

## Position Paper of the SPD Parliamentary Group

# Social Democratic international policy in the *Zeitenwende*

## I. Putin's war of aggression as a watershed moment

More than 75 years after the end of the Second World War and a little more than 20 years after the end of the Yugoslav Wars, another war yet again dominates Europe. Contrary to international law, brutal, and inhumane, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has undermined the painstakingly-constructed security order after the end of the power-bloc confrontation. In his speech at the German Bundestag on 27 February 2022, Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz thus rightly called the war a watershed moment.

We stand firmly in solidarity with Ukraine. Germany has supported Ukraine bilaterally with over 12 billion euros in 2022. We offer financial, humanitarian, military, and diplomatic support so that Ukraine can defend its territory and sovereignty successfully. We do so in concert with our international partners in the EU, NATO, and G7. We reject national unilateralism. For the first time in its history, Germany has delivered weapons and equipment in large amounts to a war zone, so that Ukraine can defend itself against the invasion contrary to international law.

Many Ukrainians have lost their homes and had to flee due to the war. The Federal Government has allocated means to mitigate the pressing needs, for instance by financing accommodation for internally displaced persons and securing necessary infrastructure such as power and water supplies. Moreover Germany has already welcomed more than one million Ukrainians and supports neighbouring countries of Ukraine, in particular Moldova. In addition there are bilateral budget aids to secure the state capabilities of Ukraine and armaments worth over 2 billion euros that have already been made available by Germany. Furthermore Germany is the largest contributor to the refinancing fund of the European Peace Facility, whose total amount is 5.5 billion euros. Ukraine's armed forces will be strengthened specifically with this money. The training of Ukrainian soldiers in EU member state territories in the framework of an EU training mission serves this goal and in which Germany plays a coordinating role.

Despite the ongoing hostilities it is also about supporting Ukraine in its reconstruction and coordinating the necessary measures for it. The Federal Government is working on a "Marshall Plan" for the long-term reconstruction of Ukraine in coordination with Ukraine and international partners. Initiated by the Federal Chancellor and the EU Commission, representatives of international organisations and think tanks as well as research bodies, civil society, and the private sector assembled in Berlin in October 2022 for this purpose in an international conference. An international structure for the reconstruction and a platform to coordinate our support measures for Ukraine have thus been established.

We have imposed far-reaching sanctions as well as oil and coal embargoes jointly with our international partners to isolate Russia politically and economically, and at the same time leaving the door open for diplomatic solutions. For we know wars do not normally end on the battlefield. In any negotiation the principle remains: not without Ukraine, not over the heads of Ukraine. The G7 states have outlined their prerequisites for a peace settlement in their statement on 11 October 2022 in agreement with Ukraine. A particular emphasis is placed on respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine as enshrined in the Charters of the United Nations (UN), safeguarding Ukraine's ability to defend itself in the future, ensuring Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction including exploring avenues to do so with funds from Russia, and pursuing accountability for Russian crimes committed during the war.

Even when there is no longer any trust at all towards the current Russian leadership for demonstrable reasons, diplomatic talks must remain possible. For this reason, talks that Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz conducts regularly with Vladimir Putin with the agreement of Ukraine and our international partners are right and necessary. Consequently we continue to need diplomatic initiatives wherever possible, be that in the framework of the United Nations or for instance the important mission by the International Atomic Energy Agency to secure the Ukrainian nuclear power plants. We must continue to make every effort to induce Russia to withdraw and call on Russia for an honest readiness for a just peace.

Talks with Russia could yield agreements in small discrete areas, such as on the issue of prisoner swaps between Ukraine and Russia or the export of Ukrainian grain via the Black Sea agreed between the United Nations, Türkiye, Ukraine, and Russia. It is worth building on these bases, for instance in the area of arms control. However before such trust with Russia can be re-established, Russia must retreat from the criminal war of aggression against Ukraine and the expansionist ideology underpinning it. If a serious readiness for such a move is recognisable, a policy of small steps starting with initiatives in manageable areas for trust-building that are verified regularly for their effectiveness could be a diplomatic opening.

