

## Rethinking transatlantic relations

With the election of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States of America, a clear majority of US citizens have voted in favour of social cohesion and against exclusion. The policy space available to President Biden will be severely restricted on account of the difficult legacy of his predecessor. The attack by hundreds of violent Trump supporters on the Capitol in Washington shows their contempt for democracy and underlines the massive polarization of American society. It will be the legacy of Trump and his supporters to have instigated this polarization through lies and misinformation. The United States needs a new social consensus, including a commitment to democracy and the rule of law. The electoral victory of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris is nevertheless a relief as **Germany and Europe can now take this opportunity to forge a new start to transatlantic relations with the new US administration.** We Social Democrats want to seize this momentum to rethink and reshape our relations with the United States.

**The United States remains Germany's most important and closest partner outside of Europe.** The US enabled a fresh democratic start for West Germany post-1945. Our countries are bound by our historical ties and the defining role of the United States in structuring the post-war world order, in rebuilding Europe, and in German reunification. We share the values of freedom and democracy, a commitment to the rule of law, to human rights and to the market economy as the regulatory framework for our economy, with the United States, the oldest modern democracy in the world. These shared values are the very foundation of the rule-based multilateral world order which Germany, Europe and the United States are committed to in the international arena. Over the last four years, our shared values have unfortunately shifted into the background and been, in part, deliberately, undermined.

While the presidency of Donald Trump has not been the root cause of all points of disagreement in transatlantic relations, his frequently destructive rhetoric and disregard for long-term allies have brought relations down to a low. Trump's rejection of the multilateral system of the United Nations, as seen in his withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement and blocking of the WTO dispute settlement system, has caused considerable damage. At the same time, authoritarian and autocratically ruled states, such as the People's Republic of China and Russia, and states with an expansive militaristic foreign policy, such as Turkey, have quickly filled the political power vacuum left by US policy in various regions of the world. Fundamental changes in our transatlantic relations had already emerged under Barack Obama, e.g., in the discourse on NATO burden-sharing, the increased focus of the US on the Asia-Pacific region, the pause in negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and even under George W. Bush with the Iraq War.

**For us Social Democrats, this makes it all the more important to now proactively shape the course of our transatlantic relations together with the future US government.** In Germany and Europe, as in the United States, we are struggling with the social and economic consequences of the corona pandemic, the greatest challenge we have faced since the end of the World War II. On an international level, we must take decisive action to counteract the climate crisis, global poverty and structural inequality as set out by the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, strengthen multilateral institutions, intensify our efforts towards disarmament and arms control as part of our peace policy, and put global economic and trade relations on a stable and sustainable foundation. Only if we join forces can we uphold the international

order in accordance with our shared values in the systemic competition between the democratic rule of law with a liberal and social market economy on the one hand and the Chinese model of authoritarian state capitalism on the other. **In this spirit, we strive to forge a transatlantic partnership of equals with the new US government, with a will to return to a respectful, constructive, and forward-looking dialogue even in case of disagreement.**

Our transatlantic relations are not just built on shared political and economic interests but have always been embedded in a mutual social and cultural understanding and benefited from manifold networks between our two continents. We must now breathe new life into these networks so that we can build a solid foundation for transatlantic relations that goes above and beyond the official channels. A foundation on which mutual understanding can continue to grow and solutions found to common social issues on both sides of the Atlantic. We should not only develop the channels of dialogue and communication with our current partners but also increase our efforts to enter into dialogue with the whole breadth of US society.

The United States and Europe have both changed. In the United States, the gap between domestic policy requirements and foreign policy challenges has continued to grow. The deep social divisions and rising political polarisation impede majorities and compromises. Right-wing extremists, nationalists and racist movements have moved the parameters of the social discourse to the right and increased pressure on our democracies in both the United States and Europe. In Europe as in the United States, the pandemic has remorselessly laid bare the social tensions within and shortcomings of our societies. The Biden administration will be facing a very tall agenda when it moves into the White House on 20 January 2021, and we Europeans also face major challenges ahead.

