

INTERNATIONAL REPORTS



Conflict - ready?

Western Foreign Policy in Times of Systemic Rivalry

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

It has been now more than nine months since the Russian invasion of Ukraine radically changed the perceived threat for many people in Europe. In Germany, too, people have had to face up to questions of war and peace that seemed to be consigned to the past – many for the first time in their lives.

How would *we* respond to an attack? Can we, as Germans, Europeans, and partners in the Western alliance, deal militarily with a now openly imperialist Russia? What if someone else were in the White House in this situation? Have we become too economically dependent on authoritarian states, and are we at risk of further adversity from China, too? Until recently, such problems were almost exclusively the domain of politicians and academics, but since February, they have become the focus of intense public debate. For many, these matters are no longer abstract but existential. Security experts are the new virologists.

In this issue of International Reports, we ask military historian Sönke Neitzel whether German society is prepared for conflict, and talk to him about unrealistic calls for peace. We also discuss the lack of debate about how war continues, unfortunately, to be used as a political means, but also how citizens may be more resilient than their government gives them credit for.

The German government, embodied by the Chancellor, took a well noted step shortly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine by announcing a *Zeitenwende* in security policy, including a 100-billion-euro package for the Bundeswehr. This was certainly important, writes Philipp Dienstbier, but the project has a flaw: it is merely catching up on the investment that will enable Germany to finally deliver on the promises made to its Western allies following the annexation of Crimea eight years ago. Meanwhile, in June, NATO once again ramped up its expectations of its members – and Germany is at risk of breaking its recent pledges to defend the alliance yet again.

In turn, the credibility and effectiveness of this alliance is heavily dependent on the United States. Looking west across the Atlantic, there is currently an overall sense of relief at the Biden administration's close coordination with European partners regarding the war in Ukraine, but this is tinged by concerns about what may lie in store after 2024. Don't just look at Trump! This is the appeal of Paul Linnarz, whose article focuses on structural changes in the US electorate. Particularly among Republican voters, there is a growing desire to scale back their country's international engagement. Accordingly, Europeans would be well advised to take their security more firmly into their own hands.

This is accentuated by the fact that the US has long viewed China as its main rival in the coming decades, and is shifting its attention from Europe to Asia. In his article, Johann Fuhrmann analyses what role the People's Republic could play in relations with Western countries, and what lessons we can learn from the experience with Russia for our future relations with Beijing.

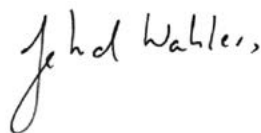
Economic ties with China have repeatedly been subject to critical examination. In economic terms, is Germany in the clutches of autocrats? In his article, Jan Cernicky weighs up the risks and benefits of a closely interwoven global economy and makes a clear appeal: as many restrictions as absolutely necessary, but as much free trade as possible.

Finally, Magdalena Jetschgo-Morcillo, Sebastian Enskat, and Maximilian Römer look at the role of democratic emerging countries in the debate about Russia's war on Ukraine. They point out that states such as Brazil, India, and South Africa are not willing to interpret this conflict as a clash between democracy and autocracy, and to adopt a clear position. The authors urge Western countries to be more responsive to the specific needs and interests of these emerging nations rather than pressurising them to choose between "good" and "evil".

The situation in Ukraine is changing from day to day, and it is hard to predict when and how the war will end. But the fundamental conflict between our free societies and an increasingly authoritarian Russia that is aggressive towards the outside world is likely to remain – as part of a wider confrontation between the countries that have established our existing liberal world order, and the revisionist powers that seek to tear it down. And although that confrontation is also a systemic conflict between democracies and authoritarian states, we have to ask ourselves whether we are wise to distinguish between opponents and allies based solely on this criterion. For in order to persist in this conflict, we must, on the one hand, strengthen our resilience and continue to defend our liberal values with confidence. But on the other hand, we will also have to win partners who may not yet be the perfect incarnation of these values. To have an honest debate on that fact and then act accordingly: that may well be the most important task Western foreign policy is facing today.

I hope you will find this report a stimulating read.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr. Gerhard Wahlers is Editor of International Reports, Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Department European and International Cooperation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (gerhard.wahlers@kas.de).



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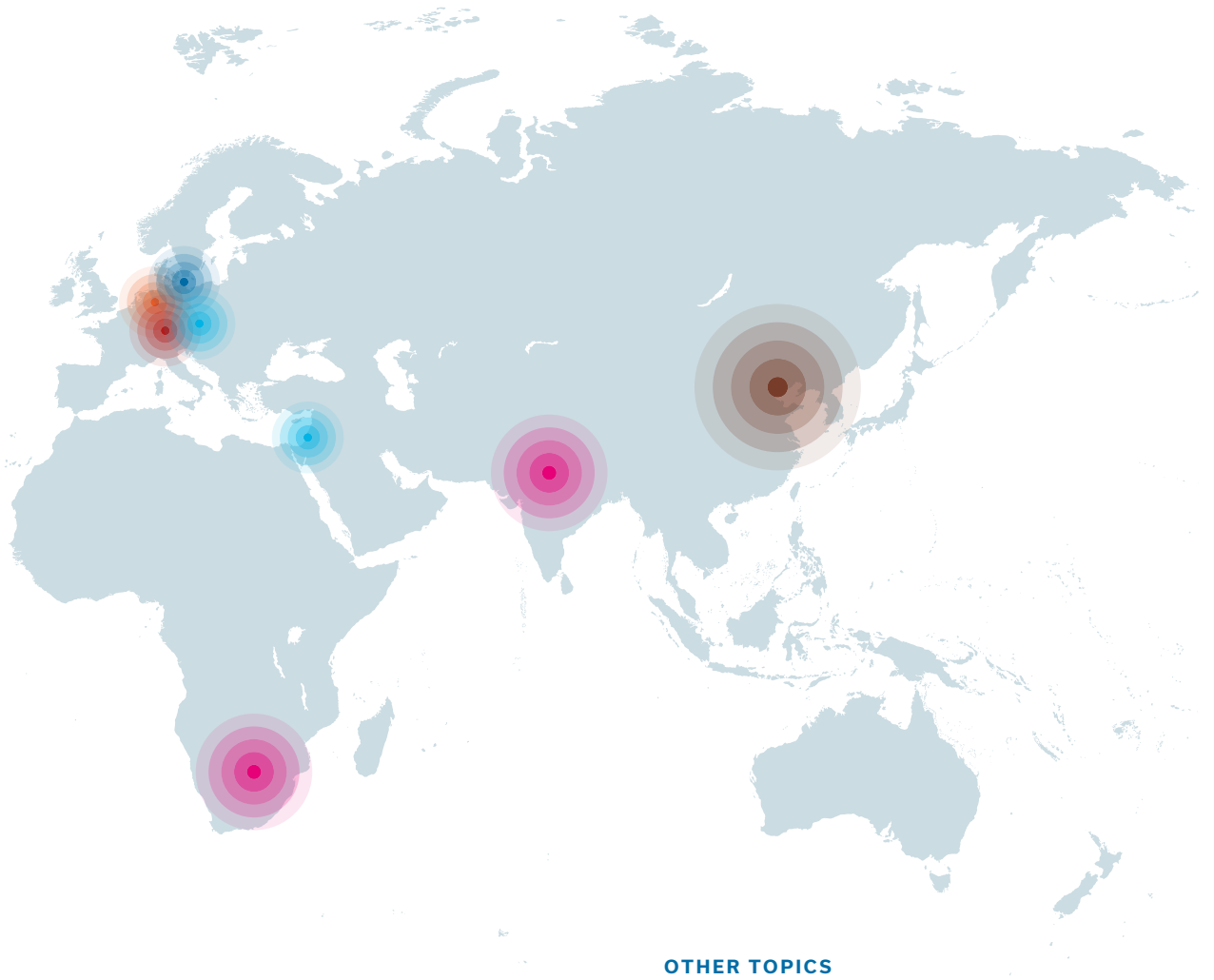
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Conflict-ready? Western Foreign Policy in Times of Systemic Rivalry

“We Have Completely Lost the Ability to Read Wars”

Security Policy Culture in Germany and the War in Ukraine

An Interview with Professor Sönke Neitzel

Military historian Sönke Neitzel talks to International Reports about unrealistic longings for peace and the atrophy of security policy thinking in Germany – and explains why only the US can ensure Ukraine’s survival.

International Reports (IR): Mr Neitzel, you are currently the only professor of military history in Germany. Does that say something about the country?

Sönke Neitzel: Yes, that certainly says something about the country. We have around 200 professorships in gender studies – and just one in military history. And in the area of political science, there are precisely three that deal with security policy in the narrower sense. Obviously, I would like to see more in this field.

IR: Why so few professorships?

Neitzel: The university milieu takes little interest in questions of war and peace. And when they are interested, they tend to be extremely normative. Since the 1970s, we have had some lavishly funded institutes for peace and conflict studies, which for years have aired an overly idealised view of the world. And, undoubtedly, the academic world’s frame of reference is also reflected in the denomination of chairs. How could it be otherwise?

IR: Are things very different in other countries?

Neitzel: Yes and no. If we just look at chairs that explicitly identify military history as part of their work, then there are very few throughout Europe. But other professorships often deal with the subject, even if they are not denominated as such. The situation is certainly best in the UK, which has a long tradition of War Studies. What is different about Germany is not so much that there is only one professorship in military history, but that the subject as a whole plays such a minor role in history studies.

IR: Let’s move away from universities and look at society as a whole. How would you describe the German citizens’ relationship to the military?

Neitzel: We need to distinguish between the Bundeswehr in particular and the military in general. The German citizens’ relationship to the military is certainly reticent, particularly with regard to the past. When Germans think of the military, it is the Second World War, the Holocaust, and Nazi crimes that dominate. But when the public is asked about its attitude towards the Bundeswehr, surveys show that Germans view it in a positive or very positive light, at least in recent decades.

IR: You mentioned a certain reticence with regard to the military. But can't this also be viewed as a strength – for example, because it goes hand in hand with a high regard for diplomacy?

Neitzel: It was never the case that the German people were

generally against the military. We just tend to be more aware of people who voice their criticism – consider, for instance, NATO's dual-track decision. But in doing so, we overlook the hundreds of thousands who joined the Bundeswehr and said: we need the military to defend us. And if we look at what the German state spent on the military during the Cold War – three to four per cent of GDP – we cannot say that the country generally has a distanced relationship to the military.

Now to the issue of diplomacy: for the most part, diplomacy alone cannot fix things. The excision of the military from political thinking began in the 1990s. And one can have different opinions about the success of this orientation. I would say that the West and Germany failed miserably in Yugoslavia. We ended up watching massacres like the one in Srebrenica. Europe – although it had a million armed troops and a thousand fighter planes – failed to end this civil war. It was the Americans who did that. One does always need a variety of items in one's toolbox. A wise policy consists of diplomacy, economic measures, and military means – then it's a case of deciding what to use in which situation.



Ambivalent relationship: While many Germans view the military as such with reticence, the majority has a positive to very positive opinion on the Bundeswehr. [Source: © Hannibal Hanschke, Reuters.](#)

IR: And this toolbox isn't fully stocked in Germany?

Neitzel: It's one thing to say that this country wants to renounce war. But the other is the question of what we actually do when other countries use war as a political means. As we see with regard to Vladimir Putin, we have completely forgotten how to take war into account as a real possibility. Looking at the situation in Ukraine, the mistake didn't lie in reaching out to Putin and offering him the chance to cooperate. The mistake was failing to make any provision for the worst-case scenario – that Putin would head down the path of war.

IR: In the weeks after the start of the invasion, there was a public debate in Germany about the proper response to the war. This included open letters containing arguments that were sometimes in favour of, and sometimes against a stronger commitment to helping Ukraine on the part of Germany and its allies – particularly with regard to supplying weapons. In an opinion piece in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in July, you yourself, alongside other experts, advocated a tough stance towards Russia. Why was that?

Neitzel: First of all, none of us knows how the situation will develop. We can only work with plausibilities and assumptions, which of course are also based on our professions and attitudes. For me, the crucial question is: do we believe that we can achieve anything with negotiations at this point? At the moment, I don't see any sign of Putin being ready to negotiate in earnest. He has no need to do so. Moreover, it would be simply unacceptable for Ukraine to be locked into the current situation. The country would be entirely at Russia's mercy. Putin would see this as confirmation that a war of aggression is indeed worthwhile, and he would even have this reward sanctioned by a fearful West.

In addition, if Germany were to propose negotiations now, it would completely isolate itself in Europe. It would divide Europe and lose the last of its credit with the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. Taking such an action would be a gift for Putin.

IR: It seems to us, at least, that the debate about a potential end to the war is often characterised by wishful thinking and a fair portion of naivety. Little attention is paid to research findings on the prerequisites for successful negotiations. Do you have the same impression? And if so, can you explain the phenomenon?

Neitzel: The debate is not about scientific knowledge, but about emotions. What becomes clear here is the desire for peace. This is very understandable, but in my opinion has little to do with reality. Most argue without knowledge, unaware of the latest findings on issues such as the dynamics and endings of wars. If, as in my case, one has studied war for decades, such opinions seem a little perplexing.

IR: In what way?

Neitzel: Wars are first and foremost about imposing one's will on the opponent by military means. Put simply, wars end when this has been achieved, or when the military means are no longer sufficient to achieve the goal. Then, there can be a compromise, such as a peace agreement or a ceasefire, and we have seen many different variants of these in the past. I see no sign that Russia has reached this point. And this is what I mean: we have completely lost the ability to read wars. It is clear that we are all in favour of peace. But our ability to engage with the subject of war is not particularly strong. In this country, we have comparatively little expertise in this area. This applies to academics and politicians alike.

IR: Someone who undoubtedly has expertise in this area is Carlo Masala, professor at the Bundeswehr University in Munich. During the summer, in the face of calls to finally negotiate with Russia to make "peace", he tweeted: "It does scare me how little some parts of society are prepared to defend themselves." Do you share this fear?

Neitzel: Of course, Germany is in a different situation than Ukraine. The Russian army is not east of Berlin at the Seelow Heights. If that were the case, the discussion would be different. But overall, I share my colleague's concern. I combine this with the finding that we have simply glossed things over for far too long and indeed lived on illusions and wishful thinking. Waking up now is very painful – and some people want to cling on to the old illusions.

IR: Surveys show that the majority of Germans are quite willing to accept restrictions, such as higher energy prices, if it helps Ukraine. On the other hand, the European Council on Foreign Relations conducted a survey in ten European countries to discover how people felt about the war in Ukraine. The results revealed that when people were asked if they preferred immediate "peace" at the expense of concessions from Ukraine, or whether they believed that peace could only be secured in the medium and long term if Russia was now firmly stopped, then the "peace at any price" camp won in every country except Poland – and Italy is the only country where this view was more prevalent than in Germany. Can we as a society stand up to Putin's Russia, or does the Kremlin just have to sit back and wait for the democratic mechanisms to kick in and for the public's desire for peace to be fully translated into government policy?

Neitzel: I think Germans are more resilient than some politicians believe. But a great deal depends on crisis management, communication, and clear action. It is apparent that we are more divided in our overall attitude towards Russia than the UK, for example. In the eastern parts of Germany, for historical reasons, we simply have a different attitude towards this. Nevertheless, I believe that the majority of the population is quite willing to accept restrictions if they understand the point of them and feel that the government is steering them skilfully through the storm.

IR: The keyword is communication. So, in this context, is it perhaps necessary to explain more clearly why supporting Ukraine against Russian aggression is so important and also in our own interest?

Neitzel: That is actually being done. The arguments are well known. If we accept this breach of the rules, things could snowball. We cannot then rule out threats to the sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova and Georgia or maybe even NATO countries. I think most people understand that.

But, as far as I am concerned, it's also important not to overdo the discussion, and to allow for different opinions. For example, people should also be allowed to criticise Ukraine – such as the influence of its oligarchs – without being branded a traitor. It should be permissible to say that Ukraine has different ideas to us on certain issues. I believe this only strengthens the credibility of the discussion. But my argument is also that if we as NATO countries no longer support Ukraine, it will cease to exist. This would be a ground-breaking precedent in recent European history. We cannot allow that to happen.

IR: Germany is often accused of having been too hesitant towards Russia in the past. After the Russian attack on Ukraine in February, Chancellor Scholz attracted much attention with his Zeitenwende speech. However, many observers felt that the expectations that it raised, including internationally, were quickly dashed. Do you share this view?

Neitzel: Scholz gave a great speech that also resonated in Europe and at NATO. Add to that the 100 billion euros for the Bundeswehr, and Germany had plenty of capital to build on. But since then, it has become clear that, although the 100 billion are certainly good, the Germans are actually behaving as they always do. They look at what others are doing, let others take the lead. In diplomatic parlance, this means: “we coordinate our efforts”. If the Netherlands supply five self-propelled howitzers, Germany supplies seven. They spent months talking about encouraging other NATO countries to deliver heavy weaponry to Ukraine, with Germany promising to replenish their stocks – an operation known as *Ringtausch*, or “circular exchange” –, but all it came down to was 14 Leopard tanks. Germany is doing something, but still too little in relation to its size, financial strength, and importance. At least, that's the perception in Central and Eastern Europe and – behind closed doors – also within NATO. It is also my personal opinion – Germany could do much more.

IR: So, you would like to see a much more proactive Germany that takes the initiative?

Neitzel: Germany could be a driving force. But on security

issues, it has never been. Think of the euro crisis and what a strong role former Finance Minister Schäuble played at that time. Now compare that to the country's role in the current crisis. There is a huge difference. This is a major problem, particularly for people in Eastern and Central Europe, who are really afraid. Whether Ukraine survives this war or not depends on the US, and possibly on the UK. But not on the EU member states, and certainly not on Germany. That's 450 million EU Europeans – a shameful fact.



IR: Now, however, one thing is unmistakable: the Russian invasion of Ukraine has raised the profile of security issues, at least in the public debate in Germany. People are willing to reconsider old certainties, for instance, when they increasingly recognise the importance of military deterrence in preventing war and aggression. Others still find this very difficult or fall back into old ways of thinking. In the extreme case, the discourse on security policy is discredited outright as "bellicism". Do you think Russia's attack will lead to a greater focus on security policy in the public discourse?

Neitzel: At the end of the day, this question

is really about whether we will see a change in Germany's political culture. Political cultures can change; in our country, this has happened several times over the past 150 years. But I would be surprised if we were to experience a real turnaround in the area of security policy – in a cultural no-man's land, so to speak. Today's discourse has been triggered by current events. When the topicality changes, the news will focus on other issues. Then the question will be whether security policy issues have really been anchored within universities, social elites, and political parties – whether there is a new awareness, whether we will even see a realignment of key political and academic positions. But I don't really expect that to happen. The people who are currently deciding on new appointments in universities or political parties will not change their minds overnight. Fundamental change would be very desirable, but I find that hard to imagine.

IR: Finally, Professor Neitzel, let's once again cast an eye to the future. You have already said that, unfortunately, the war in Ukraine is not likely to end very soon. And even if there were some kind of ceasefire, the conflict with Russia would not be over. Many believe that the conflict cannot be ended structurally without regime change in Russia – to a regime that is more interested in cooperation than in imperial expansion and hostility to the West...

Neitzel: ... or unless the Russian forces are defeated and fall apart. But that's not to be expected in the foreseeable future, even after the recent Ukrainian successes...



President Volodymyr Zelensky addresses members of the US Congress. "Whether Ukraine survives this war or not depends on the US", underlines Professor Sönke Neitzel. Source: © Adama Diarra, Reuters.

IR: ... that means we have to be prepared for this conflict to shape the next few years, and in the worst case even the coming decades. Then there's China, another power that challenges the West. Can history teach us how to stand up to these authoritarian revisionists?

Neitzel: Every conflict is different and plays out under new circumstances – and we only learn from history what we want to learn and what suits our political stance. We see history as a kind of rummage table from which we pick the argument that suits us best at any given moment.

