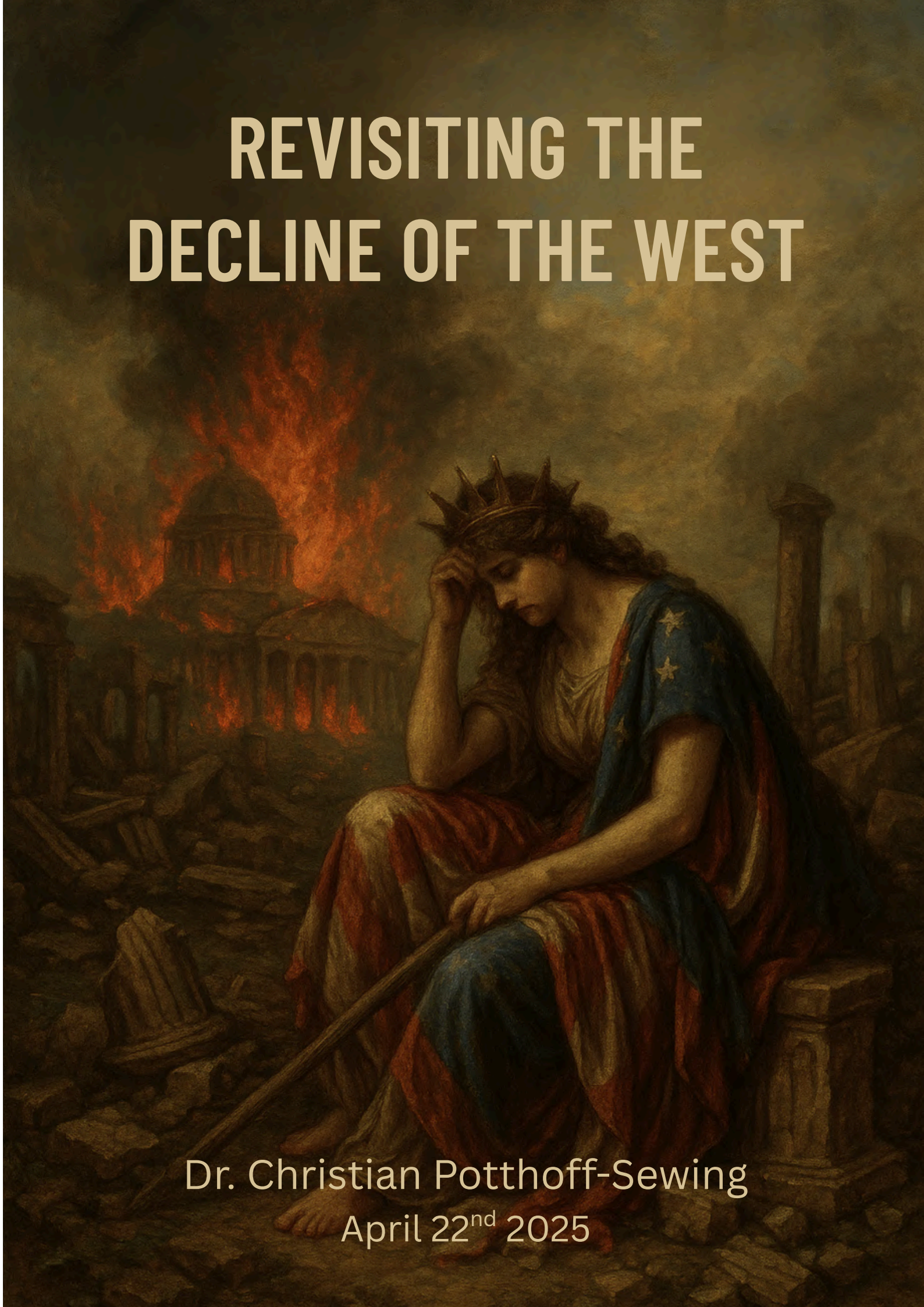
REVISITING THE DECLINE OF THE WEST



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Executive Summary

The Decline of the West Revisited

Introduction

In 1922, Oswald Spengler published *The Decline of the West* (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*), a prophetic work that captured the unraveling of European dominance after World War I. A century later, we find ourselves at another inflection point—where the West, now led by the United States, risks repeating history through self-inflicted decline.

The post-1945 world order, built on multilateralism, rule-based trade, and democratic ideals, lifted millions from poverty and fostered unprecedented global prosperity. The fall of the Soviet Union seemed to herald the triumph of liberal democracy. But today, the West is retreating into the very forces it once opposed: nationalism, authoritarianism, and the erosion of international law.

The parallels with the early 20th century are chilling—rising extremism, economic fragmentation, and the normalization of war crimes. Nowhere is this moral collapse more evident than in Gaza, where Western nations stand complicit in ethnic cleansing, betraying the values they claim to uphold. Meanwhile, the resurgence of Trumpism—with its embrace of autocracy, disdain for truth, and dismantling of democratic institutions—threatens to accelerate this decline.

This is not merely a political shift but a civilizational crisis. The West's unraveling stems from deeper forces:

- **The rise of China** and the challenge to U.S. hegemony.
- **Aging demographics** and bureaucratic sclerosis.
- **Social media's erosion** of shared truth and reasoned debate.
- **Globalization's discontents**, leaving working classes behind.
- **Digital divides** between creators and passive consumers.
- **Educational decline**, exacerbated by ideological battles.
- **Social fragmentation**, isolating individuals in echo chambers.
- **Climate chaos**, fueling conflict and displacement.

We face existential threats with no collective will to confront them. Instead, right-wing demagogues exploit fear, flooding public discourse with lies. The tragedy is clear: at the very moment we need unity, our politics are hijacked by opportunists and ideologues.

Despots on the Rise: The United States Paves the Way

From Ortega to Maduro, autocrats thrive in weak states. But the most alarming case is America's descent under Donald Trump. His administration's embrace of Project 2025—a radical blueprint for authoritarian rule—seeks to dismantle checks on executive power, politicize justice, and institutionalize minority rule.

Elon Musk, Trump's key advisor, embodies a different but equally dangerous vision: a digital feudalism where tech oligarchs rule over a manipulated populace. His open contempt for empathy aligns with the long-termism of Silicon Valley billionaires—prioritizing speculative futures over present human suffering.

Meanwhile, Israel's alliance with European far-right movements reveals a grotesque moral inversion: self-proclaimed defenders of democracy now collaborate with those who once espoused anti-Semitism, united by shared goals—suppressing dissent, eroding human rights, and dismantling global norms.

Steve Bannon's strategy—"flood the zone with shit"—has succeeded. Lies proliferate faster than truth, and journalism struggles to keep pace. The result? A populace too exhausted or embittered to distinguish fact from fiction.

The tactics are familiar: intimidation, violence, and legal subterfuge. ICE operates as a modern Gestapo; dissenters face deportation or worse. The arrest of pro-Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil—without evidence—signals a new era of state terror against thought crimes.

History warns us: "first they came for the marginalized, then for the rest."

The MAGA Agenda: A Blueprint for Collapse

Project 2025 is not policy—it is vandalism. Its key tenets:

- **Roll back civil rights** (race, gender, religion).
- **Sabotage climate action**, accelerating ecological collapse.

