

# STATEMENT / Capable of Peace in Times of War /

Russia's invasion of Ukraine pursues imperial objectives and has the hallmarks of a war of extermination, bringing suffering and destruction to the Ukrainian people. At the same time, the attack has shaken the European peace and security framework to the core, making its revision inevitable. The consequences of this war are being felt around the world, with crisis management in the conflict over Iran's nuclear installations stalled, regional conflicts eclipsed by great-power rivalries, trade relations disrupted, and food security in many of the countries importing from Russia and Ukraine at risk.

For the third time since the late 1980s, the world finds itself on the brink of a paradigm shift. The hopes of a liberal international peace order that were awoken by the fall of the Berlin Wall remained alive for an entire decade, only to be destroyed by the events of 9 /11. They brought the sobering realization that even the USA, at the time the undisputed global power, was vulnerable to the terrorist attacks of jihadist groups. The tectonic shift during the course of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has made one thing clear: the rivalry between the great powers of the 2010s—the US, Russia, and China—has turned into direct confrontation. This has not only had military and political spillovers but has also impacted economies around the world. The tough sanctions the West has imposed on Russia have had repercussions for international financial economy and global trade. Moreover, the fact that Russia and Ukraine are key exporters of wheat and maize jeopardizes food security in many regions around the world, including the Middle East and Africa.

The war of aggression against Ukraine has significant political, economic, and social consequences worldwide

Is there any way the dynamics of conflict and war can be resolved or at the very least mitigated? How capable is German and European foreign, security, and development policy of achieving peace during times of conflict—and how capable does it have to be? How can Germany's first National Security Strategy achieve the necessary balance between maintaining the country's defense capabilities and building lasting peace? It is these concerns that the 2022 Peace Report seeks to address.

## ↳ EXERT PRESSURE ON RUSSIA TO FORCE SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS

By enforcing extremely harsh sanctions and supplying increasingly heavy arms to Ukraine, the West has helped make sure that so far, Russia has only had limited military success in Ukraine (as of May 4, 2022). The faltering Russian advance, however, has caused not only Russia to rethink its war objectives but the West, too. There is increasing talk of the possibility of a military victory for Ukraine and Russia being weakened beyond the present conflict. Quite apart from the fact that this would serve Putin's narrative of justification, i.e., that the West has always sought to defeat Russia, such intentions could in fact make the Russian leadership more likely to take risks. Given the threat of nuclear escalation, in particular, the West should certainly aim to raise the cost of the war for Russia—by providing military aid to Ukraine, imposing economic sanctions, and through the diplomatic isolation of Russia. At the same time, however, the West should also put forward options that enable the conflict to be resolved by diplomatic means, in a way that would make Russian leadership more receptive to serious talks.

That said, even if a ceasefire and a peace agreement were to prove possible, there is no easy way back to a cooperative peace and security framework in Europe. Relations with Russia would initially be based on defense capabilities and deterrence and would only gradually take on cooperative features again, if at all. The necessary paradigm shift should not concentrate solely on military aspects but should also develop new diplomatic and arms control policy concepts. At the same time, however, the new focus on national and mutual defense must not come at the cost of Germany's willingness to accept international responsibility. To this end, suitable investment in development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and civil crisis prevention is needed.

The paradigm change must also bring about new diplomatic and arms control policy concepts

## ↳ DANGERS OF A NEW ARMS RACE

The war in Ukraine dramatically increases the risk of nuclear escalation at a time when nuclear disarmament and arms control is already in a critical condition. The nuclear arsenals of some countries are steadily growing, while in the USA and Russia, nuclear arms reduction has slowed down. What is more, many countries are even developing new strategic delivery systems. Attempts at disarmament in nuclear-weapon states are largely nonexistent, and almost all bilateral arms control mechanisms have been abandoned. The nuclear non-proliferation regime, too, is facing difficulties. Talks with Iran about its nuclear program, for instance, have come to a standstill.

However, especially in times of crisis, it is all the more important to give new momentum to international nuclear de-escalation, disarmament, and arms control efforts. Specific action is needed in three areas. In the short term, the German government should seek to reduce the danger of nuclear escalation to a minimum. The first step to achieving this would be for NATO to adopt a no-first-use policy. Nuclear armament must continue to be avoided and nuclear stockpiles must be frozen at the current level. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5 format) should continue to provide a forum

for discussion. Germany is in a position to influence the other members of NATO in all of these aspects.

