

## Guido Westerwelle on Foreign Policy

Germany's prospective new foreign minister answers IP

With Germany's federal election results pointing to new Christian Democrats–Free Democrats coalition government, FDP leader Guido Westerwelle is poised to become Germany's new foreign minister. IP asked Westerwelle for his response to the most pressing issues of German foreign policy, from the European Union and transatlantic relations to Iran and the Afghanistan mission.

### IP: **Europe**

In the wake of the decision handed down by Germany's Constitutional Court, what are the prospects for the European project if the role of national parliaments is to be strengthened? Can Germany continue to function as a motor of integration? And is the issue now one of expanding or of deepening the Union?

**Westerwelle:** Expanding and deepening the European Union are not contradictory objectives. However, the most pressing issue at the moment is to ensure that the European Union is able to continue fulfilling its vital function. The Lisbon Treaty is a milestone in this respect and an important prerequisite for the success of all subsequent steps towards integration.

The German Constitutional Court's ruling on Lisbon emphasizes that in transferring sovereign rights, a

particular responsibility for integration falls to the legislature. The Lisbon Treaty provides for the transfer of sovereign rights by nation states to the Union, in many cases without requiring formal ratification. The court's ruling makes it very clear that this is not possible without the parliament's agreement. The necessary democratic legitimation needs to come from the citizens, not governments.

At the same time, it is vital that Germany retains its capacity to act at an international and a European level. The Constitutional Court has also taken this into account by emphasizing the compatibility of European law and the German constitution. Germany's role as a motor of integration is not called into question by this ruling. Germany is part of a federation of states whose historical success is based on a capacity for compromise and the renunciation of national unilateral-

ism. Equally important is the fact that only those with a degree of flexibility can hope to exert a significant influence on policy at the EU level.

**IP: The Transatlantic Relationship**  
Junior partner or equal partner? What has Europe got to offer the United States, and can it deliver? .

**Westerwelle:** For many people the United States has always represented freedom, prosperity, and justice. For this reason many Germans looked to it during the difficult era of the Cold War and afterward—including Germans on the other side of the Iron Curtain, where the U.S. always exerted an enormous appeal. Over the last eight years this image has been fractured by the many external and internal policy mistakes of the previous U.S. administration. By electing Barack Obama as their president, Americans have emphatically illustrated their capacity for political change. It is important to bear in mind that what distinguishes Obama from his predecessor is more the means than the ends—dialogue rather than isolation, integration rather than containment, cooperation rather than unilateralism, the power of law rather than the law of the powerful.

A glance at the international political issues we are facing—Afghanistan, Iran, proliferation, free trade instead of protectionism, climate change, HIV/AIDS, and many others—makes it clear that there are no two regions in the world that share more values and interests with one another than Europe and the United States. Experience has shown that neither partner can solve these problems alone. For this reason it is in all our interests that

the nations of the West stand together when facing the challenges of the 21st century. We want and need a close alliance with United States.

The role of Germany and Europe in relation to the United States has unarguably undergone a fundamental change over the last twenty years. As a “frontline state” in the Cold War, Germany’s role in U.S. foreign policy was very different from today. My party regards the current German government’s failure to seize the opportunity to influence American foreign-policy reorientation in the wake of the presidential election as an enormous failure of judgment. The

German government wasted its chance to present its own ideas and proposals and thus to influence the reorientation of U.S. geostrategy. One reason was that the enthusiasm for Barack Obama in Germany was nowhere less evident than in the German government.

**IP: Germany in Afghanistan**  
Exit strategy or commitment to engagement?

**Westerwelle:** We want to end every German military deployment as quickly as is realistically possible. However, it is important not to create the impression that “exit strategy” and “commitment to engagement” are somehow alternatives that lead to the same goal. Withdrawing from Afghanistan now would mean again abandoning the country to radical Islamists who first terrorize their own people and then extend their terrorism to the world at large. The images of public executions

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and the destruction of religious sites by the Taliban remain in my mind as clearly as the images of 9/11. These things cannot be allowed to happen again. At the same time it is very clear that outside actors cannot guarantee that such acts of terror will not occur.