A Social Democratic international policy must also consider Germany's fundamental role. The strengthening of Germany's security and protection of our free democratic basic order form part of it. It is clear: Germany must assume more responsibility for peace and stability on the European continent and its neighbours and make the necessary instruments available.

Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz has already drawn the correct conclusions at the beginning of the war and has approached the new era with concrete measures. Examples include: the special 100 billion euro fund for the Federal Armed Forces, continuous increase in the defence budget, EU sanction packages, delivery of weapons to Ukraine, diversification of energy imports, accelerated expansion of renewable energy, relief packages for our citizens amounting to more than 200 billion euros, financial and political strengthening of development cooperation as well as active campaigns to attract new partners in the Global South, and much more. These initiatives are to be expanded, further deepened, and solidified with international partnerships in the coming months and years. Confronted by new and worsening crises and conflicts on our planet, we must support peace and democratic processes wherever we can. We stand firm on the side of the democratic movement in Iran.

We wish to strengthen civil crisis prevention and work for the establishment of a global and solidarity-based responsible partnership that explicitly and strongly focuses on the interests of the Global South. A global responsible partnership includes in addition using the second half of the implementation phase of Agenda 2030 to place again the attainment of the sustainable development goals at the heart of international policy. This is only possible with a strong UN with a clear mandate.

Such a transformational policy requires a broad societal agreement in the medium and long term, as nothing less than the freedom and prosperity of Germany and Europe are at stake. To that end, German Social Democracy must reflect, recalibrate, and reveal its policies thoroughly and self-critically also in these watershed moments.

Our national security strategy is outlined thus and we support its formulation. We must entwine external and internal security much more to face the current threats.

## **II. Peace and security as cornerstones of Social Democratic international policy**

Even in watershed moments the values that determine Social Democratic foreign, security, and development policy remain a firm rock and the SPD has been true to them for more than a century: peace, freedom, international justice and solidarity, and a strong European Union are the guiding principles of our policy. The universality of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law forms part of it.

In an increasingly pluricentric world, the diplomatic and economic weight of Germany and of the EU threatens to wane. We must face it with pragmatism based on our values and interests. Russia's war against Ukraine is also an attack on our democratic values and reinforces our resolve to work together and more closely with other democratic states to defend them. We however are not interested in creating new antagonistic blocs.

The rules-based, UN-centred international order is founded on the recognition that different political systems can coexist side-by-side and must cooperate with one another.

We must examine closely how we can strengthen our existing relations and at the same time initiate new, durable partnerships, through which we ultimately secure peace, freedom, prosperity, and rules-based order by mutual assumption of responsibility. Such an approach based on realism and pragmatism goes hand in hand with a values-based international policy that critically addresses the questions of values and human rights where necessary and at the same time tries to reinforce the human rights-based international framework. An active diplomacy that assumes responsibility and searches for common views, interests, and "islands of cooperation" is the foundation for international cooperation. We will work more intensively to build networks of trust with the aim of strengthening multilateral institutions and enabling joint actions. Long-lasting trust is achieved by stabilisation and development of effective international structures.

Experience demonstrates that security and peace in Europe require a credible deterrence. Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and *détente* policy were already based on a firm anchoring in the Western alliance and robust defence capabilities of the Federal Republic. At the same time there is a need for channels of communication and institutional formats so as not allow the strands for prevention of an even greater escalation be cut off. At the level of the civil society in particular, it is vital to maintain such connections. They are the foundations for trust and a peace process, even if it lies far ahead in the future at this moment.

