

# Europe in the World

## Our objective

We want to strengthen Europe's ability to act through constructive relations both internally and with external partners in order to promote a more inclusive international order.

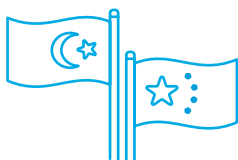
## Our contribution

We want to help Europe develop a new image of itself. We are committed to more consistently involving African, Asian and Latin American countries in the global world order and want to better understand the actions of China and Turkey and their societies. We also want to foster exchange and encounters between people from these countries. In addition, we help to advance European integration, particularly in the east of the continent.

## Areas



### 1 Making international realignment more inclusive



### 2 Shaping constructive relations with China and Turkey



### 3 Driving forward European integration

## Background

The world finds itself at the beginning of a crucial decade that will see rivalry between those keen to shape the future of the international order. In its own interest and from an international perspective, Europe will need to play an important role in this. Characterized by a deliberately imperial, antiliberal and anti-Western ideology, Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine marks a departure from the fundamental principles of an international order in which peace had been guaranteed by interdependencies. Tensions between China and the United States are growing, as are divisions in the international community. This is happening against the backdrop of worsening and increasingly complex hybrid global crises that, in many respects, cause and exacerbate one another, such as the coronavirus pandemic and the food, energy and climate crises.

Against this background, Europe must redefine its role in the world, strategically shape its external relations and establish internal stability if it wants to uphold its values and interests in the world and effectively contribute to overcoming global crises.

## Impact logic

Today's complex and interdependent global crises can no longer be overcome by conventional analytical and institutional responses that result from the prevailing silo mentality and departmentalized thinking. Increased capacities are needed to think beyond narrowly defined political domains and to develop viable political strategies for the future. For this reason, we want to promote strategic foresight and scenario thinking to boost Europe's crisis resilience. These guiding principles



will also be applied to our support of individuals with the aim of specifically strengthening intersectoral exchange and countering a silo mentality. By this we aim to contribute to the development and strengthening of a community of globally thinking individuals, to interconnect (future) designers of the new international order at various stages of their lives, in different roles and areas, and to foster mutual trust.

With respect to civil society, the media, politics, science and academia and the public sphere, we believe that targeted funding offers an opportunity to involve non-governmental actors in discourses about the future of Europe and international realignment, to create a broader basis for decision-making and to integrate diverse perspectives in order to drive forward innovation. Diversity and the inclusion of stakeholders with complex life experiences (such as migrants, refugees, and minorities) are important to us and broaden the range of viewpoints in discourse.

Finally, we want to contribute to an objective and informed public debate, which we believe is under threat from targeted disinformation strategies, and which we regard as a crucial basis for democratic opinion-forming. We therefore want to develop effective means of conveying foreign policy issues and strategies to the public.



## **1** **Making international realignment more inclusive**

### **Starting situation**

One reason why Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine constitutes a "Zeitenwende" for Germany and for the world as a whole is that it has illustrated the extent to which economic ties can also be weaponized. It is becoming clear that globalization, contrary to expectations, has not made the world a generally safer and more prosperous place in which there are no new inherent risks caused by interdependencies. Instead, global connectivity has created new vulnerabilities that have led to crises and conflicts. In future, aspects relating to dependency and security must therefore be taken into account when assessing cooperation, as must our shared responsibility for the global commons.

In view of the war that continues to rage in our Eastern neighbourhood, the end of cheap fossil energy imports as the driver of European prosperity, the turmoil in global supply chains and an increasingly dominant China, the EU must rethink the way that it shapes its external relations. Our dependence on the United States in security terms is not sustainable, either. We envisage the development of a multipolar order and the decline of Western dominance, which makes it essential for us to base our external relations on a partnership approach, to make ourselves more resilient to global crises, to act with greater foresight and to play an active role on the global stage.