## **A strong EU as a bedrock for transatlantic relations**

We Social Democrats firmly believe that improving transatlantic relations does not release Europe from its duty to further unity within its borders and take on more responsibility for itself and in the world. In view of the domestic policy challenges facing the United States, combined with the ambitions of China and the difficult relationship with Russia, we want to strengthen Europe's assertiveness and sovereignty within its borders and beyond. A proactive and sovereign Europe will prove essential to overcome the global challenges we face. **Only united can we Europeans be a credible and equal partner to the United States** and ensure that our course remains in place during and beyond the term of the upcoming US administration. We need to push on with deepening the European Union, raising consensus, and increasing its capacity to act. The progress achieved in coordinated economic policy in the form of the Recovery Fund could serve as a seed for the development of a Fiscal Union. We must take steps towards more coordinated policy in other areas, particularly in foreign affairs and defence policy. **Only then can we stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States to tackle the urgent tasks ahead.** We must honestly state our different interests so that we can identify common ground and jointly and collaboratively shape the international agenda.

We now have a time window of opportunities and challenges. Together with the United States, we want to set new impetus and priorities in our response to the pandemic, in fighting the climate crisis, in establishing fair and sustainable global economic and trade relations, in foreign affairs and defence policy, in our relations with China, Russia and Iran, and in our social, cultural, and scientific interaction, and in digitalisation. The rise of China and its ambitions as a key global player necessitates adjustments at the global level. Structuring a global response to the economic, ecological, social, and political challenges of our times will be almost impossible to implement without China. In the escalating struggle for hegemony between the United States and China, a strong and sovereign Europe must form the basis of our action. We concur with the upcoming US administration that we will only succeed in tackling the major challenges of our times together and by strengthening multilateral institutions and rules.

Democracies are under great pressure across the world. While many dictators and autocrats have remained securely in the saddle for extended periods of time, established democracies have suffered setbacks in the

last few years, including the curtailment of civil rights and political liberties. With his 'America First' strategy and proximity to autocratic rulers, Donald Trump became a catalyst for the global regression of democracy. Joe Biden will mark the return of the United States as a global protagonist for more democracy on the international arena. The president-elect has already pledged to host a global 'Summit for Democracy' in his first year of office as a key element of the new US government's policy to further democracy. The summit will focus on three areas of collaboration – fighting corruption, defending against authoritarianism, and advancing human rights at home and abroad. Biden has, for example, specifically announced that he will increase international efforts against illegal tax havens. We Social Democrats are well aware that the regression of democracy must be reversed – by working in close coordination with the United States and with other democratic countries.

## Combating the pandemic and strengthening global health policy for the long term

The corona crisis has caused huge social and economic upheavals on a global scale, and starkly increased the visibility of the vulnerabilities, weaknesses, and social tensions within our societies. US and European governments have resorted to economic stimulus packages to mitigate the economic damage to their national economies, which is still high nonetheless. Well-functioning social security systems and state aid in the form of short-time work allowances and compensation payments have been and remain a decisive tool to protect our populations from the worst effects of the pandemic.

**Fighting the coronavirus pandemic is a priority for us, both within the country and on an international level.** The pandemic has had drastic consequences beyond Europe and the United States, further revealing the degree of interconnectedness and vulnerability of our world. We Social Democrats want to work together with the US under the G7/G20 framework to wholeheartedly support the provision and fair distribution of medical products, medication and vaccines across the world. We must work to overcome the acute crisis and aid countries with weak healthcare systems, countries in regions of conflict, and people in humanitarian emergencies. **We will only manage to win the fight against the pandemic by tackling it in global unity.** We regard the vaccines that are being developed as global public goods. Over the past few years, Germany has built up a leadership role in global health policy within the G7/G20 and the Alliance for Multilateralism, and has considerably expanded its funding of bilateral and multinational approaches. We expressly welcome President Biden's pledge to rescind his country's withdrawal from the WHO, thereby heralding the return of the United States to international collaboration on health issues. This renewed US commitment should also be tangible in the upcoming global distribution of vaccines against the coronavirus and initiatives such as COVAX and Gavi. We need a strong and independent international body on health issues. **By reforming the global health architecture, Europe and the United States can show their potential as a benevolent shaping force of the international order.**

## Structuring social and ecological transformation and fighting the climate crisis

Even though the corona crisis is currently defining many aspects of our everyday lives and political action on all fronts, fighting the greatest challenge of our times – the climate crisis – remains a top priority for us. The climate crisis is not only jeopardizing the natural resources across the world on which all life depends but is also endangering both the economic and social development of many countries and the respect of fundamental human rights such as the right to live, to food, water, and good health. The devastating impact of forest fires, heatwaves and storms, and the huge economic damage these cause also in the United States and Europe, have made many people aware of the climate crisis and its tangible effects.