What advice can one give as a historian then? It certainly depends on the unity of NATO countries in every area of action: economic, political, and military. And we need a realistic view of the world. What can we achieve? What can we not?

That might sound trivial, but it is very difficult to put into practice. For decades now, the EU has lacked unity and a realistic view when it comes to foreign and security policy. Europe is still completely dependent on the US in terms of security. And I don't see any progress being made, for instance on armament. We can only hope that this will go well. But should the US one day decide to deprive Europe of its nuclear shield, Europe would be vulnerable to blackmail. The UK and France cannot really protect us in such a scenario.

IR: What can be done to improve this rather depressing situation?

Neitzel: We can do something. History is yet to be written. For example, we need a German government that takes decisive action. The Bundeswehr has to be capable of waging a defensive war. And, at European level, we have to cut the Gordian knot. Europe spends enough on defence, but it needs to organise itself differently. For this, we need a great European – a Helmut Kohl, Charles de Gaulle, or Konrad Adenauer – who has the strength to achieve the seemingly impossible. We need leaders who will finally take massive action.

The interview was conducted by Sören Soika and Fabian Wagener – translated from German.

Dr. Sönke Neitzel is Professor of Military History/Cultural History of Violence at the University of Potsdam.

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[Conflict-ready? Western Foreign Policy in Times of Systemic Rivalry](#)

Always One Step Behind?

German Security Policy after the NATO Summit in Madrid

Philipp Dienstbier

The war in Ukraine is functioning as a catalyst for the reordering of transatlantic security policy, which has been ongoing since 2014. Germany's *Zeitenwende* has laid important groundwork to finally fulfil promises made to allies eight years ago. But even as the German government is preparing to take this leap forward, NATO has raised the bar even further at its summit in Madrid, in June 2022. Further efforts will be needed if Germany wants to avoid breaking its promises yet again.

When German Chancellor Olaf Scholz proclaimed the *Zeitenwende* in his keynote address to the German Bundestag on the fourth day of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, he stated, with regard to the return of open warfare in Europe, that "the world afterwards is not the world we had before"¹. Upon hearing this, the capitals of Germany's partners, from Warsaw to Washington, expressed relief and joy at Berlin's change of heart. The planners at NATO headquarters and commands in Brussels, Mons, and Brunssum, however, must have been rather surprised by the German reality check. After all, following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent covert Russian war in eastern Ukraine, the Alliance had already realised that Russia was once again an opponent to be taken seriously; that collective defence and deterrence had to return to the top of NATO's list of priorities; and that a fundamental military restructuring of the Alliance had become necessary.

Already at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, and at the following summit in Warsaw in 2016, the Alliance had agreed – based on a clear shift in the threat level – that allies must spend two per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on defence, the intent being specifically to rebuild their capabilities, lost at the end of the Cold War, of maintaining large military units in a high state of readiness, and providing force support and functioning logistics for rapid troop deployments to NATO's eastern flank. At these NATO summits, Germany had also agreed to

restore its national and collective defence capabilities, but until 27 February 2022, it had never mustered the political will to actually keep these promises. With the ambitious plans of the chancellor and the German Federal Government to establish a "powerful, cutting-edge, progressive Bundeswehr"², and a special fund amounting to 100 billion euros negotiated with the opposition, German policymakers seemed finally prepared to make good on commitments made almost a decade earlier.

However, the extensive package of measures is based on a fundamental fallacy: it was not 2022, but 2014, that marked the *Zeitenwende* for European security policy; in setting up the special fund, promising to modernise the Bundeswehr, and refocusing on national and collective defence, Germany would simply be complying with necessary adjustments to its defence policy that have been neglected since 2014. At its most recent summit in Madrid in June, NATO agreed on next steps in reaction to the war in Ukraine, including the most comprehensive reorganisation of its armed forces since the end of the Cold War. This creates new additional requirements regarding contributions of NATO member states. As such, Germany is already lagging one step behind again, despite its *Zeitenwende* security policy announced in February.

Moreover, German policymakers must make further fundamental decisions if their country is to adequately fulfil the central role in NATO its location, size, and economic power dictate. This



The actual *Zeitenwende*: Already after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO decided to increase its collective defence capabilities. However, it took eight years and Russia's attack on the whole of Ukraine for Germany to muster the political will to actually fulfil the commitments made at the time. Source: © Artur Bainozarov, Reuters.

fundamental problem is further exacerbated by the fact that it is already becoming evident that the measures Scholz announced are only being implemented hesitantly, or not at all: Germany is once again in danger of breaking the grandiose promises it has made to NATO. If partner countries' expectations raised by the chancellor's speech were once again to be disappointed, Germany would lose what remains of its international trust and credibility.

Furthermore, it was the United States, with its comprehensive commitment to supporting Ukraine, and its military reassurance of Eastern European NATO partners that was, so far, the decisive element in preventing a Russian victory in Ukraine, and a spillover of the conflict to European neighbours. Without the US, Europe would have come dangerously close to the worst-case scenario: complete occupation of

Ukraine and further Russian attacks on Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and other countries.

But European security policy is facing another *Zeitenwende*, one that has been foreseeable for years: this may well be the last time that Washington expends so many military resources on, and pays so much policy attention to, European security. This is because Washington's strategic focus has long been the Indo-Pacific. The rapid pace of Beijing's military build-up is forcing the US to place increasing strategic focus on balancing Chinese power, which entails a partial military withdrawal from the European theatre.

This leaves an extremely narrow time frame – probably only until the end of the 2020s – in which European allies, first and foremost Germany, can and must prepare to assume responsibility for Europe's conventional defence

themselves. This strategic horizon leaves no time for a sluggish *Zeitenwende* or yet again an incomplete fulfilment of assurances given to NATO. Instead, German policymakers must realise that the measures Scholz announced will not by themselves be sufficient to set the necessary security policy course and return Germany to its position as backbone of Europe's conventional defence.

NATO's Madrid Decisions: More Defence, Greater Burden

The Russian attack on Ukraine served as a catalyst for the shift within NATO, initiated in 2014, back to collective defence and deterrence. Back then, the Alliance had finally, after years of focusing on international crisis management, decided to expand its defence and deterrence capabilities, especially on NATO's eastern flank: from the Baltic States to Eastern Europe to the Black Sea region. Both quantitatively and qualitatively, the NATO summit decisions made in Madrid in June 2022 go far beyond the previous force posture and capability profile of NATO planning, which had already been fundamentally adjusted after 2014. The most recent NATO decisions in Madrid thus establish additional military contribution requirements for member states, especially Germany.

NATO's ability to actually defend against an attack is to be enhanced.

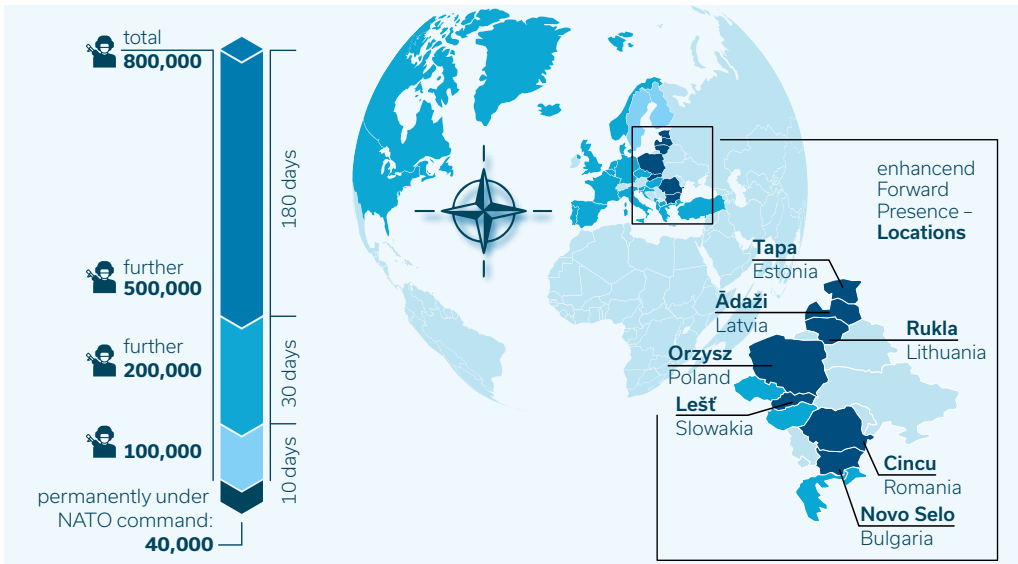
The core of the most recent reform of the allied military force structure is the NATO Force Model (NFM), which conceptually replaces the previous planning structures of the 40,000-strong NATO Response Force (NRF). The most important effect of the NFM is that it greatly increases troop numbers, to a total of 800,000 assigned to NATO. Of these, 100,000 are to be ready to mobilise within ten days, and another 200,000 within 30 days. Gradually, another 500,000 troops are to be added, who must be ready for deployment within 180 days. Additionally, a new structure, the Allied

Reaction Force (ARF), is to be created, merging the previous NATO Spearhead and other quick reaction forces. The 40,000-strong ARF will, in future, be permanently subordinated to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander – a planning milestone marking the first time since the end of the Cold War that the Supreme Allied Commander will have a force of this size to command even prior to the outbreak of a crisis, thereby allowing the swiftest possible response in a developing crisis.³

The NFM represents a conceptual shift in NATO towards deterrence in the form of an enhanced forward defence. After 2014, the Alliance initially focused on a small number of rotationally forward-deployed troops acting as a "tripwire". They would be quickly overrun in the event of attack but would serve as a *casus foederis* according to Article 5, triggering a NATO counter-offensive. The credibility and effectiveness of this concept was already questioned even before the war in Ukraine began. And indeed, NATO no longer considers it to be adequate in the face of the increased threat level. Instead, NATO's ability to actually defend against an attack, and thus its deterrence capability, is to be enhanced with a greater troop presence in potential conflict regions in Eastern Europe, and advance deployment of equipment, materiel, and munition in the "frontline states". To this end, NATO eFP (enhanced forward presence) battlegroups are to be upgraded and, in case of crisis, are to be able to grow into multidomain-capable brigades (units of about 5,000 soldiers each), with rapidly deployable additional allied forces – i.e. large units that can fight in coordination with naval and air forces and other support troops. In addition to the existing four battlegroups in the Baltic States and Poland, the new units, created in Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia after the war began, are to form three further permanent battlegroups. In future, large allied units in the rear will also be partly assigned to geographical focus areas in Europe for which they will be responsible in the event of war.⁴

In this way, the Alliance is creating a force structure with considerable troop strength and a high degree of readiness, which could act as an

Fig. 1: New NATO Forces Model: Mobilisation Periods and Troop Strengths



Troop mobilisation in the event of a crisis, including the Allied Reaction Force (ARF), and enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) locations in Eastern European member countries. Sources: NATO 2022, n. 3; Major / Swistek 2022, n. 4; NATO 2022: NATO's Eastern Flank: Stronger Defence and Deterrence, Jun 2022, in: <https://bit.ly/3fSTs7b> [7 Oct 2022].

effective deterrent if it is backed up by adequate commitments from NATO members. Indeed, it places high demands regarding both the quantity and quality of military contributions. In future, Allies must be able to mobilise division-sized units;⁵ this will also impact Germany's tasks within NATO. Up to now, the majority of high-value capabilities⁶ and large-scale units were American; in future, 50 per cent of military contributions are to come from European NATO countries themselves. This means that the pledges made by European NATO member states to Brussels must increase significantly. Under the old force structure after 2014, within the framework of the NRF, Germany had promised about 14,200 troops and 34 aircraft and ships; under the new NFM, from 2025 onwards, Germany must more than double that, to a total of 30,000 troops, 85 aircraft and ships, all of which must be available to NATO within 30 days.⁷

To achieve this force level, Germany will have to accelerate its already ambitious commitment to provide NATO with a mechanised division with three fully equipped combat brigades, bringing it

forward from 2027 to 2025. The 1st Panzer Division, which had been slated for this task, so far has only one large unit fully equipped and ready for action: the 37th Panzergrenadier Brigade, which will be NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) next year. Two other units, the 12th Panzer Brigade and the German portion of the Franco-German Brigade, will require additional personnel and materiel to be fully equipped within three years. Given that, since 2014, Germany has been unable to provide NATO with a single brigade without having to spend years in preparation – for instance, pulling together materiel and equipment from other units – providing two more brigades in the brief period remaining will require a superhuman effort.

Besides this, Germany is serving as the framework nation leading the battlegroup in Lithuania, so it faces the additional challenge of keeping a further brigade for the Baltic States permanently on standby at maximum readiness. The unit will largely remain in Germany, with only parts of the combat troops and staff elements to be stationed directly in Lithuania as a reinforced

battlegroup with forward-deployed command and control (C2) elements. This itself was, in fact, a compromise that Germany has negotiated, since the Bundeswehr would be unable to station a fully equipped brigade in Lithuania at this time. This makes it all the more important for Germany to enable the remaining elements of the 41st Panzergrenadier Brigade as quickly as possible so that in future it can be in continual readiness and can exercise regularly in the area of operations.

NATO's increased demands require a quantum leap in the announced Bundeswehr modernisation.

In other words, and at the very least, Berlin must now make far more extensive contributions to NATO defence planning – and much earlier than had been expected. Just a few months after German policymakers, on 27 February, committed themselves to modernising the German armed forces by making fundamental decisions and dedicating a special fund of 100 billion euros, the measures they envisioned for equipping and strengthening the Bundeswehr have already become insufficient. With the planned expansion of NATO's defence and deterrence capabilities, the bar for a successful *Zeitenwende* in German security policy has been raised even higher.

Room for Improvement in the Planned Bundeswehr Modernisation

NATO's increased demands on the German armed forces require a quantum leap in the announced modernisation of the Bundeswehr within the framework of the special fund. However, a closer look at the planned distribution, and especially the planned spending horizons of the 100 billion reveal significant deficits. At the same time, the special fund certainly provides for quite correct and sensible steps towards enabling Germany to fulfil its required NATO contributions in future.

This includes spending about two billion euros to improve soldiers' personal equipment, as well as investments of more than 20 billion euros into the Bundeswehr's C2 capability. Both of these are important building blocks for restoring the German military's ability to deploy large, fully equipped units to defend NATO's eastern flank. The air force is also receiving a total of more than 40 billion euros, addressing urgently needed procurement projects, such as heavy transport helicopters, maritime reconnaissance aircraft, Eurofighter ECR for electronic warfare, and, of course, the F-35. The navy is receiving almost 20 billion euros for ground-breaking projects, such as the U212 CD submarine, to be jointly developed with Norway, and the new F126 multi-purpose frigate. The special fund thus underpins Germany's promises to NATO, provides for a number of central armament projects, and at long last delivers sufficient funding to air and naval forces for the procurement of urgently needed weapon systems.⁸

Land forces, however, receive a relatively small sum (a little over 16 billion euros). Admittedly, the special fund does provide sufficient funding for important planned modernisation projects for land forces, such as the procurement of a new main battle tank for the armoured forces, and a new wheeled infantry fighting vehicle for medium-heavy forces. Nevertheless, the fact that land forces received the smallest share is worrisome, because in order to provide the urgently needed large-scale units – and thus the backbone of NATO's conventional defence in north-eastern Europe – with a division starting in 2025 and another starting in 2027, it is Germany's land forces which are particularly important. In this area in particular, the Madrid summit decisions have greatly increased the demands on Germany.

For instance, the fully-equipped, cold-start-capable, large-scale army units that Germany promised NATO, which are tasked with independently conducting combined arms warfare, require a large number of support forces, but so far these forces do not exist at all. Above all, there is a lack of long-range wheeled artillery to support mechanised infantry with indirect fire, and mobile air



defence to protect armoured units from threats from the air. Both of these are critical capabilities for warfare, as recent experience in the war in Ukraine has shown. Although the Bundeswehr must completely re-procure all of its anti-aircraft defence and wheeled artillery for its medium-weight forces, both items are barely included in the special fund thus far. Quick planning, tendering, and delivery of the necessary systems must be a top priority if Germany is to fulfil the more comprehensive requirements of NATO's Madrid decisions.⁹

Currently, Germany's air force could run out of munitions on just the second day of fighting in a symmetrical war.

The Bundeswehr also has a second severe deficit, which relates to munitions stockpiling, similarly not taken into account in the special fund. Beyond major modernisation projects, the Bundeswehr's greatest weaknesses continue to be its ammunition and spare parts stockpiles, which have thinned out over the decades. The Bundeswehr's inventories are currently so short that in a high-intensity war against a symmetrical opponent, some branches of the armed forces, such as the Luftwaffe, would run out of munitions on just the second day of fighting. Although the Chief of Defence, General Eberhard Zorn, put the necessary investments for munitions and spare parts at about 20 billion euros in the run-up to the special fund negotiations, these items were not included in that fund; instead, they are to be covered in future by the regular defence budget. This puts the urgently needed replenishment of Bundeswehr munitions and spare parts stockpiles in danger of being cut during future budget negotiations,

further impairing the viability of the German armed forces.¹⁰

Significant Deficiencies in the Implementation of the Special Fund

In addition to the planning gaps in the special fund, the greatest threat to the fulfilment of Germany's commitments to NATO lies in the sluggish implementation and expenditure of the special fund. The cumbersome and inefficient military procurement system remains a bottleneck for accelerated Bundeswehr modernisation. In order to fulfil Germany's extensive obligations to NATO, some of which have deadlines that have been moved up, procurement projects would have to be set in motion at a correspondingly vigorous pace. But the fact that in 2022 not a single cent of the special fund will be spent, and that current budget planning provides for less than a tenth of available funds (just 8.5 billion euros) to be spent in 2023 shows that policymakers will not succeed with regards to swift procurement in the foreseeable future. Whether the military contributions to NATO, to be fulfilled by 2025, will indeed occur is thus more than questionable. The target of two per cent of GDP for defence spending that Chancellor Scholz personally committed himself to is not likely to be achieved until 2024, and possibly even later.¹¹

The reasons for the Bundeswehr's bureaucratic procurement process are partly due to the complicated legal framework, which has already been addressed with the passing of a law to accelerate procurement procedures. However, there are also structural reasons as to why the Bundeswehr is using the special fund in bits and pieces, and far too slowly. Germany's Federal Office of Bundeswehr Equipment, Information Technology and In-Service Support (BAAINBw), which is responsible for procurement, cannot keep up with awarding procurement contracts to industry, and needs to be reorganised in order to ensure more efficient outflow from the special fund. In addition, the BAAINBw also has about 1,300 unfilled posts, accounting for about eleven per cent of its personnel, which helps

← Left out in the cold? Although it has to bear the brunt of the pledges Germany made to NATO at the Madrid summit, the Army's share of the 100 billion special fund for the Bundeswehr is comparatively small. Source: © Johannes Eisele, Reuters.

explain the sluggishness with which the agency is transacting the increased volume of orders. Additional personnel is urgently needed.¹²

German policymakers have to explain that peace and stability must be defended even with military force when necessary.

Finally, there is also insufficient practical implementation of joint European armament projects. An example of this problem is the German-French-Spanish project for developing a future combat air system (FCAS), comprising especially a next-generation fighter aircraft – a project that Scholz mentioned in his 27 February address. FCAS is currently so gridlocked because of infighting among the companies involved over exchange of sensitive technologies that many observers no longer rule out the project's complete failure. It is here that German policymakers, and above all the German chancellor, should be called upon to assume a degree of responsibility not only for the announcement, but also for the successful implementation and full execution of these ground-breaking joint armament projects to secure European technological superiority for decades to come.

Beyond 100 Billion Euros: A Cultural *Zeitenwende* Is Needed

In order for Germany to fulfil its obligations to NATO, a reworking of the implementation and design of the special fund is required, as are fundamental shifts in German security policy, as well as a strategic repositioning of Germany itself. The *Zeitenwende* must therefore not limit itself to financial and procurement policy aspects of Bundeswehr modernisation; it must be more comprehensive and sustainable. In addition to the shift in equipment, this should also entail a shift in personnel policy for the German military – and, crucially, a fundamental rethinking of security policy, a shift in strategic culture, and closer meshing of military, politics, and society.

