STATEMENT /
Peace Is a Long Way Off /

The global ramifications of Russia's war on Ukraine, now into its second year, are becoming increasingly evident. The conflict is undermining the ability of international organizations to function effectively and is complicating urgently needed cooperation in policy fields such as climate protection and trade. In Germany, too, polarization and conspiracy stories are on the increase—bringing negative consequences for democracy in their wake. What would most certainly not result in peace, however, would be to stop supporting Ukraine, discontinue arms shipments, and appease the Russian aggressor.

Last year was marked by war, not only in Europe but in many other regions of the world. Although the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine is a regional conflict on the European continent, its consequences can be felt worldwide: in the rise in core inflation and increasing energy and food prices, in influxes of refugees, and not least in escalating conflicts in the Indo-Pacific region. The Ukraine war was, of course, by far not the only violent conflict witnessed last year. But, while in some of the more protracted conflicts, the violence has recently subsided, with peace efforts even being undertaken in some instances—in Ethiopia's Tigray conflict or the Yemen War for example—the war on Ukraine remains characterized by an extremely high level of violence. Russian armed forces have deliberately attacked civilian targets and destroyed Ukrainian energy infrastructures. Since late 2022/early 2023, it has become increasingly clear that the conflict in Ukraine is developing into a war of attrition.

At the same time, there are growing demands—be it in the form of manifestos, open letters, or demonstrations—for peace talks to be held and arms shipments to be stopped immediately. What those making these demands fail to understand is that ceasing to provide Ukraine with international military assistance would not in fact result in lasting peace; and that at present peace negotiations are not yet on the political agenda. In spring 2023, for instance, the Russian side reiterated that it had no intention of abandoning its war objectives. Such statements in the context of the ever-new atrocities we are witnessing in Ukraine make peace talks feel futile to the Ukraine side. In as early as October 2022, Zelenskyy signed a decree rejecting negotiations with Vladimir Putin and has repeatedly confirmed this position.

At a later point in time, with the help of strong external mediation, Russia and Ukraine may be able to enter into negotiations. In the long term, an international contact group must be set up to mediate between Russia and Ukraine.

Yet, even if we were to disregard all this and heed the calls for an immediate end to arms shipments, there would still be no peace in Ukraine. In fact, without the military support of the NATO member states, Ukraine would be defeated. Our experience of Russia's occupation practices in Ukraine—involving torture, sexual violence, abduction, and even killings—lead us to expect the worst. It can be assumed that Russia would extend its cleanup policy to the rest of Ukraine and the country would be forcefully integrated into the Russian Federation. What is more, there is reason to fear that Moscow's expansionism would not end there, resulting in destabilization across Europe.

Against this backdrop, there really is no peace in sight. This is also consistent with predictions from empirical research: As little as 20 percent of all interstate wars actually end with a decisive military defeat or victory; another 30 percent have no clear outcome, instead de-escalating after many years, the conflict parties exhausted and resources depleted. These conflicts soon flare up again once the recovery period is over. Nevertheless, almost half of all interstate wars end in negotiations. For the most part, however, even these become violent again. Another relevant fact here is that wars that do not end within a year have a high probability of becoming protracted conflicts, lasting more than ten years on average.

Applying this logic to the Ukraine war suggests that a long-lasting war of attrition is a plausible scenario. The future may well hold alternating phases of violence and frozen conflict. For the European members of NATO, this means being prepared to provide Ukraine with costly support in the long term, while preventing the war from spilling over into their own territories.

In these challenging circumstances, the German government would be well advised to pursue a two-pronged strategy that involves providing Ukraine with military, political, and economic support, while helping to develop an international mediation initiative. Yet this is not a matter of explicitly demanding "negotiations, right here, right now!", but rather about creating the political and technical conditions to be able to conduct what are expected to be extremely difficult status negotiations. In this context, it is crucial that we learn from the failure of the Minsk process with its attempts to "pacify" the situation which began in 2014 and ended just before the start of the war on February 24, 2022. The future success of any such negotiations will depend on whether external partners—including Germany—can provide Ukraine with credible security guarantees that a war of aggression on Ukrainian territory such as this will never happen again. To achieve this, it will be necessary to establish an international contact group that also includes negotiation partners that, like China, have previously tended to support Russia.

↘ **INCREASE IN VIOLENT CONFLICT BEYOND RUSSIA'S WAR OF AGGRESSION**

Much as the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine dominates the news, other trouble spots must not be overlooked. These include several civil wars, in particular in the Middle East, the Sahel region, and the Horn of Africa. Even before Russia's attack on Ukraine, conflicts around the world had become increasingly violent. In 2021, the total death toll in wars and conflicts in Ethiopia, Somalia, or Yemen, for instance, was 46% higher than the previous year. Old and new theaters of war as well as rapid rearmament, in East and West alike, means that in 2023, too, the prospect of peace seems increasingly distant for many places. The military confrontation between Sudan's two most powerful generals recently highlighted just how quickly a smoldering conflict can escalate into full-scale violence.

