

The Treaty of Shanyuan – Then and Now: Reflections 1000 Years Later

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To the outside observer it must appear remarkable that the treaty of Shanyuan 澶淵,¹ an agreement between the Chinese Song 宋 Empire (960–1279) and the Liao 遼 Empire (907–1125) of the Khitan 契丹 that brought peace to two quarrelling sides is commemorated today, one thousand years after the treaty was reached.² What is so peculiar about the peace of Shanyuan that we are still occupied with it today and recognise its relevance throughout history? Are there particular circumstances that led to this peace agreement and what motivations had its participants? Was this agreement the result of power politics and the interests of a few individuals which in the end determined the fate of these two peoples? Though it will not be possible to answer all of these questions in the scope of this paper, they are the kind of questions that have guided the following thoughts.

These questions do not focus on the single event of the treaty of Shanyuan itself, but rather on some of the peculiarities and circumstances of this historical event. If every event, even those having taken place 1000 years ago would be commemorated, there would have to be many such commemorations. There is something particular about this historical event which brings scholars together to reflect and discuss the treaty of Shanyuan and its implications then and now. Are there any aspects that make this peace of interest to global research beyond national Chinese or regional East Asian focus? Are there interesting aspects in this peace agreement which have given it relevance in general historical analysis in view of the universal history of mankind? Are there any aspects that provide us with the opportunity for a comparative analysis of different world empires when confronted with similar challenges?

1 In modern Chinese 澶淵 is called “Chanyuan”, whereas in Western Sinology mostly “Shanyuan” is used for this term. “Shan” is a historical transliteration of 澶 now called “chan”. Cf. Hanyu dazidian biandi weiyuanhui (1992), 740, referring to the *Guangyun* 廣韻, a Song dynasty rhyming dictionary: 澶, 市連切。

2 This paper bases on a speech delivered at the Chinese Military History Society’s Annual Conference “Terminating Conflict in Chinese History: Military, Political, Diplomatic, and Ritual Dimensions”, University of Calgary, Canada, 28–29 May 2005.

1 The importance of the treaty of Shanyuan

The reasons that the treaty of Shanyuan attracts our attention even today, 1000 years after it was reached, can be drawn from several reasons. The importance lies within the treaty itself, the Chinese mentality, the changes in the present Chinese concept of the world order, and the role of individuals in influential roles during the negotiations of the treaty.

1.1 The treaty of Shanyuan

It is a fact that the treaty of Shanyuan reached between the Chinese Song Empire (960–1279) and the Liao Empire (907–1125) of the Khitan created a peace that lasted more than 100 years. The persistent efforts of the Khitan to gain further concessions after the peace agreement were repelled by the Chinese in masterfully conducted negotiations.³ There were especially no compromises in the question of territorial claims “south of the border passes”. The Chinese paid for the peace with some additional 100,000 ounces of silver and 100,000 rolls of silk, which did not matter at all in the Chinese national finances. That is how they calmed the Khitan again and again- consequently the Chinese population in the border areas and in the disputed provinces could carry on with a life in peace. It was not until 112 years later that the Chinese were disloyal to the peace agreement. They started secret negotiations with the Jurchen 女真, hoping to get the sixteen provinces, which they lost in 937 AD. They acted on behalf of the elusive hope to be able to build up a good neighbourhood with the new, stronger neighbours from the north. But the Chinese got quickly disappointed. The Khitan were scarcely defeated by the Jurchen, when the Jurchen turned their military power towards the south. 1126 they quickly conquered the capital of Northern Song Empire, Kaifeng. Indeed that has been a short episode of friendship between the Jurchen and the Chinese. After the Chinese betrayal of Khitan, the Chinese were defeated by the Jurchen and had to evacuate from entire north of China, which marked the end of the Northern Song Empire.

3 Cf. Schwarz-Schilling (1959), 66. Schwarz-Schilling’s study has remained one of the most important works on the topic until the present (note of the editor). More recent investigations are reflected in Tillman (2005). As Tillman states, unfortunately “(a)lthough this monograph is the only Western-language book focused solely on the treaty, it has never been widely read since it was written in German” (p. 138).