Despite the deficits in the special fund and in its implementation, the Bundeswehr can expect significant improvements in its material readiness over the next few years. However, the German government's package of measures does nothing to correct the glaring personnel shortage with which Germany's armed forces have struggled for years. The basic situation – that Germany's armed forces have 20,000 positions unfilled across the board – has changed little, as personnel numbers have been stagnant for years. Moreover, the Bundeswehr is heading for a demographic dropout at the end of the decade, when baby boomers retire from service and cannot be replaced by the significantly lower numbers of school graduates. Nevertheless, the German government remains critical of the concept of a mandatory social service year; support comes primarily from Christian Democratic circles.

In any event, obliging young people to Bundeswehr (or, alternatively, other types of) service would do little to fill positions that require well-trained specialists. Nonetheless, a social service year could be a catalyst for larger portions of future generations to come into contact with the Bundeswehr and discover a new professional arena. Experience prior to the suspension of compulsory military service has shown that this service had led to larger numbers of young people signing up for longer terms as regular or professional soldiers in the Bundeswehr building on the experiences they had gained during their year of service. This is the Bundeswehr's chance to change the trend in personnel numbers – the social service year could also contribute to attracting the specialists that the German armed forces so desperately need. Moreover, mandatory service could grow Germany's reserve, which, given Germany's increased NATO commitments, must be deeply integrated into active units so that it can perform security duty in the rear of large units when these are deployed in potential conflict areas.

A social service year could also form the nucleus of efforts to achieve closer interlinkages between the Bundeswehr and German society at large, as well as aid in the establishment of a strategic

culture. After years of the German public being alienated from security policy realities, there is now a need for a broad engagement of society with the armed forces, and with defence policy issues. This engagement must be guided by a political leadership that tells the public uncomfortable truths and clears away the culture of extreme military restraint. German policy-makers must explain, in their communication efforts, that the global threat level has massively increased due to burgeoning great power rivalries; that peace, stability, and the international order are being challenged by autocratic systems, and must be defended; that this defence cannot only take the form of de-escalation and diplomacy, but occasionally also of military force, when needed. A strategic culture must therefore perceive deterrence and defence as fundamental political tasks, which is the *raison d'être* of armed forces in democratic states. Only if this awareness catches on can Germany's *Zeitenwende* succeed in the long term.

Russia's war against Ukraine, and the subsequent restructuring of NATO, require German policy-makers to take a large leap forward in matters of security and defence policy. The special fund and the measures initiated to modernise the Bundeswehr are just the first step. Although Germany is finally fulfilling its pledges of 2014 with the projects announced on 27 February – the bar has risen anew, with the increased demands on European NATO members, above all Germany, to enhance defence and deterrence since the NATO reorganisation of June 2022. This situation requires improvements to the special fund, as well as to its sluggish implementation, including a *Zeitenwende* in terms of personnel and culture. Only in this way will it be possible to set the necessary course in security policy and to do justice to Germany's role as the backbone of conventional defence on NATO's eastern flank.

- translated from German -

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Source: © Elizabeth Frantz, Reuters.

[Conflict-ready? Western Foreign Policy in Times of Systemic Rivalry](#)

“Jeffersonians” on the Rise

Traditional Internationalists in the US
Are Running Out of Supporters

Paul Linnarz

Americans have lost their appetite for “nation building” and being the “world’s policeman” – problems at home are getting out of hand. But the US still defends its claim to global leadership, either with “enlightened nationalism” or “America First”. Europe’s preparation should go beyond addressing Donald Trump.

Donald Trump, one of the most controversial US presidents in history, will run again. Following the 8 November mid-term elections, the Republican announced his intentions to be his party’s candidate to the 2024 presidential elections. With Trump supporters cheering and his political opponents dismayed, in Europe, worries about a possible new “ice age” in transatlantic relations arise.

During his four years in the White House, President Trump manoeuvred transatlantic relations to a low point – many observers thought that the damage would have been irreparable if he had won a second term. The Trump administration unilaterally withdrew from international agreements and cooperation with multilateral organisations. The US responded to trade spats with import tariffs; via Twitter, allied countries were slighted and autocrats flattered. The reputation and credibility of the US was in ruins in many countries around the world. According to a survey of the polling institute YouGov at the end of 2019, Germans even thought that Donald Trump was a greater menace to world peace than Russian President Vladimir Putin or Chinese President Xi Jinping. While 41 per cent of respondents thought the US president was especially dangerous, only eight and seven per cent saw Putin or Xi, respectively, as the greatest danger to peace.¹

After President Biden took his oath of office, respect for the US in Germany rose greatly. However, fears have long been growing that Donald Trump might be more than just a painful episode in the relations with the US. For months now, political guests from Germany in

Washington have been worriedly asking their American counterparts, “will Trump return to the White House?”

Although his Twitter account (@realDonaldTrump) was “permanently suspended” at the beginning of January 2021 in the aftermath of the Capitol riots,² the former president has been back in the spotlight since war broke out in Ukraine. For months, it had not even been certain whether Trump would run again in 2024. At countless rallies, he only needed to mention that he “may have to” run again – and the cheering started. This summer, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* noted that, “as incredible as it may sound”, the former president was raising a quarter of a million dollars every day. “If Trump declares his candidacy for 2024 in the near future, the Republican nomination would likely be his for the taking,” the paper stated at the end of August.³

The fact that Trump has been on everyone’s lips again for months shows how uncertain, dismissive, and uncomprehending not only his political opponents at home, but indeed the majority of US allies abroad are at the idea of a Trump comeback. At the same time, the renewed focus on the person and political style of the former president obscures the view of a whole series of other problems: for instance, despite the good cooperation with Western allies in a number of policy fields, it would be naive to assume that there will be no disputes in transatlantic relations just because there is a Democrat in the White House. Moreover, many US foreign policy priorities have changed significantly less from Trump to Biden than they may appear. The confrontation with China is a case in point. The current



US administration also conditions its favour and willingness to cooperate upon very specific expectations and performances. The desire for “reliability” in tackling international challenges is not a one-way street.

Moreover, attributing all conflicts in transatlantic relations to “Trumpism” is not nearly nuanced enough. Fixation on an individual implies that US policy reversed itself in all areas when Trump took office, and that there had been no problems before Trump. Of course, Trump’s term in office marks a turning point – and not just because his

“America First” and “drain the swamp” slogans achieved a resonance that none of his predecessors were able to generate. But these slogans were not new, and “Trumpism”, to stick with the term, will continue to influence political discussions in the US even if its namesake is not re-elected. So, it is sensible, despite all the uncertainties, to consider not only the former president, but also positions and trends in the American population as a whole, and within the Republican Party in particular. Political scientist Torben Lütjen, who served as associate professor at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee until 2020,



Unilateral action as a last resort: Even though the Biden administration has significantly improved coordination with US allies overall, the withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 caught partners unprepared. [Source:](#) © U.S. Air Force, Taylor Crul via Reuters.

Biden Administration: No Guarantee of an Endless Honeymoon

Although it took months for the Senate to confirm many candidates for important governmental and ambassadorial posts upon which they could finally assume their duties, the Biden administration began to plaster over many of the cracks in transatlantic relations as soon as the president took office. Contentious issues, including, in relation to Germany, continued construction and future operation of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, were avoided, and other conflicts laid aside at least temporarily. The US administration also leaves no doubt that – with its sanctions against Russia and billions of dollars of support for Ukraine since the war began – it has been acting in close cooperation and complete agreement with its European allies.

However, the Biden administration, too, takes into account its allies' constraints on action only on the condition that they involve themselves as much as they can. "When our allies shoulder their fair share of the burden, they'll reasonably expect to have a fair say in making decisions. We will honour that," promised US Secretary of State Antony Blinken two months after taking office.⁵ Conversely, those who fail to "shoulder their fair share" cannot expect to have a say in all matters.

An improvement that can scarcely be overestimated is of course that the Biden administration has returned to the table for an open-ended negotiation process that could result in benefits that unilaterally imposed measures could not achieve. The US-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC)⁶ is a good example of this. If, however, a comprehensive involvement of all participants is determined to run counter to its

rightly noted that "by focusing so extremely on him, we have sometimes overlooked the fact that he is just the symptom, not the cause, of many problems"⁴. If, instead of Donald Trump, another Republican candidate moves into the White House, policymakers abroad will have to adjust to very similar priorities. Despite a general sigh of relief at the thought of returning to professional, respectful cooperation with its allies, the Biden administration – in the face of domestic policy requirements and the balance of power in Congress – could not afford to jettison everything the preceding administration had done.

interests, either in terms of the time required or the desired results, the Biden administration is not above operating unilaterally.

Thus, even after more than a year, the partial details available about the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan certainly do not give the impression that the effort was closely coordinated with partner countries. And the announcement, in September 2021, of the new trilateral Indo-Pacific AUKUS security partnership between the US, Australia, and the United Kingdom blindsided the French government. Within the framework of the alliance, Australia is to receive nuclear-powered submarines from the US – eliminating France as a supplier. The multi-billion-dollar contract, signed with Paris in 2016, for the delivery of twelve French submarines was cancelled by the Australian government just hours after the AUKUS alliance was announced. In a damage control mode, President Biden admitted, “what we did was clumsy”⁷.

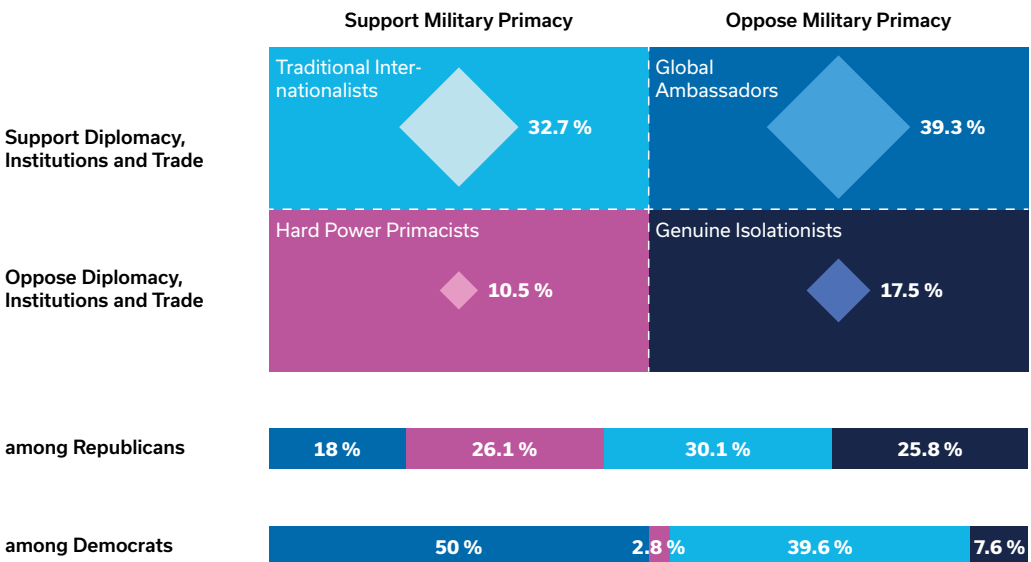
This year’s summit of the Organisation of American States was supposed to seek solutions to refugee movements, inter alia. But several of

the affected Central and South American countries were not even at the table. The US, hosting the summit for the first time since the inaugural summit in 1994, had refused to allow Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela to participate. Colombia’s then president Iván Duque supported the decision: “I think no dictatorship shall participate in the Summit of the Americas.”⁸ Mexico’s President Andrés Manuel López Obrador boycotted the summit in protest. Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Uruguay were also absent from Los Angeles. As a result, the US administration was forced to carry on with the “improvised” summit strictly according to domestic constraints arising from party politics, as William Neuman argued in *The Atlantic*: “[w]ere Biden to have invited Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, there would be hell to pay in Florida and in Congress.”⁹

US Population: War-weary and Half “Jeffersonian”

Not even Trump operated in a vacuum as president. On the domestic policy front, he underestimated the COVID-19 pandemic and its unprecedented effects for too long. In foreign

Fig. 1: Attitude of the US Population towards Their Country’s International Engagement



Inconclusive answers were not included in the survey. Source: Hannah/Gray/Robinson 2021, n. 15.

policy, however, his pugilistic manner even towards allies was to the taste of nearly all his supporters. The hope abroad that Trump would grow into his office never came to fruition. Instead, he remained in campaign mode throughout his term of office (and beyond), and said and did exactly what his base expected of their president.

At most, behind closed doors, his political opponents concede that some of Trump's foreign policy demands were precisely on target. In his speech to the UN General Assembly in 2018, the president warned that "Germany will become totally dependent on Russian energy if it does not immediately change course. Here in the Western Hemisphere, we are committed to maintaining our independence from the encroachment of expansionist foreign powers."¹⁰ Trump's supporters have not forgotten the reaction of the international audience at the UN General Assembly. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Dean Karayanis recalled that "European leaders laughed. Today, they're learning just how right he was, as they pay a steep price for not heeding the warning."¹¹ What has long been forgotten, of course, is Trump's assertion during his presidential campaign in 2015 that Vladimir Putin "is not going into Ukraine, OK, just so you understand. He's not going to go into Ukraine, all right? You can mark it down. You can put it down."¹² The fact that Trump's "great again" ambitions come – as Frank-Walter Steinmeier put it at the 2020 Munich Security Conference – "if necessary, even at the expense of neighbours and partners" has never bothered Trump's supporters.¹³

Democrats also expected increased financial commitment for defence on the part of Europe.

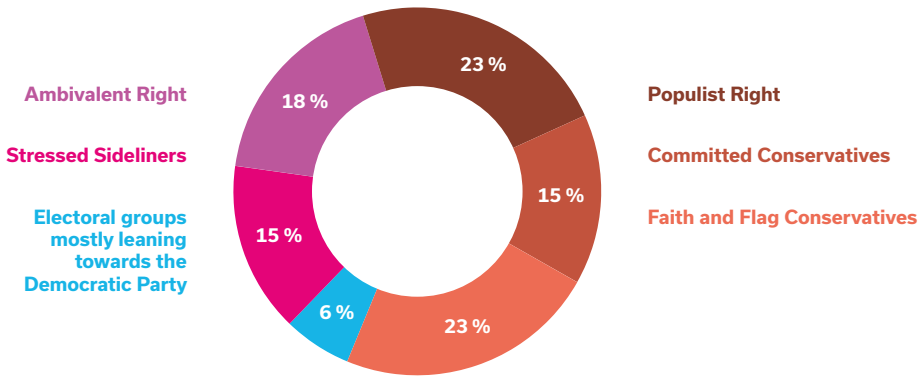
But Biden, too, has always opposed Nord Stream 2 and excessive European dependence on Russian energy imports. In 2014, he was

vice president when the NATO member states adopted the target of two per cent of GDP for defence expenditure at the Wales summit. In the same year, Russian special forces without rank or nationality markings occupied strategic points in Crimea. A critical attitude towards Russia, and the expectation of greater financial commitment for defence on the part of Europe, were thus also widespread among Democrats. During the 2016 campaign, Trump asked, "Why is it that other countries that are in the vicinity of Ukraine, why aren't they dealing? Why are we always the one that's leading, potentially the third world war with Russia."¹⁴ The second question at least was one many progressives were also asking, and not only about Russia, but about global US military commitment. This trend has continued since 2016.

Shortly after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in the summer of 2021, the Eurasia Group Foundation (EGF) published the results of a survey that showed that Democratic Party supporters increasingly viewed US-led military interventions to end human rights violations with scepticism.¹⁵ Instead, support rose for international organisations, such as the United Nations, to take the lead on such matters – an almost 30 per cent increase between 2020 and 2021 alone. Among Republicans, support for humanitarian interventions by the US military fell by 32 per cent in the same period.

Slightly less than a third of respondents supported maintaining or increasing the number of US troops stationed in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and continuing to assume significant responsibility for regional security there. The number of respondents favouring reduction of troops stationed abroad and incremental transfer of regional security responsibility to allies was much higher (42.3 per cent). About a quarter of respondents had no opinion on the matter. Young Americans (aged between 18 and 29) believe that combatting the consequences of climate change (33.2 per cent) is much more important than military support (7.2 per cent). In this group, 45 per

Fig. 2: Political Typology of Supporters of the Republican Party



The data were collected in July 2021. Source: Pew Research Center 2021, n. 20.

cent of respondents agreed that “peace is best achieved by keeping a focus on domestic needs and the health of American democracy”.

In its analysis of the survey results, the EGF divided respondents into four groups: “Traditional Internationalists”, who favour strong engagement and close cooperation with other countries for both military and diplomatic solutions to global problems; “Global Ambassadors”, who favour close diplomatic cooperation with foreign powers, but oppose military primacy and believe the US should reduce its overseas troop levels; “Hard Power Primacists”, who think the US should maintain its global military presence and security commitments, but reduce diplomatic cooperation in multilateral organisations and integration into international treaties; and “Genuine Isolationists”, who oppose both military and diplomatic engagement and think the US should be less involved on the world stage.

The survey shows that the largest group in the US population is the “Global Ambassadors” (39.3 per cent), followed by the “Traditional Internationalists” (32.7 per cent). The “Genuine Isolationists” account for 17.5 per cent, and a bit more than a tenth are “Hard Power Primacists”. The picture changes when the four groups are weighted by political party affinity. Half of Democrats are “Global Ambassadors”, but only 18 per cent of Republicans. Instead,

almost 26 per cent of Republicans are “Genuine Isolationists”, a position held by only 7.6 per cent of Democrats. At the same time, the share of “Hard Power Primacists” amongst Democrats is vanishingly small (2.8 per cent). In the ranks of Republicans, however, in addition to the comparatively high number of isolationists, there are 26.1 per cent of “Hard Power Primacists” who believe the US military should set the tone in foreign policy.¹⁶

According to a slightly different classification, the “Traditional Internationalists” of the last three decades may also be called “Wilsonians”, named after the former president who focused on promoting democracy, the rule of law, and the spread of American values. “Jeffersonians”, meanwhile, wish to consolidate and defend democracy at home rather than on the world stage. Donald Trump fits into neither category; Joe Biden cannot be considered a “Wilsonian” because he himself said that nation-building on the basis of American values has “never made any sense to me”.¹⁷ As early as 2003, he spoke of “enlightened nationalism”¹⁸ that must be reflected in US foreign policy and of “sustained commitment to the expansion of liberal democracy – not by imposing it from the outside, but by building it from within”.¹⁹ Either way, according to the EGF survey, almost half of the US population now appears to consist of “Jeffersonians” for whom the primary concern is democracy at home.



Conservative Voters: Traditional Focus Fades

The campaign strategy of the conservatives is coordinated by the Republican National Committee. A member of the committee recently said in an interview that three groups are decisive for an election victory: entrepreneurs, evangelicals, and Trump supporters. Republican candidates who hope to have a chance in the 2024 primaries must gain the support of a majority of at least two of these groups. Of course, there are many Republican voters who fall into two or even all three of those categories. The typology developed by the Pew Research Center in Washington, published in November 2021,²⁰ presented here in a simplified form, can be more helpful in understanding the internal party situation.

