

# **Social democratic responses to a world in upheaval**

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## SUMMARY

We live in a world of radical change. Gone are the times of a unipolar or bipolar order. New centres of power are vying for interpretive sovereignty, influence, and collaborations. In addition to the USA and China, as well as Europe, there is a growing number of states in the Global South demanding to play a role in shaping the future of the international order. This development has been on the horizon for many years. Even as the contours of a new global order are still developing, it is clear that we are on the threshold of a multipolar age.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is the most brutal break yet with the fundamental principles of the international order that was painstakingly established in the aftermath of the Second World War. At this point, we Europeans are finally coming to the realisation that these profound changes are not going to stop at our doorstep. It is time that we redefine our own role in the world and assume more responsibility for securing a rules-based international order, which is the basis for our prosperity, freedom and peace. In this context, Germany will have to play a central role.

**First:** We are providing answers to a world in upheaval by reorienting social democratic international policy, whereby we can build on a track record of successful social democratic policies for a peaceful, fair and sustainable world. At the same time, the current turn of events shows us that we have not always correctly assessed developments in the recent years. A far-sighted foreign policy requires strategic thinking and action. Being able to rely on our own strength is a basic prerequisite for a life of prosperity, freedom, and peace for the citizens of Europe. This requires greater investment in economic resilience and sustainability, multilateral institutions, our military capabilities, and social cohesion.

**Second:** Building a strong Europe is the most important political task for social democrats in the coming years. Europe will only be able to help shape the global order according to our own values and interests, if we are a sovereign, attractive centre. Europe needs to embrace its role as a geopolitical player and invest more in our own security. A strong Europe will drive a new agenda for innovation and economic growth that will place us at the forefront of technological and social progress as well as the fight against the climate crisis, thus laying the foundation for future prosperity. This will require political and institutional reforms alongside closer European integration.

**Third:** In a rapidly changing world, Europe must invest much more in strategic partnerships with countries with which we share political and social affinities. However, global crises are too complex to be solved by democratic states on their own. More multilateralism, more common institutions, and more international cooperation are needed to tackle the climate crisis, pandemics, hunger or to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons. These are essential conditions for the maintenance of a rules-based international order.

This time of radical transformation also offers great opportunities in terms of shaping the future and Germany has a special responsibility due to its size. We social democrats want Germany to play a leading role in securing a strong Europe, peace, freedom, and a rules-based international order.

## 1. A WORLD IN UPHEAVAL

The world is in a state of upheaval as a result of the climate crisis, war in Europe with its global ramifications, the resurgence of authoritarian regimes, the decline of multilateralism, the consequences of the pandemic, and increasing inequalities in an era of economic uncertainty. We are living through a series of major global crises that require close collaboration between states and societies, but this is becoming increasingly difficult in the wake of war, populism, polarisation, and illiberal trends.

It is obvious to us that the only way to tackle global challenges is by working together rather than in opposition to one another. We need increased collaboration and more multilateralism, in addition to more joint institutions and agreements, which will lay the foundations for peace, security, prosperity, stability, and more justice both here at home and around the world.

To achieve these objectives, we first have to understand and recognise the new framework conditions, which have a bearing on our actions: only then will we be able to provide appropriate responses and make progress. This requires clarity about our own role, principles, and scope for action (section 2). Our most important objective is to build a strong, sovereign Europe that will be an attractive partner when it comes to addressing global challenges and will enable its citizens to live in prosperity, security, and peace (section 3). A strong Europe that, whilst not claiming the moral high ground, collaborates with its partners to define common interests, and creates and strengthens collaborative structures to this end, can become an anchor of stability and reliability in a world of drastic change (section 4).

### **Strong centres in a multipolar world**

The rules-based international order is increasingly coming under pressure as the balance of power is being repositioned at the international level and an increasing number of states attempt to give precedence to the principle of “might is right” over the rule of law. Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine represents a political break and a turning point for the security and peace order in Europe. But the war and the way in which it is being dealt with is also serving as a test for the international community and the functioning of a rules-based global order in general.

Our world is characterised by a multipolar order and in spite of the growing rivalry between the USA and China, the era of a unipolar or bipolar order is over. Various states and regions are competing on the international stage for political, economic, and military influence. In particular, states in the Global South are asserting a legitimate claim to participate in shaping the international order and are forming centres of power that are exerting an influence in various ways, entering into new relationships, networks, and collaborations.

As a result, our global order will become more flexible and dynamic. Inter-state negotiations are becoming even more important, but so are resilient and relationships built on trust. This presents a great opportunity for Europe, which is founded on collaboration. At the same time, this change introduces new uncertainties to which we will respond with a strategy of resilience.

Prosperity, security and peace in the world are rooted in multilateral institutions and the successful establishment of a rules-based order. It is in our greatest interest to uphold and reinforce this order. Developments in recent years show that our efforts have not always been successful.

We have an enormous responsibility to help shape a new emerging structure, and this will create huge opportunities for Germany and Europe. Many countries around the world have high expectations of us and view us as a partner for the establishment of peace, security, and prosperity. It is time for us to take on more responsibility and show leadership to achieve these goals.

## **2. THE FOUNDATIONS OF A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FOREIGN POLICY**

As Germany's oldest democratic party, the SPD has a tradition of effective, groundbreaking international politics dedicated to securing and promoting peace as evidenced, for example by the new social democratic policy of détente vis-à-vis Eastern Europe beginning in 1969.