### **III. Global responsible partnerships – Attractive proposals to the Global South**

We want to work with the countries of the Global South on an equal footing and develop and strengthen global responsible partnerships. We formulate our foreign and development policy that is feminist and makes attractive offers to our partners for cooperation by presenting advantages for both sides and contributing towards the sustainable and socially just transformation of the global economic order. Only with such a sustainable cooperation can we solve global problems in the long term and only together with the Global South. For this reason we want to increase the budget for development cooperation in line with the increases in the security and defence budgets. For us the concept of human security that includes social and ecological security is vital. We also support the development and expansion of social security systems that offer protection from but also prevent crisis situations. Global responsible partnerships are based on a long-term development financing and include multilevel joint actions: from providing support in times of acute needs such as climate-related food crises or natural disasters, through cooperation to achieve sustainable development goals that are central to our international action, climate goals, to the multilateral partnerships for a social and economic order that is sustainable and based on social and gender equality. The involvement of developing and emerging countries in the deliberations of the G7 and G20 as well as the foundation of a Climate Club open to all countries by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz are of great significance in this context.

We have the opportunity to strengthen our partnerships with the progressive governments in Africa, Asia, and Latin America for the protection of the climate and environment. Moreover there are opportunities in trade treaties with Latin America to shape a fair and sustainable globalisation. The election of Lula da Silva as president of Brazil offers an additional impetus to pursue initiatives with the biggest economy of the region on the protection of the Amazon, trade, cooperation in the energy sector, and finally reach forward-looking conclusion of the Mercosur agreement. In addition we want to continue to work towards a reform of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, in the framework of G4 (Brazil, Japan, India and Germany).

On the African continent too, the aim is to strengthen existing partnerships and making new connections. Firstly we must continue to support fragile states in the matters of security, stability, sustainable development, and democracy. Further concrete offers may be fairer trade and migration policies, the strengthening of the healthcare system for instance in the framework of vaccine production, as well as security policy engagement in agreement with the African Union. The African Continental Free Trade Zone is an opportunity for the continent that Germany should support more strongly together with the European Union. Also it is worth expanding network with African partners in the areas of research and cultural and educational policy. On the other hand we must specifically build mutually beneficial partnerships in the areas of technology, energy, infrastructure, and development. In this, the expansion of renewable energy should be central in the negotiations. Partnerships in the areas of energy supply (Just Energy Transition Partnerships) driven forward by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Federal Minister Svenja Schulze are leading the way.

Energy questions in particular offer new points of cooperation with the Global South. Sustainable alternatives to Russian fossil fuels must be found. Competitive disadvantages must be rebalanced, green technologies supported, and existing supply chains checked for their sustainability and adherence to human rights standards. Through binding due diligence for German and European companies, social and environmental rights of the workers should be strengthened worldwide and therefore supply chains made more sustainable and less risky. We have made our first step towards this end with the enactment of the Supply Chain Act for German companies. We strive for an effective European solution.

An important element of German economic model is an efficient and competitive industrial sector that exports goods all over the world. This is dependent on importing raw materials and energy. This will remain the case in a decarbonised world. For this reason, it is vital to diversify the supply relationships and avoid dependency on a limited number of suppliers in the future. This must be taken into consideration for example with the development of new energy partnerships for green hydrogen and its derivatives. In this regard deepened energy partnerships on an equal footing for instance with African countries thus a stronger cooperation with Europe's next-door neighbour will play a greater role in the future.

At the same time the Near and Middle East will remain relevant for the foreseeable future in terms of the energy questions for Germany and Europe. Europe should use its weight in the region more readily, including advancing security policy dialogue. Alongside an expansion of trade relations, research and educational cooperation offers opportunities.

The external cultural and education policy is and will remain central to German foreign policy. To flourish in the watershed moments, we strengthen the intermediary organisations and thereby also collaboration with civil societies.

Germany has been for many years one of the main donor countries in humanitarian aid. Our engagement is however not restricted to mere provision of money and resources. The humanitarian aid allows Germany a presence that would remain inaccessible by other means and acts as an effective way of building trust with states and actors whose intersection in values and interests is otherwise not straightforward. It must thus remain a pillar of Social Democratic foreign policy in the course of the watershed.