Although, in light of the current threat situation, nuclear sharing is not up for debate at the moment, it must remain on the agenda in the medium term. Tactical nuclear weapons inevitably increase the risk of escalation and Germany must discuss whether and how it wishes to remain under the nuclear umbrella in the long term. Germany should work to ensure that tactical nuclear weapons play a lesser role in the East and West and that they function as a deterrent to the other side from nuclear deployment.

After much hesitation, the German government, like many of its NATO and EU partners in this conflict, decided to supply heavy weapons to Ukraine. In light of the current military situation in Ukraine, this seems to be a logical decision with a view to countering the Russian offensive. Nevertheless, over time and depending on how the conflict develops, the situation must be kept under continuous review to make sure that supplying weapons to Ukraine remains a useful course of action and does not become counterproductive. While helping Ukraine to defend its territorial integrity is essential, it is nonetheless imperative that the danger of nuclear confrontation is avoided—likewise the further proliferation of the conflict and consequently also the proliferation of the weapons supplied for this war into other conflict regions. Equally importantly, the weapons deliveries are legitimized by Ukraine's right to exercise self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter and may not serve to water down an otherwise restrictive arms export policy.

The effectiveness of supplying weapons to Ukraine must be under continuous scrutiny

Lastly, the war in Ukraine must not obscure the focus on goals that may seem to be out of reach today. Lasting world peace can only be achieved by means of long-term nuclear disarmament. In this context, the German government plays a particularly important role as a bridge builder—between members of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, both within the EU and within NATO. Through mediation, conditions can be created that will open up a path to arms control and disarmament again for the long term. Investment in education on disarmament and awareness-raising among the general public on the destructive potential of nuclear weapons are instrumental here.

In its coalition agreement, the German government pledged to conduct a “disarmament policy offensive”. But much has changed since Russia began its attack on Ukraine. One thing remains clear, however: A nuclear war can never be won and should not be waged in the first place. With this in mind, all opportunities for reduction and elimination of nuclear risk must be seized at all times.

A nuclear war cannot be won and should never be waged

## ↳ SANCTIONS: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

From the perspective of the NATO and EU member states, the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine placed military aid to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia at the center of the debate. Sanctions are a key foreign policy instrument used to exert pressure on states that violate the rules and to bring about changes in behavior. However, sanctions alone are never enough to resolve a crisis. They need to be embedded in an overall strategy. Moreover, sanctions rarely force direct behavioral changes in the short term. What they are well suited for, however, is restricting the room for maneuver that countries have in the medium and long term. In addition, sanctions are a valuable normative instrument: Sanctions are a way for countries to signal their own normative commitment to a rule-based order, to prevent a continued violation of the rules itself from becoming the norm.

Sanctions must be incorporated into an overarching strategy

18

The sanctions against Russia are embedded in just such a strategy. In fact, combined with weapons supplies, these sanctions constitute an attempt to prevent a Ukrainian defeat without having to, or indeed being able to, intervene in the war directly. Together, military aid and sanctions are aimed at shifting the balance of the Russian leadership's cost-benefit calculation to persuade them to participate in serious talks on a negotiated settlement of the war.

In many respects, however, these sanctions are quite out of the ordinary. The first unusual feature is the historically unprecedented severity of this package of sanctions, and indeed the speed which they were put in place. Second, these sanctions are atypical because—unlike the majority of sanctions applied worldwide—these are imposed on a major power that has access to far more options when it comes to reducing the pressure of the sanctions and imposing countersanctions, as Russia indeed did when it chose to cut off gas supply to Poland and Bulgaria in late April.

Sanctions are most effective when they are imposed and enforced multilaterally and the sanctioned state is economically dependent on the sanctioning states. This is rarely the case with great powers like Russia, which means these sanctions can at best restrict the country's room for maneuver in the medium term. Equally, sanctions should be seen as being a means of deterring other states from violating the rules in a similar manner. This is another reason why it is important that sanctions be carefully and thoroughly monitored to establish whether the objectives or sub-objectives have been achieved and to minimize humanitarian consequences. In keeping with value-based foreign policy, increasing the use of sanctions only makes sense if there is the same commitment to monitoring compliance, humanitarian consequences, and the success and/or failure of any such sanctions. Moreover, the sanctioning states must clearly communicate under what conditions the sanctions may be lifted, whether in part or in full. One criterion in this case should be substantial progress in talks, such as the withdrawal of Russian troops behind an agreed line and the negotiation of a stable and internationally monitored ceasefire.