Willy Brandt and later Helmut Schmidt shaped German foreign policy during the Cold War through a successful triad of diplomacy and cooperation, a clear commitment to human rights and international law, and the consolidation of West Germany's own military strength. Willy Brandt in particular was adept at cultivating close partnerships, including with countries of the Global South, and involving them in shaping the international order. This strategic foresight during times of tension led the way in establishing a European peace order and included the negotiations on the CSCE Final Act (1975), disarmament agreements with the then Soviet Union such as the INF Treaty (1987), and the Charter of Paris (1990). By these means, they laid an important foundation for German reunification as well as for the eastward enlargement of the European Union. This peace order has shaped Europe for many decades.

However, we have failed to pay sufficient attention to or have misjudged changes both in our immediate neighbourhood and beyond in recent years. That is why we have to recognise the new realities of a world in transition as a given, analyse them, and review and refine our responses. Security and peace are inextricably intertwined, yet peace is more than just security. Social democratic international policy is and will continue to be based on the triad of foreign, development, and defence policy. Ever since the foundation of our party 160 years ago, we have been tackling the social, economic, and ecological causes of conflicts both within our society and at the global level. One important basis for this is a feminist foreign, security, and development policy. Other important areas of social democratic foreign policy are international cultural relations and education policy, which in particular also promotes close collaboration with civil society and takes account of the perspectives of marginalised groups.

By attacking Ukraine in violation of international law, Russia has disrupted the European peace order and the putative certainties of our previous foreign, security, and development policies. Under the leadership of Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the German government has reacted decisively to this war of aggression against Ukraine, thereby ushering in a new era in German foreign, development, and defence policy. Germany is now one of Ukraine's leading supporters in military, political, economic, financial, and civil terms and will continue to stand in solidarity with the Ukrainians. The Federal Government has departed from a long-standing principle of not supplying weapons to war zones. The European Union is also showing a great deal of unity and has implemented comprehensive packages of sanctions. Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz is also committed to expanding strategic partnerships and defining common interests with leading non-European states, for example within the G7, G20, and United Nations frameworks, with a view to reinforcing the multilateral, rules-based order even in times of crisis.

### **Defining our own strengths**

A basic prerequisite for peace and committing to a rules-based order is our own strength, which requires robust institutions as well as a resilient and attractive economy and society. These are basic conditions for successful diplomacy, an effective climate policy, the protection of human rights, and peace initiatives.

However, national strength relies on having the necessary military capabilities to credibly safeguard the principle of the inviolability of borders. In the longer-term, we will continue to push for nuclear disarmament and support further disarmament initiatives. It is also important to establish resilient partnerships with countries of the Global South beyond the traditional Western alliance. These alliances provide the basis for successfully negotiating and maintaining international agreements and reinforcing the multilateral institutions required for their implementation.

The epochal change brought about by the Russian attack on Ukraine underscores the importance of a robust, sovereign, and cohesive European Union for Europe's ability to take action and illustrates both the value of the transatlantic alliance and the need to make Europe more self-reliant. It also highlights the importance of strategic partnerships with countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and underlines the need to make Europe's economy more resilient, to reduce unilateral dependencies, and to diversify partnerships.

An anticipatory and strategic foreign and security policy includes thinking in terms of potential scenarios. We have to recognise trends at an early stage and identify possible courses of action accordingly, an approach that we want to anchor within our structures.

Any effective peace policy must include diplomacy and a committed development policy, but also take account of the military capabilities of our security and defence alliances. The German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) make an essential contribution to the capabilities of the EU and NATO. They must be equipped appropriately so that they are able to fully perform their assigned tasks at all times. We are providing the means to fulfil this task and to further modernise our armed forces with the special fund of 100 billion euros. This is also necessary out of respect for the work carried out by our soldiers, who must have the necessary hardware and capacities to fulfil their duties. Thus, we are together fulfilling our responsibility towards our parliamentary army.

This also sends a clear message to our alliance partners to the effect that we are assuming more responsibility for asserting our common interests aimed at the maintenance of a value-based peace order. This implies playing a leadership role on an equal footing, including in military matters. By achieving the 2 per cent of GDP military expenditure rate and by developing effective capabilities together, we are making it clear that our allies can rely on Germany.

## **Economic resilience**

The pandemic and the consequences of the Russian attack on Ukraine have revealed the vulnerability of our globalised economic order. Ordinary citizens are experiencing the consequences of an unstable international order in their everyday lives: inflation, supply bottlenecks, and production stoppages and consequently the threat of recession and job losses. We need a strategy of resilience both in Germany and Europe aimed at minimising geopolitical risks, reducing dependencies, and making our trade and industrial policies more resilient.

At the same time, we Social Democrats will ensure that necessary diversification does not become a pretext for isolation, tariff barriers, and protectionism: we are not advocating deglobalisation.

The socio-ecological transformation has taken on a new urgency due to the current epochal shift and has both ecological and economic ramifications, as well as a security policy

dimension in light of the current war. This is because investing in the transformation of the German and European economy and society – for example in our health and education systems or public infrastructure – means investing in our independence and therefore in our security. We want to promote climate-friendly innovations in Europe and thereby also to establish global standards. In this way, we will make Europe more attractive as a business location and reinforce "Made in Europe" as a benchmark for advanced technology, sustainability, innovation, and the highest quality.

