianism« find it rather difficult to admit to the obvious contradictions between their declared political values and the outcomes of their actions. Instead, they escape their inconsistency by imputing guilt to others.

When they look at East Asia, Europeans still cling to a perspective in which »modern, democratic European society« is contrasted with an »East Asian society dominated by collectivistic and Confucian authoritarianism.« The idea that Europe has nothing to learn from East Asia is still prevalent. In the wake of the response to the corona crisis, this orientalist prejudice has been revealed anew. The worry is that these baseless stereotypes will endure even after the corona crisis is over.

In Europe there are not very many people who criticize the culturalist prejudices and the arrogance that Germany and neighboring countries have evinced over the course of modern history vis-à-vis East Asia and the rest of the world. Unfortunately, those few critiques do little to protect the rest of us who are still vulnerable to racism and hatred in the course of our everyday lives. For that reason, as an East Asian woman living in Europe, I worry about what kind of »new normal« we, the »others,« will experience after the COVID-19 pandemic has been vanquished.

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Peter Kern

Our Values, our Supply Chains

Here is a slice of everyday life for a seamstress working for the European textile industry: »At eight o'clock in the morning the young Indian woman still has some strength left. At noon she gets a bowl of rice and water. ›By evening my head had dropped onto the worktable. Then the supervisor came, bent over me, and pulled me up by the hair.‹ She had to work until six the next morning. Then, after two hours sleep, she had to begin again at eight. ›That's how it always was when we got orders from Europe.‹« (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 15, 2019)

Manchester capitalism took up the thread of exploitation in the middle of the 19th century and continues to spin it in the 21st century in the south Indian yarn industry. Is it possible to come to grips with this exploitation and child labor by relying on a supply chain law recently approved in Germany? According to an estimate provided by the International Labor Organization (ILO), a body under the auspices

of the United Nations, worldwide 153 million children must work to help support their families, around half of them toiling away under dangerous conditions. Their bodily integrity suffers harm: minors must hire out as workers even before they have reached the age that civilization deems appropriate.

And the number of child laborers has continued to increase due to the pandemic. Because the incomes of many adults have eroded, children from poor families often are compelled to work. And those who already had been working before now do so under even worse conditions while enduring longer hours.

The arguments made by industry and trade associations, intended to block the supply chain law, sounded redundant. In summary form they include objections that the law would restrain competition, become a bureaucratic monstrosity, and unleash a never-ending wave of lawsuits. When the pandemic arrived, the defense could take a deep breath for a while. But now the law has come into effect after all, and its critics are holding their fire even though it does require businesses to take certain steps. In the future they will be obligated to analyze their supply chains with an eye to human rights violations. In case such violations are found they must take remedial action. They are supposed to set up a complaint department to which employees can appeal. Opponents of the law have coalesced around three rallying cries. There should be no civil liability. The law ought to apply only to firms with more than 5,000 employees. And the due diligence requirement should extend only to the immediate supplier. It is understandable that the critique prepared by the trade associations has turned out to be moderate. They managed to get their way on most issues with the partial exception of the size of the firms to which the law would apply. The law now covers firms with at least 3,000 domestic employees and the scale basis will fall to just 1,000 by the year 2024.

Most of the German textile industry remains outside the law's coverage. Only the few really large companies with their own networks of branch offices have enough employees to be covered by it. Often the small companies are so-called logistics firms, consisting only of departments responsible for purchasing, sales, design, and marketing. These lean operations do not have any production facilities of their own. In this country, they get by with perhaps 300 employees, but in India, Pakistan, or Vietnam ten times as many personnel do the sewing for them. Bangladesh is one of the countries most favored by the yarn-processing industry. There, just a few years ago, catastrophes occurred that stimulated passage of the supply chain law. A factory collapsed, burying the (female) employees under the rubble. In another workshop seamstresses were burned alive when they tried to flee from a fire only to find that there were no emergency exits. No one knows whether or not tragedies like these are relics of the past. But the law exempts the aforementioned logistics firms from future liability for such incidents. The lower limit of the law's applicability – 1,000 employees –is still far too high for that.

The textile industry is dwarfed by the mechanical engineering and plant construction sectors, which, taken together, constitute one of Germany's biggest industries. Small and mid-sized companies predominate; even in this industrial sector there are very few really huge firms. A toolmaker may be located in Göppingen, but

small Chinese, Turkish, and Croatian companies are integrated into its network of suppliers. The Swabian firm is not affected by the new law, since it will never have 1,000 employees on its payroll. Moreover, the Chinese laborer using a spray gun to paint the stamped parts used by that firm will derive no benefit from the coming supply chain law. And that worker will continue to ruin his health if the boss of his Chinese company wants to save money by not investing in an automated paint finishing system.

Still, says the federal minister in charge, the law does offer the Chinese painter a new opportunity to take legal action. Now he will be able to engage an NGO, or Germany's largest labor union, IG Metall, or the social attaché in Beijing to bring suit in his behalf. But is that a truly realistic scenario? Is IG Metall going to globalize its support network? It has just enough full-time operatives to service its German plants well enough. Besides, the Chinese regime will hardly allow NGOs to represent workers' interests. There is little that the Communist Party of China fears more in its own country than free labor unions.

If we turn to the due diligence obligation mandated by the law, another catch becomes apparent. Let's stick with mechanical engineering and the major firms involved in it. Presumably, the firms Trumpf or Dürr obtain their specialty steels in the traditional way: from the Ruhr region. Since the due diligence clause only applies to the immediate supplier, they only have to check to see whether or not Thyssen-Krupp in Duisburg-Bruckhausen is employing children. The conditions prevailing in the production of the iron ore no longer concern Dürr and Trumpf. One could object that the evaluation of such conditions is indeed a matter for Thyssen-Krupp. But what about the employees of the subcontractor that mines the ore for the Chinese state firm?

The supply chain is a core concern for any business. In any firm, the person in charge of it has one of its most important jobs. It is absolutely imperative to manage the chain with the utmost care. Daimler Inc. deals with some 60,000 suppliers. The complexity of the supply chain kept cropping up as an argument intended to explain why a law encompassing the entire supply chain was impossible. No one could ever obtain the requisite overview of the human rights situations prevailing in the lower links of the chain. Yet for some time now, companies have had internet-based, so-called blockchain systems at their disposal, which help them maintain an overview of every link in the chain. No suppliers' parts are used that don't meet the requisite ISO and other standards. The quality-conscious German industry does not tolerate bungling. What works for upstream products would also work for human rights all along the entire value-added chain.

Beginning in 2023, the following rules will be in force: If a German firm discriminates against a minority or allows it to perform forced labor and the board of directors does not end the practice, the firm can be excluded from public contracts and required to pay an officially determined fine. Depending on how serious the violation is, the fine can range up to 10 % of its sales. The German company Volkswagen makes a quarter of its sales in China. So, starting in 2023, could it lose an eighth of its sales if the central government in China cannot plausibly refute the

charge that it maintains a system of forced labor in which hundreds of thousands of Uighurs are inducted? Hubertus Heil, the labor minister, assures us that the new law has been equipped with teeth. Time will tell whether they actually bite, but we have our doubts.

