"Normative Strategic Competition in an Era of Choice" Symposium Aide Memoire Federal Ministry of Defence, Berlin, 14 March 2023

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Introduction

We are entering an undetermined period of protracted systemic rivalry. Its implications and consequences are poorly understood. Stereotypes, though, abound: normative Strategic Competition (NSC) takes place between apparently hapless liberal democracies suffering from "Westlessness", a neo-imperialistic and aggressive Russia, and an increasingly assertive China. In reality, multiple competitions have been and are now ongoing within and between economic, technological, military, regional, cultural and ideological sectors and spheres. Spoiler alert: this phenomenon is not new. Historically, a hybrid world order has always been the norm. In the 1990s the Clinton doctrine of "enlargement and engagement" was rooted in a modernization theory based on the notion of market-democratic universalism – a linear extrapolation from the Euro-Atlantic experience of modernization and then transposition to a global context. China under Xi Jinping demonstrates a middle class can rise out of poverty and still remain loyal to a one-party surveillance state. One can be prosperous and communist. The collapse of Weimar Germany in the face of a global depression in the late 1930s demonstrated that democratic values alone are not enough, prosperity is essential. This point itself was underscored by Germany's "economic miracle" in the 1950s. The experiences of structural military intervention, regime change and attempted democratization in Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011 demonstrated that for transformation to succeed it must be internally driven, be acceptable to given societies, affordable and appropriate to different strategic contexts.

There is not one understanding of the liberal international order and this order is itself contested. There are important cultural differences and similarities between democratic societies. Values may be shared but they are shared differently. The relationship between values and interests results in different pragmatic trade-offs at the local, national and international levels, with trust and confidence highest at the local level. We see formally democratic states with autocratic/nationalist features, using strategic competition to their advantage (e.g. Turkey or India). Differences, however, should not be exaggerated. Russia's full-scale multi-axis invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 put paid to the Robert Kagan thesis of 2003 that: "Americans are from Mars, Europeans are from Venus, they agree on little and understand each other even

less." Russia's imperial aggression created near unanimity and convergence of threat perception in the 'political West'. As Germany's foreign minister noted: "We have woken up in a different world today." This shift from the idea of post-power politics back to the reality of the utility of military power as an instrument of policy is also characterized convergence of threat perception over China. Despite this, a European Council on Foreign Relations report highlights a key concern: while democracies may be united as ever before – able to emphasize the stability and resilience of the systems themselves in countering external malign influence –their influence globally is diminishing.

Session 1 "Common Values as the glue for democratic societies and the liberal World Order"

The competitive advantage of liberal democracies over autocracies is stability, stronger alliances, greater degrees of trust and credibility. Democracies can generate abundance and sustainable growth as it can unlock the collective potential of individuals. As Marcus Wolf flatly stated at the Munich Security Conference in February 2023, democracies are the "only tolerable states". This "soft power" advantage suggests functioning democracies are a more attractive partner and role model. Is, though, this soft power sufficient to counter the hard power potential of autocracies, which offers military solutions – from deterrence by denial to deterrence by punishment. Do autocracies flourish best under conditions of scarcity? Has a famine ever occurred in a functioning democracy? "Institutions" can be defined as structures of rules and norms that shape and constrain individual behavior and include: markets, the liberal World Order, elections, the media, the law and the military.

Republic of Korea (KOR) Perspective: The fundamental universal norms and values for the KOR society and domestic policy institutions are freedom, human rights, rule of law, a vibrant free press and transparency. KOR adopts "values-based diplomacy" based on three principles: inclusiveness, strong mutual trust, and reciprocity which advances mutually beneficial cooperation. KOR focuses on nine Lines of Effort designed to build a free, peaceful, prosperous and comprehensive Indo-Pacific regional security order. These include promotion of human rights and the rule of law, cooperative counter-terrorism efforts, addressing climate change and energy security, and promoting overseas development.

Democratic values shape KOR diplomatic engagements with a range if states, including the European Union (EU), Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Japan, for example. In the case of the PRK, KOR offers humanitarian aid to alleviate suffering, even though Pyongyang refuses the aid. In 2016, KOR's Ministry of Reunification promoted a human rights foundation. In the case of Ukraine, KOR has offered $100 million in assistance and will add another $130 million for demining and infrastructure repairs. Private companies in Korea contribute to a compensation fund for Koreans who in the period of Japanese colonization became forced labor in order to overcome history and a build a future orientated relationship with Japan based on shared values and common interests. KOR, alongside the U.S., the Netherlands, Costa Rica and Zambia, will co-host a summit for democracy, 29-30 March 2023. The main pillars of liberal international order are democracy, free markets, and the ability to build sustainable and resilient systems to tackle common challenges.