How many peace treaties reached in Europe or Asia lasted for more than 100 years? How many were kept alive through skilful diplomacy for such a long time? Looking back into the history of Europe, America or Asia it becomes clear why the treaty of Shanyuan has become such an outstanding event: it is because it has created such long lasting peace. Therein lies its peculiarity and it is therefore that the treaty of Shanyuan is so important.

1.2 The Chinese concept of political realities

The peace treaty of Shanyuan is an outstanding example for the Chinese ability to abandon theories and concepts, even if they have ruled for centuries, at the moment when these theories no longer fit their reality.

In their political theory, the Chinese have perceived their Empire as *tianxia* 天下, meaning “everything under the heaven”. For them the state is a global and universal state, an unshakeable theory especially since the Tang dynasty. Of course the Chinese were aware that other states, disparagingly labelled as “barbarian states”, existed at the borders. However, these states proved their subordination by paying an annual tribute to the Court of the Chinese Emperor.

The fall of the Tang dynasty and in particular the turn of the tenth century led to new constellations in the Far East. In their old view of the world, there was no space for the new powerful states in Northern China. Slowly, the innovative Chinese thinking achieved to admit the existence of states with equal rights besides the Chinese Empire though not giving up the claim of a universal state explicitly. These equal states were “partners” with which they could negotiate and reach agreements.⁴ Such a perception would have been unthinkable in the times of Tang dynasty. And Morris Rossabi was absolutely right, when he wrote in his contribution to *China among Equals*:

The Sung was one of a number of important states in East Asia. Unlike the Tang, it did not dominate the area and could not impose a Chinese world order. Until the early twelfth century, the Sung had its capital in K'ai-feng and controlled much of North China and all of South China. To the north and northwest, however, were two “barbarian” peoples who founded Chinese-style dynasties. The Khitans established the Liao dynasty, and the Tanguts formed the Hsi Hsia dynasty.⁵

4 Rossabi (1983), 9.

5 Rossabi (1983), 9. The Xixia 西夏 dynasty existed from c. 982–1227. On the history of the Tanguts see for example Dunnell (1983) and *id.* (1994).

To accept these political realities was of course a painful process. In particular this old conceptual thinking of the Chinese world empire, which was embodied by the gentry, combined with short-sighted ambitions of the military leaders who did not want to acknowledge the new historical situation weighed heavily on the new policy.

Looking back in time one must admit that even for Chinese history the new philosophy which made such a diplomatic masterpiece possible, did not last too long. They started to betray the Khitan, their former enemy and now, after the treaty of Shanyuan, their new ally. Having the security of the treaty of Shanyuan on one side and on the other side aiming to form a new alliance with the powerful Jurchen in an attempt to extend Chinese territory by sixteen provinces, this double strategy failed.

Morris Rossabi rightly explained:

The Sung court, seeking to undermine the power of the Khitans, had helped the Jurchen of Manchuria to oust the Liao from China. Chinese officials quickly regretted this policy. They had assisted a “barbarian” group which became a dangerous adversary rather than a close ally. The Jurchen founded their own dynasty, the Chin (*pinyin*: Jin 金, 1115–1234), turned against the Sung, and in 1126 compelled the Chinese court to withdraw from North China.⁶

In addition, the following dynasties including the Mongolians and the Manchu did not act according to the new realistic orientations of the Northern Song dynasty. Falling back into the habits of the old ambitions of a world empire the chance of a new realistic approach had to fail due to the emerging powerful neighbour states in the North. From this perspective at the time of the Northern Song an ingenious time slot opened up enabling the creation of a system of equal states among the neighbours in the North. This led to economic prosperity for the people and long lasting peace for the Northern Song.

