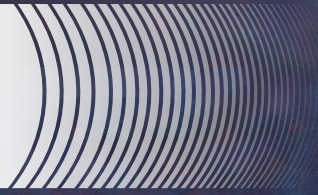


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*In the
middle of
Zeiten-
wende:*

Change and
continuity of
public attitudes
in Germany

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT** 
STIFTUNG

FES Regionalbüro
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit

FES Regional Office
for International
Cooperation

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27 February 2023



About the authors

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Methodological details

	Security Radar 2022	Security Radar 2023
 What?	Representative public opinion poll in 14 countries: Armenia, Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the United States	Representative public opinion poll in 4 countries: France, Germany, Latvia and Poland
 Who?	27,500 respondents surveyed in 14 countries Representative samples in each country	8,063 respondents surveyed in 4 countries Representative samples in each country
 When?	September-October 2021	October 2022
 How?	CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) in Armenia CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) in the 13 other countries carried out by Ipsos on behalf of FES	CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) carried out by Ipsos on behalf of FES



Introduction

Russia's invasion of Ukraine plunged Europe into uncharted waters with no blueprint to act upon, as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz remarked at the 2023 Munich Security Conference. For more than a year, a nuclear power has been waging a war on the European continent, attacking not only a sovereign country but also key principles of the international order.

Since the beginning of the war, Germany has undergone unprecedented political changes. On 24 February 2022, the day of the invasion, the newly-elected SPD-led government had been in power for just a few months and found itself compelled to take momentous political decisions in response to the war. Many of the adopted policies were not only controversial but also ran counter to established German foreign policy and broke a number of political taboos, such as exporting arms to a conflict zone. Political deliberation was harder than usual because, for the first time in history, the winning party (SPD) had formed a government in coalition with not one, but two parties, the Greens and the Liberals (FDP).

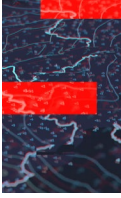
The proclamation of the »*Zeitenwende*« (watershed) by Chancellor Olaf Scholz on 27 February 2022 marked the beginning of a profound transformation that is still going on. In many respects Germany started to become a different country. It reversed its Russia policy, drastically reduced its imports of Russian fossil fuels and abandoned its restrained military stance by incrementally stepping up military aid to Ukraine, from 5,000 helmets to – eventually –

Leopard battle tanks. Germany transformed itself from a heavily criticised laggard to one of the main military suppliers to Ukraine.

Naturally, the German public is affected by the war in Ukraine and by political decisions taken in response to it. How exactly has the *Zeitenwende* changed public opinion in Germany? Which views have been transformed, and which have persisted, despite the war? These questions are relevant because at times of high uncertainty and tectonic political shifts public opinion may indicate which policies are possible and acceptable and may provide a framework for future German foreign policy. It can and indeed should underpin political deliberations.

This analysis is based on a comparison of data from our two representative public opinion polls, »Security Radar 2022« and »Security Radar 2023«, carried out in several European countries, including Germany. Data collection occurred in autumn 2021, several months before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and in autumn 2022, respectively.

The data show a fundamental shift in attitudes to Russia, as well as to military spending and weapons deliveries, but at the same time a remarkable continuity of a »culture of restraint«. Overall response patterns often mask differences between different groups. A deeper look into the data reveals persistent societal cleavages along party lines or geographical origin. The *Zeitenwende* has definitely started, but it is not yet clear where we are heading.



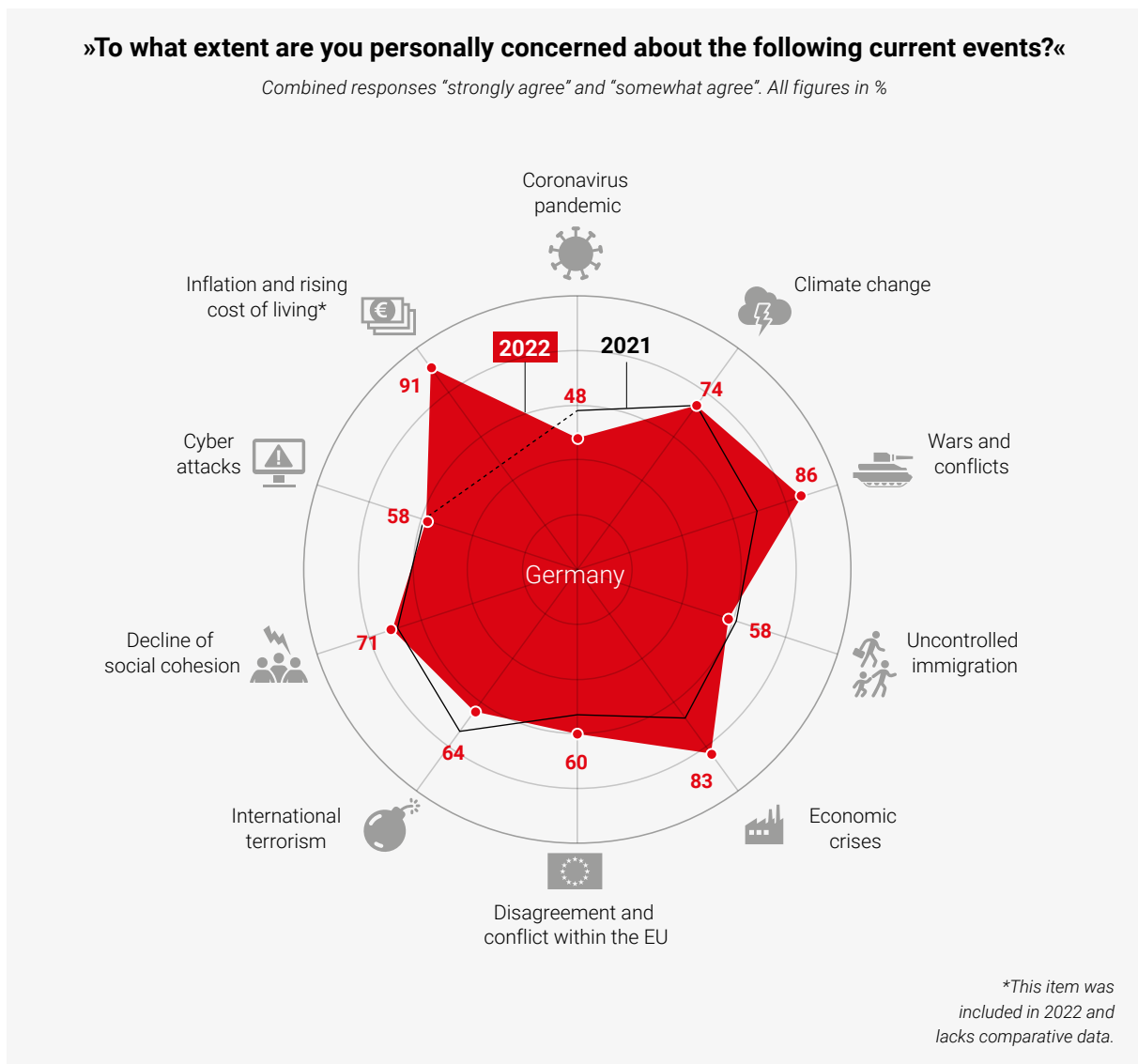
Elements of Zeitenwende

The war in Ukraine has markedly increased the level of insecurity and anxiety in Germany. It has heightened threat perceptions across the board. Respondents are much more worried than a year ago about wars and conflicts, and even consider new wars in Europe likely. Inflation and the rising cost of living

constitute the strongest worry, however. People are braced for economic crises and believe that their economic situation will deteriorate in the future.

This grim outlook underscores dramatic changes in European security, with an uncertain outcome.