## **Strengthening multilateralism**

More than half of the world's population lives in non-democratic states. We are currently witnessing the rise of authoritarian regimes and social fragmentation processes around the world. Both of these developments have serious ramifications in terms of international collaboration: international cooperation based on the rule of law – i.e., multilateral politics – is becoming increasingly difficult.

We will do everything in our power to counter efforts to divide the community of states into antagonistic blocs, because global challenges, such as fighting global poverty, combating the climate crisis, preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and launching disarmament initiatives, can only be mastered together and in collaboration with other states.

To achieve this, Germany and Europe need to work with their partners to define common interests and enter into concrete collaborative ventures that offer added value for all sides. Social democracy is rooted in the principle of a rules-based international order and is committed to reforming international institutions, such as the United Nations, to better represent the diversity of the international community and increase its capacity to take action.

In addition to global institutions, we are committed to innovative collaborative formats, such as the Climate Club or Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz' Global Minimum Tax initiative, in order to move forward with determination together with willing countries. The G7 and the G20 have a special responsibility in terms of upholding the rules-based order and organising progress.

## **A strong and visible development policy**

The networked approach to security, foreign, and development policy is the most sustainable way to prevent conflict. Collaboration on development has a particularly important strategic value in this context, because it creates trust and builds long-term partnerships. This is why we want to increase spending on development programmes in line with increasing spending on security and defence.

The fight against hunger and poverty remains a priority for social democratic development policy. Inequality in conjunction with hunger and poverty are the main drivers of violent conflict. Development policy contributes to the creation of economic, social, and civic prospects and thus to the reduction of inequality. We regard the establishment and expansion of social security systems as an essential building block in the effort to prevent the social gap from widening and to reduce existing inequalities. Social security creates security in times of crisis and simultaneously helps to avert them. A sustainable economic development must go hand in hand with decent working conditions around the world, fair wages, and the observance of human rights and social and environmental standards. The United Nations' Agenda 2030 provides a central point of reference in this regard.



We intend to press even harder for the reduction of structural inequalities, for example through a more targeted promotion of women, local and regional infrastructures, markets, and institutions. We believe it is important for a feminist foreign and development policy to focus on all members of a society and to push for the overcoming of patriarchal and post-colonial power structures, which will make for fairer and more resilient societies. Our respective policies are guided by the 3Rs approach: realise rights, access resources, and establish representation.

Moreover, the collective battle to combat the climate crisis is an existential task for the entire global community. The poorest states are often the hardest hit and the least prepared. Social democratic policies create sustainable development opportunities that combine prosperity, climate adaptation, and mitigation.

Germany is one of the leading donor countries in the fields of development policy, peacemaking, crisis prevention, and humanitarian aid worldwide. This entails a responsibility to eliminate neo-colonial and neo-liberal structures in the context of development collaborations. We need to position this commitment in a more strategically visible way, and to promote Germany and Europe as a leading force for peace.

### **Assuming a leadership role**

Germany has earned a high level of trust over the past decades. This trust is also accompanied by an expectation. Increasingly, Germany is at the centre of many foreign policy discussions. We are an important partner for many states around the world, which is precisely why they expect Germany to show more initiative and take a leading role at the international level.

Germany benefits more than almost any other country from a rules-based international order and a globalised and interconnected world, which is why we can credibly adopt a leadership role to defend these principles. But this also entails striving to make globalisation more sustainable and socially fair.

Germany also benefits from a strong Europe: we can only stand up for our values and interests on the global stage from within a strong Europe. We are too small to exert any influence on our own. It is therefore in our own best interest to take a leading role in making Europe a more attractive centre.

Leadership does not imply that Germany should override others, but rather that the Federal Government should take up and amplify other voices and perspectives and lead the way through initiatives aimed at achieving our common goals. A collaborative leadership style is the modern way forward and the answer to a world in transition.

### **3. EUROPE AS AN ATTRACTIVE CENTRE**

The most important political response to the emerging new era is a sovereign Europe. Global crises require global solutions, which we can only credibly promote if Europe speaks with a single voice. The basis for unity within the EU is our robust commitment to common values, the social cohesion of our citizens, and the EU's founding promise to secure lasting peace and prosperity in Europe.

By adopting the largest recovery fund in its history during the Covid-19 pandemic, the EU showed that Member States will unite in solidarity when it matters. Russia's attack on our peace order and our common European values has rekindled a new momentum for Europe and has reinforced the unity of Europe and NATO in a historically significant way involving the toughest sanctions package in the history of the EU, the unprecedented support for Ukraine, and Sweden and Finland's pending accession to NATO. Another thing that exemplifies this development is Denmark's accession to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.

We want to use this momentum to ensure that a consolidated EU is able to master the challenges of the new era. Today, 60 years after the ratification of the Élysée Treaty, the Franco-German partnership has a central role to play in the further development of a sovereign EU. French President Emmanuel Macron's speech at the Sorbonne University and Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz' speech at Charles University in Prague have provided important stimuli for a closer European integration, which must now be followed by concrete political projects. Germany and France share a special responsibility to ensure that this happens.

#### **A geopolitically self-confident Europe**

Europe should serve as an anchor for a value-driven and interest-based policy in a multipolar world and be a strong advocate for peace, freedom, human rights, and the defence of the rules-based order.