- Gut public health and education, entrenching inequality.
- **Weaponize tariffs**, triggering global recession.
- Empower corporate oligarchs, eroding democracy.

This is not governance—it is the looting of a civilization.

The Architects of Decline

1. Donald Trump: The Hollow Demagogue

Trump is not an ideologue but a symptom—a narcissist exploiting resentment. His "genius" lies not in leadership but in media spectacle, reducing politics to reality TV. His economic illiteracy and corruption mirror Weimar's collapse—where institutions failed to stop a charlatan.

As Bonhoeffer warned:

"Stupidity is a more dangerous enemy than malice. Against stupidity, we are defenseless."

2. Elon Musk: The Empathy-Deficient Technocrat

Musk's vision—"The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy"—is a recipe for barbarism. His war on public institutions, from national parks to universities, reveals a chilling indifference to human dignity.

3. J.D. Vance: The Opportunist Turned Zealot

Once a voice of Appalachia's struggles, Vance now peddles Putinist propaganda. His Munich speech—a love letter to autocracy—exposed his true role: an enabler of American decline.

The Beneficiaries: Putin and Netanyahu

While Americans grow poorer and global trust evaporates, two men thrive:

- **Vladimir Putin**, whose imperial ambitions are now endorsed by Trump.
- **Benjamin Netanyahu**, whose genocide in Gaza enjoys U.S. backing.

Together, they form an **axis of authoritarianism**, united by:

- Contempt for international law.
- Reliance on military brutality.

- Corruption as state policy.

The West's moral authority lies in ruins.

The Path Forward: Reclaiming Empathy and Diversity

The world cannot wait for America's redemption. Europe must lead—not through nostalgia, but by reinventing itself:

1. Build a Post-American Trade Order
    - Strengthen EU alliances (Mercosur, Canada, Africa).
    - Engage China pragmatically, without U.S. constraints.
2. Invest in Knowledge and Innovation
    - Make Europe a **haven for free research**, attracting global talent.
    - Merge defense and tech, fostering cutting-edge industries.
3. Defend Democracy Without Crusades
    - Uphold rights at home—without imposing values abroad.
    - Resist cancel culture while protecting marginalized voices.
4. Prepare for the New Warfare
    - Invest in drones, AI, and cyber defense.
    - "Si vis pacem, para bellum"—peace requires strength.

Conclusion: The Choice Before Us

We stand at a crossroads. The forces of division—xenophobia, authoritarianism, and ecological denial—threaten to unravel centuries of progress. But decline is not inevitable.

Our salvation lies in two principles:

1. **Empathy**—the antidote to supremacist ideologies.
    - The Good Samaritan did not ask about nationality or creed.
    - True strength lies in lifting others, not crushing them.
2. **Diversity**—the foundation of resilience.
    - Biology teaches us: monocultures fail.
    - Societies thrive when ideas, cultures, and people intersect.

The West's greatest achievements came not from domination but from openness—to science, to refugees, to self-criticism. If we abandon these values, we surrender to the very forces that doomed past empires.

The challenge is clear: Will we repeat history, or rewrite it?

The hour is late—but the future is still ours to shape.

Introduction

In 1922 Oswald Spengler published the second part of his most recognized book with the title "Der Untergang des Abendlandes" or "The decline of the occident". This was the aftermath of World War I, during which the European colonial powers began losing their empires, and the United States emerged as the most powerful country establishing its own imperialist reach. After the USA became the leading power of the West and especially after WW II, a world order was created, which at least at the surface was based on laws and principles. The UNO became the forum in which multilateral diplomacy was practiced, if not always successfully and being seriously marred by the cold war. Yet the period between 1945 and 2015 will be seen as a time when the world prospered. Europe became prosperous again. Globalization and international rule-based trade contributed to the achievement of ending abject poverty for several 100 million people and creating new wealthy and successful nations especially in Asia. America and its allies were seen as the champions of free trade, human rights, democracy and freedom. The collapse of the Soviet Union underlined the success of this alliance and system. The last decade of the past century and the first years were characterized by hope, even inspiring some of us to proclaim the end of history.

Instead of ending history, the West has collectively decided to enter yet another phase of decline and disintegration. This time it looks like we will do it properly and with lasting effect. The parallels between now and the time leading to WW I, the Great Depression and finally to WW II are striking, if not terrifying. Racism, identitarian ideologies, tariffs, wars and war crimes, disrespect for human rights and the international order are on the rise again. Democracies are threatened and paralyzed by extreme right-wing movements and sometimes have fallen already. The betrayal of western values is nowhere as complete as in Gaza, where ethnic cleansing, forced removal and genocide are carried out by Israel, and unanimously tolerated, if not always assisted, by western nations, including Germany. If anyone still had the belief that the westerners are the good guys, Gaza has made clear to everyone, that we are no better than Russia or China. We, and especially America, are pursuing interests in the service of Israel with a complete absence of human empathy, respect for the international order and the Christian values that once inspired at least some of us. In the USA, saying that Genocide as executed by Israel in Gaza and the ethnic cleansing in the West Bank is not a good thing is now considered an expression of Antisemitism, and you are endangering the safety and

prosperity of your family by saying this. The events in Gaza are the ugly face of western hypocrisy and imperialism. Moreover, the Trump administration is bringing the most hideous face of America to the surface. This has consequences for the world and the international order. It inspires the despots and crooks in the world to be bolder. They do not have to destroy the rule of law and a minimum layer of trust that has made us prosperous. Mr. Trump is doing it for them. Yet the causes of this collapse are not only due to the arrival of Mr. Trump. He is a mere symptom of much deeper and complex developments that have affected not only America but at least Western Europe as well.

A Civilisation in Crisis

This is not merely a political shift but a civilizational crisis. The West's unraveling stems from deeper forces. Among these are the following:

- The rise of China and its Challenge to American Hegemony
- The aging of our states reflected in both demography and the administrative system, which has entangled itself in do good inspired red tape and a legal maze
- The arrival of social media, leading to the loss of single source of truth and a lack of appreciation for professional and principled journalism.
- The disappearance of the prosperous working class, caused by the same globalization, that opened the gate to prosperity in other parts of the world. Americans who may have paid for the education for their children by working in a car factory 35 years ago, are now working three jobs at low wages to make ends meet.
- A digitization that divides our societies into controllers and creators on one side and passive users on the other.
- The exclusion of vast segments of the population from quality education, driven by lack of funding, ideological experiments in education policy, and at least in western Europe, the influx of migrants with educational needs that these countries are not equipped to provide.
- The breakdown of our ability to relate and communicate and discuss at a personal level. This lowers the esteem we have for our compatriots and people who may be different from us. We are driven further and further into isolation. The VR Spectacles from Meta are only the next step. More and more we live in a virtual truth of our own creation, and the capability to form relationships and communities is lost.

- The only values left seem to be convenience and personal gain.
- Climate change leading to famine, floods, armed conflict and large fugitive movements. The attempt to contain this has further deepened division in western societies.