United States of America (US) Perspective: The most fundamental values for U.S. society and domestic policy institutions center on inalienable individual rights, liberty, the consent of the governed/sovereignty of the people, equality before the law, freedom of the press, independence of the judiciary and the idea deeply entrenched in political culture of a level playing field and meritocracy. These tenets of liberalism took root in a U.S. post-colonial society in the 18th century and were in stark opposition to the norms associated with the British monarchy of this period, including the idea of the divine right of kings, the institution of an aristocracy and hereditary power and mercantilism.

These values find expression in U.S. foreign policy. The U.S., for example, given its own colonial history, proved itself to be an ambivalent colonial power (as evidenced by its relationship with the Philippines and Cuba). Unilateral U.S. sanctions highlight the expectation inherent in its political culture of accountability. The Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals underscore an expectation of justice and support for free markets the advocacy of transparency. U.S. citizens are migrants, and their leaving home countries by necessity or choice results in a greater willingness to accept risk and link risk to success. Charity as an ideal is evidenced by high levels of individual philanthropy. A missionary zeal finds contemporary expression in the deployment of U.S. Peace Corps volunteers globally in large numbers.

Whereas one might expect communication between Russian soldiers and the society from which they came to generate pressure to root out corruption and inefficiency, this is not the case. Inefficiency is a cultural norm and so expected. Veterans and others exposed to the horrors of the war do not typically share the pain they experience or wish to rejoin "for my buddies." In trench or positional warfare, there are no communication links between Russians and Ukrainians, so TV propaganda labelling Ukrainians as Nazi becomes the default perception. Russian society largely sits within their own echo chamber, heavily influenced by state propaganda. The 11 million Russians with Ukrainian relatives do not act as a communication bridge to the larger Russian population. But knowledge of a war that is going very wrong is spreading through social networks. This is invisible to the Russian government as it fails to understand how social networks work.

Federal Republic of Germany (DEU) Perspective: Ukraine's resistance to Russia's aggression demonstrates that Western values such as freedom, democracy, a separation of power and a functioning market matter, that NATO is not "brain dead", the EU functions and the U.S. is back. Germany's *Zeitenwende* was shaped by values. The Ukraine war caused a shift in the strategic culture of the Green Party. Formerly compatible norms of pacifism, anti-nuclear outlook and protection of non-combatant women and children became incompatible when Russia invaded. Protection of the innocent was privileged above pacifism and anti-nuclear discourse. In June 2022, 52% of respondents indicated a wish for nuclear weapons on U.S. soil – 65% of those voting Green. German public perceived the war in civilizational and values terms.

Certain weaknesses are also evident when we audit the political West. The expectation of onward linear progress gives way to fatalism when reality bites. The greatest risk to solidarity with Ukraine appears to be time and war fatigue factor. Second, while the "U.S. is back", it is politically speaking very deeply divided, making future predictions of its commitments difficult. The Trump presidency ended in an attempted coup d'état; the U.S. image as a beacon of

democracy is tarnished. Third, the belief that the West's "soft power" is universally attractive was torpedoed by the experience of state building in Afghanistan. Fourth, in Germany contradictions and tensions between "winners" and "losers" (those that feel excluded and unrepresented) in a democratic society can erode democracy. Lastly, far-right populists in Germany, Europe and the U.S. have a different conception of the "West", based not so much on democratic norms and principles but on identity: white, Christian and nationalist.

Robust liberalism needs to be able to multitask: to celebrate freedom and disseminate its utility; to cooperate in multilateral fora with those that do not share democratic values but do share interests; be pragmatic and self-limited in order to balance democratic values and state interests; and, be able and prepared to communicate a readiness and willingness to defend democracies. Finally, transatlantic relations have to become "Trump-proof" - Europeans must increase defense budgets and so embrace fair "burden sharing", making good on constant refrain that "freedom is not for free".

Session 2: "The Competitors – Authoritarian regimes and their view on the World Order"

Liberal democracies have work to do on crafting and feeding a strong and appealing narrative. China has invested much time and effort in developing a strategic narrative to promote an alternative model and influence the liberal World Order in its favor. Russia and Iran also deploy anti-western narratives. To understand and evaluate the effects of narratives it is important to identify their respective target audiences. Even if the Chinese, Russian, and Iranian narratives and visions of the future may not be attractive to majorities in liberal democratic societies, they can still and do fall on fertile ground in other societies which have not finally decided on their development path. If we accept that the (normative) strategic competition is also a contest for support by undecided countries/societies, it is essential to listen to those countries to analyze their perspectives, needs and demands, and to adapt accordingly.

