

Zeitenwende Wendezeiten

Special Edition of the Munich Security Report on
German Foreign and Security Policy

October 2020

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Tobias Bunde
Laura Hartmann
Franziska Stärk
Randolf Carr
Christoph Erber
Julia Hammelehle
Juliane Kabus

With guest contributions by Elbridge Colby, François Heisbourg, Toomas Hendrik Ilves,
Andrey Kortunov, Shivshankar Menon, David Miliband, Ana Palacio, Kevin Rudd,
Anne-Marie Slaughter, Nathalie Tocci, and Huiyao Wang.

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Foreword



Wolfgang Ischinger

Dear Reader,

In recent years, the Munich Security Conference (MSC) has highlighted a wide variety of security policy issues at its events in all corners of the world – from Madrid to Minsk, from Tel Aviv to New York, from Abuja to Stavanger. In doing so, we focused primarily on international challenges.

At our events, however, we were increasingly confronted with questions about Germany's positions – sometimes with fear and unease about whether Berlin was, for example, taking certain threats seriously enough – but almost always with great expectations of our country. At home, on the other hand, people still regularly underestimate how important our country is now considered to be almost everywhere in the world. People pay close attention to what is said or done in Berlin – or what is not. This was one more reason we decided to turn our gaze inwards for a change. The question of how exactly our country can contribute to meeting security policy challenges “earlier, more decisively, and more substantially,” as then Federal President Joachim Gauck and then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier demanded at the Munich Security Conference in 2014, should occupy us even more intensively in the future.

One result is this special edition of the Munich Security Report (MSR) with a focus on German foreign and security policy. Thirty years after German unification and six years after the speeches of what is often called the “Munich consensus,” we provide an overview of the strategic position of German foreign policy.

The report speaks of a *Zeitenwende*, the turn of an era in world politics, that has seen the erosion of almost every fundamental certainty of German foreign policy. From this arises a tremendous need for adaptation – the coming years must become a turning point if we want to develop the strategies, processes, and instruments to deal with the new dimension of security policy challenges. For although Germany has assumed “more responsibility” in one form or another since 2014, the demand for German leadership has grown much faster than the supply in recent years. The report highlights our country’s dependence on the liberal international order as well as German investments in foreign, development, and defense policy. Based on a representative survey conducted specifically for this report, it provides an overview of public opinion and discusses the need for reform in the foreign policy decision-making process.

In another way, the report also marks a turning point for the Munich Security Conference itself. We have used the months during which no events could take place due to the coronavirus pandemic to further develop the MSC. This included moving our Munich headquarters to the Amerika-Haus, an internal restructuring, a strengthening of our think-tank activities, as well as a revamp of the MSC's corporate design. This special edition is the first MSC product to appear in a new guise. In addition to improved readability of our font types and greater clarity of our graphics, we have also slightly adapted our logo to emphasize the MSC's core idea of dialogue, debate, and interaction even more strongly. We are looking forward to your reactions!

As always, we would like to thank our many partners who have contributed to the report in one way or another. This applies, of course, to the staff of the research institutions and authorities who provided us with data and material. Thanks are also due to our numerous high-ranking conversation partners in the Office of the Federal President, the Federal Government, the Bundestag, and the political parties who took the time to participate in extensive background discussions, the substance of which had a defining influence on the content of this report. We would also like to thank all of the international experts whose perspectives enriched the report as well as our sponsors who have enabled the expansion of MSC activities.

Finally, I would like to thank the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government for generously funding part of this project.

It is my hope that this text helps promote both understanding and support for a German and European foreign policy that can successfully confront the dramatic geopolitical changes and challenges we are facing.

Yours,
Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger
Chairman of the Munich Security Conference

Foreword by former Federal President Joachim Gauck



Joachim Gauck

When I opened the 50th Munich Security Conference in 2014 – more than six years ago – with my call for Germany, in the face of major global political challenges, to engage earlier, more decisively, and more substantially in foreign and security policy, it was a matter close to my heart. In many respects, our country has since taken on more responsibility – in dealing with crises and emergencies, reorienting NATO, or reacting to the coronavirus pandemic within the framework of the European Union. It is also true, however, that our commitment in some key areas still falls short of both the demands of a changed world and the expectations of our partners.

So my message today is essentially no different – only more urgent. For while German foreign policy is adapting to the changed situation, the situation is continuing to change. In view of what this report describes as a *Zeitenwende*, the turn of an era in world politics, our country needs courage and confidence. Foreign policy certainties may be dissolving, but we are not at the mercy of the passage of time. We can, if we want to, make an important contribution to holding Europe together and thus to defending our way of life, our liberal democratic order, and our interests in light of new challenges. Last but not least, it is important for Germany and Europe to make a contribution to the defense of universal values.

Much is – quite rightly – expected of our country. Foreign countries sometimes have more confidence in us than we have in ourselves. We can do little on our own, and without a strong German commitment, neither the European Union nor NATO will thrive in the long term. The future of the multilateral organizations most important for Germany depends on us now more than ever before.

The survey data in this report shows that foreign and security policy is by no means an issue that does not interest Germans: Almost two thirds of Germans are strongly or very strongly interested in foreign and security policy. And they see that we are facing major challenges: 75 percent believe that there will be more crises and conflicts in the coming years. Global political questions are certainly “bearable” for citizens, even if there are often no easy answers. It would be counterproductive if we tried to avoid foreign policy debates. It is evident that doing so only continues to raise the price of supposedly calming the public. In view of the changing security situation, we must discuss issues of alliance solidarity, the future of European defense, or even nuclear deterrence if we want to convince the population that Germany can and must make a greater contribution to the defense of the increasingly fragile West. This brings us to issues that, by the way, already played a central role in the early years of the Munich Security Conference and are now again the order of the day.

It is therefore a good thing that institutions like the Munich Security Conference have not let up and that they persist in putting foreign and security policy issues on the agenda. I wish the report many readers – and all of us a constructive debate on how Germany can live up to its responsibilities in Europe and the world.



Executive Summary

Thirty years after achieving reunification, Germany faces enormous challenges. Europe's security is under threat; Europe's democracies are on the defensive.

Context

We find ourselves in the midst of a *Zeitenwende*, the turn of an era, in which established foreign policy certainties of the Federal Republic are evaporating. This new situation is characterized by the dissolution of an international order built over decades, the rise of China, and a resurgence of power politics violating international norms. In addition, we are confronted with the dramatic consequences of climate change as well as rapid technological upheaval.

These trends are exacerbated by a gradual reorientation of the United States, the origins of which go farther back than 2016. Washington's relative power has declined. Today, the US is less able to act as guarantor of the international order and less willing to take on a disproportionate burden. Under President Trump, America no longer sees the maintenance of a rules-based international order and its institutions as a priority.

Many of these challenges are not new. For years, European democracies have been searching for answers. At the Munich Security Conference in 2014, leading representatives of the Federal Republic articulated what was later termed the "Munich consensus": Germany would be ready to assume "more responsibility" internationally and to act "earlier, more decisively and more substantially."

Six years later, it is evident that Germany has increased its foreign and security policy commitment in a number of areas. It has taken on a leading role in addressing crises, such as in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. It has increased its defense spending by about 40 percent since 2014. It has participated in military operations within the framework of the UN, EU, and NATO and has established a military presence on the eastern flank of the Alliance for the first time since the end of the Cold War. In 2020, together with

France, it proposed an unprecedented recovery package and thereby set the course for the EU to emerge stronger from the Covid-19 crisis.

And yet, Germany's commitment falls short not only of the expectations of its most important partners but also of the requirements arising from the strategic environment. German foreign policy is evolving, but the world around us is evolving even faster.

Since 2014, the erosion of the rules-based order has accelerated further. More than any other country, Germany had benefitted from this order which was to a large extent guaranteed by the United States. Accordingly, Germany is now disproportionately affected by its decline. Germany's "business model" is obsolete – both in economic and security policy terms. Piecemeal adjustments offer no solution.

Germany now faces a fateful decision: It can throw its weight behind the "European imperative," i.e. strengthening Europe in order to defend German and European interests. Or Germany can cling to the status quo and prepare itself for EU–Europe to mutate into an "appendage" dominated by other powers.

The dangers described here are understood by many observers. German policy-makers have repeatedly noted that we are experiencing the turn of an era in world politics, and that Europe must take its fate into its own hands. What has been lacking so far is the will within the political class to embark on a new German foreign policy that allows a "sovereign Europe" to emerge. The necessary building blocks for such a policy are not difficult to identify.

Tasks

The first task is to strengthen the EU and improve its ability to act. To do so, Germany must evolve from a status-quo power into an "enabling power." European sovereignty and the robust defense of European interests will be possible only if Germany takes on the leadership role which comes with being the EU's largest member state. It is clear that it will only be able to do so in close coordination with EU partners, first and foremost with France.

A German leadership role is a prerequisite for Europe's ability to act in all areas of foreign and security policy. This applies to dealing with global threats such as global warming, migration, or pandemics. It also applies to competition in the field of artificial intelligence and other strategic technologies.

Maintaining close relations with the EU's core ally, the United States, and preserving a US security role in Europe will also depend on a stronger and more convincing commitment by the European Union. Berlin should advocate for a European strategy toward the US that emphasizes common interests and communicates them through all available channels, not only to the administration in Washington, but also to the US Congress, the states, the business community, and civil society in the United States.

Strengthening the EU's capacity for action is also a prerequisite for a credible European policy toward Russia and China. Given China's rapid rise and policy changes under President Xi as well as the dynamic development of the Asia-Pacific region, there is an urgent need for a common EU policy on Asia.

Russia has challenged the fundamentals of the European security order. All attempts in recent years to enter into a constructive dialogue with Moscow have failed. Channels for dialogue must be kept open, but in the short term what is necessary is strengthening deterrence and defense and building resilience.

With regard to Europe's neighboring regions, in particular Africa and the Middle East, it will be crucial to establish a minimum of stability and to open up the potential for development.

Getting Organized

To enhance Europe's capacity for action, Germany must first define its strategic interests at the national level and modernize its foreign policy apparatus, including its decision-making processes.

The first step is to foster Germany's "strategic culture." A national strategy document submitted regularly by the German government, as is customary among all important allies and partners, is a necessity. Such a document and annual interim reports should be debated in the Bundestag and thereby help to raise public awareness. In any case, the Bundestag should, as many parliamentarians have proposed, debate basic questions of foreign policy more frequently.

Since the 1960s, the Federal Government's foreign and security policy apparatus has hardly evolved, even though the world around us has become increasingly complex and reaction times ever shorter. An improvement of decision-making structures, whether through a more systematic use of the Federal Security Council (Bundessicherheitsrat) or the creation of new coordination structures, appears necessary. Inevitably, in a coalition, such a restructuring will also be analyzed in terms of power gains and losses. However, on closer inspection, this would not be a zero-sum game for the ministries and coalition partners involved. As the example of our most important partners and allies shows, strong ministries and effective coordination are no contradiction.

Foreign and security policy in times of great upheaval must be backed up by sufficient resources. This applies equally to diplomacy, development cooperation, and defense. In a long-term comparison, spending on "international affairs" in the federal budget has fallen considerably as a proportion of the total budget and is no longer adequate in the current situation. The reduction of the US military presence in Europe – a trend that will continue regardless of the outcome of the US elections – will further increase requirements. Germany must mobilize more resources if Europe is to become a fully capable foreign policy actor.

The ability to act externally requires stability on the inside: The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically highlighted the importance of resilience. Together with its partners in the EU, the German government must examine whether we are sufficiently prepared when it comes to cyber security and other relevant areas.

Good foreign policy and the mobilization of sufficient resources require acceptance – and ideally active support – from citizens. That the public is aware of the gravity of the international challenges is evident in a new survey specifically conducted for the MSC: 75 percent of those polled expect more crises and conflicts in the coming years.

The survey confirms that Germans are open-minded and favor multilateralism. And Germans can be convinced to do more in foreign policy if politicians make the case. In addressing the Covid-19 crisis, Germany has shown leadership and has helped keep Europe together.

Now it is time to set the course for a German foreign policy that will make the European Union a capable and respected player in the world.



Introduction

1

The Munich Consensus

How has German foreign and security policy evolved since the speeches of the Munich consensus of 2014? Has Germany engaged “earlier, more decisively, and more substantially”?

The Munich Consensus

Tobias Bunde

The statement that Germany must assume “more international responsibility” has been part of the standard repertoire of foreign policy speeches or newspaper op-eds at least since the 2014 Munich Security Conference. “Earlier, more decisively, and more substantially” is how Germany needs to and wants to get involved on the international stage, said both Federal President Joachim Gauck and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.¹ Together with Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, who, in her speech, delivered the same message in different terms, Gauck and Steinmeier described what was subsequently referred to as the “Munich consensus.”²



“The key question is: has Germany already adequately recognized the new threats and the changing structure of the international order? Has it reacted commensurate with its weight? Has Germany shown enough initiative to ensure the future viability of the network of norms, friends and alliances which has brought us peace in freedom and democracy in prosperity?”²³

Federal President
Joachim Gauck,
Munich Security Conference,
January 31, 2014

“More responsibility,” all speakers emphasized, does not solely refer to the military. But the speeches in Munich were also a reaction to growing dissatisfaction among Germany’s partners, who asked themselves whether they could rely on Germany with regard to military matters in particular. The German government’s decision to abstain from the UN Security Council vote on the Libya intervention along with China and Russia, sending best wishes to its allies while withdrawing its own troops from NATO units in the Mediterranean, caused particular irritation.³ For some, Germany had become a prime example of a slacker or a free rider who benefitted from the international order but was not prepared to make a substantial commitment to preserving it.⁴ Others described Germany as a “nay-sayer nation” that was happy to export arms to the whole world but strictly refused to participate in military interventions to protect the weakest.⁵

The Libya decision was not the only issue, as Germany’s partners generally felt that German foreign and security policy did not do justice to Germany’s importance. Although other NATO members also imposed restrictions on the deployment of their troops in Afghanistan, Germany has been held up as a prime example of an excess of “caveats” that ran counter to solidarity within the alliance. As early as 2008, then US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned at the Munich Security Conference that NATO was in danger of becoming a two-tier alliance, with some members who were willing to fight and others who were not.⁶ Critics also complained of a lack of commitment at the strategic level. In the international discussion, Germany was at times even referred to as NATO’s “lost nation,” whose weakness was the alliance’s greatest problem.⁷ Others saw Germany as a “strategic black hole” at the heart of the alliance that did not offer any impetus whatsoever.⁸



“Indifference is never an option for a country like Germany – neither from a security perspective nor from a humanitarian perspective.”²⁴

Defense Minister
Ursula von der Leyen,
Munich Security Conference,
January 31, 2014

But the debate was also driven by the “strategic community” in Germany, which also largely believed that German foreign and security policy lagged far behind its capabilities. In particular, a joint paper by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and the German Marshall Fund, the title of which already referred to “new power” and “new responsibility,” moved the debate forward.⁹ What was needed, according to members of the working group, was “more creative determination, ideas, and initiatives.” So far, however, Germany had been, “selective and hesitant even in offering ideas or spearheading initiatives, at least in relation to its economic strength, geopolitical clout, and international standing. In this sense, at any rate, Germany remains a global player in waiting.”¹⁰

The speeches at the Munich Security Conference thus hit a nerve. After Federal President Gauck had finished his opening speech, the audience at the Bayerischer Hof seemed to breathe a collective sigh of relief. “We’ve been waiting ten years for this speech,” remarked a long-serving US diplomat in his initial reaction. But, of course, the question soon arose whether the Munich rhetoric would be translated into Berlin politics.¹¹

Time and again, members of the German government have reaffirmed the core elements of the “Munich consensus” in speeches at the Munich Security Conference. As has occasionally been noted, Chancellor Angela Merkel never reacted directly to the speeches of 2014 and avoided a similarly pointed statement. Yet, she has likewise described in what way Germany would assume more responsibility on several occasions in Munich.¹² What all these contributions had in common was that they spoke of “more responsibility” in the sense of an expanded concept of security – the idea that Germany wanted to become more involved in a variety of respects, military and otherwise. However, what exactly was meant by “more responsibility” has been interpreted in various ways in the years since.

For some, the vocabulary of responsibility was nothing more than an attempt to put a prettier face on the advancing “militarization of German foreign policy.” In principle, they said, it was only a matter of “normalization” and reducing old inhibitions about the use of military force.¹³ In particular, the wide-ranging speech by Federal President Gauck was reduced in the public mind to the few sentences on the use of military force; a political cartoon by Klaus Stüttmann on the “new German foreign policy,” which is now held in the Stiftung Haus der Geschichte’s collection, shows Steinmeier, von der Leyen, and Gauck wearing suit jackets paired with camouflage pants.¹⁴ For



“Yet, a culture of restraint for Germany must not become a culture of standing aloof. Germany is too big merely to comment on world affairs from the sidelines.”²⁵

Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Munich Security Conference, February 1, 2014

others again, the concept of responsibility typified the kind of “pseudo-intellectual babble” that could be used to spread “a vague sense of bliss in the midst of global political turbulence” and thus “whitewash the unpleasant questions about difficult trade-offs between competing interests and the search for the right instruments.”¹⁵ To them, Germany was once again avoiding the really decisive questions.

And so, it is not surprising that six years after the speeches, the verdict on the “Munich consensus” is very mixed. If one asks the foreign policy elite whether Germany has made good on the intentions of the Munich consensus, one often hears critical assessments in private. Many frankly admit that Germany has failed to live up to the German government’s promises and the expectations of its partners. Some point out that the world has changed rapidly since 2014 and that the Munich consensus has been overtaken by trends and events. Others point to a significant increase in Germany’s diplomatic engagement and the obstacles that stand in the way of more far-reaching ambitions.

There is no doubt that there are many good examples of Germany taking on “more responsibility.” The Federal Foreign Office refers to a veritable leadership offensive in Europe and the world, which the Federal Government has been pursuing since 2014. Indeed, Germany has shown initiative in many areas. For example, after initial hesitation, Berlin played a key role in responding to the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014. Germany played a decisive role in the European Union’s decision to impose far-reaching sanctions, which it has repeatedly extended since then. Together with France, the German government initiated the Normandy Process – in close coordination with the United States, which stepped back into the second row.¹⁶

Berlin has also become much more involved in NATO than before: Germany played a major role in advancing the Framework Nations Concept, assumed leadership responsibility for the new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), and took on a leadership role in one of the four multinational battalions on NATO’s eastern flank as part of the “enhanced Forward Presence” (eFP) – making it the only continental European member to do so. In addition, Germany offered to host the Joint Support and Enabling Command in Ulm – one of two new NATO operational commands the establishment of which was decided at the NATO summit in 2018. It is to be fully operational by 2021.

Beyond Europe, the German government has also participated in or even initiated important security policy initiatives. For example, Germany, in conjunction with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, succeeded in persuading Iran to sign the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in the E3+3 format, which is intended to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. After the United States withdrew from the agreement, Germany, along with France and the United Kingdom, made efforts to preserve it. Since the terrorist attacks in Paris, Germany has also participated in the coalition against the so-called Islamic State (IS). When IS troops were on the verge of overrunning the last redoubts of the Peshmerga, the German government decided to supply weapons to a crisis region to enable the minority to defend itself against the IS. For the last year, the German government has been trying to contain the war in Libya with the “Berlin Process.” Together with France, Germany initiated the “Alliance for Multilateralism” to counter the erosion of the liberal international order.