The group that will probably be most important for Trump is the “**Faith and Flag Conservatives**”. It makes up 23 per cent of all Republicans, 14 per cent of all voters (as of 2020), and ten per cent of the US population. This group is very to extremely conservative, predominantly religious (more than 40 per cent evangelical), and older (a third are over 65, and only eight per cent are under 30). 85 per cent are “non-Hispanic White”, and almost 60 per cent are men. 39 per cent live in rural areas. Three quarters of this group (more than any other) say that a strong US military is more important in international relations than diplomacy. Almost 70 per cent are convinced that the US “stands above all other countries”. This value is also higher than that of any other group. 53 per cent of them also think that compromise in politics is just “selling out on what you believe in.” Donald Trump has



Outdated? The “traditional Reagan Republicans” are now in the minority in their party. Source: © Mark Leffingwell, Reuters.

more support from this group than from any other. Half of them consider him the best president of the last 40 years. 55 per cent want him to run again in 2024. 86 per cent are convinced that Trump was “definitely or probably the legitimate winner of the 2020 presidential election”. Along with the “Progressive Left” group, who make up the most extreme stratum of the Democratic Party, the “Faith and Flag Conservatives” are the most politically engaged of any group. Their voter turnout in 2020 was 85 per cent, much higher than the national average. Their willingness to donate is the highest of any Republican group. They regularly follow political issues in the media. The sole or primary media source for almost 75 per cent of them is Fox News. Almost 80 per cent think that “there has been too much attention paid to the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol”. They are the only group with a majority of members who think that the criminal penalties faced by the perpetrators were too severe.

A quarter of the “Ambivalent Right” voted for Joe Biden in 2020, and more than 60 per cent think that he legitimately won the election.

“Committed Conservatives” are, in a manner of speaking, “traditional, old school” Republicans. They represent 15 per cent of all Republican supporters, nine per cent of all voters (as of 2020), and seven per cent of the US population. This group shares the core political positions of the Grand Old Party (GOP) since the time of Ronald Reagan’s presidency: business-friendly, in favour of free trade and low taxes, opposed to far-reaching state powers. In foreign policy, it favours close diplomatic cooperation with allies while maintaining sufficient military influence. 68 per cent believe that the US “should take the interests of allies into account in foreign policy”. “Committed Conservatives” are a bit less critical when it comes to immigration. 49 per cent think

that Reagan was the best president of the last 40 years, albeit 35 per cent think that Trump was. Four of ten want to see Trump run again in 2024. This group is also very politically active: voter turnout was above average in 2020. 42 per cent follow political issues regularly (as compared to 34 per cent of all US adults). 80 per cent are White, ten per cent are Hispanic. The proportion of Asians (three per cent) and Blacks (one per cent) is negligible. Almost 60 per cent are men, and about a third are over 65. Of the various Republican groups, the “Committed Conservatives” have the highest levels of education and the highest average income. Unlike all other Republican-oriented groups, two thirds of them say that vaccination is the best defence against COVID-19.

Almost as important for Donald Trump as the most conservative group mentioned at the outset is the “Populist Right”. This group accounts for 23 per cent of all Republicans, twelve per cent of all voters (2020), and eleven per cent of the US population. Half of the “Populist Right” want to end not only illegal immigration, but legal immigration as well. A special feature of this group is its outspoken criticism of the US economic system: 82 per cent say that “large corporations are having a negative impact on the way things are going in the country” and about half of them “support higher taxes on the wealthy and on large corporations”. Almost 90 per cent think that the government is “almost always wasteful and inefficient”. 85 per cent of them are White. Only about 20 per cent have a university degree. The difference to the other groups is that women are in the majority, at 54 per cent. The group’s voter turnout was roughly the national average in 2020. 70 to 80 per cent think that Trump “definitely or probably” won the 2020 election. Almost 60 per cent want him to run again. The group’s income level is roughly in line with the average for the US population as a whole, as are levels of interest in media information on political issues. Fox News is the sole or primary source of information for 64 per cent of the “Populist Right” (out of a choice of 26 media outlets on the survey). 53 per cent of them are Protestant, another 27 per cent are

evangelical Protestants. The percentage of this group who are completely vaccinated against COVID-19 is much lower than the average of the US population overall (much like the “Faith and Flag Conservatives”). 60 per cent of the “Populist Right” support candidates who publicly state that Trump won the 2020 election.

The “**Ambivalent Right**” accounts for 18 per cent of all Republicans, nine per cent of all voters (2020), and twelve per cent of the US population. This group is more moderate than the previously mentioned groups, especially on social issues (abortion, same-sex marriage, legal immigration). A quarter voted for Joe Biden in 2020. The group is younger (63 per cent under 50) and less White than the others: 17 per cent are Hispanic, eight per cent Black, and five per cent Asian. Nor are they as religious. Income and education levels are roughly at the national average. 63 per cent of the “Ambivalent Right” do not want Trump to remain “a major national political figure for many years to come”. Almost as many, and thus more than in any other Republican group, believe that President Biden legitimately won the 2020 election. But the group is much less politically active than the others: only 55 per cent voted in 2020. The “Ambivalent Right” is similarly less interested in media reports on political issues. While Fox News is the primary source of news for this group as well, consumption of other media is higher in this group than in any of the others.

“Old school” Republicans will have to move towards the positions held by the “Populist Right” to succeed in the 2024 primaries.

Lastly, the “**Stressed Sideliners**”. Unlike the “Ambivalent Right”, which holds many traditional Republican positions, this group tends to be conservative on social issues, but progressive (“left” in European political language) on economic

ones. Three quarters favour raising the minimum wage; 83 per cent think that the economic system “unfairly favors powerful interests”. Both education and income are lower in this group than the national average. 56 per cent are women; less than 60 per cent are White; 21 per cent are Hispanic; ten per cent are Black; and five per cent are Asian. Republicans and Democrats share this group: the “Stressed Sideliners” split evenly in the 2020 presidential election – just under half voted for Biden, the other half for Trump. The name of this group has to do with its members’ relatively low average income. At the same time, this group has the lowest voter turnout (45 per cent in 2020). Less than 20 per cent of this group regularly follows political reporting in the media. The group makes up 15 per cent of the US population. In 2020, it accounted for ten per cent of all voters. It makes up 15 per cent of all Republicans and 13 per cent of all Democrats. According to the Pew Research Center typology, a further six per cent of Republicans are distributed across groups whose members are primarily Democrat.

The percentage of the respective groups within the supporter base of the GOP may have shifted over the last few months, but in essence the various groupings reflect the balance of power among party members and supporters. These currents will decide which candidate has the best chances for nomination in 2024.

Republican Party: Pledges of Allegiance and Troop Build-ups

What is clear is that convinced Wilsonians and traditional “Reagan Republicans” likely have no chance in the primaries: their most important clientele, the “Committed Conservatives”, make up only 15 per cent of all Republicans. Those who hope to succeed with the “Populist Right” (23 per cent of Republicans) will have to part ways with the traditional, more moderate Republican position on immigration policy. And on economic issues, including free trade and corporate taxes, this group expects political positions that, until Donald Trump came along, were almost exclusively held by political opponents in the progressive camp. “Old school” Republicans hoping to



Political suicide: Until recently, anyone who openly opposed former President Donald Trump from within the Republican ranks, as Liz Cheney did, could expect a quick end to their political career. [Source: © Sarah Silbiger, Reuters.](#)

win the 2024 primary against the former president will therefore have to move towards the positions held by the “Populist Right”. The “Faith and Flag Conservatives” (23 per cent of Republicans) are also politically active and ready to donate. Almost all of them voted for Trump in 2020. But half of these very to extremely conservative Republicans do not think that he is the best president of the last four decades. The percentage of those who want to see a Trump comeback is lower in this group than in the “Populist Right”. It is also clear that Republicans need the votes of Blacks and Hispanics in the swing states if they wish to win in 2024. The challenge is to win over the “Ambivalent Right” (18 per cent of all Republicans) during the primaries and motivate them to vote. Unlike “Faith and Flag Conservatives”, this group does not believe that the US should stand uncompromisingly above the rest of the world.

Given this Republican landscape, which is increasingly dominated by conservative and populist tendencies, but is by no means homogeneous, it is fair to ask why, until not long ago, Donald Trump was never actually criticised from within his own ranks except by a very few dissenters. The reason is not only that the polarisation of American society between Republicans and Democrats has been deepening for years, but also that the power struggle between the moderate and the very conservative camps within the Republican Party started long before Trump’s 2016 win. Outlooks that roughly say “whoever is not for me is against me” have been on the rise among Republicans since at least the Tea Party movement in 2009. Trump capitalised on this fact: “Trumpism” is now the name for this sentiment.

6 January 2021, when they stormed the Capitol, was not the first time that radical Trump

supporters chanted “Stop the steal!” Originally, the slogan’s accusation of electoral fraud was not directed against Joe Biden or the Democrats. Loyal Trump fans had first used it against their own ranks, in the 2016 campaign.²¹ It was aimed at Trump’s most dangerous Republican competitor, Ted Cruz. At the time, wild allegations that Cruz had stolen the primaries in Colorado were intended to prevent a possible nomination of the Texas senator.

Meanwhile, even among “classic” Republicans (“Committed Conservatives”), in 2021, more than 60 per cent did not think that elected officials should criticise Trump publicly. This sentiment reached 75 to 80 per cent among “Faith and Flag Conservatives” and the “Populist Right”. Even in the “Stressed Sideliners” group, only about half expressed sympathy for public criticism of Trump. The only Republican group whose majority had no problem with a Republican attacking Trump verbally was the “Ambivalent Right”.²² It is not just Trump who demands unconditional loyalty; voters also reject dissenters in their own ranks. Until recently, open criticism or even declared party-internal opposition was very likely to end the political career of the person expressing it. A record of reliably supporting almost all Republican positions in Congress would not save the offender. Liz Cheney, probably the most prominent Trump critic, is an excellent example. She was punished in the Wyoming primaries when she defended her House seat this year, losing badly against a previously unknown politician named Harriet Hageman, whom Donald Trump supported. Given this climate, it is not surprising that there has so far been no discussion about the different internal party factions.

Instead, efforts have been ongoing for months to iron out what Trump and his inner circle likely consider to be his biggest weakness: when he won in 2016 to the surprise of almost all observers, he came to Washington as a political outsider without personnel of his own. That shall not happen again, which is why loyalists such as Mark Meadows, Jeffrey Clark, and Russ Vought are busy vetting candidates for a new Trump administration. New players, such as the American Moment

organisation, are in touch with universities and the offices of Republican senators and congressmen to groom students and young congressional aides for the time after the 2024 election, when they will form the junior cadre of a new administration.²³ Those who advocate for “loose borders, free trade absolutism, foreign adventurism” do not fit the profile. “For decades the American Right stagnated under an old consensus,” says the American Moment. “We will not go back.”²⁴

In June, Danielle Pletka of the American Enterprise Institute asked a question to clarify the party’s position: “where will the Republican Party be on defending Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack? Will isolationists on both left and right actually have the power to steer a course?” Pletka thinks not, but the devil is in the proverbial details: “Sanctions on China would hit the Republican base hard, raising costs for basic goods even higher.”²⁵ At the Hudson Institute, Mike Pompeo noted that he is often asked in his hometown whether the US should be involved in the war in Ukraine. He answers, “We’re not the world’s policemen.” In the same breath, the former Secretary of State, who is still “proud” to have served under Donald Trump “in a unique administration”, explains that “by assisting Ukraine, America bolsters our own security without the involvement in combat of our men and women”. If people are fighting for their own freedom, the US must be ready to support them. But “the United States should never again fight another nation’s war,” says Pompeo.²⁶ This means that internationally, the US will continue to defend freedom in its own interests. But allies must be able to defend themselves. Karin von Hippel, Director-General of the Royal United Services Institute in the United Kingdom, advised Europeans to be “less complacent”. After all, “Trump, or a politician like him, could return to the presidency soon.” NATO allies should therefore imagine “a world where the US is not there all the time”.²⁷

— translated from German —

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[Conflict-ready? Western Foreign Policy in Times of Systemic Rivalry](#)

Will a Mauling by the Bear Teach Us How to Tame the Dragon?

Implications of the Russian War of Aggression
for Germany's New China Strategy

Johann Fuhrmann

Communist China is increasingly perceived in Germany and the rest of Europe as a systemic rival while, at the same time, German investments in the People's Republic are rising. For years, China has been the most important bilateral trading partner of both Germany and the EU. How can the China strategy announced by the German Federal Government address these challenges and dependencies – also against the background of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine?

Since Vladimir Putin began his war of aggression in Ukraine, Germany has been faced with the ruins of a disastrous Russia policy: the result of naivety and failure to contain Russia through close economic relations. At the same time, China's ambivalent position towards the European war, and threats of military annexation of Taiwan have sparked a new debate in media and political circles about Germany's approach to the People's Republic. Under the auspices of the Federal Foreign Office, the German Federal Government is creating the country's first China strategy. What lessons can be learnt from the Russian war of aggression and its repercussions? To answer this question, we will focus on the growing partnership between Beijing and Moscow and on China's international role and ambitions. Finally, we will consider what conclusions can be drawn for future dealings with China. But first, let us examine the context in which the China paper announced by the German Federal Government is being drafted.

New China Strategy: It's a Trap!

“The experience of the past few months has taught Germany how dangerous it is to be dependent on individual trading partners. And even though current concerns are focused on how to acquire as much energy as possible to replace Russian gas within the shortest time possible, worries that Germany could be much more vulnerable at another point remain. China is the country from which Germany imports by far the most goods,”¹ reads

a recent analysis by economic correspondent Julia Löhr, who works for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. And thus, two strategy papers announced by the German Foreign Office and which are currently in the making, are marked by growing international tensions and economic dependencies. A “comprehensive national security strategy” will be published in the spring of 2023, followed by the above-mentioned China strategy. Meanwhile, there are growing indications that the two papers are part of the German Federal Government's preparations for an era of heightened systemic rivalry. “‘Just in time’ has had its day. Our guiding principle should be ‘Just in case’,”² said Franziska Brantner, Parliamentary State Secretary in the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. In other words, Germany does not want to enter a conflict with China unprepared, like it did with Russia.

The German Federal Government's decision to adopt a China strategy was taken with the coalition agreement in December 2021. The suppression of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong; reports of human rights violations, torture, and forced internment in Xinjiang; and open threats of military annexation of Taiwan are all factors that reinforce fears of growing rivalry between Beijing and the West. China's unwillingness to condemn Russia's war against Ukraine as the violation of international law that it is, and the unfiltered dissemination of Russian propaganda by Chinese diplomats and state media, have recently further heightened tensions.

China and Russia – United against the West?

For several years, Russia and China have been staging – and celebrating – a rapprochement in bilateral relations. There have, for instance, already been almost 40 meetings between Chinese President Xi and Vladimir Putin. In early February 2022, Russia's president travelled to Beijing for the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games. Discussions with Xi led to a comprehensive declaration of more than 5,000 words. In the text, both sides said that they “oppose further enlargement of NATO”. In return, Moscow said that it considers Taiwan to be “an inalienable part of China”. Both parties also sharply criticised AUKUS, the US-UK-Australia partnership in the Indo-Pacific concluded in mid-September 2021.³ It is unclear whether Moscow discussed its plans for war in Ukraine with Beijing before it attacked. What is certain is that experts have long worried about an ever-closer alliance between China, the most populous country in the world, and Russia, the world's largest territorial state.

This is emerging in military matters, for instance. In 2016 and 2017, Russia and China held joint missile defence exercises in the form of computer simulations, and in 2019, Moscow revealed that Russia was supporting the People's Republic in building a missile early warning system.⁴ Both countries have been conducting joint military exercises since 2005. Their joint air power exercises attracted attention at the end of May 2022. The provocative action involved Chinese and Russian jet aircraft violating South Korea's air defence zone, and approaching Japanese airspace.⁵ Security experts like Brian G. Carlson currently see evidence of increasing Chinese-Russian cooperation on nuclear deterrence.⁶

The rapprochement was facilitated by common interests, especially rejection of the Western order and of a unipolar claim to leadership by the US. Thus, the two countries jointly founded two multinational development banks to serve as a counterweight to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. To the

consternation of Washington, 103 countries, including Germany, joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank initiated by Beijing. The creation of such parallel structures is a source of irritation for the US. China uses these means to push for a role that seemed reserved for the US at least since the end of the Cold War, reinforcing its claim to global leadership. Such institutions constitute a significant vehicle for China and Russia. They allow the autocracies to present themselves as serious alternatives to the West in the area of development cooperation and infrastructure development.

Despite all the policymakers' warnings, German investments in China have continued to rise sharply.

However, no formal alliance exists between the two autocracies – at least, not yet. For instance, Beijing emphasises that its relations with Moscow constitute a partnership, not an alliance. Beijing will doubtless attempt to gain the greatest advantage from the current situation. For instance, in June 2022, China overtook Germany to become the largest importer of Russian energy sources.⁷ But at almost the same time, official sources in the US announced that there was so far no indication that China was providing Russia with direct military support for the war in Ukraine or helping it to circumvent sanctions.⁸ China appears to be at pains to keep all options open. From a Chinese perspective, this policy is also attractive because a partnership between Beijing and Moscow is by no means a partnership between equals. China, the world's second largest economic power, does not feel it necessary to adopt an unequivocal position. It is far from clear that this power is illusory: despite all the policymakers' warnings, German investments in China have continued to rise sharply. In the first half of 2022 alone, they rose by 26 per cent compared to the same period last year.⁹ And numerous German companies are developing new major projects. For instance, BASF is currently investing

ten billion euros in the new integrated chemical complex in the South Chinese province of Guangdong. Hella, an automotive parts supplier, plans to expand its manufacturing capacity with a new lighting plant in Changzhou. And Aldi, a discounter, has announced its intention to open hundreds of new locations in China.

Xi's Ambitions

The images travelled around the world: former President Hu Jintao was escorted, evidently against his will, from the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in Beijing in mid-October. His successor, Xi Jinping, remained motionless in his seat. Was this a demonstration of power for the global public? The Tagesschau, a German news programme, used

the term “Xina”, and Spiegel, a German news weekly, referred to Xi as “the almighty”.¹⁰ With the end of the Congress, Xi has cemented his autocratic rule within the Communist Party of China and driven intraparty opposition from its centres of power, the Politburo and its Standing Committee. But where is Xi steering his country, and to what extent does this give rise to potential conflict with Western states and their value partners in the Indo-Pacific?

There is no question that under Xi, China has become more prosperous, authoritarian, self-confident, and aggressive over the past decade. The suppression of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang province and the elimination of the last democratic freedoms in Hong Kong have become symbols of Beijing’s growing aggression. Beijing’s



Saber rattling towards Taiwan: In August 2022, the People’s Liberation Army started large-scale manoeuvres near the island that China considers part of its own territory. Source: © Tingshu Wang, Reuters.

backing for Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine has done great damage to China's reputation in Europe and beyond. Threats to Taiwan have exacerbated worries of open systemic conflict. Beijing has made further territorial claims in its immediate neighbourhood. For example, China does not recognise a 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague by continuing to claim virtually the entire South China Sea, where it is creating artificial islands and setting up military infrastructure.

It is Beijing's declared goal to undermine the world order of which the US is guarantor.

Xi announced his intentions early on: only a few months after Xi took power, Chinese journalist Gao Yu leaked "Document Number Nine", in which party leaders warned its cadres against "anti-Chinese forces" in the West, belief in "universal values", "civil society", and "Western ideas of journalism".¹¹ China experts consider the document to be Xi's political roadmap. It makes clear that China considers its rivals to be in the West, with Washington the guarantor of a world order which it is Beijing's declared goal to overpower and undermine. With the help of multilateral organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the BRICS association of emerging economies, the People's Republic strives to make its voice heard in the world and to hollow out established Western institutions. And it is succeeding: the BRICS countries, which also include Brazil, India, and South Africa, did not condemn Putin's war of aggression at their 14th summit. Under Point 22 of their concluding declaration issued in July, the heads of state merely called for "negotiations between Russia and Ukraine"¹². This egregious step would scarcely have been conceivable without political and economic pressure from Beijing.

China is already the second largest economic power in the world. As early as 2017, China was the main trading partner for 120 countries. The

People's Republic is the most important bilateral donor for developing countries and holds around 21 per cent of the debt of all African countries. Since 2013, China has used its Belt and Road Initiative to systematically pursue its goal of developing trade routes to Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. More than 100 countries have signed cooperation treaties with the People's Republic for the construction of rail lines, roads, seaports, and airports. Beijing has planned to spend around one trillion US dollars on this comprehensive programme by 2025, most of which has already been invested.