Figure 1: Concerns

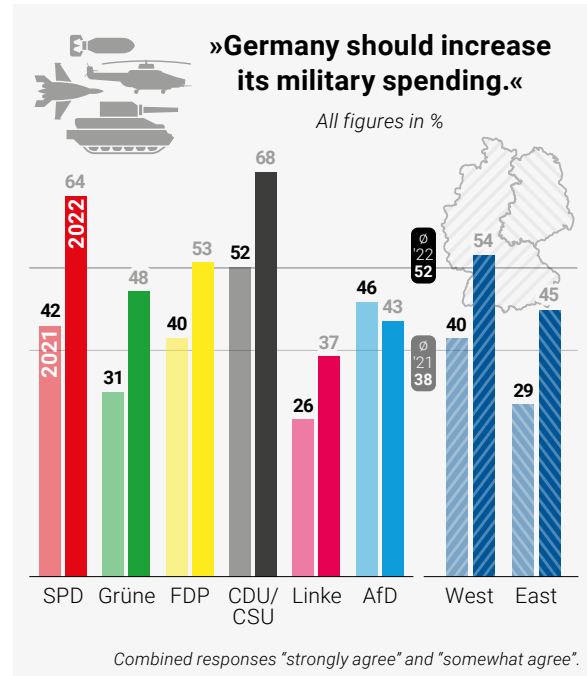




Military spending

One of the biggest policy shifts of the *Zeitenwende* is the promised increase in the defence budget – in fact, the largest jump in German military spending since rearmament after the Second World War. For years, there was a consensus among German citizens against increased military spending. Indeed, our poll from autumn 2021 shows that only CDU voters were then in favour. This ingrained reluctance reflected a political stance that for many years had fallen short of the NATO target of 2% of GDP. Seven months after the beginning of Russia's war, however, opinion had shifted fundamentally: now a majority of Germans endorse a bigger defence budget. Voters of all parties have increased their support, most strongly SPD voters, followed by Green and FDP voters. CDU voters are, however, still the strongest supporters of increasing the military budget (68%). Furthermore, people in western Germany support this measure more strongly than those in the east of the country.

Figure 2: Military Spending



As things stand, people are worried about their security and support increased defence spending. But politicians need to keep in mind that large defence budgets may be hard to justify if energy prices and inflation remain high, real wages diminish and an economic downturn occurs. In the short term, the negative repercussions were cushioned by a generous social stimulus. But the long-term price of the *Zeitenwende* may be very high and people may be not prepared to pay it in the shadow of pervasive economic worries. When confronted with a palpable deterioration of living standards, public opinion will almost certainly become less favourable. In the long term, politicians need to reassess the various threats and find a sensible balance between social and military spending.

Delivery of weapons, support for Ukraine

The *Zeitenwende* policy has broken a taboo in German politics, namely sending weapons to war zones. Already before Ukraine was attacked, when Russia was amassing troops at the Ukrainian border, some allies began delivering weapons to Ukraine. This was deemed an unthinkable move for Germany and was vehemently opposed by the freshly elected Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. But in the face of the severity and brutality of Russia's unprovoked attack, policy was changed in a matter

of weeks. Germany began providing weapons and, over the course of the year, has stepped up military support, finally agreeing to deliver Leopard 2 battle tanks in January 2023.

The issue of weapons for Ukraine remains controversial and continues to polarise German society. While 45% are in favour, 43% are against. We did not pose the question in autumn 2021, but Germany's ingrained culture of restraint provides a good



reason to assume that a majority would not have approved of such a step back then. Interestingly, SPD voters are most strongly in favour of delivering weapons to Ukraine (62%), followed by Green voters (60%). Conservatives (53%) and Liberals (43%) are less sure.

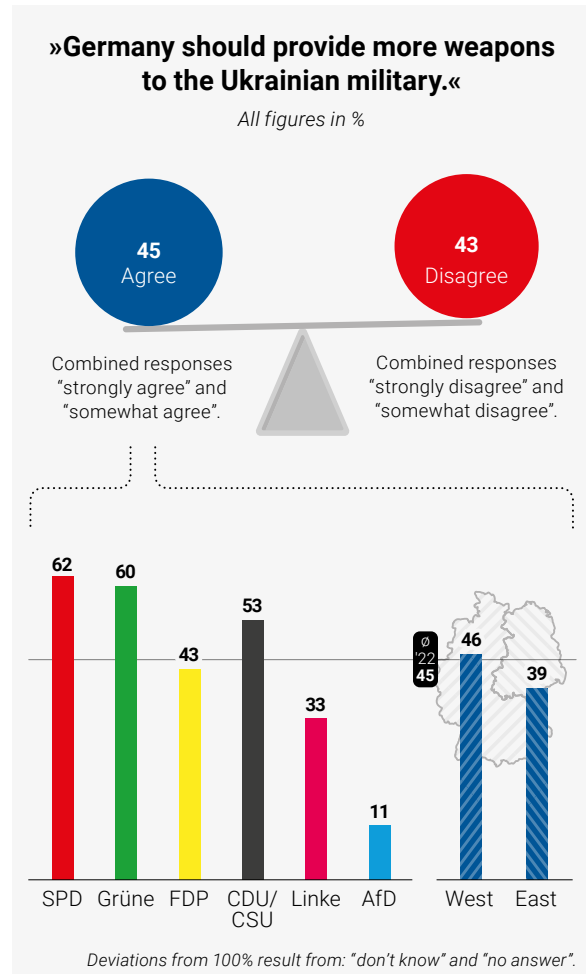
As of February 2023, the German government is firmly committed to supporting Ukraine »whatever it takes« and to continuing military support. But further weapons deliveries, especially of longer-range weapons or fighter jets, will need to be explained to the public carefully and politicians may encounter public resistance.

The German government's support for the decision to grant Ukraine EU candidate status is another notable departure from previous policy. Before the war, such a step was deemed unrealistic, at least for the foreseeable future. The public was sceptical, too, as our 2021 poll shows (merely 26% were in favour). Interestingly, Germany was not alone in its rejective stance: in 13 other European countries that we polled in autumn 2021, none was in favour, with the exception of Ukraine itself. Even in Latvia and Poland support did not exceed 45%.

But one year into the war, German support for Ukrainian EU membership has increased strongly. It is still short of an absolute majority, but an impressive 44% are now in favour (40% against). Support has increased in all groups except far-right AfD voters. The strongest proponents are Green voters, who have almost doubled their support within a year (from 32% to 62%). In comparison, in Latvia and Poland support for Ukrainian EU membership has achieved a stable absolute majority.

Regarding potential membership of NATO no comparable shift has happened. Endorsement has indeed risen from 25% to 36% but rejection remains much stronger and has even increased, from 38% to 46%. This counterintuitive trend can be explained by the fact that more people have formed an opinion on the matter within the span of a year – the share of »don't knows« has halved, from 32% to 16%. SPD voters are the strongest proponents of Ukrainian NATO membership, at 48%, up from only 29% a year ago. Again, comparison of German public opinion

Figure 3: Providing weapons



with generally much more supportive Latvian and Polish opinion shows a difference of 20 or more percentage points.

Finding a consensus within the alliance on Ukrainian membership may prove challenging in the months and years to come and will be a major challenge for the German government. It is also a question that affects public opinion, because political deliberations and decisions are bound to receive heightened public attention.