In summary, we are subject to unprecedented challenges like climate change while trends in our societies make it impossible to confront these challenges in a constructive way. Right wing populists thrive in this environment while flooding the public space with a tsunami of lies and inciting hatred and division wherever they can. It is a tragedy that at the time where a consensus and joint action plans are most needed, our thinking and the way we shape our political will, are manipulated and in some cases controlled by egocentric psychopaths. Despots on the rise: the United States paves the way. There are some examples of such despots in the developing world such as Mr. Ortega (whose fight against the Somoza family I supported as a student), the military junta in Myanmar and many more. Yet the most painful and striking example is the moral collapse of the United States under Donald Trump. It is not clear whether Trump has embraced the Program 2025 (a 900 page reactionary wish list largely authored by the Heritage Foundation and political appointees of Trumps first term) in full, but its “unitary executive theory” which demands that federal agencies such as the department of justice be placed under direct presidential control, has certainly been a useful playbook in Trumps ambition to ignore the separation of powers and dismantle key elements of checks and balances in government.

Yet there are significant overlaps between the republican election platform and Program 2025. Elon Musk, the most important advisor to Trump, does not seem committed to the “values” of Program 2025. His priority is the tyranny of the elite driven by a complete absence of empathy for humans that do not make his grade. His idea is to use the loss of understanding and respect for facts and science and the inability of our societies to have constructive debates to create a new order driven by a digitization model which clearly divides societies between a digital aristocracy and a manipulated mass of users. I also have the impression that this vision is shared by some other tech billionaires such as Peter Thiel, a major sponsor of J.D. Vance. Some members of the billionaire class in the United States follow an ideology known as long termism. In its focus on the long-term survival of humanity including such possibilities as settling on Mars and other planets, it provides a perfect rationale for ignoring the material injustices and social problems of the present. Give more to the rich and forget about the poor,

because they cannot contribute to the long-term vision anyway. This explains the zeal with which Elon Musk goes about destroying institutions that maintain the fabric of society. The objective is no longer to live in peace and prosperity on this planet. Perhaps their vision of the future is best pictured in the film Elysium, where the elite lives on a satellite in paradisical circumstances while the majority suffer in misery on an earth that has been made unlivable.

There are also interesting developments in the alliances we see across parties and countries. Israel has invited European right-wing extremists mostly from France and Spain to a conference to combat anti-Semitism. This has prompted several prominent and staunchly democratic intellectuals and politicians to refrain from attending this conference. We all know that anti-Semitism is one of the key foundations of the European far right. But now it looks like the joint objectives of promoting genocide, restricting free speech, undermining the rule of law, dismantling the international order and rolling back globalization, are more important than the racist foundations of these objectives. Sadly, it looks like a significant part of the Jewish Community, which historically could always be relied upon as a force of progress, human rights, scientific and intellectual excellence and building international connections, has changed sides. So, we are seeing an alliance of political forces, whose long-term objectives may cover a wide spectrum of different models for the future, but who in the short term have a lot of common ground. Putin's imperialism, the AFD in Germany, the long termism of a Peter Thiel, Elon Musk and may be JD Vance, the so-called Christian nationalists of Program 2025 and Zionists, all have an interest to establish a dominant narrative based on lies, and in an electorate which has given up on understanding the facts and decides based on hateful emotions.

Putin has certainly established an unescapable propaganda machine in his own country, but he has also become a master of flooding countries upholding free press and free speech with manipulative lies (or as the public calls it euphemistically: 'fake news'). This modus operandi has found imitators in the extreme right in Europe and especially in the Republican Party in the United States. Steve Bannon said it: drown them with lies! Reputable journalism has a hard time keeping up. It was interesting to see that the debates during the election in Germany were accompanied by fact checks in the background. You could check whether the arguments were based on facts or fiction while the debate went on. Not too many people bothered, however,

and the AFD still got more than 20% of the vote. Not surprisingly all right-wing parties share the objective to abolish the public broadcasting sector and responsible journalism. The dominance of lies in the news is now being reinforced by a strategy of terror and violence, as it was by the NAZI's in Germany.

The arrest of Mahmoud Khalil, a pro-Palestinian activist at Columbia University, shows how strong the influence of fascist Zionism on American policy has become. There was no indictment, there was no proof for any of the misdeeds he was accused of. Instead, ICE was instrumentalized, to silence a voice claiming that Palestinians are human beings. Looking at Khalil's writing, it does not look like he was a supporter of HAMAS, but he was trying to fight the hatred driving the atrocities happening in Palestine and Israel. But this is no longer acceptable. You must actively support genocide to be tolerated in the United States. Under the Trump administration we will see a lot more of this, and it will not just be to the detriment of Palestinians. The arrest of Mahmoud Khalil was celebrated and displayed on social media. The helpless voice of his American wife, who seems to be 8 months pregnant, was exploited to the fullest. The arrival of alleged gang members in one of Bukele's concentration camps in El Salvador was also celebrated on truth social, displaying all the brutality used on these people. This message was no longer directed at the converted, sadistic MAGA audience to say: "hey, we are doing what we promised and getting rid of foreigners." No, this was directed at the Americans opposed to the deeds of the Trump administration. The true message of these images was: 'look what might happen to you! Due process has been eliminated, no judge will come to your help. If you are against us, there will be no one, who can help you. We will arrest you and throw you into a hole outside of US jurisdiction, where thugs will do unspeakable things to you.' Terror is the instrument of choice against Americans still dedicated to the rule of law and democracy.

Another Nazi State in the Making?

The same instrument was used by the Nazis. The terror is implemented through executive orders. This was the exact same instrument Hitler used to destroy the Weimar Republic, albeit reinforced by an empowerment law (Ermächtigungsgesetz), which turned the executive orders into binding laws. The Trump administration has not passed an empowerment law but uses obscure and obsolescent laws from the past to create a legal foundation for its actions and

executive orders. Hitler's terror was not limited to the acts of the official police. His party also had the SA (Sturmabteilung), a mob of thugs to intimidate potential opponents with violence. Hitler's accomplices Himmler and Göring had transformed the police forces of the states of Bavaria and Prussia into precursors of the GESTAPO (secret state police), which was used as thought police to fight dissent. Trump does not have an SA, but he has the MAGA mob, ready to intimidate dissenters with violence. He does not have a GESTAPO (Secret state police), but ICE is already acting in ways reminiscent of GESTAPO practices in Hitler's Germany. It is particularly striking that ICE seems to be used increasingly as a thought police, where your treatment will no longer depend on your legal status but on your thoughts and whether you are critical of Donald Trump. I can only recommend a visit to the Museum "The Topography of Terror" in Berlin to understand what is currently happening in the United States. The terror of the Trump regime is regularly portrayed on the today show, but it is no joke! The administration pushes the boundaries of lawless terror, while the fiction of a country under the rule of law acts as a tranquilizer. We can see that all the arguments are on our side, but nothing happens. Terror is the reality; the rule of law is fiction. As in the Reichkristallnacht (this was the night when the German Equivalent of the MAGA movement put on brown uniforms, attacked Jews, Jewish institutions, burning buildings and killing and injuring thousands), atrocities are directed at people with few connections to the core of society. First, they come for alleged illegal or criminal immigrants, then they go for Palestinians and even Jewish students voicing opposition to US foreign policy. They are coming for you next!