Ongoing US sanctions have also prompted China to seek more economic independence from the West. The "dual circulation" strategy announced by the Central Committee in late October 2020, aims in particular at promoting the domestic market and pursuing a technological decoupling. Xi has repeatedly shown that China is prepared to instrumentalise its economic power for political ends. For instance, China has been blocking almost all imports from Lithuania for almost a year. The point of contention was the establishment of a "Taiwan office" in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. Beijing's reaction was prompt.

Observers now agree that the greatest potential for military conflict between China and the West is China's desired "reunification" with Taiwan. For instance, former Australian prime minister and sinologist Kevin Rudd believes that the US will likely intervene militarily if there is a conflict: "If the United States were to fail to defend Taiwan militarily, it would, according to its own calculations, see cracks in its credibility as a good ally to Japan, South Korea, and other Asian countries."¹³ Xi's ambitions thus pose immense challenges to the West, which Germany and the EU also have a responsibility to address.

A New View of China

"How can we set ourselves free from China?" was the mid-August headline of *Die Zeit*, a German weekly newspaper. And, in the face of the war in Ukraine, there is scarcely any question that attracts more attention from China

strategists in the German Foreign Office and Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs. Statistics show how important China is as a trading partner for Germany: the total volume of foreign trade with China in 2021 was just under 246 billion euros – compared to less than 60 billion with Russia.¹⁴ But that is not all: Germany’s dependence on China is much more complex than its dependence on Russia. “It involves important raw materials (like rare earths and the basic materials needed to make batteries), new technologies (like artificial intelligence and 5G wireless technology), and ultimately, the huge Chinese market, on which large German companies depend.”¹⁵

The greatest challenge is reducing individual major German corporations’ dependence on China.

As early as May, Germany’s Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Annalena Baerbock, held talks in the Foreign Office with Siemens CEO Roland Busch and BASF CEO Martin Brudermüller to determine whether the companies would be in a position to become independent of Chinese business within a few years if necessary. Media reports indicated that the reaction was cautious. The Chinese market, with its potential 1.4 billion customers, is simply too important to many companies. For instance, Volkswagen sold 3.3 million vehicles in China in 2021 alone for a profit of twelve billion euros. Puma gets 28 per cent of its turnover from China, Infineon 27 per cent, and Airbus 19 per cent.¹⁶ But the problem goes much deeper: a survey by the ifo Institute showed that almost half of all manufacturing companies in Germany are reliant on pre-products from China and “the dependence

on Chinese raw materials is in many cases even greater than for industrial products”¹⁷. For instance, some 65 per cent of raw materials for electric motors are imported from China; for rare earths, that number rises to 93 per cent.¹⁸

The Russian attack on Ukraine showed that Germany and Europe must fundamentally rethink the rules governing their dealings with authoritarian states. It is important to systematically review supply chains and dependencies. In a position paper, the ifo Institute advocates in particular that Germany and the EU should work harder on free trade agreements to provide effective political support for diversification efforts by German companies.¹⁹ The



Step on the brakes? In a first, the German Federal Government has recently denied credit guarantees for Volkswagen’s renewal of its production plants in China’s Xinjiang province. [Source: © China Daily via Reuters.](#)

EU free trade agreement with New Zealand concluded at the end of June cannot be more than a first step. The aim of German and European efforts should be to conclude strategic partnerships and free trade agreements with like-minded nations such as the US. It is also important to strengthen alliances with partners who share Germany's values, such as the democratic members of the BRICS group – Brazil, India, and South Africa. The West should also focus more on its partners and potential allies across the world. The surprise security treaty between China and the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific in April 2022 should demonstrate to the West that the competition for strategic alliances is well under way.

Yet, the greatest challenge is reducing individual major German corporations' dependence on China. The consequences of a total stoppage – if something like a military confrontation over Taiwan were to happen – would be devastating. That is why the strong focus on the Chinese market by large individual corporations is not just a business risk. Policymakers have clearly recognised the problem, but their means are limited. For instance, in June, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs denied Volkswagen credit guarantees for the partial renewal of its plants in Xinjiang. "Limiting investment guarantees, as discussed by the Ministry for Economic Affairs, is an initial signal, but is unlikely to prevent large corporations



from investing further,”²⁰ said Dana Heide, a former China correspondent for the *Handelsblatt*. The question of economic dependencies on the People’s Republic will therefore probably continue to be mostly decided in these corporations’ boardrooms.

Beijing’s threats concerning Taiwan must be taken seriously.

Assessment and Outlook

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov’s Africa trip at the end of July once again demonstrated that Moscow and Beijing’s systemic conflict with the West is also a competition for partners and narratives. For instance, Chinese diplomats and state media are propagating the Russian narrative that the war in Ukraine was caused primarily by NATO’s eastward expansion. A global media monitor for the war in Ukraine produced over several months by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung makes it impressively clear that the Russian-Chinese war narrative is having the desired effect in large swathes of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In many places, Western sanctions are blamed for the worsening food crisis and rising prices. The German Federal Government’s China paper should therefore develop a strategy that integrates German and European media in order to lend a stronger voice to the Western discussion and a European perspective on global events. An obvious partner for developing such a strategy is the *Deutsche Welle*. But here, too, it is important to think and proceed at European level.

There is no question that reducing economic dependencies and cluster risks relating to China is an important step towards reducing German and European vulnerabilities. However, Germany’s new China strategy should dare to do more. German and European interests must be clearly defined so that China realises the immense costs of a conflict. The China strategy

should also determine the areas in which China is a rival or even enemy of the West and where there is competition – which might be beneficial to both sides. And the areas in which China is needed as a partner, as in the global fight against climate change, should also be explored.²¹

There is no doubt that China and Russia are trying to undermine the Western order. Beijing’s threats concerning Taiwan must be taken seriously. Nonetheless, the relationship between Beijing and Moscow is not a formal alliance. And the goal of German and European efforts should be to continue to sound out all the opportunities inherent in this ambiguity. The fact that the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s first Asia trip was to Japan, was a clear signal – both to China and the value partners in the region. It is therefore clear that it is primarily up to China to avoid a systemic conflict with the US and the West.

Nevertheless, the so-called compromise on the Chinese state company Cosco’s investment into the Hamburg seaport, imposed by Scholz against the will of six federal ministries sceptical of such a move, sends a completely wrong message in this context – virtually dismissing the *Zeitenwende* that he himself proclaimed in February. In allowing this transaction, the chancellor also undermines what was meant to become a core principle of the Foreign Office’s future China paper: reducing dependencies. Only a firm stance would have made it clear, also to Beijing, that business as usual is no longer an option in Germany’s policies towards China. Instead of learning its lessons, the Federal Government again lacks a clear strategy, which is all the more regrettable in a time where our values must be asserted with even more dialogue, less naivety, and a good dose of firmness.

– translated from German –

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[Conflict-ready? Western Foreign Policy in Times of Systemic Rivalry](#)

In the Clutches of Dictators?

Why We Must Reduce Economic Dependence
while Resisting Isolationist Tendencies

Jan Cernicky

The fatal dependence on Russian energy supplies has quite rightly catapulted trade and economic policy into the centre of the German debate. But criticism of German energy policy over the last few decades must not encourage isolationist illusions. Harmful dependencies must be identified and reduced, but economic policy focused on broad trade remains central for Germany and Europe.

The current debate on the impact of economic interdependence with foreign powers is primarily focused on the associated political risks, while the opportunities are largely ignored. The risks should not be overlooked, of course. However, it is important to adopt a nuanced perspective that distinguishes between harmful dependencies and beneficial economic relationships.

Whenever a company decides against producing necessary goods itself, and instead purchases them from another company, a dependence on this supplier arises. In principle, dependencies can be neutralised with preferably long-term supply contracts and functioning rule of law. The company can also mitigate them by purchasing from several different suppliers, allowing it to cope with the loss of a single supplier.

The situation becomes more difficult when there are only a few suppliers, and all of them are abroad. In this case, the German state has few options for enforcing contracts if there is a conflict. This problem can be addressed through trade agreements with other countries. Provided there is long-term legal security in the other country, as in EU states, there is not much need to worry. This condition is least fulfilled in authoritarian countries, where legal certainty scarcely exists at all. So, it is not surprising that precisely these states give rise to the greatest risks – not just business risks for individual companies, but risks that threaten the entire German economic system if such dependencies are concentrated. This was impressively demonstrated in the case of

Russian gas. The difficulty of avoiding business relations with autocracies and other problematic partners was illustrated when German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Robert Habeck visited Qatar (not exactly a model democracy) to try to arrange a replacement for gas supplies from another authoritarian state, Russia.

But there is also a plethora of non-political risks that may arise in friendly states, or even domestically: natural disasters, pandemics, supply route blockades, and others. So even in a world in which we would only purchase goods from friendly states, these risks would remain. And even the political risks in trade relations are not limited to authoritarian states: Brexit, which has almost been forgotten, quickly changed rules governing trade with the United Kingdom, for instance.

However, and this is often overlooked at the moment, economic interdependence invariably entails not only risks, but also opportunities. The classical economist David Ricardo recognised this more than 200 years ago and expressed it in his famous comparative advantage theory: if companies from different countries trade with one other, each can focus on producing the goods for which it is the most competitive. The resources in both countries are thus used more efficiently, and prosperity increases. No matter which country is more competitive, both benefit. Trade also leads to exchange of knowledge and innovations, which is important for a leading industrial nation like Germany.



Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz visiting Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States in September 2022: For the time being, Germany cannot dispense with non-democratic partners in its attempt to decouple from Russian energy supplies. Source: © Andreas Rinke, Reuters.

As long as it is not compelled militarily, and thus becomes robbery, trade is always economically advantageous in the medium term – otherwise the partners involved would not engage in it. On average, trade with authoritarian states is actually particularly lucrative: since it involves higher risks for the companies involved, they engage in it only when profits are correspondingly high. Trade therefore always implies risks as well as economic gain. The greater the risk of a business deal collapsing, the greater the profit if it succeeds. The risk of dependency on authoritarian states is attracting great attention in current debates. How serious is the risk in reality, and what is the best way to react to it?

The Extent of Dependencies

First, it is worth examining the extent and structure of economic interdependence with authoritarian states: only in the event of a high proportion of individual authoritarian states, problematic dependencies may arise. On the other hand, if the overall volume of trade is distributed across several such states, the overall outlook is unproblematic, at least economically, since trade with one problematic supplier can be replaced with trade from another. Theoretically, autocrats could coordinate with each other and form a “cartel of authoritarian countries”. But this seems unlikely since authoritarian rulers



do not tend to engage in long-term cooperation – not even with other autocrats.

Economic interdependence can be subdivided into three different dimensions:

1. according to sales markets;
2. according to supplier parts imports;
3. according to raw and basic materials imports.

The US followed by China are the most important individual sales markets for Germany, closely followed by France and the Netherlands. But if the EU were a single country, it would be Germany's most important export market by far. Germany's exports to EU countries are about seven times larger than those to China.

Any attempt to determine the proportion of German exports that go to authoritarian states encounters the difficulty of clearly defining what an authoritarian state is. There is no unambiguous nor universally acknowledged definition of an authoritarian country or of a dictatorship. We will therefore use the widely recognised indicator of the non-governmental organisation Freedom House¹, which divides states into the "free", "partly free", and "not free" categories. We will consider "not free" states to be authoritarian countries.

Dependence on supplier parts from China is often overestimated.

Germany's 100 most important export destinations include 22 states that fall into the "not free" category. Taken together, they constitute almost 13 per cent of the value of exports to the 100 most important countries. In 2021, the only truly significant ones were China and the Russian Federation, the latter ranking 14th. The next "not free" states are the United Arab Emirates in 34th place, Saudi Arabia in 38th place, and Thailand in 43rd place. Excluding China, the

authoritarian states account for only five per cent of exports to the 100 most important countries. Thus, there does not appear to be a significant dependency on such states.

But the general overview is not everything. Large individual companies, and with them their suppliers, are much more strongly dependent on the Chinese market. The data relevant to this question is sparse, and those concerned obviously do not like discussing it. Extensive research by the Handelsblatt² from February 2021 concluded that China is the largest single market for BMW, Daimler, Infineon, Adidas, and Volkswagen. It showed that Volkswagen sells 41 per cent of its vehicles in China. Yet the 40 DAX (German stock index) companies average only 16 per cent of turnover in the People's Republic. This indicates that other important German companies are much less dependent on business in China than Volkswagen is, for instance. Even if the overall economy is only moderately dependent on China as a sales market, and not at all on other authoritarian states, it is still true that individual, and very important, companies are in the clutches of China's Communist Party.

The question of import dependence, on the other hand, is much more complex. For one thing, dependence on supplier parts from China is often overestimated. The overall share of German imports from China is quite high, as a study by the German Economic Institute shows.³ For instance, China's proportion of the EU's value added is 13.6 per cent. But an ifo Institute for Economic Research study⁴ commissioned by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung shows that a large percentage of these imports can be sourced relatively easily from other countries or replaced by similar parts. Problematic dependencies on China or other authoritarian states are only present for well below one per cent of these imports.

Yet the raw materials import dependency situation is much more worrying. It is widely known that Germany imports almost all its fossil fuels from abroad, with a large part of those purchases



Rare earth metals mine in China: Several metals important for industrial production – and even more so, their respective processing capacities – are concentrated in the People's Republic. [Source: © Reuters.](#)

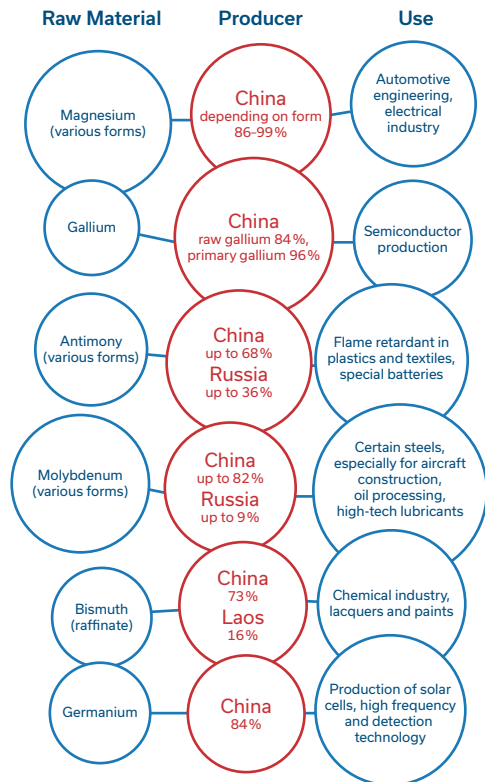
having been from Russia until now; in future they will come increasingly from other autocracies such as the Gulf states. But in the procurement of important industrial metals, there is an even greater concentration on a few supplier countries, especially China, as figure 1 shows.

Much of the concentration on China is not because the metals listed are themselves concentrated there. China as a country with a great surface area has access to many sources of raw materials, but its dominance in the raw materials extracted is due to the fact that China has succeeded in concentrating large swathes of the global processing capacities within its borders over the past 20 years. It did this with state support and aggressive export subsidies. This made raw materials in China so cheap that it was not profitable for other parts of the world to produce them themselves. This is particularly noticeable for magnesium: although it is one of the most common elements on earth, many magnesium products still come almost exclusively from China. Theoretically, China would not only be able to exploit its quasi-monopoly through high prices but could also use it for political manoeuvring. To date, China has rarely tried this with the EU. But even this analysis shows how closely advantages and disadvantages are connected: China's subsidies provided German industry with cheap raw materials in virtually inexhaustible quantities. The Communist Party has thus indirectly subsidised German industry for years with many billions of euros.

What Can Be Done?

How can Germany react to this situation? With regard to sales markets, incentives for diversification could be created by having the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad expand their quite successful market development programmes, while also making them less complicated and more focused on small and mid-sized companies. It would be a good idea to concentrate more on peripheral states, since there is sufficient experience in states where German companies are very active anyway, such as China and Vietnam, and thus additional consulting

Fig. 1: Origin and Use of Selected Raw Materials in German Industry



Source: BDI Federation of German Industries 2022: Analyse bestehender Abhängigkeiten und Handlungsempfehlungen, 27 May 2022, in: <https://bit.ly/3SFb6t1> [12 Oct 2022].

is not necessary. Such diversification need not be friendshoring, aiming at establishing new supplier relationships with democracies only. A “non-political” diversification, especially one at the expense of China, reduces the likelihood of dependency on individual authoritarian states.

Such a diversification strategy also includes economic partnerships and free trade agreements. Everything that facilitates market entry abroad leads to more trade. Partnerships with India, the Southeast Asian ASEAN states, and the South American Mercosur, as well as an ambitious trade policy towards Africa, should be at the top of the agenda. Any progress in free trade with the US would also be welcome. Such agreements would also help for imports, since

they make it easier for foreign exporters to do business in Germany. The German Chambers of Commerce Abroad should thus interpret their mandate more strongly in both directions.

But this solves very few of the raw material import dependence problems outlined above, since those problems are related to a concentration of production capacity among a few countries. In this context, the current problem with Russian gas appears solvable at least in the medium term since other suppliers can deliver enough gas (albeit not at the same price). However, for the above-mentioned raw materials from China, the situation is different. In the short term, the problem can be minimised with targeted stockpiling – with government support, if necessary. But in the longer term, Germany and the EU must contribute to creating new capacities outside of China. This does not necessarily mean that these capacities will be established within the borders of Europe. Countries like Chile and Argentina, as well as North African states are attractive as partners for the production of critical metals not only because of the availability of natural resources, but also of renewable energies. This is all based on state industrial policy and massive subsidies in these industries.

Even authoritarian regimes are interested in functioning trade and economic relationships.

To ensure that such highly problematic regulatory instruments are applied only when the market offers no other solutions in the long term, the first thing to invest in is a comprehensive screening of dependencies in the purchase of important raw materials. Such screening would provide objectively verifiable data that can be used to make transparent decisions about subsidies for individual industries.

A theoretical alternative for generating more domestic capacities in raw materials production would be to impose tariffs on raw materials

imports so that expensive local production becomes competitive again. In addition to potential Chinese counter-reactions, this has the disadvantage of making previously imported goods much more expensive and possibly scarcer. For the energy revolution, supplies from China will be indispensable in the medium term, even if the establishment of great capacities of raw materials for solar modules and batteries outside China were to begin today. So, it seems advisable to continue to purchase relatively cheap metals from China for the time being, while alternative capacities are being built up as quickly as possible.

However, establishing processing capacities for strategic metals does not solve the problem that ore deposits, which yield the aforementioned metals, are in some cases concentrated among a few countries. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, has half of the global cobalt reserves; other important reserves are in Cuba and Russia. Kazakhstan controls almost half of the global supply of chromium, and half the supply of bismuth and tungsten is in China.⁵

The concentration among a few countries is a much smaller problem than the processing capabilities problem outlined above. But it is certainly the case that for many materials, authoritarian states are the main suppliers of many raw materials, though not for all. The only remedy here is good and, ideally, contractually fixed trade relations – especially with authoritarian states, since that is precisely where there is a great need for regulation. Ultimately, there is no way to avoid trading with unsavoury partners. The Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) between the EU and China, which has now been put on hold, was an attempt at agreeing on minimum standards with an authoritarian regime. There are good reasons why this agreement failed politically. Among them are the sanctions imposed in 2021 on members of the EU Parliament, and the objective of not further increasing the concentration of certain industries in China; a concentration that is already problematically high. But in essence, it is the right idea. Such agreements, even if undemocratic regimes

implement them only partially, place German companies operating in authoritarian states in a much stronger position, enabling them to contribute to Germany's supply security. After all, authoritarian regimes are interested in functioning trade and economic relationships, too. If they sign an agreement with the EU, their reputation as a business-friendly country alone will motivate them to act if the agreement is broken, since such violations would become public and greatly decrease the tendency of potential partners to trade with and invest in such states.

