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World War I: Lessons Learned and Lessons Threatened

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Past Wars and Current Consequences

In June 1915, Lieutenant-Commander Geoffrey Basil Spicer-Simson passed through Gaborones, today's Gaborone, without any recorded stopover. Together with two motorboats, which he had brought by ship from London, he had taken the Cape Town to Elizabethville railway which led him through the Bechuanaland Protectorate, today's Botswana. Spicer-Simson led the expedition which was meant to counter the German presence in East Africa. From Elizabethville, today's Lubumbashi, he advanced over land towards Lake Tanganyika in order to support British land forces which had come from Northern Rhodesia. In late 1915 and 1916, some of the most bizarre actions of World War I took place on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Here is just one of the stories: Spicer-Simson's flotilla, consisting of the Mimi, the Toutou, *His Majesty's Ship (HMS) Fifi* and the *Vengeur* entered Bismarckburg, today's Kasanga in Southern Tanzania, only to learn that the guns on the German fort were wooden dummies. In preparing for a British attack from the South or a Belgian attack from the Western shores of Lake Tanganyika, the German army had sent a ship, the *Graf von Goetzen*, all the way from Papenburg in Northern Germany to Bismarckburg via Dar-es-Salaam in order to defend the imperial colony. But shortly before the British attack on Bismarckburg, this German war ship was flooded by the German soldiers themselves. Finally, in 1918, the German General Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck and his army of local *Askari* surrendered to the British. I recall meeting one of the *Askari* in the 1970s. He asked me if I were "Deutsch". When I said yes, he posted himself in front of me as if I were Lettow-Vorbeck and saluted "Guten Morgen", "Guten Mittag", "Guten Abend". The Swiss author Alex Capus has written a brilliant novel on the Great War on the shores of

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Lake Tanganyika, helping us to better understand the absurdity of the emerging Great War which everybody saw coming, nobody wanted to happen and which turned every neighbor into an enemy and every decent peace-loving worker into a nationalistic warrior. The novel is titled “A matter of time” (“Eine Frage der Zeit”) and was first published in 2007.¹

Mostly, for us in Europe, World War I has been reduced to the European theatre, while the overseas and colonial dimension has been lost in time. The same is true for the connection between the end of colonialism after World War II and the reconstruction of the post-war European order based on a common market and a community of law, the European Economic Community, which today we call European Union. The time has come to re-connect the fate of the North and the South in our age of globalization. This includes the lessons we can learn from the origins and consequences of World War I which started just one hundred years ago. I will discuss three aspects of this vexing and complex agenda.

My first point of discussion: The transformation of the European state system over the past three hundred years and its breakdown in the 20th century.

The moral basis for the notion of peace in Europe is rooted in Christianity. “Thou shalt not kill”, the fifth commandment in the *Decalogue* has been both a moral compass for Europe and a permanent source of frustration among Europeans. The reality of Europe was one of killing fields throughout most of its history. Military conflicts, among Christian kings and princes, at times with the involvement of church leaders, are part and parcel of the European history of broken promises and flawed credibility. Yet, the biblical code of conduct has never been forgotten: “Blessed are the peacemakers”, we read in the New Testament in the Gospel according to Matthew. In modern European politics, one can detect a long and daunting struggle to question this wisdom, to restore it, to challenge it again and to rephrase it whenever possible. I will not go into the intellectual history of peacemaking and, time and again, the legitimization of violence and warfare in Europe. I will limit myself to recalling the key features of the structures which framed the order of states in Europe in modern history.

Hugo Grotius lived in the Netherlands during the time of protracted warfare. For almost eighty years, a war had dragged on between Spain and the Netherlands,

1 Alex Capus, *Eine Frage der Zeit*, München: Knaus, 2007; english translation: *A matter of time*, London: Haus Publishing, 2011.

furthermore paralleled by the Thirty Years' War between Catholic and Protestant nations across Europe. He was the first to link the notion of a binding natural law with principles of justice for every nation unrelated to their customs; the rules of engagement and behavior in warfare; and the idea of lasting and binding conditions of international law. In his famous book "On the law of war and peace" (*De jure belli ac pacis*) Grotius wrote in 1625: "Fully convinced [...] that there is a common law among nations, which is valid alike for war and in war, I have had many and weighty reasons for undertaking to write upon the subject. Throughout the Christian world I observed a lack of restraint in relation to war, such as even barbarous races should be ashamed of; I observed that men rush to arms for slight causes, or no cause at all, and that when arms have once been taken up there is no longer any respect for law, divine or human; it is as if, in accordance with a general decree, frenzy had openly been let loose for the committing of all crimes."²