Peoples Republic of China's (PRC) narrative: At the 20th Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Party Congress in November 2022 (the CCP's conversation with itself), China stated a desire to have a leading global role. China's narratives, surprisingly, use western values and normative terminology, but more unsurprisingly, Chinese definitions of such norms and terms are inherently anti-liberal and anti-democratic. China views the liberal order as one that is U.S./Europe dominated, with these hegemons instrumentalizing the order to pursue their values and interests. Beijing defines itself as a "whole process democracy" as discussions and consultations do occur within the CCP. China uses the term "common values", subject to regional and cultural interpretations, rather than "universal values". China promotes a hierarchy of rights: right to security, right to development, then rights to civil and political rights. In other words, China privilege collective rights over individual ones.

China's narrative, strongly rooted in state sovereignty and rejecting of "external interference", is attractive and appeals to states and societies in the Global South. In Latin America, for example, the notion that democracies cannot deliver and that China offers a viable alternative economic partnership takes hold. States do not focus on the strategic nature of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment into, for example lithium in the case of Chile, and the implications of this for a given state's future strategic autonomy. China's narrative is found in action not words (there is no one

consolidated document), not least the Global Development Initiative, the SCO, Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank, the norms of the "three evils" (terrorism, separatism, religious extremism), embedded now in the National Security Strategies of Central Asian states, and the concept of "common destiny of mankind" which increasingly appears in UN resolutions.

The Russian Federation's (RF) narrative: Russia is not monolithic but a core consensus on how Russia should engage the world rests on three key building blocks. First, Russia argues that the current world order based on universal values ("liberal totalitarianism" or "militant liberalism") is unjust and poses existential threat to Russia's identity and sovereignty. Looking to the Arab Spring of 2011, Russia argues that it protects stability and international order, acting as a counter-revolutionary power in Eurasia, a "critical balancer" in Lavrov's phrase, while the U.S. acts as a radical revisionist state. Second, "super-sovereignty" for great powers is key to Putin's philosophy, able to allow Russia to act as a rule shaper and rule breaker, with full subjectivity in international relations. Freedom of choice of states allows them to assert whatever norms they want. In a sense, Russia promotes the notion that "some states are more sovereign than others". In its irony-free foreign policy, Russia argues that its war in Ukraine is a war against the U.S. to restore Ukraine's "true sovereignty", its true sovereignty only realized as it merges its people and territory with Russia. Third, multipolarity is key. For Russia, multipolarity translates into a world order based on great powers with order producing and managerial roles in their spheres of cultural and civilizational spaces and influence. In effect, in a multipolar world the U.S. is pushed back into its hemisphere.

Essentially, Russia promotes a toxic mix of radical geopolitics, anti-Westernism/anti-colonialism and ultra-conservative "traditional values" (gender roles and religion) and seeks to "make the international system safe for emerging empires". This narrative finds some purchase in the Global South. The Gulf States act as "hubs of ambivalence", and are vital to Russia for deal making, logistics, finance and business. Africa becomes the new zone of competition with the West. In place of alliances, Russia adopts the notion of "friendly' and 'unfriendly" states. Russia maintains a bloc of about 50 countries which are willing to abstain on votes against Russia or be conveniently absent. These include big democracies such as India and South Africa. A wider group of states is happy to vote with the majority in the UN on the principle of invasion or annexation - but prefers not to actively work against Russia. This left just 93 states willing to vote Russia off the Human Rights Council. At the same time, Russian oligarchs reportedly spent some $188 million in the decade 2009-2018 to fund far-right and ultra-conservative networks in Europe and the U.S. in order to destabilize, divide, distract and polarize.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's narrative: The dominant Iranian calculus assumes a logic based on a number of interlocking factors. First, Iran today experiences a power transition era. Indeed, the "political earthquake" that was the China-mediated Iran-Saudi Arabia rapprochement is reported in Iran as the harbinger of the end of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East and U.S. decline more generally. Second, the decline in the U.S.' relative power and global standing triggered the war in Ukraine. This war should be understood as the West's attempt to prevent the emergence of a new world order, rather than a Russian war of aggression. This is evidenced by the rise of regional and non-western actors, not least Russia, China and Iran who all exhibit strategic autonomy. As such, these states have greater room for maneuver. Third, Iran asserts that the West practices hybrid warfare against Iran, Russia and China. Fourth, looking to the east is

the solution – Russia and China can collaborate to resist a U.S.-led international order. Such a response can and is marketed as pragmatic geopolitical "resistance" – which has wider appeal - rather than as a narrower sectarian ideological Shiite axis/crescent project. Iran has something to offer: "resistance" as an alternative to the liberal international rules-based order. A protracted period of systemic rivalry offers incentives for Iran, Russia and China to close ranks around a transactional, non-ideological spoiler agenda.