We need to set the course for a greener future now, particularly in view of the enormous sums that are currently being mobilised to rebuild our economies in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. We cannot go back to the old 'normal'. **The time has come for a more sustainable, cleaner, more socially equitable, egalitarian and climate-friendly restart of our economies, industries and societies.** We Social Democrats therefore support the approach followed by reconstruction efforts on both sides of the Atlantic, in

the shape of Biden's Build Back Better plan, the European Green Deal and the Next Generation EU. **Only a socially equitable and ecologically sustainable transformation of our economies will provide our societies with sustainable prosperity and jobs and protect our environment for future generations.**

**We need to take rapid action on many levels to mitigate the climate crisis.** The announcement of the incoming US government of its intention to re-join the Paris climate agreement is a huge opportunity to jointly tackle the climate crisis with focused multilateral policies. The appointment of former foreign minister, John Kerry, to the newly created role of presidential climate envoy is an important signal as he is a long-term advocate of multilateral efforts in the fight against climate change. The climate negotiations in the framework of COP 26 in November 2021 will be decisive in determining whether we can inject sufficient momentum into the reduction of carbon emissions to reverse current trends worldwide. It is our joint responsibility to take decisive action to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees and to define concrete steps to reduce carbon emissions, reach the Sustainable Development Goals and prevent temperatures from permanently exceeding the planetary boundaries. **Germany, Europe and the United States must take a pioneering role in fighting the climate crisis and pave the way for a decarbonisation of industrialised nations around the world.** To maintain competitiveness despite the high investment costs needed to transform the different economic sectors, we should work towards multilateral solutions to limit carbon emissions. If it does not prove possible to implement these solutions fast enough then we should work together with the United States to introduce a carbon border tax on carbon-intensive imports, ideally within the framework of the WTO or its further development.

**The United States, the second largest emitter of carbon emissions after China, and Germany, the sixth largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions, both have a particularly large role to play in fighting the climate crisis.** Europe and the United States must therefore work together with other countries on an international level to drive the annual mobilisation of at least 100 billion US dollars for the Green Climate Fund from 2020, the UN Adaptation Fund, and the implementation of further climate financing tools to fund climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, particularly in the countries of the global south. Potential for collaboration in these efforts between the United States, China and Europe needs to be identified and exploited.

**On both sides of the Atlantic, we must tackle the challenge of making the transition from our current industrial societies towards sustainable production processes and lifestyles equitable.** In key sectors, such as renewables, green technologies, and sustainable mobility, we want a close partnership with the United States on a national, federal and municipal level, sharing information and experiences on the measures needed to achieve the social and ecological conversion of our industrial societies. Our shared objective must be to lead by example and develop, foster and make available technological innovations in areas such as energy storage technologies and green technology standards.

## **Building a new foundation for our transatlantic trade relations**

The EU and the US are the two closest-knit regions in the world. In 2019, the United States was the top destination for goods from the EU and the second largest exporter of goods to the EU. The investment stock of German companies alone amounted to 522 billion US dollars in 2019. German companies are the fourth largest foreign employer in the United States, providing 700,000 jobs. Our economic strength and close ties to the United States gives us the opportunity to jointly develop the multilateral trading system further, strengthen transatlantic trade relations and concurrently de-escalate current bilateral tensions.

Over the last few years, the debate on the structuring of global trade governance rules has focussed on the international trading system. The fatal moves of the Trump administration, in withdrawing from multilateral agreements and institutions, and undermining multilateral trading rules, as well as the conduct of China, with no efforts to reform over the last few years and refusing to become fully integrated into the rule-based world trading system, throws doubt on the very viability of cooperative approaches.

At the same time, social and ecological sustainability factors need to be afforded more priority in trade agreements. Trade agreements must become a more effective tool in the global fight against climate change and work safety violations with binding social, human rights, and ecological standards, as well as concrete complaints and sanction mechanisms.

**For us Social Democrats, trade policy is first and foremost an instrument to make globalisation equitable.** We do not question the principle of open borders, many high-level and well-paid jobs in Germany are dependent on foreign trade. Trade policy must nonetheless be based on fair multilateral rules and take account of all aspects of sustainability. That means safeguarding the opportunities for development of trade partners, also in the global south, and ensuring humane, equitable and sustainable production along the whole supply chain and in the provision of services.