Yet, despite the long list of activities and initiatives, critics have complained that even when Germany is involved, it is not really present. The Germans, they say, have typically preferred to leave it to others to get their hands dirty. Hence, Germany’s participation in the anti-IS coalition has been limited to providing support services and reconnaissance flights: “The Germans take photos, the others drop the bombs – that kind of special role is not tenable,” criticizes former defense minister Volker R  he.¹⁷ Germany did not take part in the air strikes in Syria, which were carried out by the United States along with France and the United Kingdom in response to the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime. In Mali, too, the Bundeswehr has been involved in training Malian soldiers but not in combat operations. The decision to supply weapons to the Peshmerga, praised by many as a courageous step forward for German security policy, was also seen by some as an attempt to avoid getting involved more directly.¹⁸ According to critics, the Berlin Process, which is intended to contain the war in Libya, has suffered from the fact that Germany ultimately does not want to use leverage to compel a peaceful resolution.¹⁹ And in the case of the “Alliance for Multilateralism,” critics have questioned whether this represents a substantial contribution to the defense of the liberal international order or rather an attempt to work together pragmatically across different regions and cultures.²⁰

The fact that Germany, in the opinion of many active politicians, is lagging behind its capabilities would be problematic even under normal circumstances. It is critical because the world has changed dramatically since the



“In my view, the Munich consensus of words must become a Munich consensus of action.”

Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer
Munich Security Conference,
February 15, 2020²⁶

Munich Security Conference in 2014, and the erosion of international order already evident at that time has accelerated and intensified. The annexation of Crimea, the war in Ukraine, the growth of the “Islamic State” in Iraq and Syria, the terrorist attacks in Europe, the refugee crisis, the Brexit referendum, the election of Donald Trump as US president, the controversies over the North Korean missile program, arms control crises from the Iran deal to the INF Treaty to New START, the coronavirus pandemic – the list of words signifying global political upheaval could go on for a while.

As a result, the demand for German involvement in foreign and security policy has risen far faster than the supply since 2014. And thus, although Germany is doing more, its actions are falling even further behind what is actually needed.

Overview of the Report Chapters

The following chapters are devoted to various aspects of German foreign and security policy. [Chapter 2](#) describes the massive changes in the security policy situation in which Germany finds itself. The chapter advances the thesis that we are currently experiencing a *Zeitenwende*, a turning point, in world politics in which all the key certainties of German foreign policy are being called into question. Since Germany has, in an unparalleled way, settled into and become comfortable in the “post-Cold War world” in a political, military, economic, and intellectual sense, the current changes in global politics have been particularly challenging for Berlin. In conclusion, we argue that the Covid-19 pandemic can be understood as a catalyst of existing trends. For Germany, this raises the question of whether the adaptations it has made can keep pace with the changes in the world.

It is no exaggeration to say that German foreign policy is “inextricably linked to the success story of the liberal world order,”²¹ which is commonly believed to be in crisis today. As much as Germany has benefitted disproportionately from this order, it is also disproportionately threatened by its erosion. [Chapter 3](#) therefore illustrates by way of various examples the dependencies that exist for the German economy and German politics. As a trading state, Germany is being hit particularly hard by the restrictions on the open global economy due to intensifying competition among the major powers, while, as a civil power, Germany has hardly been prepared for the change in the United States’ role as a “benevolent hegemon” and the further erosion of alliances and arms control treaties. All in all, challenges are arising that, in a

worst-case scenario, would call into question Germany's previous "global political business model."

[Chapter 4](#) then discusses the measures taken by German policymakers in the wake of the "Munich consensus" in the shape of investments in foreign, development, and defense policy. The chapter acknowledges the efforts that have been made in recent years but also highlights where Germany is lagging behind in its commitments. We conclude that Germany has gradually increased its engagement, however without adjusting its usual *modus operandi*. Whether that is adequate for us to meet the challenges posed by the new era that is currently dawning is doubtful. The chapter renews the calls for a comprehensive increase in spending on foreign, development, and defense policy in line with a "three-percent target" that reflects the concept of "networked security."

It is a common assertion that convincing the German public of the need for a stronger international commitment, especially one that involves the use of military means, is difficult. The Germans, supposedly, are a pacifist people who want nothing to do with the world's problems – in stark contrast to the country's deep interconnectedness. In [Chapter 5](#), we explain, drawing on public opinion research and the results of a survey conducted specifically for this report, that public opinion has evolved in recent years. For example, approval for greater German involvement in resolving international crises has risen, as has approval for increased defense spending. At the same time, Germans remain reluctant to use military means, even though they can be convinced of the need for individual missions or tasks. The majority of respondents favored less restraint vis-à-vis the great powers and wanted the European Union to act as one. At the same time, they are skeptical that this will come about.

The next chapter, [Chapter 6](#), is devoted to the foreign policy decision-making process. Despite minor adjustments, Germany still essentially operates via the ministerial structures and decision-making processes of the old Bonn Republic. As this chapter shows, the issue is not just that the balance has shifted between the individual ministries and between the ministries and the Federal Chancellery. Many more ministries are now involved in formulating foreign policy because more and more policy areas have become internationalized. Time and again, German foreign policy has not spoken with one voice. Even though it will be impossible to entirely avoid coordination

difficulties in the German system due to competing principles, and this problem is not unknown in other countries, more far-reaching reforms must be considered. A controversial discussion has arisen around this issue in recent years, centering on the notion of a “National Security Council.” We use examples from abroad to illustrate how better coordination could be achieved.

[Chapter 7](#) summarizes the main findings of the report and outlines the role of an “enabling power”²² for German foreign and security policy.



Security Situation

2 Zeitenwende

What is the state of the international order in 2020?
What fundamental changes is Germany facing? And
what role is the coronavirus pandemic playing in this?

Zeitenwende

Tobias Bunde

The Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the French Revolution in 1789, the beginning of World War I in 1914, the end of World War II in 1945, or the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 – all these dates are linked to certain assumptions about the course of world history, namely that they mark the end of an old epoch and the beginning of a new one.²⁷ In some cases, contemporaries immediately understood the global political significance of such events as the culmination of important changes. In others, the identification of a specific year as a turning point was primarily a construction of later generations.²⁸

Will historians identify the beginning of the financial and economic crisis in 2008 as a “benchmark date” that heralded the end of the economic superiority of the West? Will the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 be understood as the beginning of a new era of great-power competition? Will the year 2016, with the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump as US president, be retrospectively understood as a key date in the decline of the West? Or will the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 be seen as the starting point for a reinterpretation of China’s role as an authoritarian-capitalist superpower that wants to make its mark on the 21st century and finally casts aside its “peaceful rise”?

In any case, we cannot deny that today we are living at a time of upheaval that is shaking the liberal international order and especially the West to its very foundations.²⁹ An exceptional quarter of a century of global politics is coming to an end, a quarter of a century that, with the fall of the Wall and German reunification, could not have gotten off to a better start for Germans. Germany suddenly found itself on the right side of history, firmly anchored in the West, “encircled by friends,” as the defense minister at the time, Volker Rühe, put it, most of whom soon became members of NATO and the EU. The “peace dividend” was paid out; territorial defense or nuclear deterrence were concepts that still carried over from the Cold War, but their importance had rapidly diminished. For Germany, it was a time when there were no really difficult foreign and security policy decisions to be made.³⁰ The only problem was that this extraordinarily fortunate constellation was soon perceived as a new normal. Today it is dawning on most of us that we are again facing harsher times.



“This year, we will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of reunification – at the time, an unbelievable and unexpected stroke of good fortune, particularly as it was associated with the reunification of Europe, which had been divided by the Iron Curtain. ‘Felix Germania’ – at one with the world, surrounded by friends, secure in the global ‘Pax Americana.’ That’s how it was. And that is the framework at risk of crumbling before our very eyes. As yet, there is no indication of what might replace it. But it is clear that the hope that others will somehow sort it out for us is a vain one, for us Germans at least.”¹⁰⁶

Federal President
Frank-Walter Steinmeier,
Munich Security Conference,
February 14, 2020

In 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron warned the United Nations General Assembly that the current phase should not be seen as a brief interlude in history that will inevitably be followed by a return to normality. We were facing a crisis of the current order, he said, of such a fundamental nature that the order would not function as it did before.³¹ Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has spoken of the fact that the “world order that we once knew, had become accustomed to and sometimes felt comfortable in” no longer exists.³² It is unclear, however, what exactly the future order will look like, what interests, ideas, and institutions and which constellation thereof will decisively shape it.³³

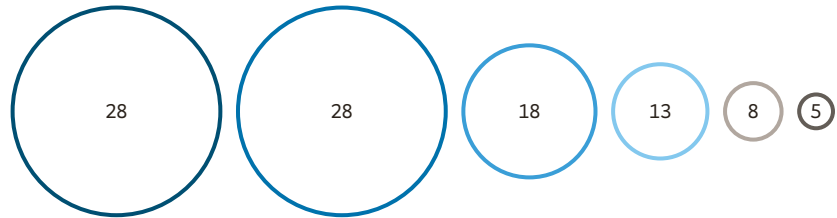
These are undoubtedly times of great political uncertainty for political leaders. The world has “come apart at the seams,” stated Foreign Minister Steinmeier in 2015 in the face of a multitude of crises. He did not consider this to be an “accidental cluster,” but rather believed them to be “caused by enormous tectonic shifts in our small world.”³⁴ In private, more than a few top politicians have freely voiced such concerns. We’re on thin ice with so many issues, says many a veteran policy-maker of whom one would think they have seen it all. Chancellor Angela Merkel, too, has in recent years increasingly referred in her speeches and interviews to history, its lessons, and the danger of a disintegrating order.³⁵

The public also seems to be aware of these changes. Admittedly, the majority (56 percent) of the citizens surveyed for this report in August 2020 believe that the security situation in 2020 is better than it was during the Cold War. However, 18 percent of the population consider the current situation similar to that of the Cold War; 21 percent even consider it worse. Interestingly, the under-30s (75 percent) in particular consider the current security situation to be better while this view is less widespread among the over-60s, who experienced the Cold War era first-hand (50 percent). When comparing the current security situation to that of the 1990–2001 period, Germans are much more cautious. 34 percent of those surveyed consider the current security situation worse, while only 30 percent consider it better.

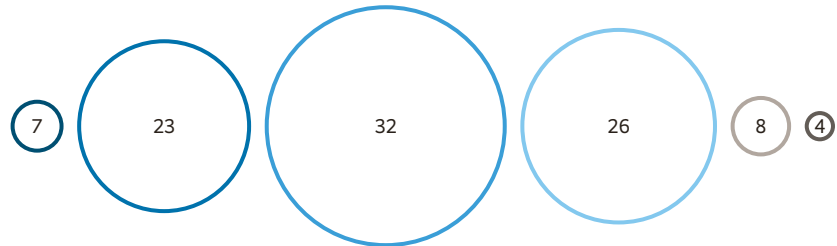
Figure 2.1
German attitudes toward Germany’s security situation,
2020, percent

- ... much better
- ... somewhat better
- ... similar
- ... somewhat worse
- ... much worse
- Don't know

Germany’s security situation today, compared to 1949-1990, is ...



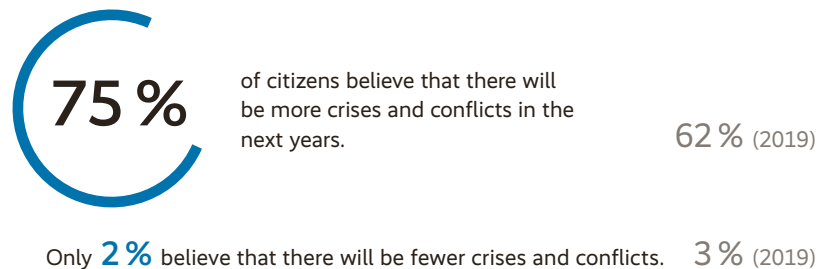
Germany’s security situation today, compared to 1990-2001, is ...



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Germans do not foresee any improvement in the future – on the contrary: 75 percent believe that there will be more crises and conflicts in the coming years. Only two percent believe that there will be fewer. One may interpret this as an indication that Germans largely assume that the world order is less and less capable of creating “order.” Compared to last year, respondents have become even more pessimistic.

Figure 2.2
German attitudes toward crises and conflicts in the world,
2020, percent



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference (2020); Forschungsgruppe Wahlen commissioned by the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government (2019).
Illustration: Munich Security Conference



“We are experiencing the dawn of a new era, an epochal shift. We can no longer rely on the United States to provide comprehensive security, on EU states moving ever closer together, on liberal democracy winning out worldwide, on countries like Russia or China integrating into the international order, on the United Nations having a monopoly on power. The global order, which nobody needs more than us, the export-dependent Germans, is crumbling.”¹⁰⁷

Wolfgang Ischinger, *Der Spiegel*, August 31, 2020

The Progressive Erosion of German Foreign Policy Certainties

For Germany, the progressive erosion of the liberal international order is a particularly far-reaching challenge, because hardly any other country had established itself as well in the order largely guaranteed by the United States as Germany had – politically, militarily, economically, but also intellectually.

The simultaneous dissolution of Germany’s foreign policy certainties represents nothing less than a *Zeitenwende*, the turn of an era in world politics, to which Germany must find new answers.³⁶ In part, however, these beliefs are so deeply rooted in the German imagination that, in spite of developments to the contrary, they are not, or only gradually, being reexamined. But that is the first step on the way to an appropriate strategy for this new era.

Foreign Policy Certainty: The United States Will Remain a “European Power” in the Long Run and Act as a “Benevolent Hegemon”

Since the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany, its close ties with the United States have been the fundamental life insurance on which the country’s security has been based. The security guarantee by the United States was a necessary condition for Germany’s acceptance into the Western community of states and for European integration. Likewise, neither the policy

of détente towards the Eastern Bloc nor German reunification in 1990 would have been possible without this relationship.

After the end of the Cold War, the German elite assumed that the United States would remain a “European power” in the long run.³⁷ But in the face of a changed world, the United States expected an adjustment in transatlantic burden-sharing – an expectation that became increasingly clear after the attacks of September 11, 2001. At the beginning of his first term in office, President Barack Obama spoke of being the United States’ first “Pacific president,” while Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the US pivot to Asia, and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned that future generations of Americans would no longer be willing to bear disproportionate burdens.³⁸ Hardly anyone in Germany took this seriously. There was no strategic debate about what a turning away from Europe by the United States – even to a limited extent – would mean for German security.³⁹

It is obvious that the outcome of the upcoming presidential election will have immense implications for the configuration of the United States’ role in world politics. Whether we should speak of a definitive “end of the American era”⁴⁰ or whether the United States will once again establish itself as the leading power of a renewed West will become apparent in the coming years. In any case, under President Donald Trump, the United States has bid farewell to its traditional role as a “benevolent hegemon.”⁴¹ The United States under Trump does not see itself as the “world’s policeman” with a duty to resolve major international conflicts, nor does it consider the network of international organizations, which was primarily created by the United States itself, to be particularly worthy of protection in its present form.⁴² But even with new leadership in the United States, Europe, and especially Germany, will have to adjust to a different kind of relationship that will entail higher expectations by the United States of its European partners.⁴³ For, as Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer notes, in the United States, “both the willingness and ability to do more than its fair share are dwindling.”⁴⁴

So far, this change in a fundamental constant of German foreign policy has only made an appearance in the form of abstract statements in foreign policy keynotes. Chancellor Merkel attracted worldwide attention in 2017 with an election campaign appearance in the Bavarian town of Trudering, when she soberly stated a few days after the G7 summit that it was no longer possible to rely blindly on the United States of America, but that more independent action on the part of Europeans was needed.⁴⁵



“The times in which we could completely rely on others are, to an extent, over [...]. Therefore, I can only say that we Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands.”

German Chancellor
Angela Merkel, beer tent
speech in Trudering,
Munich, May 28, 2017¹⁰⁸

Other members of the Federal Government have also repeatedly expressed similar views in recent years. In an interview with the *Tagesspiegel* newspaper, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas admitted: “We in Europe as a whole will have to give more thought to our security. We must assume more responsibility. It was a criminal mistake not to have had this debate for so long.”⁴⁶ But to this day, the German debate has done little beyond making these observations. How exactly Germany’s government and parties intend to deal with the emerging scenario of reduced US engagement remains unclear.⁴⁷ That will not suffice in view of the fact that Germany today is facing security policy challenges of a magnitude not seen since the 1950s.⁴⁸

Foreign Policy Certainty: European Integration Is Moving in the Direction of an “Ever Closer Union” Based on a Common Set of Values.

For a long time, the development of the European Union seemed to be only going in one direction – towards an “ever closer union,” as the European treaties state, in which liberal-democratic states would cooperate more and more closely and shift competencies to the European level. Germany supported both the deepening and the widening of the Union and indulged in the illusion that there was no trade-off between the two. Yet, at least since the Brexit referendum, it has been clear that European integration can certainly be “turned back.” In the meantime, the financial and economic crisis called the future of the common currency into question, and to this day it is still unclear whether the “halfway house” of only partial integration can be sustainable in the important areas of economic and monetary policy. For about a decade now, the European Union has found itself in a succession of overlapping and ever intensifying crises. Former Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker aptly spoke of a so-called “polycrisis.”⁴⁹ In any case, it is now clear that European integration is no sure-fire success.

In almost all member states, EU-skeptical parties, whose political program is directed primarily against “the Brussels bureaucrats,” have gained influence. The political scientist Jan Zielonka speaks of an “illiberal counter-revolution” that is pushing back against the advance of liberal ideas.⁵⁰ In some member states, elected governments are actively undermining fundamental liberal-democratic principles that constitute necessary criteria for accession to the EU. Hungary, the forerunner of this illiberal “anti-West” under Viktor Orbán, who sees the true West in an opposition to migration, changing values, and liberalism,⁵¹ is today described by Freedom House as “partially

free” and by the Varieties of Democracy Project at the University of Gothenburg as an “electoral autocracy.” For the EU as a community of law, the erosion of liberal democracy and the rule of law poses fundamental challenges.⁵² After all, a community based on the rule of law is based on mutual trust that comparable principles apply in all member states. A reluctance to act due to European party politics, combined with EU subsidies, has strengthened illiberal regimes such that the EU is hardly able to deal with them today.⁵³ In Germany, in particular, one has been massively underestimating this development for years and now must deal with the fact that, due to unresolved conflicts over fundamental principles, initiatives that are vital for the future of the integration project, such as the coronavirus rescue fund, can only be achieved by making concessions on the rule of law mechanism.

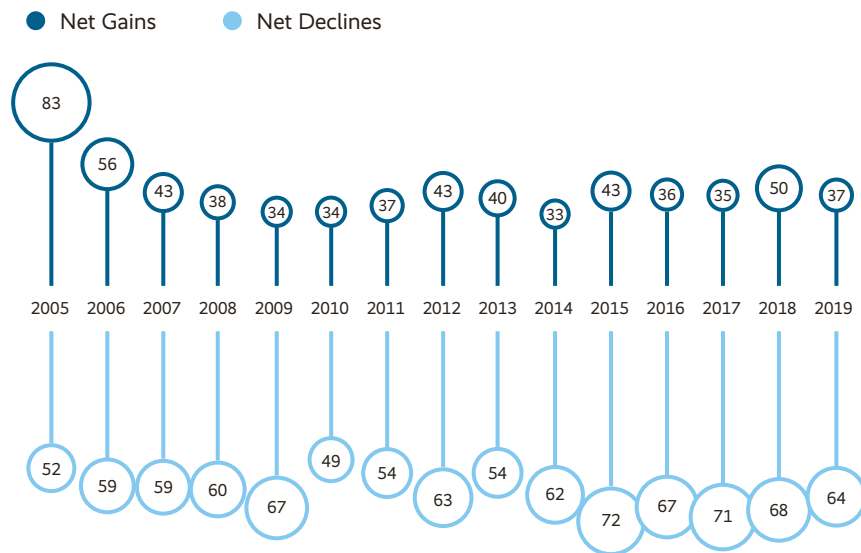
This development has also had foreign policy consequences, since the illiberal regimes in the European Union have the ability to prevent the EU from taking a common position on foreign policy issues and to act as “Trojan horses” of authoritarian powers.⁵⁴ Various examples in recent years have shown that this is not an abstract scenario.⁵⁵ In this respect, too, “the postponement of political conflicts over the core values of the union is becoming increasingly cost-intensive.”⁵⁶

Foreign Policy Certainty: Liberal Democracy Is the Only Legitimate Governance Model and Will Prevail Throughout the World in the Long Run.