The first translation of international law principles into politics occurred in the Westphalian peace system of 1648. The Westphalian peace system tried, for the first time, to give an answer to the "German question"; that is, perceived and real political instability in the center of Europe. Signed in Osnabrück and in Münster, the Westphalian peace system recognized the rationality of statehood, *raison d'état*, and the national sovereignty of independent nations as formative ideas to re-create a stable European state system after a century of warfare. From this point on, German history no longer belonged to the Germans alone. The root cause of warfare was twofold: with the separation of European Christian confessions in the 16th century, the Catholic Church lost its role as the unifying factor; the Pope in the Vatican as representative of a united moral principle guiding the legitimacy of European rulers. And local and regional resentments against the so-called Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, the Habsburg-led imperial regime in Vienna, had led to a plurality of rule and authority among European states and societies since the 16th century. *Raison d'état* and the universal recognition of national sovereignty were the answers given by the Westphalian peace negotiators to re-consolidate peace and re-establish stability across Europe.

The Westphalian system survives around the world until today, wherever national sovereignty is an issue. In Europe, its peace-serving power began to

2 Hugo Grotius, *The Law of War and Peace*, translated by Francis Kelsey, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1925, Prol. sect. 28.

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crumble during the early 18th century. The Westphalian principle of harmony through mutual recognition of state sovereignty was increasingly challenged by new hegemonic tendencies, this time in the name of national (and not religious or imperial) sovereignty. In other words: national sovereignty and *raison d'état* do not include a universal notion of morality that guarantees their sustained recognition by all actors in a given state system. In the 17th century, France rose to monarchical absolutism while Germany remained decentralized with many local kingdoms and states. German-French border disputes along the Rhine River and over Alsace-Lorraine emerged, but also new internal revolutions about legitimacy and order developed in England and elsewhere. With the death of the French "Sun King" Louis XIV in 1713, Europe began to tumble into new conflicts and was increasingly forced to re-visit its order. In 1776, the United States seceded from British and French domination; the first example of successful decolonization from the European yoke. Independence from Spain and Portugal followed in Latin America. The second attempt to organize the European state system, after the Westphalian treaties, started with the Peace Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 and was completed with the Vienna Congress in 1815: Europe was now kept together by a system of balance of power, eventually coupled with reciprocal recognition of the domestic legitimacy of monarchic state order. The period between 1715 and 1815 was not free from conflict: Europe experienced 36 military conflicts, often due to border or trade disputes. Yet, balance of power became an idea that defined the search for stability and monarchic peace for quite some time. Balance of power mechanisms are based on the assumption of balanced interests, but find it difficult to adapt to changes, be they economic, related to state structures or to rule or power. The notion of balance of power was also based on the principle of monarchic rule, replacing the religious legitimacy of earlier centuries with the recognition of ruling families expressing state traditions. Balance of power and the legitimacy of monarchic state rule, the second big experiment of European state order, eventually came under growing pressure by new forces appearing throughout the 19th century. The two most important ones were the rise of nationalism, coupled with economic transformation emanating from industrialization and the forces it unleashed, on the one hand; together with variants of revisionism challenging existing borders on the other hand. The search for new domestic political order found its echo in the demand for constitutional rule, parliamentary competencies and political parties, including those focusing on the social question. The call for a reconsideration of national boundaries led to a mix of alliances among states and against states, in order to maintain a system of balanced powers

in the midst of a growing number of border disputes and territorial ambitions aimed at harmonizing nationhood and statehood. The constellations became increasingly antagonistic, difficult to manage and impossible to justify when challenged on ideological grounds or by newly emerging social or state powers. Eventually, the European state system, organized around the idea of balance of power, exploded under the pressure of imperialistic power politics and was poorly repaired by the search for collective security.