The law governing supply chains is based on the »core labor norms« of the International Labor Organization. China recognized only two of those norms: the bans on discrimination and child labor. The Communist Party of China (CPC) has not recognized either freedom of association (the right to collective bargaining) or the ban on forced labor. From its point of view, it is being quite consistent. If the working class owns the means of production, it does not need any associations to fight against entrepreneurs. Besides, the All-Chinese Labor Federation already exists. And since all Chinese are considered to be liberated since Mao's day, there cannot be any forced labor. Only a cynic would think that the complications emerging from such circular reasoning are humorous. The German federal government has ratified all of the ILO standards while the CPC has refused to recognize two significant ones. Who will pay the price for the conflict that arises from their disagreement? Will it be the corporations?

Unlike nation-states, German firms doing business abroad are not subject to international law. A German law can regulate only the legal relationship between German citizens and firms located here. Such a law could have effects in foreign countries, but mainly of a symbolic nature. The systematic logic of the German legal system inherently ensures that the law will lack teeth. However, the outcome need not be sheer resignation. In Brussels, the German presidency of the Council has laid the groundwork for an investment deal with China, and done so with remarkable alacrity. One can only wish that the supply chain law had moved forward so quickly. In fact, it still has not been ratified by the EU Commission or the EU Parliament. This agreement could cure the illness from which the German supply chain law has suffered. It could make the deal conditional upon freedom of association for dependent employees and the ban on forced labor. Those are civil rights and Western values. And after all our chancellor does like to talk about »our values.«

One can imagine what kind of reaction this linkage between civil rights and the investment deal would evoke: Critics will say that these are matters of conscience and have nothing to do with Realpolitik. The Transatlantic Treaty with the USA (TTIP) came to grief over a matter less fundamental than the freedom of association. In this context let's not forget about chlorinated chicken. Can one talk about »our values« and make an exception for two essential ones? Whatever might antagonize the ruling circle in Beijing is readily dismissed as the »ethic of conviction.« By contrast, throwing ourselves at their feet, the kowtow, is regularly celebrated as a noble example of the »ethic of responsibility.« Meanwhile, the Realpolitik-practicing Chinese overlords are busy remolding the world in their own image. In the Global South they have already gotten pretty far with that. In their world-view there is no room for free labor unions.

Freedom of association is the means of choice for ending the exploitation of human labor and of child labor. One of the experiences that caused the deepest suf-

fering within the labor movement until the late 19th century was the work of children. The proletariat was compelled to hire them out to the factory bosses for ten to twelve hours per day. Crude capitalism did not come to an end until the labor unions managed to extract a high enough wage that families could survive without the extra income that the children would have provided. What has become a matter of past history in the northern hemisphere remains a part of everyday life in the South. A visit to the cobalt mines in Katanga and many other places will convince you that this is true.

German society is morally entangled with societies that lack the legal standards of civil society. Karl Mark wrote: »Work in white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in black skin.« What was once true of the early United States in the relationship between the white workers of the northern and the black workers of the southern states continues to be valid in the present. Work in the developed countries may be performed cleanly in offices and factories, but it is implicated in sometimes really filthy conditions of production. Excessively long working days, low standards of worker protection, wages of one dollar: no, not a dollar an hour but a dollar for the twelve hours that an Indian woman spends picking tender leaves for First-Flash Assam Tea.

The planned supply chain law marks a correct step. On the credit side of the ledger are the duty to report, the prevention requirement, and the complaint mechanism. The debit side includes both the (missing) ban on forced labor and guarantee of freedom of association. Here we need a European law that sets standards for economic transactions with China, the country that soon will dominate both middle-income and poorer countries. The investment deal hasn't been signed yet, so there is still a chance to improve it and inscribe »our values« in it.

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Lewis Hinchman

The Native Americans' Quest for Identity and Recognition

A Historical Lesson on gaining respect

From the outset, Euro-American colonists in the New World understood that their settlements would come into conflict with the prior claims of the native peoples to the same land. They needed to legitimize their land-taking somehow, and did so through converging philosophical, religious, and civilizational arguments. However, over the centuries, their policies toward Indians (Native Americans or First Nations) evolved from barely concealed ethnic cleansing and genocide toward the recogni-

tion of Indian self-determination and semi-sovereignty. In the process, the image that mainstream America holds of Native Americans has become far more positive; indeed, the same is true of the way Indians view themselves. Once seen as a »vanishing race« doomed to extinction by the great tides of world history, Indians now generally are perceived as »agents,« politically engaged shapers of their own future. As many Americans have begun to rethink their own past and the role of indigenous nations within it, they have come to admire Indians' ingenious adaptations to often harsh, demanding natural environments. However, the reservations on which many live remain deeply impoverished – almost third-world enclaves within the USA – while politicians (mostly Republicans) continue to invent new ways to diminish Indian voting rights. In many parts of the country, Indians have become targets of resentment on the part of White Americans who regard themselves as victims of discrimination and believe that Native Americans are enjoying »privileges« they do not deserve.

At first, settlers in the English colonies of North America were few in number, unfamiliar with their new environment, and surrounded by powerful Indian nations that easily could have wiped them out. Under those circumstances, they inevitably regarded Indians as foreign nations with which treaties would have to be made. In Virginia, for example, English settlers had to bargain with the powerful Powhatan confederacy composed of some 200 Indian communities to obtain sufficient food supplies, which colonists could not yet produce for themselves. Nevertheless, the arrogant English still clung to the medieval notion that Christian nations had a right to usurp the territory and property of »heathens« which they often did, inevitably provoking retaliation and war.

Eventually a more plausible ideology had to be devised, explaining why Whites had a right to seize Indian lands and resources. It wove together three distinct but closely related strands best exemplified in John Locke's influential *Second Treatise of Government* (1689): theories of property, standards for »civilized« life, and religious justifications. Upon their arrival in the New World, English colonists quickly realized that the entire continent already had been claimed by its aboriginal inhabitants. But, as Locke argued, the landholdings of the natives were not really property in the English sense, because America was still in a »state of nature« in which resources were available for the taking to anyone. »In the beginning,« he wrote, »all the world was America.« That is, the New World was a vast, bounteous wilderness in which the inhabitants, whether Indians or European settlers, could appropriate whatever they pleased without harming anyone else.

Profit-seeking as proof of civilization

Thus, it might seem as though the colonists and the Native Americans could live side by side, sharing the land's resources. However, Locke believed (erroneously) that the Indians in America did not practice agriculture or use money. Consequently, they could not extract as much value from a given plot of land as an Englishman could. He reasoned that Indians could not claim ownership of the land because they did not fully exploit it. Locke concludes that a thousand acres »in the

wild woods and uncultivated wastes of America« would yield the »needy and wretched inhabitants« less than ten acres of well-cultivated land in England would. Productive commercial agriculture is thus the hallmark of civilization.