### Jointly reforming multilateral trading

**After the paralysing years of the Trump administration, efforts must now be directed towards regaining the United States as a partner and working together to breathe life back into the multilateral trading system.** The focus here must be on the World Trade Organisation and strengthening and expanding its role as a supervisory, negotiating and dispute settlement body. Multiple aspects need to be improved and the backlog of reforms is massive. As the EU and the United States together account for a third of all global trade, 60 percent of all direct investment and a third of all patent applications, they have the necessary weight to set a new multilateral dynamic in motion.

In close collaboration with the United States, we therefore want to: **firstly**, further develop the WTO rules to step up environmental and resource protection, and adapt the rules to the challenges of electronic trading; **secondly**, dissolve the blockade in the appointment of judges in the WTO's appellate body and strengthen WTO as a dispute settlement authority; **thirdly**, drive forward the completion of the Doha Development Round, building bridges between the EU and the United States, China, and India; **fourthly**, further develop the global trading rules, also through plurilateral agreements under the umbrella of the WTO, and strengthening the areas of human rights, climate and environmental policy, and working conditions. We Social Democrats are open to reform efforts on the part of the United States, e.g., in the procedural processes of the WTO.

**Furthermore, coordinated action with the United States at the highest level with regard to China is an important step to prevent market-distorting subsidies and to jointly call upon and enforce China to follow the agreed standards for state-owned companies and to comply with the rules of fairness and positive reciprocity.** For instance, the United States and the EU should together drive forward the resumption of the plurilateral negotiations within the framework of the WTO, first commenced in 2014, that aimed to extensively liberalise trading in goods relevant to the environment, so-called green goods, or environmental goods, and which broke down mainly due to the refusal of China to make compromises.

### De-escalating economic tensions

In constructive dialogue with the future Biden administration, we want to resolve the present trade disputes in transatlantic relations, such as the tariffs on steel and aluminium, punitive tariffs currently in place, and the tariffs the United States has threatened to impose on European cars. We want to take the same approach in the discourse on trade deficits and surpluses, a subject which we intend to address in its entirety, focussing not just on goods and products but also on, e.g., services and investment income. We strictly reject the application of extraterritorial sanctions against longstanding partners to further own economic or political interests. Europe must increase its resilience to extraterritorial sanctions by developing robust and innovative mechanisms to protect European companies, organisations, and individuals, and those operating in Europe against unjustified sanctions on the part of third-party states. Discussions need to be held on legal and practical approaches and tools that secure, e.g., financial and/or legal assistance.

## Strengthening digitalisation, regulating data governance, and taxing digital corporations

Digitalisation and technologisation increasingly form the very basis of competitiveness and the capability to act. We Social Democrats want Europe to regain, maintain and sustainably expand its digital sovereignty. The protection of digital systems and infrastructure is particularly important for German and European (cyber) security.

**Europe must steadily expand its technological and digital capabilities in order to reduce its dependence on the big non-European technology corporations that dominate the market, e.g., in data and network infrastructure, and to gain the economic and digital sovereignty necessary to drive a people and value-based approach.** Steps in this direction include the EU Data Governance Act slated for 2021 and projects such as GAIA X to create a GDPR-compliant cloud infrastructure and interoperability – two important milestones on the path to more independence and security. At the same time, the development of new technologies such as quantum computing, artificial intelligence, space science and the expansion of 5G mobile networks is opening new opportunities for collaboration that can benefit Europe and the United States.

The linking up of large volumes of data from all different parts of society harbours huge innovation potential and will herald many technological innovations. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that policymakers must establish a global regulatory framework to counteract the rules of play set up by the large corporations. We are concerned about the monopolies and dominance of a few internet corporations and therefore support the calls being voiced on both sides of the Atlantic to scrutinise their compliance with competition law. To counteract the risks of digitalisation we need to strengthen digital standard-setting and dismantle monopolistic positions. The EU has taken a leading role internationally with its General Data Protection Regulation, the amendments to European competition law, the EU White Paper on Artificial Intelligence and the European data strategy. With the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) adopted in early 2020, California became the first US state to follow suit with more stringent data protection regulation. **The EU and the United States should work together to put forward an ambitious international data act** that defines individual and collective data protection rights and establishes standards for data sharing that are in the public interest and that ensure global interoperability.