Summary

In the medium term, it will be quite possible in many cases to reduce undesirable linkages that are perceived as a dependency. But doing so is an expensive business for two reasons: first, it dispenses with the previous, cheap suppliers. Second, supplying the replacement domestically requires large investments. In times of high inflation, it is especially important to carefully consider which interdependencies with foreign countries are considered major risks, and where there is therefore willingness to pay a higher price to acquire raw materials.

It is also important to make this assessment based on good information, especially because many raw materials are located primarily in authoritarian states. What is more, Germany's prosperity depends on exports to countries all over the world. Generalised concepts such as friendshoring, where attempts are made to trade only with politically acceptable countries, are therefore certainly not a good idea. Placing such political conditions on trade relations is also difficult in theory. How are transparent decisions according to fixed categories to be made about what countries fulfil requirements of democracy, human rights, and sustainability? For these three categories alone, there are many indicators, all of which result in slightly different rankings. It can thus be difficult to draw a clear line between authoritarian states and democratic ones.

We will have to continue to engage in trade with non-democratic states. There will continue to

be raw materials for which there is little choice of supplier. It is good to diversify as broadly as possible and to establish domestic capacities where feasible and economically sensible. Work must also be done, especially with difficult partners, on formalising relations. This explicitly involves instruments that allow Germany and the EU to react robustly to measures used by other states to gain unfair competitive advantages. By proposing an instrument to counter economic coercion, the EU has already reacted to such measures.⁶ More important than coercive instruments, however, are screening instruments that clearly show where government intervention may be necessary – and, more important, where it is not. We should not abandon the German economy's successful collaborative model simply through fear of autocrats.

– translated from German –

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[Conflict-ready? Western Foreign Policy in Times of Systemic Rivalry](#)

Without a Stance?

Democratic Developing Nations amidst
Intensifying Systemic Competition

[Sebastian Enskat](#) / [Magdalena Jetschgo-Morcillo](#) / [Maximilian Römer](#)

Western countries tend to view the war in Ukraine as part of a global conflict between democracies and autocracies. However, in Brasilia, New Delhi, and Pretoria there is much greater reluctance to accept this view, let alone take clear sides. But why are so many developing nations – including democracies – refusing to nail their colours to the mast, and what can the so-called West do to win over key players from other regions in this systemic competition? An examination of Brazil, India, and South Africa.

On 2 March 2022, there was great jubilation when the UN General Assembly in New York announced the result of what was termed a historic vote on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "International community overwhelmingly condemns Russia's invasion"¹ – this was the general reaction to Resolution A/ES-11/L.1, which was supported by 141 states and opposed by just five – Russia, Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, and Syria. There were 35 abstentions.² Afterwards, there was even talk of an alliance between the West and the rest of the world against Putin.³

But, just over nine months later, not much from this euphoria remains. In the West, the war is primarily perceived as a conflict between freedom and democracy on the one hand, and repression and autocracy on the other. Support for Ukraine's struggle remains strong, and condemnation of Russia's war of aggression is largely unanimous. Elsewhere in the world, however, the picture is much more ambivalent. One certainly cannot say that there is unanimous support for Ukraine and that Russia is completely isolated across the globe. Even the fact that a clear majority of UN members voted to condemn Russia's illegitimate annexation of parts of Ukraine in the most recent vote on 12 October 2022 does not change this. Indeed, the past few months have increasingly shown that most developing nations have no interest in positioning themselves too strongly against Russia outside of UN institutions.

At this point, it is useful to review the results of the UN vote in early March. A closer examination does indeed paint a rather ambivalent picture. For example, if we look at Africa, it is clear that only around half of African member states – 29 out of 55 – voted in favour of the resolution (there were 17 abstentions and eight absences). Moreover, it should be considered that the 35 countries which abstained from the vote account for more than 50 per cent of the world's population.⁴ Additionally, one must recall that the positive voting outcome was only achieved through huge diplomatic pressure. It is therefore hardly surprising that the UN General Assembly's vote on suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, held just over a month later on 7 April, was already far less clear-cut, with 93 votes in favour, 24 against and 58 abstentions.⁵

However, it is not only such figures that have contributed to the disillusionment within the Western camp in recent months. Few people are likely to have had any great illusions about the balance of power in the UN General Assembly, or regarding the global spread of democracy and freedom. One of the main reasons for this disillusionment is that countries which have refused to adopt a clear position on Russia's war of aggression include those that the West typically regards as like-minded, democratic partners, above all influential emerging economies such as Brazil, India, and South Africa. The significance of these three countries in terms of their positioning in relation to the West is particularly relevant in that all three are key political,

economic, and military powers in their respective regions, giving them a prominent position as “regional powers”.

Whether these countries remain *democratic* developing nations – be it in a strict sense, or a loose one – is a rather academic question, secondary to the purposes of this analysis, and will thus not be explored further. This article aims, instead, to elucidate how such definitions are far less important to the countries themselves than to the West.

The main purpose of this article is, therefore, to try to understand how these countries – specifically Brazil, India, and South Africa⁶ – view Russia’s war against Ukraine, and to examine the reasons for their positioning or non-positioning. The goal is thus to highlight different perspectives, particularly between the West and the Global South. The intensifying systemic conflict with Russia and China makes it particularly vital for the West to identify these diverging perspectives, and to consider them in its strategic thinking.

Brazil: So Long to Western Ties?

Brazil, which held presidential, parliamentary and gubernatorial elections in October, struggled to adopt a clear stance ever since Russia started its war in Ukraine. The now outgoing President Jair Bolsonaro had visited Vladimir Putin shortly before the outbreak of the war, to express solidarity with him. In the days following 24 February, Bolsonaro was initially reluctant about commenting on Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. In early March, at the UN General Assembly, he stated that Brazil wanted peace, but that he was fearful of the negative repercussions brought by sanctions on the Brazilian economy.⁷ After much hesitation, Brazil voted to condemn the Russian invasion in early March, but abstained when it came to a vote on suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council in early April. In February 2022, Brazil also abstained from a joint statement by the Organisation of American States condemning the war and joined Argentina in opposing a virtual appearance by Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelensky at a Mercosur meeting in Uruguay in July, only to change course once more and vote against Russia at a UN resolution in October.

Looking back at the past, and considering foreign policy traditions of the country and the region as a whole, Brazil’s current stance on issues of global governance and on the war in Ukraine is no surprise. In past decades, the region’s comparatively peaceful security architecture meant that countries like Brazil had no particular need to put global governance issues in the political spotlight, or project hard power.⁸ Brazilian diplomats were well known for their ability to position themselves between different partners and within multilateral institutions. This was mainly done with the aim of consolidating Brazil’s national sovereignty and retaining a relatively secure geostrategic position, both regionally and globally.

The whole region has a long tradition of non-intervention in international affairs. Particular emphasis is placed on the right to self-determination and the equality of states, and there is a strong aversion to external political or military interference in domestic affairs. The origin of this world view lies in the colonial and interventionist experiences, which many Latin American countries have faced through Europe and the United States.⁸ This could potentially explain why Brazil voted against Russia’s illegal annexations of Ukrainian territory at the UN level, while usually being much more ambivalent regarding Russia in other matters.

Brazil imports nearly a quarter of the fertiliser for its vital agricultural sector from Russia.

Besides historical factors, other considerations also play a role. In times of global supply chain bottlenecks, recession, and food shortages, these considerations are predominantly economic. Much of Latin America’s economic growth over

the past decade has been based on trade with Asia, and particularly China, which has become the region's largest trading partner.¹⁰ Russia's role in the region should also not be underestimated. Brazil imports nearly a quarter of the fertiliser for its vital agricultural sector from Russia, and Brazilian politicians insist there are currently no alternative sources of supply.¹¹ In any case, the Brazilian people are already facing soaring prices for energy and basic foodstuffs, along with high inflation overall.

Despite such structural conditions, it is, however, obvious that the Bolsonaro factor has played a significant role in Brazil's current positioning. Among Bolsonaro's political opponents, there is speculation that the current president, whose term will end on 1 January, views an autocrat like Putin as a role model. Moreover, it is not only regarding the war in Ukraine that Bolsonaro has abandoned Brazil's traditionally strong Western orientation. The relationship with the US became frosty when Joe Biden took office, but has thawed somewhat since the Summit of the Americas in June 2022. However, the Bolsonaro administration's foreign policy as a whole has shifted away from regional and international engagement. For example, under Bolsonaro, Brazil expressed great scepticism towards the regional Mercosur integration project, pulled out of hosting the 2019 World Climate Summit, and withdrew from the UN Compact on Migration.¹²

Europe should probably say goodbye to any expectations of Brazil's unequivocal commitment to the West.

The big question is what will happen to the country's foreign policy stance after ex-President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva, who recently won the presidential election, takes office. There will probably be no change with regard to Brazil's stance on Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine.¹³ Lula believes President Zelensky is "just as responsible for the war as Putin", accuses

the US and EU of being complicit by pushing for NATO's eastward expansion, and has no desire to be drawn into a new Cold War.¹⁴ It is also likely that Lula will bring Brazil closer to China, as was the case during his previous presidency.¹⁵ Brazil, while not a member of the Belt and Road Initiative, receives significant amounts of Chinese investment.¹⁶ For some years, China has even replaced the EU as Brazil's biggest trading partner and is now the largest buyer of agricultural products, such as soy, pork, and chicken.

Overall, we can expect to see many Latin American countries trying to take a more pragmatic and impartial stance on Ukraine as well as regarding global order in the coming years. One of the main reasons behind this will be the need to focus on addressing socioeconomic problems at home, and the fact that governments do not really gain any favours with their domestic audience for positioning themselves strongly for or against the West. Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua are exceptions to this for ideological reasons, and have publicly expressed their solidarity with Putin.¹⁷ In general, however, the reaction of many countries is different to the Cold War era, when many actors in the region formed clear alliances either with the US or the former Soviet Union. This was partly due to military, ideological, and economic pressure that the two countries can no longer exert in the region today.

Brazil is now a case in point for the fact that countries in the region prefer to pursue good relations and trade with China and Russia as well as the EU and US. It also illustrates that some countries do not want to be pigeonholed within the global order unless they really have to. Celso Amorim, President Lula's former foreign minister, recently stressed how multipolarity is viewed by Brazil as both a tendency and as a political goal of the country's foreign policy, and that it does not want to be trapped in between the competition amongst China and the US.¹⁸ Nevertheless, under Lula, Brazil could once again assume a stronger role in Latin American integration and regional order. However, Europe should probably say goodbye to any expectations of Brazil's unequivocal commitment to the West.

India: Self-confident and Alliance-shy

“Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe’s problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems” – with these words, which subsequently went viral on social media, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar responded to a question about India’s stance on the war in Ukraine at the GLOBSEC conference in Bratislava, in June 2022. He went on to say that India had not the slightest intention of aligning itself with any geopolitical power bloc in the near future.¹⁹ In the interview, the minister explained India’s interests and strongly rejected the idea that India – a country with nearly one-fifth of the world’s population – should share the world view

of a bipolar order, let alone join one of the two camps, the political West on the one hand, or Russia and China, on the other.

India, which is self-confident in its foreign policy and has always been wary of alliances, has maintained close relations with Russia since Soviet times. During the Cold War, the USSR obstructed numerous UN Security Council resolutions on the Kashmir conflict in India’s favour, and was seen as a counterweight to India’s archenemies to the north – China and Pakistan. India could also count on Soviet support in the 1971 war against Pakistan. In return, India did not condemn the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops in 1968, and supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980.²⁰



Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar: “Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe’s problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems.” Source: © Adnan Abidi, Reuters.

India and Russia still have close economic ties: the majority of India's defence and weapons arsenal is Russian-made. The latest acquisitions from Russia are the Triakand frigate in 2014 and the S-400 missile defence system. However, the Russian arms industry is partly dependent on Western companies, especially in the technology sector, such as for chips for the aforementioned S-400 defence system.²¹ So the fact that Boeing, Airbus, and other companies are no longer supplying Russia as a result of Western sanctions could, sooner or later, also compromise India's defence capabilities.

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) between Russia, Iran, and India has also been revived in the wake of Western sanctions against Russia.²² But paying for imports has become more problematic since the introduction of those sanctions. New Delhi may be able to process the imports via rouble-rupee payments or third-party currencies – and thus circumvent sanctions on payment transactions – but this procedure incurs higher costs, which is not exactly welcomed by the majority of India's financial and business elite.

In India, the international order based on values and rules is viewed as a Western construct.

In general, people in India have little patience with economic difficulties caused by the sanctions against Russia. However, the strongest opposition comes from the country's older diplomatic elite, some of whom were ideologically influenced and educated in the Soviet Union. Younger businesspeople are more likely to see the country's economic dependencies on Russia as a problem, and there are even isolated signs of understanding for the economic sanctions imposed by the West.

Nevertheless, against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that India abstained from all three UN votes on the war in Ukraine. Speaking of

the United Nations, India has been one of the largest contributors of troops to UN peacekeeping missions for decades. In light of this, and of India's economic growth, size, and international engagement, the country demands a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, saying that the Council no longer reflects today's power constellation. Along with Brazil, Japan, and Germany, India is campaigning for reform of the United Nations as part of the Group of Four (G4).

In India, the international order based on values and rules is generally viewed as a Western construct, which is why the country likes to promote alternative models. Some of the country's foreign and economic policy elites anticipate a world divided into two, with one bloc dominated by China, and the other by the US. Others propagate the scenario of a new Asian order, sometimes with India as a new superpower in a tripolar world order. However, this still seems unlikely when the strength of the Indian economy is compared with that of China and the US.

Another motivation for India to remain neutral is the fear that Russia could be driven into an alliance with China. India is now largely surrounded by countries that are participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative, while strictly refusing to participate itself. Despite the old conflicts, however, India is cooperating with China within the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), the RIC trilateral (Russia, India, China), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The fact that its more powerful neighbour China could not only attack Taiwan but also Bhutan, which is under Indian protection, points to a potential test of India's defence capabilities. As previously mentioned, these have been adversely affected by Western sanctions against Russia, and the situation is likely to worsen. Partly because of China's growing influence in India's neighbourhood, India has joined the US, Japan, and Australia to form the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which aims to counterbalance China's expansionist ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Quad is just one of many formats that the political West uses to seek cooperation with India – rhetorically at least, the doors of the world’s liberal democracies are wide open to India. In Germany, the governing parties’ coalition treaty expresses a “strong interest in deepening our strategic partnership with India”. Australia signed a free trade agreement with India in 2021, while the UK, Canada, and the EU are all working towards one. France has sold India seven Rafale fighter jets (though this is a modest figure compared to the 400 aircraft from Russia). Japan is offering infrastructure development and Washington is keen to reward an Indian shift away from Moscow with weapons, technology, and visas.²³ Whether these recent “declarations of intent” will materialise, however, will depend to a large extent on the ongoing ability of liberal democracies to assert themselves.

South Africa: All Doors Open

South Africa’s initial reaction to the war in Ukraine can best be described as erratic. Immediately after the Russian invasion, Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor called on Moscow to withdraw its troops from Ukraine, only to be brought back into line by President Cyril Ramaphosa, who later stated that NATO was to blame for the escalation because of its eastward expansion. This stance was reaffirmed by the ruling ANC party, which ramped up its anti-West rhetoric at its party congress in early August.²⁴ South Africa abstained in the UN General Assembly vote in early March, arguing that the resolution did not call on the parties to the conflict to engage in dialogue, and would only cause more division.²⁵ South Africa also abstained from the vote on Russia’s suspension from the UN Human Rights Council, and did not join in with the sanctions against Russia.

South Africa’s long history of ties with Russia is also contributing to its reluctance to condemn Russia’s war of aggression. The USSR supported the young South African nation’s struggle against apartheid for many years – a fame that Russia continues to benefit from.²⁶ It is well known that the current ruling party receives donations from

Russian oligarchs, and Defence Minister Thandi Modise created a furore in August when she attended a security conference in Moscow.

That aside, South Africa is proud of its long tradition of non-alignment and intends to maintain this “strategic neutrality”. It wants to be a partner to the West while simultaneously maintaining good relations with China, with which it is linked through BRICS and the Belt and Road Initiative. One should also not forget how, especially in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa and other countries of the Global South felt that they had been abandoned by the West. The fact that the Western-led COVAX initiative has supplied two thirds of all vaccines sent to Africa in 2021 seems to be largely ignored here.²⁷ The impression of being badly treated by the West was also reinforced by the treatment of African migrants at the Ukrainian border in the early days of the war.

In Africa, wheat prices have already skyrocketed by 45 per cent due to supply chain disruption.

South Africa is fundamentally committed to multilateralism and has long called for reforms in the multilateral system to make it more equitable and contemporary, such as giving an African nation a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. A multipolar world is seen as desirable, and the BRICS counterparts China and Russia are viewed as better partners than the Western hemisphere in this respect.

Western countries are accused of hypocrisy in their condemnation of the Russian war of aggression, and South Africa likes to point to Western military interventions such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.²⁸ The fact that such comparisons are misleading and that the framework conditions under international law were quite different in the cases mentioned tends to be ignored. However, in a statement on 8 April 2022, Naledi

Pandor explained that South Africa's neutral position with regard to the war in Ukraine did not mean that it condoned Russia's violation of international law. In this respect, it is interesting to note that South Africa is generally highly sceptical of regime-change ambitions on the part of the West, but this seems to be less of a concern when it comes to Russia seeking to bring down the government in Kiev.²⁹

However, in view of the fact that we are already more than nine months into the war, the focus is now primarily on its economic consequences for South Africa. Issues with food security and the sharp rise in the price of fertilisers and raw materials such as steel are a problem not just for South Africa but for the continent as a whole. According to UN estimates, 44 per cent of the

wheat consumed in Africa comes from Russia and Ukraine, and wheat prices have already skyrocketed by 45 per cent due to supply chain disruptions. The African Union (AU) has warned of a food crisis of catastrophic proportions. Moreover, it is unclear whether EU member states or G7 countries will still be able to fulfil their commitments towards the Global South if they themselves are forced to redistribute resources to deal with internal economic and social pressures while providing unbudgeted financial and military support to Ukraine.³⁰

Russia (along with China) has also been positioning itself in Africa in other areas, carving out an important role. As such, as of now, Russia is: Africa's principal arms supplier (ahead of France, the US, and China);³¹ a buyer and licensed



Deceptive impression: Despite Nelson Mandela shining in blue and yellow outside Cape Town city hall, his party, the African National Congress, still gives Moscow credit for its support in combatting apartheid, which has consequences for South Africa's position on Russia's war against Ukraine. Source: © Shelley Christians Jordaan, Reuters.

prospector of valuable raw materials; an exporter of agricultural equipment; and, via the Wagner Group, a provider of private security services.

The courting of South Africa and other influential actors on the continent has been underway for some time, but it has intensified in the months since the war began. In June, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Niger, Senegal, and South Africa. This was partly in his role as G7 chair, in order to discuss food supplies, but also with a view to bringing African countries more on side as political allies. In July, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited Egypt, Congo, Uganda, and the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa.

Explaining Why: Old Attachments and New Dependencies

If the preceding remarks about how Brazil, India, and South Africa view the conflict between Russia and Ukraine have shown one thing, it is that their perspectives differ from the prevailing view in the West in many ways. While Berlin, Brussels, and Washington mostly perceive the conflict as a kind of proxy war in the escalating systemic conflict between the democracies and autocracies of this world, this world view does not tend to be shared by the three countries we are examining in this article, and they are certainly reluctant to join one of the two blocs as classified by the West.

Dependencies in key sectors make it difficult for emerging countries to turn their backs on Russia.

Instead of a debate oriented towards abstract ideals such as freedom and democracy, the dominant view in Brasilia, New Delhi, and Pretoria focuses more on their own historical experiences and specific interests. Colonial experiences can be just as important as foreign policy traditions or economic and military

dependencies. And while each of the three countries has its own unique view of the war in Ukraine and the international order, a few generalised conclusions can be drawn that help explain why the three countries are far from aligned with the West against Russia and China.