The Powerful Jewish State and Lobby

The weapon of choice against the political establishment is slightly different. I hate to say it, and I have tried hard to defeat this impression, but Jewish Lobbyism and the strong role Jewish people play in the US Media, is instrumental in the intimidation of representatives and Senators. Still, we should be careful not to generalize and open ourselves to the reproach of anti-Semitism. There are excellent publications such as the New Yorker and the New York Times (probably the last daily not having caved in yet), which are edited and written by Jews, who would not be caught dead supporting Trump, and who delight us with their excellent writing every day. The split is not between Jews and the rest, it is between decency and a Trumpism, which has instrumentalized radical Zionism to brand decent people as anti Semites and manipulates the law to randomly terrorize and prosecute political opponents. I saw a video of Senator Ted Cruz examining Marco Rubio for the post of secretary of state. The questions

were designed to ensure complete submission of the administration to the objectives of the Israeli government which is to gain “Lebensraum” (living space) at the expense of the “Untermenschen” (sub-humans) some of us still call Palestinians. For the hard Zionists, Palestine and Palestinians do not even exist. They are animals at best to be exterminated at will and driven to God knows where.

The Trump administration has submitted its military might to Mr. Netanyahu to be used at will. Mr. Netanyahu returns the favor by supporting Trump loyalists through AIPAC, who will also intimidate the few remaining members of the legislature asking questions and daring to uphold the flag of human decency. The impression is clearly that you will not gain an elected position, if you think that genocide on Palestinians is a bad thing. Yet it is truly mesmerizing how little protest there is in both the house and the Senate, when Israel commits war crimes and continues to violate international law on the West Bank. Chuck Schumer, the democrat minority leader of the Senate, still considers it his mission that Israel should not lose the support of the American youth. One of the reasons is that AIPAC boasts the power to remove any politician from office, who dares to criticize Israel. This Lobby has also smartly used campaign contributions to create dependencies and make sure that at least marginal seats will be won by candidates who prefer not to think about Israels deeds and simply follow instructions.

Trumps vision of turning the Gaza strip into a Las Vegas of the Middle East, where billionaires drop single Dollar bills for starving Palestinian children, is proof that this administration will do whatever Israel wants to maintain power. The Trump administration does not value allies or the international order. Instead, it is following China and Russia in pursuing an order where the strongest is always right. The US now plays a major role in legitimizing military violence to achieve national objectives. The only ally, who can always rely on the US as an ally, is Israel, because it has bought the US legislature. The extermination of the Palestinian people may just be a rehearsal for using genocide as a political tool. Who will be next? May be the Ukrainians in a joint operation with Russia? This is also the reason why it cannot be assured that we are just looking at an episode of four years. Ignoring laws and conventions is already a well-established practice of this administration. The legislature is paralyzed by AIPAC pressure and by the complacency caused by more than 200 years of democracy. This has made the scale of the current threat totally unimaginable. It is time to wake up. We are facing nothing

less than the transformation of the United States into a lawless, rogue state driven by the whims of a senile psychopath and the eugenic dreams of a billionaire clique.

The Programme That is Supposed to Make America Great Again

These are some points of the wish list called Program 2025. I have deliberately overdrawn them in some cases. I think it is justified, because it shows what the right in America (who now call themselves Christian Nationalists) really wants.

- Reopen all the doors for discrimination based on race, sexual orientation and religion.
- Emit as much CO2 as possible, ignore climate change.
- Turn every ally into an enemy, subject them to blackmail, extortion and ransom demands, irrespective of the cost to them or the United States.
- Destroy biodiversity in the United States by closing parks and giving up natural reserves.
- All but abolish Medicaid and Medicare to make sure that the weakest members of society die sooner rather than later.
- Drastically reduce investments in science and research especially as it relates to public health, the environment and anything else that does not contribute directly to defense.
- Use AI to manipulate the populace or the maintenance of the US as the dominant power. (We do not need public health systems, because billionaires can afford to pay for private jets flying in eggs for them. They will also find private ways to protect themselves, if Ebola should break out in the US.) One of the first things the DOGE thugs cut was cancer research for children.
- Cut out social services and support.
- Cut education: We have seen what the ideal educated subject looks like in Elon Musks eyes, when we were exposed to his DOGE fighters. It is a person with highly specialized technical skills and a complete absence of knowledge, ethical values, and devoid of critical thinking. Also, they want to make sure that access to even this basic education is highly unequal. Only children of the elite with the correct entrenched prejudices should be educated. The demands made on Columbia University to release the US$ 400 million

legally committed to it, but now blocked illegally, show what influence the administration wants to exert on all educational institutions. Forget free research and education.

- Taxes: Cut all progressive taxes (such as income, capital gains, inheritance) and focus on regressive taxes such as tariffs. Trump really seems to believe that he can replace the revenue from income tax with tariffs. The credo is: 'Tariffs are a tax on foreign countries!' I suppose a simple look at the demand and supply elasticities in markets concerned, which would allow a more educated estimate of the true effects of tariffs and of who pays for them, will be considered "WOKE" in the future. What will happen to government revenue when the desired yet illusory and totally counterproductive effect of tariffs (the relocation of industries to the US) actually happens? As a matter of fact, the study of economics should be prohibited altogether, because Trump does not know the first thing about it. It makes you wonder whether the study of medicine will still be allowed with RFK Junior overseeing the country's health.
- Immigration and naturalization will be allowed selectively and decided on the basis of personal wealth. Russian Oligarchs are welcome.
- Women's rights should be rolled back to the state of the late 19th century (unless you are blond, young and a dedicated Trump Fan).
- International relations will also be governed by the values of the imperialist 19th century.

It is the rule of the strongest and the reckless exploitation of the defenseless. These led to WWI and the great depression. Poland was the frequent victim of such dealings, but now we can see it live and in color in Ukraine. The discussions between Moscow and Washington are very reminiscent of negotiations between Hitler and Stalin over Poland giving both the freedom to invade before WWII. This is just an excerpt of the list of horrors that will expand as we stand by. It would go too far to analyze each one of them. But it is certain that it will lead to a USA and a world that is far worse than anything we have seen since 1945.

Trump may believe that this random list of horrors amounts to a political strategy. Things will get better for him and his cronies with a few bumps in between. Elon Musk does not care whether this is a strategy or makes anything better or worse. His goal is the deconstruction of the state and the transformation of society into an oligarchy with masters and slaves. The oligarchs will determine what the state of humanity will look like in 20,000 years, and the

subjects (hopefully Christian Nationalists) will follow. It may well be that democracy has lost some of its appeal, because it has become the tyranny of minorities. We may sympathize with the difficulties members of the LGBTQ community have in living fulfilled lives in our societies, but is this really the top problem in the democratic world? We understand that people object to windmills or train lines close to their homes, but should we allow the NIMBY (not in my back yard) movement of wealthy pensioners to paralyze the development of our infrastructure. Interest groups have ruthlessly exploited political and bureaucratic processes to push their specific agendas, making everything more cumbersome, slow and expensive and thereby defying democratic majority decisions. It may very well be that this behavior has opened the door for the radical right-wing agendas and the disrespect for the democratic processes. If we want to fight Trump's army of monsters and their equivalents in other countries, we have to come back to meaningful and constructive debates driven by respect for each other and the acceptance of majority rule. It may also be helpful to reexamine the principles of subsidiarity, in order to make sure that decisions are made close to the people affected by them. Most of all we need a vision for the future of the world which is attractive enough for people to follow.