### **The objective of our action**

In a changing international order and against the backdrop of multiple global crises, Europe must redefine its role. For the sake of strategic sovereignty and resilience, former dependency patterns must be broken, and partnerships diversified and intensified. We want Europe to create balanced partnerships with countries from the Global North and South in order to address key future issues, and thereby contributing to the establishment of a more inclusive world order in the long term.

## **Our approaches**

### *1. Building crisis resilience and strategic capability*

In order to increase Europe's resilience and ability to act in the context of multiple crises and enable it to find its new place in the changing world order, it is important to clarify Europe's international objectives and reconcile these with its scope for action under the various contextual conditions of global developments. To this end, methods of strategic foresight can be used to generate scenarios for future political developments as a means of obtaining strategic orientation. In future, such scenarios must better reflect the way in which various crises influence one another, and the risks of interdependencies and must include diverse viewpoints, in particular from African, Asian and Latin American countries.

We want to promote cooperation between institutions from different political domains, for example from climate, foreign and security policy, with a view to being better able to analyze and understand the reciprocal effects of the topics in question. Furthermore, we want to improve the way in which these activities are translated into practicable concepts for policymakers. On the one hand, this requires effective mechanisms of scientific policy advice that are based on such integrated scenarios and involve decision-makers at an early stage. On the other, it requires decision-makers in politics, government, and international organizations to have the ability to understand and react appropriately to such integrated analyses. That is why we want to support targeted capacity building in this respect and increasingly gear our individual funding to strengthening the intersectoral competencies of current and future decision-makers, as well as their capacity for integrated thinking.

### *2. Paving the way for new partnerships and alliances*

The need for Europe to diversify its international cooperations and partnerships arises on the one hand from its own interests in strategic sovereignty and reduced risks of interdependencies. On the other hand, when redesigning its cooperation architecture, Europe needs to strive to ensure that inclusion and fair participation, especially of states of the "Global South", are established as the basic principles of future multilateral cooperation. This is especially crucial against the backdrop of its guiding values and its self-interest in overcoming global challenges. In other words, strategies that aim to redefine Europe's role in the world must go hand in hand with the goal of creating a more inclusive world order.

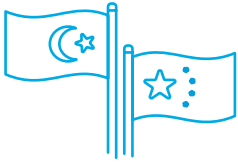
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We therefore want to pave the way for partnerships between the EU and selected countries in Africa, Asia or Latin America in those thematic areas in which Stiftung Mercator is already active. This also involves critically reflecting on the extraterritorial effects of European regulation and explicitly addressing the EU's crisis of credibility, often caused by the fact that the EU's actual actions have not always been consistent with the aforementioned guiding values.

In this context, we want to place emphasis on the climate/foreign policy interface. To overcome the climate crisis, a global cooperation architecture is indispensable. Yet, achieving this has become even more difficult as a result of the shifting geopolitical circumstances. Most of the renowned international forums, such as the United Nations, G7 or G20, are making only sluggish progress, although they remain important arenas for maintaining a multilateral dialogue aimed at tackling this enormous challenge. We therefore want to work towards establishing a stronger dialogue and more solid partnerships between Europe and selected Asian, African and Latin American countries when it comes to joint approaches to climate-friendly development paths and questions of climate resilience. This encompasses interfaces with development, economic and energy policy. Such alliances can add momentum in international forums and thus achieve a more ambitious and better coordinated approach on a global level. One particular focus will be on the dialogue with African countries.

Furthermore, we want to explore how migration and digitalization can become productive additional topics for dialogue with countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.



