

Press release

European security needs more than weapons: Germany's leading peace research institutes present their 2025 Peace Report

Berlin, 2 June 2025. War in the Ukraine and Gaza, authoritarian state restructuring in the US, power shifts in the international order: Europe must take greater responsibility for its own security in the future. In so doing, Germany and Europe's military defence capabilities must be linked to long-term peacebuilding strategies. This is what Germany's leading peace research institutes recommend in their 2025 Peace Report. Entitled 'The Struggle to Save Peace' (Frieden retten!), the report presents concrete recommendations for Germany's domestic, foreign and defence policies.

According to the 2025 Peace Report, global conflict has intensified in recent years: in 2024, more than 122 million people were fleeing war and violence. The war in Gaza has claimed more than 53,000 lives and largely destroyed the area. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which violates international law, is destabilising Europe. The armed conflict in Sudan has caused the world's largest humanitarian catastrophe. The 2025 Peace Report also notes fundamental shifts in power in the international community and recommends that Europe urgently strengthen its independence in security policy. Under Trump, the US is moving towards autocracy and is no longer a global anchor of stability. The polarisation between the democratic West and the authoritarian alliance around China and Russia is weakening international institutions and increasing the potential for conflict.

Military deterrence and arms control

The Trump administration has plunged NATO and thus the European security architecture into a deep crisis. The Peace Report analyses the challenges: the European Union must develop strategies to ensure its defence – especially against the threat from Russia – in the long term, independently of the US. Gaps in military capabilities must be closed, arms procurement must be Europeanised, and joint defence structures must be expanded. The aim must be to defend against military threats and prevent future ones through deterrence, military capabilities and alliance building. At the same time, however, arms control and diplomatic initiatives must ensure that conflicts do not escalate.

Warning: Contagious! Why Trump's policies threaten democracy in Germany and Europe

The Peace Report analyses how the radical policy change under US President Trump is affecting democracy in Germany and Europe. The 2025 Peace Report warns of the threat of 'authoritarian contagion' from Trump's policy of intimidation, his contempt for rules and his attempts to assert power beyond the law and institutions. For European democracies, it is more important than ever to defend their own liberal values, oppose external influence on elections and combat disinformation.

Europe is not alone: new alliances for a rules-based world order

The current situation requires a strong response from Europe in foreign and security policy. This requires the EU to agree on common positions. In addition, Europe must seek international partners to protect and advance the achievements of the multilateral, rules-based order. This includes free trade, collective security and climate protection. New partnerships can also help to mitigate the increasing polarisation of the international community into opposing camps and contain conflicts.

Germany's credibility lies in defending international law!

The wars in the Ukraine and Gaza have dramatically highlighted the dehumanisation of modern warfare, which primarily affects the civilian population. Core norms of international law and human rights are being massively violated. The authors of the Peace Report call on German politicians to protect international law, comply with it themselves and to defend the neutrality of humanitarian aid. International courts, such as the International Criminal Court, play an important role in maintaining a sustainable multilateral peace order, which must not be hijacked by political interests.

'Forgotten' conflict in Sudan: International efforts are insufficient

While the wars in the Ukraine and Gaza attract media and political attention, other wars are largely ignored. The conflict in Sudan has triggered an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Since the war began in April 2023, at least 125,000 people have died, over 24 million people are at risk of acute hunger, and more than 12 million people have been displaced. The warring parties receive external support from third countries and other external actors in the form of financial aid. They profit from the illegal trade in weapons and raw materials. The Peace Report therefore considers it urgently necessary for Germany to advocate at the EU level for the extension of economic sanctions and stricter regulation of international gold trading and arms deliveries. In addition, civil society actors on the ground, such as the 'Emergency Response Rooms', which have already helped with peace and stability in the past, should be supported.

Humanity and fair burden sharing in European refugee policy

Wars and violence in their home countries are forcing people to flee. Right-wing parties are exploiting this situation to stir up fears, for example of rising crime rates. The Peace Report shows that these fears are not supported by facts. It recommends investing in the integration of refugees instead of in the significantly more cost-intensive infrastructure for deportations and border security. Within the EU, the German government should advocate for a solidarity-based immigration policy. The individual right to protection from persecution and threats to life must be upheld.

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Link to the current Peace Report

The central recommendations of the German peace and conflict research institutes to the German Federal Government are also available in English on the website of the Peace Report. The complete Peace Report (in German) with detailed information, figures and assessments on the individual aspects is available to download at: www.friedensgutachten.de. The Peace Report is published by transcript Verlag.
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Events

Following the federal press conference, the research institutes will present the Peace Report to the federal ministries and parliamentary groups. On 3 June at 6 p.m., the Evangelische Akademie zu Berlin invites you to an evening forum at the EKD building, Charlottenstr. 53/54, 10117 Berlin, to discuss the Peace Report. Information on this and other nationwide events can be found at www.friedensgutachten.de.



About the Peace Report and the publishing institutes

The Peace Report is an annual publication of the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (bicc), the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) at the University of Duisburg-Essen and the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF). Since 1987, Germany's leading peace and conflict research institutes have been analysing current international conflicts, identifying trends in international foreign, security and development policy, and making clear recommendations for policymakers. Interdisciplinary teams of authors work together on the chapters, contributing different perspectives.

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