Our global responsible partnerships are based on the EU values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, as well as creation and recognition of generally valid international agreements. We always remain true to our fundamental values and discuss them with partners who do not share these values wholeheartedly. A pragmatic international policy based on our values and interests also means recognising differences in the norms and values of other states and deciding on different degrees of cooperation on that basis. Such a values-based pragmatism is the foundation of Social Democratic policy. We do certainly not build a community of values with undemocratic states but goal-oriented cooperation remains indispensable. Global challenges such as the fight against climate crisis, pandemics, food crises, nuclear proliferation, excess debts, and for fair taxes can only be solved globally. In view of Putin's attack on freedom and democracy we must at the same work even more closely with our partners who share our values.

## IV. Sovereign Europe

The European Union is the central framework of German politics. This will become even more pronounced through this watershed era. The war has however shown the fractures and current impasses in the EU. Common European progress is still being constrained too often by national interests and blockades. To elevate the strategic sovereignty and capabilities of Europe, there needs to be concrete steps in the further development of the EU, as Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz presented in his Prague speech. In this matter the German-French partnership is of central importance for us. At the same time, Germany must take into account more strongly the perspectives of our Central and East European partners as the largest member state and bridge builder in the EU. Moreover it is vital to strengthen European multilateralism further through the European human rights institution, the Council of Europe. The Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in Reykjavik in May offers a suitable opportunity.

In an increasingly multipolar world that is shaped by a security and an economic rivalry between the USA and China, we strive for a confident position for the EU as a sovereign power centre. The US security guarantee for Germany and Europe will be the more durable and stronger, the more responsibilities the EU assumes in security policy. As such the EU must be in a position to contribute to the peace in Europe and its direct neighbours than heretofore. At the same time the EU must advocate even stronger for a rules-based shaping of multipolarity than hitherto.

A war in Europe has made us all aware again of the value of NATO as the guarantor of our security and provider of our alliance defence. The transatlantic alliance is also stronger than before in this crisis. We want to use this moment to strengthen the European pillar in NATO. This will make the EU also more resilient should another US president be elected, who casts doubt on the centrality of the transatlantic alliance. By strengthening the European pillar of NATO we also strengthen the direct defence capabilities of Europe. This means that Europe must intensify demonstrably its joint defence efforts with concrete steps such as the development of a rapid reaction force and a permanent operative EU HQ. We strengthen the European pillar of NATO with the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) initiated and coordinated by Germany. We have had large gaps in air defence in Europe for a very long time. These gaps have been ignored for too long and must be remedied as soon as possible. It is this Federal Government that has finally and fundamentally grasped the initiative on this issue. In the meantime 15 countries have already joined our initiative. We want to create, use, and maintain the corresponding systems jointly. Doing so we achieve more interoperability and economise on procurement.

More security sovereignty means in addition securing the European cyberspace and further developing European armaments cooperation by ensuring that the current armaments decisions in Germany will be compatible with European allies thus leading to greater complementarity, efficiency, and interoperability.

The accession of states in the West Balkans is a crucial cornerstone for a sovereign EU. We want to anchor them long-term in the European democratic model and prevent undemocratic actors from exploiting the lines of conflict. The realisation that the enlargement policy also serves the strategic interests of the EU in the region is a watershed in itself. We are committed to the goal of EU membership for the six Western Balkan states, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, and equally the prospect of EU accession for Ukraine and Moldova. We also support Georgia in its path towards the European Union.