The same assertion – that Englishmen deserved to seize the wild lands of America because they used it more productively than the Indians – continued to define the policy of the U.S. government until at least the early 20th century, even though – as we now understand – their methods of production were usually more environmentally well-adapted than those of the Whites who insisted that only Old-World crops such as wheat would count as tokens of civilized agriculture. Besides, Indians did use money and maintained extensive trade networks among themselves and with Europeans for centuries. Despite that, Whites consistently regarded the Indians as »greedy monopolists« who wanted to hoard all the best land for themselves even though they made such poor use of it. In this telling, Whites were the victims of Indian wastefulness; hence, they were fully justified in »liberating« the land from the Indians' monopoly.

On rare occasions, the image of Indians as uncivilized admitted of exceptions or modifications. For example, American colonists in the Northeast long maintained friendly ties with the »Five Nations« of the Iroquois (later six), a confederacy established in the late 16th century by a Mohawk chief, Hiawatha. The Iroquois federation proved to be a durable and powerful alliance that inspired even Benjamin Franklin to cite it as a model for the proposed American federal system. Moreover, renowned American literary figures such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow idealized Indian chiefs' courage and resourcefulness. Longfellow's highly popular *The Song of Hiawatha* celebrated the Iroquois leader's virtues, while nonetheless having him (counterfactually) request Christian missionaries for his tribe. But the consensus position was expressed by the Big Horn Association of Wyoming: »The destiny of the aborigines is written in characters not to be mistaken. The same inscrutable Arbiter that decreed the downfall of Rome has pronounced the doom of extinction upon the red men of America.«

The negative image of Indians as »rude savages« and inefficient stewards of the land was complemented by the Euro-American estimation of their religions, which seemed to furnish further proof of their backwardness. As Locke wrote, »God gave the world to men in common … [but] it cannot be supposed he meant it to remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational, not to … the quarrelsome and contentious«. Applied to America, it seemed obvious that God had assigned English settlers to the former group and the »warlike« Indians to the latter. God's intentions thus overlapped neatly with philosophic justifications for land-taking. Religion did, however, add a new element. When Indians were assigned to reservations in the 19th century, they also had to accept missionaries who tried to stamp out their traditional beliefs and often withheld food ration deliveries to force compliance. The missionaries even proscribed charitable practices such as the potlach of the Pacific Northwest in which well-to-do Indians would give away food and other possessions to the needy.

To understand how the image of Indian nations changed over time, it is worthwhile to review certain turning points in the history of the United States. The first

great blow to Eastern Indians came in 1830 when Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. The latter required that the so-called »Five Civilized Tribes« trek from their homes in the Southeast to what would become Oklahoma, a forced march (the »Trail of Tears«) that killed many, including 8,000 Cherokees, a Georgia tribe that had adopted American-style agriculture as well as its own alphabet. Their exile proved that even Indians who seemed to fit all of Locke's criteria for »industrious and rational« conduct would not be allowed to hold onto their land if White men wanted it. During the era of the Removal Act, the United States Supreme Court had the opportunity to review several cases involving the Cherokees and the State of Georgia, and could have affirmed Indians' sovereignty over their own lands. Chief Justice Marshall did admit that the Indian nations were »the rightful occupants of the soil« (*Johnson v. M'Intosh*), yet he narrowed the scope of his own proclamation by arguing that the Indians were not independent or sovereign; rather, they were »domestic dependent nations« under the ultimate authority and tutelage of the U.S. government. Europeans had »discovered« the lands of the New World; hence, they held sovereign authority over them and all of their aboriginal inhabitants.

By the 1880s the federal government and the states had effectively extinguished the independence of every tribe in the country outside of Alaska, forcing them onto reservations that usually included only a fraction of their former territories and which they could not leave without permission from their Indian agent. But even that was not enough. Congress decided that the Indians still occupied too much land; worse yet, it was mostly under communal ownership. Hence, in 1887 Congress passed the General Allotment (Dawes) Act, allegedly intended to foster a spirit of individualism among the native peoples by giving them each 160 acres of freehold land. All unassigned or »surplus« land on the reservations was to be sold off to Whites. As a result, the Indian land base shrank from about 56 million hectares in 1887 down to 19.5 million by 1934.

The zigzags of policy toward Native Americans

That year marked the turning point in both the public image of Native Americans and their actual political and cultural circumstances. Franklin Roosevelt, newly elected President in 1932, appointed an anthropologist, John Collier, as Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), a federal agency charged with oversight of Indian reservations and especially their economies. Having spent time at Taos Pueblo in New Mexico, Collier had developed a deep admiration for the Indians' traditional culture, which he came to regard as superior to the competitive, individualistic ethos of Western societies. In 1934 the BIA leader launched a plan, known as the Indian Reorganization Act or »Indian New Deal« meant to halt the fragmentation of the reservations caused by the Dawes Act and guarantee that Native Americans could practice their traditional religions and cultures. Collier also proposed – controversially – that Indian nations should adopt a form of American-style democracy featuring a tribal council. Still, the Indian New Deal charted a novel course for indigenous peoples insofar as it tried to restore at least some of what had been lost as a result of defeat, confinement on reservations, and the missionaries' hostility.

Moreover, Indians had become U.S. citizens in 1924, so they could now – least in principle – wield some influence over the U.S. government's or their states' policies.

But conservative Republicans seized one last opportunity to roll back Indian claims to self-determination: the »termination« policy. In 1953 Congress claimed the right to end the very existence of Indian tribes as collective entities, which it proceeded to do to about 100 tribes over the next 17 years. Under termination, the »trust« relationship between Indian tribes and the U.S. government would be dissolved, as would any claims to sovereignty by Indian nations. A tribe would no longer have a reservation or any sort of formal group identity. Although this was sold as a policy that would »liberate« Indians from »tribalism« and »wardship,« it left many bereft even of the minimal aid provided by the BIA. To cite one example, the Menominee tribe of Wisconsin had been assigned a reservation in that state coterminous with a »county« that then was one of Wisconsin's wealthiest. After termination, the Menominee tribe's economy deteriorated so rapidly that their reservation/county eventually became the poorest in the state. Put simply, the true purpose of termination was to destroy the Indians' identity as members of a larger community of memory.

By 1970 the injustice of termination became apparent even to Richard Nixon, a Republican president, who abolished it and tried to restore the reservations and trust relationships of some of the terminated tribes, including the Menominee. The process of recovery from termination continues even today, as tribes try to prove that they still have cohesion and a collective identity after nearly 70 years and the erosion of their cultures and languages.

The image of Indians changed dramatically during the Seventies and Eighties after several violent clashes between Native Americans and federal or state forces. Their growing militance and self-confidence led to political victories, including the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975, which gave them more control over their finances and energy resources, the Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, and the economically important Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, which affirmed their right to run even high-stakes casinos on reservations. Although Indians were not always successful in their legal and political battles, their efforts reminded the American public that they were more than quaint, passive survivors of a bygone era.

What will the future bring for American Indians?

