Positioning Germany's Right-Wing Revival in Global Context[1]

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Abstract

Right-wing extremism and neo-fascism have recently come to the fore again in the Federal Republic of Germany. This includes political organizations, people and groups that proclaim racist, nationalist, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, Islamophobic and militarist ideologies. Sleeper cells that have been dormant and almost invisible for decades are suddenly appearing. Whoever heard of the "Reichsbürger" (presumed ideal citizens of the German "Reich") until recently, a group that suddenly made headlines in 2010, and again in December 2022, who don't accept modern Germany and its 1949 Constitution? Political parties like the "Deutsche Reichspartei", the "NPD", the "Deutsche Volksunion", and "Die Republikaner" have made a name for themselves in the past. Most recently the "AfD" (Alternative for Germany) party has firmly established itself in the German parliament. The question has to be asked: what is so special about Germany? Chauvinism and militarism are not restricted to any one country. However, what aggravates the situation and represents fertile ground for the spread of neo-fascist ideology in Germany is that after the Second World War the denazification process in Germany was—admittedly—not very successful. This includes academics, historians, political scientists and the legal professions, not to mention persons who had been working in the administration. This paper aims to evaluate the recent rise in sleeper-cell awakenings in Germany in the global context. To what extent is Germany the center of world fascist and xenophobic movements? In addition, the paper also wants to show alternatives for creating a world free from want and war, hate and discrimination.

Keywords

Germany, International Right-Wing Movements, European History, World Wars, Hague Peace Conferences (1899 and 1907), International Peace and Security, India, China, United Nations

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1. The Historical Background

Historically Germany's development as a nation-state has been unique. The Holy Roman Empire, unofficially also known as the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (Saint-Empire romain germanique), was the dominant political, cultural and religious force in Western and Central Europe. However, as a country Germany was not politically united until 1871, when militarist Prussia defeated the French Republic. How did the barbarian Germanic tribes that brought about the collapse of Roman civilization advance to such prominence? Before Bismarck united Germany with his foreign policy of "blood and Iron" into a national empire, Germany consisted of a number of small states and kingdoms, in which royal households like the Habsburgs played a dominant role. Economically, the Fuggers, international venture capitalists and bankers with headquarters in Augsburg, near Munich, constituted a powerful conglomerate that played an important role in international trade. Prussian traders also had a commercial outpost in India's Bengal province.

In the 19th century, some people hoped Germany would succeed the colonial empire of Great Britain, and emerge as the next (and last) dominant global, colonial and political power. Soon, however, Germany felt threatened by the rising power of Japan in the Far East. German Emperor William II's famous painting (see Figure 1) "The yellow peril" depicted a scenario and background that set the stage for the development of a German colonial and imperial, racist, militarist power.[2] In his famous "Hun Speech" at Bremerhaven on July 27, 1900, as the German troops were departing on board the vessel SMS Brandenburg to suppress the Chinese Boxer Rebellion, William II said: "When you encounter him [the Chinese], know this: no quarter will be given. Prisoners will not be taken. Exercise your arms such that for a thousand years no Chinese will dare to look cross-eyed at a German…Open the way to civilization once and for all!"

On the other hand, thinkers such as Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) conceived of a peaceful community of nations, including China, which would be submitting to a common rule of law, to replace international anarchy. In spite of having developed an idea of a "yellow peril"—among races discriminated against in many parts of Europe were the Jews—for a long time racism had hardly played a significant role, even in the colonies. The colonial powers' main purpose was mostly to exploit (and educate) the local population. But now certain scientific concepts developed, maintaining that other races were inferior to the white race. Social Darwinism (Charles Darwin, 1809-1882) played a role (Claeys, 2000).