The EU has proven its collective ability to deal with crises in many cases in the past few years. The coronavirus recovery programme is a milestone for the cooperation and future stability of Europe. The unanimous and unequivocal answer of the EU to Russia's war of aggression also exemplifies the joint action capabilities of the EU in crisis situations. However there are deficits. The principle of unanimity enables blockades and impedes European progress. It is so much more important that the momentum at the watershed moment is used to achieve concrete progress in deepening European integration, for instance by more majority voting precisely in the areas of foreign policy, but also in fiscal policy, a more strongly strategically-oriented trade, economic, and industry policy, and permanently strengthened European investment capacities. There is a need for economic coherence and joint instruments for mitigating external crises to safeguard collective European action on a sustainable footing. There is a need for the strengthening of the European security agencies to protect Europe from within and without. Increased impetus is required for the strengthening of our civil protection.

## V. Transatlantic partnership

Russia's war of aggression contrary to international law forges our transatlantic partnership stronger and clearly demonstrates our common values of freedom and democracy. Putin's attack is an attack on every free democratic basic order that we share with our transatlantic partners. To protect this model of coexistence against threats we build a strong and trusting partnership with the USA within which Europe and Germany as the largest member assume more responsibility. Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz has already made important decisions towards this end with the special fund for the Federal Armed Forces and the accompanying increases in defence expenditure as well as initiatives of the German G7 presidency to support Ukraine.

Precisely in view of the external threats we wish to work on preventing economic and trade conflicts with our transatlantic partners. At the same time we want to invest in the independent security of Europe and enhance the strategic cooperation with the USA in the areas of climate and energy policy, rules-based international order, and democratic social policy.

## VI. Relations with China and the Indo-Pacific region

The rise of the People's Republic of China is one of the biggest global changes in the last few decades. The growing importance of China contains numerous challenges but also a few opportunities for Germany and the European Union. Germany carries its China strategy agreed in the coalition agreement to the European debate. This position should take into account the changes in China as well as shifts in the relations with the United States, Russia, and other European neighbours. The goal is a reduction of heavy dependencies and thus strengthening of our sovereignty. Furthermore we should work on a common European position that is firmly placed in the community of values of the West, considers the security interests of our democratic partners in the Indo-Pacific region, strengthens European sovereignty in a rules-based multilateral order, and deepens constructive, open, and transparent relationships with the central actors of tomorrow.

For us Social Democrats, the policy towards China will remain shaped by a continuous political dialogue. The fundamental point is to talk not just about but with China and deal with questions constructively and critically regarding cooperation, competition, and human rights. Without dialogue with China it is almost impossible to meet the economic, ecological, social, and political challenges of our time.

The relations with China must be formed along the three dimensions of partnership, competition, and systemic rivalry as defined at the European level. On shared interests such as on a rules-based international order, climate protection, or disarmament and arms control, it is vital to keep sounding China out. At the same time we observe that the aspects of competition and systemic rivalry are increasing. Consequently there is a need to reduce dependencies in key technologies and value chains as well as in raw materials and energy sources. We postulate that China is not simply a cooperation partner but also an economic competitor and systemic rival. This is clearly the case with China's ambivalent attitude towards the war of aggression against Ukraine contrary to international law. We must realise that China under President Xi is becoming increasingly more confident and in part more aggressive towards the outside. This development is coupled with a worsening human rights situation, particularly in the Xinjiang province, and restriction of political freedom, for instance in Hong Kong.

There are two different models in competition: the model of a democratic state with the rule of law that protects universal human rights in a free and social market economy, and the Chinese model of an authoritarian state capitalism that restrains universal human rights. Even if our relationship to China is determined by the all three dimensions already mentioned, they cannot simply remain unconnected unthinkingly. The systemic competition is decisive in how the partnership with China can be formed in concrete terms and influences the shape of economic competition with China. Part of the answer to the systemic competition must be that we make alternative and more attractive offers of cooperation in the countries and regions wooed by China. In this context we welcome the EU's Global Gateway Initiative. In the framework of systemic competition, cooperation in areas of mutual interests will still be sought. Cooperation with China on the questions of a rules-based international order, disarmament and arms control, as well as climate policy and sustainable energy production is of great importance.