Few countries in the world took Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis more seriously than Germany.⁵⁷ With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the seemingly unstoppable triumph of liberal democracy, it was assumed that Western-style liberal democracy would from now on be the only widely accepted political governance model – and not only in Europe. Indeed, liberal ideas shaped world politics in a more profound way than ever before. In almost all parts of the world, regional organizations adopted treaties to protect democracy.⁵⁸ The peace missions under the umbrella of the United Nations followed a liberal vision and served as a transmission belt for the liberal political order.⁵⁹ In the long run, it was thought, the remaining autocratic regimes would also disappear from the face of the earth or at least reform themselves.

Today, no trace of this liberal euphoria remains. Even the mobilization of massive resources in countries such as Afghanistan or Kosovo has had limited success. The missionary zeal with which the neoconservatives in the George W. Bush administration wanted to achieve a democratization of the Middle East cost many lives but did not bring the desired results. The hopes associated with the Arab Spring were not fulfilled either. Quite the contrary, there has been an autocratic counter movement underway for many years, a development borne out by well-known indices. In each of the past 14 years, Freedom House’s annual data set has included a greater number of countries whose overall rating has worsened compared to those who have improved.

Figure 2.3
Countries with net gains/net declines in their Freedom in the World Score, 2005-2019



Data and illustration: Freedom House

The latest report from the V-Dem Institute also contains dramatic figures. In 2019, autocracies outnumbered democracies for the first time since 2001; 54 percent of the world population live in these 92 countries.⁶⁰ Researchers are already talking about a “third wave of autocratization” that is currently underway.⁶¹ At the same time, they also see signs of hope: In 2019, there were substantial mass protests for democratic values in 44 percent of all coun-

tries; ten years ago, this was only the case in 27 percent of the countries. So it is not the case that liberal democratic ideas have generally lost their capacity to mobilize. Examples such as the recent developments in Belarus show that the opposite is the case. But liberal ideas today have more powerful opponents. This is due in part to the return of authoritarian superpowers who are spreading their own ideas of order much more aggressively than in the past.

Foreign Policy Certainty: Great Powers Such As China and Russia Can Be Integrated Into the Liberal World Order As “Responsible Stakeholders” and Will Move Closer to the West in the Long Run.

While the international debate warned more than a decade ago of the return of authoritarian superpowers and the “end of the end of history,”⁶² Germany long held on to the “convergence thesis,”⁶³ according to which states such as Russia or China would become “responsible stakeholders”⁶⁴ in the liberal world order in the long term through close integration.

After the end of the Cold War, the political mainstream in Germany assumed that Russia would gradually become a partner of the West. Germany in particular pursued a committed policy of integrating Moscow in parallel to NATO’s eastward enlargement. In retrospect, the “modernization partnership” with Russia, already viewed with skepticism by Germany’s eastern neighbors after the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, appears to have been a naive attempt to recognize progress in Russian politics that did not exist. Even after the annexation of Crimea, the belief in “change through trade” remains widespread in Germany. In parts of the German public, Russia’s increasingly aggressive policy towards the EU and NATO, including attacks on opponents in European capitals such as London and Berlin, large-scale disinformation campaigns in democratic election campaigns, or cyber attacks on parliaments, are not perceived as massive attacks. Some even take new violations as a reason to demand a reset in Russia policy with reference to the alleged disregard for Russian security interests by the West.⁶⁵

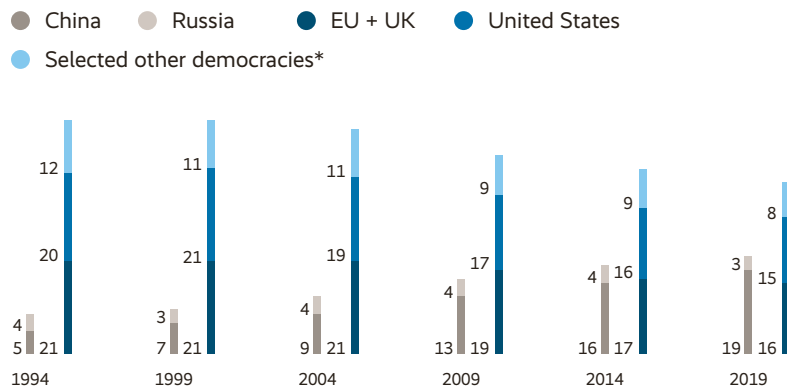
The same applies to dealings with China, whose increasingly self-confident behavior is causing the international community growing concern. The Beijing leadership under Xi Jinping, for example, has not only intensified state repression and surveillance at home but has also adopted a different tone in foreign policy. China’s actions in Hong Kong have prompted doubts across the world on whether Beijing wants to adhere to the “one country, two systems” formula. At the same time, China finds itself in territorial conflicts

with several neighbors. Recently, there have been violent clashes with India. In the South China Sea, China has built a multitude of artificial islands in recent years, which can be understood as the “annexation of a larger maritime area by means of hybrid warfare.”⁶⁶ Towards Europe, too, China is becoming more and more demanding.⁶⁷

This new self-confidence, combined with the increasingly aggressive delivery of the message that its own system offers a model for the world, is based in no small measure on China’s economic success. In direct comparison with the liberal-democratic market economies of the West, the state-capitalist Chinese economy has caught up significantly in recent years.

Figure 2.4
GDP (Purchasing Power Parity), share of world total, 1994–2019, percent

*Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia



Data: International Monetary Fund. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

This rise would never have been possible without China’s integration into the open world economy. But in recent years, there has been a growing comprehension that economic opening is not necessarily associated with political opening. At the beginning of 2019, the Federation of German Industry stated with remarkable clarity that despite China’s economic importance, it should not be overlooked that the People’s Republic of China has entered into systemic competition with liberal market economies and that the convergence thesis is “no longer tenable”: “China is no longer developing structurally in the direction of a market economy and liberalism but is in the process of consolidating its own political, economic and social model.”⁶⁸ Wolfgang

Schäuble, President of the German Bundestag, was one of the first leading politicians to speak bluntly of the fact that Germany “like the West as a whole is exposed to systemic competition.”⁶⁹ Despite this, the convergence thesis still seems to have prominent supporters.⁷⁰

This does not necessarily mean that Germany and its European partners should adopt a unilaterally confrontational stance towards China and Russia (which could thus lead it into the trap of a new clash of systems). But a more realistic view of autocratic great powers is urgently needed if Germany and Europe want to defend their own “way of life.”

Foreign Policy Certainty: World Politics Is Increasingly Being “Legalized,” and Even the Great Powers Are Subjecting Themselves to Universally Binding Rules Within the Framework of Global Governance.

The period after the end of the Cold War was initially also characterized in Germany by the hope of a genuine “world domestic policy”⁷¹ – a rule-based system of global governance within which states, international organizations, civil society, and companies could address the key challenges facing humanity in the future.

Within the framework of the United Nations, various world summits were held to strengthen the awareness of the international community’s shared responsibility for the planet, the environment, or health and development in all parts of the world. The network of international organizations became increasingly close-knit, and their competencies grew.⁷² While the EU remained by far the most far-reaching experiment in supranational cooperation, many regional organizations followed the European model of regional integration. International jurisdiction was also developed further, with the establishment of the International Criminal Court as an initial high point. The global Responsibility to Protect was proclaimed, and a wide variety of measures were linked to respect for human rights. State sovereignty was defined in increasingly restrictive terms. In the area of world trade, even powerful states subjected themselves to the WTO’s dispute settlement mechanism.

But “governance beyond the nation-state”⁷³ is being challenged – by rising powers, nongovernmental organizations, or even states that themselves played a decisive role in its creation.⁷⁴ Donald Trump, carried by a wave of new nationalism that is also represented in intellectual circles,⁷⁵ has turned

against the alleged ideology of “globalism.”⁷⁶ In many areas of global governance, a “policy failure with regard to global commons”⁷⁷ is now in evidence, which gives little hope that the international community of states will be able to agree on responses to the fundamental challenges facing humanity such as climate change.

Particularly far-reaching examples of legalization at the international level – such as the International Criminal Court or the World Trade Organization – have been under particular pressure for several years. Neither the United States, nor Russia, nor China had joined the International Criminal Court, but they had at least supported its work in some war zones. Recent years have seen the emergence of a counter-movement of governments that are trying to reverse the development of norms.⁷⁸ Out of dissatisfaction with the lack of Chinese cooperation, the United States is blocking the appointment of a new member to the World Trade Organization’s dispute settlement body.

At the same time, this trend of questioning international authority should not be confused with a return to a classic Westphalian understanding of sovereignty, according to which all states decide on their internal affairs without outside interference. After all, the United States, China, and Russia have all pursued concepts of sovereignty over the past two decades that are rooted in pre-Westphalian traditions and grant them a license “to dominate others – paradoxically, in the name of sovereignty.”⁷⁹

The fact that, in capitals from Washington to Moscow to Beijing, it is held that the world has entered a new era of great-power competition, gives reason to fear that, going forward, interdependencies and cooperative arrangements will increasingly become the subject of a struggle for zones of influence.⁸⁰ While the United States under President Trump has recently withdrawn from various international organizations that it played a decisive role in creating, China is increasingly active in trying to influence them in its favor. The increasing divergence of the major powers is having a particularly dramatic effect on peacekeeping because the United Nations Security Council has been unable to agree on a common approach in the major wars of the present day: “There is a lack of global order because the great powers have no common idea of this order.”⁸¹

For Germany, the crisis of multilateralism raises difficult questions, which Hanns Maull has summarized as the “ultimate dilemma faced by a ‘civilian power’ with its very specific form of foreign and security policy”: “What

happens to the ‘reflexive multilateralist’ [...] if the partners and institutions on which its policy depends disappear?”⁸²

Foreign Policy Certainty: The Importance of Military Force, Especially Between States, Is Declining.

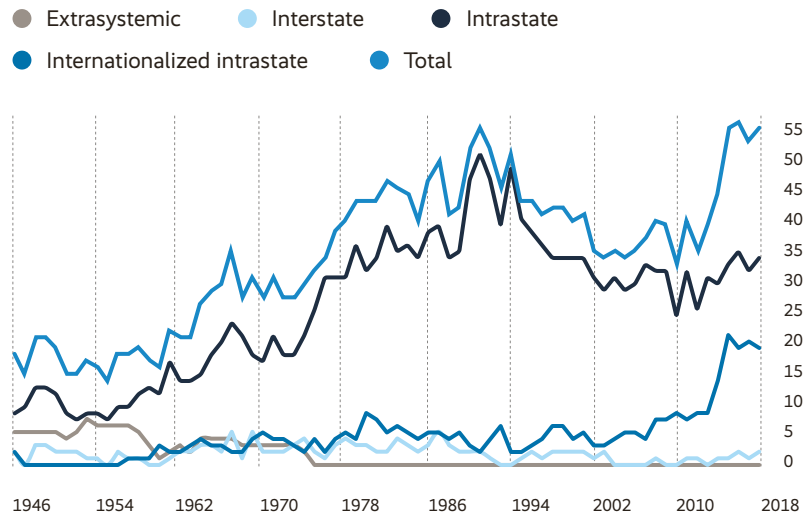
With the end of the Cold War, the danger of armed conflicts between states seemed to diminish. The community of states increasingly focused on internal conflicts or internationalized civil wars. Interstate wars seemed a thing of the past. For the Bundeswehr, this meant a reorientation away from national and alliance defense in favor of international peace missions.

Popular authors such as the linguist Steven Pinker and the political scientist Joshua Goldstein argued that war had gone out of fashion and the use of force was becoming increasingly rare.⁸³ According to Goldstein, humanity was on its way to winning the “war against war.” In Germany, these arguments fell on particularly fertile ground. As a “civilian power,” Germany was one of the self-appointed pioneers of the “civilizing” movement in international relations.⁸⁴

But the number of violent conflicts has again increased in recent years. Despite the German mantra that there are no military solutions, other actors have not been afraid to push through such military “solutions.” The wars in Syria and Yemen in particular have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Proponents of the thesis that humanity is becoming more and more peaceful may understand such conflicts as a statistical deviation. But even if we turn our attention away from the very real suffering of the victims of current wars, the statistical arguments for a permanent decrease in violence are not completely convincing.⁸⁵ In political science, therefore, the theses of Pinker and Goldstein are now considered to have been largely refuted.⁸⁶

Figure 2.5

Armed conflicts by type, 1946–2018, number of conflicts



Data: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Given the erosion of the international order, the intensifying territorial conflicts in some parts of the world, and the general increase in competition among the great powers, exuberant optimism regarding the future seems inappropriate. If it is correct that the world of the 21st century will be a “multi-order world,” i.e. a world characterized by different orders that partly overlap but partly also contradict each other,⁸⁷ it is unfortunately also safe to assume that the risk of war will grow again.⁸⁸

In 2019, the alarm bells rang when it was unclear how Saudi Arabia and its allies would react to an Iranian drone strike. There is also much to suggest that military tensions will increase in Asia. In 2019, there were clashes between the nuclear powers India and Pakistan, which fortunately did not escalate further. In 2020, there were over 20 deaths in skirmishes between China and India. Taiwan, in turn, could become a hotspot for tensions between Beijing and Washington. Even in Europe, borders have once again been changed without peaceful negotiations. This summer, even the situation between the NATO partners Greece and Turkey threatened to escalate.

This is further evidence of an erosion of the international order, which, for several decades, at least maintained peace between the great powers and prevented the escalation of wars between states, even if the world was not entirely peaceful. The maintenance of this state of overall peace has not been made any more likely by the dawning “age of predators” or by the “growing back of the jungle.”⁸⁹ On the contrary, one might even fear that it is the very belief that all-out war is all but impossible that leads to more risky behavior, which may eventually trigger a war whose escalation can then no longer be prevented.⁹⁰ Conflict researchers like Bear Braumoeller therefore consider it “not unlikely at all that another war that would surpass the two World Wars in lethality will happen in your lifetime.”⁹¹

For Germany’s strategic culture, this harsher global political climate is also an intellectual challenge. German foreign policy always reaches its limits when confronted with actors whose actions follow a different logic.⁹² The political elite and the population continue to struggle with the need for diplomacy or even just with the idea that deterrence may be needed to secure peace. “All of this makes it clear,” summarizes Jana Puglierin aptly, “that Germany is still struggling to find its way in a world that no longer operates according to the rules of the 1990s, in which might is replacing right and in which conflicts are once again being litigated in more violent ways.”⁹³

The Acceleration of the Erosion of Foreign Policy Certainties

These trends are not new or unforeseen, and many have been analyzed and discussed for a long time. At most, what is new is that foreign policy certainties may be dissolving much more quickly than feared and existing developments are continuing to accelerate. The Covid-19 pandemic seems to be acting as a further catalyst.⁹⁴ French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said as early as April 2020 that he feared that the world after the pandemic would look just like the world before it, only worse.⁹⁵

The problem of “Westlessness,”⁹⁶ i.e., a world that is becoming less Western and in which a West that is also becoming less Western is not acting collectively, has only become more prominent in light of the pandemic.⁹⁷ While in the financial and economic crisis more than a decade ago, the transatlantic partners still coordinated their efforts and launched complementary economic stimulus programs with a view to finding a common way out of the crisis, transatlantic relations in the coronavirus crisis have been marked by speechlessness. The members of the G7 have hardly appeared together. Indeed, the few media reports on the G7 that have emerged did so when its members

could not even agree on a joint declaration because the United States insisted on calling the coronavirus the “Wuhan virus.”⁹⁸ In view of escalating tensions with Turkey in the Mediterranean, Emmanuel Macron felt confirmed in his assessment that NATO was already brain dead.⁹⁹ And the question of whether Donald Trump intends to go ahead with a withdrawal from NATO in a possible second term in office is being openly discussed.¹⁰⁰

In general, the public perception of the United States and its soft power has continued to suffer in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.¹⁰¹ In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 13 countries, only 15 percent of those surveyed thought the United States had handled the outbreak well. In contrast, the majority of respondents said the WHO (64 percent) and the EU (57 percent) had done a good job. Even China’s handling of the crisis is still rated as good by 37 percent of respondents.¹⁰² The response to the pandemic is therefore also a “global battle of narratives.”¹⁰³

Some of the other trends described above are also being intensified by the pandemic and its effects. For instance, governments have used the pandemic to further restrict democratic rights. Crises in Europe threaten to worsen further. Debate on the pros and cons of an open global economy is even more heated than before. Talk of “decoupling” has grown. In addition, the pandemic has highlighted the great extent to which seemingly apolitical international organizations have become an arena for the conflict between China and the United States. Some observers have even warned that the coronavirus pandemic is also increasing the danger of a conflict between the great powers.¹⁰⁴

On the positive side, however, after initial difficulties, the European Union seems to have succeeded in using the crisis as an opportunity to launch forward-looking initiatives. The Franco-German initiative for the coronavirus rescue fund and the agreement on a new multi-year financial framework indicate that the *Zeitenwende* is also bringing opportunities with it. To successfully deal with the erosion of foreign policy certainties, it will therefore be important for Germany and Europe to channel this impetus into foreign and security policy.¹⁰⁵



Key Points

- ① The world is facing a *Zeitenwende*, a turning point in world politics. The quarter of a century after German unification was an exceptional phase in world politics that is coming to an end.
- ② Today, many of the fundamental certainties on which German foreign policy has been based in past decades have been called into question.
- ③ The coronavirus pandemic has further accelerated the erosion of foreign policy certainties, with the consequence that the world has to more quickly prepare for harsher times.
- ④ Germany must therefore urgently subject some of the central tenets of its foreign policy to a critical reality check.

A View from the United States: 21st-century Globalism



Anne-Marie Slaughter

Germany needs to see its long and ongoing confrontation with the grievous sins of its past as an asset. No nation is free of oppression and violence against minorities; many nations have committed crimes against humanity and even genocide. Leadership in the 21st century, both domestically and internationally, will require more transparency and humility than ever before. Germany has a head start.

Nations that are willing to acknowledge and try to repair past and present wrongs, against their own people and the people of other nations, will have a new moral authority and legitimacy to fight for globalism against nationalism, to address the truly existential global threats of our time. Leaders have the capability now as never before to reach across borders directly to people around the world, to marshal a new solidarity in the face of common threats. Angela Merkel's prestige and potential influence rose sharply around the world when she addressed the German people honestly in confronting the dangers of the pandemic and drew on her own scientific expertise in addressing it.

The great divisions of this century will not be democracy versus autocracy, but rather open versus closed societies, humanism versus nationalism, and global collective security versus great-power rivalry. Germany, together with those of its fellow European colonial powers willing to expose the full horrors of how nationalism and racism shaped much of their past, can lead the way in framing foreign policy debates in terms of 21st-century globalism versus 19th-century nationalism.

21st-century globalism calls directly on human beings around the world to acknowledge and fight common global threats, recognizing that we are organized as nations but are not defined and limited only by our national identities. 19th-century nationalism is a world without rules, in which narrow elites manipulate their peoples to advance their own egotistic dreams of glory. Germany knows that old world only too well. Germans now have an opportunity to step forward and help shape a new one.

Anne-Marie Slaughter is CEO of New America.

A View from “An Englishman in New York”: Tackling the Age of Impunity



David Miliband

The pictures from the fall in the Berlin Wall continue to inspire my generation, and Germany’s progress over the last thirty years as a role model of internal stability, democratic governance and concerned humanity has rightly garnered admiration. Commitment to Europe and European integration, alongside strong bilateral relations around the world, have been two pillars on which that progress has been based. The challenge going forward is to add a third pillar to the first two: a global role, commensurate with the values, interests, and capacities of the country. That is all the more necessary given the fissures in the democratic world and the challenges from autocratic nations who do not share liberal values or world view.

There are many candidates for the focus of this global effort, and tentative signs in Germany of the need for it (for example the “Alliance for Multilateralism”). However, the fragmented international community – a community more in name than reality – has been exposed by the Covid-19 crisis. There is also pressing need for fresh vigor and leadership when it comes to climate change, refugees and migration, the seemingly endless wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen. These are all issues where Germany has played a valuable but not yet determinative role, and where its domestic interests could justify such a global effort.