The disruptive powers of digitization and the goal to limit climate change have made it difficult to formulate such a vision which is seen as attractive by most people. Instead, climate policies and digitization have created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. This needs to change. The inflation reduction act was a good attempt, and it allowed Biden to leave a strongly growing and future-orientated US economy to the Trump administration. But it may have been too demanding on some, and power was handed back to Trump, who with his archaic dogmas will almost certainly lead the US into the worst recession it has seen since the 1970s and cause lasting and irreversible damage to the planet.

The Characters

1. Donald Trump

To most thinking people, it is an absolute mystery how the most powerful nation on earth could have elected a personality like Donald Trump as its leader. Can he be compared to Adolf Hitler? What Hitler and Trump have in common is their deeply rooted narcissism, triggered perhaps

by traumatic experiences in earlier life. While this may be the most dangerous characteristic the two have in common, it does not make them the same. Hitler came from very modest backgrounds, lived in relative poverty, and was driven not by self-gain, but by a fundamentally flawed, hate-filled, racist ideology to which he dedicated every cell in his body until the very end. He delivered Germany and himself to total destruction as he saw his perverse vision break down. This is not Donald Trump. He will be playing Golf in Florida when the chaos he has caused will lead to unbearable misery in the United States. Trump is not driven by an ideology, although the MAGA slogan and Program 2025 (which also has its fair share of hatred) works as a substitute for a clearly articulated vision. If there is anything driving Donald Trump, it is a deeply rooted psychotic inferiority complex. He was born with a golden spoon in his mouth but maybe it was poisoned. How many sons of successful entrepreneurs do you know, who feel forever obliged to step out of the shadow of their fathers? Is it a coincidence that his brother died of alcoholism? Trump's father may have been reasonably successful as a real estate developer in New York, but there is little evidence that he was a good father. I am an entrepreneur born into an entrepreneur's family myself, and I can perhaps understand what drives the inheritors of companies. You want to show that you are worthy as a successor, and you want to step out of the shadows of those who led the company before you. If you are not careful, you may overstep the capabilities of the organization you inherited. I know this from experience, but I was lucky enough to be taught a balance of humility and ambition by my wife, colleagues, customers, mentors and many others. I experienced stressful and critical situations, but never absolute failure. In the end, I was capable to turn our company into a remarkable success. Also, my father was a good and loving father. Trump may not have gotten the recognition and esteem from his father that he so craved. As he took over the family business, he drove it with great ambition and a few remarkable successes. Yet these ventures such as Trump tower and the Hyatt in Manhattan were perhaps stretching the abilities of the organization but not overstepping them. Building casino's meant stepping into unknown terrain, and it led to one spectacular bankruptcy after the other. It shows that Trump's judgement was blinded by ambition, and this episode also exposed him to the business practices of the casino world. This culture may have shaped his business practices and principles. Trump is not a great business leader. He did not respect the limits of the organization he was leading, and he failed to lead it to the operational capabilities needed to what he wanted to do. He is also not a great dealmaker or negotiator. His dealmaking is based on blackmail, extortion, pressure, and false promises. We can see this in his negotiation with Putin about Ukraine, where he just acts as a weak agent in Russia's favor. Ukraine is blackmailed and humiliated, Russia's

position is echoed and amplified to break the resistance of Ukraine and Europe against Putin's ambitions. But there is one talent Trump has which was recognized very early by his main sponsors. Trump is a media person and a master at grabbing attention. He has understood instinctively which lowest common denominators will motivate people to consume media content. His public personality as the glamour boy and tycoon towers over his real business achievements. His persistent bragging and living way beyond his means, a string of trophy wives and alleged affairs with porn stars and playmates, made him the person you want to see fail. Trump failed again and again, and he managed to turn his failures into media events. Trump's public life is a horror show, where every event is more outrageous and disgusting than the previous one. The hero is a person despised and envied at the same time, yet admirably through sheer chutzpah, he seems to get away with it. The media personality found its culmination in "The apprentice", in which Trump could present himself as the super tycoon while humiliating his apprentices to the amusement of the audience. This is the emotional foundation of Trumps following. Envy, curiosity about what will happen next, the status of defying traditional values and conventions and getting away with it, guarantee that people will pay attention either in disgust or secret admiration. Yet the best strategy would be to just ignore the man. Unfortunately, he is the President of the United States now, and he continues his strategy that the next act must be more outrageous than the previous one to keep attention. There are two weaknesses that go hand in hand with this talent. One is the lack of cognitive capabilities or more plainly stupidity, the other is psychotic narcissism. I would like to start with a quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian, who was murdered by the NAZIS for his resistance to their regime: "Stupidity is the more dangerous enemy of the good than malice. One may protest against evil; it can be exposed and, if need be, prevented by use of force. Evil always carries within itself the germ of its own subversion in that it leaves at least a sense of unease in human beings. Against stupidity we are defenseless. Neither protest nor the use of force accomplish anything here; reasons fall on deaf ears; facts that contradict one's prejudgment simply need not be believed – in such moments the stupid person even becomes critical – and when facts are irrefutable, they are just pushed aside as inconsequential, as incidental. In all this the stupid person, in contrast to the malicious one, is utterly self-satisfied and being easily irritated, becomes dangerous by going on the attack. For that reason, greater caution is called for when dealing with a stupid person than with a malicious one. Never again will we try to persuade the stupid person with reasons, for it is senseless and dangerous."

This description certainly is very close to what we are seeing from Donald Trump. His inability or unwillingness to use cognitive facilities provides a perfect wall against constructive debate and entrenches the paralysis of the partisan political system that has made Washington such a subject of hate for many Americans. Pete Hegseth, Marco Rubio, and Mike Waltz are probably best seen as additional bricks in this wall of stupidity which perfectly serves the objectives of Trump's sponsors. The wall of stupidity makes sure that reasonable arguments by decent Americans play no role in the political process. The field is left to those, who know how to push Trump's buttons. The KGB recognized as early as the 1980s that vanity and narcissism were very prominent and useful elements of Trump's personality. Flattery and parties with nice girls will go a long way with him. There is much evidence that the Kremlin has recognized and used these personality traits before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. I recommend Katherine Benton's book on 'Putin's people' to get an overview. Russian criminals and oligarchs even played a role in keeping Trump financially on his feet after the spectacular failure of his Atlantic City ventures. They offered him highly lucrative licensing deals, which could have had no other motive than gaining his loyalty. For Putin, Trump is bull's eye. He could not have found a more effective instrument to do as much damage to the West and the United States as possible than Donald Trump. It makes the Cuban Missile crisis look like child's play. After four weeks of Trump being in office, the western alliance is in shambles. The current US administration is closer to Vladimir Putin than to any elected European leader. The new world order that Putin and Xi Xing Ping dreamt about is within reach. Freedom and democracy will soon be a thing of the past. Trump is an instrument, but the Russians are not the only ones using it.