In an increasingly fragmented world, we want Europe to function as an attractive centre and the key political and economic partner for other states and regions.

The European Union's strength and appeal are the result of its policy of combining peace, democracy, individual freedom, societal prosperity, and social participation with ecologically responsible progress. This story of success is raising hopes among a large number of countries, who aspire to membership of the Union. The European Union is already the most attractive alliance of states in the world and we will resolutely continue along the path towards an enlarged and more integrated EU.

We want to put Europe in the vanguard of international crisis prevention, the promotion of peace and democracy, and the defence of human rights by establishing common objectives for our development collaboration and humanitarian aid efforts in Europe.

#### **A strong partner within NATO**

The European Union Member States have committed to mutual assistance in the various EU treaties. These pledges have been reinforced through various initiatives and programmes in recent years. However, in the face of the Russian war of aggression we see that there is still a wide gulf between the aspiration and the reality of a defensible EU. As exemplified by the Biden administration, the USA and NATO still serve as the guarantors of European security.

However, President Donald Trump's tenure in particular has clearly shown us that Europe needs to become more sovereign and invest more in its own security.

The current change of era should serve as a catalyst for the development of a common European security and defence policy. We will promote an increase in collaborations among EU member states with a view to strengthening NATO's European pillar and enhancing the EU's military capacities and capabilities.

It is essential for the European Union to overcome the inefficient and ineffective fragmentation in its defence policy. The current system, in which 27 countries all maintain their own procurement systems, possess a plethora of different weapons systems, furnish their own arms companies with orders and negotiate with them about the weapons of the future, is no longer in keeping with the times. We want to make a confident commitment to joint European defence efforts and greater cooperation in production and procurement, which will consolidate the security and sovereignty of the EU. The Federal Government's initiative to build a European air and missile defence system is a pioneering step.

Europe must be capable of using conventional weapons to defend itself against attacks – including those of a hybrid nature, which fall short of an armed attack - and must have the corresponding deterrent capabilities. In order to achieve this, we need closer collaboration throughout Europe: in addition to joint procurement, we also need common minimum standards for arms export controls, coordinated defence spending, a rapid reaction force, and a genuine EU headquarters to ensure a clear command structure.

At the same time, we will push ahead with measures to improve infrastructure, military mobility, and cyberspace in a common European context. Our political demands should be coordinated and implemented by an independent EU Council of Defence Ministers. Greater autonomy is predicated on an increased capacity to take action, which in turn requires majority decision-making in foreign policy and an EU foreign minister with far-reaching competences.

## **Working together for more social security**

The foundation for the attractiveness of a geopolitically minded Europe as a partner for other countries and regions are the equitable distribution of prosperity and strong social cohesion. The social pillar of the EU must be further strengthened. Every person in Europe must be able to live from the proceeds of his or her own labour, which is what social democracy is striving for. Achieving this requires fair educational opportunities, minimum wages, and social security systems throughout Europe.

During a period of high inflation and continuing economic uncertainties, we continue to rely on fiscal flexibility within the EU. We saw the role that a far-sighted fiscal policy can play in stabilising the economy when we had to deal with the pandemic. This capacity of the state to take action in times of crisis continues to be important. The "NextGenerationEU" recovery fund has provided an impetus for sustainable investment going forward. We are committed to building upon the example of the recovery fund and the increased European solidarity during the crisis as a means of achieving lasting progress in terms of integration. An EU capable of taking action needs sufficient funding, which is why we want to introduce genuine own resources of the EU, which will form the funding basis for the EU budget in the future.

Further development of the Stability and Growth Pact is also necessary with a view to enabling future investments for the climate-friendly restructuring of our economies and digitalisation,

establishing realistic rules for debt reduction, and improving the comprehensibility and transparency of the Pact. We will increase the political pressure for a further consolidation of the Capital Markets Union and the completion of the Banking Union with adequate supervision and will create a functioning European capital market in order to promote investments and ensure the competitive funding of European companies.

## **A resilient economic, innovation, and industrial policy**

Our economic, trade and industrial policies form the basis of a strong and attractive European Union. Some of Europe's greatest strengths include institutional transparency, political stability, and our rules-based system. To ensure we remain fit for the future in the competitive international arena, we rely on strategic industrial and economic policies coupled with a sustainable and digital transformation.

Recent crises have clearly shown that we can no longer rely as heavily as we have in the past on foreign trade for many strategic products, be it medical masks, computer chips and semiconductors, car batteries, medical products and equipment, or energy, cyber security, and aerospace services. Europe has already fallen behind in crucial key technologies and has been too late in recognising its dependence on a limited number of suppliers.

Safeguarding jobs and prosperity in Europe through an active industrial policy will enable us to survive in a world dominated by different power centres. A successful socio-ecological transformation and the development of forward-looking technologies will require proactive policies for industry and innovation, which will make our national economy more resilient.

In our view this will mean realigning the balance between protectionist and open trade and investment policies in order to reduce unilateral dependencies and economic vulnerabilities. We want to keep and further consolidate existing closed value chains in Europe involving everything from innovation to so-called regulatory sandboxes and large-scale industrial production. At the same time, we are committed to free, fair and rules-based global trade. One of the key tasks of industrial and economic policy is not only to secure a surge of investment in emerging technologies, but also to ensure their broad application in commerce and society through investment.