If China had proven the same sense of reality facing the European countries, which ruled the colonial era in Asia during the seventeenth to nineteenth century, the course of world history would have certainly been different. Looking into the diplomatic correspondence between Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 (r. 1736–1795) and King George III (1760–1820) of England, it becomes clear that China upheld once again the old claim of a Chinese world Empire without accepting and/or realizing the political realities. Had the Chinese been wise enough to acknowledge the reality of the world outside their Empire and sustained diplomatic exchange as equal partners, they would have quickly learned how to control the cur-

6 *Ibid.*, 9-10.

rent realities, especially also in military terms. History would have taken another course. The Meiji 明治 -Revolution in Japan is a corresponding example, as it brought Japan in the twentieth century in a different position than China.

1.3 Changes in Chinese perceptions of a world order

Studying the negotiations leading up to the peace of Shanyuan and the treaty itself, one can quickly relate to the immense mental effort behind this change in the Chinese perception of a world empire. David C. Wright has presented this with great competence.⁷ Wang Gungwu describes the effects of this rethinking after the treaty of Shanyuan as follows:

This [change] was expressed in two ways: as “control by loose reigning” (*chi-mi* 羈縻) and as “winning their confidence through kindness” (*huai-jou* 懷柔). Neither phrase was new, and the Sung editors were merely reaffirming what they thought the historical record had shown to have been the most successful policy. But they went further by showing, on the one hand, the many facets of such a policy and, on the other, the relationship it had with alternative policies, such as bringing the insatiable “barbarians”, seeking to assimilate them, pacifying and trying to annihilate them, and devising reliable defences against them. In Preface after Preface, the subtleties are woven together into a sophisticated amalgam of the rhetoric of inclusiveness, of tribute, of retaliation and punishment, which was, at the same time, combined with a sharp awareness of relative strength and weakness and a readiness, whenever really necessary, to negotiate treaties and alliances with equals.⁸

What becomes clear is that the Chinese spirit adapted to the political realities, while still maintaining the claim of a universal Chinese empire.

In practice these documents were translated into action successfully by the Chinese in the Song dynasty and thereby empowered the treaty to last for more than 100 years. The treaty of Shanyuan is a unique expression of this era of new thinking, carried out in the Emperor’s concrete political attitude and that of his ministers. The literature describes that even after the treaty of Shanyuan more attempts were made to try and improve wise policies towards the non-Chinese countries, countries which had the same importance as the Khitan. These circumstances made the treaty of Shanyuan a cornerstone for successful new thinking which by far did not penetrate the *zeitgeist*. Numerous sources show that even as late as the eleventh century the Chinese remarked nastily about

7 Wright (1998).

8 Wang (1983), 60.

the “barbarians”, ridiculed them and treated them with cynicism. The Chinese government fought against all this, while those opposing the new line of thinking such as orthodox-conservative military leaders or officials did not want to negotiate with the Khitan. They opposed negotiations despite the suffering and disastrous living conditions of people in the border territories.⁹ According to Herbert Franke,

(... i)n Sung diplomatic correspondence, the proprieties of dealing with a foreign court were observed, particularly the correct titles of the foreign ruler, but did not prevent Sung officials and statesmen from referring to the Liao and Chin as “slaves” or “caitiffs” (*lu* 虜) for domestic consumption. Many if not most Sung politicians continued to look down upon the powerful Liao and Chin states as “barbarians”. The principle of reciprocity in diplomatic relations with these states was nothing more than an enforced concession, which was but grudgingly granted because of the Sung’s military weakness.¹⁰

Franke is thereby clarifying the so-called weakness of the Song to have stabilized the status quo for almost more than 200 years. He continues:

Every aspect of diplomatic intercourse was illustrated by the relevant official documents, including such practical matters as a list of hostels and postal stations and a description of the Liao state and its customs. Su Sung’s [蘇頌 (1020–1101)] political philosophy, which coincided with that of the Song court, consisted of an apology for the appeasement policy followed by the Song in relations with the Khitans. With some pride, Su Sung pointed out that the establishment of peaceful relations with Liao permitted the people in the border regions to live a normal life and reach old age without ever having been troubled by military actions.¹¹

Despite these observations, it is important to see that not only circumstance, but also individuals leave an impression by the circumstance of their time and the role they are playing.