## Fighting tax evasion

Furthermore, within the OECD Inclusive Framework, we want to reach agreement on a reform of the international tax system. Urgent action is needed to stop the tax evasion practices of multinational corporations. In our opinion, essential components of this agreement will be a redistribution of taxing rights and a global minimum tax rate to counteract international low-tax competition. In June 2020, the United States withdrew from negotiations on the redistribution of taxing rights on account of the upcoming presidential elections. The new US administration should re-join the negotiations to enable a joint multilateral solution. If progress is not made on the multilateral level, we, the EU, will have to drive ahead alone and introduce an EU-wide tax on digital corporations to ensure that they participate in financing the public sector.

## Renewing our transatlantic security partnership

The electoral victory of Joe Biden as the new US president also opens up opportunities to renew global peace and security policy. We advocate a transatlantic security policy that protects our citizens and our open, pluralistic societies from global and transnational threats, and that fosters peaceful and self-determined development.

We firmly believe that security is not divisible. We will not be secure until our neighbours also live in security. This is the heart of our comprehensive and cooperative security policy which seeks to tackle the root causes of violence and conflicts, and to prevent war from being used as a political instrument. Problems can never be solved by military means alone. An intelligent and sustainable foreign and security policy combines various approaches and mechanisms and is implemented jointly with allies. Such a policy includes

diplomacy, crisis prevention and conflict management, development cooperation, economic sanctions, and, as a last resort, mandated military operations.

## Strategically readjusting transatlantic foreign and security policy

To strategically readjust transatlantic foreign and security policy, we would first have to reach a common and extensive agreement on our current situation in security policy and interests at the highest political level. The more we concur with the United States and the clearer our division of responsibilities and approaches, the more effective our future common foreign and security policy will be. **Close coordination in foreign and security policy issues, between Germany and Europe on the one hand and with the United States on the other, is therefore of central importance.** Democratic support is important in this area to enable bold decision-making in security and defence policy and to inject new momentum into transatlantic relations and make them strong going forward. We are aware that the future US government will increasingly shift the focus of its foreign and security policy from the Middle East and Europe towards the Asia-Pacific region, in particular to stand its stead against China. As Europeans we must take on more responsibility for our own security and stability, particularly among our neighbours.

## 'Yes' to NATO and 'yes' to Alliance defence

We firmly believe in the NATO as the framework for continued transatlantic cooperation in security policy and national defence in the future. The primary objective of security policy is to protect NATO territory from violent external intervention. We can best ensure this security in an alliance of allies.

In the last few years, we have strengthened the responsibility of Europe, also for its immediate neighbours. As Europeans, we must steadily proceed on this path to share the burdens and build up a strong and sovereign Europe within the NATO. This is a particularly urgent task in view of the many crises in our neighbouring regions.

As a NATO partner, we have invested much and provided support, in Afghanistan in particular. We must therefore ensure that the gains that have been laboriously achieved for the Afghan population are preserved. In our opinion, a reduction of troops in Afghanistan must be linked to clear conditions so as not to endanger the peace process. We owe it to the Afghan population that the country does not fall back into war, chaos and even more violence. The NATO reflection process initiated by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas aims to strengthen the political dimension of the Alliance. Based on this report and its recommendations, we can work on further strengthening the Alliance, also in its role as a central transatlantic platform to coordinate our security and defence policy. European sovereignty has grown over the last few years. We Europeans are not just asking what the United States can do for us but what we can do by and for ourselves to strengthen our own security and make the transatlantic partnership more balanced.

Our mutual objective is to ensure that the NATO remains prepared to tackle current and future security policy challenges. The conduct of all NATO partners should be aimed towards cooperation, instead of fuelling conflict and eroding mutual trust. In this spirit, we concur with the recommendations of the reflection group to update the strategic concept of the NATO of 2010, to reassert our commitment to the values and principles of the Washington Treaty, and to reanimate the transatlantic partnership.

We must find a common approach towards China and its increasing prominence as a global military player. Our relations with China open up opportunities that we should use, as well as challenges that we must brace ourselves for. On a national level, we have contributed to this with the adoption of the national policy guidelines on the Indo-Pacific. On the EU level, preparations for an Indo-Pacific strategy have been initiated. The Alliance needs a comprehensive approach to deal with China as a partner, competitor, and systemic rival. The answer cannot be to 'decouple' from China, as propagated by the Trump administration, or a one-sided focus on the potential threat posed by China. We regard dialogue with China across system borders and in accordance with universal values as a key component of our China policy.