An uninterrupted supply of critical raw materials is crucial for ensuring our economic security. The production of modern chips and batteries is not possible without rare earth elements or lithium, which means that we need to diversify more than just our imports. This is why we are advocating a German and European raw materials strategy that will ensure the expansion of the circular economy, provide economic incentives for Europe's own raw materials production industry, and consolidate existing partnerships with resource-rich countries around the world. To ensure that this endeavour is compliant with human rights as well as social and environmental standards we advocate the adoption of a European supply chain law.

We must not allow authoritarian states to gain control over our critical infrastructure, which is why we will work to ensure that Europe protects its critical infrastructures. This requires a resilience strategy based on a holistic analysis. And finally, we need a binding definition throughout Europe of what counts as critical infrastructure and where the capital participation and market access of non-European companies requires more scrutiny.

## **Leading the way in the fight against the climate crisis**

Putin's war has increased the urgency of our common European goal of becoming climate-neutral by 2050. Sourcing fossil energies from authoritarian states cannot secure Germany's and Europe's energy supply in the long term. The only way to ensure our energy security in the medium and long term is through a substantial and rapid expansion of renewable energy production and the corresponding storage capacities.

The EU grew out of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) for the joint management and control of coal and steel production. Now, 70 years later, we need a common push for renewable energies and green hydrogen as the basis for a new European economic model, a transformation that would present some major opportunities. Developing the technologies of the future here in Europe and bringing them to market will make us a global leader in climate action and innovation.

The central project for enabling transformative growth, achieving a leading role in technological innovation and becoming an exemplary model for the international community is the European Green Deal. The implementation of this strategy needs to be expedited, which will require a closer integration of European energy markets and European grid infrastructure (Energy Union). We also need more joint European innovation projects. The democratic Baltic Sea Region has considerable potential in this context. Collaboration between Germany, Poland, the Baltic States, and the Scandinavian countries on renewable energy production schemes is contributing to a dynamic development towards European energy security and independence. In view of the threat posed by Russia and the planned accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO, the Baltic Sea region has also become extremely important in terms of security policy.

Whether or not Europe will succeed in establishing itself as an attractive global centre will depend to a large extent on the socio-ecological transformation. We will work hard to achieve this, and in doing so we will also reaffirm Europe's ambition to become the first climate-neutral continent. It is important to show that climate protection and prosperity can go hand in hand: if we succeed in this, it will inspire other countries to follow suit. This will require increased collaboration with other regions and countries to develop and expand climate-neutral technologies and green technology markets. This major industrial transformation will secure good jobs around the world, especially in Europe, for many years to come.

## **Strengthening democracy and the rule of law**

European democracy is being challenged by hybrid attacks, for example by Russia. Meanwhile, fundamental principles of the rule of law and freedom are also coming under attack in certain EU Member States. Only a cohesive, resilient European Union can stand firm against these threats. Cohesion among Europeans must be based on their unity in diversity and their shared understanding of democracy and the rule of law.

The momentum of the current change of era can serve to consolidate fundamental European values. The instruments created for this purpose must now be proven to be effective: Member States that systematically violate fundamental values must have their voting rights revoked at the European level and the disbursement of European funds must be linked to compliance with the rule of law and democracy. We want to hone the instruments available to us to uphold the rule of law in order to prevent certain states from trampling the fundamental values of the European Union underfoot. This is why consolidating the power of the Council of

Europe's European Court of Human Rights in terms of a consistent implementation of its rulings throughout the Member States is also of great importance.

### **Taking the security interests of Eastern and Central Europe seriously**

The totalitarianism and imperialism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which primarily originated in Germany and Russia, caused immense suffering and crimes against humanity in large parts of Central and Eastern Europe. We are all the more grateful for the contribution made by the people of Central and Eastern Europe to the restoration of peace and freedom throughout Europe. German reunification would not have been possible without the peaceful revolutions that took place in Poland and Hungary. Today, we are not only united through our long and shared history, but also through deep social, cultural, political, and economic ties.

Our own security and prosperity are closely linked to that of the states of Central and Eastern Europe. Revisionist and imperialist Russia considers large parts of Eastern Europe to fall within its sphere of influence. Putin has never recognised the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of many Eastern European states, which is something to which we paid too little attention until the attack on Ukraine. And yet Central and Eastern European countries have been experiencing increasing aggression and threats from an expansionist Russia for the past two decades, which is why we will significantly increase our coordination of security policy issues with our Central and Eastern European partners, especially within the EU and NATO, and take their assessment of the security situation seriously.

As the largest and economically strongest EU Member State, Germany has a special role to play in the reformulation of Eastern European policy. We will therefore work with our partners, and in particular with the Central and Eastern European EU Member States, to develop a common EU policy for Eastern Europe that takes account of the security interests and development opportunities of all states currently facing the threat of an expansionist Russia. Germany has a responsibility to regain lost trust.

### **Advancing EU reforms, enlargement processes, and European Neighbourhood Policy**

The current conflict with Putin's Russia has led the EU to rediscover one of its most successful instruments – enlargement policy, which has served as a force for peace, democracy, the rule of law, and prosperity in Europe. The task now is to continue this success story in a consistent manner in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. The return of war in Europe has reminded us that the stabilisation and integration of our neighbours to the east and south-east are also, and above all, in our own interest.