The increased public support in Germany for Ukrainian membership of NATO can be put in perspective by responses to the question about a potential further NATO enlargement towards the Russian border: one in two German respondents views that as a potential threat to security in Europe (49%), up from 37% a year before. Almost identical figures

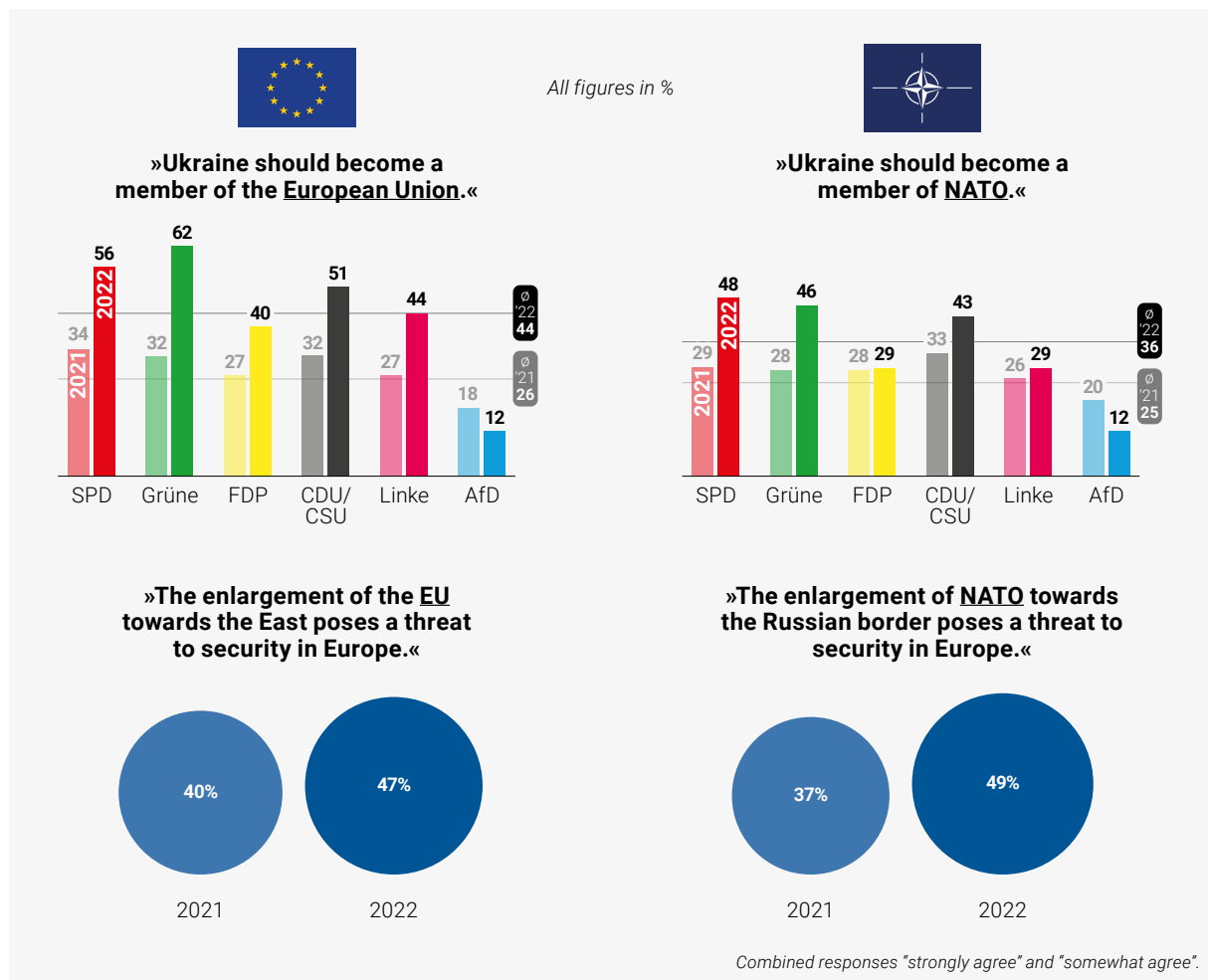


and the same dynamic pertain to the question on EU enlargement towards the East.

These attitudes may be a limiting factor on potential Ukrainian accession to Western institutions and indicate that German support may be even more fragile than the – already sobering – figures suggest.

Interestingly, the share of people who do not see EU or NATO enlargement as a threat did not change between 2021 and 2022, remaining at 37% and 35%, respectively. This is also a result of a diminished »don't know« share. This trend can be observed across many questions and underscores the heightened salience of foreign policy topics and particularly the war in Ukraine for the German public.

Figure 4: Ukraine's potential EU and NATO membership

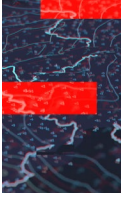


Attitudes to Russia and China

Another key component of the *Zeitenwende* is a reversal of what was often described as the »special relationship« between Germany and Russia and the termination of reliance on Russian energy.

Public perceptions of Russia have changed fundamentally. Before the start of the war half of the po-

pulation considered Russia a threat; now it is three-quarters. Threat perception has increased across all parties, with Green voters being most suspicious of Russia (87%). Perhaps the biggest shift of opinion has happened among Die Linke (the Left) voters, who prior to the war were the most Russia-friendly group but one year later had almost doubled their



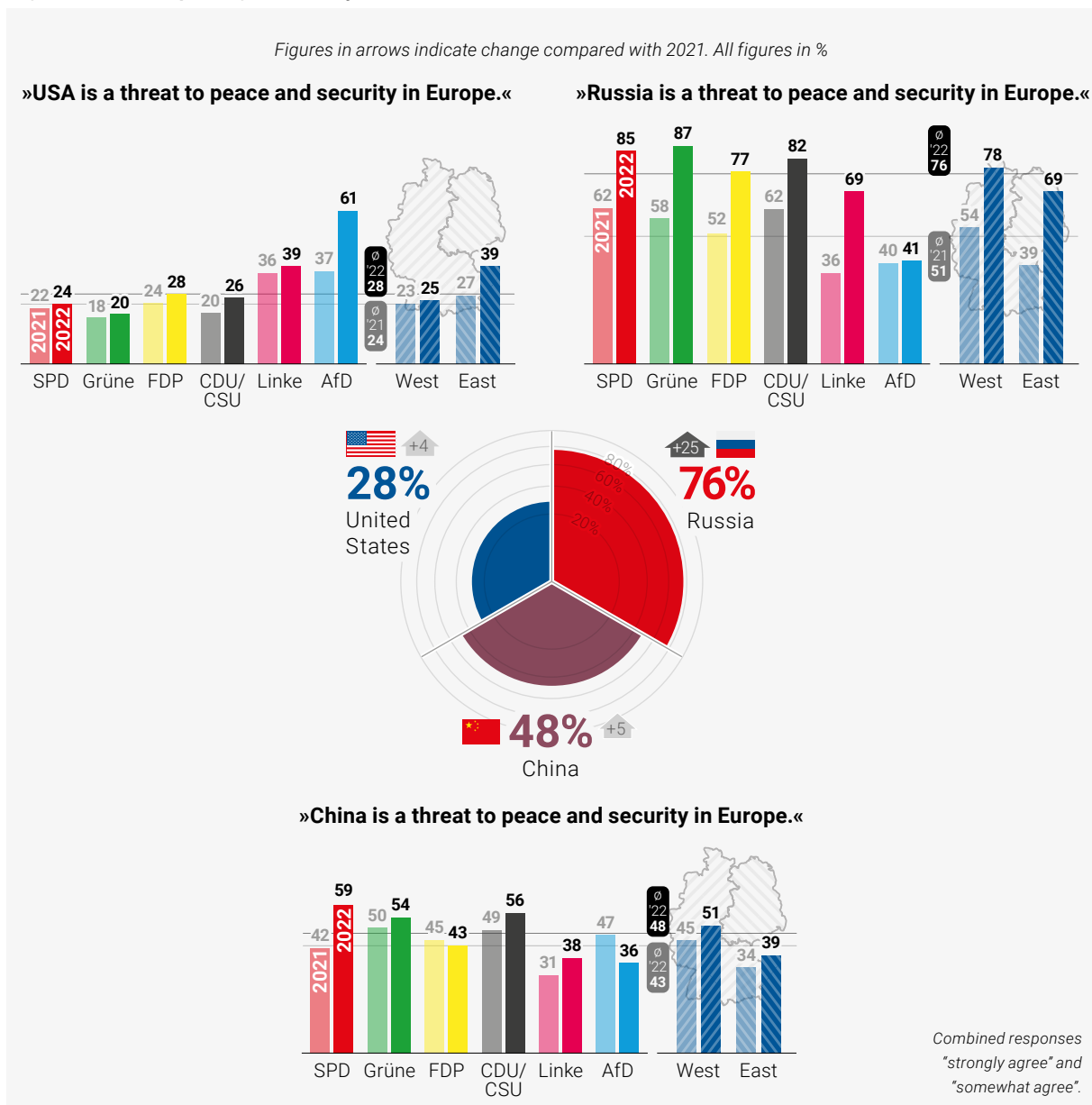
threat perception. Respondents from eastern Germany have undergone the same development, and the perception gap with western Germany has narrowed.