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[2]Caption (translation): "Peoples of Europe, Defend Your Holiest Possessions" This famous "Yellow Peril" lithograph by the German artist Hermann Knackfuss was based on a drawing by his patron, Emperor Wilhelm II, in 1895 and widely disseminated thereafter. The version reproduced here appeared three years later, on the eve of the Boxer uprising, in the Jan. 22, 1898 issue of the American magazine Harper's Weekly. [1898_Jan22_Harpers_Weekly_Yellow_Peril_rarenews]

Figure 1. Famous "Yellow Peril" lithograph by the German artist Hermann Knackfuss, titled "Peoples of Europe, Defend Your Holiest Possessions".

The concept of Germans as a special race or "Aryans" goes back to the eighteenth century reception of Indian traditional concepts and studies, which became the basis for promoting and inventing a tradition leading to a particular cultural identification that occasioned racist-ideological theories. In the 1790s, the impact of the works that came out of the "Indian Renaissance" had hit the German intelligentsia "like a rapid-fire series of explosions" (Schwab, 1984: p. 53). Arthur Schopenhauer, Immanuel Kant, (see Figure 2) Johann Gottfried Herder, Friedrich Schlegel, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe read the newly discovered ancient Indian texts in German translation. Schopenhauer "throughout his life … celebrated the blessings that he ceaselessly derived" from the philosophy of the Vedanta (Schwab, 1984: p. 427; Schlichtmann, 2016: pp. 150-151). Historian Raymond Schwab writes that although in fact "England was the native land of Indic studies, the native land of the Indic Renaissance was Germany, first at Jena, Weimar, and Heidelberg, then at Bonn, Berlin, and Tübingen." (Schwab, 1984: p. 53) Eventually Germany was awarded the title "India of the Occident". "This was not, in [Victor] Hugo's frame of reference, a very good mark for Germany." (Schwab, 1984: p. 366) Historian David Kopf considered it a "bias of the German scholars" who "increasingly viewed the *Vedanta* as a unique manifestation of the 'Aryan genius'." (Kopf, 1969: p. 38) The *motif* of the US-born white supremacist movement, "The Aryan Nations," is found in this paradigm.

The "comparison of Germany with India" was widespread, and Germany "took pride in it." (Schwab, 1984: p. 366) According to Sheldon Pollock, the "Oriental Renaissance" had led to and endorsed a special "complex of 'knowledge as power'," which tended to "construct the concept of a [special] historic German character," (Pollock, 1993: p. 7) eventually positing that the Aryans originated in Europe. By contrast, Raimond Schwab believes it should have been Germany's historical mission to present for modern Europe "a fusion of the mythological traditions of all humanity." (Schwab, 1984: p. 217) The general tenor, however, was, as the Orientalist Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837) acknowledged in 1837

before the *Asiatic Society*, that "civilization had its origin in Asia" and the West "owed a debt of gratitude" to the Asian cultures (Colebrooke, 1837 in Kopf, 1969: p. 39; Allen, 2012: p. 113).

On the other side, personalities such as Gottfried Leibniz, already mentioned, proposed a universal international system based on justice and order, an interreligious and multicultural project in which China, too, was to participate. He sought to combine linguistics, sinology, economics, politics, morality and legal philosophy; within this system Europe would form a unified region based on Christianity, a European federation (Sherwig, 1962). His idea of a supranational European Council or Senate, whose decisions should be dictated by reason and conscience, is often thought of as an early model for the European Union. G. Leibniz had read Abbé de Saint-Pierre's peace plan (*Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe*, 1712) and therefore wrote to the Abbé on February 7, 1715: "I found it very sensible and acceptable…" (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. German philosopher and Enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant proposed an international League of Nations.
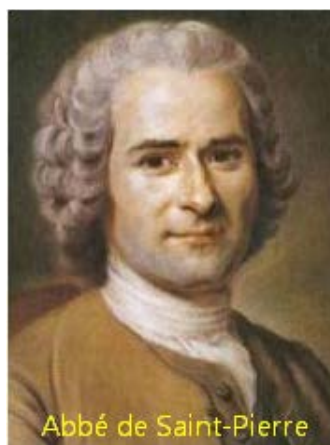

Figure 3. French author Charles-Irénée Castel de Saint-Pierre was the first to propose an international organisation to maintain peace.