Following years of delay, we would now like to welcome the states of the Western Balkans into the midst of our community as soon as possible. Creating the preconditions and securing the process for the admission of Ukraine, Moldova and, in terms of perspective, Georgia to the EU as rapidly as possible must become a priority for our future Eastern European policy. In this context, the Copenhagen criteria remain a basic requirement.

To prepare for the accession of new members, the EU must become considerably more capable of taking action and more sovereign. Far from being a sideshow, institutional reforms within the EU are an essential prerequisite for an EU that is capable of taking action and embracing

new members. The sanctions against Russia show that the EU is capable of taking resolute and rapid action.

We want to remove the unanimity principle from the decision-making procedures in order to ensure the EU's long-term ability to act in the field of foreign policy. This will make the EU more agile, more responsive, and more democratic. If we aspire to a sovereign Europe, then majority decisions represent a gain and not a loss of sovereignty.

Our European partners expect Germany to live up to its responsibility and take a leading role, not least because of its size and economic strength. For us, leadership means involving our partners. We want to provide stimuli and guidance, whilst at the same time focusing on mediation and the balancing of interests.

By working together, we have the best possible chance now and in the years ahead to help shape the 21<sup>st</sup> century in our own and Europe's interests. In order to achieve this, we want to strategically expand the European Union's ability to act and increase its appeal as a global partner.



## 4. A STRATEGIC EXPANSION OF PARTNERSHIPS

An attractive European centre could make a decisive contribution to providing global solutions to global challenges. A rules-based international order is the best foundation for this. Therefore, it is in Europe's strategic interest to work towards the establishment of effective multilateral institutions and international agreements. To achieve this, Europe needs to be thinking and acting in a more geopolitical way and define clear guidelines for dealing with other centres of power.

At the same time, it is important to cultivate long-term relations with emerging states and regions that are expressing a legitimate interest in helping to shape the global order. Especially in competition with competing power centres such as China and Russia, which pursue different values and goals, it is particularly important that Europe make long-term and appealing offers of collaboration. This is especially true for states that are politically and socially close to us.

### **Strengthening transatlantic relations**

The transatlantic relationship is central to European and German foreign relations. Our common membership in NATO, the United Nations, the G7, and the G20, as well as our shared commitment to democratic and liberal values, enable us to pursue strategic goals together in areas such as European security, climate policy, and multilateralism.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has brought transatlantic common ground into sharper focus than has been the case for a long time. Europe and the USA are moving forward in close solidarity in their support for Ukraine and imposing sanctions against Russia and the USA is Europe's most important security partner worldwide.

Yet the close transatlantic relations cannot be taken for granted and only the upcoming presidential elections will determine whether the improved relations under President Biden will last. Moreover, the USA's strategic and security policy is increasingly shifting towards the Indo-Pacific region.

The risk of protectionist measures has recently increased in the USA where the development and production of key technologies are heavily subsidised. American companies are favoured when it comes to awarding public contracts and grants, which is why we want Europe to do everything in its power to avoid a trade dispute and subsidy race with the USA and to dismantle existing trade barriers instead. The Trade and Technology Council (TTC) is the right forum for this. The EU must react to measures that clearly violate WTO rules.

At the same time, Europe should be seeking to boost its economic power by pushing ahead with investment and innovation in forward-looking technologies (greentech, 6G in medical technology, etc.). Being economically strong and independent will increase the appeal of Europe as a partner for the USA to engage in innovation, economic, and trade policy collaborations.

Germany will assume more responsibility in Europe with a view to developing the transatlantic relationship into a genuine partnership of leadership and responsibility. In terms of defence policy, we want to see Europe standing on its own feet and shouldering a greater share of the task whilst continuing to develop its own capabilities. In terms of NATO's European pillar and the coordination and promotion of European armament projects, the



ultimate goal should be for Europeans to become increasingly able to guarantee their own security within a collaborative NATO-EU collaboration framework.

## **Reassessing the relationship with China**

The turning point in foreign and security policy has also resulted in a more critical assessment of China. Since China's failure to condemn the Russian attack on Ukraine, we have come to realise that China under Xi Jinping is a global power that intends to shape world politics in its own interests. The results of the CCP's 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress confirm this emphatically.

To the outside world, China is making an increasingly self-confident and sometimes aggressive appearance, for example by repeatedly emphasising its hegemonic claims to countries in its immediate vicinity. Repressive trends at home, such as the massive curtailment of freedoms in Hong Kong and the documented human rights violations against the Uyghurs, are worrying.

The complexity of our relations with China is reflected in the EU Commission's characterisation of China as a "partner-competitor-systemic rival". The People's Republic has now emerged as a bona fide geopolitical actor, without whose participation, global challenges, such as climate change, pandemic control, and food crises, as well as arms control and nuclear non-proliferation, cannot be solved. At the same time, the Chinese and European economies are closely intertwined to their mutual benefit through their international value chains. Western companies are competing with Chinese companies for market share and innovation.

Therefore, decoupling is not the right answer. Instead, we need a European resilience and risk reduction strategy, not least with a view to protecting critical infrastructure in Europe. We also need to diversify our economic relations in order to minimise economic dependencies on China, for example when it comes to procuring raw materials in accordance with the "China plus one" principle, which means that we always have an alternative supplier in addition to China. We must create incentives for German companies to diversify their value chains and sales markets, which would include banning the import of products from forced labour through a European supply chain law.

