DEMOCRACY AND SOCIETY 10.05.2022 | Martin Schulz

The time to support the Global South is now

The war in Ukraine has monopolised the Global North's attention and resources when the Global South is still dealing with the effect of many crises

While the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is shaking up the European security order, other parts of the world are being particularly affected by the war's 'side effects'. The struggle against the economic consequences of the pandemic and the effects of the climate crisis were already posing major challenges for many developing countries. The war in Ukraine is now making the situation even more difficult to manage, and adding new crisis dynamics as well.

As a result of the Russian invasion, for example, the prices of bread, petrol, and fertiliser are rapidly increasing in the countries of the Global South. At the same time, many exporting countries have restricted food exports, so that in many places food shortages are looming. In view of these developments, the risk of famine is growing, as is the risk of protests that lead to unrest. In addition, there is concern that donor countries could become less willing and less resourced to support the Global South, due to new commitments related to the war in Ukraine. Yet these are now needed more urgently than ever. We, Europeans, must counter these fears. Support for Ukraine and a strong commitment to the Global South must not be mutually exclusive.

International solidarity and the adherence to a global commitment

Two examples from Africa show why our commitment to the Global South remains important. First, the Horn of Africa is experiencing its worst drought in 40 years. Up to 20 million people are acutely threatened by hunger. At the same time, due to the war in Europe, the prices for food and fertiliser are spiking. Until now, over one third of east Africa's grain imports have come from Russia or Ukraine; but since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, deliveries have plummeted. The region's national

budgets are massively indebted after two years of pandemic and economic restrictions, and cannot absorb the price increases. Meanwhile, the UN World Food programme, which sources more than half of its grain from Ukraine and Russia, lacks the resources to combat impending famines. The appeals to the international community are becoming more and more desperate.

Secondly, in West Africa it is becoming increasingly difficult to protect the civilian population. The climate crisis has already led to increased risks of conflict in the Sahel region, among other places, because pastureland and water sources are shrinking. The lack of economic prospects, non-existent public services and a lack of security are giving people greater incentives to join violent groups. The region's military forces often fight against such groups, without regard for the civilian population. Increasingly, Russian weapons and military advisors are also being used.

As the Global North, we have benefited from colonialism and globalisation for centuries while we live at the expense of the countries of the Global South, who are not only suffering the most from the climate crisis but have also contributed to it the least.

Locally coordinated support for human security, which is also promoted by German and European development cooperation, and international peacekeeping missions, such as the one in Mali, can make an important contribution to protecting the local civilian population. The continuation of the MINUSMA mission and Germany's participation in it have been a subject of debate, especially since the withdrawal from Afghanistan last summer. The war in Ukraine now raises the question more strongly as to whether a commitment is still viable when the current threat is so close to home. However, Germany's withdrawal from the Sahel region would deprive the civilian population of necessary protection and make it more difficult to provide humanitarian aid. That would be a fatal signal to the local population. It would also hardly constitute convincing evidence of Europe's willingness to assume more global responsibility in the future.

These two examples illustrate that we should intensify rather than scale back cooperation with the Global South now. Our international solidarity requires that we adhere to our global commitment to comprehensive human security both within and outside Europe. As the Global North, we have benefited from colonialism and globalisation for

centuries while we live at the expense of the countries of the Global South, who are not only suffering the most from the climate crisis, but have also contributed to it the least. It is part of our global responsibility to continue to support these countries right now – especially when they are being acutely affected by the effects of war in Europe.

Being a reliable European partner

Europe's commitment to this is more broadly based than that of other partners of the Global South. Russia, China, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates work almost exclusively with governments – regardless of whether or not they are democratic. Europe, on the other hand, also cooperates with legislative bodies, the judiciary and civil society. Whether combatting hunger, protecting the civilian population, enforcing human and employee rights in global supply chains, or strengthening democratic scope, civil actors in the Global South count on European support. This is not to be expected from Russia and China. In most countries in the Global South, a majority of the population wish to realise opportunities that only democracies guarantee. Continuing the common commitment to social and political rights worldwide – without being naive in terms of foreign policy – must therefore be part of the *Zeitenwende*.