2. Elon Musk

The conversion of Elon Musk to a Trump disciple looked like a recent development, but it is nevertheless rooted in deep personality traits developed over a long time. Musk is South African and was influenced by the experience of apartheid. His grandparents moved the family from Canada to South Africa, because they saw Apartheid as an ideal system. Musks grandfather was a hardened Nazi. Make no mistake: the entrepreneurial vision of Elon Musk is admirable. Building Space X and not just Tesla are proof of this vision. It took a lot of courage to understand early enough that space technology is a market with rapid growth, and that the inefficiencies of public space programs created a tremendous window for private

enterprise. Musk also succeeded in attracting and motivating top talent to Space X, enabling the company to take the lead in this market. Space X is not only the most competitive company in delivering satellites into space, but it is also working on highly innovative and cost saving cutting edge technologies. Tesla on the other hand has lost a lot of brand value, not only as a result of Musk's public display of radical right-wing politics, but also because the models are old and spectacularly announced innovations simply did not come. It is no surprise that Space X, where he can basically award multi-billion-dollar contracts to himself, is getting more attention now than Tesla.

Not only has Musk's Racism tarnished the appeal of the brand, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to develop new models that can compete with the Chinese. The acquisition of Twitter was a financial blood bath, but the purpose here was to turn a platform into a right-wing propaganda channel. The short-term gains for helping Trump to win the election more than compensated the losses from Twitter. At Trumps inauguration, Musk threw a Hitler salute yet calling him a Nazi would fall short of describing his ideology. His thinking is best summarized in a quote from him: "The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy." You will probably guess that I found this quote on Instagram. To complete the cheapness, I will also use the quote from Hannah Arendt posted next to Musk's quote: "The death of human empathy is one of the earliest and most telling signs of a culture about to fall into barbarism." In his first few weeks as the head of the Department of Government Efficiency, Musk has demonstrated a complete absence of empathy. He has been instrumental in firing and terrorizing those people in America, who do not just serve Mammon, but feel an obligation to serve their country. Park Rangers, who may have started their careers in the military and get deep satisfaction explaining the wonders of nature to children. Musk looked like he took pleasure in destroying the lives of these people. Empathy is also a pre-condition for diversity in humans. The empathy or love of neighbor described in so many examples in the bible, applies especially to those who do not fit our prejudices and the norms we have accepted and want to impose on others. If we view every human being as a creation of God and therefore equal to ourselves, we are exercising empathy and thereby allowing diversity. If follows that the indiscriminate campaign against diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) launched by the Trump administration is also a fight against empathy. The elimination of empathy, a supremacist ideology and racism are what unites the extremist right-wing waves currently destroying democracy in the US and threatening it in much of what used to be the west. This time at least the Zionist Jews are not among the victims

but the perpetrators. They lead the way with genocide and ethnic cleansing in Palestine and they have closed ranks with European fascists in what they call their fight against antisemitism. What they have really done is open a second front for those Jews and civilized people, who fight antisemitism to ensure a peaceful existence of Jews within our communities. It looks like the principle of racial cleansing has taken priority over the question of which race should be on top. The abstract idea of a dominant race, whether to be chosen or created, is the common denominator tying Elon Musk to the AFD in Germany. It is also a prominent idea in elements of the US billionaire class, notably the Paypal clique. The motive is eugenic ideology in the context of long termism. These people think that they must play with the gene pool to create the human being that can live with artificial super intelligence. They want to play God. It seems like the idea of playing God has now taken priority over Elon Musk's business interests. Three books lowered the element of surprise I experience with the current developments of the United States: The Unwinding by George Packer, Caste by Isabel Wilkerson, and The Hillbilly Elegy by J.D. Vance.

3. J.D. Vance

In his book Vance describes what helped him to escape the lifestyle of the white underclass, but he also relates why this segment of society would hate Barack Obama and vote for Donald Trump. The same elements attracting an educated person to Obama, such as eloquence, competence and the apparent ability to solve those high-level problems less educated people may not even see as problems, drive the uneducated away from Obama and into the arms of Donald Trump. By following various personalities in America over many years, George Packer describes the unravelling of the American society, which some of the MAGA followers may want to return to. Isabel Wilkerson describes how deeply entrenched the discrimination and oppression of African Americans is in American society by drawing analogies to the Indian caste system. As if to illustrate how this attachment to caste privileges is still alive, Tucker Carlson recently stated in an interview, that – should he ever be treated by a female American surgeon with African genes - he would assume that she got into the position only as standards were lowered to suit her. This attitude explains why the outrage caused by the Trumpian battle on DEI is not greater. Of course the standards are not lowered for the professional Carlson is talking about. It is more likely that she had to overcome obstacles the likes of Carlson could never even imagine. The disappointment of a society which has moved from Ford, GM, GE

and similar jobs to Walmart or Amazon (with lower skill levels and wages), the hostility of the uneducated to education, and the caste system probably explain why someone like J.D. Vance with his exemplary record of social mobility never became a champion for improving the lot of at least some elements of American society. Instead, he became an opportunist, spewing hatred and nonsense to stay in Donald Trump's favor. The mental obstacles to fighting the barriers you have overcome yourself may be just too great. His original background may also explain his pathological hatred for Europeans. The speech J.D. Vance gave at the Munich security conference revealed him as Putin's agent and a proponent of the racial cleansing agenda pushed by his mentor Peter Thiel and the AFD. He bashed our European democracies for defending ourselves against Russian manipulation. Vance said that the cancellation of the Romanian election, due to suspicions of Russian interference was a sign of weakness, belittling the Russian interference as buying social media advertisement. What he did not mention is that the Kremlin uses AI to steal the identity of trusted western media, to plant manipulative lies (fake news) in the heads of voters. The Russians spend more on this kind of activity, than those parties dedicated to democracy dedicate to social media altogether. They do this in every European country but particularly in their former satellites (like Ukraine, which they want back) and in Germany. I find it hard to imagine that Vance is naïve enough to not know this. His speech came across as a call not to defend against the Russian attempts to destabilize Europe and destroy the European Union. J.D. Vance is perhaps one of the most dangerous persons in the Trump gang. He is not as stupid as Pete Hegseth, Marco Rubio or Mike Waltz. The lies he emits are not borne out of ignorance, but they are calculated manipulated lies often laced with a pseudo logic making them even more dangerous. J.D. Vance is the vice president to a 78-year-old psychopath and therefore closer to the top position than his accomplices. His version of Christianity is closer to tribal traditions of the stone age or the rules of organized crime than to the gospel.

Love of neighbor in his view applies first to his family, second to his community, thirdly to his country, and there is not much left for anybody else. This view is similar to the rejection of empathy advocated by Elon Musk. I can love my neighbor, but I choose who the neighbor is. I will do God's will, but I determine what God's will is. This is the essence of Christian Nationalism, where humans do not serve God, but a created God serves humans by justifying their purely selfish actions. The immediate beneficiaries: Vladimir Putin and Binyamin Netanyahu.