The events that led to the outbreak of World War I are well-known to anybody interested in history. But it requires more than just a knowledge of events to understand why the assassination of the Austrian crown prince in Sarajevo on June 28th, 1914, by a young man who was demanding the secession of his native Bosnia from Austro-Hungarian rule and the establishment of a country of the Southern Slavs under Serbian rule, escalated into the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on Serbia; followed by the German declaration of war on Russia and on France and by the British declaration of war on Germany after Germany disrespected Belgian neutrality. This sequence of events was the consequence of agitating nationalism, stubborn interpretations of national sovereignty, and a mutual escalation of mistrust among countries engaged in alliances and counter-alliances, coupled with secretive or imagined coalition formations – and the stupidity of the German emperor who altered long-established policies and turned into an unpredictable imperialist. Until the German signing of the armistice in Compiègne on November 11, 1918 and the victory of the war coalition initiated by the *Triple Entente*, that is Great Britain, France and Russia (until the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917), seventeen million people were killed in the biggest war in world history until that time. Seventy million soldiers took up arms across forty countries involved in the war, which turned the United States into a European power and initiated the revolution that turned czarist Russia into the Soviet Union. World War I, often described as a war nobody wanted and everybody slipped into unintentionally, was the ultimate crash of the ultra-complex balance of power system which was incapable of withstanding the domestic political and ideological forces.

This was the end of the second European state system. Realpolitik had been one of the mantras of this period. Coalitions, alliances, the rise of social forces and nationalistic aspirations made it increasingly difficult to manage the system. Power politics and pro-active efforts of several states to divide Europe in order to enhance their own position culminated in the run-up to World War I. Europe as a unifying idea withered away and legitimacy of existing state orders came

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increasingly under extremist pressure. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia was the first such radical break from mainstream constitutional developments across Europe.

The effort to return to a controlled and stable system following World War I, culminated in the creation of the League of Nations in 1919; the third European state system after its predecessors, the Westphalian and the balance of power system. In 1919, US president Woodrow Wilson wanted to make the world safe for democracy by recognizing the principle of self-determination for every nation, coupled with the mechanisms of collective security. Self-determination was granted to several European nations emerging from the ashes of the Ottoman, Habsburg and Prussian empires. However, Russian, British and French imperial orders remained intact; in the Russian case it was even renewed by the new legitimacy of Soviet rule. Collective security is capable of maintaining stability as long as all actors accept it. But collective security under the League of Nations system was not able to generate and guarantee stability once a key player began to challenge the system. Because of the fundamental rift with Russia, after the Bolshevik revolution which turned the country away from the European constitutional order and provided its imperial character with a new Soviet legitimacy, the collective security order of Europe was never, even at its beginning, comprehensive. When the German Hitler regime resigned from the League of Nations in 1933, the system of collective security was practically dead. Democratic rule in Europe came under increasing pressure as the diplomatic security structure fell apart, escalating in totalitarian rule of the German Nazi party and its racist ideology between 1933 and 1945. This terrible dictatorship marked the second fundamental break with Europe's constitutional traditions after the Russian Revolution.

To sum up and look beyond World War I and World War II, which can be seen as one Thirty Years War, the second in Europe's history: Ideologies and strategic failures eventually led to the self-destruction of Europe; to the emergence of the two fringe powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, as the dominant powers in Europe; to the division of Europe into a Western camp, democratic and with a market-driven economy and an Eastern camp, under communist rule and with a centrally planned economy; and it led to the dissolution of the colonial empires of France and Britain, to the end of the remaining colonial

possessions of the Netherlands, and eventually also to the end of those of Spain and Portugal.

Relations between Europe and Africa: A Test-Case

I continue my analysis by turning, secondly, to the relations between the European state system and Africa as a text-case for a renewed global order, then and now.

Colonialism projected and exported the power struggles among European states to other parts of the world. Beginning with the expansion of Portugal and Spain into South and Central America, Great Britain and France into North America, and other countries including the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom and Denmark; these countries engaged in the quest for colonial glory with the aim of strengthening their position inside Europe. This remains an important aspect, not to be forgotten amidst our concern for the effects of colonialism on the people in European colonies: Between the 16th and the 19th century, the effect of acquiring overseas colonies on the power equation in Europe was more important for the leadership of European countries than these acquisitions themselves. No single united European foreign policy managed the acquisition of colonies. Instead, each country and those promoting colonial expansion did so in order to balance the respective interests of neighboring European competitors. Internal European conflicts were exported and, to use modern economic language, externalized to the Americas, to Africa, to Asia, to the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean. British-French rivalries ended in the loss of both their North American colonies. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, Haiti became the first country populated by slaves gaining independence. Subsequently, also the Spanish and Portuguese empires in South and Central America were transformed into a set of new nation-states.