After all, China has become a systemic rival under the leadership of Xi Jinping and is pushing for the transformation of the international system in its favour through its quest for economic and military dominance in the Indo-Pacific region, the expansion of its political and economic influence in the Global South, and its criticism of the rules and principles of the international order.

The rise of China requires a common European China policy. Europe must use its geopolitical leverage and stand up for Europe's interests and values with one voice, rather than allowing itself to be divided by Beijing. Another lesson to be learned from the Russian war of aggression is that we need to work more closely with our partners around the world. Many of our partners in the Indo-Pacific region feel threatened by China. We must take these concerns and fears seriously and take them into account in our policy towards China.

We should seek dialogue with China, which should be conducted in a robust manner and in the spirit of constructive criticism. Human rights violations and protectionism are as much a part of this as our commitment to the One China policy and our determination to see the Taiwan issue resolved only in an consensual and peaceful procedure.

## **Organising European security under the shadow of Russia**

For too long, certain European countries, and Germany in particular, have relied exclusively on a cooperative future with Russia and have failed to develop scenarios based on an alternative approach to dealing with Russia. This should have been a major consideration following the Russian invasion of Georgia, or at the latest after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Germany and Russia share a special history and we have derived the responsibility to put those things that unite us at the centre of our politics precisely in light of this history, which in turn has caused us to defocus on those things that separate us, even as Putin's regime distanced itself further and further from Europe. As a result, Germany has failed to respond adequately to emerging autocratic tendencies in Russia and its increasingly aggressive foreign policy. Russia's increasing lack of interest in joint institutions, such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE, was another indicator of their alienation.

Our insistence on the assumption that ever closer economic ties would contribute to the long-term democratisation and stabilisation of Russia was a mistake. Instead, Germany became unilaterally dependent on Russia in terms of our energy policy, completely failing to recognise the security dimension of our energy supplies. Other countries in Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe have also failed to secure a sufficiently diversified energy supply. A European resilience strategy must prevent any recurrence of such unilateral dependencies in the future.

There can be no normalisation of relations with Russia as long as the Putin regime continues to pursue its imperialist goal of conquering and oppressing sovereign states. We remain committed to the long-term goal of a common security order in Europe, which will only function when Russia, too, once again shares an interest in it and recognises the fundamental principles of the rules-based order. One thing is clear: as long as nothing fundamentally changes in Russia, Europe's security will have to be organised under the shadow of the Russian threat.

## **The Global South as an equal partner**

Governments and societies in a multipolar world order can exploit the room for manoeuvre inherent in a fragile international order to their own advantage. There are alternatives to the Western development model and in particular, those countries that are the main recipients of development aid from the OECD countries use the opportunities available to them to choose between different offers. These developments have allowed authoritarian regimes to grow more powerful in the shadows. Having failed to see their expectations fulfilled, many states in the Global South have turned away from the promises of liberal democracies.

Europe must respond to this by investing in strategic partnerships with countries of the Global South. Whilst Europe is the partner of choice for many countries, we have failed in recent years to exploit this capital and to make attractive offers of collaboration, unlike China or even Russia. Reforming multilateral organisations and rules to meet the Global South's wish for better representation is an important step.

## **Supporting multilateralism without double standards**

We want to expand partnership-based collaboration as a win-win model and thereby establish a multilateralism with no double standards. As a global centre, the European Union is vital for

this as Europe is capable of attracting many countries to collaborate in joint projects through attractive and fair offers.

It is time for a new sustainable, crisis-proof, and socially just international policy. We want to break up unequal and neo-liberal power structures in North-South relations and to promote human rights, democracy and prosperity.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the United Nations' Agenda 2030, which have been adopted by the international community, serve as a benchmark for collaboration agreements with global partners. Many of the core convictions of social democratic policy are reflected in these goals, making them promising and sustainable starting points for bilateral and multilateral projects from our perspective.

## **Dialogue even with difficult partners**

At the same time, we must not exclude dialogue and cooperation with states that do not share our own values. No partnership policy can be limited to democracies when over half the world's population lives in autocratically ruled countries. Core requirements for greater global security include such things as international arms control, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and collective efforts to combat the climate crisis. Importantly, this means keeping the communication channels open – even with difficult partners. There will therefore be different spheres of cooperation that also include non-democratic states.

This presupposes the identification of common interests within the framework of a value-oriented interest policy. Difficult trade-offs always have to be considered in terms of how far to take such cooperation and at what point our principles and values should preclude it.

Nevertheless, collaborating with progressive and democratic forces around the world is integral to our self-image as a social democratic party. The rise of authoritarian forces across the globe must be met head on by increased solidarity among democrats, which will necessarily entail supporting and protecting democratic civil societies, which are increasingly coming under threat.

## **Common responses to global challenges**

The challenges of the globalised world are complex and no state can master them alone:

**Combating the climate crisis** requires partnerships for the development and provision of climate technologies. Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz' initiative to establish a climate club comprising states from the Global North and South shows leadership and creates a new forum for an ambitious and coordinated global climate protection policy. We also want to work with countries in the Global South to develop emission reduction and climate change adaptation strategies, for example through new energy and climate partnerships. These partnerships help to expand the energy supply and will benefit local economies. They also support the use of solar and wind power as well as green hydrogen to transform Europe's energy supply. We will also work to ensure that Germany and Europe do not leave the countries that are most affected by the losses and damage caused by climate change to fend for themselves. Our aim is to further expand the global protective shield against climate risks.