## **Strengthening institutions of cooperative security**

Our transatlantic partnership in security policy should not be restricted to the defence of NATO territory alone. European and transatlantic security is based on the ability to enter into dialogue, find compromises and cooperate. Organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are an essential component of this comprehensive approach. They stand for cooperative security and enable shared standards to form the basis of political action. It is the task of all member states to strengthen these organisations. The Paris Charter of 1990, the 'Magna Carta' of European and transatlantic security, addresses the indivisible security within OSCE territory. This understanding should remain the basis for achieving a stable European security order. We believe the political and diplomatic commitment within the framework of these two organisations is of decisive importance and, with it, the resources at their disposal. This means, in essence, the financing of the organisations and the implementation of their peacebuilding mandate. In the past, the United States has not been the only country to constrain the capacity of these institutions to act through the often very late payment of the meagre mandatory contributions while, on the other hand, attempting to indirectly set their agenda with voluntary additional contributions. Yet, particularly in view of the current challenges posed by crises and tensions both on a regional level and between the superpowers, the United States and China, ensuring effective and neutral institutions of collective security are in the highest interests of the West.

## **Putting disarmament and arms control on the agenda**

Intensified transatlantic cooperation must go hand in hand with a resumption of efforts to advance arms control and disarmament. The violation and revocation of the INF Treaty is a direct threat to us Europeans and we must therefore take a resolute and united stand. We also need an immediate extension to the New START Treaty to reduce strategic nuclear arms, and a return of all parties to the Treaty on Open Skies. We finally need Washington and Moscow to commence serious talks. We urgently need initiatives for disarmament and arms control as already undertaken by the German foreign minister in the framework of the Stockholm Initiative. Our long-term objective must be to integrate China and India into the arms control architecture.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been under great pressure for decades. We firmly believe that we can only sustainably dissuade emerging nuclear countries from building their own nuclear weapons if large powers refrain from starting a new nuclear arms race with new types of weapons. To stop this from happening, nuclear weapons states need to take on their responsibility to advance nuclear disarmament as called for by the Stockholm countries. We are now confronted with a new nuclear order that is much more complex, untransparent and, above all, more dangerous than the relative 'balance of terror' because the outdated deterrence categories of the Cold War have lost their effectiveness.

## **Confronting geopolitical tensions**

From a German and European perspective, we Social Democrats see an urgent need to take action, together with the United States, in our relations with China, Russia and Iran. The past few years have been marked by transatlantic dissent on how to tackle these challenges, which has ultimately benefited autocratic regimes. In the next few years, we should focus on countering attacks on our rule-based and liberal international order with joint and resolute action. We will only manage to strengthen the rule-based and liberal international order by taking coordinated action to tackle current hotspots of geopolitical tensions.

## **Integrate China in the rule-based world order**

The much-proclaimed 'new bloc confrontation' between the United States and China is not in our interests. We do not hold a purely mitigative strategy to be appropriate in view of the immense global economic interdependence, particularly in the case of China. We would strive to strike an adequate balance between the different components of partnership, competition and systemic rivalry in our relations with China. The respective weight of these components will remain a central topic of discussion in transatlantic relations. Our guiding principle is that of a united Europe that effectively represents its interests on the global level and

avoids one-sided dependence. In order to achieve this, we must continue to build the economic, technological and scientific capabilities of Europe.

In order to uphold and strengthen the multilateral order, China must be encouraged to meet its international legal obligations and to take on more responsibility for rule-based collaboration. With the return of the United States as a pillar of international order, we must jointly emphasise the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights and vehemently oppose China's attempts to challenge them. We should jointly call on China to take on an active role in multilateral arms control and to make its development financing more sustainable and more transparent. Europe and the United States should urge China to relinquish its special and differential treatment within the WTO by dropping its status as a developing country and participate more actively in the debate on reforming the WTO.

### **Integrating Russia in conflict resolution and arms control**

In Germany's bilateral relations with the United States, Russia has always been an issue on which Washington, despite all its scepticism, has valued the political experience of Berlin in dealing with Moscow. Relations with Russia have been marked by frequent setbacks, including the annexation of the Crimea in violation of international law, the support of separatists in eastern Ukraine, interferences in elections and democratic processes in the EU and the United States, and the application of the internationally banned chemical warfare agent novichok to eliminate domestic political opponents. Russia regularly violates international law which puts its relations to its neighbours under strain.