1.4 The role of individuals in Shanyuan

Based on the solid documentation of the individuals involved in the initialisation and negotiations of the treaty of Shanyuan, it is possible for historians to make judgements about the roles these officials played. Given the amount of dramatic situations, it would probably be an appealing historical framework for a play writer. Would a William Shakespeare (1564–1616) or Friedrich

⁹ Franke (1983), 116.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 122, cited from *Su Weigong wenji* 蘇魏公文集, 66.4b.

Schiller (1759–1805) have been familiar with this material, they surely would have turned it into an acclaimed piece of art. Having studied biographies and consulted the relevant documents, the influence of the individuals and their role in the peace of Shanyuan is outlined extensively elsewhere.¹² Nevertheless, the interpretation of the role of individuals can slightly differ. Rather than seeing Wang Jizong 王繼宗 (Wang Chi-tsung) as the “right man at the right time in the right spot”¹³ to lead successful negotiations, David C. Wright has uttered a slightly different interpretation. According to Wright,

This, in my opinion, smacks of “great man” historiography. I believe that the mutual desire for peace would soon have culminated in an agreement even without Wang Chi-tsung.¹⁴

Of course any such interpretation of the role of individuals will always remain speculative; no one can know what would have happened, if some individual had not been at their place at the time.

Looking at the circumstances at the beginnings of the negotiations leading up to the treaty of Shanyuan, the situation was by no means better than it had been years before. Having conquered even along the Yellow River at least motivated the Khitan military quite strongly to continue conquering. Having Wang Jizong in his position appears as a lucky coincidence, given his experience and biography as an outstanding personality with him being familiar with the Khitan psychology and the Chinese imperial court mentality which he experienced during his imprisonment at the court of Liao. The deaths of both the senior Liao Emperor and the brilliant military leader Xiao Talan 蕭撻覽 (?–1004; Hsiao T'a-lan) have played their role in calming the mood for further attacks by the Khitan. Nevertheless, the intensity of diplomatic efforts from Wang Jizong were obstructed by Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (960–1025; Wang Ch'in-jo), known for his shady personality, who was taking the envoy of the Song Emperor hostage for weeks to prevent messages to get through to the Liao. Despite a willingness for peace from the highest political level, it has to be recognised that also the Song functionaries resisted such efforts. It was mainly due to Wang Jizong's efforts to sustain the negotiations and keeping them alive, that in the end both sides achieved a successful solution.

The course of history would have continued even without these negotiations and maybe other political, military and regional developments would have taken place. Without this peace treaty, however, most likely

12 Schwarz-Schilling (1959).

13 *Ibid.*, 96.

14 Wright (1998), 34.

the Northern Song would even have had to end their reign sooner. With this in mind, certain parallels to other historic events and processes can be drawn. This will be done below, after looking at the importance of the treaty of Shanyuan as a successful answer to a challenge of history.

1.5 Shanyuan – a successful answer to the challenge of history

According to Arnold J. Toynbee world history is characterised by the rise and falls of cultures.¹⁵ The particular course of history is dependent on the answers the respective cultures find to meet the actual historical challenge. In this sense the treaty of Shanyuan was a successful answer to the course of events facing the Song dynasty at the end of the first millennium. While before China had been surrounded by more or less powerful nomad tribes, these subdued during the Tang dynasty due to its military and civilian power. During the Tang dynasty there were no doubts about the Chinese world order: “Tianxia” was at the centre of the world, imperial China, being meticulously graduated in a specific hierarchy. First, the core of the country is ruled by the Emperor, who holds the mandate of heaven. Second, there is a circle of subdued barbarians or non-Chinese minorities which are less powerful, though considered part of the Chinese Empire at its fringes and governed by civilian and military outposts of Chinese administration. Third, there is a circle of the distant states that are part of the Chinese civilisation as they pay their respect to the Chinese world order. Finally, there are those remote peoples which do not participate in Chinese culture, do not pay any tribute and are thereby beyond world civilisation. Due to the historical circumstances at the time, this particular world was never questioned until the Song dynasty.