World War I ended German and Ottoman colonial rule and World War II the Dutch, Italian and Japanese colonial rule. This period was also the beginning of the end of the British and French colonial empires. Only the Russian Empire prevailed, albeit transformed into the Soviet Union. Since the mid-20th century, the breakdown of the global primacy of Europe has meant that a new relationship among states and peoples has had to be found – for the management of internal affairs inside Europe and for European relations with former colonies.

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Two tendencies became dominant in the decades following World War II. First, as already seen in the Americas, African and Asian decolonization was followed by the establishment of formal states along the principles of the Westphalian state system. Formal sovereignty and national rationality were the driving forces behind states establishing autonomous statehood and gaining international recognition ever since. Internally, most sovereign states in the developing world were weak or even fragile. National sovereignty turned into development sovereignty. European countries linked the formal recognition of sovereign statehood in their former colonies to a policy of development aid and preferential trade relations, which was not able to reverse the many colonial dependencies and socio-economic development gaps over a short period of time. Increasingly, the limits of national statehood were recognized in Africa, as well as the shortcomings of a technocratic development approach, which aimed at advancing development based on state-centered social engineering. Hence, in recent years a combination of region-building and market orientation has marked a new beginning in many African countries.

National sovereignty and independence, *raison d'état* and nation-building were ideas taken up all over the "Third World", while Europe, destroyed and bereft of its colonial glory, embarked on a new, the fourth experiment in organizing itself: attempting to find the right balance between rebuilding states, beyond aggressive nationalism, and region-building of a completely unprecedented type - a European federation which continues to gradually evolve. From this perspective, nation-building in Africa is as old, or as young, as region-building in Europe. They are two sides of the same coin.

Today, for both sides, the 54 countries of Africa and the 28 Member States of the European Union, their relationship has matured. Over the past decade, the European Union has proposed Economic Partnership Agreement's (EPA's) as an updated continuation of its association policies over the last five decades. However, from the beginning, these EPA's have been criticized for being too narrow and one-dimensional in their economic orientation. Being almost anti-political, they never had the potential to become a comprehensive strategy for re-designing Europe's relationships with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. In order to move toward an honest and credible partnership between Europe and Africa, which draws appropriate conclusions from the history of past centuries, the European Union needs to reconsider its focus and give its Africa strategy more substance. It has to develop a comprehensive political strategy for its relationship with the existing regional groupings in Africa, in the

Caribbean and in the Pacific region. The various regional groupings in Africa, in the Caribbean and in the Pacific have matured. These groupings may still be weak, contradictory and insufficient, yet they are genuine expressions of independent region-building. They have become political processes and ought to be supported as such. They have to be taken seriously by the European Union as a political and economic expression of the genuine interests of the respective peoples, societies and states.

The flip side of this argument points to Africa: In order for the European Union to take African regional integration seriously, Africa has to overcome what Nigeria's former President Olusegun Obasanjo has called the "over-dependency-under-performance syndrome." In concrete terms, this requires a tangible re-calibration of development strategies aimed at moving from aid-driven development to aid-framed and supported private initiatives as the key to sustainable development. It is true that Africa has entered a new stage of region-building, SADC, ECOWAS and the EAC being the prime candidates for success. They are multi-dimensional, have gone through experiences of crisis and renewal, are political in nature, and promising in their potential and the seriousness of their leading actors. Yet, the major question for African region-building remains: how to achieve result-oriented deep integration? How to do things better, more effectively and with sustainable effects? How to define the potential of integration by its opportunities, instead of being scared or worried about its limits? On paper, the declaratory framework around the actors of African region-building is impressive. The new momentum for regional integration in Africa is a fine opportunity that should not be missed. But it needs strategic focus, an honest re-assessment of priorities and links between the existing structures and – most importantly – the optimal use of limited resources in order to achieve visible and lasting early results. Africa's regional integration efforts will have to move ahead in the direction of common legislative commitments with clear implementation procedures. The wisdom of African leaders will help find the right answers and turn African-owned strategies into reality. It remains important not to forget European experiences: Africa needs working, efficient and uncompromising institutions, but it should not fall into the trap of taking institution-building for region-building. Regional integration is a matter of real issues and concrete results from joint projects. Regional integration is not done by emulating any sort of institutions. Region-building happens through institutions and policies that work.