**It is nonetheless in the interests of Germany and the EU to work with the United States to prevent relations with Russia from deteriorating further** and put them on a course that enables collaboration on specific political issues. There are too many international conflicts that cannot be resolved without Russia, such as in Iran, Syria and in the eastern neighbourhood of Europe. The top priority of our action is safeguarding peace in Europe. Progress towards this objective will only be possible through dialogue and binding agreements, based on a solid foundation of military defence capabilities and economic sanction mechanisms. Particularly the latter will be a key instrument under the new US administration. The debate on Nord Stream 2 is a difficult challenge we face. In order not to compromise our own interests, the EU must develop defence mechanisms against extraterritorial sanctions. The Nord Stream 2 energy infrastructure project remains essential for German and European energy supply security and as a bridging technology on the way to CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral energy generation. The "Foundation for Climate and Environmental Protection MV" now to be set up by the state government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern also serves the goal of bringing this important project to a successful conclusion. At the same time, we should make efforts to better recognise the legitimate interests of our partners through working together more closely at an earlier stage. In acknowledgement of the increasing significance of Asia in US foreign and security policy, this also means stepping up the commitment of EU member states to safeguard the security of Europe and its neighbouring regions. This also means increasing efforts in arms control on the European continent, which will not be possible without Russia and the United States.

### **Reactivating and further developing the Iran nuclear deal**

In his election campaign, Joe Biden raised the prospect of the United States returning to the nuclear deal with Iran (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPoA). This signifies a clear break from Trump's failed policy of applying maximum pressure. Iran is likely to be in favour of restarting negotiations despite its contradictory rhetoric, but the situation has changed completely in comparison to 2015 when the first agreement was concluded. On the Iranian side, confidence in the negotiated solutions is low. The moderate forces have been discredited due to the failure of the JCPoA to deliver the promised economic benefits. Regional security has not improved, with relations between many countries, between some Gulf states and Iran for example, deteriorating further. At the same time, Iran has moved a lot closer to China and Russia in the past four years, both economically and politically.

**Europe has a decisive role to play in the mediation of de-escalation measures and preparations for a new nuclear deal (JCPoA plus).** Germany, as part of the E3 (Germany, France, the United Kingdom), should take a proactive leading role in this process to pave the way for new negotiations between the United States and Iran by negotiating confidence-building measures. To be more specific, that means encouraging the United States to tangibly ease sanctions as soon as possible if Iran agrees to comply with the provisions of the JCPoA in exchange, verifiably bringing down the level of uranium enrichment to the level agreed therein. A first step should be the conclusion of an interim agreement in spring 2021. A comprehensive new agreement following on from that should cover both missiles and regional security in addition to a nuclear dossier.

## **Strengthening the transatlantic exchange between our societies and cultures**

We want to strengthen the broad social and cultural exchange through conventional channels. Using the toolkits of foreign culture and education policy, we want to expand the cultural diplomacy between our continents. Tourist travel, town twinning, international school partnerships, the international mobility of trainees, students and doctoral candidates, and other economic, scientific, cultural and political exchange forums and parliamentary meetings on every level all make an important contribution to our mutual understanding.

For us Social Democrats it is important to learn from the successful experiences of the Year of German-American Friendship, 'Wunderbar together', and promote the cultural work of the Goethe Institute, the work of political foundations, donor organisations, such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, transatlantic organisations and think tanks and civil society networks. We must use these channels of social policy and the direct exchange between citizens to broaden our perspective over and beyond the conventional issues of security, trade and foreign policy, and to generate new momentum. We want to expand and further develop the approach of science diplomacy in foreign science policy. Topics such as the protection of workers in the platform economy, trade union organisation, and equal opportunities are also very important for the United States. We should also further intensify the sharing of knowledge in research and in science. Fighting discrimination on account of gender, religion, ethnic or social origin, bodily, mental or psychological impairment, and sexual orientation remains a major task on both sides of the Atlantic. We can work on this by keeping the ties between our societies vibrant and in dealing with issues of tolerance and religious and cultural freedom. We must also make the networks more diverse, more female and less dominated by elites.

Finally, we need to place the spotlight on the issue of shaping our democratic societies, processes and institutions in cooperation with the United States. In Europe and the United States, support is growing for the blueprints of authoritarian states and populist leaders which jeopardise the very foundations of our liberal order based on the rule of law. Our joint response to this threat will be crucial for the further sustainable development of our liberal societies.

The US president-elect, Joe Biden, has announced his resolve to assert the values of our democracies against the autocratic trends across the world. We Social Democrats want to seize this opportunity and move forward together with the United States.