By the same token, a majority of 60% think that the interests of the EU and Russia are contradictory (46% before the war). Voters of all parties have increased their share compared with 2021,

most strongly Liberal voters (an increase from 38% to 67%).

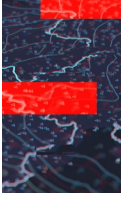
Overall, Russia's relentless war against Ukraine seems to have catalysed a convergence of threat perceptions within different segments of German society and may function as a common basis for formulating a new Russia policy.

Figure 5: Actors posing a security threat



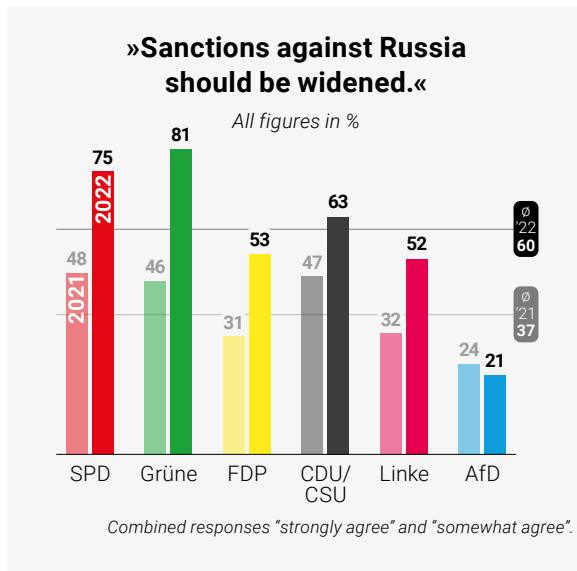
Popular endorsement of sanctions has been impressive and underscores the extent of the reckoning Russia's actions have provoked (within one year

support has increased from 37% to 60%). Across all parties – except the AfD – strong majorities support the widening of sanctions against Russia, especially



among Green voters (up from 46% to a whopping 81%). This highlights the principled stance that Green voters display on many issues throughout the survey.

Figure 6: Sanctions



The same pattern concerns the respective interests of the EU and China: just as before the war, some 48% of German respondents think that they are contradictory. Liberal voters stand out with a 12% increase in their agreement.

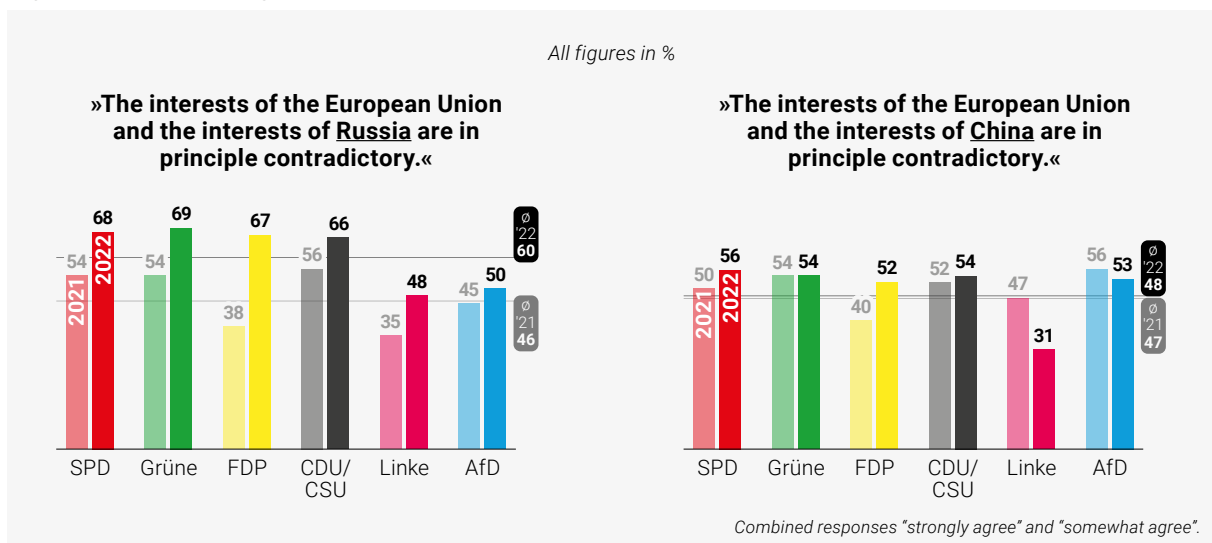
This indecisive stance should serve as a reminder for German policymakers: while the war in Ukraine dominates the agenda for now, systemic competition with China is likely to move centre stage in the longer run, with a price tag that the public remain only dimly aware of.

The United States is not considered a threatening actor but there is still deep-seated scepticism among a stable share of respondents in Germany. About a quarter think that the United States is a threat and still want to cooperate more with Russia, against all evidence. Many of these people vote AfD or live in eastern Germany, where threat perceptions of the United States have increased from 27% to 39% within a year.

In contrast to the reckoning with Russia, no *Zeitenwende* seems to have occurred (at least as yet) in relation to China. Threat perceptions overall have increased only slightly (from 43% to 48%), although the disillusionment among SPD voters is impressive (a jump from 42% to 59%). Liberal voters even think that the threat from China is slightly smaller.

This is a cause for alarm for the Western alliance in the context of a renewed transatlantic bond and unity in response to the war being waged against Ukraine.

Figure 7: Contradicting interests





Decoupling without burning bridges

Another crucial element of the German *Zeitenwende* is a reshuffling of economic relations. The scope of sanctions against Russia and the extent of decoupling from the Russian economy and its energy resources is unprecedented. Perhaps the most symbolic step was the termination of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, for years defended by successive German governments against the staunch criticism of allies. The extent and speed of these policy changes is unexpected from such an industrial export-oriented economy as Germany.

The German public backs the reversal of economic policy but does not seem to want to burn all bridges. A paradoxical picture emerges. On one hand, a majority realise the benefits of (inter)dependence and that German prosperity depends on the well-being of other countries. On the other hand, a large majority are prepared to curtail economic ties with Russia and even to ban Russian energy resources, even at the cost of rising prices.