Like other citizens, Indians now act politically to defend their interests. Their newfound influence has become apparent on many fronts. For example, several Southwestern tribes persuaded the Obama administration to create a new kind of national monument (a federally protected area analogous to a national park), known as Bears' Ears, in southeastern Utah in order to protect an area rich in archaeological sites, many created by the ancestors of the very tribes that advocated for Bears' Ears today. Although the Monument was downsized drastically by Trump, it surely will be restored by Biden. Most importantly, the Indians will become co-managers of the Monument, helping to formulate policies designed to protect their ancestors' sacred places. Meanwhile, the Yurok and Karuk tribes in northern California have agitated for years to have four dams on the Klamath river removed, since they block the

migration of salmon upriver to spawn, thus depriving the tribes of fish stocks guaranteed by treaties. In 2020 the U.S. government and the state of California agreed to dismantle the dams despite White opposition. In addition, Indians have persuaded the U.S. government to staff their schools with indigenous teachers as well as to establish tribal colleges on some of the larger reservations to teach Indian histories, languages, and cultures. Native American Studies programs have also been instituted at major universities, such as Cornell, that profited from the expropriation of Indian lands. And President Joe Biden recently chose a New Mexico Congresswoman and Native American, Deb Haaland, to be Secretary of the Interior, which includes the BIA.

But how much »agency« and political power can Indians really have in the United States? Although their history of wrongs and their image as resourceful environmentalists have won them a reservoir of sympathy, they still constitute less than 2 % of the U.S. population. But as they awaken to their political potential, they may become important players in hotly contested states like Arizona (they are 6 % of the population there), where the strongly Democratic leanings of the Navajo and Tohono O'odham nations enabled Biden to win the state by 12,000 votes. And it should be noted: their »small« numbers (roughly 5.2 million including those with a parent of another ethnicity) are still roughly equivalent to the total populations in European countries like Norway and Finland.

Before the arrival of Europeans, Indian nations did not think of themselves as having much in common; indeed, they were often bitter enemies. In time they began to see that they had a shared interest in resisting White encroachment, but by then it was too late to save their ancestral lands. Today, ironically, a »pan-Indian« identity is emerging as the First Nations start to see themselves in the mirror of the White/Indian dichotomy. And that sense of a common destiny has enabled them to win many a political struggle together that they would have lost separately. Today we are witnessing the emergence of Indians as a self-conscious political-cultural group whose identity as Native Americans overshadows their ancient enmities.

Native Americans will need every bit of political cohesion they can muster, because they have a long agenda of wrongs to address: poverty (26.2 % are considered impoverished) and unemployment, the lack of running water and electricity, and the toxic residue of past-energy extraction on some reservations. Moreover, the current Republican political base, feeling slighted and abandoned by mainstream America, complains that all racial minorities, including the Indians, enjoy undeserved advantages. They regard themselves as the true victims, whose interests are ignored by coastal elites allied with minorities, including indigenous people. They bristle at the Indians' »special privileges« such as hunting deer out of season, catching more salmon than Whites are permitted to, or not paying state taxes on gasoline – even though those »privileges« are simply aspects of the Native peoples' semi-sovereign status and/or of the treaties they signed long ago with the U.S. government. Today, for good reason, Native Americans constitute one of the Democratic Party's most loyal voter groups. They know that the Republican Party easily could erase all of the progress they have made over a century in the name of eliminating »special privileges« for any ethnic group.

So how have Native Americans helped shape the American experience? The answer depends on which century one chooses to highlight. From 1607 (the year in which the first English colony at Jamestown, Virginia was founded) until the early 19th century, the Indians were regarded as foreign nations, some of which were feared and hated, while others entered into alliances with settlers against rival tribes and/or established trade relations with them. Beginning in the 1820s and 1830s, they came to be defined (by the Supreme Court) as »domestic dependent nations« under the sovereign authority of the United States. Treaties were still made with them, yet virtually all of those were violated by the U.S. government. Still, broken treaties were not regarded as serious moral failings by most Americans, because after all the »red men« were supposedly doomed to extinction by the grand sweep of history anyway. Taking their land was just part of the »manifest destiny« that awarded North America to Euro-Americans. Finally, by the 1880s Congress stopped making treaties with Indians altogether and simply took their territories by fiat (the Dawes Act), although eventually making them citizens in 1924. From the 1930s on, the public image of Indians – and their treatment by the U.S. government – began to shift, partly due to the »Indian New Deal« and partly because the Indians gradually acquired agency: the capacity to shape actively their own lives and social circumstances. By the end of the 20th century, they had become a significant force in the politics of several states, had gained the sympathy and even admiration of most Americans, and had begun to revive and protect their traditional languages, cultures, and the remnants of their homelands. As noted, not all Americans concur with the Indians' enhanced status, especially those who still covet Indian lands or water rights, and resent their special status in American life. But the United States has become an overwhelmingly urban society, and most city-dwellers now understand the wrongs inflicted upon Indians and want to see those rectified. The »greening of America« has transformed Indians from »bloodthirsty savages« and »heathen« into wise ecologists leading the USA into a new age of alternative energy, post-consumerism, and cultural pluralism.

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The Arab world as a Region in Crisis

What Germany and the EU must do in response

Today, the Arab countries of the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) constitute the world's largest crisis-plagued region. At the heart of its woes are three internationalized civil wars in Syria, Libya, and Yemen. Already in their 10th year, they are culpa-

ble for humanitarian disasters, the destruction of cities – including their infrastructure –, the loss of countless human lives, and the flight of millions from their homelands. By now no fewer than seven million Syrians have left their country, one-third of its entire population. Most of them now are living in Turkey or in gigantic refugee camps in Jordan or Lebanon, two countries fighting for their own survival.

Authoritarian and repressive systems dominate throughout the region. In the Gulf States, autocratic dynasties that trample human rights underfoot and loathe democracy continue to rule. Morocco and Jordan are also monarchies, and in Egypt the military has ruled unimpeded since the coup of 2013. It forbids the free expression of opinion and incarcerates its critics in many newly constructed prisons.

For generations, people in those countries have come to regard the state as a meddlesome and vexatious institution, one that is little more than a self-service store for corrupt elites and notable mainly for its bureaucratic excesses and repression. Most recently the COVID pandemic has exposed the consequences of corruption and bad governance for all to see: a ramshackle, chronically underfinanced healthcare complex and shockingly inadequate systems of social security. Still, the coronavirus neither reduced nor contained the international and geostrategic lines of conflict in the MENA region, but rather allowed them to persist unchanged.

As a result of these shortcomings, the countries of North Africa and the Middle East are the world's only regions where poverty on average has increased considerably since 2010. Today, according to World Bank data, one quarter of the people who inhabit MENA live below the poverty line, while a further third are on the verge of sinking into poverty. Even official statistics concede that youth unemployment is more than 30 %, higher than in any other part of the world. And prospects for the future are bleak: Two-thirds of the population is under 35. The economy, already fragile, cannot keep pace with this kind of population growth. Not surprisingly, migration is on the rise.