The challenge facing China since the tenth century and in particular since the turn of the millennium was a completely different one. In the North-West, the North and the North-East, from Central Asia across Mongolia, Manchuria to Korea, it was dominated by nomadic peoples living on horseback but yet with an efficient political and social organisation.¹⁶ These peoples became an increasing threat for the Northern provinces of the Chinese empire as they did not fit into a place in the hierarchy of the Chinese world order. However, the Northern Song mastered this challenge with great innovation and by applying superior peace techniques instead of war and allowed people in the Northern provinces to go on with their lives as settlers, peasants, craftsmen and artists. Chinese leadership quickly understood that any military intervention against the powerful and

15 Toynbee (1958), 368.

16 Wittfogel/Feng (1949), 907.

well organised horsemen from the North would turn out to be a hopeless undertaking. This realisation alone, however, was not enough. They had to undergo a mental accomplishment of the new reality by redefining Chinese interests and their people in the North. This new definition of *tianxia* led to the emergence of powerful neighbouring states with which they could not negotiate at the level of tribute.

This created a fundamental change in the Chinese world order. Chinese officials adapted to the new reality where on the outskirts of China are not only tribute-paying countries but an equally legitimated state exists in the North for which all institutions have been created from scratch. For the wording of the treaty of Shanyuan formulations had to be found that documented this “equality” without harming the Chinese hierarchical world order yet expressed the new political interests of both sides. After the treaty of Shanyuan the government had to be reorganized so that the silver and silk deliveries for the “support of the Khitan army” could be strictly separated from the other “tribute-business”. A new ceremonial of equality between the Chinese court and the Khitan court had to be created. The Chinese were lucky that the Khitan Emperor given his junior age was seen as the “younger brother” of the Chinese Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 998–1022). This means that the familiar denomination of both families was understood. The Chinese mastered this challenge with sharp-minded assessment, political far-sightedness, and wealth of ideas, fantasy and creativity. The treaty of Shanyuan was in this process the most important cornerstone in Chinese history.

The further course of history, which in the end brought the Mongols and the Manchus to the Chinese throne, had unfortunately annulated this process. Apart from the recognition of the powerful peoples in the North from the Chinese empire there have not been any other “equal” relationships. By the time the European colonial powers knocked on their doors the Chinese were no longer used to such relationships. The arrogant answer of the Chinese Emperor Qianlong to the delegation of the British King George III is well known. The hierarchical world view of Chinese universality was reinstalled and the historical challenge was not recognised. Therein lies the explanation that no adequate answers to the new realities of the world could be found.

It seems like a thought-provoking experiment to explore what course history would have taken for Eastern Asia and Europe if China would have developed more in the spirit of Shanyuan. What if China would have shared more of a belief in the equality of independent sovereign states and the new definition of national interests as put forward in the treaty of Shanyuan? To the least, China would most probably have found a sooner and adequate response to Europe’s challenge.

2 Peace-making and peace-maintaining in today's world

Looking back at the developments in the 1000 years that have passed since the treaty of Shanyuan, these are undoubtedly one of the most exciting eras in the history of mankind. The old and established dynasties which provided a certain kind of continuity with the various notions of empires have disappeared both in China and Europe. The concept of the nation state as form of political organisation in sovereign units prevailed. Today even the last colonial powers, built by nations in Europe and Asia based on the model of former empires, have crumbled away. The European colonies established in Asia and Africa disappeared during the first half of the twentieth century. The Soviet Empire followed this with a delay of fifty years. This development will not be spared for China in the twenty-first century.

