



## "Change through trade" failed - time for a course correction

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The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is a blatant violation of elementary rules of international law. The International Court of Justice in The Hague has pointed this out already very clearly (<https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/182/182-20220316-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>). By itself, the Russian leadership's repeatedly changing justifications for the alleged "special operation" demonstrate the complete lack of justification.

The attack also clearly contradicts Russian law. Not only does Art. 15 IV of the Russian Constitution declare the "*generally recognized principles and norms of international law*" to be components of the Russian legal system. It also includes Art. 79.1, inserted in 2020, which commits Russia to "*support and strengthen international peace and ... not to interfere in the internal affairs of any state.*" Article 353 of the Russian Criminal Code provides that the crime of preparing and waging a war of aggression is punishable by imprisonment for up to 20 years. Even by his own law, Putin deserves to be in a prison cell!

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blatant violation of the law!

Rarely has it been easier to identify the aggressor in a conflict. There has not been another similar breach of civilization in Europe for decades. Domestically, too, the Russian regime has dropped its last restraints: The remaining free media had to give up, Memorial was banned, thousands of Russians were arrested just for demonstrating against the war. Russia is falling back into dark chapters of its history.

Putin's Russia  
can no longer be  
a partner.

The cynical legal nihilism of the Russian regime has become obvious. No one can close their eyes any longer to the fact that Putin's Russia has catapulted itself out of the house of Europe and the circle of civilized states governed by the rule of law. The end of membership in the Council of Europe was logical. Such a regime can no longer be a partner!

But can it, may it still be a trading partner? Politicians and business people in Europe seem to assume this to a considerable extent. There is no other way to understand the current hesitation and manoeuvring of many politicians and companies.

At the same time, it is obvious that it was the economic exchange with Europe that enabled Russia to rearm and wage war. One is shocked to read reports of technology from France, Germany and Italy being used in Russian military vehicles. Our payments for gas and oil form the basis of the Russian economic system. The bitter truth is that Putin uses these revenues to maintain his military apparatus and his system of repression. While we were dreaming of rapprochement, preparations for war were already underway in the country.

The Western, especially the German, policy of the last decades, which was based on "change through trade" ("Wandel durch Handel"), has failed miserably. As a result, Russia is further away from peace, the rule of law and democracy today than it was in 1991. Moreover, we have made ourselves so dependent on Russia for energy that we now find ourselves in a dilemma. The bloody price for this wrong policy is being paid by the people of Ukraine.

Business must also recognize that the focus on the benefits of trade and investment have obstructed a clear view of the realities of the regime. How can entrepreneurs talk about corporate social responsibility or human rights in supply chains while continuing to do business with Russia? All the more so, there is no moral justification for continuing to reap profits in doing business with Russia.

The sad truth is that the West finances Russia's war of extermination with hundreds of millions of euros daily (!). Without this income, the Russian regime would very quickly be unable to pay for its war.

Therefore, all measures must be taken to immediately stop the import of raw materials from Russia. Cherished projects like the phase-out of nuclear or coal energy have to be put on hold (for the time being), if necessary we have to accept personal losses. All efforts must be subordinated to the goal of silencing the weapons immediately and getting the Russian troops to withdraw from Ukraine without delay.

**Close gas pipelines  
to silence the  
cannons!**

Freedom and peace have a price. The people in Europe understand this, probably better than many politicians. They are ready to make sacrifices to bring the war in Ukraine to a swift end. Politicians should finally take real action and stop any financing of the aggressor!

**Prof. Dr. Rainer Wedde** teaches business law at the Wiesbaden Business School of the RhineMain University of Applied Sciences. He received his PhD on a topic of Eastern law and worked as a lawyer for several international law firms, among others in Moscow. He is a member of the board of the German-Ukrainian Lawyers Association and co-spokesman of the DGO's Law Section. Contact: [rainer.wedde@STOPfinancingtheaggressor.org](mailto:rainer.wedde@STOPfinancingtheaggressor.org)