2. From the Age of Enlightenment to the Hague Peace Conferences and the First World War

As far as militarism is concerned, Germany was not much different from the other powers. That changed with the Hague Peace Conferences in 1899 and 1907. The modern day international peace movement is said to have its origins in the Enlightenment. Historically it benefited to a great extent from the Oriental Renaissance (Schlichtmann, 2016: pp. 131-182). The pacifists' aim was to put an end to war. The first Peace Societies were founded in the beginning of the 19th century (New York 1815/1828, London 1916, Geneva 1830). By the time of the Hague Peace Conferences in 1899 and 1907, another Peace Society was founded in Berlin in 1892, and a Japanese Peace Society in Tokyo in 1906.

The Hague Peace Conferences were the first truly global, government-sponsored assemblies meeting in times of peace, creating the first international organization and the international court. The "International Union of the Hague Conferences", as it has been called (Schücking, 1918), failed in its main objective, which was to abolish war, due to a small minority, spearheaded by Germany, who twice vetoed the creation of an international court with binding powers. This in spite of the fact that the major powers at the time, Great Britain, France, Russia, The USA and even China—although at the time not a great power—as well as most of the 46 nations participating in the Conference in 1907 were in favor of "obligatory arbitration for the peaceful settlement of international disputes." So, instead of going to war, nations would have to go to court to settle their differences. Walther Schücking had spoken out in favor of establishing a world federation; as a member of the German Peace Delegation at the Versailles Conference after WWI he also proposed the establishment of a world parliament. The German Emperor William II, however, was opposed to the whole idea of the Conferences to which the Russian Czar Nicholas II and the Dutch queen Wilhelmina had invited and remarked on the work of the Hague: "In my practice and in future I will only rely and call on God and my sharp sword! I shit on all the decisions," i.e. the peaceful resolutions adopted in The Hague. This set the course for Germany to eventually embark on two world wars.

Jews serving in the German army during the First World War, were subjected to a census in October 1916, although this was not for reasons of anti-Semitism. However, when Germany lost the war, an (international) Jewish and Bolshevik conspiracy was blamed for the defeat (see **Figure 4**)[3]. Also blamed for losing the war were the coloured soldiers serving in the armies of the Entente. German propaganda alleged Indians and Africans to have been engaged in especially brutal practices that violated international law.

An apology for the mistakes committed at The Hague that led to the First World War would set the stage for orchestrating a European initiative on the

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[3]The illustration is "from a 1919 Austrian postcard showing a caricatured Jew stabbing the German Army in the back with a dagger. The capitulation was blamed upon the unpatriotic populace, the Socialists, Bolsheviks, the Weimar Republic, and especially the Jews." (Wikipedia) Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6500035.

Figure 4. A caricatured Jew stabbing the German Army in the back with a dagger.

incentive of Germany to gradually establish an international peace based on justice and order. A policy of revenge would not serve anyone.

3. The Rise of Fascism and Hitler and Subsequent Developments until 1949

Following the First World War Germany experienced significant instability in both social and political terms. The newly created democratic Weimar Republic faced numerous challenges. Adolf Hitler joined the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers' Party) in 1919. Only one year later he became its leader and renamed it the *Nationalsozialistiche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist German Workers' Party, NSDAP). One of its aims was to repeal the Versailles Treaty. When Hitler became the "Führer" and "Reichskanzler" (leader and chancellor of the Reich) in January 1933, he ended the Weimar Republic and proclaimed the Third Reich, a single-party fascist state. Based on principles of race and heredity the new policy aimed at excluding minorities, gypsies, homosexuals and especially Jews.