African perspectives: Africa is a work in progress and a continent in transition and on the road to an organized economy, stable order, market-democratic growth and to Islam and Christianity. Transition is a condition, one that offers sharp contrasts between volatility and stagnation, dynamism and regression, order and disorder. Africa's population is younger than the global norm, its fiscal base narrower and states weaker and more vulnerable. Although Thabo Mbeki argued that the liberal international order of the 1990s favored African states, offering as it did the opportunity to manage chaotic transitions to development and stability, autocracies in Africa form the plurality. In 2015, the African Union adopted "Agenda 2063" which embraced democracy, good governance, the universal principles of human rights, justice and rule of law as a means of stabilizing power. However, African states argue that democracy does not exist at the inter-state level and that multilateralism favors the West when interests do not coincide.

Session 3: "Liberal Democratic Societies under Attack - Fostering Societal Resilience"

Liberal democratic societies traditionally allow more diversity than autocracies. The institutionalized peaceful clash of opinions and ideas and the non-violent mechanisms to settle intra-societal conflicts contribute to the stability of democratic societies and are the "competitive advantage" of liberal democratic societies in the normative strategic competition. The rights to freedom of speech and opinion, though, provide external powers and competitors the opportunities to influence internal political discourse and thereby weaken societal consensus. External influence can also undermine a population's trust in their institutions, which is a major source of societal resilience. Modern information technology, social media, and influencers able to disseminate and amplify the narratives of competitors and adversaries can increase the threat.

African perspectives: Communication resilience translates into being able to preference one`s own belief systems, values and norms above those of an adversary. Beliefs are based on trust, established by content credibility and reliability in messaging and narratives that is developed over time. Belief in narratives serve a social function, it allows individuals to feel connected to a large community, to feel that they belong and gain social prestige. Trust allows for the reduction of the complexity of reality into simple linear problem-blame-solution narratives. In this sense, a "better" story which resonates with people`s beliefs and evokes emotions, even if it is a lie, can trump the truth. Resilience is impotent in the face of zero-sum polarization, where trust that success can be found in the middle through negotiation and compromise evaporates.

To build resilience societies can detect bots, undertake narrative analysis and understand better the distribution of the disinformation, refute with accurate and relevant facts and argumentation and expose the adversary. However, this essentially reactive approach may be to over analyze and admire the problem from one step behind rather than address the issue. It gives authority to first movers who control the information environment. A more coherent approach is to focus on

one's own messaging and narratives, and deliver them through platforms that are used by the population, such as Facebook 5 years ago and Tik-Tok today. Ukraine stands testament to the fact that audience-centered strategically planned democratic/freedom values-based base-line communication can be very effective. The German military has a poster which channels Montesquieu and reads: "We fight for your freedom to oppose us." Successful communication should be in the vernacular, delivered through a medium used by the target audience and clearly demonstrate the practical utility of abstract values and principles in everyday life.

A U.S. military perspective: Public perception of the military institution in the U.S. has changed: 75% of the population before 2020 expressed high confidence in its character/values and military professional ethic and competence. In 2022, trust and confidence had fallen from 75% to 64%. This reduction reflects greater political and social polarization in U.S. society, revealing that the military is not immune from the stresses and tensions that exit in the society from which it is itself recruited. It also reflects the efforts of external actors to influence attitudes within and towards the U.S. military, suggesting that U.S. service personnel are both and at once too woke and too extreme.

A DEU military perspective: Normative strategic competition poses two key challenges for institutions such as the military in liberal democracies. First, the military needs to maintain societal trust. Second, such institutions must find mechanisms to deal with external influence on their members, who are themselves part of the society and therefore exposed to the competitors' influence. Liberal democracies can defend themselves through resilience-building efforts. In the case of the Bundeswehr, its leadership philosophy - *Innere Führung* or leadership development and civic education – anchors the German military in German society. It encapsulates the notion of citizen-soldier who respects the values and norms of the German constitution, the Basic Law (Grundgesetz), which guarantees the right to own property, freedom of movement, free choice of occupation, freedom of association, and equality before the law. This provides the military with legal, ethical, historical and political legitimacy, integration into society, strengthens the will of military personnel and their commitment and discipline. The overall goal of *Innere Führung* is to increase cognitive resilience, an appreciation for justice, fairness and diversity and to enable acting not reacting.