Green voters stand out with the most principled stance, followed by SPD and CDU. FDP and Die Linke voters do not support a ban on Russian energy

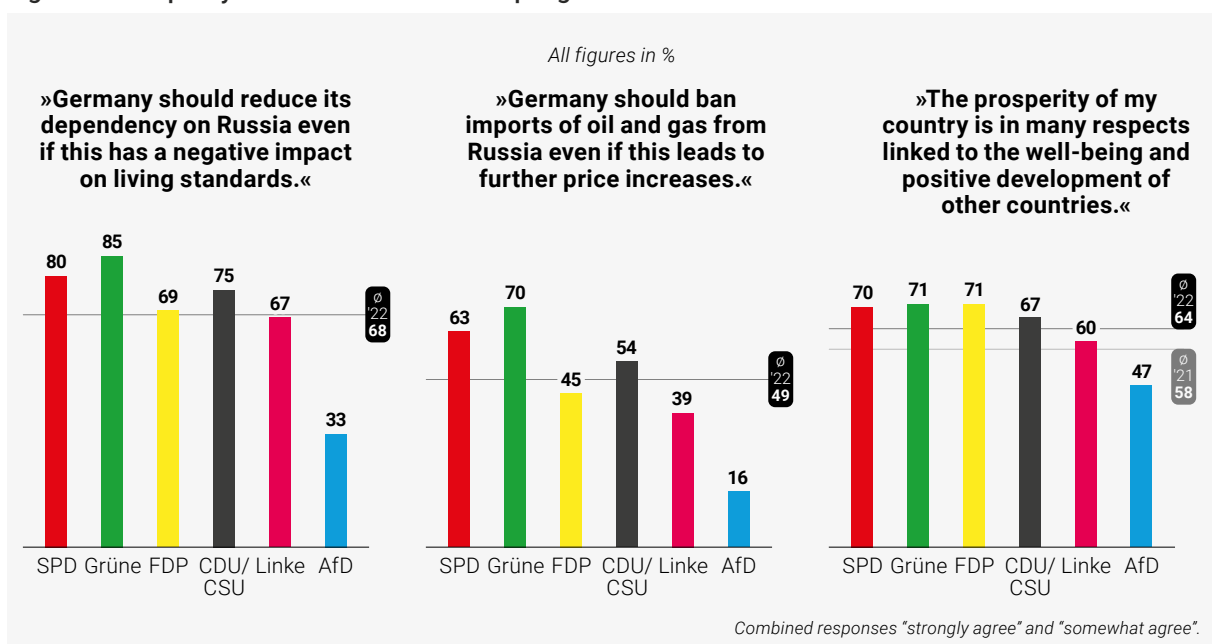


resources. AfD voters reject decoupling policies and do not acknowledge economic interdependencies to the same degree as other voters, in line with the isolationist stance they project throughout the survey.

The public backing of decoupling policies is remarkable given how pervasive economic worries are. However, the sustainability of support for decoupling may prove fragile, especially if China is taken into the equation. Public support for decoupling from China is as high as support for distancing from Russia (64% in favour). But the repercussions and long-term costs are still not clear to respondents.

This poses a challenge to politicians who need to carefully balance the benefits of interdependence against the risks associated with it, and bear in mind the social costs for the people.

Figure 8: Prosperity versus economic decoupling





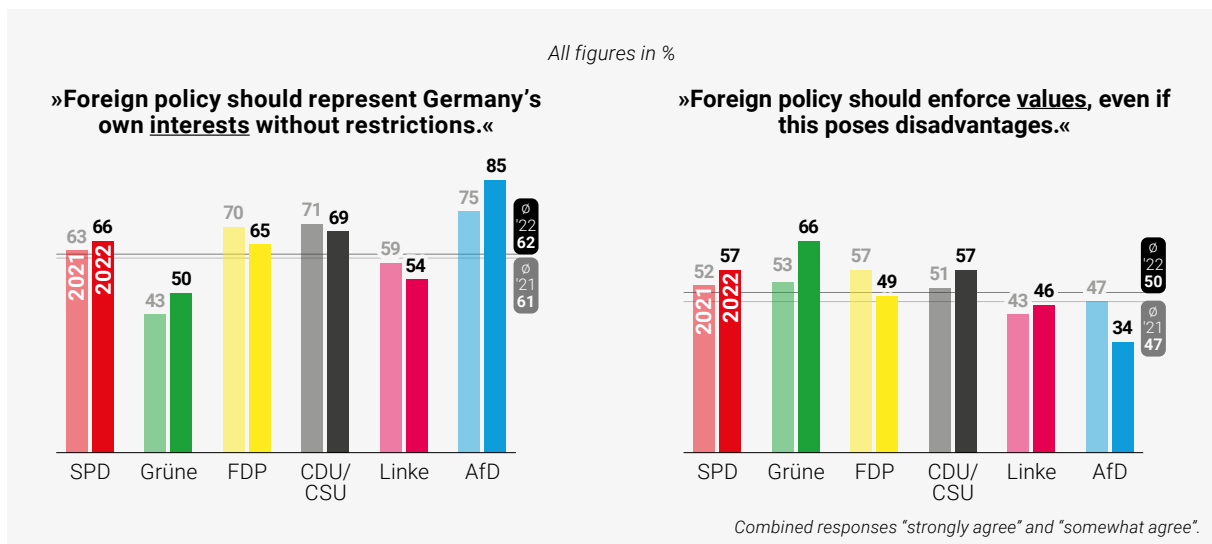
Interests still trump values

Does the *Zeitenwende* imply a shift towards a values-based foreign policy? Not really, despite a series of momentous political decisions driven to a considerable degree by moral considerations. Just like before the war, people in Germany tend to favour an interest-based foreign policy over a values-based one by a margin of about 12%.

Green voters stand out as the only group that clearly favours a values-based foreign policy (66%, compa-

red with 50% on average in Germany). The strong emphasis on values among Green voters runs like a golden thread through the survey, conspicuous in questions on sanctions (Greens are the biggest proponents), taking sides in conflicts abroad (Greens have increased their support from 54% to 68% within a year) or cooperation with non-like-minded states for the sake of promoting peace (Greens decreased their support from 60% to 48%).

Figure 9: Interests versus values



Persistence of a culture of restraint

Some fundamental changes have undoubtedly occurred in Germany. But at the same time the country is not reinventing itself and does not question every tenet of its foreign policy. Specifically, the German culture of restraint is remarkably persistent and displays high continuity in our surveys. In this sense Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock was premature when she proclaimed »the end of the culture of restraint« in February 2022.

The war has not changed ingrained German scepticism regarding military intervention. Solid majorities across the board are against military intervention in conflicts, with only CDU voters being split on the matter. In the course of the war overall German rejection has even increased, from 51% to 56%. Rejection is strongest among Die Linke and AfD voters. Military foreign policy means are considered neither effective nor legitimate – diplomacy is favoured across the board.