The NSDAP's programs such as building highways (Reichsautobahn) and a general economic upturn guaranteed the Nazi party the support of the public. Militarism was the motor that promised Germany could expand and become a dominant economic and political power in Europe and the world. A famous political buzzword coined by Emanuel Geibel in his 1861 poem, *Deutschlands Beruf* (Germany's calling), was: "Am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen" (The salvation of the world by imposing German values). In this way, under the leadership of the "Führer" (leader) Adolf Hitler, Germans felt they were marching in the right direction, a direction that would benefit the whole world in the end. To achieve this, Jews, gypsies and other "unwertes Leben" (unworthy lives) had to be systematically extinguished. Euthanasia—killing people with mental and physical disabilities—and racial hygiene became key concepts to assure the purity of the German race. Hitler's successes convinced the masses, who were fasci-

nated by his demagogic rhetorics and charisma.

How did Germany and the Germans deal with their past after the war had ended? In an article published in 2015 German Chancellor Angela Merkel, visiting Japan, is said to have prided herself on how "her country rehabilitated its international reputation after World War II by reconciling with Nazi victims and acknowledging the atrocities Germany had committed" (Rienzi, 2015). However, while it is true that "a substantial majority admitted that the German population as a whole should bear some blame or guilt for Nazi crimes" (Greg Rienzi), Lily Gardner Feldman, a fellow at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, says that the Germans were "deeply divided on the interpretation of that responsibility." In fact, surveys revealed there was "a persistent negative perception of Jews," and "one-third of those surveyed clung to the belief of the inferiority of Jews…and 83 percent believed that Germany's crimes were only on the same level as other nations" (Gardner Feldman, 2012). The Allied endeavour to remove Nazis from their former positions in culture, the media, economy, academia, the judiciary, and politics, the denazification (*Entnazifizierung*) program, was in fact not very successful. German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's State Secretary Hans Globke was a Nazi who had been involved in drafting the anti-semitic Nuremberg Race Laws, and Kurt Georg Kiesinger, a German Chancellor, also was a former member of the Nazi Party. Already in the first two years after the end of the war, with Germany becoming an economic powerhouse as well as being wanted as a political comrade-in-arms by the former Allies, denazification efforts were given up and finally abandoned altogether in 1951. Soon Nazi parties sprang up once more. At the same time the American *Operation Paperclip* program accepted more than one thousand top German scientists and engineers who had worked for the Nazi Government into the U.S. between 1945 and 1959.

4. The Rise of New Nazi Parties after the War

Due to the overall failure of denazification, soon several small right-wing parties appeared in West Germany. In 1946 the "Deutsche Rechtspartei" was founded, succeeded in 1950 by the "Deutsche Reichspartei". Other new far-right parties were the "Socialist Reich Party", founded in 1949 (banned in 1952), and the "German Social Union" (1956-1962). However, until the foundation of the "National Democratic Party of Germany" (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, NPD) in 1964, they did not exert much influence. The German people had other problems. However, repeated attempts by the Government to ban the NPD, the most prominent and powerful neo-fascist party, failed.

Strangely, matters gradually deteriorated after German reunification, with a new nationalism coming to the fore. In 1991 there were 849 hate crimes, neo-Nazis attacked several accommodations set up for refugees and migrant workers in a number of towns (e.g. the Hoyerswerda riots), and in 1992 riots broke out in Rostock-Lichtenhagen. Neo-Nazis also murdered three Turkish girls in a 1992 arson attack in Mölln (Schleswig-Holstein), in which nine other people were in-

jured. In 2011, the National Socialist Underground was exposed for having murdered 10 Turkish people between 2000 and 2007. The list goes on.

The "Deutsche Welle", a liberal radio station reported in 2007 that the situation for the "right-wing extremist National Democratic Party of Germany has changed rapidly in recent years: it has more and more members, more and more young members, and it has become more dangerous. The NPD opens up massively to young neo-Nazis, many of whom are convicted of violent crimes and sedition. They…deny the Holocaust, worship Adolf Hitler and commit acts of violence" (Tillich, 2007). Journalists and MPs are threatened, and neo-Nazi activities in the army and the police forces are being investigated, while right-wing spokespersons are becoming increasingly vocal on the internet and in the media.