My own view is that the binding thread of Germany’s distinctive global effort should be to use its resources as well as its example to tackle what I call the Age of Impunity. Foreign policy is increasingly dominated by the abuse of power not the balance of power. From war zones where aid workers and civilians are being killed in record numbers to human rights to economic and environmental exploitation, the norms and laws of the rules-based system are being undermined. By virtue of history as well as contemporary situation, Germany is well positioned to warn and work against the abuse of power. Its economic resources, national story, and global reach go make it well-positioned to work to build countervailing power against those who threaten global decency as well as global order.

David Miliband is President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee, a member of the MSC Advisory Council, and former Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom.



A View from Russia: The Model Multilateralist



Andrey Kortunov

In my view, the most valuable feature of German foreign policy is its firm commitment to the fundamental principle of multilateralism. It is particularly important today, when many international players including great powers explicitly or implicitly challenge this principle and shift to unilateralism and nationalism in dealing with their adversaries and partners alike. Thirty years ago, to stick to multilateralism meant to float with the tide, these days it means to hold back the tide. Multilateralism requires much more resilience, stamina, and faith in 2020 than it required back in 2000.

The true value of any principle is defined by how much you are willing to pay for it. Multilateralism might make German foreign policy less innovative or it might slow down German responses to various international challenges and crises. Moreover, numerous critics often perceive it as a sign of Germany's weakness, lack of imagination or its reluctance to take a leadership role in world politics. I can even imagine that for some Germans, the outcomes of their continuous attachment to multilateralism sometimes becomes a source of frustrations and disappointments. Even more frustrations and disappointments are still in the pipeline for Germany.

However, multilateralism is the only way to provide for stability, security, and sustainable development at regional and global levels. In this sense, Germany remains an indispensable role model and a foreign policy lab for many other nations and states. I can only hope that Berlin will stay committed to multilateralism and that Washington, Beijing, and Moscow will learn more from the German experience in future than they do now.

Andrey Kortunov is Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC).



NATO Engages
The Alliance at 70

NATO
Atlantic Council
MISE

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Dependencies

3

Wonderful Together, Vulnerable Together

How dependent is Germany on the liberal international order? And what economic and security vulnerabilities will arise if it continues to erode?

Wonderful Together, Vulnerable Together

Tobias Bunde,
Randolf Carr, and
Franziska Stärk



“Germany is globalized more than most countries and thus benefits more than most from an open world order – a world order which allows Germany to reconcile interests with fundamental values. Germany derives its most important foreign policy goal in the 21st century from all of this: preserving this order and system and making them fit for the future.”¹⁹⁶

Federal President
Joachim Gauck,
Munich Security Conference,
January 31, 2014

When Federal President Gauck spoke about Germany’s international role at the Munich Security Conference in 2014, he put an emphasis on the importance of a liberal world order for Germany. Indeed, in retrospect, it is manifestly clear that Germany has reaped extraordinary benefits from the international order molded in large part by the United States, an order that shaped the Western world after 1945 and, after 1989, increasingly the entire world. As a “trading state” whose primary goal is to secure and increase national prosperity,¹⁰⁹ Germany was able to pursue its economic interests in a largely stable system. The characteristics of this system were particularly suited to Germany’s strengths. As an export-oriented nation that established an above-average degree of integration with the global economy, Germany profited from an open world economy and free trade routes without having to worry too much about what made them possible.¹¹⁰

For decades, NATO and especially the United States’ security guarantee provided a basic level of security that was ultimately taken for granted. After the end of the Cold War and the unification of the two German states, Germany, the “civilian power,” collected an immense peace dividend. For the unified Germany, “encircled by friends,” as a former minister of defense, Volker Rühle, put it, military threats to its own security seemed purely theoretical.¹¹¹

Within the framework of the European Union and NATO, Germany found its political home “as an equal member in a united Europe,” an aspiration framed by the preamble to the Basic Law – not something to be taken for granted for a country that had brought unspeakable suffering to the world in two world wars. “Politically,” summarizes the Federal Government’s 2016 White Paper, “Germany can rely on a strong network of bilateral, European, transatlantic, and multilateral ties and institutional structures that provide its activities with legitimacy and make them effective.”¹¹²

But as much as Germany has benefited disproportionately in political, military, and economic terms from the liberal international order, it is also disproportionately dependent on it. Accordingly, the weakening of this order has hit Germany particularly hard. Therefore, the erosion of Germany's foreign policy certainties required that it pay greater attention to the country's vulnerabilities and take committed action to increase its own resilience.¹¹³

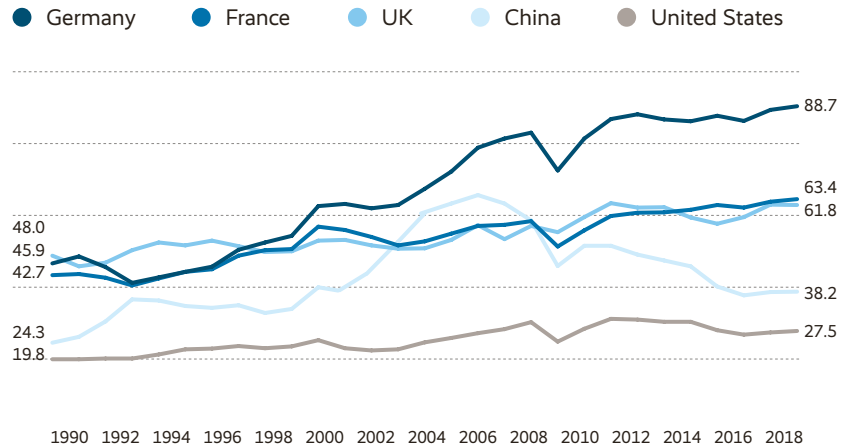
Economic Dependencies

Among countries its size, the Federal Republic of Germany stands out for its exceptional integration into the global economy. This naturally has an impact on the country's security policy interests, as the 2016 White Paper states, "Germany's prosperity and economy are highly dependent on appropriate conditions – both in Europe and globally. Germany is fully integrated into international trade and investment flows. Our country is particularly dependent on secure supply routes, stable markets, and functioning information and communication systems."¹¹⁴

The numbers speak for themselves. The trade-to-GDP ratio, the sum of imports and exports in relation to gross domestic product, also known as the Openness Index, is a classic indicator of the integration of a national economy into the global economy. Germany has the highest trade-to-GDP ratio among the G7 countries – it far exceeds that of France or the United Kingdom, for example.

Figure 3.1
Openness index,* selected countries, 1990–2018, percent

*A country's openness index, or trade-to-GDP ratio, is the total sum of its imports and exports of goods and services expressed as a percentage of its GDP.



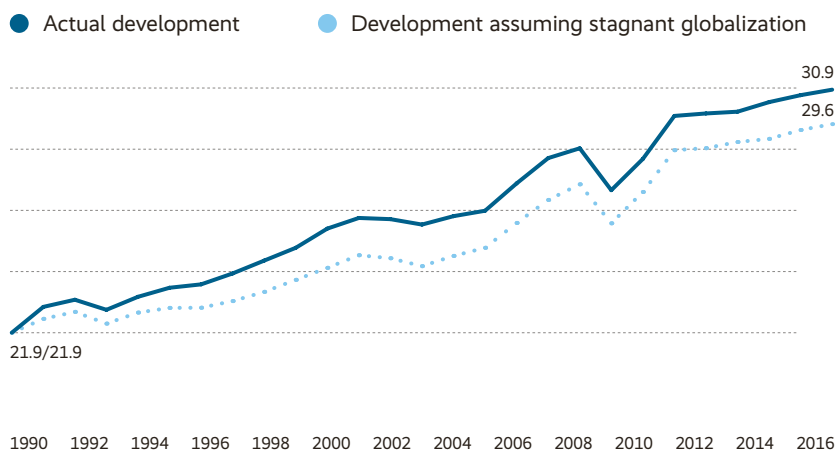
Data: World Bank. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Indeed, indicators of various kinds underscore Germany's special position as a leading beneficiary of globalized trade and investment flows. According to the McKinsey Global Institute's Interconnectedness Index for 2016, Germany ranks fourth among the most interconnected countries after Singapore, the Netherlands, and the United States. In contrast to many other countries, most of which only had a particularly strong international network in one or two of the fields studied (goods, services, finance, people, data), Germany was among the leading group in every individual field.¹¹⁵

It is therefore not surprising that Germany has also benefited from economic globalization to a demonstrably above-average extent compared to other countries. The Bertelsmann Stiftung's Globalization Report 2018 calculated the share of a country's prosperity gains since 1990 that were attributable to globalization. According to the report, Germany is one of the greatest beneficiaries of globalization. The average German gain per capita from globalization amounts to about 1,150 euros per year. This puts Germany in 6th place out of the 42 countries surveyed.¹¹⁶

Figure 3.2

Increase in GDP per capita with and without increasing globalization, 1990–2016, EUR thousands



Data: Bertelsmann Stiftung. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

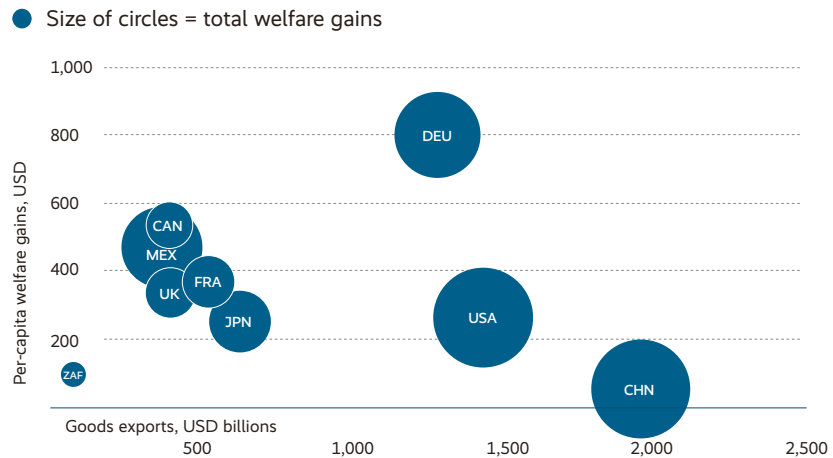
A key factor for Germany’s profitable participation in globalization was the development of new foreign sales markets for German goods. Thus, Germany became the long-standing “world export champion” in the mid-2000s.¹¹⁷ According to calculations by IW Consult, in 1998 every fifth job in Germany was dependent on exports; by 2018, it was every fourth. Germany owes a good two thirds of the increase in employment in that 20-year period to the growing foreign business of German companies.¹¹⁸

Few other countries have benefited as much as Germany from the institutional system that, for some decades now, has underpinned the open global economy. A study by the Bertelsmann Stiftung quantified the effects of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on its members’ prosperity.¹¹⁹ Looking at the absolute gains made by selected countries, at first glance, the United States and China lead by a large margin. Germany is in third place with around 66 billion US dollars. However, looking at profits per capita reveals that the real beneficiaries of the WTO are very open, export-oriented, and well-connected countries. Germany has thus enjoyed absolute gains similar to the much larger economies of the United States and China, but German per capita profits are three times higher than those of the US.¹²⁰ The flipside of this economic success story is that Germany has been hit particularly hard by changes in the international economic order.

Figure 3.3

Selected countries' welfare gains from WTO membership, USD,* base year 2016

*In the underlying Bertelsmann Stiftung study, country-specific welfare effects since accession to the WTO were calculated by way of a counterfactual analysis of the trade balance with and without the effects of WTO membership.



Data: Bertelsmann Stiftung. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

The WTO's dispute settlement body has not been able to adjudicate on disputes since the United States blocked the replacement of its appeal judges. Officially, the Trump administration has accused the body of overstepping its authority.¹²¹ Experts have interpreted the blockade as payback for numerous arbitration awards made against US trade protection measures.¹²² Negotiations on WTO reforms have proved difficult, and not just because WTO rules must be developed by consensus: Against the backdrop of the steadily growing number of trade restrictions introduced by G20 states, it will not be easy to persuade the United States to return to its role as guardian of the free trading system.¹²³ In a world of returning systemic competition, in which mercantilist thinking and bilateral trade balances are gaining in importance,¹²⁴ maintaining WTO structures seems of little concern to the United States. The consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic could further strengthen protectionist tendencies, which could complicate the global economic recovery and the development of the WTO.¹²⁵

Thus, Germany's strong integration into the world economy is being tested, especially from a geopolitical perspective. In the current climate, a primarily economic approach to countries such as China and Russia is reaching its limits – and is being met with a growing lack of understanding both at home

and abroad. In view of the fact that not only competitors such as Russia and China but even close partners such as the USA are using economic ties as a means of exerting pressure, unpleasant questions are arising for the “trading state” of Germany. Those include concerns, both domestically and in partner countries, that the degree of integration of German companies into the global economy makes Berlin vulnerable to economic blackmail.

For example, Germany has been severely criticized for its adherence to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, especially by Eastern European countries and the United States, who assert that it strengthens Russia’s economic and foreign policy agenda and deprives transit countries of important political leverage over their overpowering neighbor.¹²⁶ To prevent Germany from making itself Russia’s energy policy “hostage,” President Trump’s government has imposed economic sanctions.¹²⁷ While experts consider these to be in violation of international law,¹²⁸ outspoken critics of the US sanctions policy have warned that Germany risks becoming a “vassal” of the United States.¹²⁹ The choice between upholding long-standing agreements between Russian, German, and European companies on the one hand and the strategic importance of the transatlantic relationship on the other hand is a difficult one for Berlin. With the poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny and the resulting debate on whether Nord Stream 2 can be continued in view of the long list of Russian violations of international norms, the debate has taken a new turn.

In a similar vein, Germany has been criticized for an overriding concern with easier market access and the conclusion of a European investment agreement with China. The attitude of the German government, which, according to some observers, such as the journalist and long-time China correspondent Thomas Reichart, continues to be characterized by a “China naivety,”¹³⁰ is increasingly facing domestic German headwinds, especially since the debate about 5G network expansion. Experts have warned that the Chinese government is instrumentalizing German economic interests to prevent a disadvantageous political decision on this issue.¹³¹ A paper by the SPD parliamentary group emphasized that political and economic interests cannot be separated: “The competition between these two systems ultimately defines the limits of our partnership in concrete terms and influences the nature of our economic competition with China.”¹³² Michael Roth, minister of state at the Federal Foreign Office, also recently argued that Germany could turn the tables on China and “if necessary use the EU internal market

as a means of exerting pressure” to protect interests and values.¹³³ The growing support for a perspective on China that puts geostrategic considerations in the foreground is an indicator of the change in the German debate.¹³⁴ At the same time, experts warn that a full-on confrontation course with China modeled after the US approach is the wrong path for Germany and Europe.¹³⁵ The only thing that seems certain is that it will be increasingly difficult for Germany to stick to its “tried and tested” approach in the future and to conduct an economic foreign policy largely free of geopolitical considerations.¹³⁶



“We cannot ensure the defense of the West if our allies grow dependent on the East.”¹⁹⁷

US Vice President
Mike Pence, Munich
Security Conference 2019,
February 16, 2019

Due to the growing use of interdependence as a means of political pressure, in capitals around the world, attention is increasingly turning to strategies of intentional economic “decoupling.”¹³⁷ Countries are increasingly facing the threat that the network of globalized financial flows, digital communication channels, and supply and value chains is becoming a web that their rivals will try to ensnare them in. The logic of “decoupling” aims to sever these webs at neuralgic points and thus reduce strategic dependencies. In its complexity, decoupling thus resembles a “surgical operation” – but like surgeons at the dawn of modern medicine, operating with crude instruments and limited knowledge, governments can rarely accurately assess the consequences of their actions.¹³⁸ In many cases, these measures revolve around the “reshoring” of foreign production back into the country. China, for example, whose high-tech companies rely on highly specialized semiconductors from Taiwan and the United States, is feverishly trying to establish domestic production of these components.¹³⁹ Whether the motive is to promote national security, competitiveness, or self-sufficiency – theoretically up to a quarter of global goods exports could be relocated to other countries in the next five years according to a McKinsey study.¹⁴⁰ The recent debates in the United States about “clean networks,” including the banning of Chinese social media platforms from the market, show that decoupling is not only affecting goods and hardware, but also the interconnectedness of the global digital space.¹⁴¹ At the same time, in financial policy, various states, from the EU to Russia and China, are considering developing alternatives to the American-controlled banking network SWIFT.¹⁴²

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has intensified the push for greater resilience and autonomy and has reinforced the trend towards decoupling.¹⁴³ When countries such as India and China cut off exports, governments around the world realized how much they depended on foreign supplies –

of medicines, chemicals, medical devices, and other equipment – to merely protect their populations. It is estimated that the United States sources about 40 percent of common drugs from India; in Europe, the figure is around one quarter. In turn, India sources 70 percent of the active ingredients from China.¹⁴⁴ So, in April, the White House said: “One of the things that this crisis has taught us is that we are dangerously over-dependent on a global supply chain. [...] Never again should we have to depend on the rest of the world for our essential medicines and countermeasures.”¹⁴⁵ In May, Heiko Maas concluded that dependence needed to be reduced, not only in the health sector, but also in strategic areas such as “energy, IT, food, logistics, raw materials and rare earths.”¹⁴⁶



“But we need to recalibrate balance between the international division of labor and the risks of strategic dependencies. And I want Germany and Europe to be in the vanguard here.”¹⁹⁸

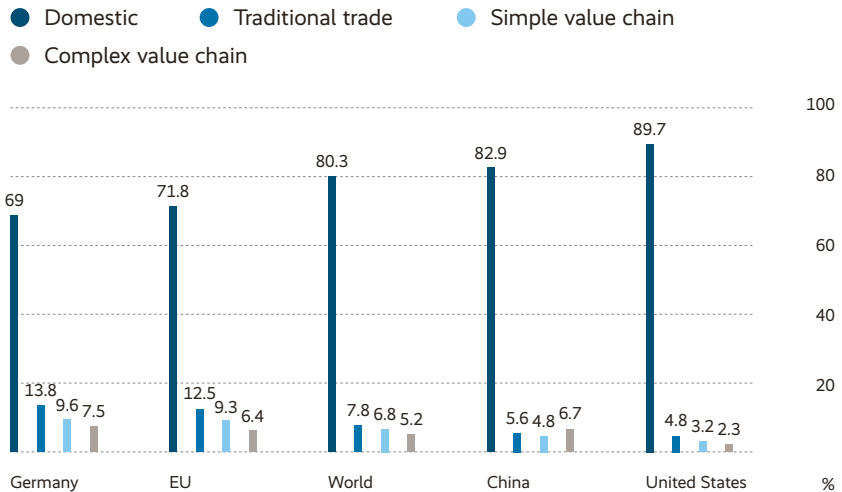
Foreign Minister
Heiko Maas,
Heads of German Missions
Conference, May 25, 2020

These examples show that the increasing awareness of sensitive strategic dependence is radiating out into all directions and areas. Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, who coined the term “weaponized interdependence,” however, see the potential for miscalculation and dangerous escalation in the hasty cutting back of trade, finance, and data flows between the major powers.¹⁴⁷

An advancing disintegration of the international order and an intensification of conflicts between the major powers could also have a massive impact on prosperity in Germany. After all, even crises in distant regions of the world can damage Germany considerably. For instance, a massive restriction of maritime trade due to a blockade of important shipping routes would hit the German economy particularly hard. Over 20 percent of German foreign trade is conducted by sea.¹⁴⁸ A conflict that would bring shipping in the South China Sea to a standstill would disrupt nine percent of Germany’s total trade in goods. In percentage terms, only nine other countries, all of which are themselves located in Southeast Asia, would be more severely affected by such a disruption.¹⁴⁹ A blockade of the Strait of Hormuz would affect one in ten routes operated by HAPAG-Lloyd, the largest German company and fifth largest in the world.¹⁵⁰

Figure 3.4

Value creation of selected countries and regions, 2015, percent



Data: ifo Institute. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

In the debate that has flared up in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic about Germany's vulnerability, special attention is being paid to the country's economic dependence on China. According to a study published by the ifo Institute in February 2020, value-added exports to China accounted for 2.8 percent of Germany's total economic value added in 2015 – in 2005, it was less than one percent.¹⁵¹ While close value-added links with China are not negative per se, the pandemic has shown that the absence of the “workbench of the world,” as China is sometimes known, can have a severe impact on international trade flows. Particularly in Germany's key industry, the automotive sector, numerous plant closures have revealed the existing vulnerabilities. According to a study conducted by Prognos AG on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung, a good two-thirds of the value added in the German automotive sector in 2014 was generated domestically.¹⁵² Nominally, the value-added share of important supplier countries, such as China, at two percent, or Italy, at 3.4 percent, was not particularly large.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, production outages in these countries can delay the closely interlocked supply chains of the “just-in-time” production that is common in many fields and, in some cases, bring it to a standstill.