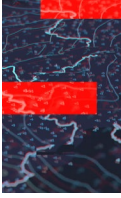


Figure 10: Military interventions

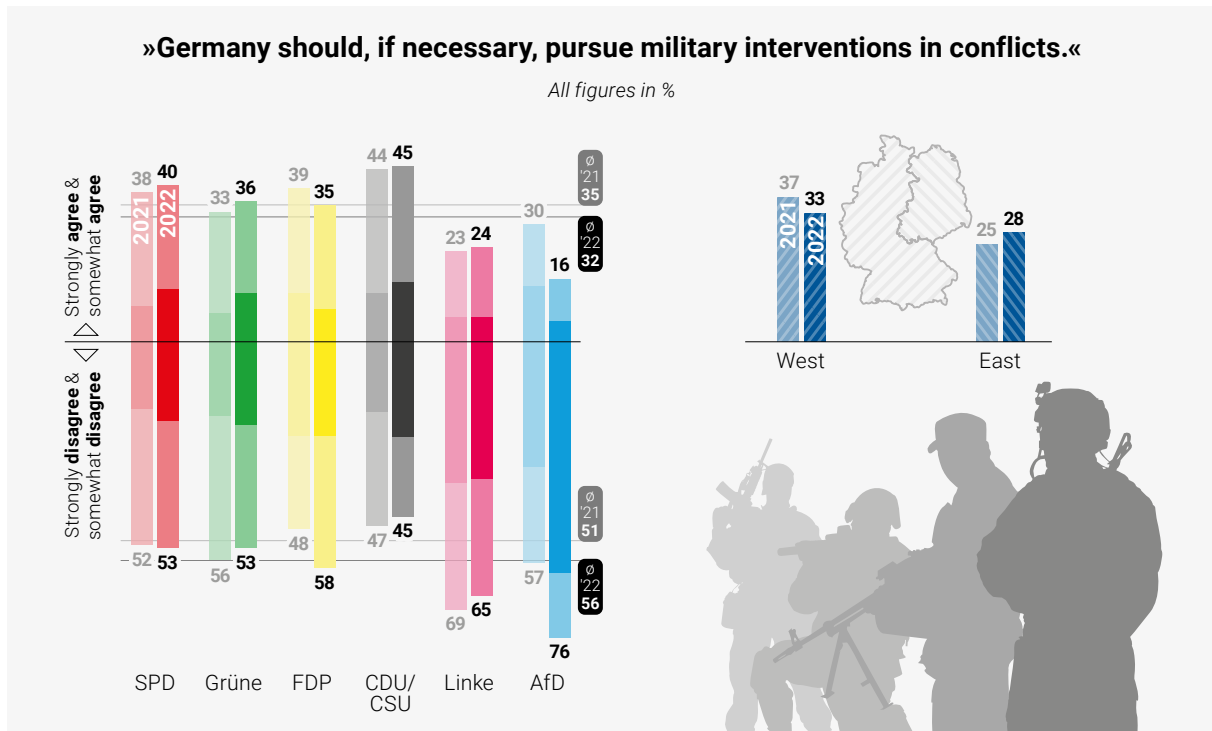
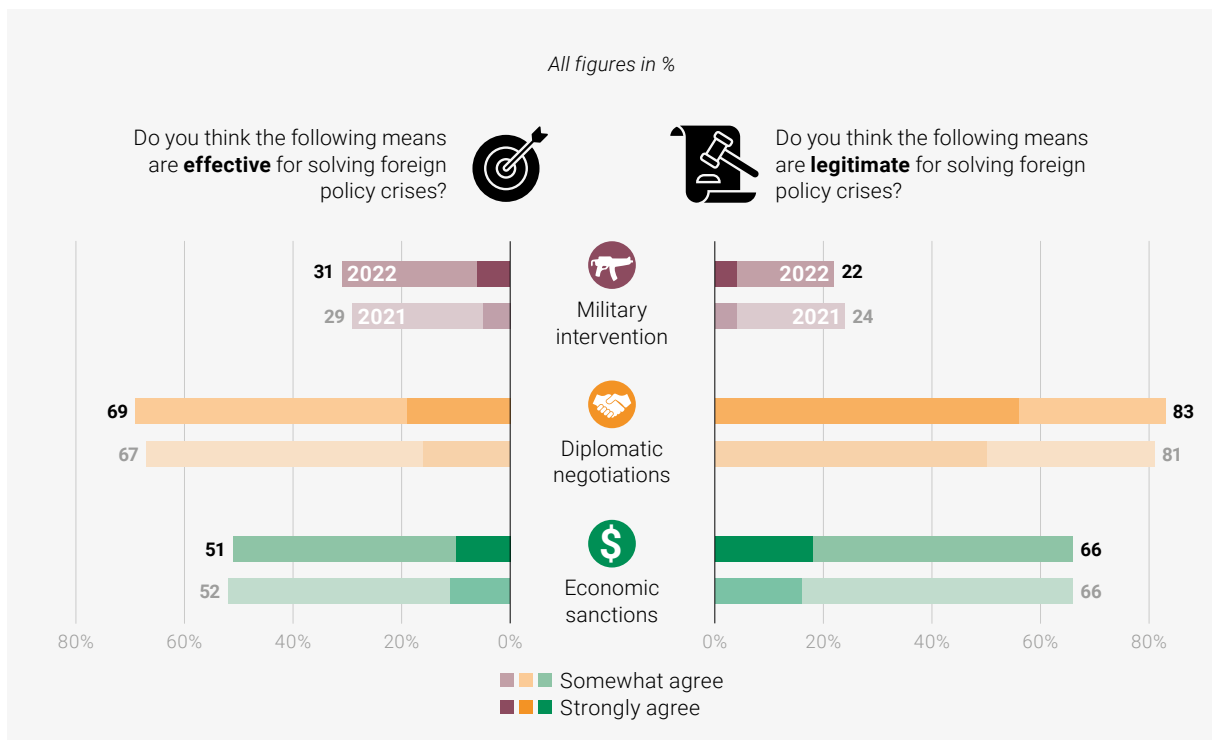


Figure 11: Efficiency versus legitimacy of foreign policy instruments



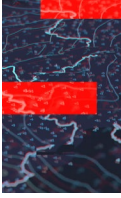
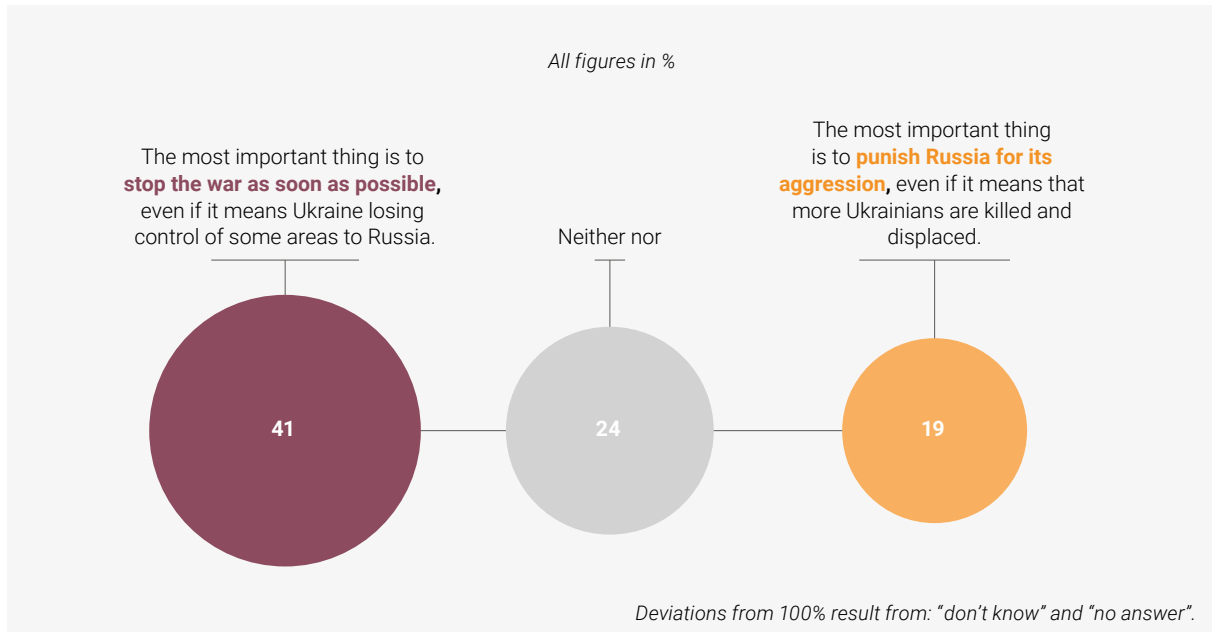


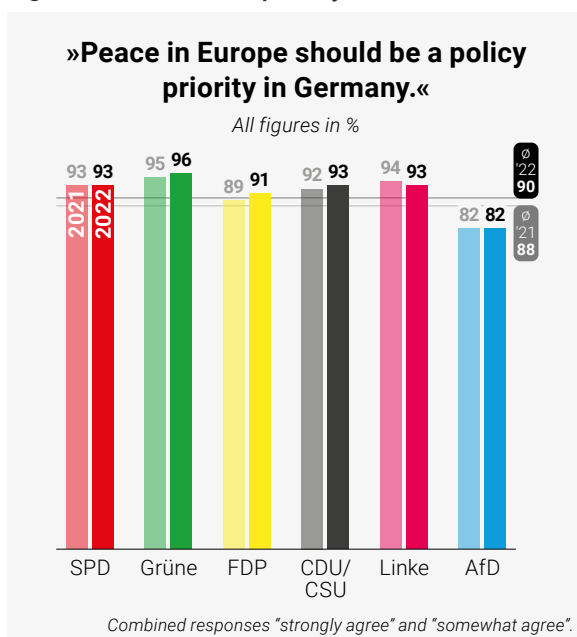
Figure 12: Peace versus Justice



In a similar vein, overwhelming majorities believe that peace should be a policy priority in Germany. With regard to ways of ending the war, German respondents clearly favour peace over justice (41% vs 19%), opting for ending the war as soon as possible, even at the cost of territorial losses (as opposed to punishing Russia for its aggression, even at

the cost of further killing and destruction). Coupled with a clear German rejection of sending troops to Ukraine (75% are against and only 13% in favour, a consensus shared across parties), this indicates an awareness of escalation scenarios and a desire to avoid being dragged into the war.

