
Preface by Federal Foreign Minister Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier

2014 was a turbulent year. In our subjective perception, crisis is becoming the new normal. Ukraine, Syria, Gaza, Iraq, the advance of IS and the Ebola epidemic all happened within a single year. In our globalized world, crisis is no longer the exception. It is the permanent corollary, perhaps even the product, of globalization. So we need to be better prepared.

Defusing crises means taking timely action, through prevention, mediation and compromise, before damage limitation becomes the only option. This is in Germany's foreign policy interests and must be part of its policy agenda. Germany is well-regarded by the international community in this field, but it could do more to set international standards – for we have a responsibility to utilize our opportunities and resources in the interests of peace.

We want to take earlier, more resolute and more substantive action, not only during acute crises but also increasingly in conflict prevention and recovery. So we need to enhance our capacities – from early warning and scenario planning to new crisis management structures at the Federal Foreign Office and coordination among all the various actors in government and civil society. Our foreign policy must be based on the precautionary principle.

Alongside improved coordination, better communication is needed. Foreign policy does not only take place abroad. We need to promote awareness and ownership of our foreign policy agenda in Germany itself. We must explain, listen and learn. Foreign policy has to be firmly embedded and supported at the domestic level if it is to have authority and impact beyond our borders. Civil society organizations such as the Development and Peace Foundation, with their diverse conference formats, symposia and workshops, play a key role in this context.

The world around us is changing. The tectonic plates of global politics are shifting dynamically. However, we should not focus solely on the tensions arising at the margins. Existing governance structures are losing their impact. Germany must define more precisely how it wishes to contribute to maintaining and reforming these structures. We must give very careful thought to how we can protect and regulate precious public goods: the oceans, space and the Internet. It is essential to identify the right blend of well-established and indispensable structures, such as the United Nations, and the new governance elements and international regimes which may be necessary, for example, to curb the uncontrolled arms build-up observed in many parts of the world. How can we develop far-sighted foreign policies based on long-

term investment in governance and international institutions and a smart approach to strengthening international law? Which partners can and must we win over to this endeavour?

Contrary to some assumptions, there is much evidence that democratic rule-of-law systems have more to offer by way of a response to the growing pressures of a globalized world than authoritarian regimes, and that they are more adaptable and resilient than we ourselves sometimes seem to believe. However, this also means dispensing with the illusion that, through prevention or resolute intervention, we can halt or defuse every critical escalation in the modern world. Alongside our awareness that our effectiveness in the foreign policy arena is largely based on our capacity for innovation and the appeal of our social model, with its specific blend of freedom, security, prosperity and the rule of law, the recognition that our own options are limited must, of necessity, also filter into a smart foreign policy agenda for the 21st century.

We need to pursue a realistic and pragmatic approach to peace which allows for contradictions and yet builds confidence and maintains our capacity to take responsible action. Our country's global interconnectedness, which has long been vital in safeguarding our security and prosperity, leaves no room for insularity or radical ambitions to change the world. Recognizing this fact does not mean undermining our values. However, adherence to our values must be accompanied by a clear-sighted view of the world's changing realities, and this insight must be conveyed when we explain our foreign policy in Germany itself.

In the interests of a long-term peace policy, we should not focus on revolutionary change but on evolutionary processes. In the context of a strategy for peace in the 21st century, foreign policy means prevention, crisis diplomacy and long-term transitional support. It must aim to shape the elements of a sustainable, peaceful and equitable international order, based on integration into an ever closer European Union in which Germany exercises its responsibility through negotiated leadership.

When it comes to shaping a better world, Germany has much to offer: its contribution is based on quiet self-confidence and modest ambitions. Policies that are fit for the future rely on a realistic analysis of the challenges that lie ahead. I am pleased to say that this analysis is provided, once again, in this latest edition of *Global Trends*.