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Currently, African region-building efforts are going through a formative period comparable to similar formative periods in Europe and in other region-building processes around the globe. After World War II, the need for a new beginning was inevitable in Europe. State relations and relations among European societies had to be based on a new rationale. They had to be framed by an organizing idea that would ensure peace and stability, affluence and freedom for generations to come. Europe's Western democracies opted for functional economic integration as a tool to advance peace and to promote eventual political union. There is no law of nature that requires that this process begins with the same tool and follows the same or a similar path. But one fundamental lesson may be learned from the European integration experience: the formative idea that can carry the rationale for regional integration for decades must be of a political and strategic nature, encompassing many aspects of public life and influencing several social and political dimensions. The rationale for European integration was the idea of reconciliation based on a gradually emerging common rule of law. The rationale for African integration could be the formative idea of continental stability through socio-economic progress based on a gradually emerging regionalized common rule of law. The limits of past state-centered policies need to be transformed by the opportunities of integration-oriented policies.

Lessons Today and Lessons Tomorrow

Now, I will turn to my third and final point: The consequences of World War I – lessons learned since then, lessons threatened again now and tomorrow.

As already mentioned above, the order following World War I remained fragile and weak in all respects: Firstly, the collective security architecture of the League of Nations maintained stability but could not guarantee it through binding mechanisms; it also remained weak because the United States stayed away from its own creation; Germany was pushing for withdrawal and Soviet Russia was denied membership for a long time. Secondly, the democratic order in many European countries was weak or had even failed, while at the same time the moral defect of colonial rule continued. Thirdly, two totalitarian regimes undermined the very fabric of the post-war order in Europe; Germany and the Soviet Union opposed both the collective security system and the democratic regime system, initiating the destruction of the post-war order before it could even take roots. To be clear: German responsibility for the outbreak of World

War II is undisputable, but the fragility of the post-war system had several sources.

As for the European state system and relations among the people of Europe, it took World War II, the most terrible war so far, and the complete self-destruction of Europe to start with a fundamentally new approach, gradually changing the structures of the European state system and of European societies. Immediately after World War II, the world was in ruins. The destruction of the European empires after World War I – notably czarist Russia, the German Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire – was followed by a European civil war which undermined the taming powers of democracy and the rule of law. Europe seemed to be lost: strategically to the fringe powers of the United States and the Soviet Union, and domestically to fragile republics, loaded with issues of territorial integrity and revisionism pressure. The old world was gone, that was for sure.

In this situation, the rise of the West was the result of a defining idea that changed the course of history: freedom first, rooted in rule of law and cooperative state relations. The surprising renewal of parliamentary democracy enabled the defense of the values of democracy and human dignity by institutionally resisting the totalitarian concept of power symbolized by the Soviet Union. The Atlantic Alliance defended Western security through an enormous interdependency of free people, voluntarily supporting each other's economic recovery by facilitating reconstruction and economic interaction. The logic of the Marshall Plan (and its subsequent heir, the OECD), of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and of the European Economic Community (EEC) was complementary: it led to a credible combination of cooperative state structures based on domestic self-determination, rule of law and democracy.

During the Cold War, the formative idea of American-guaranteed peace and European integration went hand in hand. While NATO was an US-inspired and -led strategic military alliance, the European Economic Community was an internal European regulatory operation equipped with its own expanding rationale and structures. While NATO was based on the defining idea of defending peace, the project of an ever closer European union was built on the defining idea of integrating economies, aspiring to advance a functional spill-over into political governance. When the Cold War came to an end, the defining ideas of both NATO and the European Community (EC) changed. NATO began soul-searching about its relevance amidst new global strategic challenges. The

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EC moved toward deeper integration as the European Union (EU), a structure which completed the transformation of the European state system and is increasingly impacting on the lives of European citizens, including their claim rights vis-à-vis the EU. But hand in hand, the EU and NATO constitute the fourth European state system, which is based on rule of law and supranational political structures, linking most of the EU and the North American democracies as the two pillars of the one Atlantic civilization.