Author Andreas Kluth reports: With people like the rapper Kanye West ("Every human being has something of value that they brought to the table, especially Hitler"), satirist Walter Moers ("Adolf, the Nazi pig") and others, the "banality of evil" (Hannah Arendt) has in the 1980s resulted in a new genre of "Nazi porn" or "Hitler kitsch" that trivializes the matter. "The phenomenon isn't German but global. Hitler has become the raw material for memes" (Kluth, 2022). There is a well made, long documentary video, in German and English, giving historical evidence to prove Hitler's innocence.[4]

In 2010 some members related to the so-called "Reichsbürger movement", which started its activities in the 1980s and favors a great German Empire, founded the *Bund Freies Europa*, which became the *Europäische Aktion* (European Action, EA), an umbrella organization of Holocaust deniers and right-wing extremists, who are also active in Switzerland, Austria, Great Britain and France, and unite like-minded people in other European countries. In 2016 a militant Reichsbürger shot four policemen, a game changer.

The daily newspaper "Sueddeutsche Zeitung", reported in 2018: "The right-wing extremist scene in Germany has regained popularity in recent years: many neo-Nazis are well networked and engaged in organizing large demonstrations and events." According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), there were 24,100 right-wing extremists in Germany in 2018; however, the actual number is bound to be much higher. Organizations like Pegida (short for Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West), a xenophobic populist organization founded in 2014 in the city of Dresden (it was there that it drew the most participants at its weekly demonstrations), have spread worldwide. Pegida's initial successes in Germany led to founding PEGIDA groups in the UK, Holland, Norway, Denmark, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, France, Portugal, Poland, Austria, Bulgaria and Hungary, and beyond, to the US, Canada, and Russia. Most recently, in December 2022 twenty-five members of a nationwide Reichsbürger group were arrested for having planned to "overthrow the German state," as the newspaper *The Guardian* reported, echoing numerous

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[4]You can find the documentary on YouTube: "Hitler's War - What the Historians Neglect to Mention - WW2 Truth." The identical German version is not available in Germany.

media reports of the incident. Prosecutors identified them as "supporters of conspiracy myths, from a conglomerate of narratives relating to the ideologies of the Reichsbürger and QAnon ideologies" (Oltermann, 2022).

Recently Willy Wimmer, a Christian Democratic MP from 1977 to 2007, former German vice president of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and parliamentary State Secretary from 1988 to 1992, has claimed that it was not the Germans who should be blamed for Nazism and Hitler but the Entente and the Treaty of Versailles. Not only the AfD but also many Christian democrats apparently agree with him.[5] "The First World War." Wimmer writes, "was planned by English and French elites for decades: Germany and Austria-Hungary were to be destroyed as independent, economically prosperous European states." The blame for the Hitler dictatorship lies solely with the victorious powers of the First World War, who in Versailles had given Germany sole responsibility for the First World War. "Versailles," according to Willy Wimmer, "was to form the basis for further wars," that France and the Anglo-Saxon powers were already planning (Wimmer & Sosnowski, 2019: p. 11). To me, as a German, the present head of state, Chancellor Olaf Scholz, proclaiming a new era ("Zeitenwende") and bidding farewell to Germany's presumed post-World War II pacifism, in order to deal with the Russian aggression in Ukraine, doesn't bode well for the future.

5. Nazism Outside of Germany

A question that must be asked is whether international right wing organizations would survive (and thrive) without their existing in Germany. It may be too far-fetched to assume that the international movements are controlled by Germany or that the groups outside the "Fatherland" are following instructions from German neo-Nazis. But the German groups certainly set the pace and are seen as a model to emulate. "By the mid-1990s at the latest, [German] neo-Nazis began to network with one another, even across national borders." (Ignatzi, 2013) And in an article published by the liberal German Media Center *Deutsche Welle* journalist Christian Ignatzi stated: "Right-wing extremists also create networks more and more internationally" (Ignatzi, 2013).

