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GLOBAL PEACE – STILL FEASIBLE?

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FEDERATION OF INDO-GERMAN SOCIETIES IN INDIA

NEW DELHI

Introductory Remarks:

Dear Ambassador Ronen Sen,

Dear Friends of the Indo-German Associations,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me thank you, Ambassador Sen and President of the Federation of Indo-German Societies in India for your kind words of introduction and for the great honour you bestowed upon me - on behalf of the Association - as an Honorary Member of your Association. I do look forward to our future cooperation in the interest of our nations and their cultures.

Already during my term as Head of Mission and German Ambassador in New Delhi in the early nineties cooperation with the Association was an important part of my work in India. Later on I could contribute to this relationship in my capacity as chairman of the Indo-German Society in Germany from 1996 until 2008.

In November 1990, I had the honour to present to the President of your great country the letter of accreditation on behalf of the President of the newly united Germany – a country that had been divided politically for more than forty years after World War II and had been – for decades - in the center of the East-West conflict over the future of Europe and Global Peace.

The Indian Subcontinent fascinated me already during my youth: – no wonder:

A very close relative of mine, the brother of my grand mother traveled through India in 1903 on behalf of the German Chamber of Agriculture in Saxony (Halle) in order to study cattle races and cattle raising in other countries, among others in India – at the time under British rule - in Japan and the United States

Here are – in English translation – his words of praise for the Taj Mahal on the occasion of his visit to this Monument of Indian Culture and Civilization:

« Once again, an escalation, although by now this is hardly possible – not in the absurd, abhorrent – no, in the magnificent, the beautiful. To have seen the Taj Mahal is to have marvelled at a Wonder of the World. The mighty domed structure set by the gleaming Jumna, in lovely surroundings, surrounded by terraces, flanked by mosques, four gates, executed with gorgeous marble, form the entrance ways. The heaviness of the structure lessened by four slender minarets about 150 feet tall and by numerous larger and smaller domes and spires rising up from the surface of the roof: marble is the theme and....sculptures have given it beauty. This treatment of the material in the archways, in the screens, the vaults, the entranceways, in short, everywhere is nearly indescribable and infinitely lovely.....Not only the beauty of the sculptures. The arabesques, floral patterns, inscriptions, all inlaid in the superbly patterned marble, but also the multiplicity of the patterns, no tiresome uniformity and yet everywhere harmony and coherence throughout

the entire complex. The dimensions are vast yet its effect results more from its beauty than the impact of the size. »

I read the Memoirs of my Grand Uncle in German language as a 15 year old young man during the Second World War and wondered whether I would ever have a chance to visit these imposing monuments in India. Yes – I did – during my stay as German Ambassador to India from 1990 until 1993. And I was in no way less impressed with the beauty and the dimension of this monument as was my granduncle in 1903.

Global Peace – Challenges and Opportunities

Some Reflections

Let me share with you today some of my reflections on one of the key questions of mankind at all times, meaning to say also of today. I have in mind the endeavor of mankind for global peace at our times – an objective that was shared by philosophers and politicians in key positions of regional or global dimension – at all times in history. Not seldom the endeavors for global peace however lead to war and destruction.

Certainly, the international community of our times as well as other observers of international relations in our times are deeply concerned not only about the risk of war in many regions of the globe but indeed about the actual military conduct of war in the Near and Middle East – as the region between the Hindukusch and the Mediterranean is called in Europe. The on going flow of

refugees from war ridden regions is a living proof for the conflictual situation in that region of the world.

Therefore there seems to be no reason to be very confident in the peace making forces of our times.

Yet it is also true and correct to say that Europe is no longer the battle ground for power rivalry of a military or ideological nature that had turned the old continent and many parts of the world into deadly battlefields between 1914 and 1945 and into a risky power rivalry between 1945 and 1990. Colonial power rivalries seems to be part of history. As of now there is – contrary to other times of global history - no power that seeks total control over the rest of the world.

Because of current revisionist tendencies in the international policy of Russia the North Atlantic Alliance continues to be indispensable as the guardian of deterrence and defense – notably in the eyes of the nations in the immediate neighborhood of Russia, such as the Baltic states.

On the basis of the European Union, of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) but as well because of the credibility of the North Atlantic Alliance as guarantor of Deterrence and Defence the continent does enjoy today and already for quite some while peace, prosperity and to a large degree social security of the people and nations involved.