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Consequently, we need to ensure as quickly as possible that the Afghans are able to provide security within their own country so that development in other areas can move forward. Then we will have reached the point where we can start a staged withdrawal of the international military presence. In the case of police training, the German government has been far too slow in meeting its own, self-imposed obligations. A precipitous withdrawal will only result in Kabul once again becoming the capital of world terrorism. Our engagement in Afghanistan is not based on altruism. We are there to protect our own security interests.

### **IP: Difficult States**

How can Iran be prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons? And what is our plan B: How should we deal with a nuclear-armed Iran? Lastly, how can Germany and Europe contribute to a peaceful solution in the Middle East?

**Westerwelle:** The dispute with the Iranian government over its nuclear program is one key aspect of the Iran situation. The other key aspect is the series of demonstrations in the wake of Iran's presidential election. It is extraordinary to see so many, above all young people, in Iran engaging in

the struggle for the rule of law and democracy. In Iran we are seeing a generation of extremely well-educated and Western-oriented people take a stand. They see the opportunities the world has to offer them obstructed by the current regime and its policies. These are people who want to take advantage of globalization's possibilities. They rightfully regard enemy stereotypes, conflicts, and self-isolation as restricting their freedom to structure their lives as they wish. Repressive measures cannot easily cap the spirit with which these people are struggling for a better future.

Finding a solution to the dispute over Iran's nuclear program is proving so difficult for the parties involved in part because their relationship with one another is so complex. One of the keys to finding a solution lies without doubt in the relationship between Iran and the United States. In his Cairo speech, President Obama confirmed a change in policy and took an initial, courageous step. In expressing his admiration for Iranian culture and offering direct negotiations, he unambiguously differentiated his approach from his predecessor's policies of containment and escalation. Obama has proved his capacity for de-escalation without at the same time appearing naïve. This approach is correct because it prevents the hard-liners in Teheran from being able to present the West as a provocateur, which is exactly what they are trying to do in the face of the internal political pressures they face. Another obvious key element that can contribute to the diffusion of the nuclear dispute is the implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), that is, a consis-

tent policy of disarmament and arms control. Two fundamental elements of the NPT are the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and the guaranteed right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The more seriously the existing nuclear powers take their obligation to help create a world free of nuclear weapons, the greater credence they will have in the eyes of states like Iran, who find the prospect of possessing a nuclear arsenal extremely tempting. As regards the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, we need creative approaches that can balance the energy needs of one country with the legitimate security interests of all the others. The idea of a multilateral arrangement for overseeing the nuclear fuel cycle is an approach that may be helpful. And, as is the case of all questions regarding disarmament and arms control, the issue of how such schemes are to be monitored is, of course, crucial.

Regarding the Middle East conflict, the FDP has long been proposing a regional approach modeled on the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) process. Experience has shown that it makes little sense to approach the different conflicts in the region separately because they are simply too interconnected. We therefore need to try to integrate all relevant parties into a framework of negotiation that avoids the kind of highly charged situations that repeatedly develop between different stakeholders. My own party's view is that ensuring Israel can exist in peace and within secure borders is a goal that Germany will always remain obligated to, but that this cannot be separated from the need for an independent, vi-

able Palestinian state.

Germany is in a position to contribute to the resolution the Middle East conflict because we not only enjoy a close friendship with Israel but also have a good reputation in large parts of the Arab world. Furthermore, the fact that we have convincingly overcome the obstacles created by the Cold War proves our ability to diffuse and ultimately overcome even the most entrenched political antagonism. We now need to apply our experience and skills to the resolution of the Middle-East conflict.