If it is asked why all these disquieting findings should concern us in Europe, the question can be answered without hesitation. The countries of North Africa and the Middle East are right on the European Union's doorstep. The northern tip of Tunisia lies barely 150 kilometers from Sicily, while the beaches of Andalusia are visible to the naked eye from Morocco's Mediterranean coast. Everything that happens there sooner or later has a direct impact on Europe. Therefore, it is high time – and should be a top priority task for European and German foreign policy – to cultivate a new, neighborly understanding of the countries of the Maghreb and Middle East while devising a new scheme for a unified European approach.

From a European point of view, the Mediterranean once was a shared space of culture, trade, and economic activity that linked it to North Africa and the coast of the Levant. But it has long since become a kind of system boundary, a wall of indifference and even more – of self-isolation. To be sure, Europe volubly and justifiably criticized the plans of U.S. President Donald Trump to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexican border. Yet the Mediterranean, Frontex, and the coast guards of North African states serve the same purpose, acting as a bulwark to fend off unwanted immigration. And Europe has long since outsourced a major part of its border secu-

rity to the fences enclosing the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla or – via diplomatic agreements – to Turkish refugee camps and their counterparts in Libya that fail to meet minimum standards of human dignity. At present that is the core of Europe's Mediterranean policy. It absolutely cannot remain so. The least than can be expected would be an EU initiative in favor of lasting improvements to the living conditions in the region's refugee camps.

As we rethink the European neighborhood policy – which is something we must do – the focus should be on what is in our mutual interest: a rapid improvement in the economic and social living conditions of the population in Arab countries. In order to accomplish that, it would be desirable to intensify trade relations and tie the region's economies more closely to the EU's internal market, starting with Tunisia and Morocco. Toward that end we should develop further the existing treaties of association, resulting in a status often referred to as a privileged partnership. There are a number of areas in which to promote meaningful and urgent cooperation with the region, including more extensive investments in energy (e.g., green hydrogen), environment and health, digitalization, and professional education or simply education in general.

By the same token, European and German arms exports must be curbed, since they have repeatedly stoked the militarization of the foreign policies of the Arab states. Algeria and Egypt, in particular, have been among the chief recipients of German arms deliveries for years. The Gulf states have been as well, notwithstanding the recently extended export ban on arms to Saudi Arabia. Those arms deliveries bestow on authoritarian regimes undesirable (to us) prestige boosts while simultaneously draining them of the enormous financial resources desperately needed to fund better educational and social welfare systems.

As far as German and European foreign policies are concerned, there is no alternative to stabilizing the MENA. Nevertheless, this cannot mean courting authoritarian and repressive dictatorships as »anchors of stability.« Although regimes that suppress freedom of opinion and civil society may be able to guarantee tranquility and stability in the short run, they have a brief shelf life. To place our bets on them would be both myopic and dangerous. More specifically, a new, future-oriented neighborhood policy cannot tune out conflicts and differences of opinion and must always call out human rights violations.

Germany, with less historical baggage than other countries, has a favorable starting position for political and diplomatic action in the Arab world. We have no colonial past in the region and were not involved in the recent military operations in Iraq and Libya. Those credentials offer German foreign policy the chance to act as an »honest broker« mediating between conflicting parties without displaying a neocolonial attitude and a raised index finger to scold them – in short, to treat them with respect and honest interest.

The most important building blocks for the envisioned stabilization of the region are peaceful solutions to the hostilities in Libya, Syria, and Yemen where internationalized civil wars have been raging for years. Recently a »political dialogue forum« was held in Geneva in which an agreement was reached that marked a great advance toward a peaceful solution in Tripoli. Representatives of the three

major regions of that country (Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fessan) as well as the various parties to the civil war were able to reach consensus on a joint transitional government. The diplomatic foundation for this success had been laid previously at a conference in Berlin in January of 2020; thus, the agreement can also be counted as a success for German diplomacy.

Yet this agreement is only a snapshot. It remains to be seen whether a durable consolidation and stabilization of Libya, known for years as a failed state, will emerge from it. The outcome also will depend on its acceptance by foreign parties to the war such as Turkey, Russia, and Egypt as well as on the attitude of the various »status quo profiteers,« i.e., militias and warlords.

The country is a test case. If hopes for recovery there are fulfilled, a stabilized Libya would send a positive message to the region, especially to its neighbor Tunisia. Furthermore, success there could enhance the image of the EU as a problem-solver.

Moreover, diplomacy has succeeded in this case in another respect. It has achieved an important prerequisite for a common European policy by inducing two key EU members, France and Italy, to take a unified position even though for years they had been defending clashing economic and political interests in Libya. In the future, French foreign policy, traditionally authority-oriented, must be aligned far more closely with a uniform European line. The Grande Nation's aspiration to be a world power, its pursuit of objectives connected to its arms sales policy, and the courting of dictators and autocrats by President Macron do not harmonize well with the vision of a joint EU policy toward the Middle East and Africa.

Around the beginning of February this year there was a spark of hope even for the population of Yemen, ground down by a decades-long civil war. In his first speech on the principles of his foreign policy, the newly elected U.S. president Joe Biden called this war a »humanitarian catastrophe« and announced a diplomatic offensive intended to end the bloodshed once and for all. In the speech, he was implicitly signaling a course correction by the USA vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia. Indeed, it seems within the realm of possibility that the masters of war in Riyadh could be persuaded to jump on the bandwagon of peace. This is the case because Saudi allies such as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates have long been seeking an exit-strategy, while at the same time declining oil prices have narrowed Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's room for maneuver. The EU, which so far has not opted for any specific plan of action, should regard the new situation as a strategic opportunity and press for a United Nations peace mission in Yemen. The situation there will not be stabilized until a cease-fire is in place across the entire country.

In this respect an end to the war in Yemen looks more likely even than it does in Syria. To be sure, the military conflict in the latter country has been decided in favor of Assad, yet a peaceful resolution is still nowhere in sight. Here, too, the future hinges on the attitude of foreign powers that were de facto parties to the war and continue to be so: Turkey, Iran, and Russia. The latter has attained a strong position in the region, whereas the influence of the EU and the United States has continued to wane.

If the new Biden administration really does intend to reset its Middle East policy, the EU in particular should use the opportunity vigorously to reinforce its dip-

lomatic initiatives toward Iran. At present, the greatest threat to peace and stability in the Middle East comes from Iran: notably, from its quest to acquire nuclear weapons, the major-power conflict between it and Saudi Arabia, and its political and military influence in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. EU insiders were forced to acknowledge how limited their political options had been thus far in light of the U.S. sanctions. And therefore, it would be all the more important as far as circumstances allow to urge President Biden and his Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, to join in a new round of talks with Iran. At any rate it is a good sign that the administration has named Rob Malley, one of the top experts on the complex situation in the Middle East, as its new special envoy on Iran. But it is doubtful whether it will be possible to revive the nuclear weapons accord, which the United States unilaterally terminated. In the meantime, deep mistrust of the political leadership in Tehran has begun to prevail, and not just in Washington. Thus far, unfortunately, encouraging signals from the Iranian capital have not been forthcoming. That is all the more reason why the EU and the USA will need to find a common line quickly, not least in order to roll back the growing influence of China. It is in the global interest to keep the region from being armed with nuclear weapons.