Looking at the world at large it is fair to say, that regional co-operation constitutes in almost all regions of the world a very important and successful promoter of peace and economic development and upto a degree as tool of successful international crisis management if needed. I do not only speak of Europe, but also think of the OAS – the organisation of American States on the American continent -North, Central and Southern – but also of ASEAN, an

organisation that has turned into a major regional player in South East Asia. The organisation of African States moves into this direction as well. In South Asia – your domain of living and prospering – nuclear deterrence has become a major stabilizer, I think. But that needs to be debated.

In the light of what I tried to lay before you – the great importance of regional co-operation as promoting force for peace, successful crisis management and of economic as well as social progress, - it seems to be useful to look at the chances for Global Peace at our times:

It is common understanding that the international institutions established by the victorious powers after World Wars I and II - the League of Nations and the United Nations – were and are of limited value in their role as institutions for international conflict management. The privileged position of the five major victorious powers of WW II (US, Russia, China, France, Great Britain) – they are also the five original nuclear powers on the world stage – includes a veto position in conflict settlement by the UN Security Council. This limitation has moved peacemaking in conflictual situations to places outside the UN organisation. NATO is such an outside organisation with enormous influence and enormous potential for action.

However the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations – such as UNESCO, WHO, WTO etc. - do play a very important role in the economic and social development of nations in Asia, Africa and South America. Their activities contribute to the overcoming of the negative impact of the colonial age

The role of the United Nations in the management of global policies to limit climate change cannot be overestimated at all: Indeed, the United Nations have managed to bring about international agreements on national commitments for the limitation of dangerous greenhouse gases.

The United Nations handle dozens of UN missions for crisis management and peacekeeping operations. India is one of the major supplier of military forces for such UN Missions.

This short overview that I could put before you indicates that mankind is not helpless in the handling of international conflicts and of climate change – the challenge number one in our times.

Therefore the issues of peace and wellbeing of mankind constitute a major theme in the history of philosophy and political theory.

Immanuel Kant „Zum Ewigen Frieden“ 1795) –

and

Nukunja Vihary Banerjee „Towards Perpetual Peace“(1988)

I want to supplement my reflections on the theme by sharing with you the recommendations presented to the world by a German and by an Indian philosopher who addressed the issue of Perpetual Peace – given the critical situation of the world.

I speak of the widely known German philosopher **Immanuel Kant** (1724-1804, Koenigsberg) who published his essay „Zum Ewigen Frieden“ – „Toward Perpetual Peace“), in 1795 that means in the period of the French Revolution and the upcoming French Emperor Napoleon.

I also speak of the Indian philosopher **Nikunja Vihary Banerjee**, who published his essay „**Towards Perpetual Peace**“ in 1988. Banerjee undertakes in his publication a critical review of the peace arrangements put into force by the victorious powers of World War I that ended in disaster because of the

imposition of imperial objectives and goals and ignoring the needs for a negotiated peace between winners and losers.

Banerjee pleads for the reorientation of the philosophical approach to peace and thus substitute state rivalry as the major tool for making peace by a philosophical definition of objectives to be achieved by peace settlement in the interest of perpetual peace.

I suggest to assess in the light of his teaching the impressive achievements that the peace settlement brought about in Europe in 1990 – after the unexpected sudden fall of the wall in Berlin in November 1989– only a few years after the publication of the essay by Nikunja Vihary Banerjee.

The agreements of 1990 were brought about on the basis of mutual agreement on the European Value system documented in the Charta of Paris in November 1990 thus overcoming the deadly military and ideological confrontation that dominated Europa from 1945 until 1990.

The essay on Eternal Peace by Immanuel Kant was published in a period of time in the history of Europe that was dominated by the French revolution (1789) and the Napoleonic Wars in Europe – brought to an end by the Peace Treaty of Vienna in 1814 – negotiated under the chairmanship of the Habsburg State Minister Prince Metternich and conducted by the representatives of winners and losers on equal footing – in deep contrast to the peace treaty of Versailles in 1919 that was dictated by the winning forces without negotiations with the losers – thus inviting new conflict that indeed broke out in 1939. WW II ended in 1945. WW II and the Cold War were brought to end by negotiations in 1990 conducted by Allies and adversaries of the war on equal footing.

Immanuel Kant the German philosopher from Koenigsberg (1724-1804) served mankind well with his writing on the issues of Perpetual Peace („Zum Ewigen

Frieden“ 1795) as well as with ethical norms for our social behavior in his writing on the rules of Practical Reason.

He reminded us of the everlasting task to make global peace feasible under the circumstances of time and the state of public affairs on the international stage. Recalling his recommendation on the issue of perpetual peace can help us even today to better understand the issues at stake and to gain strength from his writings. We can also gain new insight into the back stage of international conflicts of our times.