## ↳ **NUMBER OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS WORLDWIDE REMAINS HIGH**

The war in Ukraine has overshadowed the many other violent conflicts in the world which also urgently need political interventions if peace is to be achieved. A large number of ongoing intra-state conflicts are characterized by military intervention on the part of third countries—such as the USA and Russia, but also regional powers like Turkey or Saudi Arabia. To prevent these conflicts from escalating any further, it is paramount that the German government pursue a restrictive arms export policy. The planned arms export control law is an important step in this direction and should be implemented without delay.

In this context, it is vital that the war in Ukraine does not obscure one pivotal concept: Diplomatic instruments should always take precedence in the resolution of conflicts. The German government attached great importance to peaceful conflict resolution in its guidelines “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace” (2017), something that has become all the more imperative given the number of violent conflicts that are showing no signs of abating—internationalized and jihadist violent conflicts playing a particularly prominent role here.

In Africa, in particular, jihadist groups have a major impact on the conflict dynamics. These groups’ claims to religious and transnational authority pose significant challenges for states as well as international conflict transformation. As a rule, jihadist conflicts, and this is also the case in the German government’s guidelines, are understood in the context of the international fight against terrorism. While this is not wrong, it is not the full picture. There are considerable differences between jihadist groups. The German government should therefore push for talks with those groups that have distanced themselves from transnational jihadism and violence against civilian populations. In these cases, international actors could accommodate the interests of local jihadists in negotiations, even if a lasting solution to conflict seems a long way off.

Jihadist violence is one of the biggest challenges in global conflict dynamics

Regional organizations (African Union, AU; Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS) play a particularly important role in the peaceful resolution of conflicts, especially on the African continent. This is something that should be supported, both financially and politically, and should be incorporated into international strategies.

## ↳ **FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY IS MORE ESSENTIAL THAN EVER**

In the coalition agreement between the SPD, Greens and FDP, the new government agreed to pursue a feminist foreign policy. In this, Germany is following countries such as Sweden, Canada, France, Mexico, Spain, and Luxemburg, who are already pursuing this objective in some shape or form.

In light of the increasing attacks on democracy and human rights, feminist foreign policy is not only timely but in fact urgently needed. Especially during times of conflict, feminist foreign policy can highlight ways of better understanding conflict dynamics and developing counterstrategies. In the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine, feminist foreign policy

can, for example, help decipher imperial ambitions which to some degree also stem from a dangerous understanding of masculinity. Feminist foreign policy offers fresh perspectives that extend beyond the old playbook of deterrence, rearmament, and sanctions. Moreover, it highlights who has endured severe suffering during war and whose rights need to be strengthened accordingly.

Feminist foreign policy aims to make international politics gender equitable and inclusive and offer alternatives to the patriarchy and militarized masculinity. To achieve this, the voices of marginalized groups must be heard in the security policy discourse and incorporated in decision-making processes. Representation strengthens international law and human rights and creates lasting peace.

Feminist foreign policy aims at inclusive, gender-equitable international politics

From a feminist perspective, the prevention of violence not only means tackling gender-specific violence against women. Rather, the focus is on deeply entrenched forms of discrimination based on gender, sexuality, religion, origin, or nationality. These forms of violence are increasingly being seen in war-torn countries, but societies in periods of transition or peace are also affected. Violent acts are often hidden from view, as the recent global increase in domestic violence and racism during the Covid-19 pandemic has shown.

Feminist foreign policy goes hand in hand with feminist development policy where partners negotiate on an equal footing. In domestic politics, too, this policy approach has to be continued. After all, feminist foreign policy will only be credible if discrimination in all its manifestations is also tackled at home and everyone's voice is heard. This includes fighting against femicide, strengthening equality for LGBTQI\* people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersexual), and countering the gender backlash driven by right-wing populist and conservative reactionary religious movements.

## ↳ NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Feminist foreign policy must also be included in the National Security Strategy (NSS) currently being discussed by the German government, the quintessence of which is "Security for the freedom of our lives". In the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, it is vital that the NSS combine defensive capabilities with the prospect of the conflict coming to an end, in doing so demonstrating the capacity for peace in times of war. This is the only way to create a new framework for peace in Europe.

The National Security Strategy must respond to global challenges such as climate change, peacebuilding, and inequality

At the same time, in light of the global dimension of the extensive security challenges we are facing in the 2020s, the NSS also has to incorporate other vital elements such as proactive violence prevention that takes into account the impact of climate change on especially vulnerable and often fragile states. Given that climate change can no longer be averted, what are called for in this context are prompt climate change adaptation measures. The second important element is for Germany to continue to participate in multi-lateral action promoting peacebuilding, stabilization, and conflict transformation, an approach that is clearly in the country's own interests. In fact, international commitment to peacebuilding can help reduce violence and pave the way to peaceful development

in war-torn societies. Last, one of the underlying causes of violent conflict is an unjust international system, a problem that can only be addressed through a resolute commitment to development, economic, and finance policy, among others.