The question remains though, whether this development has made the world more peaceful. War, genocide, sorrow and misery have continued as an unbearable threat for the entire mankind throughout the twentieth century. The last decades clearly show that the idealistic approach to a nation state system has not been sufficient anywhere to guarantee a peaceful evolution of mankind. These positivist or idealistic approaches – as expressed in the American Declaration of Independence 1776 or in the French Revolution 1789 – have disappeared in the moment sheer power politics dominated the course of action. This development is particularly dangerous and risky in a period of power transition from one ideology to another. The history of the last three centuries clearly shows that there have been only two such transitions carried out in a peaceful way: When Great Britain handed over the flame of its empire to the United States of America and when the Soviet Union peacefully gave in to America's challenge of the arms race as it understood the pointlessness of such a race when the military and economic power of the US simply became too overwhelming. Once again, we encounter a situation in time where the right person is in the right place at the right time. In this case the great character of Mikhail Gorbachev helped to shape the course of history in a peaceful way. Though the potential of devastating wars was looming this did not materialise.

2.1 Questions of power

In the words of a political columnist of a German newspaper in April 2005 it sounds as follows:

Things are getting even more difficult due to the special character of China as a “challenger”. China is, like Germany and Japan, a “late” developer, who wants to catch up time. In a very short time developments are taking place which took the current leading power, the United States, one and a half dec-

ades. The “take-off” phase of this development – a dramatic change and an enormous power increase – is particularly hazardous. The mobilization of people, their interest in public affairs, their pride of their achievements and their hunger intensifies in this phase. The success justifies the claim of status, which is expressed with great impatience. Subtle feelings of inferiority and the impression of getting a raw deal mingle with national pride. Extreme forms of nationalism are evolving.¹⁷

This dangerous potential rests not in China alone. As this subject gains increasing importance, the world’s history will be more and more confronted with it. Müller continues to state:

When this development takes place in undemocratic societies, a great tension is rising: For the highly mobilized, urban forces of society, the valve of a political participation doesn’t exist here because the access to power is blocked. The nationalism allows an external redirection of this energy. The war as a tool of distraction, which channels this released energy, wasn’t unusual even in democratic countries during their “take-off” phase. (...) The nationalism is the new dangerous ideology of salvation.¹⁸

The power claim and erratic sovereignty of nations directly lead towards instability and, as history proves, anarchy. On the issue, Ulrich Menzel reminds of the anarchy which rules the world of states as

(...) an axiom in the dogma of international relations, particularly as history, as far as it goes, hardly records anything but a continuous succession of phases of war and phases of peace between orient and occident.¹⁹

The concept of national sovereignty has led to a system with an absence of an international monopoly of power and the use of force all of which has made periods of lasting peace and regulated international relations less common. The concept of sovereign nation states dates back to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia and has been established globally with the European conquest and phase of decolonisation.

Though peace may be a political goal that is well worth striving for, it can be attained only by well-armed state forming a risky target of aggression for potential attackers. (...) This is reflected in the *jus ad bellum*, the most forceful expression of state sovereignty in Realist thought even in classical times.²⁰

In whichever terms or format, wars are not beneficial to either side, both winners and losers. This painful conclusion has taken political elites a

17 Müller (2005), author’s translation.

18 Müller, *ibid.*

19 Menzel (2004), 4.

20 *Ibid.*

long time to realise that the resolution of conflicts of interest at the international level through compromise is more beneficial and a legal framework for international relations has consequently been instated.²¹

This returns to the starting point of the section as it is the same realisation that war is not beneficial to either side that was facing the players at the time of the treaty of Shanyuan. It was exactly this experience – in the end all sides are losing – that opened the opportunity for negotiating and maintaining the treaty of Shanyuan alive for a long time. It based on the Chinese Song dynasty with its great knowledge of defensive battles against the peoples in the North and also by Wang Jizong, who lived at the court of Khitan.

2.2 The role of individuals

Looking at examples from present history several examples can be drawn upon to show the important role of individuals. At present, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is marked by the state of Israel being much more powerful in military and economic terms. However, it has not achieved much progress in peace by not accepting the equality of the two sides at the negotiating table. There was a short interval during the Oslo Peace Process, when it seemed that circumstances were similar to those in the Shanyuan peace process: a combination of new thinking, flexibility and mediation coming together and creating an opportunity for peace. However, with the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, the peace process unravelled and a second Intifada has resulted.