Apart from actual Nazi parties spreading worldwide,[6] the powerful Pegida saw itself "as the nucleus of a larger German and European trend," (Vorländer et al., 2018: p. 13) and already before the Corona pandemic, a "network of rightists and

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[5]See the video (in German) organized by the AfD:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOHwkndXpAE&t=66s.
[6]American Nazi Party, Aria Party (Persia), Arrow Cross Party (Hungary), Azure Party (Persia), Bulgarian National Socialist Workers Party, German American Bund, German National Movement in Liechtenstein, Greek National Socialist Party, South African Gentile National Socialist Movement, Hungarian National Socialist Party, Nasjonal Samling (Norway), National Movement of Switzerland, National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands, National Socialist Bloc (Sweden), National Socialist League (UK), National Socialist Movement of Chile, National Socialist Movement, (United States), National Socialist Workers' Party of Denmark, National Unity Party (Canada), Nazism in Brazil, Nationalist Liberation Alliance (Argentina), SUMKA, Ossewabrandwag (South Africa), World Union of National Socialists. (List from Wikipedia)

esotericists" had formed as well as an "informal alliance" between the AfD and Pegida (Nimz & Rietzschel, 2020). "In the informal alliance of PEGIDA and AfD, of street and parliament, movement and party, a right-wing populist force took shape which found common ground with the rejection of immigration, mistrust of the religion of Islam, fundamental criticism of the political and media elite, the dissatisfaction with liberal and representative democracy and the fear of heteronomy" (Vorländer et al., 2018: p. 14).

In a way, as University of Bielefeld Prof. Heinrich Wilhelm Schäfer pointed out in a lecture on the emergence of fundamentalist currents: "In order to understand fundamentalism one has to understand modernity." (Schloßmacher, 2017) Other authors who have researched the phenomenon have pointed out another rather disturbing, recent trend: Right-wing rock bands go on tour across Europe and attack foreigners in their lyrics (Speit & Langebach, 2013). Political scientist and right-wing extremism expert Hajo Funke described how right-wing extremists are trying to pool their strengths internationally. There is now a large international network from which right-wing extremists benefit. Organizations like "The Golden Dawn", which has allies all over Europe, joined forces in 2004 with ultra-right parties such as the NPD and the Spanish "La Falange", forming a "European National Front." The German terrorist group "National Socialist Underground" (NSU) has become a major force. Journalist Ignatzi writes: "One thing unites right-wing extremists from all countries: their hatred of Jews. That is also the reason why many neo-Nazis revere the former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This fundamentalist publicly agitated against Israel and threatened the country with annihilation. Islamists sympathize with Nazis again and again." (Ignatzi, 2013) Ignazi quotes author Andreas Speit: "As early as the 1920s, there were strong alliances between the right-wing extremists in Europe, and those of the Arab region." The ideological reason is banal, since right-wing extremists also uphold old traditions which are still upheld in traditional Muslim societies, especially when it comes to "dealing with women" (Speit & Langebach, 2013).

6. The United Nations Organization

There is reason to assume that our democratic institutions and their politicians and national lawmakers themselves are responsible for the situation. In Germany, according to Article 21 of the Constitution, political parties are to actively "participate in the formation of the political will of the people", especially young people, who are to be motivated to take part in activities that benefit society as a whole. Against organized international crime, fundamentalism, chauvinism, and militarism etc. stand the United Nations.

Having already referred to the historical background, I would like to remind the reader once more of the pivotal event, the Hague Peace Conferences (1899 and 1907). The German government did not sympathize with any of the peace plans. Instead, Imperial Germany had plans for the invasion of the United

Kingdom, based on the ideas of the commander of the Imperial German Navy, Admiral Eduard von Knorr in 1897. Since the German fleet was small and greatly inferior to the British Navy, von Knorr planned a preemptive strike against the Royal Navy, after which the much more numerous German army would land on British soil. In fact, it were the Naval Laws of 1898, 1900, 1906, 1908, and 1912 that upset the "balance of power" that had existed in Europe until then. The German emperor, William II, committed Germany to building up a navy capable of defeating the British Royal Navy.