Another major risk factor are scenarios where important sales markets break away or access to them is denied. In the context of the controversy surrounding Huawei and the German 5G expansion, some have speculated about the future of German automakers' business in China. The Chinese ambassador in Berlin asked with regard to a possible exclusion of Huawei: "Can we also declare German cars unsafe some day because we are also able to produce our own cars?"¹⁵⁴ Since Volkswagen, BMW, and Daimler on average generated more than a third of their sales revenues in China in 2019,¹⁵⁵ this was widely perceived as a thinly veiled threat.¹⁵⁶ If Volkswagen were excluded from the Chinese market, it would, on its own admission, have to lay off around 50 percent of workers in certain divisions.¹⁵⁷ However, economists offer differing views on the significance of China for the German economy as a whole. From the point of view of some, such as ifo expert Jürgen Matthes, the example of a few prominent companies distorts an overall picture that actually points to a "limited" German dependence on China.¹⁵⁸ Others, however, expect this problem to "hit Germany particularly hard" in the future and significantly impair economic growth, particularly against the backdrop of the US-China rivalry.¹⁵⁹

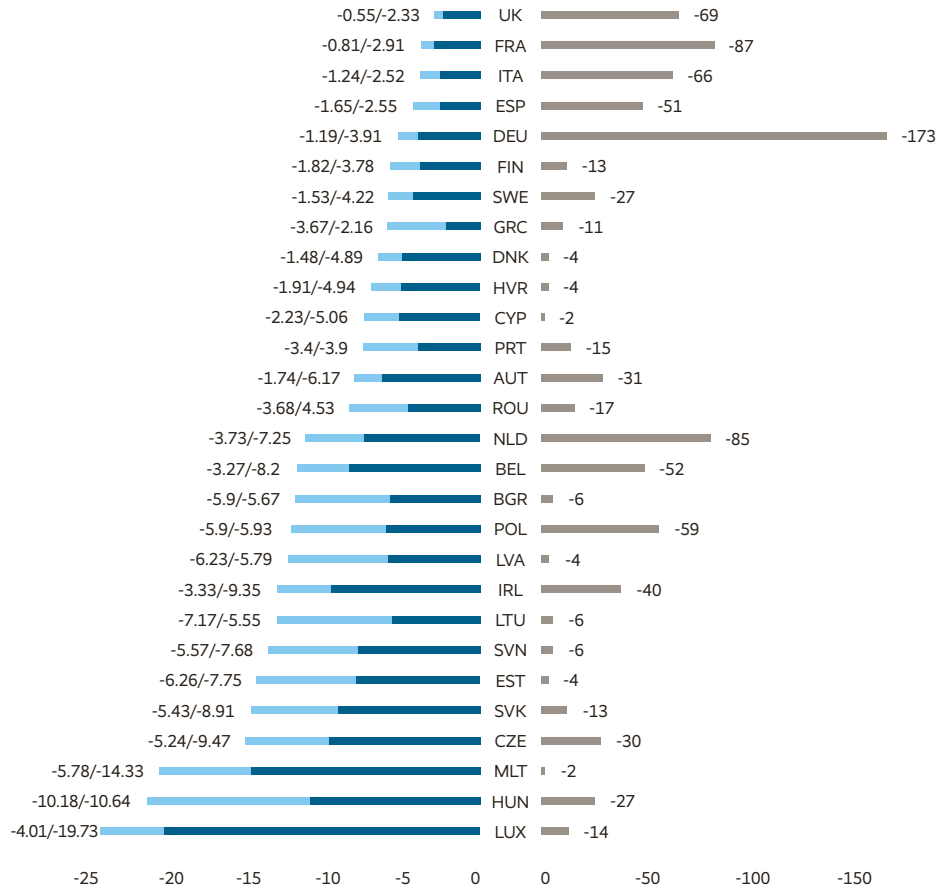
Even more dangerous for Germany than the scenario of a global economic "decoupling" would be the disintegration of the European Union and its internal market. It is true that China is now Germany's most important trading partner: In 2019, goods worth 206 billion euros were traded. However, the sum of imports and exports of German trade with Poland and the Czech Republic (216 billion euros), by way of comparison, already exceeds that figure. Trade with all EU member states exceeded 1.4 trillion euros, i.e., seven times the volume of trade with China.¹⁶⁰ This figure impressively underlines the importance of the single market for the German economy.

The German debate has regularly focused on the costs and risks arising from Germany's membership of the European Union. As the member state with the EU's largest economy, Germany is naturally one of its net contributors.¹⁶¹ Due to the loss of the United Kingdom, the German share of the total budget will continue to rise. According to current plans, Germany is expected to contribute almost 35 billion euros to the EU budget in 2027. That amounts to 8.5 billion more than was estimated for 2020.¹⁶² In media reports, this regularly leads to alarmist headlines.¹⁶³

However, from Germany's point of view, the EU's great economic advantage is that it has established favorable trading and competition conditions, the benefits of which exceed the budgetary costs of Germany's membership many times over. This is most evident, for example, when taking into account the economic costs of a total disintegration of the European Union. According to a study by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW), Germany would be the foremost net loser if the milestones of European integration – the European customs union, the European single market, the European monetary union, the Schengen Agreement, free trade agreements with third countries, and net transfer payments between EU members – were to be eliminated. German gross domestic product would drop by 173 billion euros.¹⁶⁴ While, for many smaller countries, the abolition of transfer payments would have a major impact, for Germany as a net contributor, the cessation of the internal market would account for about 80 percent of its overall losses.¹⁶⁵ Ultimately, then, safeguarding common prosperity and economic relations in the EU is not only in Germany's economic but also in its strategic interest: "The bigger and safer the EU's single market is and the more dynamic its development, the less likely it is that one economic weakness of Germany's will come to light: the dependence on two major foreign markets outside of the EU, neither of which will hesitate to utilize their economic and political power."¹⁶⁶

Figure 3.5
Effects of a reversal of EU integration, base year 2018

- Single market, percent of price-adjusted per-capita income
- Other integration measures incl. transfers, percent of price adjusted per-capita income
- GDP change in real terms, EUR billions



Data: IfW. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Political and Military Dependence

But Germany is not only highly dependent on the liberal international order in an economic sense. Politically and militarily, too, the success of our country is closely linked to this order.

It is one of the truisms of European security policy that Europe's defense depends substantially on the United States.¹⁶⁷ This was long perceived as unproblematic. The White Paper states that Germany "therefore embraces mutual interdependence in the domain of security. This includes functioning alliances, partnerships and other types of communities, and particularly Germany's close security partnership with the United States."¹⁶⁸



"Part of our self-critical approach must be to acknowledge that we Europeans have, for too long, closed our eyes to the uncomfortable reality that a US withdrawal from military commitment and international treaties means for us in particular."¹⁹⁹

Foreign Minister
Heiko Maas,
Munich Security Conference,
February 14, 2020

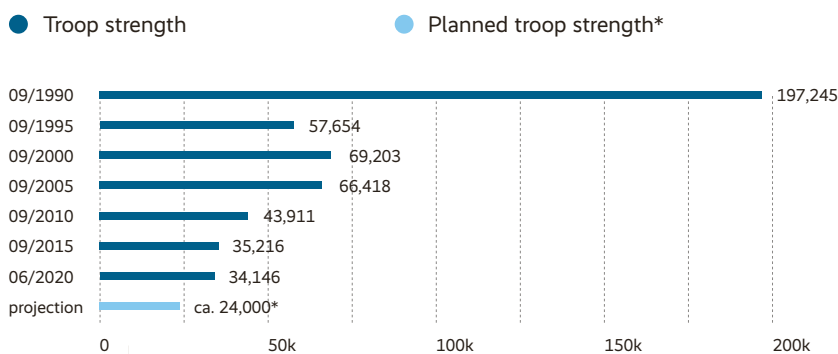
Even if the threats today are different from those of the Cold War, European defense is based explicitly or implicitly on the assumption that it would be underpinned by American reinforcements in the event of a crisis. Given the developments of the past few years, however, it would be negligent not to consider the scenario of a US withdrawal from NATO.¹⁶⁹ As unlikely as the scenario may still be, the potential consequences are severe.¹⁷⁰

For without the United States, the Europeans would hardly be able to defend themselves. According to a study by DGAP and IISS, the European Union is already having major problems in living up to its own level of ambition in crisis management and can actually only independently and permanently take on operations at the lower end of the mission spectrum.¹⁷¹ According to the authors, the prospects that this will change in the next decade are not very rosy based on the governments' current plans.¹⁷² The outlook for collective defense, the domain of NATO, is even bleaker. If the Europeans were left to their own devices, they would face massive capability gaps. Some of these gaps could be closed comparatively easily, albeit at great cost. If the United States were to leave NATO, the European NATO members would have to spend between 288 and 357 billion US dollars in order to have at their disposal armed forces that would be able to prevail in a limited regional war against a peer competitor. And even if these resources were made available, it would take up to two decades to reach this level of capability.¹⁷³ Especially in the area of intelligence, it would be almost impossible to replace the essential US capabilities upon which Europeans currently rely.¹⁷⁴ "Without this access, European states would be blind, mute, and deaf. If they were attacked, they would have to defend themselves in a largely uncoordinated way and face heavy losses."¹⁷⁵

In this respect, the German nonchalance in dealing with the debate on transatlantic burden-sharing should be a source of bewilderment, since it leaves the impression that many decision-makers are still unaware of the seriousness of the situation. For some time now, foreign policy experts have been warning that a refusal to make additional efforts would ultimately endanger Germany's security because it could prompt the United States to reconsider its NATO commitments.¹⁷⁶ President Trump's decision to withdraw a third of US troops from Germany out of frustration over Germany's refusal to spend more on defense may have been a first step. The fact that this decision, in the opinion of almost all experts, also runs counter to American interests¹⁷⁷ does not matter.

Figure 3.6
US soldiers on active duty in Germany, September 1990 – June 2020

*according to US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper (July 29, 2020)



Data: Defense Manpower Data Center, US Department of Defense.

Illustration: Munich Security Conference

After all, an increase in German defense spending is not a favor that Berlin would do the incumbent US president but an investment in its own security and that of its allies. Even under a different US president, there would still be an expectation that Germany should fulfill its obligations within NATO and do significantly more for NATO's collective defense.



“If the governing coalition in Berlin breaks free for a moment from its party-political games, it will find that meeting the 2 percent target – as absurdly high and arbitrary as this sum is – will cost less than the destruction of NATO would cause. No one in Germany will be able to pay this political price, especially not with a few percentage points of gross domestic product.”

Stefan Kornelius,
Internationale Politik,
July–August 2018²⁰⁰

In view of Germany’s and Europe’s security policy dependence on the United States, the nonchalance that is commonly evident in the debate on the two-percent target, the withdrawal of some of the US troops stationed in Germany, or burden-sharing in the area of nuclear sharing is a real security policy risk.

For however much the United States may need cooperation with Europe – Europe is and will remain much more dependent on the United States for security policy than the other way around. This applies more so to Germany and many smaller European states than to the nuclear powers of France and the United Kingdom: “For Germany, the continued conventional and nuclear protection provided by the United States is existential and indispensable in view of the ever more dynamic change ongoing in the world,” says a new position paper by the CDU/CSU parliamentary party leadership in the German Bundestag.¹⁷⁸ And Foreign Minister Maas also made it very clear in one of his more recent speeches: “The decoupling of European and American security would be highly dangerous for all of us in Europe, and particularly for us in Germany.”¹⁷⁹

In a way, the German debate in this respect is reminiscent of a metaphor coined by US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in a different context: To renounce something that has worked for a long time and still works is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet.¹⁸⁰ In principle, the British historian Michael Howard already summarized the problem in 1982. The Europeans, he said, had gotten so accustomed over decades to the fact that deterrence would be taken care of elsewhere that we “now assume that the dangers against which we once demanded reassurance only now exist in the fevered imagination of our protectors.”¹⁸¹

Even if we assume that Europe itself was able to provide its own defense in the medium term: Without the US security guarantee, Germany would be forced to spend a far greater share of its gross domestic product on defense.¹⁸² In retrospect, the German debate on the two-percent target would seem quite absurd.¹⁸³ In terms of security policy, the transatlantic relationship remains Plan A for the Federal Republic of Germany. For the foreseeable future, there is no realistic Plan B either. But Germany will not get around developing a Plan B together with its European partners – but doing so without simultaneously making Plan A less likely.¹⁸⁴ The Europeans must there-

fore “take a two-pronged approach and try, on the one hand, to save transatlantic relations and, on the other, to get Europe to stand on its own feet at the same time.”¹⁸⁵

“We want to remain transatlantic – while also becoming more European,” announced Ursula von der Leyen, then minister of defense, in this regard at the Munich Security Conference in 2018.¹⁸⁶ The question is therefore not so much whether European defense should occur within the framework of NATO or the EU in the future.¹⁸⁷ In both cases, Europeans will have to invest more in their own capabilities. Ideally, this would become the basis for a new “transatlantic bargain” that would secure the long-term commitment of the United States.¹⁸⁸ In the worst case scenario of a security policy “decoupling,” it would be an investment in European capabilities that would then be even more important than before. In any case, it is essential to move forward together with European partners in order to create “more European, more connected and more capable” armed forces that can be deployed under the auspices of the EU and NATO.¹⁸⁹

Most people in the German political sphere have internalized the idea that an effective capacity to act can no longer be guaranteed at the level of the nation state. Without a European Union that is capable of acting, German foreign and security policy will also have very limited capacity to act. “Europe,” said Chancellor Merkel in her speech to the European Parliament at the start of Germany’s EU presidency, “does not deprive us of any options. In a globalized world, it is Europe that gives us our options in the first place! We will be able to preserve our beliefs and our freedoms with Europe – and not without it.”¹⁹⁰

A collapse of the European Union would therefore not only be an economic catastrophe for Germany but also a political one.¹⁹¹ Today, German foreign policy only has global influence if it speaks in unison with its partners in the EU. For a long time, it has succeeded in doing so in trade policy – here the European Union is an undisputed superpower. The internal market, “associated with the major integrated European policies, competition, and international trade,” writes Clément Beaune, French secretary of state for Europe, “is a lever of internal strength and external power.”¹⁹² In other policy areas, Europe is not in the same position to exert power. But Europe must become more self-confident and formidable in these areas, too, if it does not want to become the “plaything of third parties.” “The goal is European sovereignty,”



“For what is Germany’s national interest today, 30 years after the most important constitutional goal – reunification – became reality? [...] Europe is not something that is merely nice to have or important when other partnerships wilt. No, it is our strongest, our most fundamental national interest. Today and tomorrow, Europe is the indispensable framework for us to assert ourselves in the world.”²⁰¹

Federal President
Frank-Walter Steinmeier,
Munich Security Conference,
February 14, 2020

was how Foreign Minister Maas put it.¹⁹³ Others speak of “strategic autonomy,” defined in a study by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs as “the ability to set priorities and make decisions in matters of foreign policy and security, together with the institutional, political and material wherewithal to carry these through – in cooperation with third parties, or if need be alone.”¹⁹⁴

In the end, Germany is and remains dependent on a European Union that is capable of acting: “Without a strong Europe – a Europe that is united, prosperous, and capable of taking collective action in the world – German prosperity, German security, and Germany’s ability to influence the course of global events will decline.”¹⁹⁵

Key Points

- ① With the erosion of the liberal international order, the “German business model” as a trading state and civilian power is also being called into question.
- ② The global economy is increasingly shaped by geopolitical considerations. For Germany as a trading state that is uniquely interconnected across the globe, the new era of great-power competition is also an economic challenge. Unable to escape this development, it will have to make tough decisions.
- ③ The withdrawal of the United States from its role as a “benevolent hegemon” and as guarantor of the *pax Americana* raises fundamental questions for Germany, whose security is, to this day, ultimately dependent on the American security guarantee. Germany will have to do far more than it has done in the past to secure European defense together with its partners.
- ④ The *Zeitenwende* is bringing Germany’s economic and security policy dependencies to the fore – it is high time that we adapt and bring Germany’s weight to bear in order to make progress on the path to “European sovereignty.”

A View from China: A Mediating Power



Huiyao Wang

Germany's profile has risen immeasurably in the three decades since unification, becoming the EU's driving force and an economic and technological powerhouse. Over this time, the Sino-German relationship has become ever deeper and more multifaceted, with economics at the core. China is Germany's largest trading partner and German companies have played a major role in China's industrial development. The two sides may not always see eye to eye, but fundamentally, China and Germany share the same deep commitments to an open, rules-based economy and effective global institutions to deal with threats such as climate change and the unprecedented health and economic crisis we are living through.

Some wonder if Germany's influence will wane with the coming end of the Merkel era. From China's perspective, and I suspect for many around the world, I would like to see just the opposite. Like the EU, for all its economic and cultural prowess, there is a sense that, politically, Berlin has sometimes punched below its weight on the global stage. As we enter a more uncertain multipolar age, I for one would welcome Germany to be a more self-assured, proactive geopolitical player, continuing the pragmatism that has been a hallmark of Merkel's foreign policy, but also be willing to diversify its foreign relations and step into a more prominent international mediating role of the type Germany has proved adept at regionally. The country's convening power is evident in the continued growth and evolution of fora such as the Munich Security Conference and there is scope to extend this reach further.

Germany's ability and willingness to mediate is all the more crucial at a time when we see an emerging dynamic that threatens to cleave the world into competing hemispheres. China has no desire to become entangled in a prolonged bipolar struggle with the US, and fully supports a stronger EU that can work with China to reinvigorate multilateralism and play a stabilizing role as part of a China-EU-US trilateral mechanism. Given its central role in the EU, as well as deep ties with both the US and China, perhaps no country is better placed than Germany to play this mediating role.

Over 30 years since reunification, Germany has benefitted greatly from deepening trade ties with China while largely staying hewn to Washington

strategically. In the three decades to come, navigating and balancing the triangle with Beijing and Washington might mean moving out of this comfort zone and being willing to galvanize the EU to play a larger role in bridging between the transpacific powers. That will be no easy task. But no country is more aware of the harm done when we allow the world to be divided by ideology and mistrust. As we move into the post-pandemic era, Germany has a historic opportunity to help chart a different course for the world.

Wang Huiyao is the Founder and President of the Center for China and Globalization (CCG) and a Counsellor of the China State Council.

A View from Estonia: Primus inter pares



Toomas Hendrik Ilves

Even before the fall of the Wall and the later re-establishment of the independence of the Baltic States, the attitude of the German government toward the three countries varied from exasperation at their persistence to annoyance that these small countries were an impediment to German-Soviet, later German-Russian relations, foreign and economic. Thirty-one years ago, an official of the Bundesnachrichtendienst sought me out at Radio Free Europe and yelled at me to tell the Balts to stop their move toward independence. Ten years later (as foreign minister of Estonia) I was repeatedly told by senior German officials that my country's membership in NATO and the EU "was not in the German national interest." The attitude of the Ost-Ausschuss representing German business interests in Russia was even harsher.

This attitude of annoyance, bordering on antagonism at the three countries at their insistence at restoration of statehood and later joining the transatlantic West persisted throughout the Kohl era, remained unchanged in the Schröder era and only began to mellow under the chancellorship of Angela Merkel.

From the Baltic perspective there has always been a hope that Germany would take a more "realistic" and a less strictly self-interested approach to EU foreign and security policy. Acknowledged or not, Germany is the leading member state in the EU. As such, it would be expected to recognize that



its *primus inter pares* position confers a responsibility to consider the broader interests of the Union and NATO without retreating turtle-like whenever its economic interests might be at stake.