We need to make concrete and fair offers to the Global South that will make the EU a more attractive partner than it has been thus far.

Continuing a strong global engagement is also essential for Europe in geostrategic terms. No other region of the world benefits from the rules-based multilateral order as much as the EU, which has built its prosperity and supply chains on its reliability. Therefore, the hitherto underestimated deglobalisation that currently poses a threat along exclusive zones of influence constitutes a particular risk, given the special integration of European prosperity into a global division of labour. This is all the more reason for Europe to commit itself to preserving this rules-based order beyond its borders.

To do this, we need partners. However, in order to find them, we will need to make more intensive efforts than in the past. The circle of the EU, the G7, NATO, and the OECD is too small. We need to make concrete and fair offers to the Global South that will make the EU a more attractive partner than it has been thus far. This is not out of altruism, but a rational approach in mutual interest. After all, if we want to secure majorities for a rules-based multilateral order in your own interest, we have to be the partner of first choice for the developing countries and for common political projects.

The need for critical assessment

The abstentions of some developing and emerging countries in the vote on the Ukraine resolution in the UN General Assembly in early March is therefore a warning signal. Among the more than 140 countries that voted for the resolution were primarily those in the Global South where Europe is particularly engaged and which tend to be democracies. However, we should also look to the reasons that led certain countries to abstain, and derive constructive policy approaches from this. For many countries in the Global South, an increasingly multipolar world is also one in which they can reduce dependencies on Europe and the US and diversify partnerships. For such countries, Russia is increasingly one of these partners – for example as the largest arms exporter to Africa, but also in the area of grain export. A clear positioning vis-à-vis Russia is therefore more difficult in the case of some countries.

Europe should respond to this in a constructive way. Future cooperation should not be based on categories of 'reward' or 'punishment' for voting behaviour. Instead, the opportunities to jointly shape global challenges should be emphasised. Countries such as India and South Africa abstained from the vote in the General Assembly, among other reasons, because they assume that we have double standards, for example in the case of fighting the pandemic. However, these two countries are not the only ones that remain decisive partners for rules-based multilateralism. Therefore, we need to be making more competitive offers to the Global South. For this we need a new framework of cooperation and a better understanding of the other parties' interests.

Our cooperation must be more strategically positioned than in the past. This will require greater coherence between the various political areas in Europe. Approaches in foreign, development, climate and economic policy must mesh with each other. Despite the increased demand for defence funding, the extensive humanitarian and development policy commitment must be maintained. In the end, every euro spent on crisis prevention saves many times the expenditure than dealing with the consequences of the crisis would entail. Every euro spent on protecting democracy creates a foundation for political stability.

In a world in which many developing countries are being courted by various potential partners, a fairer EU trade policy takes on

A critical assessment of one's own actions is always a prerequisite for a change in policy. In the past we have too often confused short-term security with long-term stability. For example, Europe's cooperation with African autocrats to control migration to Europe and, supposedly, strengthen regional security was a mistake. This

geopolitical importance.

cost us trust among those who – with growing success – protest against these autocrats and may soon assume government responsibilities. Establishing commercial interests that protect the interests of individual European industries but limit the creation of added value in the Global South makes it easier for other actors to make more attractive offers – for example in the establishment of economic infrastructure. In a world in which many developing countries are being courted by various potential partners, a fairer EU trade policy takes on geopolitical importance. Through it, we can win the partners we need.

Europe's advantage remains its capacity for multi-dimensional cooperation with the Global South. There it experiences a high degree of recognition – our partners from politics, civil society and trade unions from São Paulo to Bamako to Dhaka agree on this point. An increasingly multipolar world needs more international commitment rather than less. This also amounts to one way in which our political approach to the new era must be measured.



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