## ↳ **STRENGTHENING THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF DOMESTIC SECURITY INSTITUTIONS**

Domestic security institutions play an ambivalent role in democratic societies: They are necessary for protection from security threats as well as to safeguard democratic processes and institutions, for instance against the extremist and antidemocratic forces that came about during the Covid-19 pandemic. Owing to their extensive powers, however, security authorities can also pose a potential danger to individual liberties or make it more difficult to settle a conflict without the use of violence.

The gradual expansion of security institutions' powers after the attacks of 9/11 also brought an increase in the capabilities they have for control and repression. An ever-broader understanding of security was accompanied by an increase in the authorities with security-related responsibilities and the policy areas in which they operate.

Many measures are geared toward the principle of prevention and the notion that threats can be identified ahead of time and prevented even before they happen. The police have also increasingly been incorporated into these security concepts and their scope for action has shifted further and further into the prevention of criminal offenses.

In light of the broader scope of security authorities' powers of intervention, cross-border surveillance, and the use of modern technologies, it is becoming increasingly important to control and oversee security institutions. This, however, is not without its challenges. Control not only means political oversight through parliament and oversight panels or judicial reviews, but also public oversight through the media, civil society organizations, academia, or whistleblowers.

In times of crisis, in particular, security policy based on protecting fundamental rights is of the essence. In principle, the current German coalition government acknowledges this and underlines the importance of democratic control of security authorities, the effectiveness of their actions, as well as the evaluation of security laws. This broad thrust is all well and good, but when it comes to the specifics of the processes, the composition of the individual panels, and transparency requirements, there is certainly room for improvement. Moreover, thoughts and ideas on cooperation between the intelligence and security authorities at international and European levels are also rather vague.

The plans outlined in the coalition agreement must be fleshed out and the coalition partners must strengthen democratic control in accordance with the rule of law. An independent evaluation of what is now a barely manageable abundance of security laws must be conducted and incorporated in a wider public debate. In future, an independent body ("freedom commission") should be set up to provide advice on legislative projects and a

Democratic control of security authorities in accordance with the rule of law is of the essence

systematic and timely “overall monitoring report” produced. The institutional structure, the recruitment process, and the working methods of the evaluation bodies remain hazy, however. The exact role of the interdisciplinary national academy, also presented in the coalition agreement, is similarly unclear.

---

## CONCLUSIONS

22

Not only has the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine brought immeasurable suffering. It also threatens the very foundations of both the European and global framework for peace. Defensive capability and a strengthening of self-defense capacities are becoming increasingly important. But in this paradigm shift as well as in the new National Security Strategy, the existing insights into peace policy must not be jettisoned. Achieving peace requires we think beyond the war logic and develop diplomatic options to at least freeze violent conflicts with a view to resolving them in the medium or longer term. Military aid and sanctions are vital instruments that can be used to exert pressure. But they must be embedded in a diplomatic strategy that enables a quick, flexible, and intuitive response to changes in the behavior of the other side. Another key aspect is that, in the context of a nuclear threat, it is essential that every decision made takes the dangers of further escalation into account.

Today's threats to peace extend beyond the war in Ukraine. Internationalized civil wars and jihadist violence, which continue to strongly influence the dynamics of conflict the world over, must not be forgotten. Here, diplomatic initiatives and restrictive arms export policy are called for. It is also important to point out that in many cases war is a reflection of deeply entrenched relations of dominance between men and women and lasting peace will only have a chance if disadvantaged groups are heard and given an opportunity to participate in decision-making. Lastly, but equally important, the capacity for peace begins at home. Given the increasing importance of security authorities, one of the many crucial tasks will be to provide for democratic control of these bodies and their activities on the basis of the rule of law.

## Authors

---

**Dr. Claudia Baumgart-Ochse**  
PRIF – Peace Research Institute Frankfurt

**Prof. Dr. Christopher Daase**  
PRIF – Peace Research Institute Frankfurt

**Prof. Dr. Tobias Debiel**  
INEF – Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen

**Prof. Dr. Nicole Deitelhoff**  
PRIF – Peace Research Institute Frankfurt

**Prof. Dr. Conrad Schetter**  
BICC – Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies

**Prof. Dr. Ursula Schröder**  
IFSH – Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy  
at the University of Hamburg