1. **History:** As the example of South Africa has shown, the former Soviet Union's support for African liberation movements has still not been forgotten. This was particularly evident in the vote at the UN General Assembly on 2 March, when all the countries in southern Africa that are still dominated by former liberation movements abstained.³² In India, too, the fact that the USSR always stood faithfully by New Delhi's side in the Kashmir conflict continues to play an important role. Although relations between Brazil and Russia were mostly neutral and limited to minor trade agreements during the Soviet era, the two countries have gradually intensified their strategic partnership since the late 1990s. Clearly, it is not in Brazil's interest to jeopardise this history of bilateral relations.
2. **Foreign policy traditions:** India, Brazil, and South Africa are following a long foreign policy tradition by refusing to side with the West in condemning the war in Ukraine, but also not clearly siding with Russia. Particularly during the Cold War, many developing and emerging countries deliberately steered clear of aligning themselves with either of the two great powers in order to avoid being drawn into their conflicts. The original Non-Aligned Movement was formed in the 1950s from the many newly established states of Africa and Asia, as well as from Latin American states, most of which had gained their independence in the 19th century. In the UN, this movement is manifested in the Group of 77. Such movements are once again gaining importance, such as in Latin America, where a new vision of the international system is being propagated in line with the idea of "No Alineamiento Activo", characterised by new actors, new alliances and rivalries, and new challenges.³³

3. **Economic and military dependencies:** Whether it is the reliance of Brazil on Russian fertilisers or that of India on Russian arms, these examples clearly show how dependencies in key sectors of the economy or defence make it difficult or even impossible for emerging countries to turn their backs on Russia. Some dependencies have even been exacerbated by the war. For example, African countries in particular rely heavily on grain and cooking oil from Russia and Ukraine.³⁴ Due to the devastation of agricultural land and the blockade of ports in Ukraine, the prices of these goods have skyrocketed, with serious consequences for the countries affected.
4. **Hard-headed calculations:** Today, many countries of the Global South – not just the three discussed in this article – are able to, and indeed do, pick and choose from a vast array of offers of cooperation on economic, development, and security issues. Offers made by the West – if they are made at all – are often tied to conditions, such as standards of democracy and the rule of law, so the Global South does not always view them as the best option. And when offers from the West are absent altogether or patchy – as was most recently the case with vaccine supplies at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic – China and Russia are happy to step in and fill the gap. Countries like Brazil, India, and South Africa are increasingly unwilling to base their decisions on an imagined ideological proximity, and instead make hard-headed cost-benefit calculations that are primarily oriented on their more short-term interests. The accusation of opportunism that this often engenders is increasingly being countered in the Global South by accusing the West of double standards: the West loves to invoke noble ideals, but at the end of the day is just as opportunistic in its actions.
5. **Anti-Western narratives:** With regard to this accusation of Western double standards, the Global South frequently points to military interventions by the US and European

partners without a UN mandate, such as the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, the West's non-intervention or perceived lack of interest in other conflicts – such as Syria – also frequently comes under fire in connection with the debate on the war in Ukraine. Even if such comparisons are misleading and those cases were significantly different from the perspective of international law, the West needs to understand that such narratives are widespread in the Global South. The West is also accused of these oft-cited double standards with regard to the lessons on democracy, the environment, and human rights that it likes to dish out to developing and emerging countries – lessons that, according to critics, are quickly forgotten when it comes to economic or security cooperation with countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia. As far as emerging countries are concerned, the West's calls for Vladimir Putin to be tried by the International Criminal Court ring rather hollow when the US has failed to even ratify that court's statute. In any case, such inconsistencies contribute to the narrative – which is propagated particularly actively by Russia – that the political West only defends the liberal world order because this serves its own security and economic interests.³⁵

All too often, development cooperation fails to address the actual needs of partner countries.

Conclusion: What to Do?

They say a fault confessed is half redressed. This article is an attempt to contribute to this. But there also has to be desire to change and improve. So, we will conclude by briefly sketching out how we could begin to bind democratic emerging countries more closely to the West in the intensifying systemic competition with Russia and China.





A tractor is seen spreading fertiliser in central Brazil: The country imports a considerable part of this important agricultural input from Russia, which is why it has had no intention to clearly distance itself from Moscow.

Source: © Adriano Machano, Reuters.

- **Addressing specific needs:** Appeals for democratic standards and the rule of law are and remain important, including in development cooperation. However, all too often this cooperation still fails to address the actual needs of partner countries. A good start would be to focus more on what countries actually need and are calling for in terms of security and economic policy. For example, Germany could assist with procurement processes and lobby for better access to the EU market or for visa facilitation.
- **Creating equal partnerships:** Cooperation with democratic emerging countries still tends to be asymmetrical. But many countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia have a great deal to offer, particularly at a time when there is a huge need for diversification in the energy sector. In particular, regional powers such as Brazil, India, and South Africa have economic and security-policy potential that should be recognised and harnessed more fully by the West. In any event, lecturing and exerting pressure from above is

counterproductive, and has simply helped to reinforce existing non-alignment reflexes. The West would be well advised to precisely identify the explicit and acute needs of these countries during this global energy and food crisis, and to promote cooperation. For example, in areas such as technology transfers in agriculture, energy infrastructure, and also through a revision of the Mercosur-EU trade agreement.

- **Increasing multilateral cooperation:** Brazil, India, and South Africa are, of course, already represented at various multilateral forums such as the G20. However, in recent years, it was smaller, more informal formats, such as BRICS and the Quad that have manifested a change in the global order. Germany and Europe would do well to launch comparable formats with new partners from the Global South. This would send a symbolic message but also provide an opportunity for closer multilateral exchange and cooperation on a range of topics. In the Quad, for example, this is done in the form of working groups on climate change, technology, infrastructure, and COVID-19. Overall, greater involvement in old and new forums would be a good way to create synergies and thus be more responsive to the needs of other countries. Brazil, for example, has long wanted to become a member of the OECD.
- **Consolidating our own narratives:** The example of how the West was viewed negatively in some parts of the Global South during the COVID-19 pandemic particularly highlights the importance of political communication. This is because, despite considerable support from Europe on vaccine supplies, some emerging countries have been vociferous in their criticism of Europe. Similarly, Europe is now being blamed for causing food shortages in other regions because of its sanctions against Russia. It is vitally important that Europe consolidates its own fact-based narratives in order to counter disinformation campaigns. It has to play catch-up, especially in online and social media, which China and

Russia use in a very targeted way. The people of the Global South have to see the West as a trustworthy partner before the political will for closer cooperation can emerge.

- translated from German -

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No Experiments

Chile Rejects New Constitutional Draft in Referendum –
But the Need for Reform Remains

[Hartmut Rank](#)

Elevating a left-wing government programme into the national constitution? Apparently, many members of Chile's 2021 constitutional convention thought that this would be a good idea. Their draft has now been rejected by a large majority in a referendum. Not because there were no reasons to reform the current constitution, but because the now rejected text was no better than the old one, and the Chilean people have recognised this.

It has been three years since protests arose in Santiago, Chile's capital. At the time, it was not least the promise of a new constitution that stopped the shocking violence. Now, the text drafted in a year-long process by 155 delegates selected specifically for this purpose has been rejected by a clear majority. And yet it is becoming apparent that Chile will indeed receive a new constitution in the not too distant future.

The Path to the 2022 Referendum

Starting on 18 October 2019, demonstrations against a small fare increase in public transport rapidly escalated to violent protests against a number of social grievances in just a few days. This resulted in the destruction of metro stations, looting in the capital of Santiago and a number of other Chilean cities, and finally also in excessive violence on the part of security forces.¹ The police lost control of the situation, and President Piñera turned to the military to restore public order. The violence left 15 people dead, including victims of military violence; dozens of civilians were injured, some severely; and more than one hundred policemen were wounded.²

The government's promise of a prompt referendum on constitutional reform contributed greatly to quelling the protests. This referendum was held one year later, on 25 October 2020. Two questions were posed to voters: "Do you want a new constitution?" and "What type of convention should draft the new constitution?"³ In addition to the fundamental question as to whether a new constitution was desired, voters were thus also able to decide how it was to be created.

This second question involved a choice: the first option was a *Convención Mixta* made up of 172 members, half of whom were elected members of Congress and Senate, and the other half being representatives elected specifically for the purpose of drafting the constitutional text; the other option was a *Convención Constitucional* consisting of 155 representatives of the people, to be newly elected⁴ specifically to draft the constitutional text. This decision was later to have critical influence on the fate of the constitutional draft produced. The historic referendum resulted in a clear victory for those approving of a new constitution: 78.27 per cent voted "Apruebo" – a solid majority. But voter turnout was relatively low with just over 50 per cent of the 14 million eligible voters.⁵ In a second vote, on 15 and 16 May 2021, 155 representatives were elected to the so-named *Constituyente* from among 1,369 candidates.⁶ 17 of these spots were reserved for indigenous peoples.

In the meantime, Chile also elected a new head of state in two ballots in November and December 2021. Left-wing Gabriel Boric, just 35 years old, was elected by a margin of more than ten percentage points,⁷ defeating right-wing candidate Kast, and replacing conservative politician Sebastián Piñera as president in March 2022.

In September 2022, the Chilean people once again had a decision to make: either to approve ("Apruebo") or reject ("Rechazo") the constitutional text presented in July 2022 after ten months of work. A veritable election marathon over the previous two years was therefore already behind the Chileans at this moment. A special feature

of the September 2022 referendum was that this time voting was mandatory. An impressive 13 million of the 15 million voters, or about 85 per cent, cast their ballots. This lends extra weight to the rejection of the draft by a two-thirds majority. It is safe to consider this a stern rebuke to the leftward-oriented government and to the 155 representatives who spent almost one year developing the text. It was a landslide victory⁸ for the draft constitution's opponents, especially considering that in 2020, 78 per cent of voters were fundamentally in favour of a new constitution. How can this result be explained?

A frequent accusation against the text of Chile's current constitution is that it is a "Pinochet constitution".

The Current Constitution: Not Perfect, but Better than Its Reputation

To understand this situation, it is first worth taking a look at the Chilean constitution that is still in force, and at a general finding – namely that constitutions are normally not entirely unchangeable texts. This is exemplified by the 27 amendments⁹ to the Constitution of the United States of America, written in 1787. Similarly, the German Basic Law, ratified in 1949, has been changed more than 65 times.¹⁰ This is not fundamentally different in Chile: more than two hundred years have passed since Chile finally achieved independence from Spain in 1818. Apart from the military dictatorship (1973 to 1990), still very present in the national historical consciousness, Chile has been a republic five times in these two centuries.¹¹ The most recent, current republic has existed since 1990. Its constitution was ratified in 1980 but has already been amended several times since the return to democracy.¹²

A frequent accusation against the text of Chile's current constitution is that it is a "Pinochet constitution". This is only partly true: the 1980 consti-

tution did indeed bear the signature of dictator Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, and this is the basis of the allegation.¹³ At its core, this text was strongly economically liberal and had robust protections against state intervention. It is precisely these principles, criticised as "neoliberal", that much of the criticism of the current constitution is directed against. However, the 1980 constitution also contained democratically questionable provisions, including the autocratic structure of the presidency for which it provides.¹⁴ But it is also true that in the more than thirty years since the military dictator left power, the constitution has been amended dozens of times under a variety of presidents, many of them left-leaning.¹⁵ These changes were often aimed at eliminating real or imagined "authoritarian enclaves" in the "Pinochet constitution". For instance, the president's right to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies has been greatly limited.

At the same time, there are entirely valid arguments for a more moderate and non-partisan reform of the current constitution. For instance, basic rights, and an effective mechanism for protecting them, as well as the creation of an ombudsman institution should be anchored in the constitution. Greater regionalisation of the hitherto strongly centralised state also seems sensible. The same is true for a possible transition from a presidential to at least a semi-presidential or even a parliamentary republic. Furthermore, the explicit mention within the constitution of specific rights for indigenous peoples (including the right to information and codetermination) could be more than just a symbolic step; it would compensate to a degree (although not make up for) historical injustices, and would thus ideally reduce or even eliminate the violence that continues to erupt sporadically in the parts of Chile inhabited by indigenous peoples. None of this has yet been done, but if it were, it would have the potential to create or rather consolidate social peace.

So, there are reasons for a constitutional reform in Chile. In view of this, why did the Chilean people deliver such a resounding "no" to the draft presented to them in September 2022?



The 2021 “Constituyente”: Not Representative

As indicated at the beginning of this article, it is important to consider the process by which this draft was created. Let us first attempt a comparison with the history of the creation of the current German Basic Law – although such a comparison is, as ever, only of limited validity. The parliamentary council tasked with drafting the German Basic Law united a wide range of political currents, and thus largely reflected the political spectrum at that time in the parts of Germany controlled by the three Western Allies. The composition of the Chilean constitutional convention, elected in 2021, was different – it was dominated by left-leaning thinkers.

Of the 155 seats, 17 were reserved for Chile’s various indigenous groups, the best-known among them the Mapuche and the Aymara. This number (eleven per cent) roughly corresponds to their proportion within the wider population in the most recent census. Of the remaining 138 representatives, 48 were independent (among them many moderate to far-left individuals). The remaining representatives were from centrist and left-wing political parties, which performed better than they had in the previous elections for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The question of why conservative forces were not as well-represented in the constitutional convention as they were in Congress is, thus, a reasonable one. For instance, there



High voter turnout: More than 13 million Chileans, equivalent to 85 per cent of those eligible to vote, flocked to the polls for the constitutional referendum, as seen here in the capital Santiago on 5 September. Source: © Pablo Sanhueza, Reuters.

constitutional convention. Unlike the political left and independents, they tried too little and too late to engage forcefully in the campaign, and to win seats in the convention.

An examination of the party landscape confirms the impression of a country divided about the constitutional draft.

At the political level, too, the constitutional process that began in 2021 showed how polarised Chile was, and still is, regarding the constitutional draft. Former presidents took a wide variety of positions after the constitutional draft was published in July 2022: socialist Michele Bachelet prominently supported the draft in the media, while others, including conservative Sebastián Piñera, maintained their reserve; still others came out against the draft.¹⁸

were only two representatives from the Christian Democratic Party,¹⁶ while in 2017, in the previous Chamber of Deputies election, the Christian Democrats garnered 8.5 per cent of the vote.¹⁷ The answer has multiple levels: most importantly, conservative parties were on the defensive, having provided the president since 2018, and being blamed by the electorate for many of the current problems. The ruling conservatives had also lost support among some voters because President Piñera had used the military to quell the October 2019 protests – the first domestic use of the military since the end of the military dictatorship. But the main reason is that it took too long for conservatives and right-wing forces to realise the importance of the

An examination of the party landscape on this issue confirms the impression of a divided country. While, unsurprisingly, left-leaning parties campaigned for the adoption of the draft, and the majority of conservative forces sought its rejection, some were undecided, and some changed their minds during the drafting process. Examples of this last group include former members of the constitutional convention from the Renovación Nacional party, who began openly campaigning for rejection of the draft only shortly before the referendum.¹⁹ The leadership of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), together with several other parties, participated in the campaign for the approval (“Apruebo”) of the draft constitution. However, several influential party representatives at that time, most notably Senators Ximena Rincón and Matías Walker,

strongly opposed the proposal, arguing that it still required numerous reforms. Although this indicated some internal differences, it did not lead to a significant change in the party's official position. By mobilising for the "Apruebo", the PDC leadership actively participated in that campaign.

The Failed Constitutional Draft: Off the Mark

Now let us look at the draft itself. The "political constitution for the Republic of Chile"²⁰ of 4 July 2022 was put to the vote in September 2022 and rejected by an astounding eight million Chileans – a comfortable absolute majority.

The draft reads more like a left-green-secular government programme than like a constitution.

In many German-speaking media outlets, including the most important news programmes, the draft was labelled "progressive" – a term intended as a seal of approval by the reporting journalists.²¹ This reporting did not just seem, but *was* in fact, one-sided. Why else would eight million voters have rejected a constitutional draft if it were as desirable as it was portrayed in Germany? These voters are neither supporters of dictatorship, nor are all of them victims of fake news or disinformation,²² as is sometimes suggested. And this large majority of Chileans certainly does not reject "progress". What transpired, however, was that the draft did not turn out to be significantly better than the current constitution. For one thing, it was far too long: its 388 articles and 57 transitional clauses would have likely made this constitutional draft one of the longest texts of its kind in the world. It is not the task of a constitution to regulate everything in as much detail as possible. Rather, a constitution should provide a framework for the legislator and the state, establishing important ground rules and basic principles. Moreover, the text was not the foundation of a new society reflecting the majority of that society's constituents. The overall impression the text leaves is

more reminiscent of a left-green-secular government programme than of a constitution. The following are just a few of the most controversial and unpopular reform proposals.

First, the planned changes to the legal system were alarming. For example, the Constitutional Court was to be renamed while its competences were to be curtailed, amounting to partial abolition. Experts also expressed concerns about the planned creation, and above all the composition, of a so-called Judicial Council, which was to be responsible for the majority of appointments in the judicial sector. Some were concerned that this would lead to the further politicisation of the judiciary.

While the constitutional draft provided for some useful new institutions, the text also directly called for the creation of a number of other new bodies, which would have had to be created and financed, and whose precise duties remained undefined. The draft also suffered opposition from many members of the church, though not limited to them, as it intended to "regulate", at the constitutional level, a number of issues which remain highly disputed in Chilean society – thereby improperly anticipating the outcomes of ongoing discussions. Among these are the absolute right to abortion and aspects of end-of-life treatment.

Furthermore, the draft's frequent use of the terms "gender" or "gender perspective" is also questionable; it was planned to enshrine a parity quota in many places in the constitution. The text also introduced so-called indigenous voter registries and a "Chilean Afro register". These changes were not to be regulated by more specific electoral law, but directly in the constitution. This would have led to a much greater administrative effort, and thus a much more expensive electoral process.

Indigenous peoples, of which eleven different nations are named directly in the draft text, were to receive not only the right to information and the right to be heard in processes affecting them – both of which are certainly important – but also the privilege of having their explicit



consent required in a number of issues, which would amount de facto to a veto right. This was also criticised by conservative camps who do not reject a reform but disagree with preferential treatment of indigenous peoples over other population groups.²³

There is no doubt that the draft also contained a number of positive elements that deserve to be included in a new constitutional draft. Among the many provisions, rules governing basic rights and the creation of an ombudsman office deserve mention. Furthermore, there is no objection to establishing environmental protection as a governmental goal alongside others such as democracy and the rule of law; nor indeed is there anything to be said against the creation of environmental courts. However, the text is ultimately excessive in its inclusion of a number of regulations that are more detailed than necessary and raise doubts as to how the state can implement it all in practice²⁴ (not to mention how it all can be realistically financed).

Assessment and Outlook

The referendum on Chile's draft constitution attracted great global attention. There were strong emotions in both the "accept" and "reject" camps in the immediate aftermath. Catholic bishops spoke of democracy having "triumphed"²⁵. The chairman of the constitutional convention, herself from the Mapuche people, spoke of "individual and collective mistakes" that led to "defeat", but announced that the "recognition of the indigenous people has only been postponed"²⁶. One of the most striking (and inappropriate) comments from abroad came from the newly elected president of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, who tweeted that "Pinochet is alive in certain political sectors of America"²⁷.

Chile will continue to struggle in the years ahead to create a new constitution. This issue will continue to dominate political debates (and likely elections as well). The only eventuality that can be ruled out at the moment is that there will be no more constitutional reform after the



"Not that way!": Although a majority in Chile still wants constitutional reform in general, the draft presented in mid-2022 by the left-leaning "Constituyente" failed miserably. Source: © Mark Leffingwell, Reuters.

failure of the draft constitution. Shortly after the referendum, President Boric announced a new, comprehensive constitutional reform. It is reassuring to see that his grasp of political reality has improved, prompting him to first consult parliamentary groups in Congress.