His time was dominated by the international conflicts during and after the French revolution in 1789 that was brought to an end by the Peace concluded in Vienna in 1814 under the wise management of the Habsburg statesman in Vienna Prince Metternich – a peace that was brokered with the participation at the negotiating table of winners and loser of the wars.

The Versailles Treaty of 1919 failed in this respect totally, because it was not concluded by negotiations between the victorious powers and the losing powers, but was imposed by the winners.

Only in 1990 the great power conflict of major powers about the future of Europe (WWII and Cold War) was brought to an end by treaties concluded by winners and losers as partners at the negotiating table on even footing.

In his essay on „Toward Perpetual Peace „ (Zum Ewigen Frieden), written in 1795, Immanuel Kant offered suggestions how governments and nations could contribute to the universally shared goal of peace on earth.

Among others did he suggest the formation of a Federation of Free Nations as the most important contribution for achieving peace and cooperation among nations. He used the formula „League of Nations“ – and indeed, the

peacemakers after WWI named the universally perceived international organisation for the management of war and peace „Völkerbund – League of Nations“. For a number of reasons the League of Nations was a stillborn product of the victorious powers and could not deliver! Immanuel Kant used also the term „Federalism of free states“ thus emphasizing the need to recognize the sovereignty of states that enter the federation with other members of the international community.

Immanuel Kant does not only care for a definition of conditions for cooperation among nations, but also reflects on the position of the individual in society and state structures, thus promoting the notion of a democratic constitution for a nation of which the individual citizens enjoy an equal status as free citizens of the society.

His essay is a valuable guide for the definition of the position of the human being, the position as a citizen in a state based on the rule of law and states as equal members of an international Federation of States.

In this sense Immanuel Kant can be defined as a promotor of a democratic society and of citizens of a state based on national law but embedded into the global structure of a Federation of States (Nations).

It can well be argued with good reasons that the Charta of the United Nations but also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 are based on the teachings of Immanuel Kant in his essay „Zum Ewigen Frieden“.

From this presentation the conclusion can be drawn– that peace on earth is feasible, and that mankind is in a position to respond successfully to the challenges posed by the threat of climatic collapse on mother earth.

The insights of Immanuel Kant at the time of the French revolution and its aftermath in Europe are as valid today in the aftermath of the great wars and

the ideological confrontation during the twentieth century as they were in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars.

And indeed, the tragic battlefields of Europe have been replaced by the development of the European Union with an ever growing number of member states in spite of the incumbent exit of Great Britain. The key component of this European Union constitutes the common market for goods, persons and services to move freely among the member states of the Union – constituting the largest free market of nations on the global stage.

It can be assumed that power rivalry between the USA and Russia as well as China will continue to dominate global politics. However the impact of the European Union - a non-world power in strategic terms and nuclear weaponry- should not be underrated. The European Union is a promotor of international peace by a system of international legal schemes - such as the abolition of ABC weapons and the strengthening of international trade by the World Trade Organisation - an institution criticized in these days by US President Trump.

The impact of the consultative mechanism of the „European Organisation for Security and Cooperation“ will remain limited but should not be ignored.

The strategic rivalry, the nuclear strategic balance between the USA and Russia – and tomorrow of China - involves Europe - no doubt. This strategic dimension of the European Union cannot be overlooked.

On the global stage the United Nations with the Security Council as the major organ for the management of international crises shares - up to a degree - the fate of failure of the League of Nations established after WW I.

In his essay « Toward Perpetual Peace » Immanuel Kant emphasized two principal ideas, namely the idea of a federation of states with equal status and

the perception of the freedom of the citizen, of the „Buerger“ as an individual but conscious of the requirement of social responsibility.

Conclusions

When it comes to the world of our times it is fair enough to say that there is no lack of tension in the world – within societies and among the states.

Social cohesion within society depends on individual and shared responsibility as well as on general rules to be observed by all citizens irrespective of individual convictions, religious beliefs and professional qualification.

On the international stage the concept and the reality of regional cooperation and conflict settlement between nations and within society need general rules. The binding force of these rules however is limited.

Given the differences of impact of international law on the global stage in contrast to the binding nature of internal rules within a state, compromises in conflict management on regional basis are indispensable (European Union, OSCE, OAS - Organisation of American States, African Union, ASEAN etc.). Nations and Regions are important and influential players in global structures (United Nations family).

I do speak of the important role of regional co-operation. On the other hand we cannot ignore the fact that the boundless spread of information – sometimes fake news - around the world constitutes a serious challenge to the concept of and reality of the „informed citizen“, the „informed society“ as the basis for mature societies.

The conflict situation cannot be ignored. We have to be aware of the challenges.

Berlin, February 2019