A New Axis of Evil

In fact, we are facing a new Axis of Evil consisting of Russia, Israel and the United States. Netanyahu's visit to Victor Orban, whose foreign policy positions are more in line with those of Russia than with the EU or NATO, foretells an increasing proximity between Russia and Israel. The common values of these three regimes are as follows:

- Complete disrespect for international law
- Disrespect for international borders
- Using military force to achieve their foreign policy objectives
- Corruption at a level, that will ultimately lead to failed states (Russia has perhaps travelled furthest on this path.)
- Genocide is a good thing as long as they are the perpetrators.
- Ignore the principles of democracy and the separation of power.

All these values are the exact opposite of what the West stood for under the leadership of the United States. In its current state the United States has lost the ability to be the leader of the free world, and the intention of Trump is to bully the rest of the world and subject it to extortion rather than lead it.

Tariff Terror

I finished my PHD in economics a long time ago, and I have not kept up with the academic development of this discipline since then, but the memories of what I learned and the practical experience I have had since then are enough to see that there is no economic rationale behind the tariffs Trump is implementing. The nonsense of high tariffs and splendid isolation comes up in America roughly once a century, and each time it has had the same devastating effect on the US economy and increasingly on the rest of the world. Massive tariff increases by the US contributed to the Great Depression of the last century, and it is clear that they will have a similar effect this time. Anybody with some experience in business and two semesters of studying the basics of economics knows that tariffs reduce wealth for both the importer and the exporter. Anybody who has spent his or her life opening and starting or relocating factories, as I have done, knows that moving manufacturing back to the US through tariffs is a stupid pipe

dream. The inconsistency of Trumps actions undermines trust and will make sure that nobody will embark on a long-term investment in the US. Quite to the contrary: even existing plans to invest in plant and equipment will be put on the back burner. The only beneficiaries of the economic terror Trump is unleashing on the world, are his buddies making profit on inside deals facilitated by the market movements caused by Trumps erratic actions and announcements. He even brags about this in an Instagram post. The United States have been hosting the largest and most sophisticated financial market system in the world. Yet many of the acting persons in this financial system (such as Stephen Schwartzman, the founder of Blackstone) supported Donald Trump's campaign. I cannot believe that the financial establishment of Wall Street actually believed that any of the intended actions of Donald Trump would lead to increased wealth anywhere. Their support must have been based on very selfish hopes to benefit from insider trading by knowing in advance what rubbish Trump would do next, or on the idea that common sense would prevail, tariffs would not be implemented in the way that Trump was announcing, and that the positive effects of deregulation would outweigh the negative effects of Trumps core agenda. Just like the political establishment of the Weimar Republic should have read "Mein Kampf" and taken it seriously, Wall Street should have read the program of Donald Trump and evaluated the scenario of its actual implementation. But then there is also the promise of a regressive tax system, which many of them may have found attractive. Ownership and wealth come with responsibilities towards the community. It looks like this principle is foreign to a large part of the Wall Street establishment. Again, we see that empathy is a foundation of any civil society, and that its absence will lead to its collapse. If there were only more investors like Warren Buffet, whose strategies are based on long term value creation and common sense, instead of being indifferent about whether value is created or destroyed. The short-term greed of Wall Street in conjunction with the erratic economic terror of Donald Trump (I refuse to use the term policy) has already lead to unprecedented destruction of value in America and the rest of the world. Unless the midterm elections change the balance of power in Congress, and Congress then finds a way to reign in the genetic accident that Americans have elected to be president, the destruction of value will go on. The USA will continue to be a destructive force in the world economy. So, the question for the rest of the world is: "how do we protect ourselves from the damage that America is doing?" MAGA: Make America Go Away!

The Result

During the first months of the second presidency of Donald Trump, most Americans have become poorer. The respect and admiration much of the world had for the United States has vanished. The alliance with Western Europe is in shambles. Most trading partners of the United States are facing recession or at least diminished economic growth. Uncertainty created by Trump's erratic and idiotic economic policies has and will stifle investments in much of the world including the United States of America. So, who has benefited? I am not sure whether the greatest beneficiary is Binyamin Netanyahu or Vladimir Putin. The latter has attacked Ukraine and was ostracized by the international community. But since Donald Trump took office, the champaign is flowing in Moscow. The Trump regime has not only adopted Russian propaganda regarding the attack on Ukraine and conceded to the objectives of this Russian war of aggression, it has also offered a normalization of relationships and exempted Russia from the tariff terror Trump has imposed on every single country in the rest of the world. Mr. Netanyahu, for whom systematically murdering civilian Palestinians seems to be the easiest way to stay in office, has been given a completely free hand and additional weapons by the Trump regime. Israel is bombing Lebanon, committing ethnic cleansing in the west Bank, bombing Syria, murdering the few remaining people, aid workers and medical rescue teams in Gaza, and doing everything it can to drag the United States into a war with Iran. While the Biden administration at least sometimes raised some feeble objections to the most heinous war crimes Israel is committing, the Trump regime is deporting, using other means of repression or intimidating the few citizens who still dare to point out that Israel's actions are inconsistent with international law.

Europe - Quo Vadis

Europeans have looked to America for leadership ever since the end of World War II. This has always been problematic but worked in general. There have always been administrations or factions within them, whose competence and purity of intentions were questionable. For the most part, however, this arrangement has worked, as the creation of a rules-based international order governing trade and the management of conflicts was accepted by most. The rejection of the international order by the Trump administration, however, has destroyed this model. Even without this rejection and the refusal to exercise responsible leadership there is the question of

which person in her right mind would look to the likes of Donald Trump, Pete Hegseth, Marco Rubio and Mike Waltz for responsible leadership. There is still a very significant part of American society (close to 50%) who shares our values, believes in science, empathy, a rule based international order, education, diversity, equity and inclusion. Every effort should be made to strengthen this part of American society and to build transatlantic relations with them. But for now, their influence on American leadership is blocked by the wall of stupidity. So we are faced with a United States of America who not only reject the international order, but who also cannot be trusted to stick to agreements or hold promises. The world must work without American leadership, and it looks like progress in the development of an international order will work best, if the United States is not part of the process. This does not mean that the middle finger J.D. Vance has shown to Europeans at the Munich Conference should be returned in kind. Instead, the door should be left open for the US to follow, but America cannot be part of the process of developing the international order. The two remaining political entities taking an interest in shaping the international order are China and Europe. The European Community has so far responded intelligently to the absurdities coming out of the White House. The doors should be left open, and reasonable, mutually beneficial offers should be made to come to a trade agreement with the United States. Yet hopes should not be raised too high as reason and the interest to come to agreements that benefit the US economy seem to have been banned from the White House. The EU should intensify its efforts to come to trade agreements with other parts of the world. Mercosur should be implemented as quickly as possible, Canada could come closer to the EU and may even consider membership, smaller but valuable markets such as Caricom should be developed as trade partners. Then there are also India, East Asia and Africa. The EU has a special interest in Africa, as economic development there may help to manage migration, and offer alternative access to raw materials.