Conclusions

The Symposium suggested that a G-Zero world order in which no set of states manages the strategic agenda does not favor China, but does Russia and Iran. For Russia, a G-Zero world order, is a much more preferable option than the reconsolidation of the political West. Moreover, Russia is well placed to exert influence through its informal and illicit networks and rule-breaking (which Russia would contend are simply expressions of strategic autonomy), and can do so while echoing and amplifying Iranian rhetoric of "resistance".

Systemic rivalry is not just a confrontation between two political systems – democracy and autocracy – and the different sets of values, norms and beliefs which underpin them, but a contest or competition for influence over the undecided states and societies in the "hedging middle", which includes Brazil, Mexico, India, Vietnam, Thailand, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria. There is the need to actively craft a strategic narrative conveying our view on the challenges to overcome and a fair world order based on rules derived from democratic values. Trying to counter destabilizing and/or authoritarian strategic narratives

by fact checking and responding is not sufficient. The liberal democratic camp needs to regain the initiative and to actively promote its competitive advantage in the normative strategic competition.

The political West would be wise to be humble, inclusive and recognize the nature and needs of this "target audience". It should also understand that any approach that engages states in the "hedging middle" using values-based diplomacy will be more legitimate, credible, resilient and sustainable than simply transactional realpolitik alternatives offered by Russia and China. In an "era of choice" the "hedging middle" can, in effect, shop at a geopolitical and normative market-place, is able to examine, bargain and then 'purchase' the 'prosperity-stability' goods on offer from Beijing, Moscow, Brussels and Washington D.C. The "hedging middle" holds the balance of power in this normative strategic competition. Furthermore, the emerging new setting of the international system also offers regional powers traditionally aligned with the political West, for example Turkey and Saudi Arabia, more room for maneuver and gaining strategic autonomy.

Having understood the reality of the strategic context, the political West must then decide which values are critical to the functioning of the rules-based liberal international order and which are preferable but not essential. This symposium suggests that from the perspective of the "hedging middle" and other regional powers the right to choose not to choose (democracy's "tolerance paradox") is linked to the right of strategic autonomy and agency in the international system, but that with such rights comes responsibility and accountability.

In the Cold War many states in the non-aligned "Third World" adopted hedging strategies, as expressed today in the strategic culture of the Philippines, using the metaphor of "rowing between two reefs". This behavior is part of their strategic cultures – a fixed reality the West cannot wish away. Such strategies continue to be rational: they optimize benefits and mitigate risk. In Africa today, taking sides in a divided world is to limit options, room for maneuver and the ability of states to attain "strategic autonomy" and realize their agency. After independence, India which views itself as a civilizational state, ensured that there was universal franchise, despite high levels of illiteracy and poverty. India's vibrant democracy is over 70-year-old and these decades have created an emotional connection between its citizens bound by universally shared fundamental values of human rights and dignity. India's path demonstrates that the West is not the sole guardian of democratic values. India demonstrates that democratic values can be shared but shared differently.

What "theory of change" can now underpin the political West's engagement with the "hedging middle"? If the options are bipolarity or fragmentation, what is the West's offer? The approach outlined by Amartya Sen in his book Development as Freedom offers a viable starting point. Sen addresses and respects the needs of the Global South for autonomy but also provides a platform for Western engagement through a shared agenda that is easy to communicate and hard to refute. Sen persuasively argues that values, institutions, development, and freedom are all closely interrelated. Development can unlock individual "capabilities" and agency by providing the individual with economic resources to overcome poverty, with social opportunities to displace deprivation, and with protective security in place of political tyranny or cultural authoritarianism. This approach recognizes that a binary division of the world into "free"/democracy and "unfree"/autocracy has little analytical purchase: people can be "unfree" ("the losers") in a democratic society and "free" ("the winners") from at least some of these constraints in the

"unfree" autocracies. It also embraces the commitment of all states to development. Individual freedom is the cornerstone of democracy.

GCMC, 16 March 2023.

This summary reflects the views of the authors (Graeme P. Herd, Falk Tettweiler, Katrin Bastian and Frank Hagemann) and are not necessarily the official policy of the United States, Germany, or any other governments.