## 2 Shaping constructive relations with China and Turkey

### Starting situation

Ever since Xi Jinping came to power (in 2013), the spaces for transnational dialogue and cooperation activities have been restricted by law, ideologically oriented and embedded within security policy. Looking at China's presence in the world reveals how actively the Chinese state is seeking to play its role in shaping a new international order, e.g. by positioning itself in multilateral institutions, by pursuing development initiatives in Africa, Asia and Latin America, by establishing Chinese standards and by expanding its clout in international discourse. In this context, China's systemic rivalry with the United States defines its own geopolitical coordinate system. Whereas rivalry with China likewise takes centre stage in Washington D.C., for the EU and Germany it was the 2019 strategic outlook on China that formed the basis for relations with China as a rival, a cooperation partner and a competitor. Looking at the situation within China reveals the political and social shift toward a security state over the past decade. Civil society engagement in and civil society dialogue with China have become much more difficult ever since. Furthermore, we are observing social tensions in China posing a threat to the stability of the country's society and confront its leadership with major domestic policy challenges.

In Turkey, intergovernmental relations have also become more complicated in recent years, above all as a result of domestic political developments. Nonetheless, Turkey is nowadays more important than ever for Europe and Germany. Turkey plays an important role as an EU neighbourhood-state and regional power in the Middle East. Many of the EU's core interests demand close cooperation with Turkey. Turkey exhibits a more self-confident stance these days and aspires to a regional leadership role in the realigning international order, e.g. by offering to mediate between Russia and Ukraine. In doing so, it is distancing itself politically from the EU. Nevertheless, a marked pro-European attitude exists among younger generations.

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### **The objective of our action**

China and Turkey play prominent roles in the changing global order, as well as when it comes to overcoming existing global and regional crises. We therefore want to expand expertise about these two countries among various target groups and maintain dialogue between representatives of their societies. Thereby we want to contribute to constructive German and EU relations with China and Turkey.

### **Our approaches**

Our longstanding experience in China and Turkey serves as a solid foundation for our understanding of a global order set in motion and our observation of new and emerging actors within it. Our regional expertise further enables us to provide fruitful contributions to German and European debates.

#### *1. Exchange and encounters*

Through our work, we aim to support the development of cross-border networks, especially of young people and civil society. We consider it important to involve diverse groups from all kinds of different sectors in order to widen the spectrum in Chinese-European and Turkish-European dialogue. In addition to network effects, exchange experiences also have an impact on the individual level: they strengthen competencies such as empathy, tolerance for ambiguity and a critical self-image, as well as fostering an understanding of other perspectives. In this way, they counter prejudices, xenophobia, and racism. International exchange and encounters provide an opportunity to attain personal and professional qualifications that enable cooperative and responsible action in an interdependent world.

Dialogue with civil society stakeholders in China and Turkey – while keeping in mind the limitations for independent civil society work – supports the monitoring of developments and debates within China and Turkey in a nuanced manner and makes them visible to a German or European audience. Such dialogue with China and Turkey is fundamental for connecting debates in Germany, Europe, China, and Turkey with one another and for developing joint answers to global challenges. Exchange and encounters promote the ability to reflect on one's relationship with others, which in turn is essential if Europe is to commit itself credibly to a more inclusive international order. In this sense, our work in this context also contributes to our objective in our first area of activity.

Our work involving exchanges and encounters with stakeholders from China needs to be rethought in light of the developments outlined above. We will therefore reassess the potential scope for civil society dialogue with China. Our Beijing office will play an important role in this.

As far as our exchange formats with Turkey are concerned, we can rely on a well-established and robust network of partners in Turkey. Our Istanbul office as well as the already engaged civil society at the local level play a major role in expanding this network. For our exchange formats to be successful in practice, we must ensure mutual interest, which is why we continuously tailor the topics of our exchange formats to current developments. In this context we see close links to the issues that we want to prioritize in the other two areas of activity of our strategy. Furthermore, increased cooperation between foreign policy think tanks in Turkey and Europe can contribute valuable insights to our first area of activity.

## *2. Competence and understanding*

The need for China and Turkey competence has increased across target groups and sectors in Germany and Europe in recent years. Given the role played by China and Turkey in international realignment and a common European policy towards both countries, we see an important task in addressing this need, especially when it comes to German and European decision-makers in politics, business, government, research and the media. If Germany and Europe are to be able to pursue strategic action vis-à-vis China and Turkey, they will also need to critically examine their relations with these countries. This includes knowledge of Chinese and Turkish perspectives of Europe and the world, and the formulation of our own, as well as common interests.