While Germany often "does the right thing," promoting a broader pan-European position, be it the 2009 debt crisis and later with the refugee and Covid-19 crises, it all too often appears blind when it comes to Russian behavior toward its neighbors. Be it vetoing the membership action plan to Ukraine and Georgia in 2008; its *quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi* persistence pushing Nordstream 1 and 2 – to the point of disregarding EU law – its blinkered view of Russia is the primary impediment for the "Zwischenländer" to Germany's East from accepting German leadership in EU foreign policy.

Germany does seem to be shifting slightly: the Luftwaffe has been deployed for a longer stint for NATO air-policing in the Baltic States; Germany did bring Alexei Navalny for treatment after his poisoning in Russia. Hope, especially in the Baltic States, springs eternal.

Toomas Hendrik Ilves is former President of the Republic of Estonia, a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and a member of the MSC Advisory Council.



Investments

4 Instrumental Reasoning

What instruments has Germany used in recent years to act “earlier, more decisively, and more substantially”? How have German investments in the foreign policy toolbox developed? Where are the greatest deficits?

Instrumental Reasoning

Tobias Bunde and
Laura Hartmann

In its foreign and security policy, Germany has pursued “a comprehensive approach that can make a timely and substantial contribution to the mobilization of appropriate foreign, development and security policy instruments.”²⁰² The “Munich consensus” of 2014 was accompanied by the political demand to expand and strengthen the foreign policy “toolbox.”²⁰³ Those who wanted to act “earlier, more decisively, and substantially” must also “sharpen their instruments and develop new tools,” wrote the then foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in February 2015. This also includes asking “whether and when the use of military means may be necessary to secure political solutions.”²⁰⁴ For even though German politicians repeatedly and correctly insist that the debate should not be reduced to the issue of military means, it should not be limited to civilian means either if one is serious about this comprehensive, networked approach: “If you have a big hammer, so the saying goes, any problem can easily look like a nail. But perhaps it is also true that the person who only wants to buy a screwdriver likes to overlook the nails among the problems, and that sometimes it is important to have a working hammer after all.”²⁰⁵



“The military instrument is indispensable for our security but is neither the first choice nor the most likely to deliver success when it comes to the diplomatic and political capability to act.”

Federal President
Frank-Walter Steinmeier,
Munich Security Conference,
February 14, 2020.³⁰⁵

A well-stocked and well-maintained foreign policy toolbox costs money. The German government has emphasized that Germany has made important course adjustments since 2014. In particular, it points out that, in recent years, Germany has provided considerable additional funds for foreign, development, and defense policy initiatives and has become more active in all these areas.

Diplomacy

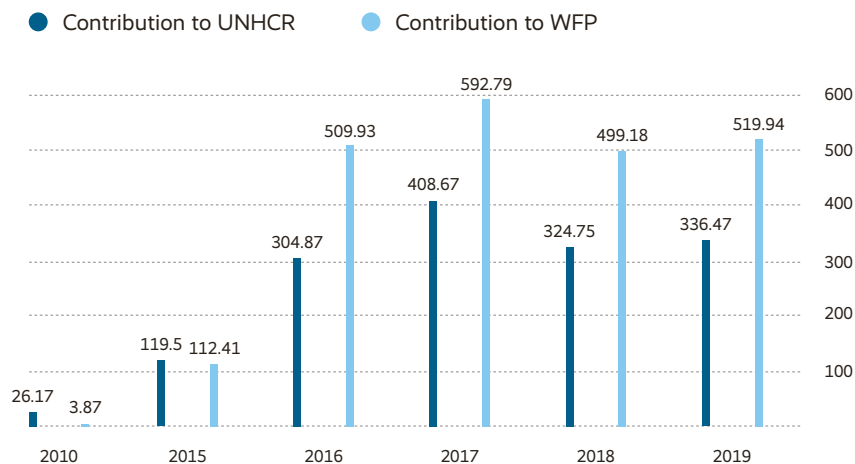
German officials quite rightly point out that taking responsibility for international leadership does not only involve making a military contribution but also includes diplomatic initiatives, contributions to peace missions, support for international organizations, and the willingness to accept refugees from war zones. From this point of view, it is argued, Germany’s balance sheet looks much more positive than the all-too-sweeping criticism of German restraint will give it credit for.²⁰⁶

In the White Paper of 2016, the German government stated: “Our focus is therefore on preventive measures.”²⁰⁷ In this context, a central concern of German foreign policy is “to defuse crises in a timely manner, to counter them through compromise, mediation, prevention, before the only option

left is damage control.”²⁰⁸ One result of the Review process at the Federal Foreign Office was therefore the creation of a new department dealing with “Humanitarian Assistance, Crisis Prevention, Stabilization, and Post-Conflict Reconstruction.” It is in this area that the Federal Foreign Office has seen much stronger commitment and impressive funding increases in recent years.

Indeed, the budget for the Federal Foreign Office has almost doubled in the last decade – from about three to almost six billion euros. A major part of Germany’s increased financial commitment is due to the need to alleviate the symptoms of a world in crisis mode. For example, financial aid to provide immediate support for refugees or famine have been significantly increased. Between 2010 and 2019, the Federal Foreign Office’s contributions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have increased more than twelvefold.²⁰⁹ Over the same period, contributions to the World Food Program (WFP) have even increased 134 times.²¹⁰

Figure 4.1
Germany’s financial contributions to UNHCR and WFP,
2010–2019, EUR millions

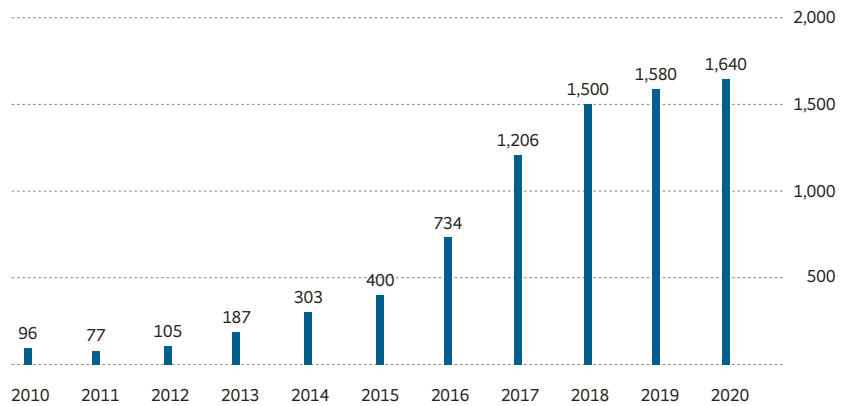


Data: Federal Foreign Office. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

The same applies to spending on humanitarian aid, which has been massively increased over the past decade in the face of numerous crises.

Figure 4.2

Germany's spending on humanitarian aid, 2009–2020, EUR millions



Data: Federal Foreign Office. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

As the world's fourth largest economy, Germany is naturally one of the most important donors to international organizations and a central pillar of institutionalized multilateralism. After the United States, China, and Japan, Germany is the fourth largest contributor to the regular budget of the United Nations. Taking voluntary contributions – for example, to individual programs – into account, Germany is “one of the three largest funders of the United Nations.”²¹¹

Germany is also one of the main donors to other important organizations. Germany's contribution to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) more than doubled between 2010 and 2020 – from 17.2 million euros to 40.7 million euros.²¹² And while NATO focuses primarily on national defense expenditures, Germany decided last year to significantly increase its own share of NATO's general budget. In future, Germany will increase its contribution to NATO's budget by about 33 million euros per year or about 10 percent (313 million euros in 2019) and will thus pay the same share (16.35 percent) as the United States.²¹³

In addition, together with France, Germany has launched the Alliance for Multilateralism. The Federal Foreign Office regards it as an example of a proactive, multilaterally oriented policy in response to a new state of affairs, where the United States is withdrawing from its leadership role in multilateral organizations while China is endeavoring to reshape them in its favor or to establish alternatives.²¹⁴

Yet, the additional financial resources that the Federal Foreign Office itself distributes can only be effective if there is also enough qualified personnel available to invest these resources wisely. The most important resource for German foreign policy remains, without question, German diplomats. The Foreign Service continues to enjoy an excellent reputation at home and abroad: “Germany’s diplomatic apparatus is one of the most professional and successful in the world.”²¹⁵

But for years, the question remained whether the Federal Foreign Office has sufficient personnel to fulfill its political ambitions. In contrast to the foreign ministries of other countries, the German Foreign Service is quite modestly equipped in terms of personnel, as a comparative study states.²¹⁶ In a Bundestag debate in 2018 on increasing financing, the deputy chairman of the FDP parliamentary group and former diplomat Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, too, reiterated the great importance of diplomacy in times of crisis in the multilateral global order and warned: “The Foreign Office is on its last legs.”²¹⁷

Thus, the doubling of its budget was only matched by a nine percent increase in permanent posts over the same period.²¹⁸ At the same time, the Federal Foreign Office barely has the personnel pool it is required to maintain: “Many divisions and embassies are simply understaffed for the work they should actually be doing.”²¹⁹ Unfortunately, this is particularly true of embassies in strategically important regions “where Germany’s interests in stabilization are greatest – for example, in Mali or Iraq.”²²⁰ The problem that not enough German diplomats can be deployed at hotspots for German foreign and security policy was already apparent in Afghanistan a decade ago.²²¹

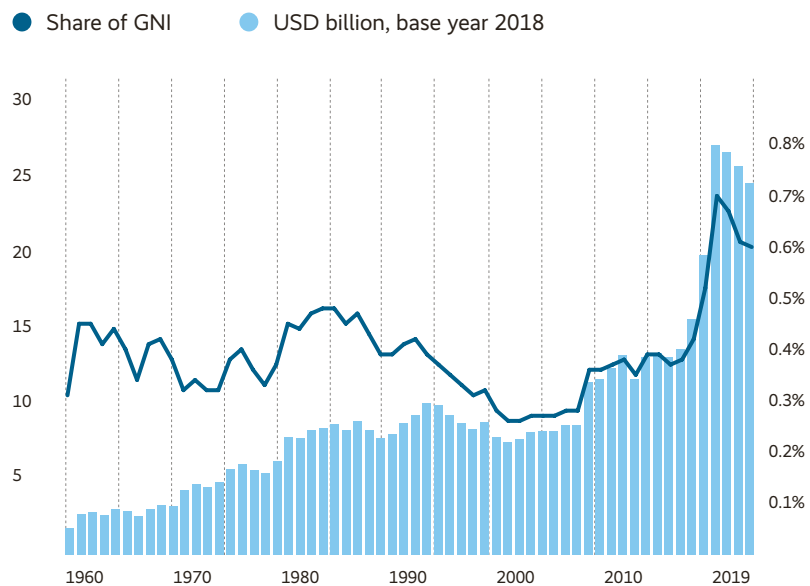
Development Cooperation

Germany has likewise set itself ambitious goals in the field of development cooperation in order to meet its international responsibilities.²²² However, to combat the structural causes of underdevelopment in the long term, additional funds are also needed: “Development for peace and security does not come for free. We must invest significantly more into addressing civil conflict, preventing crises, and promoting peace.”²²³

Based on the 1972 United Nations agreement, Germany has committed itself to the goal of spending 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on development cooperation.²²⁴ For decades, however, German policy clearly failed to meet this target.²²⁵ The German ODA ratio fell well short of 0.5 percent of GNI.²²⁶

Figure 4.3

Germany’s development spending (net ODA), 1960–2019



Data: OECD. Illustration: Munich Security Conference.



“There is 1,800 billion dollars worldwide for armaments and military expenditure as opposed to 170 billion dollars for humanitarian expenditures and development cooperation. This is blatantly out of proportion and in no way does justice to the tasks of peace and development cooperation. The implementation of the 0.7 percent target for development cooperation is more important today than ever before.”³⁰⁶

Development Minister
Gerd Müller,
Umdenken.
Überlebensfragen
der Menschheit, 2020

The year 2016 was an exception, as domestic expenditures to deal with the refugee crisis were counted towards the ODA criteria and pushed Germany over the 0.7 percent mark for once.²²⁷ Yet, despite an agreement to the contrary in the coalition agreement, which stipulated a significant increase towards the 0.7 percent target,²²⁸ German ODA spending is expected to continue to decline until the end of the 2021 legislative period.

An analysis from 2019 – well before the enormous additional burden on the budget caused by the Covid-19 pandemic – assumes that, according to medium-term financial planning, a total of 5.7 billion euros will be needed in 2020 and 2021 to reach the 0.7 percent target, and more than twice as much (12.6 billion euros) even if expenditure on refugees within Germany is not taken into account.²²⁹

Even so, Germany is in an average position compared to other industrialized countries. While the Scandinavian countries and Luxembourg meet or exceed the target,²³⁰ many Western countries are far behind. For instance, the United States is the most important donor in absolute terms²³¹ but spends relatively little on development in relation to its gross national income.²³²

Due to its global consequences for stability and security, climate change has become increasingly important for German politics in recent years. It has become a new overarching task: “In future, climate change must be taken into account in all areas of our foreign relations. These range from EU policy to trade and economic issues, the multilateral work done in the UN and the dialogue with affected partners.”²³³ At the EU level, Germany is calling for a horizontal “climate target” of at least 25 percent in the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-27 – that is, “25 percent of the total EU budget should be climate-related investments and support the Green Deal.”²³⁴ Within the UN framework, the Paris Agreement and climate change are to be taken into account as cross-cutting issues with German support.²³⁵

In addition to this work within multilateral institutions, Germany, together with the other industrialized countries, pledged in 2009 to make available 100 billion US dollars annually from public and private funds for climate protection and adaptation measures in developing countries from 2020 onwards.²³⁶ The Paris Agreement further expanded this goal: It envisages a financing target exceeding the 100 billion US dollar mark to be set before 2025.²³⁷ As part of this promise, the Chancellor announced at this year’s Pe-

tersberg Climate Dialogue that she would set aside “four billion euros for international climate financing” in 2020.²³⁸

But despite impressive leaps in a short space of time — since 2005, when German climate financing totaled 471 million euros, the amount has increased almost tenfold²³⁹ — even around four billion euros amounts to only about ten percent of defense spending and just under half of what many observers believe Germany should shoulder based on its economic performance.²⁴⁰

However, this also applies to many other countries — according to many donor states, the billions of euros needed will primarily be raised through the increased commitment of private financing.²⁴¹ Even if this approach absolves the state of responsibility to a certain extent, the potential of such initiatives should not be underestimated: If the low-interest loans provided by the KfW Development Bank and the German Investment Corporation (DEG) are included in the equation, German climate financing for 2017 would increase, from 3.65 billion euros of government budget funding to a total of 6.7 billion euros, putting Germany in a leading position in the EU.²⁴²

Defense

The field of defense policy – and thus the Bundeswehr as “an important instrument of our security and defense policy”²⁴³ – is generally regarded as the area of German foreign policy in which Germany has the most catching up to do. Since 2014, Germany has significantly intensified its commitment in the field of defense policy. Undoubtedly, many arguments support the notion that the “Munich consensus” has also found its expression in this area.

In NATO, following the Wales Summit, Germany not only took on a leadership role in the first test round for the so-called Spearhead Force, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). A few years later it was also the only continental European member state to assume command responsibility for one of the four multinational battalions stationed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland as part of the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP).²⁴⁴

Figure 4.4
Enhanced Forward Presence (efP) deployments, 2020

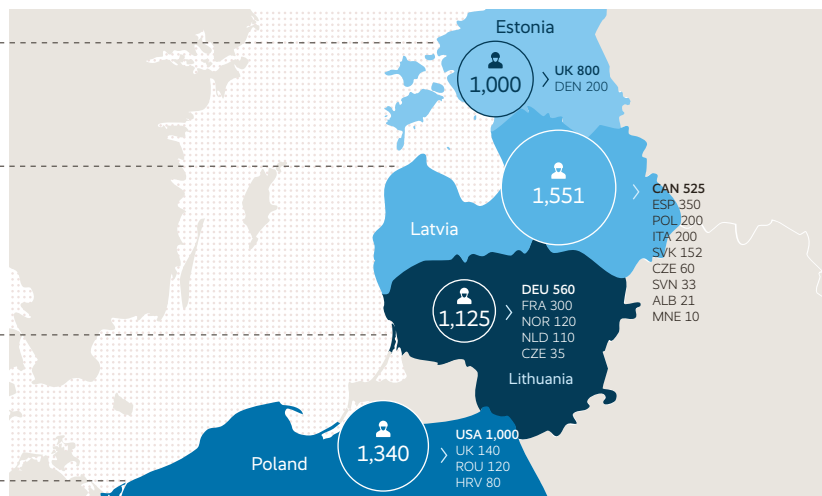
 Deployments **Bold marked country names = Framework Nation**

Resources

1 armd inf bn HQ, 1 armd inf coy(+), 1 engr sqn, 1 tank sqn with Challenger 2, Warrior, Scimitar, AS90, Trojan; 1 armd inf coy with CV9035DK

1 mech inf bn HQ, 1 mech inf coy(+), 1 cbt spt coy, LAV 6.0, M777; 1 EOD tp; 1 mech inf coy BMP-2; 1 mor pl; 1 recce squad; 1 tk coy, PT-91 Twardy; armd inf coy with Ariete MBTs + Dardo IFVs; 1 engineer pl; 1 armd inf coy(+), Pizarro

1 armd bn HQ, 1 armd inf coy(+), Boxer, Leopard 2A6, Marder, Pionierpanzer Dachs; armd inf coy (+) with Leclerc + VBCI; 1 SP arty bty with Pzh2000, 1 armd inf coy, Leopard 2A4, CV9030N, NM109, Wisent 2; EW unit **1 Mech inf bn with Stryker; M777,** 1 ADA bty, GDF-003; 1 recce sqn, Jackal 2; 1 MRL bty, M91 Vulkan



Data: The International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Illustration: Munich Security Conference



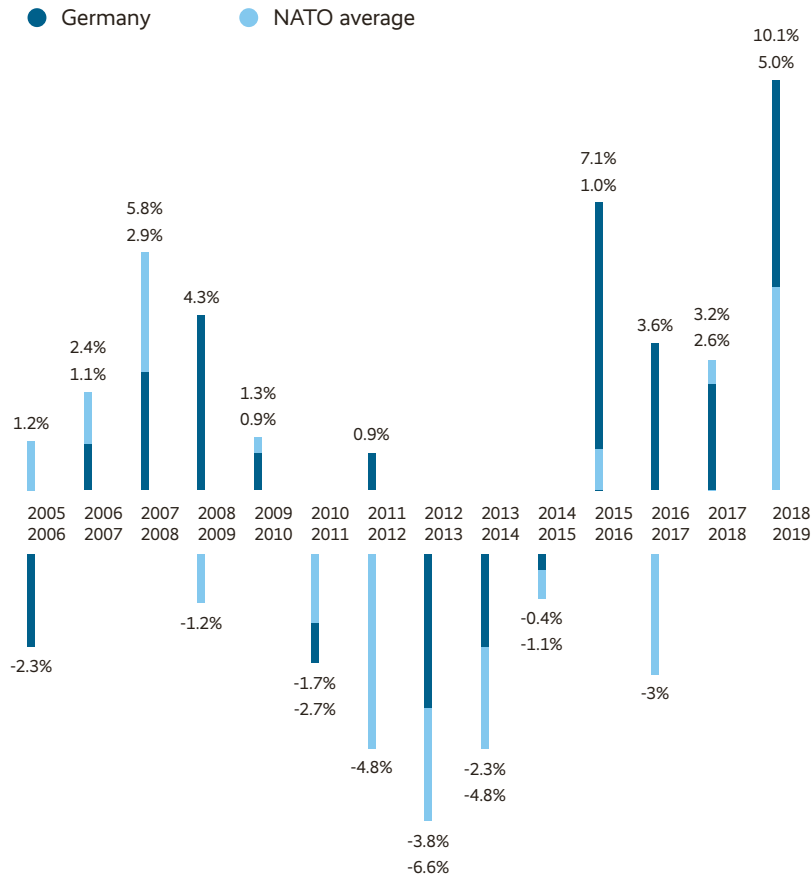
The German government also pushed ahead with the implementation of the Framework Nations Concept in NATO, which was conceived in Berlin for multinational capability building.²⁴⁵ In terms of capabilities and commitments, the German government argued, Germany was thus a key player within NATO. In contrast to many other member states, it said, Germany was gearing its planning entirely towards NATO's needs and making its capabilities available in a reliable manner.²⁴⁶

Even with regard to the “third C,” as NATO speak puts it, namely “cash,” it could be argued that the German government has been serious in its announcement to take on “more responsibility.” According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the country has increased its defense spending significantly more than the NATO average. In 2019, the defense budget increased by 10 percent compared to the previous year, which was the largest increase among the fifteen countries with the largest defense budgets.²⁴⁷ The German government has repeatedly emphasized that greater increases would be impossible because one would hardly

be able to spend the money. As Chancellor Merkel put it at the MSC 2019: “Of course, we must also ask ourselves what we’re doing with this money.”²⁴⁸

Figure 4.5
Trends in Germany’s military spending compared to the NATO average, 2005–2019, percent*

*Year-on-year variation.
Accession of Albania and Croatia from 2009, Montenegro from 2017.