Figure 13: Peace as a priority



In their deliberations about further support for Ukraine German politicians need to keep in mind the persistence of the culture of restraint and the clear red line of not sending troops. They need to weigh the benefit of each step against the risk of escalation. It is unclear whether in the long term peace can be achieved with more weapons, as some leaders have recently suggested. Most importantly, as the war drags on, politicians should provide their voters with a persuasive strategy for how to avoid being drawn into it and the likely prospect of stopping the fighting.

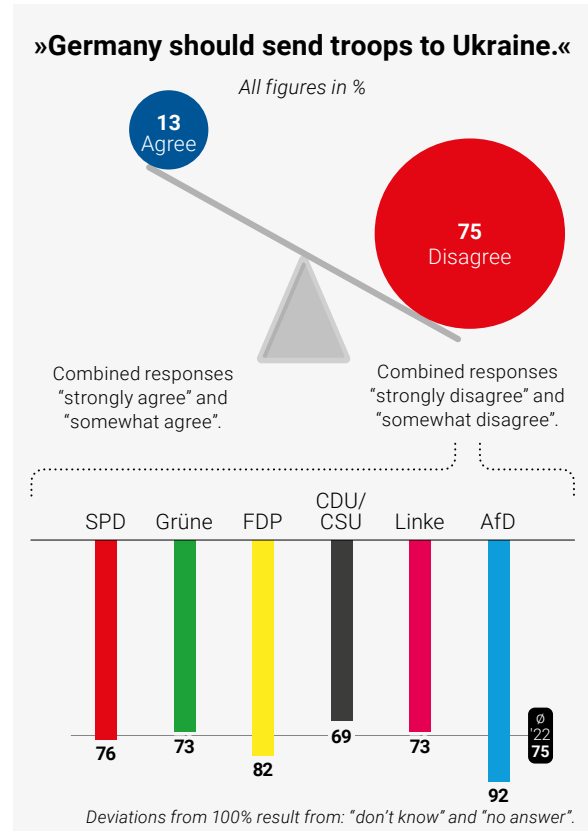


Germany in the EU context

The war is a dramatic challenge to and the biggest test yet of European unity. Germany's *Zeitenwende* did not happen in a vacuum and impacts the country's relations with its EU neighbours. Our polls show that Russia's war against Ukraine has induced changes in people's perceptions that put Germany on a path of convergence with its Eastern neighbours, notably Poland and Latvia. The convergence can be traced in worries, threat perceptions and responses to the Russian aggression, ranging from sanctions to weapons deliveries. There are even majorities in all four countries for building a European army. However, behind this unity major differences remain. They pertain to strategic questions of dealing with China, pathways towards ending the war as well as future organisation of security in Europe. This is exemplified by the question on Ukraine's potential membership of the EU and NATO: Latvians and Poles are strong supporters, while Germans and French are much more sceptical.

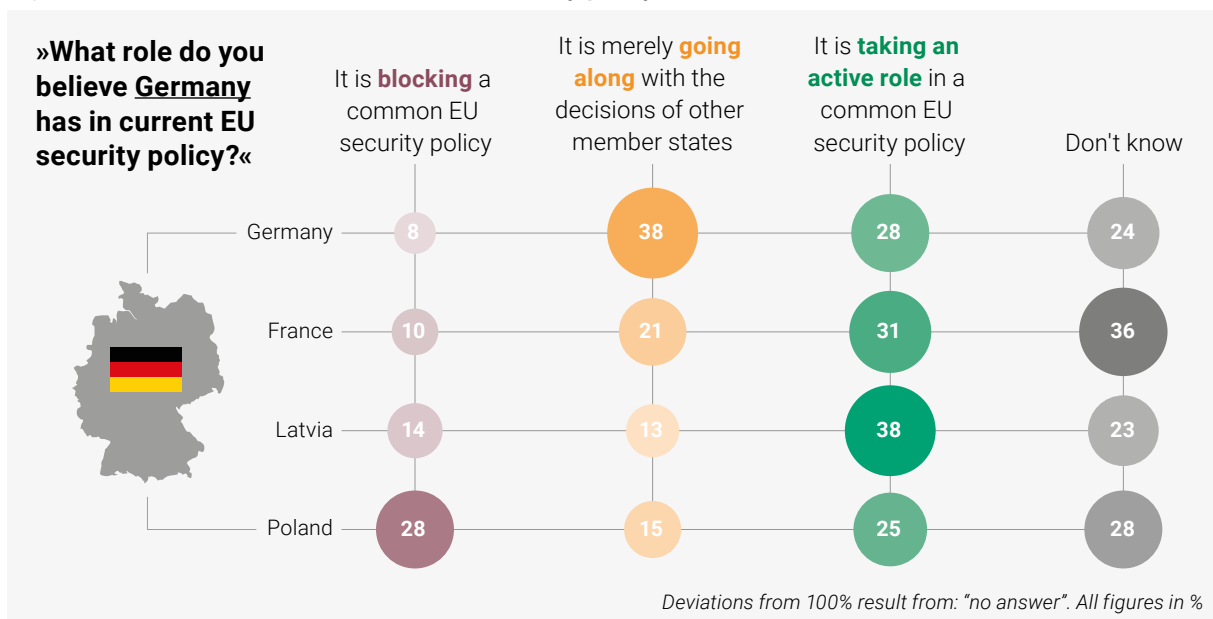
These differences are exacerbated by the lack of mutual trust between the countries of the »Weimar triangle« – comprising Germany, France and Poland – which was once expected to lead the EU. Coupled with the belief of some German respondents (38%) that their own country is merely going along with the decisions of other EU member states rather

Figure 14: Sending troops



than taking an active role in the common security policy (28%), this may prove a brittle foundation for making the EU a strong actor capable of shaping its neighbourhood and providing for its own security.

Figure 15: Role of countries in current EU security policy





Conclusion

Russia's war against Ukraine has accelerated political developments in Europe and Germany and triggered transformative processes in the realms of defence, alliance cooperation, energy transition and EU enlargement. One year since Chancellor Scholz's seminal speech in the Bundestag proclaiming a watershed in European security and German foreign policy, the *Zeitenwende* has undoubtedly started to manifest itself not only in politics but also in the minds of Germans.

Sustainability of public support

The extent and speed of the changes occurring in German policy is not to be underestimated, given its history. The culture of restraint is deeply ingrained into German institutions, policies and perceptions, framed as a »principled scepticism« towards the use of military means, as well as a reluctance to move without previously building a consensus among allies. Basic underlying tenets include »war never again«, »Auschwitz never again« and »always embedded in alliances«. This legacy has not been called into question in the minds of the German people. But it may be at odds with political decisions that may set Germany on the path to becoming (once again) the greatest military power in Europe, with a related requirement, if not an aspiration, to lead, even against resistance of partner countries.

The post-Second World War legacy not only shaped a strong military force-averse, pro-European stance in Germany but also solidified a worldview that can be characterised as »peace by interdependence«, based on the assumed improbability of war between mutually dependent trade partners exemplified by European integration. The underlying premise of German economic and trade policy – peaceful relations through intertwined economies – has been severely shaken by the war but still seems to enjoy support among Germans.