We will continue to cooperate with relevant think tanks to better understand the various dynamics and complexities in China, Turkey and in the region, assess courses of possible action, translate analyses into political practice, and provide impetus for an objective public debate. That is why we support cooperation with and between think tanks that engage with European-Chinese and European-Turkish relations. With our activities we support policy-related research on China and Turkey, as well as on their domestic, foreign and security policy, which allows policy advice to be formulated on this basis.

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As far as establishing and expanding China competence in Germany is concerned, we are continuing to pursue our strategy of incorporating China competence into the educational biographies of young people. Through our work, we want to help ensure that expertise on China is structurally represented as a cross-cutting issue in the German education sector.



### **3 Driving forward European integration**

#### **Starting situation**

The EU will be one of the poles in a new multipolar world order. On a global scale, the EU is the alliance encompassing the largest number of sovereign, democratic countries that are based on the rule of law. That is why the EU also serves as a bridge builder when it comes to addressing multilateral challenges and finding global responses, whereby the aspects of greater inclusivity and justice constitute the main focus.

At the same time, China, Russia, Turkey, and the Gulf states are asserting their influence in the EU's eastern and south-eastern neighbourhood. In the Western Balkans, the growing influence of the aforementioned states is evident in targeted propaganda that is directed against Western norms, values and institutions.

The EU's ability to become an actor with geopolitical and strategic clout will also depend on whether it manages to successfully integrate eastern and south-eastern neighbourhood states. It is therefore in the EU's core interest to drive forward rapprochement with these states.

However, in many of the potential accession countries the EU's credibility is suffering from the stagnating accession negotiations, often caused by conflicts of interest among individual member states of the EU and the fact that EU countries themselves do not consistently adhere to their own standards and principles, such as the rule of law as well as press and media freedom.



The inner-European process of rapprochement and stabilization thus finds itself under multidimensional stress at a time when European unity (including beyond the EU's own borders) is of growing strategic importance for Europe's positioning in the world.

### **The objective of our action**

To be able to effectively shape international realignment, the EU depends on its own internal functioning as well as on a robust and stable neighbourhood. In view of the new security policy realities, the EU has a vital interest in contributing to the stability of its neighbouring countries to the east and southeast. We therefore want rapprochement between the EU and potential accession countries to be intensified.

### **Our approaches**

To drive forward rapprochement between the EU and the candidate countries in its eastern and south-eastern neighbourhood, we want to create more spaces for dialogue in which to share and compare perspectives and expand the mutual understanding about common challenges, develop concepts for improved transnational cooperation, and highlight the advantages of increased integration. In this way, we want to contribute to building bridges within wider Europe and thereby help establish new trust. Our focus is not on the formal accession process, but on encouraging the EU and its societies to consider Europe as a larger and more inclusive concept, and to incorporate this thinking into their activities.

We want to achieve this by using key thematic issues of our foundation's work, such as climate action, the rule of law and digitalization, as focal points for a practicable and mutually enriching dialogue. Migration may also become a topic of interest within this context. This approach will allow concrete progress in these fields, thus having a stabilizing effect on the EU and its neighbourhood and helping to strengthen the wider European region. In our activities, we want to place an emphasis on young professionals as the European decision-makers of the future, and because their lives will be particularly impacted by Europe's changing role in a new international order.

Rather than establishing a dedicated southeast/eastern Europe focus, we intend to concentrate on bringing together and networking stakeholders from accession countries with their counterparts from founding and second-generation EU member states. In this context we also want to explore what role new formats such

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as the European Political Community could play. Where relevant, appropriate, and possible we also integrate Turkey into the impact logic of this area of activity.