Unfortunately, peace plans aiming at a world federation, a world under the rule of law instead of military alliances, played no role in German political thinking. Not only did Germany not support these international efforts, which the great powers, Great Britain, France, the USA, Russia and even China had consented to at The Hague, after 1949, the country never attempted to take steps to implement the peace provisions in its own Constitution. When the German Constitution went into effect, the government should immediately have submitted to the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, under Article 24, paragraph 3, which was reminiscent of what had been at stake (and lost) some 50 years ago at The Hague. The Article stipulates: "For the settlement of disputes between states, the Federation shall accede to agreements providing for general, comprehensive and compulsory international arbitration". This would have had an immediate, positive effect, possibly forestalling and nipping the Cold War in the bud. Unfortunately, as one author describes it: "The most important professors of constitutional law who exercised a decisive influence on the interpretation of the Bonn Basic Law (1949), and therefore on its implementation, had already proven themselves to be outspoken supporters of the state (and of the *Führer*-state) during the era of Nazi dictatorship." (Bendersky, 2007: p. 36) Worse than not having promptly submitted to the jurisdiction of the International Court is the German omission to take legislative action to start the process of empowering the United Nations, similar to what the close to twenty follow-up provisions in other European Constitutions provide for. For example, Article 11 of the 1948 Italian Constitution has Italy agreeing to the "limitations of her sovereignty necessary to an organization which will ensure peace and justice among nations"; Denmark's 1953 Article 20 enables the legislator to transfer powers to international authorities "through a bill, to promote international legal order and cooperation"; Norway's 1965 Article 115 permits limitations of national sovereignty with the aim "to secure international peace and security" and "promote international law and order and cooperation between nations", and the 1946 French Constitution "accepts the limitations of sovereignty necessary for the organization and defense of peace" (albeit "under condition of reciprocity"). Similarly, Japan's Constitution aims for "an international peace based on justice and order" (Schlichtmann, 2011: pp. 109-110).

These articles correspond to the UN Charter which obliges Members to "confer primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security" on the Security Council (Art. 24). The Council acts on the assumption that

it has the authority to take "prompt and effective action" on behalf of its Members, if and when the necessity arises, provided that nine of the 15 Members of the Council are in agreement. There is a question whether Article 24 has been implemented. In fact, Article 106 suggests that the UNSC's powers are arbitrary, and the institution has strictly speaking not been empowered "by law" to exercise its responsibilities. John Foster Dulles maintained: "The Security Council is not a body that merely enforces agreed law. It is a law unto itself." Dulles further: "No principles of law are laid down to guide it; it can decide in accordance with what it thinks is expedient." (Dulles, 1950: p. 194) This is a far cry from what the drafters of the Charter had originally intended. However, nations have been reluctant to give up any part of their national sovereignty that would affect their war-making powers, and Germany in particular has been blocking any such efforts and development. If Article 24 had been implemented, nations by now would have been mostly disarmed, and the UN System of Collective Security would be in operation (Schlichtmann, 2022). As I have pointed out in the text, the German Constitution's Article 24 provides for delegating sovereign powers "by law" to international organizations like the UN.

Indeed, there are indications that both China and Russia, as well as Ukraine, would prefer a system of common security within the framework of the United Nations. In March 2022 the official website of the Ukrainian President featured the headline "Ukraine must have a collective security agreement with all its neighbors with the participation of the world's leading powers," quoting Volodymyr Zelenskyy: "These will be guarantees not only for Ukraine ... for Russia as well." Zelenskyy seemed to be echoing Putin who had frequently berated the West for being unwilling to build "a modern, non-bloc collective security system" with Russia. South Korean political adviser Moon Chung-in confirmed in a speech he gave in Beijing, published in a Hong Kong newspaper in December 2022: "Cooperative security needs to be re-energized. Now we see the big clash in this part of the world between America-centered collective defense based on alliances and China's vision of a collective security system based on the United Nations Charter and multilateral security cooperation … The Western idea of dividing the world into liberal and illiberal states is extremely misleading and even destabilizing." (Moon, 2022) But why is Germany deliberately blocking such a move that would ultimately be of benefit to all?

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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