The EU should seek fair trade agreements which include a clear perspective to create value not only in the EU but also in the partner countries. Restrictions on trade driven by geopolitical interests of the United States should be critically evaluated, as those interests may no longer be the same as those of the EU. They should be ignored, if it is in the Interest of the EU. Trade policy, just like foreign policy should be driven by the self-interest of the EU and not by some messianic ambition to spread our values to our trade partners. If Indonesia finds it difficult to follow feminist standards, we consider valuable in Europe, this should not be detrimental to trade relations. This policy will entail a rivalry with China. The US will play an ever-declining role in international trade, as the CEOs of protected industries play golf with Donald Trump

while neglecting the competitiveness of their companies. Other companies in the US may well be choked by the system of tariffs, as they find it impossible to build international supply chains as well as finding local suppliers. China will be the force to reckon with. While both China and the US can now be considered autocratic, China has the advantage of being led by a cadre with a proven track record of improving the lives of the people they have governed. The communist party is governed by strict meritocratic principles. You may still find pockets of corruption and dishonesty in some parts of the Chinese administration, but you will be hard pressed to find incompetence. The work of Chinese officials is evaluated by KPIs, and performance defines career progress. This may have been compromised somewhat by Xi Xing Ping declaring himself emperor, but it is still there. It remains to be hoped that at some stage China will reduce the concentration of power in one person again and come back to the system of unwritten rules that allocated leadership positions, and played a significant part in writing the economic success story China has become. This may also help to temper the imperial ambitions China is currently showing. For now, trade with China must be developed with caution, but the opportunities are so huge that even a cautious approach will be highly lucrative. Transparency, reliability, the rule of law (although some of the laws are unfair to foreigners), and consistency can be found in China, and no longer in the US. In developing trade relations with China, the EU should be cautious and selective, but the US interest in blocking China's progress should not influence EU Trade Policies.

Currently the US must be seen as a Russian ally and as hostile to the EU. The outcome will be two global trading blocks one centered around the EU, the other one around China. These blocks will trade with one another, but the partnerships will be more selective and qualified between the blocks than within them. The importance of the United States in international trade will be a fraction of what it is now. The US, Israel and Russia will be on the sidelines. Two superpowers with huge nuclear arsenals and a rogue killer state. One of the superpowers governed by hateful idiots, the other one by a gang of hardened criminals. I do not think that this is a desirable outcome, but unless something changes in the US this outcome seems quite likely. Other necessary steps by the EU The US Government is fighting free research and science at the top Universities in the US. For decades the EU has suffered a brain drain of brilliant academics crossing the Atlantic to find better working conditions in America. This could be an opportunity to stop this outflow.

The EU should get its act together and build numerous centers of excellence for science, research and innovation with the best working conditions academics can find. Berlin, Paris,

Munich, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Milan, Stockholm, Prague and Warsaw could be such centers. London is such a center already, and Switzerland is also an integral part This does not preclude cooperation with top institutions in the US. But it should be clear that Europe is the place of freedom where new ideas can thrive. For the time being Europe (except for Hungary) is the only large political entity upholding the foundations of democracy as it evolved after the French revolution. Europe should defend these principles within the European Union, but we should refrain from the messianic ambition to spread our values through foreign policy or trade policy. The rights of LGBTQ people in our societies should be protected, the principles of DEI as well, and we should keep making progress in granting women equal rights in our society. But we should be careful not to fall into the trap of cancel cultures. We also should not expect other cultures to follow these values, and we should not allow these values to guide trade policies. It will be hard enough to defend these values against the rassemblement national, the AFD, Vox, Fides and others in our own countries.

The Trump regime as well as the imperialist ambitions of Russia have increased the need for a European defense strategy and a drastic increase in military spending. This is regrettable, but Europe should at least try to make the best of it. The war in Ukraine has shown that the nature of warfare is changing, and the relative importance of weapons systems and technologies is shifting. Instead of buying weapons from the USA, Europe should develop its own integrated strategy to develop military technology such as drones, electronic warfare, artificial intelligence and similar. The goals to strengthen the military and making Europe a hub for cutting edge technological developments should support each other. It should be remembered that many successful companies in Silicon Valley started with DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) research grants. Unfortunately, we must leave some of our idealistic pacifism behind and return to a world where the Roman doctrine “Si vis pacem, para bellum” (If you want peace, prepare for war) gains new validity. Finally, we should make a serious effort to shake out much of our bureaucratic sclerosis and deregulate the economy as well as improve the cooperation between academic research and teaching with the private sector. The emphasis should be on cooperating with small and midsize young companies, and not just with the large established concerns. Siemens can do a lot, but not everything.

Conclusion

The world is under siege by right wing political movements. The common elements of these movements are hostility to foreigners, disrespect for the international order that facilitated the wealth we currently enjoy, rejection of diversity, empathy, equity and inclusion, and the denial of climate change. Nobody understands better how destructive these movements are than Russia, and this is why nearly all of them are supported by the Kremlin in one way or the other. With the alliance between Putin and Trump the threat is become more menacing than ever. Add the unimaginable economic incompetence of the Trump regime to the scenario, and it becomes difficult to imagine how things could have gone worse. As mentioned above, these new forms of fascism are founded on supremacist ideas (be it white, Zionist, or Russian), or in a more abstract and hidden form in the eulogistic principles of Elon Musk or Peter Thiel and some other mad billionaires. Both confused beliefs lead to the rejection of diversity and therefore true empathy. Empathy and diversity are closely related.

As a Christian I cannot emphasize enough how central these values are to the Christian faith. Remember the good Samaritan, the many stories of Jesus approaching especially those individuals who were ostracized by society, and the general command to love your neighbor. We as Christians are supposed to love and help people, no matter what color, what religion, what nationality, sexual orientation or race they are. True empathy only happens in the context of diversity. Biology also teaches us that diversity assures the survival of a species. Just being a racist white billionaire does not entitle you to determine the genetic composition of future generations. The existence of Donald Trump may demonstrate that letting genetics take its course can go horribly wrong, but this does not allow us to use genetics in order to create the people of the future. We do not even know whether we will ever be able to prevent the Trumps, Stalins, Hitlers, Putins and Mao Tse Tung's of this world from being born. A large and diversified gene pool is still our best bet to survive as a species. The same goes for the diversity of cultures and ideas. No monolithic ideology has ever led to a thriving empire. Most ideologically driven regimes survived in misery and oppression and collapsed soon after. Communism and Fascism are the best examples. Our best chance is to allow different thoughts and ideas. We should use the full potential of human creativity and the diversity it entails. This requires us to listen and to learn from one another. Neither confirmation closets in social media, nor Trumpian intolerance, nor the limitations imposed by cancel cultures will lead to good

results. This is a very abstract conclusion, but it summarizes the basic principles we seem to have forgotten.

We stand at a crossroads. The forces of division—xenophobia, authoritarianism, and ecological denial—threaten to unravel centuries of progress. But decline is not inevitable.

Our salvation lies in two principles:

3. **Empathy**—the antidote to supremacist ideologies.
    - The Good Samaritan did not ask about nationality or creed.
    - True strength lies in lifting others, not crushing them.
4. **Diversity**—the foundation of resilience.
    - Biology teaches us: monocultures fail.
    - Societies thrive when ideas, cultures, and people intersect.

The West's greatest achievements came not from domination but from openness—to science, to refugees, to self-criticism. If we abandon these values, we surrender to the very forces that doomed past empires.

The challenge is clear: Will we repeat history, or rewrite it?

The hour is late—but the future is still ours to shape.