Despite the rejection of the one-sided 2022 draft, there appears to be no question that a majority of Chilean people want a new constitution. This is especially true of the left, who wish to finally get rid of the so-called “Pinochet constitution”, and to implement at least part of their agenda. Indigenous peoples also wish to see their rights recognised and their status as nations legally enshrined. Moderate forces are also interested in having a modern constitution and eliminating remaining authoritarian presidential elements.

It would be advisable for a new draft to avoid the temptation – evident in several other Latin American countries – of formulating an excessive number of rights. Several tendencies can be observed at the regional level: in Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2009), for instance, the concept of plurinationalism, also envisaged in the failed Chilean draft, has been anchored in new constitutions. This ensures that, for the first time, the indigenous peoples of these countries are recognised not only as cultures, but as nations in their own right.²⁸ In general, the last few decades have seen a significant expansion of the catalogue of rights in Latin American constitutional texts. In addition to the basic rights familiar in Germany, Latin America attaches particular importance to social and economic rights – at least in theory. A right to work or to free medical care often appears unrealistic to outside observers, for despite all the constitutional reforms – and an ever more extensive catalogue of rights that go beyond classical human rights to encompass economic, social, and cultural rights in the constitutions of countries in the region – the overall human rights situation in Latin America remains “deplorable”.²⁹ A significant problem for many constitutions in the region is the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms comparable to the German constitutional

complaint (*Verfassungsbeschwerde*). There are a few exceptions, such as the *tutela* in Colombia, and the *amparo* in Mexico.³⁰

It remains unclear how things will develop in Chile; several options appear possible. In the first days following the referendum, the question of whether another completely independent constitutional convention should be newly elected was discussed, or whether this time there should be a mixed committee of senators, members of the Chamber of Deputies, and newly elected representatives.

It therefore currently appears likely that in early 2023, citizens will once again vote on the composition of a new constitutional convention. President Gabriel Boric has made statements to the press to that effect.

Conclusion

The failure of a flawed constitutional draft that would have cemented the political views of only *one* part of the Chilean people, and had other deficits as well, is something to be welcomed. However, in order to ensure long-term social peace in Chile, a new and more balanced constitution continues to be something to strive for. The hope is that a new attempt at reform will give all parties represented in Congress a chance to be heard, to vote, and also to participate in the reform process. The result must not be a draft that is supposedly “progressive” and reflects only *one* political perspective. A robust constitution must leave room for a variety of political views. On such a basis, a new, balanced social contract for Chile could emerge. Such a contract could then, in a few years, receive the necessary majority and replace the current constitution.

– translated from German –

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Approaches to the Future Battlefield

The Debate on Armed Drones in Israel and Germany as a Case Study

[Idit Shafran Gittleman / Eyal Berelovich](#)

Notwithstanding certain immutable features of war, some of its concrete techniques do change, notably following new technological developments. Advanced electronic weapon systems, including armed drones, are a case in point. We shall examine how countries handle the opportunities and challenges involved by means of a comparative analysis of Israel and Germany.

Carl von Clausewitz – one of the greatest theoreticians of war – distinguishes between the nature of war, which he refers to as the concept of fighting, and the conduct of fighting. The nature of war, he explains, is constant and reflects the use of violence as a means to achieve goals – whether territory, resources, influence, or honour. It is a constant feature of human history, and is not expected to change unless a fundamental change takes place in human nature itself. On the other hand, wars change dramatically in the way they are being conducted, and in accordance with cultural and technological developments.

Indeed, alongside traditional characteristics and familiar political reasoning, modern wars are different from the old ‘great wars’ in many ways. One of the main changes on the battlefield in recent years has come about due to dramatic technological developments: these have led to innovative protective measures, sophisticated intelligence capabilities, and advanced electronic weapon systems, all of which intensely influence the nature of warfare.

These changes have a tremendous impact on a wide variety of issues related to the concept of war. As such, almost all armies face new challenges regarding the adaptation of their forces and methods of fighting to the modern battlefield. However, different countries respond to their specific security challenges disparately in this regard.

The Role of the Army

On 16 July 2016, the German Federal Government released the much-anticipated new White Paper for security policy and the future of the

Bundeswehr.¹ The purpose of the paper was to articulate the current and future strategic goals of the German government, thereby setting out the country’s “principal guideline for [...] security policy decisions and measures”.²

In the document the mission of the Bundeswehr is defined as follows:

- “Defend Germany’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and protect its citizens.
- Contribute to the resilience of state and society against external threats.
- Support and ensure Germany’s ability to take action in matters of foreign and security policy.
- Contribute, together with partners and allies, to countering security threats to our open society, and to our free and safe world trade and supply routes.
- Contribute to the defence of our allies, and to the protection of their citizens.
- Promote security and stability in an international framework.
- Strengthen European integration, the transatlantic partnership, and multinational cooperation.”³

According to these principles then, the main role of the German army is to defend Germany from any outside attack, and to support its allies in an event of war. Another – internal – role of the Bundeswehr is that of helping the Federal Government or the states’ governments in case of natural disaster.⁴ The other main mission of the Bundeswehr is to be ready to deploy as part of a multinational coalition. The approval process for deploying Bundeswehr units outside

Germany is political, legal, and social: if the Federal Government wishes to send the units to be deployed abroad it must gain parliamentary approval. This approval process – which purports to achieve a holistic view of deployment objectives – was created so as to diminish the government’s ability to participate in military campaigns.⁵ These two main missions do not affect the force generation process of the Bundeswehr, which is focused on the concept of a Single Set of Forces, i.e. to create a task-oriented capable single force that can be employed in both scenarios.⁶

The Israel Defense Forces’ strategy points to a clearly defined threat: war with Hezbollah.

In April 2018, then Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Lieutenant General Gadi Eizenkot, released the document known as the IDF strategy. This was the first time the IDF strategy was publicly released; it is usually disseminated only inside the IDF. The document serves as a compass for new operational and force generation concepts. The purpose of this unusual publication was, as Brigadier General Meir Finkel argued, “to increase the transparency between the IDF, the political echelon, and the public, and to encourage the political echelon to relate to the ideas expressed in it as a response of sorts to the absence of official national security documents”.⁷ In the document it is stated that “[t]he objective of the IDF is to defend the security of the state of Israel, its citizens and inhabitants and secure [the state’s] existence and territorial integrity and national interests and to win any conflict it is called upon by the political authority”.⁸

To do so, the IDF forces and units need to be capable of operating in three fundamental scenarios: first, on operational deployments (border protection) in peace time; second, in case of military, security, and civil emergencies;

third, in war.⁹ In the first two scenarios some of the IDF forces need to be able to participate in what is termed the “war between war” (in Hebrew *Mabam*), i.e. military operations which fall below the threshold of war, or grey zone operations, intended to minimise emerging and existing threats.¹⁰ The force generation concept, according to the document, is similar to that of Germany: creating a force that is flexible and agile enough to be efficient in all the different functions.¹¹ The main role of both armies is to defend the territory of the state and its citizens. However, they are trying to prepare for this mission while also engaging in operational deployments.

The Future Battlefield

Although the official goals of the two armies have a common denominator, as far as the future battlefield is concerned, there is great variation between the Bundeswehr and the IDF. The German government’s strategic documents, and the concept of the Bundeswehr, do not mention a threat to peace, but instead different general amorphous threats. The IDF, however, points to a clearly defined threat: war with Hezbollah. The focus is not only on Hezbollah but also on the military capabilities of Iran and its proxies.¹²

In 2018, then German Minister of Defence Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer signed a paper on the new “concept of the Bundeswehr”. Cyber and information war are mentioned as dimensions that reduce differences between front and home front, and need to be addressed not only by the Bundeswehr but by the entire government. Thus, the Bundeswehr is only part of a national effort to address the threats in these dimensions.¹³

On 9 February 2021, Kramp-Karrenbauer and the Chief of Defence of the Bundeswehr, General Eberhard Zorn, published a position paper titled “Thoughts on the Bundeswehr of the future” (“Gedanken zur Bundeswehr der Zukunft”).¹⁴ They argued that Germany does not see military force as a tool for conflict resolution or as an aid





A clearly defined threat: For the Israel Defense Forces, a potential new war against Hezbollah is at the centre of their strategy. Source: © Ali Hashisho, Reuters.

to diplomacy in the same way that other nations do. Furthermore, they noted, the country and the army are “poorly prepared” (“schlecht gewappnet”) ¹⁵ for new kinds of threats, such as drones, killer satellites, hypersonic missiles, cyber threats, and other non-kinetic threats. ¹⁶ This statement was part of the endeavour of Kramp-Karrenbauer and Zorn to approve the reform they had planned. A study by the Bundeswehr Command and Staff College describes the future battlefield in a similar manner. It argues that the patterns of military conflict are changing, ¹⁷ and focuses on how new technologies and non-kinetic threats will affect the future battlefield. The new array

of threats is derived mainly from leaps in digital information capabilities and the dissemination of new technologies. The paper argues that “thus, [it] is a new, highly technological theatre of war: the Multi-Domain Battlefield (MDB), which is more than just challenging the decades of established focus on the ‘classic’ dimensions of land, air, and sea. Space and cyberspace are de facto already new battlefields.” ¹⁸

As the senior officers of the Bundeswehr visualise the future battlefield, they argue that the war will be fought in five dimensions (air, sea, cyber and information sphere, land, and space). New

technologies will diminish the distinct separation of front lines and the home front. In this manner, the Bundeswehr will form one part of the whole-of-government approach.

The Bundeswehr and the Israel Defense Forces share a common solution to their particular operational challenges: multi-domain warfare.

In March 2021, the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Israel published a memorandum depicting the shape future threats from Hezbollah might take, and which operational scenarios are best-suited to cope with them. The authors claim that in a future war, “Israel is expected to suffer widespread damage, at least in the initial stage of the war, in a number of areas: there is a possibility of attempts to harm Israel’s vital capabilities, for example, by hitting IDF facilities (headquarters, air force bases, reserve recruitment centers); attacks on strategic infrastructures and vital services (sea and air ports, energy and water facilities, transportation); targeting of government assets; disruptions to the economy (upsetting functional continuity); and strikes on population centers. Such tactics will be aimed at undermining Israeli citizens’ sense of security and national resilience. All this suggests that the next war will claim a high price – far higher than that seen in previous wars.”¹⁹ Furthermore, the new capabilities of Hezbollah and Iran allow them to attack Israel and the IDF units in the cyber, information, and electromagnetic realms.²⁰

Both Israeli and German armed forces identify similar emerging trends regarding the battlefield of the future. First, future wars will be more technological, due to the dissemination of new technologies. Second, they will be fought both in the front lines and on the home front. Third, the importance of the cyber and

information dimensions has increased and will continue to increase because of the technological advances.

Despite the slight differences in the force structure and the peace threat, the Bundeswehr and the IDF share a common solution to their particular operational challenges: multi-domain warfare. The ability to employ Bundeswehr capabilities in all dimensions is a recurrent theme in the defence ministry and in Bundeswehr strategic papers.²¹ The IDF current chief of staff, Lieutenant General Aviv Kochavi, created a new operational concept for the IDF, which was named “the victory concept”.²² The cornerstone of the concept is a multi-domain effort to shorten the duration of the war, its costs for Israel and the IDF, and inflict maximum damage to the enemy.²³

The Discourse

As mentioned above, one of the characteristics of the new battlefield is the increasing use of innovative weapon systems. These systems are often characterised as being accurate and smart, and based on artificial intelligence and robotic operation. In addition to many distinct advantages, they are also cost-effective when it comes to risking human lives, both for bystanders as well as for combatants.

On the other hand – as with any technological apparatus based on artificial intelligence – new challenges arise with regard to these systems, too. One of the tools that is increasingly being used is the UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) – a remotely manned aircraft. The usage of these tools engenders two main axes of discussion. One focuses on professional-operational issues. These include, inter alia: usage of the tools; protection against usage by the enemy; and relationship between the use of new tools and more traditional military techniques, such as land manoeuvring. The second axis relates to ethical and normative issues regarding the implications which arise from the transition to warfare using tools with fewer human dimensions.

It is interesting to trace these axes also through a comparative view between Israel and Germany. In general, while in Germany the moral debate occupies a central pillar when it comes to discussing the use of artificial-intelligence-guided weapon systems, in Israel, the debate at both military and political levels focuses on operational aspects, as well as on certain legal questions regarding regulation of the use of “remotely operated objects”. The question in the centre of this debate is whether it is possible to achieve systemic and strategic goals, and overcome military foes using stand-off capabilities, and by means of an air system only. Another central question is how to define the operationally correct balance, considering the requirements of each mission, between the use of ground forces and the use of armed drones. Furthermore, on the margins of the discussion, the transition to a technology-based army in Israel also has consequences for the army’s future recruitment model and manpower needs.

In Israel, the debate does not focus on moral questions about the very use of armed drones.

In Israel, conscription is mandated by law, and the model of service is that of the “People’s Army”. This model is based, among other things, on a security concept of the need for maximum manpower. This need is now subject to a renewed interpretation in view of the introduction and centrality of modern weapon systems. Recently, the debate has also been expressed in constitutional-political questions regarding who has the authority to direct the use of these tools, and also regarding how they are deployed in the context of the policy of targeted killing which, in Israel’s view, forms part of its fight against terror.

This discussion came to the fore in the light of a statement from the Israeli Chief of Staff according to which he granted permission to use armed drones in the West Bank as part of an ongoing

and extensive operation against terrorist infrastructures (named “Shover Galim”). However, even in relation to this statement the discussion revolved around the question of who has the authority to order the use of these tools. In response to the Chief of Staff’s statement, the Minister of Defence clarified that only he has the right to issue such a directive. The debate did not focus on moral questions about the very use of the tools and their implications for the morality of the war. The general perception in Israel is that the moral aspects regarding the usage of this tool are covered by the well-known debate on the moral status of the practice of targeted killing. There are clear legal and moral questions surrounding this practice, not least that it involves a de facto procedure of execution. However, the practice has been sanctioned by the Israeli Supreme Court. The court ruled that as long as the practice is used against what has received the title “ticking bombs”, then it is legal.

Uzi Rubin, of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, claimed that use of new technologies has led to “[a] new form of warfare that is more economical in resources and losses”. He also refers to reducing the risk to aircrew members in the Israeli Air Force, the loss of whom forms one of the sensitive points in Israeli society.

Meanwhile, in Germany, the question of whether the Bundeswehr should be able to use armed drones and kill remotely was initially excluded from the governing parties’ coalition agreement in 2018. Yet, in that same year the Bundestag approved the lease of five Heron TP drones made by Israel Aerospace Industries for a duration of nine years. Lydia Wachs, a Research Assistant at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin, notes that the governing coalition of Social Democrats (SPD) and then Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) agreed that the Bundestag would decide on arming its drones only after a comprehensive assessment of international and constitutional law, as well as ethics.²⁴



In December 2019, after visiting German troops in Afghanistan's Kunduz province, the Minister of Defence Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU) stated that "if I'm to take the troops' wishes on board, and honestly, I can understand them, then much speaks in favour of arming drones [...] Here you have to seriously ask whether we are really willing not to deploy all the options that are available to us, bearing in mind that soldiers' lives are at stake."²⁵

She then set up a series of panel discussions involving experts, politicians, and representatives of civil society. The discussions on the use

of drones revolved around professional questions. However, not only from a military perspective but also from legal and moral points of view.

Wachs sums up the German debate on armed drones as follows: "Those in favour of procuring armed drones – first and foremost the CDU – have repeatedly underlined that these systems would be about the right to the best possible protection for deployed German forces in hotspots around the world. By accompanying troops on patrol, armed drones could provide close air support and better protection in an emergency. Furthermore, due to their greater precision,



Bundeswehr soldiers are seen in northern Afghanistan: To provide German troops with the best possible protection when sending them into dangerous missions is one of the main arguments put forward by those in favour of procuring armed drones. [Source: © Sabine Siebold, Reuters.](#)

risking emotional indifference as well as a lower threshold for warfare on an operational as well as political level.”²⁶

In April 2022, the Defence Committee of the Bundestag voted in favour of arming previously leased drones.

Russia’s war against Ukraine, in addition to numerous other changes to Germany’s foreign policy principles, has provided a new stimulus to the debate on armed drones. On 27 February 2022, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) announced that the Federal Government would actively pursue the “acquisition of the armed Heron drone”.²⁷ In April, the Defence Committee of the Bundestag voted in favour of ordering the missiles necessary to arm the Heron drones. The current government, formed by Social Democrats, Greens, and Liberals (FDP), plans to make concrete use of such devices subject to prior approval by parliament.²⁸

armed drones – if used – would cause fewer civilian fatalities. Within the critical and largely pacifist German public, drones, however, conjure up images of US-American extraterritorial targeted killings in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Turkey’s drone operations against Kurdish groups since 2016 and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which re-erupted in September 2020, generating numerous publicly available videos of Azerbaijan drones striking on Armenian military vehicles and buildings, have further contributed to this picture [...] [T]he Greens and Left Party [...] raise concerns that the deployment of military UAVs may lead to a growing distance between the drone pilot and the battle ground,

The Philosophical Moral Debate

In his article “Drones and Robots: On the Changing Practice of Warfare”,²⁹ Daniel Statman (an Israeli philosopher specialising in combat ethics) states: “the question regarding the morality of drones is a good illustration of a wider theoretical question: namely, whether, and in what ways, technological developments that transform traditional practices necessitate changes in the norms that govern these practices. In a sense, the answer is obviously affirmative because the application of moral principles always depends on premises about the factual reality. If reality changes, the moral norms also

change. What is less obvious is whether the underlying moral principles change as well.”³⁰ Statman enumerates a number of claims that are frequently raised in the discussion by those opposing the development and use of these tools. Among the claims he states:

Disrespectful death – Some people think that a human being deserves to be able to at least point to his or her killer(s) (and condemn them if they are unjust) – even if said killers are cruising 20,000 feet above in a plane. The thought is that at least a human being in a plane high above is less of a “faceless” death wrought upon someone than a robot being operated remotely would be.³¹

Risk-free killing undermines the license to kill in war – This refers to the moral basis for distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants, centred on the mutual risk they pose for one another. Those who oppose the use of drones sometimes claim that the lack of risk to the person who operates them, undermines their license to kill combatants.

Accountability – This claim raises a question which is relevant to any system based on artificial intelligence, according to which in the event of an accident it is not clear who is held responsible for the damage.

Another central claim in the moral debate on the activation of weapon systems that rely on artificial intelligence warns from an “easy finger on the trigger”. According to this claim, in the absence of components that constrain an attack, such as fear of putting fighters at risk, or psychological difficulties in “killing with one’s hands”, states might launch attacks more easily. Of course, this concern also exists in relation to classic bombings from the air, but it exists even more strongly in relation to the weapon systems in question. Statman refers to this claim, too: “The main worry”, he explains, “is that the distance between the drone operators and their victims will lead to a more callous attitude towards killing.”³²

Nevertheless, Statman largely dismisses the above arguments, concluding: “One must always

be cautious in predicting the future. Nevertheless, compared with the grand battles of the past, with their shockingly high toll of casualties, drone-centred campaigns seem much more humane. They also enable a better fit between moral responsibility and vulnerability to defensive action. Judged against bombers, cruise missiles – and, obviously, against various kinds of weapons of mass destruction – the drone may well be remembered in the annals of warfare as offering real promise for moral progress.”³³

Conclusions

In summary, Germany and Israel share a similar perception of the characteristics of the future battlefield, and a common understanding of the operational concept. However, they differ in the way the challenges posed by a battlefield based on advanced technologies and artificial intelligence are reflected in the discourse. In Israel, the main discussion revolves around professional questions regarding the operation of the innovative weapon systems, and the optimal manner to integrate them alongside more traditional land manoeuvres. Meanwhile, in Germany, these systems mainly raise legal and ethical questions regarding their use.

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