At the same time, it would be a great over-estimation to imagine that Germany and Europe alone might somehow be able to find a solution that has eluded the region for decades. The United States, Russia, and the United Nations all need to play a major role if a viable and peaceful solution to the problems of the Middle East is to be found.

It is also for this reason that I wholeheartedly support President Obama's early and intensive engagement with the Middle East and the fact that he has urged all parties to provide clear signals of their readiness to embrace peace and compromise.

### IP: New World Orders

There are a range of catch phrases and issues: "effective multilateralism" or "networked security," reform of the UN, WTO and IMF, expansion of the G-8 to the G-20: How should German foreign policy handle the rise of emerging powers?

Westerwelle: Emerging nations like

India, China, and Brazil have long ceased to be developing countries, and are now playing a decisive role in world politics. And their influence on world affairs will only increase in the future. The role such countries play in global security, energy, climate change,

health care, and food production is now central to any policy addressing these fields. In effect this consti-

tutes an enormous challenge for the West because we must cooperate more closely with states that do not necessarily share our values and in fact may actually violate them. On the one hand, we therefore have a strong interest in strengthening the United Nations and thus the rule of law in international relations. On the other hand, we need to call on emerging nations to assume a greater degree of responsibility in return for greater influence on international policy.

With regard to Afghanistan, for instance, China, Russia, and India are three large states that have just as little interest in seeing the return of the Taliban regime as we do in the West. However, the contributions of these countries to the stabilization of Afghanistan are comparatively modest at present. In my opinion, more engagement beyond the mere level of military involvement is needed and is also possible. On another level, the same could be said in relation to North Korea and even Iran.

Moreover, I do not believe we need to be reticent when it comes to asserting values such as universal human rights when confronted with their violation by emerging powers. In our opinion, the principle of non-interfer-

ence ceases to apply when universal human rights are being systematically violated.

The G-20 and the Doha Development Round illustrate the workings of a globalized world based on participation and cooperation. The reconciliation of interests functions best in multilateral organizations.

**IP: Your priorities for German foreign policy?**

**Westerwelle:** We Liberals want to see Germany taking a lead again in a consistent policy of disarmament and arms control. Such a policy creates greater security and increased trust. The trend we have seen in recent years—increasing mistrust and, as a consequence, the danger of a new arms build-up—needs to be reversed by home-grown initiatives. We consider it an enormous failure on Germany’s part to have remained so passive on the subject of disarmament and arms control, although our country enjoys a high degree of credibility in this area. Disarmament and arms control were key elements of rapprochement during the Cold War, and indeed in ending it. Germany has convincingly proved that enduring peace, freedom, and prosperity can be achieved without possessing weapons of mass destruction. This experience can provide a fruitful model. We Germans have no interest in seeing a new arms race on the European continent or in regions on our borders such as the Middle East. Moreover, we increasingly face the danger of terrorists obtaining weapons of mass destruction or the knowledge and technology required to build them. The greater the arms build-up at a state level, the

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more this danger increases. We therefore need to take decisive steps in the area of nuclear and conventional disarmament. We thoroughly endorse President Obama's commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. Germany could set an example by working within NATO toward the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons still stationed on our soil.

In relation to our neighbors, it is time we started looking eastward and extending the process of reconciliation and the development of close alliances that has been so successful to the west. I would like to see the same deep friendship between Germans and Poles as has now been established between Germans and the French. Germany and others have paid far too little attention to bilateral relationships within the European Union recently. It is clear that increasing the

internal cohesion of the European Union ultimately augments our capacity for action in the international arena. Internal European cohesion is based on the principle of equality of all members of the Union. The formation of alliances and "directorates" within the Union contradicts this principle and is therefore a mistake. German foreign

and European policy was so successful in the 80s and 90s because we took the interests of smaller states seriously and considered them when formulating our own policies. We have to find our way back to this kind of approach. It is a scandal that the government's policy toward smaller European countries is so conspicuously marked by derogatory statements from our finance minister. It is time we started extending the process of reconciliation eastward.