Preventive peace policy serves the global **campaign against poverty and hunger**, which is why the provision of reliable funding for the United Nations World Food Programme represents an important act of solidarity on the part of the Global North. Diplomatic and political

development efforts are also of existential importance in view of increasing conflicts over the distribution of resources due to the climate crisis as well as armed conflicts that affect the global food trade.

The conclusion of far-reaching **trade and investment agreements** (e.g., the EU-Mercosur Agreement), which also safeguard social rights, protect the environment and climate, and create long-term prospects for growth and prosperity for all contracting parties, would be an important milestone in establishing robust alliances and partnerships. We are also advocating a reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the face of escalating trade disputes. Both the prosperity of Europe and the development prospects of many countries in the Global South are heavily dependent on a rules-based, non-discriminatory global trade regime.

The Global South's trust in the solidarity of the international community has been damaged in recent years as a result of a policy of compartmentalisation in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. Provisions must be made within the framework of a **global health policy** to enable faster, cross-border support and unbureaucratic international collaboration in the future, for example, through the expedited construction of decentralised vaccine production facilities. The control centre in such health crises should be a World Health Organisation that enjoys widespread support.

Europe has also hitherto failed to address the issue of **flight and migration** in a spirit of partnership, which decreases confidence in our approach to human rights. The dying and suffering at Europe's external borders must end. Europe needs a values-based refugee policy and a collaborative migration policy, to which end, we want to expand migration partnerships and promote legal migration to Europe, for example for students, skilled workers, and scientists. We also want to work with partner countries at the same time to expand circular migration and make it more attractive with a view to making greater use of the development potential of migration.

The debt sustainability of many countries in the Global South has deteriorated and their political capacity to act has been affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic in addition to high energy and food prices, coupled with a significant increase in interest rates. A debt crisis is looming over many states, which could result in further international instability. To avert this, Germany should collaborate with other creditors to advocate for a solidarity-based solution (e.g. pro-rata debt relief). We also need a **realignment of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)**. They are from a different era and are not well positioned to meet the current challenges. We have to adapt structures to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and mobilise public as well as private financial resources to fund economic, social, and political development processes, especially in economically weaker countries. We want to tackle this reform in Europe together with partner countries in the Global South.

## **A strong United Nations for a global community capable of taking action**

We want to intensify our commitment in order to reinvigorate the United Nations (UN) where it has lost strength, and to expand it where the global community needs international rules and action.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has once again exposed one of the UN Security Council's weaknesses, namely that its structure still reflects the post-war order of a bipolar world dominated by colonial powers. A veto by any of the permanent members prevents any

resolution that would otherwise initiate peacemaking measures. Due to the way the Security Council currently works, it is unable to fulfil its main peacekeeping and peacemaking mission.

We also need to strengthen the international criminal justice system. Anyone who commits a war crime should fear prosecution: there should be no more impunity for war crimes in future.

A world free of nuclear weapons continues to be the goal of social democratic policy, to which end we strongly advocate urgently needed tangible progress on nuclear disarmament and arms control, first and foremost within the framework of the United Nations. We also support so-called "no first use" initiatives aimed at renouncing the first use of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, we are committed to maintaining, fulfilling, and extending the New START Treaty on the limitation and verification of strategic nuclear weapons.

We want to take the opportunity to use Germany's candidacy for a seat on the Security Council in 2027 to put disarmament initiatives back on the agenda at the global level. We also intend to reopen discussions concerning reforming the UN Security Council, despite the fact that any such reform would be difficult in view of the current geopolitical tensions. We are in favour of initiatives aimed at restructuring the most important UN body to keep it up-to-date within the framework of a Charter amendment or a review conference such as Brazil's G4 initiative. We want to see a proportionate representation of all global regions in the institutions of international organisations and a UN Security Council that is capable of taking action. In consultation with the General Assembly, we will continue to pursue pragmatic proposals such as limiting veto rights.

By itself, more money will not lead to success. Germany will also be called upon to contribute more personnel for peace missions, civilian projects, and UN peacekeeping missions. We have well-trained personnel capable of making a decisive contribution to the success of institutions such as UN peacekeeping missions. To this end, we want to start the process of reaching the necessary agreement between the Federal Government and the federal states (Länder). We know that reforming the UN system is a difficult undertaking, which is why we want to make use of and further develop existing multilateral forums and platforms (G7, G20, OECD). Furthermore, we are playing a leading role through additional initiatives, such as the Climate Club, to inject new momentum into the battle against the climate crisis.

## 5. CLOSING REMARKS

The international order is in upheaval, which is why we must adapt our foreign and security policies to the new conditions and face up to the new challenges. The current global crises are too complex for any one country to solve alone. This can only be done collectively and in collaboration with other states. Our aim is to strengthen and further develop the rules-based international order. We want to build upon our internationalist tradition to find solutions to global challenges with a strong Europe working in partnership with other countries and regions. Our foreign and security policies are designed to enable people to live in security, peace, and prosperity.

As a party, we can pave the way for this. We will use the regional and global networks of our social democratic party family. With the support of progressive organisations and in dialogue with our sister parties and the trade union movement we want to develop joint initiatives aimed at making the world more peaceful, just, feminist, and fit for the future.