Another example are the Balkans in the 1990s, where one can equally observe some of these traits in some of the leaders. For example, President Alija Izetbegovic while demanding the establishment of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina accepted the reality on the ground resulting in the establishment of a Serb Republic as an entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the other side, President Slobodan Milosevic did not have the foresight or the advice of people around him and in the end he lost every battle. There were opportunities to try and keep the construction of Yugoslavia together, but any attempt in that direction was obstructed by the totalitarian thinking of Milosevic. This applies in particular to the case of Kosovo, where Serbia has lost all total control and sovereignty over a territory it calls the cradle of the Serb nation. All this forms part of a process that has turned a relatively progressive country in the Eastern block into one of the most underdeveloped countries in Europe, due to the ideologies and incompetence of a

21 *Ibid.*

single secretary-general of the communist party. A wiser and more experienced politician would have certainly not brought the country into such misfortune and possibly Yugoslavia could have been maintained as a respected federation.

Both Shanyuan and these examples from more recent history show that it is also individuals who play an important and decisive part in a course of events. Individuals can influence history both in positive and negative ways. This thesis should not be dismissed but continue to be discussed and taken into consideration.

2.3 Mediation in the Balkans

The same experience can also be drawn from the war in the Balkans. Since 1993 I try to communicate this experience or realisation through the concept of mediation: Nobody is gaining anything out of hatred, hostility and war. All are great losers. The Serbs are less aware of this fact, but it will bitterly strike them in the years to come, when they will inevitably lose even one of their last territories, the Kosovo. At the same time there will be lessons to be learned for the interethnic conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina where I was active as International Mediator (1995–2004) or in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Kosovo where I am currently working. In these cases it becomes clear that there has to be a cautious transition of power:

The “national interests” is once again being proclaimed by Western super-powers as the highest authority of western democracies. Whereas especially the USA, as the leading nation of the West, is creating a climate of insecurity and incalculability through arbitrary interpretation of these “national interests” which is leading to great worries and even to fear especially among smaller countries. No wonder that the emerging states of the former Soviet Union vehemently want to be part of the NATO. How else could they protect their small, free existence from tired out neighbouring states in this international environment?²²

3 Final Reflections

Drawing conclusions from the course of our history with the realisation of the lessons learned from the treaty of Shanyuan, several observations can be made. Today, each nation state must be built on the concept of freedom in a democratic and constitutional state. This cannot be done by imposing

22 Schwarz-Schilling (1997), 98.

democracy from the top but rather through a process of convincing the people in local communities, through a bottom-up approach. It has to be made clear that the sovereign states will have to renounce a part of their sovereignty to originate a European order the legitimacy of which is based on international law as can be seen in the European Union and for the world order in the United Nations Organisation. It appears that once again we are encountering a very difficult period in the transition of power.

Most likely neither one of us will be alive long enough to witness the great master plan for the entire globe – though it seems that what has been described is a general trend that more or less carries through regionally. In this respect, these regional developments become the building block for the future world order. My work in the Balkans has made me see the challenge of taking a small region through this transition of power for the sake of a more peaceful world order. Others are trying the same in other regions and sharing similar experiences. Yet others are trying to ensure this peaceful transition of power at the global level within the system of the UN.

Only time will tell whether our efforts will turn out to be (at least) as successful as the efforts of those who negotiated the treaty of Shanyuan and who created an international system of peaceful power constellation that lasted for more than 100 years. My respect and my admiration is all the greater for those brave people who, despite the established slogans and dogmatic ideologies faced the historical challenge and came up with a forward-looking answer. One thing we can be sure of: What we all need is courage, courage like those who established a treaty like Shanyuan and courage for those contributing to peace and freedom for the twenty-first century.

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