German foreign policy will continue to uphold an unwavering commitment to securing the state of Israel's right to exist. No political party represented in the Federal Parliament would cast doubt on that maxim. And this responsibility for the security of Israel provides another reason for reaching agreement on a new nuclear accord with Iran. Notwithstanding that principle, Israeli policy over the last few years warrants criticism. The massive construction of settlements in the West Bank has been going on and continues still without any legal basis at all. A two-state solution of the kind that Germany and the EU keep trying to bring about has been made next to impossible by those settlements. And there is the further problem that Israel now defines itself as a »Jewish state.« This highly questionable ethnic nationalism runs counter to the elementary principle of any democracy: that all of its citizens should be accorded equal rights regardless of their religion or ethnicity.

The so-called peace plan presented by Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner in effect supported and even egged on Israel's then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing coalition. While the plan indeed may have led to the normalizing of relations between a few Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and Morocco with Israel, it did nothing to enhance prospects for peace. The outlook for peace will be dim unless and until the Palestinians are included and their rights are recognized. The violent confrontations and mutual rocket attacks between Israel and Hamas once again have made the world realize how far away a peaceful solution remains.

It is a good thing that the USA wants to revert to a multilateral approach to the conflict. Europe must now press for a solution in which both parties, Israel and the Palestinians, again enter into a dialogue with one another and strive to find a peaceful solution. In my view, that might consist in a federal model or a confederation of Israel and Palestine. Furthermore, federal models also might embody forward-looking solutions in other unstable countries like Iraq. For example, such a plan

might bring about the relative autonomy of the Kurds of northern Iraq within an Iraqi federation.

In the past the EU has been unable to assert its interests in stability and pacification in the region. Other actors like Russia, Turkey, the Gulf States, China, and of course Iran – even Islamist terrorist groups like Islamic State – now rule the roost since the United States allowed a political vacuum to arise. The cautiously optimistic signals from Libya and Yemen leave room for a little bit of hope. Nevertheless, the MENA region remains largely without a functioning control mechanism to contain crises and conflicts. The Arab League, an amalgam of the 22 Arab states, long has been deeply divided internally, and thus unable to act. Finally, the poor economic situation, disastrous environmental problems in some places, corruption, political mismanagement, and especially the simmering great power conflict over regional hegemony between Saudi Arabia and Iran leave little reason for optimism. This is the context in which German foreign policy must maneuver and prove its mettle.

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Competition Among Systems is the Wrong Perspective

German and European Africa Policy on Trial

During the past decade Germany's policy toward Africa has been given a higher priority on the foreign policy agenda. Besides a multitude of project designs and political initiatives, certain concrete decisions on resource allocation, including the creation of 40 new positions at German embassies and the regional division of the Foreign Office, underscore the trend toward a higher profile for Africa. Yet the strategic orientation of German policy toward Africa must be more carefully articulated. Currently, an intensive geopolitical discussion is underway that is primarily concerned with the global systemic competition between Western democracies and countries with authoritarian models of government. But according to the World Bank, about 40 % of Africans still live below the poverty line, and successes in combatting immiseration cannot keep pace with the continent's rapid population growth. In sum, geopolitics alone falls short of the mark. What factors must a strategic reorientation of German Africa policy take into account to be on the right track? Is it possible to embed German Africa policy in its European counterpart? And above all: might a renewed overture with an emphasis on enhancing prospects for development among the countries of Africa become the basis of our policy rather than geopolitics and systemic competition?

The extra attention being paid to Africa in German policymaking has several causes. The narrative that portrayed Africa as the continent of opportunity, driven by its impressive growth rates during the »ought« years, also influenced the discourse in Germany, displacing the image of it as the »crisis continent.« Still, important distinctions were not being drawn. As a result of several events – the Libyan civil war, troubles in the Sahel region, and the debate about flight and migration – the political relevance of African policy in Berlin has risen. However, while the underlying logic of numerous initiatives in policymaking toward Africa have reflected a willingness to act, it has put a negative spin on the actions contemplated. The idea was that engagement in Africa could slow increasing migration from there to Germany and Europe. The argument invoked as a guideline for setting policy was »combatting the causes of flight.« That reasoning, which served as a justification for encouraging more vigorous investment, is not suited to be the cornerstone of a cooperative political approach to the countries of Africa. Still, the plethora of initiatives in African policy, ranging from the »Marshall Plan« formulated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation to the so-called »G-20 Compact with Africa,« did lead to a reorienting of Germany's policy toward the continent. The innovations undertaken include the promotion of foreign trade, geostrategic weighing and balancing, and reinforcing the international perception of Germany as a relevant actor in African policymaking. Thus far, the initiatives currently in effect, as well as the so-called reform partnerships between the German government and certain African countries, are components of a political agenda that must be further modulated, synchronized, and adjusted. The multiplicity of initiatives in Africa policy and the lack of any coherent strategic direction have made it increasingly harder to understand Germany's policy orientation toward that continent.

Africa is a diverse continent in every way, so, more than anything else, the approaches adopted by Germany and Europe need to become more nuanced. Of course, there are some characteristics that apply to all African states such as rapid population growth, predominantly informal economies, heavy urbanization, and massive impacts from climate change upon agriculture. But because those states are very different economically, socially, and above all politically, it is difficult to generalize about political responses. Right now, support for the African Continental Free Trade Zone (AfCFTA) seems to be the most seminal approach to achieving growth and value-creation on the basis of increasing intra-African trade. Meanwhile, external actors are pinning their hopes primarily on debt-forgiveness initiatives, the encouragement of investment, expected to have a positive effect on local businesses and stimulate employment, and advocacy of access to public goods, especially social security, mainly for those employed in the informal economy. Because European and German Africa policy has been classified as a geostrategic issue, the competition between systems – Western democracies versus authoritarian models of governance – has come to be perceived as the most important parameter determining policymaking. Thus, the highly visible Chinese presence on the continent and relations between the African countries and China are steadily gaining importance. Yet appearances can be deceiving. The EU claims

32 % of Africa's foreign trade volume which makes it by far the continent's most important trading partner, as documented by Robert Kappel in a recent publication of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. By comparison, China accounts for another 17 %, and the USA just 6 %. Furthermore, the EU is responsible for the lion's share of foreign direct investment (€ 222 billion in 2017, as compared to 42 billion for the United States and 38 billion for China). In short, the European Union unequivocally remains Africa's most vital partner in both investments and trade policy. For that reason, relations between Africa and the EU will be of crucial significance well into the future. Nevertheless, other actors, including China, India, and Turkey, also exert influence. In particular, Chinese financing of infrastructure and high-visibility projects such as airports, highways, railroads, and parliament buildings, carries considerable symbolic value. At first glance this kind of diversification offers African countries opportunities to free themselves from relationships with Europe that are still strongly marked by postcolonialism and consequently by strategic dependencies. However, the engagement of China with the continent, motivated partly by its interest in obtaining raw materials, ends up by creating new kinds of strategic dependencies, no matter how that engagement is framed by the media and political discourse.