It is rare for a violent conflict to be waged without the involvement of non-state armed groups. Even in the interstate war between Russia and Ukraine, the Wagner Group, a private military company owned by Russian oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin and with very close ties to the Kremlin, plays an important role. In other conflicts, military violence has become completely privatized, such as in the heavy fighting between Latin America's drug cartels. Last year, violent conflict between exclusively non-state groups cost 20,000 people their lives. Conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa involve an especially large number of non-state violent actors, while in the Sahel region, Islamic jihadist groups are gaining ground. To combat these groups, national governments rely on non-state troops, be it local militias or the aforementioned Wagner Group, which was recruited by the governments of Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Central African Republic, for instance. In the Sahel, however, the Wagner Group has actually proven to be a destabilizing factor, with the company pursuing its own, primarily economic objectives, such as controlling the mines. The Wagner Group evades direct control by its clients and conducts its operations with extreme brutality. Moreover, the group undermines international peacekeeping missions. The German government must classify the Wagner Group as a criminal organization. Known members of the Wagner Group must be placed on sanctions and wanted lists.

Non-state actors play an increasingly important role in violent conflicts

↘ **GREATER TRANSPARENCY ABOUT THE DILEMMAS OF FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY**

Feminist foreign policy quite rightly takes into account the consequences of political decisions and action for different groups—not just for women, but also for other structurally marginalized sections of society. It aims to achieve equal rights, participation, and access to resources for disadvantaged people. In the past year, however, it has become clear that feminist foreign policy has yet to convincingly address societal exclusion and the denial of women's rights of participation. This is the case in Iran, for instance. Sparked by the death of the young Iranian Mahsa Amini following her arrest by the religious morality police in September 2022, women and indeed many men have been demonstrating against the country's misogynistic, inhumane regime. Despite the international solidarity with this protest movement, there have been no strong political reactions. The Tehran government has struck back against the protestors with increasing brutality, with more than 200 documented

executions. Yet the European Union (EU) has still failed to classify the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization. This restraint is partly down to the German government's concern about the possibility of a harsh foreign policy reaction from Iran, which could have repercussions for nuclear talks and oil transport through the Persian Gulf. The situation with Afghanistan's Taliban regime, too, poses a dilemma for feminist foreign and development policy. The ban on girls attending school or training or on them going out to work makes the provision of humanitarian aid difficult in Afghanistan and would, from a feminist foreign policy perspective, be reason enough for the world to turn their back on the country. A decision to discontinue emergency assistance, however, would spark a humanitarian crisis across the entire region.

Both of these examples show that rigorous implementation of a feminist foreign policy— tough sanctions against Iran, stopping aid to Afghanistan—would have security policy and humanitarian consequences for which the German government is apparently unwilling to bear the responsibility. In both of these cases, it is vital for any feminist foreign and develop- ment policy to adopt a clearer position and, if required, also take action. If this does not happen, the dilemmas described here must be discussed more openly and transparently than they have been to date, if, that is, feminist policy is not to lose its credibility in light of its frequently ambitious human rights rhetoric.

↘ HUMANITARIAN AID AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION MUST NOT BE MONOPOLIZED BY SECURITY POLICY

In 2021 and 2022, three crises overshadowed the global situation. These have been dubbed the three Cs—climate, Covid-19, and conflict—the latter proving especially prevalent since 2022 when Russia launched its attack on Ukraine. The C with the most dramatic long-term consequences is climate change. The increase in extreme weather events, particularly drought, threatens crop yields, which in turn results in shortages and rising food prices. Today, owing to events such as floods in South Asia, drought in the Horn of Africa, or earth- quakes in Turkey and Syria, many countries are finding themselves in a permanent state of crisis. On the African continent, in particular, extreme events often take on catastrophic proportions, as the countries lack coping mechanisms and adaptive capacities.

Climate change, Covid-19 and conflicts threaten societies in the Global South

Especially at the local level, a stronger link between humanitarian aid, development co- operation, and peacebuilding would be expedient when it comes to countering the effects of war, climate change, and food insecurity. The dots on the triple nexus however must be connected from more than just a conceptual perspective; instead, this approach must look far more to local populations and their needs. The legitimate concern of many non- governmental organizations is that by closely connecting humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding (HDP nexus), humanitarian aid would be politically controlled and the concept of peace would be expanded to the point where it would also include security policy and military measures. Such monopolization would diminish the credibility of the HDP nexus.