Against this background, Europe has been confronted with the recent re-emergence of the Russian question. Since the end of the Cold War, two parallel structures exist on the European continent, which overlap without being identical. On the one hand, there is the integrated European Union, enlarged to include almost a dozen post-communist countries after the end of the Cold War. This is the fourth experiment in building a European order. On the other hand, there are the Council of Europe and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). As pan-European structures representing the idea of collective security they are heirs to the idea initially defined by the League of Nations. The Council of Europe and the OSCE are prolongations of the third experiment in building a European order. While the European Union is based on a binding system of governance and regulation and NATO remains a military alliance among the two most interdependent regions on earth, the Council of Europe and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) depend on nothing else but the voluntary good will of their Member States.

Since the emergence of an aggressive secret-service driven neo-imperialism in Russia under President Putin, this pan-European collective security system - and for that matter its global equivalent, the United Nations - have come under more serious pressure than at any time since the end of World War II. The key to the successful sustainability of the European Union is trust and confidence among its citizens and the credibility and leadership of its political actors. This is framed by a complex set of institutional arrangements and regulatory mechanisms of governance linked to binding legal procedures and court rulings with possible sanctions. The key to the successful sustainability of the Council of Europe and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe is simply trust and confidence among its leaders and the predictability of their actions and attitudes.

Organized instability in Georgia and Moldova due to partial secessions within these countries during the past two decades, the Russian annexation of the

Crimea in March 2014, and the undeclared civil war in the Ukraine are the result of President Putin's assessment that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was "the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century". He wants to render the three most fragile former Soviet republics, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, incapable of deciding on their internal and external self-determination. He intends to revise the course of history by returning Russia to its presumed glorified past. In doing so, he challenges the post-Cold War pan-European collective security architecture (if not also the post-war global collective security system) based on the idea of collective security. Currently, Russia's policies are trying to return Europe to the world that existed before World War I that failed to provide a successful and plausible framework for the European state system ever since. The illegitimate annexation of another country's territory by coercion and force is not only a flagrant violation of international law. It disrespects the self-determination of people and, most importantly, it opens Pandora's box of possible attempts to copy such unruly behavior across the world, not the least in Africa.

Since the end of the Cold War, the former "German question" has been replaced by the "Russian question". The "Russian question", as we see in 2014 with grave concern, is more than just a matter of the domestic political system in Russia; and it relates not only to the fragility of Russia's political culture and the socio-economic agenda of an ongoing post-communist transformation in the post-Soviet space. In the final analysis, the "Russian question" is the unresolved consequence of colonial expansion in former centuries. While other colonial empires established by European states have vanished, Russia still carries many features of an empire and is currently re-organizing the planned Eurasian Union in an imperial style. This is not the place to go deeper into this very troubling question or even to analyze the mind of President Putin. As long as Russia and its leadership consider themselves part of Europe, they must be judged by standards that have emanated in Europe since World War I.

In his book "A matter of time", Alex Capus leaves us with a powerful and troubling dialogue. He put the following words into the mouth of the last colonial governor of German-East Africa during World War I., Heinrich Schnee: „Das, meine Herren, ist das Schicksal des kolonialen Menschen: sich zeitlebens immer wieder für die Selbstverachtung und gegen den Tod entscheiden zu müssen.“ (This, gentlemen, is the destiny of the colonial man: throughout one's life one has to decide in favor of self-loathing and against death.“). The colonial mind, this is the message of the novelist, first and foremost is sickening the colonizer

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himself. Most of us Europeans have learned this lesson of history since World War I. But obviously not all have done so, especially not in the Kremlin. This is why, unfortunately, some fundamental lessons of history since World War I are being threatened today in Eastern Europe.

Hence, and in conclusion, the picture is a mixed one. But any anthropological optimist would conclude that it is only a matter of time for freedom and self-determination to prevail anywhere. It is only a matter of time because everywhere the human mind longs for freedom, self-determination and respect. The human mind will not give in to any kind of oppression and manipulation. This is the lesson which the world can also learn from the African people who have shown us over a long period of time what it takes to struggle for freedom and yet to reach this most noble goal of mankind.

The **West Africa Institute (WAI)** is a research center offering research, capacity-development and social dialogue on regional integration in West Africa. WAI is promoted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), ECOBANK and the Government of Cape Verde. WAI is based in Praia Cape Verde.

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