Our horizon in the Indo-Pacific region is not limited to China. The rules of international order are being increasingly challenged in the Indo-Pacific region by individual actors. The arms race in the region is stepping up, geographical tensions are increasing territorial conflicts and the danger of an escalation is heightened. We will work together with our partners to maintain the rules-based international order that strengthens international law and multilateral structures and prevents conflicts. In this we stand strongly against bloc-building in the Indo-Pacific region. We are ready to cooperate with partners in the region who are committed to the principles of the rules-based international order.

The Indo-Pacific region has a prominent importance for Germany and the European Union. At the same times there are great economic dependencies on individual markets. We call for creation of framework conditions that diversify the supply chain in the key areas and explore the opportunities in the Indo-Pacific region better and more widely. We will deepen and expand existing partnerships especially with India, Japan, Republic of Korea, but also the ASEAN member states.

## **VII. Disarmament and arms control**

A world without nuclear weapons remains the goal of Social Democratic policy. For this reason we support with urgency the necessary, concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament and arms control in the framework of the United Nations. We support moreover the initiatives of no first use. We should also consider alternative processes and mechanisms that bring us closer to our goals. Even if the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) adopted in 2017 in part led to polarisation, it gave an important impetus for the debate on worldwide nuclear disarmament. In view of the current situation, we must continue to engage constructively with the arguments and intentions of the TPNW including with actors in the civil society. Furthermore we call for the retention, implementation, and extension of New START that limits and verifies strategic nuclear weapons between the USA and Russian Federation. Moreover we work on the preservation and strengthening of existing treaties such as NPT and CTBT among others and particularly on involving countries that are yet to bind themselves legally.

We stand for an EU that continues to engage for a stronger, multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We oppose with all our determination any irresponsible theoretical musings on a creation of a European nuclear power let alone a nuclear armament of Germany.

Russia is the aggressor whom we must counter with determined deterrence. We have taken such into account with our support to Ukraine and East European partners, coordinated with the transatlantic alliance and the European as well as an operationally ready Federal Armed Forces. At the same time Russia will remain a country with a large surface area, population, and military strength on the European continent in the future. This is relevant for the shaping of the European security order in the long term.

Under no circumstances should there be a nuclear escalation. The collective declaration by the G20 leaders rejected the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and that is a successful policy of the Federal Chancellor and the Western alliance. We must not compromise on current treaties and initiatives on disarmament and arms control.

## **VIII. Foreign policy as a task involving the whole society**

It has been long clear that internal and external security intersect and interact at many places. The watershed makes this fact even more pronounced. Germany's societal model and prosperity may not be secured exclusively by domestic and social policy measures amidst systemic challenges posed by the international milieu. Energy security, economic prosperity and innovation, digital sovereignty, social cohesion, and democracy are all inexorably linked to foreign policy developments. Equally domestic political aspects have direct effect on our foreign policy.

The watershed moment thus issues two core challenges the German economy must overcome at the same time: firstly decarbonisation and climate-neutral, socially just transformation.

Secondly there is a need to reach strategic autonomy as the European Union and reduce dependencies without forcing key industries and technologies abroad. Indeed where such key industries are too greatly dependent outside of Europe, they must be brought back to the EU.

An important domestic political foundation for foreign and development policy is the strengthening of social cohesion within society. Part of such foundation is a feminist policy that supports gender equality and peaceful economic and social development at home and worldwide. In most countries women do not have the same rights as men. In those places we pursue a values-based feminist foreign and development policy to make societies stabler, more resilient, and more peaceful. The following 3 Rs guide our approach: realizing rights, as well as safeguarding access to resources and representation.

A foreign and development policy anchored in societal peace and social justice gains legitimacy within and at the same time influence without. What makes Germany and the European Union an attractive partner and centre for third states is living in an attractive societal model at home that incorporates the values fostered in foreign policy. Sustainable global progress and social justice go together for us. The goal of Social Democratic international policy remains peace and prosperity for all humanity.