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↘ STRENGTHENING ARMS CONTROL MEASURES

Arms control policy is another area that is being negatively affected by the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine. The main issue here is that, for the foreseeable future, Russia will no longer be a trustworthy partner in arms control; what is more, in early 2023, Russia suspended its implementation of the last bilateral treaty limiting the deployment of strategic nuclear warheads. Moscow is also attempting to undermine the multilateral arms control regime, including the biological and chemical weapons ban and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and discredit institutions such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)—it must be said, however, that Russia has only had limited success with these endeavors. Although false aspersions cast by the Kremlin have led to official investigations, these accusations are regularly withdrawn and exposed for what they are: false information aimed at destroying the integrity of inter-national organizations. In order to contain the long-term effects of this disinformation, however, a strategy is needed which systematically corrects fake news while improving transparency with a view to stopping the spread of disinformation in the first place.

Russia attacks arms control regimes by launching disinformation campaigns

Arms control policy will have no choice but to adapt. Disarmament measures are going to be harder to execute, as will be arms limitations. But this is no reason to set aside arms control and wait for better times. On the contrary, in fact, it would make more sense to focus on arms control measures, to maintain stability by means of diplomatic and com-munication channels, including in times of crisis and war, and to secure the political control and command structures through international agreements. The goal must be to increase crisis stability, minimize the risk of misconceptions, and prevent unintentional military escalation. For the period *after* the Russian war on Ukraine, textbook concepts such as transparency and accountability with regard to troop movements as well as confidence-building measures must be taken up again. This also opens up opportunities for multi-lateral talks to involve states which, in the past, have entrusted arms control to the super-powers—the USA and Russia.

Existing multilateral arms control forums must focus on preserving what has been achieved, on cautiously expanding on the progress made in recent years, and especially on strengthening the institutional implementation mechanisms, for instance when it comes to enforcing the biological and chemical weapons ban.

↘ POLITICAL DISENGAGEMENT ONLY AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION

Russia's war on Ukraine calls into question a strand of institutional peace policy which has long been taken for granted: economic integration and interdependence, especially in the area of trade. In the public discourse about Europe's, in particular Germany's dependence on Russian energy, there are growing calls for economic integration and inter-dependence, including in relation to China, to be reduced, so as to prevent a gas supply situation similar to that of winter 2022 from occurring again. This concern is not entirely unfounded when it comes to individual areas of trade, including with China, but integration

with China is generally so complex that there are no clear asymmetries between the two sides. If at all, China is in a weaker position than Germany, despite the fact that the former's population would seem more adept at dealing with adverse conditions. Moreover, disengagement is not per se a policy that, as is sometimes claimed, supports peace. Indeed, disengagement ultimately serves only to reduce the costs of a full-scale conflict, while at the same time relinquishing control over political levers that could in fact prevent such a conflict. Any disengagement from China (and other autocracies) therefore calls for considerable caution and systematic monitoring over individual fields of trade, as well close consultation with EU partners. Disengagement is not a goal in itself. Instead, it should be implemented in relation to vulnerable areas which are sensitive from a security policy perspective and are at risk of being used by the opponent as a means to exert political pressure.

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↘ MITIGATING SOCIAL POLARIZATION

Even in established democracies, social peace and constructive conflict resolution are not without their challenges. The consequences of current crises, such as inflation, climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, and Russia's war on Ukraine, which are interconnected on many levels, increase the risk of political polarization and social divisions in Germany and other European countries, too. Political polarization can be productive; but in its more extreme form it can undermine democratic politics and even promote political violence. German society, while not yet fragmented into two antagonistic political camps, is also seeing an increase in polarization. Climate policy in particular holds significant potential for conflict. In a constitutional democracy such as Germany, violations of the law by climate activists, for example, are punishable, whereas peaceful protest must be understood as an inherent part of democratic processes of negotiation. Preventive detention and public defamation are not suitable responses to civil disobedience.

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, conspiracy narratives have gained traction and visibility. In 2022, right-wing extremists and conspiracy theorists attempted to mobilize the population, but this time with only moderate success. Nevertheless, it is important to strengthen the resilience of democratic societies in the face of anti-democratic ideologies or disinformation campaigns. To this end, advice and education programs such as those set out in the Democracy Promotion Act must be financed and expanded despite the pressure on public budgets.

Politicians must refrain from employing confrontational rhetoric or simplistic juxtapositions that will further exacerbate the polarization surrounding controversial topics. Further, the role of parliaments and the public sphere as spaces of democratic debate and constructive dispute must be strengthened. In certain circumstances, new participatory formats such as citizen councils have the potential to be a valuable addition to political decision-making processes. Political answers to current crises must reflect the social costs and the varying degrees of impact on different groups in society.

CONCLUSIONS

For the world today, peace is a long way off. Not only does the Russian war of aggression overshadow the situation in Europe; it also threatens to block cooperation in the framework of international agreements and in fact foster the creation of new political camps. In many parts of the world, the threat to human survival and civil liberties is very real. Even democracies are under jeopardy where political firebrands make use of ideological polarization. A foreign and security policy that seeks to achieve peace must be committed to certain norms and values, but must also recognize what is actually possible. For policy to retain its credibility in the long term, the resultant impasses must be communicated and debated transparently.

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

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