In this context, the significance of Germany's economic decoupling and people's support for it is not to be underestimated. However, we are at the very beginning of the process, when the long-term costs and consequences are not yet clear, whether for politicians or the broader public. Energy prices are likely to remain high for the foreseeable future and may put a huge strain on German competitiveness, putting many jobs at risk. And while decoupling from Russia appears doable, reducing dependence

on China, Germany's main trade partner and, increasingly, competitor, will probably prove far less feasible and more costly, affecting peoples' livelihoods more directly.

Overall, the economic transformations associated with the *Zeitenwende* may prove the biggest challenge for an export champion heavily reliant on its energy-intensive industrial base and largely dependent on fossil fuels and global value chains. German taxpayers and voters are not yet aware of the huge upcoming costs and may be less willing to bear them than a snapshot of opinion from autumn 2022 suggests, especially if coupled with high (and further rising?) military expenditure.

So far, people broadly support the new German foreign policy. This support is impressive, given the huge challenges at hand. But the *Zeitenwende* is not yet complete and some hard choices await society and political leaders. Much depends on the outcome of the war. People in Europe, but also the combatants seem to be in for a long haul. No decisive turn of the tide on the battlefield has been achieved in recent months, and no prospect of a diplomatic settlement is in sight. Neither escalation nor protracted conflict can be ruled out. Finding a settlement that is palatable to the Ukrainian people, preserves the remainder of the rules-based order and reduces the risk of a resumption of hostilities or renewed Russian attacks is a huge challenge.

A cautious conclusion can be drawn from our polls that German public opinion seems to have been trailing tectonic policy shifts rather than heralding them. Very serious political decisions, some of which involved amending the constitution, happened very quickly and were not preceded by an adequate public debate. On the contrary, public deliberations



focussed rather on the weapons systems delivered to Ukraine than on the long-term consequences of the *Zeitenwende* for Germany. This was made possible by the economic cushions provided by the government against the immediate effects of the war. The ability to soften the effects could change soon, because the Liberal coalition partner is insisting on adhering to the debt brake provisions in the coming years. This could set investments in defence over

against social expenditure. In this context, with the security situation highly volatile and the long-term economic repercussions uncertain, public support for government policies and willingness to pay the price may wither. That could hamper the government's long-term ability to continue its support for Ukraine – militarily and financially – as it crucially depends on the continued backing of the voters.

Young people

Young people in Germany (18–29 years old) demonstrate slightly different response patterns from older generations (particularly those 40+).

Young respondents are the only age group with **no majority in favour of increased military spending** (41%, compared with 52% on average). Compared with the 2021 poll, young people have hardly changed their views, while other age groups have shifted their opinion fundamentally from rejection to endorsement.

Young respondents seem to put somewhat **more faith in a future together with Russia and China** than older people. This is visible in slightly higher support for collaboration with these countries and a slightly lower perception of contradictory interests. While overwhelming majorities of young people think that Russia is a threat, the share is somewhat lower than among older and especially the oldest respondents. Notably, before the war opinions were almost identical across age groups.

In a similar vein, young respondents are **less in favour of decoupling from Russia and China** (possibly because they are more aware of the negative economic consequences). Similarly, young people are not inclined to take sides in case of a conflict abroad (39%, compared with 55% on average).

More alarmingly, multilateral international organisations such as the **UN and the OSCE garner less support** among young respondents than among older ones. The same trend was observed in 2021.

Scepticism of the United States is also more widespread among young respondents: 36% regard the

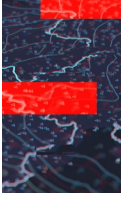
country as a threat to European security, compared with the average of 28%.

Perhaps most disquietingly, the pervasive German **culture of restraint is less pronounced** among young respondents. Endorsement of military interventions (41%) is much higher than among the 50+ generation (25%). Young people view **military instruments** of foreign policy as more effective and more legitimate than older respondents, as they did in 2021. In response to the war raging in Ukraine, a **readiness to send troops** among the young is twice the average (26% compared with 13%).

On the bright side, young people stand out as a **strongly pro-EU** age group. This includes strong support among young respondents for **Ukrainian membership of the EU**. An absolute majority favour such a step, unlike among other age groups (52%, compared with 44% on average). A much stronger endorsement of Ukrainian EU membership was observed among young people already in 2021, when overall levels of support were low.

A combination of a strong pro-European stance and less scepticism of military instruments does not seem to translate into strong support for a European army, however. Young people's support has increased slightly in the course of the war (from 46% to 49%), but still falls short of a majority and is lower than the 2022 average (53%).

Last but not least, young respondents more than other age groups **trust German leadership** in EU security policy (36% compared with 26% on average).



Eastern Germany

Thirty-five years since the reunification of Germany, differences in public opinion between east and west remain marked. Respondents in eastern Germany oppose increased military spending and further weapons deliveries to Ukraine, display an ingrained scepticism towards the United States and NATO, and are strong proponents of a pragmatic foreign policy (cooperation with non-like minded states). The culture of restraint is more pronounced among respondents from the East. Moreover, eastern Germans are eager to stay out of the war in Ukraine (53% think that no third country should

intervene in the war, in contrast to a mere 35% in West Germany).

Prior to the war eastern Germans' views of Russia were systematically more benign than those of western Germans. This has changed radically in the course of a year, and the extent of rethinking Russia's role is often stronger among people from the East, thus narrowing the gap to the West. But differences in perceptions persist, with western Germans remaining the more pronounced »Russia hawks«. Policy (36% compared with 26% on average).

Political parties

Strong differences of opinion along party lines are striking in Germany. A comparison of response patterns in our polls allows several observations.

Social democratic voters overall seem to back the strong policy changes introduced by the SPD-led government. Their shift of views on Russia and China is the strongest across all parties. They have also changed their opinions more dramatically than others on the increased military budget. SPD voters are the strongest backers of the OSCE.

Green voters follow similar patterns to Social Democrats and display the strongest values-based approach to foreign policy issues. They are sceptical of military measures, however, and display the strongest pro-EU and pro-Ukraine stances.

Conservative (CDU/CSU) voters have changed their opinions, too, but not to the same degree as voters to the left of the political spectrum. They are the strongest proponents of an interest-based approach to foreign policy and are least restrained regarding military instruments, interventions and military spending.

Liberal voters, next to conservatives, seem to be more focused on the negative economic repercussions of economic decoupling policies and are less prepared to decouple from Russia and China. Their views seldom coincide with those of voters of the other two coalition parties, the Greens and the SPD.

Voters for Die Linke have clearly changed their attitude towards Russia but do not seem to have abandoned a peace-driven stance. Attitudes to NATO and the United States tend to be sceptical.

AfD voters display an isolationist stance and are the only group that do not seem to have changed their opinion of Russia.

FES ROCPE in Vienna

Established in 2016, the FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe (FES ROCPE) addresses today's profound challenges to European security. It also works closely with the OSCE towards revitalising cooperative security.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 was a watershed moment for security in Europe and has rendered obsolete previous visions of European order. A new Cold War or even more unstable relations between Russia and the West are the probable outcome of this war, creating an environment of confrontation and containment in Europe. At the same time, planetary challenges such as climate change or pandemics continue to threaten peace and security and require cooperative approaches.

In these uncertain times, FES ROCPE continues to develop new ideas under the aegis of solution-oriented policymaking, together with experts, politicians and policy planners from Eastern Europe, Russia, the EU and the US. The aim is to tackle interconnected security challenges, contribute to conflict resolution and strengthen the idea of common and indivisible security in Europe in the spirit of the Paris and Istanbul Charters (1990/1999). It is our belief that organisations such as the FES have a responsibility to come up with new ideas and to introduce them into the political process in Europe.

Our activities include:

- regional and international workshops aimed at developing new concepts on stabilising the security situation in Europe, dealing with conflicts and achieving lasting peace in Europe;
- maintaining a regional network of young professionals working on de-escalation, cooperation and peace in Europe;
- regular public opinion polling on security matters;
- cooperation with the OSCE in the three dimensions of security: the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human.

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