Judging by its share of global trade, Africa still seems to be a marginal actor, since it accounts for just 2 % of international trade and investment activity. This is the case even though individual countries like Ethiopia have managed to diversify their exports to Europe. In the aggregate, Africa's participation in global supply chains that include locally added value remains quite modest. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the problem still more as supply chain interruptions have cost many people their jobs, and presumably not just temporarily. So, for the time being the point is to create new development prospects for Africa, an undertaking in which Europe, as its most important partner, will play a central role. This task has assumed greater urgency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has set the countries of Africa back many years in their economic development. The loss of millions of jobs and the decline of per capita income by about 4 %, according to IMF statistics, speak for themselves. Sovereign debt must be reduced to a sustainable level once again. Support must be marshalled for those who have borne a disproportionate burden of suffering in the pandemic, the »new poor of the big cities.« Finally, concrete economic options will have to be identified.

A reset of European-African relations?

While relations between the two continents clearly have become highly relevant, they now have entered a reset phase. However, due to internal political contradictions in Africa and Europe it has proved difficult to find any coherent institutional arrangement for those relations. The post-Cotonou arrangements (being negotiated for a period of 20 years), the talks concerning an African-European partnership (between the EU and the African Union), and negotiations toward a so-called Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), still incomplete to this day, will continue to run in parallel with one another.

Nevertheless, the negotiations on the post-Cotonou agreement, in which the foundations of economic and political relations were to be clarified, have dragged on for so long that even the current interim arrangement has been extended again until at least March of 2022. Interestingly, the final sticking points had nothing to do with trade issues, but rather focused on migration policy and the way in which reproductive health issues should be formulated. It remains unclear in both Europe and Africa to what extent supranational organizations like the EU and AU have a mandate to negotiate intercontinental relations. On the African side the post-Cotonou negotiations were not conducted by the AU, but rather by a negotiating group under the leadership of Togo. It is true that the European Commission has conducted negotiations for the European side, but fundamental dissent persists about whether any agreement it hammers out would have to be signed by the Commission alone or would also require the approval of parliaments in the member states.

Given these tough negotiations, the newly revised version of an African-European partnership, to be presented at the next EU-AU summit meeting, will take on added significance. However, because of the pandemic, the summit had to be postponed. Moreover, when Germany assumed the presidency of the Council in 2020, the importance of Africa on the political agenda receded. It is possible that the summit will not be held until 2022 when France will have assumed the presidency. Ultimately, institutional obstacles will not get in the way of a reorientation of European-African relations. The decisive point is that the basic political and economic features of the relations should be clearly evident, so that they can offer guidance to a future EU-AU partnership.

There are differences on the question of how democratic, open societies should be organized – ones that in fact are controversial in Africa, Europe, and all around the globe. Yet the idea of open societies, democracy, and the rule of law are of constitutive significance for Europe and must remain foundational in any future partnership. Global competition between systems is not a good argument to invoke here, because it allows us to lose sight of whether the norms attached to the rule of law are being respected. Europe stands for democratic norms and will retain its credibility only if it raises them explicitly in its relations with Africa. However, deals on democracy and social change cannot be downgraded into a matter for a German Assessment Center for African Countries. For one thing, an accountability obligation must be incorporated into any scheme of African-European cooperation via the participation of civil society actors and national parliaments. For another, the parties must agree to an overall arrangement that will allow the underlying administrative instruments to become transparent and verifiable.

This also holds true of cooperation on security policy, which is especially significant in helping each side to recognize how its counterpart understands its own role. For example, a cooperative relationship among the countries of both continents presupposes that some intelligent answers can be found to deal with the crisis in the Sahel region. This entire matter is relevant for German domestic policy as well, since the Federal Republic provides troops in the framework of multilateral UN missions and backs European training missions for African police and military forces. The time-tested linchpins of German foreign policy emphasize two things: German

support must be embedded in both a multilateral framework and a consensus-based European approach, both of which must be clearly evident. Those guidelines must be adhered to even if that means Germany will need to free itself (albeit in a constructive, carefully consensual manner) from French policy toward the Sahel, which is strongly committed to combatting terrorism. One central element in such a cooperative relationship involves a continuation of German and European backing of regional actors such as the African Union and regional organizations such as ECOWAS (West Africa). If German foreign policy is to assume greater responsibility, it must improve significantly its support for consensus-building and harmonization with other actors, including Europe, the German federal government itself, and international and local partners on the ground. However, the deployment of policy instruments such as the training of local troops in the name of a so-called »toughening up policy« (the outcomes of which have been questioned by experts) must be evaluated critically.

The African-European partnership: a longer-term global view

So, what is needed at the upcoming EU-AU summit meeting are clear overtures to the African countries, ones that go beyond isolated political initiatives and administrative measures. This is no longer just a task for development politics, although even the current focus on boosting investment falls short as long as it fails to contribute concretely to economic transformation in Africa. The recipes used in past decades, which included the establishment of special economic zones, deregulation of the labor markets, and the like have not proven successful thus far.

The outlines of such an overture, of course, are quite obvious. To break free of outmoded asymmetries, there must be some shared objectives. Europe has to do more than just go along with the economic and social upheavals in Africa. There also could be a geostrategic rationale for a European overture, e.g., to reduce the continent's dependence on China. However, given that the pandemic has dramatically worsened Africa's situation, a renewed overture must take into account the continent's altered development prospects in the global context. If Europe's offer is reconceptualized in light of the new situation, global impulses might emanate from a new African-European partnership with implications that go beyond the geostrategic. That partnership could develop on a normative level as well, demonstrating its potency as a sign of international cooperation built on solidarity.

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Our Colonial Heritage: Dawn of a new era?

Near the end of April, 2021, the German Federal Government announced that it wanted to return the bulk, if not all, of over 1,100 »Benin bronzes« held in German museums. They are part of a trove of roughly 10,000 valuable artifacts, mostly made of bronze and ivory, that were stolen in 1897 from the ruler's palace in Benin City, located in today's Nigeria, by members of a British colonial army embarked upon an extremely violent »punitive expedition.« Since then, they adorn the holdings of numerous museums and private collections around the world (mainly in Europe). The message from Berlin, which sounded almost like a binding commitment and was celebrated as a »milestone« by those who proclaimed it, came almost as a surprise, given the previous attitude toward restitution issues of the responsible figures from politics and museums, which could be characterized as hesitant, to put it mildly. It was preceded by some tough give-and-take. Just a few weeks before, for example, Hermann Parzinger, president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, had insisted in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that the originals of the Benin bronzes would be exhibited at the opening of the Humboldt Forum, which is exactly what Nigerian authorities on cultural politics had in mind. Yet ever more urgent demands for the return of the precious objects kept coming from that very same Nigerian side. As early as the summer of 2019, Nigeria's ambassador to Germany, Yussuf M. Tuggar, had written to Chancellor Angela Merkel asking for the return of all the looted Nigerian cultural assets, a request to which the German government failed to respond in a timely or appropriate manner. Yet Tuggar stuck to his guns, as did a variety of civil society groups and scholars who stubbornly kept the topic of plundered objects on the agenda.

Many people have the impression that demands for the return of countless cultural assets acquired during the colonial era by force or at least under dubious circumstances in Africa and other colonized parts of the world are a recent phenomenon. For example, in this country debates over just such issues often involve the controversial Humboldt Forum, which intends to display many objects, the »acquisition« of which is not transparent. As a matter of fact, in quite a few instances, as with the Benin bronzes, the provenance of those artifacts can be traced back demonstrably to colonial violence. Yet as early as a half-century ago, after the majority of African countries had attained their independence, numerous African politicians, intellectuals, and museum personnel already were making efforts to have art returned. Bénédicte Savoy, in her book *Africa's Battle for its Art*, has rendered a great service by reconstructing both those forgotten and likely consciously repressed efforts and the temporarily successful blockade imposed by European museum and cultural bureaucracies. She rightly observes that »The issue is shaking many societies today with a force like that of a boomerang coming back to them.« She adds that »it is the potential return of the repressed to the historical stage, now multiplied exponentially, that can't be ignored this time around.«

Savoy, who lives in Berlin and Paris and teaches art history, has given a new and important boost to the debate about the restitution of stolen cultural assets. A

report she wrote together with Felwine Sarr, commissioned by French President Emmanuel Macron and published in late 2018 (*Rapport sur la restitution de patrimoine culturel africain)*, expressly calls for the large-scale return of African cultural objects to the former colonies, a position that has made waves all around the world. The two authors estimated that 95 % of all African cultural assets are in Europe or more generally in the »Global North.« They add that a few museums are hoarding an enormous quantity of objects that never have been exhibited. According to the report, certain Berlin museums alone lay claim to around 75,000 artifacts with colonial origins. The report turned up the pressure, especially in Germany, to address more vigorously the issue of how the colonial legacy should be handled. The debate, in which both sides have taken increasingly rigid positions, has focused strongly on the Berlin Humboldt Forum, where two sets of issues – »looted art« and »colonial crimes« – met and merged. Of course, it was not easy to escape the impression that this one institution was being asked to make amends for all colonial guilt. Meanwhile, the Federal Government of Germany and most of the museums are pinning their hopes on the bureaucratization of the restitution issue, i.e., on provenance research work that will drag on interminably.

As Savoy shows in detail and through close attention to the sources in her brilliant study, a more successful strategy was adopted 40 or 50 years ago by public authorities and museum administrations in Europe to resist restitution petitions from formerly colonized countries. Arguing that they wanted to preserve for science and for the future the collections accumulated in European metropolises during the colonial era – thus insinuating that Africans were in no position to do so – they were playing for time. And they generally spoke with forked tongues. As Savoy proves by citing their correspondence, many actors in museum administrations were actually very familiar with the colonial origins of the bulk of their collections. »Yet outwardly, especially before official bodies and political circles, those responsible for the museums in the 70s assiduously and brazenly peddled the image that their collections had been acquired innocently and with clean certificates of provenance, which of course they were never required to show. There were exceptions, but very few.« The alleged legality of the purchases, she continues, became an »auto suggestive mantra« which is repeated to this day.

Savoy illustrates the museums' blockade policy of those days by citing the example of the Benin bronzes. The first attempt by Nigeria to recover those valuable artifacts from Berlin dates back to 1972. At that time, the director of the Nigerian Antiquities Authority, Ekpo Eyo – pointing to recommendations made by the International Council of Museum – attempted to obtain some permanent loans from Berlin and other European cities for a new museum to be established in Benin City. At first, the Foreign Office adopted a favorable attitude toward the request, but the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation immediately stonewalled. Its president, Hans-Georg Wormit, wrote to the Ministry of the Interior, arguing that Berlin, which had anyway lost enough museum assets as a result of World War II, could not afford to make such permanent loans. Moreover, he played the Cold War card, claiming that the transfer of artifacts desired by Nigeria would weaken the position

of a new museum complex in Berlin-Dahlem dedicated just a few years before – and consequently his own position – vis-à-vis the art institutions of the GDR (East Germany). The Interior Ministry intervened with the Foreign Office, which fell into line and signaled to the Nigerian government that it did not wish to comply with the request. A short time later, the Director General of State Museums recommended that future inquiries from formerly colonized countries should be »handled with as much dilatoriness as possible.« Savoy minces no words in pointing to the disappointed hopes, the decades-long humiliations, and the frustration of the African countries and other colonized parts of the world – often treated like unruly supplicants – as indispensable keys to understanding present-day policy alignments on restitution issues.

It would seem that the Benin bronzes have become »impossible exhibits« for the Humboldt Forum. The same holds true for another artifact that belongs among the showpieces of the rebuilt Berlin City Palace. At least according to the old version of the story, the high-seas-worthy, richly decorated Luf boat (a South Seas outrigger) apparently had come into the possession of the Berlin Ethnological Museum's collection early in the 20th century, in a manner that was supposedly beyond reproach. But the boat, too, is actually another piece of colonial plunder! At least, according to the historian and publicist Götz Aly, there is no evidence to confirm the claim that it was obtained through regular channels. His book, *Das Prachtboot* (*The Magnificent Boat)*, instantly landed him a true media coup. On the basis of accessible books and documents, Aly shows that provenance research need not be some sort of magic trick. He reveals how this huge and valuable artifact was spirited out of New Guinea, then a German colony, and brought back to Berlin. With visible pleasure he unmasks the prevarications and secretiveness of museum personnel and cultural politicians. Although by now the latter may indeed be willing to send human skulls back to Africa and Oceania – ones that once served as material for the highly-respected discipline of »race studies – they would go to almost any lengths otherwise to delay the return of valuable looted artifacts.

The businessman Eduard Herrnheim had sold to the Royal Museums in Berlin the 16-meter-long Luf Boat, outfitted with two sails and a keel fashioned from a single tree trunk. In his memoirs he wrote: »The last of these vessels that the dying tribe was still able to produce later came into my hands and now adorns the Ethnological Museum in Berlin.« Aly comments that, »one would speak more precisely about the purchase of such a unique object.« The boat was simply expropriated; they just »took it away from an island population that had been ruthlessly decimated.«

Aly embeds the reconstructed history of this unique object in a depiction of German colonial rule in the South Seas, which was marked by violence, destruction, and plunder. In this way he deconstructs the image of comparatively peaceful foreign rule in this part of the world, although he surely is not the first to do so. Likewise, by pointing out that the development of the discipline of ethnology has been closely tied to colonialism, he is again running through doors that have been wide open for a long time. Nevertheless, in effect Aly's study hits a raw nerve by exposing the extreme indecisiveness that continues to affect our policy toward stolen art from

the former colonies. We ought to be on the edge of our seats waiting to see how the debate plays out next.

Götz Aly, *Das Prachtboot: Wie Deutsche die Kunstschätze der Südsee raubten (The Magnificent Boat: How Germans looted the art treasures of the South Seas).* S. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main 2021, 240 pages, 21 €. – Bénédict Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst: Geschichte einer postkolonialen Niederlage (Africa's Battle for its Art: History of a postcolonial defeat).* C. H. Beck, Munich 2021, 256 pages, 24 €.

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