Data: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Within the EU, Germany has also sought to provide impetus and has contributed significantly to the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Berlin supported the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) for the defense sector, which the Lisbon Treaty established as a

possibility, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), and the European Defense Fund, which is intended to form the basis for the development of a European Defense Union with a “European army.”²⁴⁹

Furthermore, the Bundeswehr is present in many parts of the world. However critically Germany’s partners sometimes view its commitment, Germany cannot be accused of rashly withdrawing from a mission once it has decided to participate. Since the 1990s, the Bundeswehr has been continuously engaged in peacekeeping in the Balkans. Even today there are still Bundeswehr soldiers in Kosovo. And in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia alone, a total of around 63,500 Bundeswehr soldiers have been deployed under NATO command to secure peace since 1996.²⁵⁰ In contrast to many other NATO members, Germany remains present in Afghanistan and even still maintains a relatively large troop presence. Even after the end of the ISAF mandate, Germany is still the second largest provider of troops in Operation Resolute Support after the United States, with up to 1,300 soldiers.

In recent years, the Bundeswehr has also expanded its involvement in Africa and the Middle East. This applies particularly to Mali, where, since 2013, the Bundeswehr has been supporting the UN Stabilization Mission MINUSMA with troop numbers that were increased up to a new limit of 1,100 soldiers in 2016;²⁵¹ it is also supporting the EU Training Mission (EUTM) there with 350 soldiers.²⁵² Germany is also participating in the coalition against the so-called Islamic State (IS). When, in 2015, the IS threatened to overrun the last redoubts of the Peshmerga in Iraq, Berlin even managed to deliver weapons to a war zone to allow the endangered minority to defend itself. In 2019, the Bundeswehr’s mission-related additional expenditures due to international missions amounted to almost one billion euros (964.9 million).²⁵³

Figure 4.6

Selected international deployments of the German army, 2019

Deployment	Total actual expenditure, EUR millions (as of December 31, 2019)	Average personnel strength of the German contingent	Average period in post, days
Resolute Support	381.9	1,169	93
MINUSMA	269.9	903	92
Counter Daesh/ Capacity Building Iraq	92.7	459	73
EUNAVFOR Med Op Sophia	39.9	47	40
EUTM Mali	30.1	173	85
EU NAVFOR Somalia Op Atalanta	25.2	59	75
UNIFIL	25.0	125	69
KFOR	12.4	72	90
UNMISS	0.7	13	148
Sea Guardian	0.5	26	7
UNAMID	0.2	3	119
MINURSO	0.1	3	145

Data: Federal Ministry of Defense. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Despite this increased commitment, the accusation that Germany is a security policy free-rider remains. At the heart of the debate is how to deal with NATO's two-percent target, according to which members are required to spend at least two percent of their gross domestic product on defense. It is true that this target originated during the enlargement debate about two decades ago, when the aim was to prevent the new member states from falling below the two-percent mark after their accession. However, it only came to public attention as part of the response to the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the ongoing fighting in Ukraine in the summit declaration at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales. In this declaration, the NATO allies agreed that, first, all countries that already met the NATO target of devoting at least

two percent of GDP to defense and at least 20 percent thereof to investment would continue to do so. Second, all others, rather than continue to cut defense spending, were to increase real defense spending in line with GDP growth and “aim to move towards the two-percent guideline within a decade with a view to meeting their NATO Capability Targets and filling NATO’s capability shortfalls.”²⁵⁴

Members of the German government have since repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to this target — in joint statements of the NATO states or in their own speeches and commentaries. At the same time, however, the two-percent target has been publicly questioned again and again in the German debate. This discussion about “two percent,” which, according to Stefan Kornelius, has long been “a cipher, a code word for an almost endless chain of arguments, counter-arguments, and political fantasies,”²⁵⁵ begins by pointing out that the share of the gross domestic product is meaningless. If GDP declines, it becomes easier to hit that target without having increased the defense contribution at all. To this point, Greece is often cited as an example because, due to its economic crash, on paper, it could have been considered a model NATO member.²⁵⁶ This argument was also adopted by Chancellor Merkel: “If we all fall into recession and have no economic growth, then defense spending will be easier.”²⁵⁷ The fact that the two-percent target is not an adequate yardstick for a country’s defense contribution is undisputed, even among advocates of increasing defense spending. However, within the debate on German defense spending, it is often unclear why these observations, which in themselves are accurate, should be an argument against a significant increase in defense spending.

Quite rightly, some stress that it is not sensible to use abstract numbers; one should instead focus on what is deemed necessary based on strategic analysis. This is also completely correct, but it suggests that there has not been any strategic analysis so far and that, as a consequence, additional expenditure for the Bundeswehr is not “demand-oriented” but is driven solely by the artificial two-percent target. SPD parliamentary party leader Rolf Mützenich, who remarked in the Bundestag that the “supposed” two-percent target reminded him of the dance around the golden calf, instead demanded one must “talk about the capabilities that we can contribute to NATO and strengthen these capabilities”²⁵⁸ — as if this were possible without a significant increase in expenditure.

Reports by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, publications in the media, and defense ministry reports on operational readiness have repeatedly revealed the capability gaps that the armed forces have to contend with and how regularly important materiel is not available. The countless articles on equipment shortages in the Bundeswehr are now a genre of defense policy reporting in their own right – and report on oddities such as painted broomsticks used to simulate the gun barrel of a combat vehicle, or the fact that, for a long period of time, not one of the six German submarines was available for deployment.²⁵⁹ In any case, the state of the armed forces is inconsistent with the White Paper’s statement that the Bundeswehr is “an important instrument of our security and defense policy.”²⁶⁰



“In the 1980s, the Bundeswehr equipped 1.3 million soldiers to be ready for mobilisation. At the time this had to work. The idea was to prevent the Third World War by tangible strength and deterrence. Today, the 180,000 active service-women and men can only marvel at this.”

Hans-Peter Bartels,
Annual Report 2019 by the
Parliamentary Commissioner
for the Armed Forces,
January 28, 2020³⁰⁷

For example, in its latest report on the material operational readiness of the Bundeswehr’s main weapon systems, the Federal Ministry of Defense states that “no significant turnaround” has yet taken place, even though the measures taken in recent years regarding individual weapon systems have had initial positive effects.²⁶¹ The greater operational readiness for missions and similar obligations, at times literally essential for survival, can often only be ensured at the expense of the remaining troops or materiel.²⁶² For example, when Germany took on a leadership role in the NATO Spearhead VJTF last year, “it had to borrow the required equipment from other army units, where it was naturally missing.”²⁶³ By the time the Bundeswehr takes over the VJTF leadership again in three years, the plan is to have resolved this problem.

In his reports, the armed forces commissioner also criticizes the fact that more than 20,000 posts above the crew level remain unfilled²⁶⁴ and that goals – such as the 2031 target of having a fully equipped Bundeswehr – are already being deferred because they “evidently do not appear to be fully feasible in terms of either materiel, personnel, or finances.”²⁶⁵

The issue of procurement also regularly causes headaches. Hence, in his latest report, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces asks: “[...] why does it take seven years to upgrade 100 old battle tanks to the latest state of the art when at the same time the same industry can build 50 brand new battle tanks for another nation in two years?”²⁶⁶ The most recent report from the Ministry of Defense on material readiness states that the operational readiness of the 68 main weapon systems has slightly increased and is now at about 70 percent. But the ministry emphasizes: “This figure is not satisfactory because of the wide variance among the individual weapon sys-











Germany in the World

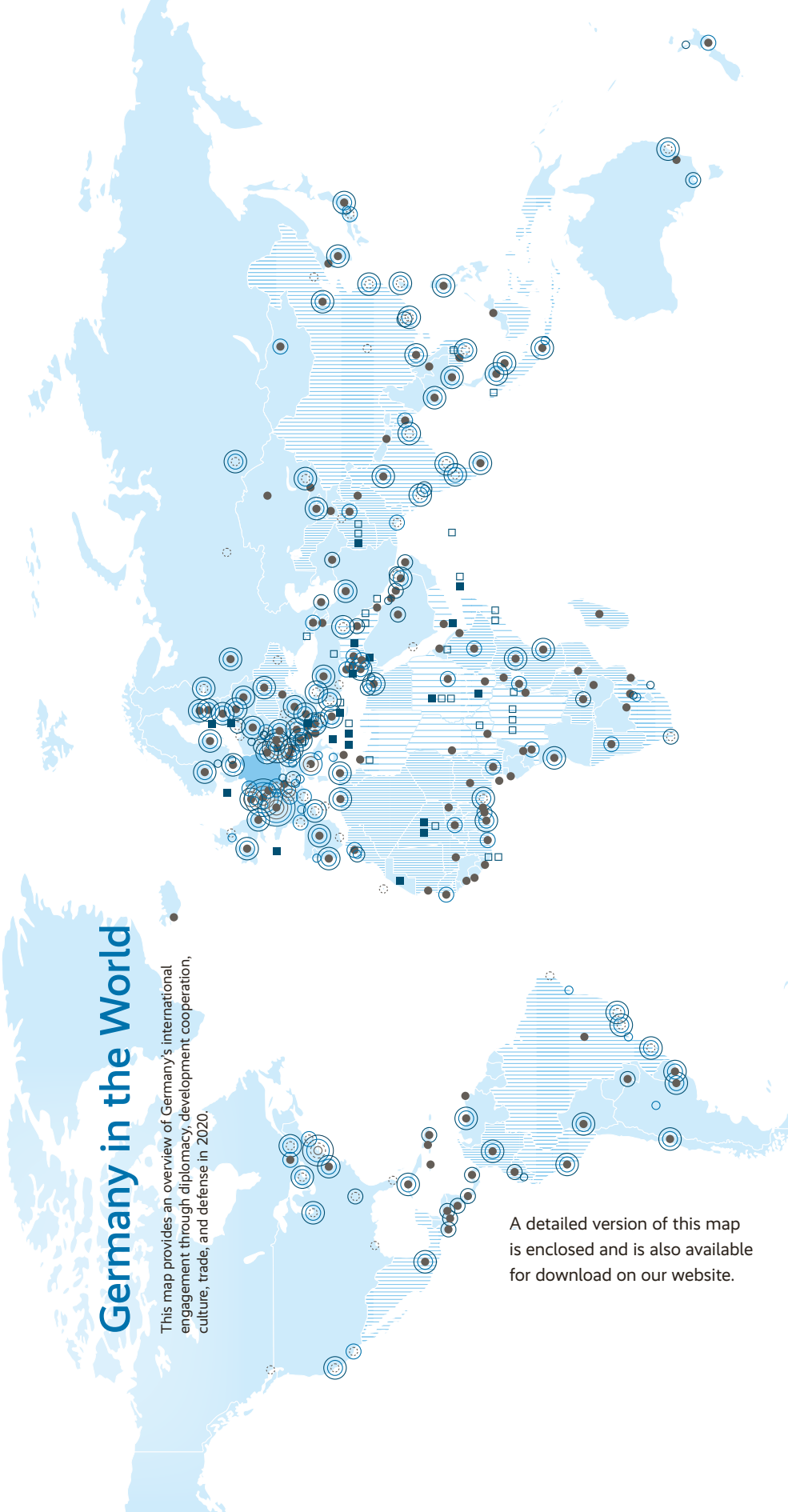
This map provides an overview of Germany's international engagement through diplomacy, development cooperation, culture, trade, and defense in 2020.

A detailed version of this map is enclosed and is also available for download on our website.



<https://doi.org/10.47342/SBID8214>

-  **Bilateral partners**
Long-term cooperation to achieve shared development goals
-  **Global partners**
Cooperation on tackling issues defining our common global future, such as climate change
-  **Nexus and peace partners**
Cooperation in crisis regions to tackle causes of violence, conflict, and displacement, supporting the process of stabilization and peacebuilding
-  **Embassies**
-  **Multilateral representations**
-  **Consulates(-general), representative offices, German Institute**
-  **Current Bundeswehr deployments and equivalent commitments**
-  **Completed deployments (since 1991)**
-  **Goethe Institutes**
-  **Chambers of Commerce Abroad**



tems. For example, the material operational readiness of brand-new unprotected trucks is over 90 percent, but for helicopters it is under 40 percent.”²⁶⁷ Some weapon systems, such as the Tiger combat helicopter, the NH90 transport helicopter, or the Puma mechanized infantry combat vehicles are now notorious for their low operational readiness. The Puma, in particular, writes the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, is “a prime example of the force’s difficulties with the apparently now unmanageable armament process – unmanageable for armed forces officials and industry alike.” Of the 284 mechanized infantry combat vehicles purchased last year, only a quarter are said to have been operational.²⁶⁸

Without eliminating these gaps, Germany will not be able to contribute the thoroughly ambitious capabilities to NATO that Berlin has long since promised. It is therefore a matter of equipment, not militarization, as the German government – from Angela Merkel to Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer and Heiko Maas – has repeatedly emphasized.²⁶⁹



“Everyone knows that the Bundeswehr has problems with its hardware. It’s about equipment, not militarization.”

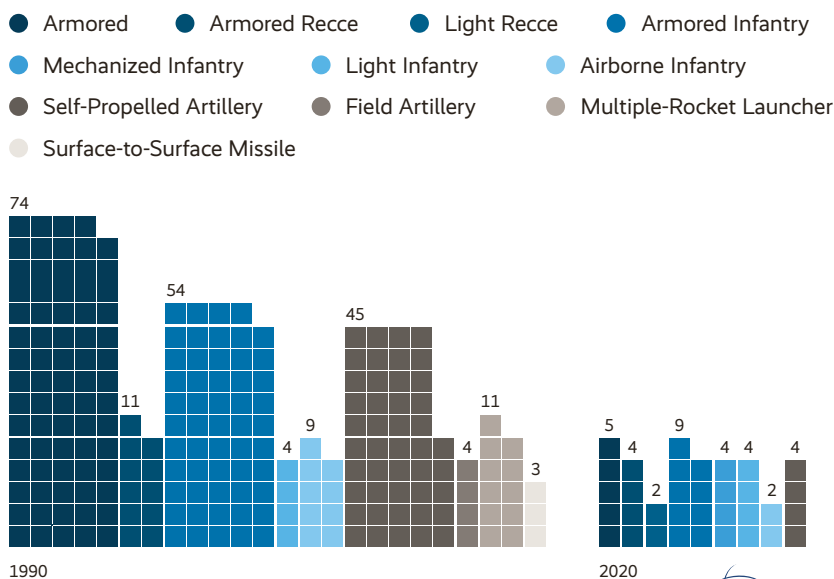
Foreign Minister
Heiko Maas,
Interview, *Der Tagesspiegel*,
March 9, 2019³⁰⁸

In view of the somewhat miserable condition of the German armed forces, the statement by then Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, who quipped during the election campaign that he would not know where to put all the additional aircraft carriers,²⁷⁰ did not leave a good impression – and not only abroad. After all, nobody expects Germany to buy aircraft carriers; all anyone wants is an efficient Bundeswehr that can reliably meet its obligations within the EU and NATO.

With the return to territorial defense, Germany is taking on a central role within NATO and the defense of Europe. Admittedly, it is not a question of returning to the level of the 1980s, when the Bundeswehr with its 215 combat-ready battalions²⁷¹ was still considered “by far the strongest conventional armed force of the West in Europe” and “formed the indispensable backbone of defense within NATO.”²⁷² But the Bundeswehr, according to the German government’s strategy papers, will have to assume an indispensable role in the collective defense of Europe again due to Germany’s central position in Europe. To this end, three operational divisions are to be established by 2032; the NATO Spearhead Force (VJTF) is to be fully equipped as early as 2023. At the Brussels Summit in 2018, the German government also agreed to the NATO “4x30” initiative, which is intended to increase the operational capability of existing units of NATO member states — within 30 days, 30 battalions on land, 30 squadrons in the air, and 30 warships at sea should be ready for action.²⁷³

This has meant that the Bundeswehr faces enormous efforts, as it is currently still far from meeting these goals. An overview by the International Institute for Strategic Studies shows the extent to which capabilities have been lost, especially in the area of territorial defense, since 1990.

Figure 4.7
German army combat bataillons, 1990–2020



Data and illustration: The International Institute for Strategic Studies



Between 1990 and 2020, a range of factors – including shifting threat perceptions and mission profiles, economic challenges, and the changing role of conscription – contributed to a notable decline of active combat battalions in service with the Bundeswehr.

Given that recently the European security environment has deteriorated, defense spending is growing again, and NATO has requested investment in heavy forces, the German Army is pursuing a plan to generate three combat-capable divisions, with a total of eight brigades by 2032.

While detailed planning assumptions in the open-source environment currently only cover the period up to 2027 (when a fully equipped division is meant to be available) implementation of the 2032 ambition would entail a modest growth of active combat battalions compared to current levels.

In view of the existing capability gaps, the German government’s original plan to increase the budget therefore hardly appears excessive. The “4+5+6 Plan” presented by the Ministry of Defense, which envisaged an increase in the defense budget by four billion euros in 2019, by five billion in 2020, and by six billion in 2021, was based on concrete models for targeted investments, which would have meant that Germany would already have reached 1.5 percent of GDP in 2021.²⁷⁴ Defense Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer therefore regularly emphasizes that the efforts are not yet sufficient. This is because, although the commitments discussed above provide the framework for the Bundeswehr’s planning, they are not fully reflected in existing budget drafts.



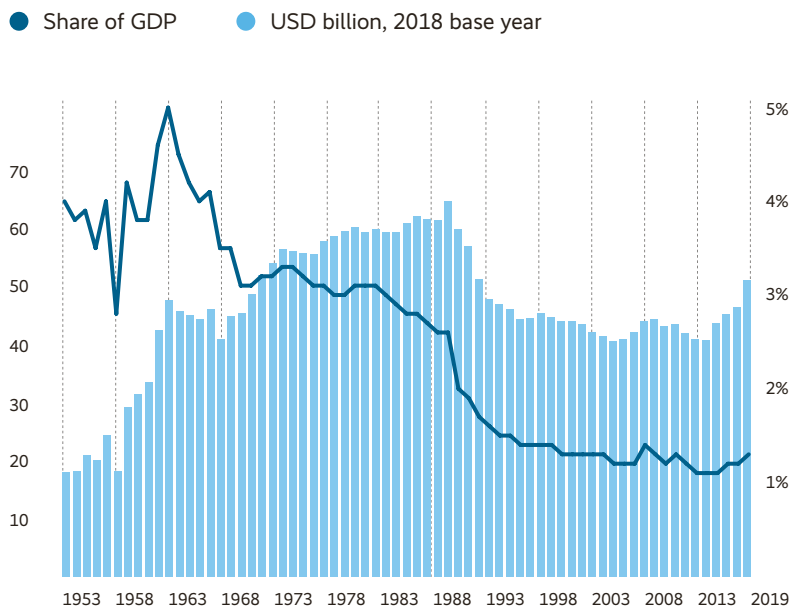
“Many in Germany have recognized that we must assume more responsibility — that was the message of both the Munich consensus and the White Paper of the federal government. This recognition bears a promise, however, that we have not yet entirely fulfilled.”

Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer,
Speech at the Bundeswehr
University Munich,
November 7, 2019³⁰⁹

In the White Paper of 2016, the German government itself emphasized how large the “peace dividend” that Germany benefited from after the end of the Cold War was: “After 1990, defense spending as a percentage of Germany’s gross domestic product fell by more than half. The widespread feeling that threats to German security had diminished combined with economic challenges following German reunification meant that defense was no longer considered a top priority.”²⁷⁵ But the question is whether the conditions allow for Germany to continue reaping this dividend. If it takes the threat analyses that form the basis for the NATO summit declarations, the European Union documents, including the “Global Strategy,” and the White Paper seriously, a significant increase in expenditure is essential.

A look at the past also shows that a spending level of two percent or more would be far from being a historical anomaly. For decades, the Federal Republic of Germany spent well over two percent on defense. In 1978, for example, NATO’s heads of government signed the Long Term Defense Program, which set a benchmark of three percent of GDP.²⁷⁶

Figure 4.8
Germany's military spending, 1953–2019



Data: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

The fact that the German government announced in 2018 that it would spend at least 1.5 percent on defense by 2024 did not meet with wild enthusiasm within NATO, but it was accepted. Nobody seriously expected the German government to succeed in almost doubling the defense budget within ten years. The problems arose when this restrained budget planning was also called into question. Shortly before the 70th anniversary of the founding of NATO in the spring of 2019, reports began to circulate that the draft budget for the next three years would fall short of previous plans, making it very difficult to even reach the minimum target of 1.5 percent. This not only led to great resentment in Washington but also among other partners, who complained that Germany's behavior was endangering both its relations with Washington and also the entire continent.²⁷⁷ Last but not least, it jeopardizes the German government's promises to reliably provide NATO with certain capabilities.²⁷⁸

Leading members of the German government tried to explain to foreign countries that, in recent years, expenditures have always been higher than the figures in the first draft budget. On the occasion of NATO's 70th birthday celebrations in April 2019, Foreign Minister Maas pointed out in Washington that the German budget process was difficult for outsiders to understand, but that the German government had made a firm commitment that it wanted to keep.²⁷⁹ The allies have long since had the impression that Germany was again distancing itself from the shared target and did not want to meet it at all.

Despite all the efforts that Germany has made in recent years, for many people abroad, the impression remains that Germany does not take its solidarity with NATO entirely seriously. In the 1990s, the concept of *Bündnisfähigkeit* still played a central role in the debate on German foreign policy. The significance of Germany's decisions for NATO, however, has receded into the background in today's debate. This is all the more dramatic because NATO's capabilities today depend on what Germany can contribute to NATO even more than in the post-reunification period.



“You can’t at every turn stress the importance of multilateralism and keep it as the foundation of German foreign policy and then renege on the commitments you’ve made to multilateral institutions like the NATO alliance.”

Julianne Smith,
The New York Times,
March 19, 2019³¹⁰

As unsatisfactory as the two-percent goal is, it has become a central symbol of alliance solidarity – the same alliance solidarity that the German government described in the White Paper of 2016 as “a fundamental principle of German governance.”²⁸⁰ This is where the aspirations and reality of German multilateralism clearly diverge. “In the past, Germany has always been a vocal advocate of a values- and rules-based world order,” criticizes a new paper by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, “but it has not always been prepared to make good on its words with the corresponding deeds. This bears the risk of lapsing into foreign policy moralism and therefore urgently needs to be underpinned by appropriate action.”²⁸¹

Critics also see a discrepancy between the lofty rhetoric and the actual actions of the German government in the further development of the Common European Security and Defense Policy. German politicians, they charge, like to talk about visions of a “European army” that is, at best, a long-term goal – they speculate about a “European aircraft carrier” or a “European Security Council” – but are rather reluctant to implement concrete steps on the way to these visions or even stand in the way of more ambitious proposals.

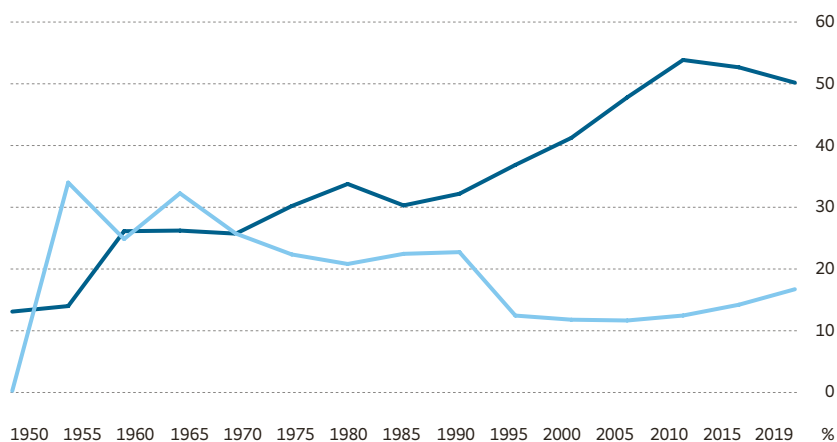
Investments That Pay Off: Three Percent for International Challenges

If the basic assumption of the report is correct, namely that a phase of extraordinarily peaceful geopolitical conditions is currently coming to an end, Germany will not be able to avoid thinking about rebalancing its expenditures in a way that may be more in line with “strategic normality.” If we look at German military spending since the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 and compare spending on international concerns with spending on labor, economic, and social affairs, it is immediately apparent how much priorities have shifted over the past decades. To be clear: This development is a stroke of luck, and nothing would be more desirable than investing scarce funds primarily towards domestic priorities. The question is whether we can assume that Germany’s business model, based on getting a liberal world order at a bargain price, so to speak, will still work in the future.

Figure 4.9

Selected shares of the Federal budget, 1950–2019, percent

- Spending on labor, economy, health, families, and social services
- “International spending” (diplomacy, development, and defense)



Data: Federal Government. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

But how can a general trend reversal in the financing of the foreign and security policy toolbox actually be achieved? As has been shown, the area in which Germany has the greatest need to catch up is in the military. Military spending growth rates are indeed considerable. In view of the massive changes in the security policy environment in which Germany finds itself, however, they can hardly be considered sufficient. Thus, the question arises as to how this largely undisputed statement in the “strategic community” can be translated into a lasting strengthening of security policy instruments in view of the now toxic debate on the two-percent goal.

One idea comes from a former minister of defense, Volker Rühle, who in an interview suggested that the Bundestag should “pass a Bundeswehr Capability Act that defines what the Bundeswehr must be able to do until 2030 and finances this.”²⁸² A little later, Johannes Varwick and Jan Techau put this idea into concrete terms in an opinion piece, which gave rise to a petition that was signed by more than 6,900 people.²⁸³ This proposal is intended to avoid the problem of releasing strategy documents setting targets over several legislative periods that cannot be backed up with resources in a “budget-proof” manner. This is because the general budget reservations turn “statements on the financing of strategic projects in white papers or security strategies into declarations of intent that are binding merely in the political sense.”²⁸⁴ Whether it is conceivable or even desirable that the German Bundestag should commit itself in a similar way to the parliaments in countries such as France or Poland is in any case questionable. Some members of the Bundestag are already resisting the two-percent target because they believe that if it were implemented without objections it would undermine the parliament’s budgetary rights and should therefore only be decided by the Bundestag.²⁸⁵ The more promising, albeit laborious, way seems to be through consensus-building in the German Bundestag. In any case, trends in public opinion suggest that the debate is beginning to shift ([Chapter 5](#)).

The fact that the CDU/CSU and SPD coalition agreement of 2017 already suggests linking the increase in the defense budget and the increase in the budget for development aid shows that it may be easier to think about a compromise formula that strengthens Germany’s spending on international affairs in general. For example, an increase in Bundeswehr funding could be combined with an increase in funding in the other areas.



“Germany should invest three percent of its GDP in peace and order, not only to increase defense expenditure, but also for spending on crisis prevention, diplomacy and development cooperation. I think this money would be well invested, as it would enhance both our defense capability and our credibility.”

Federal President Joachim Gauck, Munich Security Conference, February 18, 2017.³¹¹

The so-called three-percent target, which was introduced into the debate a few years ago by Wolfgang Ischinger and supported by Federal President Joachim Gauck and others,²⁸⁶ describes a comprehensive target that not only includes the two-percent target but also entails meeting the ODA quota of 0.7 percent and increasing spending on diplomacy. This strategy would commit Germany to the NATO target but at the same time make it clear that the other aspects must not be neglected either.

Figure 4.10
The 3% goal for “international spending”

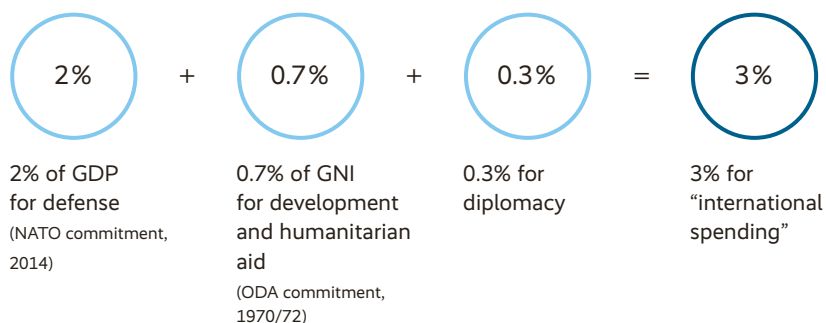


Illustration: Munich Security Conference

A commitment to a three-percent target may make it easier for a future coalition to initiate spending increases in all areas, because it encapsulates a comprehensive concept of security, which, if we take German political rhetoric as a benchmark, is at the core of the foreign policy consensus in Germany.²⁸⁷ A goal of this kind would underscore a holistic understanding of security policy that is not limited to defense spending yet recognizes in monetary terms that the military remains an indispensable instrument.

An expanded target of this kind would also be helpful in the debate with our partners, as it would focus attention on various ways of assuming international responsibility. There are few countries that are actually in the top group in all three areas. But exceptions such as the United Kingdom also

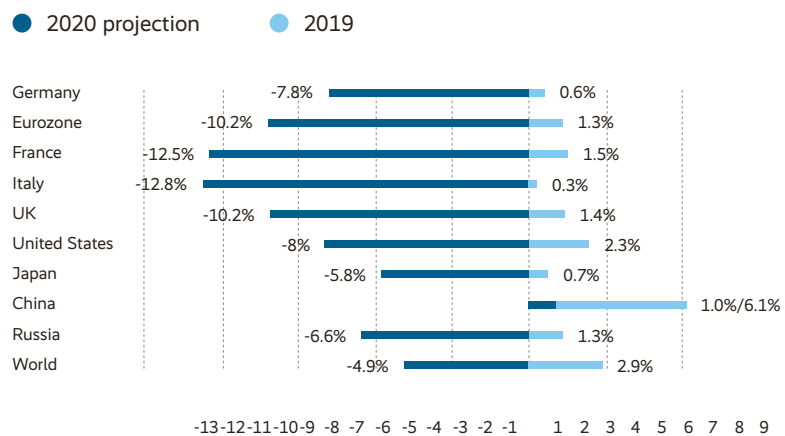
show that a state can be particularly active in both development cooperation and defense.²⁸⁸ However, the Covid-19 pandemic and its many economic and social implications threaten to intensify the struggle for state resources over the next few years, as happened after the 2008 financial crisis.

Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Budgetary Policy

It is true that forecasts have improved slightly in recent months. However, Germany's economy is in the most dramatic recession in its postwar history.²⁸⁹ After a decline of 2.2 percent in the first quarter of 2020, German gross domestic product "is expected to have shrunk by a further estimated 11.9 percent in the second quarter."²⁹⁰ The hoped-for recovery will thus be a task for the coming years, not months.

Figure 4.11

World Economic Outlook, year-over-year projection, percent



Data: International Monetary Fund. Illustration: Munich Security Conference.

Of course, each euro can only be spent once. Political decision-makers will mainly be looking “inwards.”²⁹¹ Already at the beginning of the pandemic, SPD parliamentary party leader Rolf Mützenich suggested “pausing and thinking about whether it is even still appropriate to accept this hare-brained arms race, these unbelievably large sums of billions of euros for military expenditure.”²⁹² In view of past crises, such as 1929, 1973, and especially the financial crisis of 2008, this is hardly surprising: “In an economic downturn, states – especially the liberal democratic ones – usually save first on the military.”²⁹³ In 2008, the axe fell on European defense budgets particularly hard, with cuts of between eight percent (in larger states) and 30 percent (in smaller states),²⁹⁴ which worsened the defense budget imbalance in NATO.²⁹⁵ After the last crisis, it was estimated that Europe’s “bonsai armies”²⁹⁶ would take almost six years to recover at least partially from the cuts. However, a real rethink only began with the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014.²⁹⁷ In the shadow of the austerity measures of the past decades, modernizing the Bundeswehr has already become the “perennial task of our decade.”²⁹⁸ In recent months, experts therefore warned urgently against repeating the mistake of hasty austerity measures and called for European defense budgets to be “immunized” against radical cuts in order to be prepared for current and future threats.²⁹⁹



“We have to remember that when NATO allies decided to invest more in defense, they did so because we live in a more uncertain, more unpredictable world, and therefore we need to invest more in defense. This has not changed.”

NATO Secretary General
Jens Stoltenberg,
Press Conference, Brussels,
March 19, 2020.³¹²

Similar to defense spending, development aid spending is already under constant scrutiny in public debates, even in non-crisis times.³⁰⁰ The more effective use of existing resources was therefore an issue for decision-makers even before Covid-19, for example, in the reconception of bilateral development cooperation,³⁰¹ which, in its present form, is to be phased out in about one third of the countries.³⁰² Naturally, however, funds for development cooperation will also be viewed even more critically in the coming years when decisions have to be made on where scarce resources are best utilized.

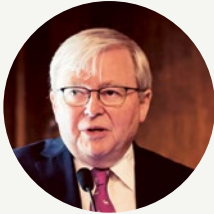
It will be all the more important that spending on foreign, development, and defense policy is not pitted against spending on early childhood education, pension subsidies, or other important domestic expenditures. On the one hand, there are certainly ways of being more creative on the tax revenue side — whether through a kind of stability tax, which would only affect the particularly wealthy, or also — as Development Minister Gerd Müller suggested — the introduction of a digital tax or a transaction tax at the European level.³⁰³ On the other hand, the question arises as to whether a state can actually do without investments in its security without running the risk of undermining the foundations of its prosperity in general.

The international environment in which Germany operates and plans its investments in development, defense, and foreign policy in general has been further aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In a context like this, foreign and security policy issues must not be forgotten, not least because the decisions already made and those still to be made as part of the pandemic response will set the course for the future.³⁰⁴

Key Points

- 1 In recent years, Germany has significantly increased investment in all areas of foreign, development, and defense policy in order to expand and strengthen its toolbox.
- 2 A comparison of German expenditure on international affairs over time shows, however, that we are still at a below-average level in historical terms. This is inconsistent with the current challenges and the worsening state of global affairs.
- 3 The area in which Germany has the most catching up to do is defense spending. Nevertheless, in line with a comprehensive concept of security, a broader target in the sense of a three-percent goal – acknowledging the role of the military but also assigning other expenditures adequate importance – seems appropriate.
- 4 The effects of the pandemic will in all probability lead to a critical review of Germany's expenditure on foreign, development, and defense policy. In view of the changes in world affairs, however, the government should not look to economize here so as not to endanger the foundations of our security and prosperity.

A View from Australia: Stability and Steadfastness



Kevin Rudd

In the last two decades, Germany has become an indispensable power not just in Europe, but around the world.

Germany is now the largest economy in Europe and boasts the second highest rate of immigration across the continent. Germany is also the third largest development partner globally and is the third largest donor to the United Nations. And the country also has the fourth largest defense budget in all of NATO. All this means Germany has a newfound responsibility for also maintaining the global order and promoting global cooperation.

2021 is likely to be a year of great transitions for Germany. At home, a new Chancellor will take office. In Europe, the implementation period of the UK's Brexit will come to an end. And in the United States, we will either see a new administration take office or an even more unstable era for America's allies emerge with the re-election of President Trump. On all these fronts, stability and steadfastness – which have become the essential and revered hallmarks of Germany foreign policy – will become even more important in Europe and around the world.

However, alongside the ongoing management of Europe's internal challenges and the west's relations with Russia, Germany must now also begin to play an even more significant global role with respect to China.

China is Germany's largest trading partner by far, and Germany is China's largest trading partner in Europe. Chancellor Merkel has visited China more than a dozen times and the political ballast of the relationship runs deeper than with any other western nation, with some 80 different dialogue mechanisms existing between the two countries. And Germany will, of course, host the next EU-China Summit later this year.

The role for greater German leadership on China will be especially evident in the case of a Biden administration, where the need for a cooperative EU-US approach to China will be essential for forging progress across the foreign policy, security, climate change and human rights agendas. And in the event of a Trump re-election, this work will become even more crucial in main-

taining solidarity among the world’s democracies in their collective engagement with the Middle Kingdom.

This is therefore the key challenge, but also the key opportunity, for German foreign policy in the period ahead.

Kevin Rudd was the 26th Prime Minister of Australia and is the President of the Asia Society Policy Institute.

A View from the United States: Unwilling to Let “the End of History” Go



Elbridge Colby

From the US perspective, the era of “the end of history” is over. America is internalizing that and increasingly determined to concentrate on great-power competition. This will mean focusing its efforts on ensuring China does not dominate Asia and ultimately beyond, a demanding objective that will shape everything America does, regardless of the party in power. In this light, America needs a Germany that shares this concern, and is willing to contribute to that effort, particularly in Europe.

A big part of the problem from the west side of the Atlantic is that, in ways that inhibit such alignment, Germany appears unwilling to let “the end of history” go. This reluctance leads to an abiding, almost visceral discomfort about anything smacking of realpolitik among many Germans. This in turn makes it difficult to have candid, frank discussions with them about clear, hard-nosed strategic priorities, tradeoffs, and bargaining in light of the pressing challenge from a rising China. This is not a European problem for Washington: France, for instance, has no problem talking in these terms.

German leaders, meanwhile, dwell on purported crises of multilateralism, the rules-based international order, and shared values across the Atlantic. These are the challenges a country fixates on if it is trying desperately to hold on to an international order that seemed to prevail in the 1990s, an order that was uniquely favorable to Germany. But this international order



NATION
to Statehood

has now passed and refusing to adapt to the more chastened, “realpolitik” world of the 2020s will make Germany’s foreign policies increasingly discordant with reality and what its allies expect.

This wouldn’t be such a problem if Germany were a small or unimportant country. But it’s not; it’s the most powerful and wealthiest country in Europe. Germany’s discomfort with refusing to give up the “end of history” in a more realpolitik world thus can lead to strange results. Take China: Some argue that continued deepening German engagement in trade, telecom, and political links with China perhaps will help liberalize it; to America and increasingly others, this looks like obtuseness at best, and self-dealing at worst. Or defense: To many Germans, low defense spending seems practical and even perhaps model behavior, especially in light of Germany’s history; to America and many others, it looks like free-riding and sloughing off the responsibilities of NATO membership, from which Germany has benefited more than anyone.

Both sides would be better off and able to align our efforts with a Germany that could let the “end of history” go. Europe and America surely do not want a machtpolitik Germany, but they would be better off with a more candidly realpolitik one.

Elbridge Colby is a Principal at The Marathon Initiative and served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development (2017-2018), during which he served as lead official in development of the 2018 National Defense Strategy.



Public Opinion

5 Folk Wisdom

What is actually preventing Germany from reaching a “Munich consensus of action”? Would the public really not accept a more active foreign and security policy? Or does the problem perhaps lie elsewhere? What is the current state of the strategic debate in Germany?

Folk Wisdom

Tobias Bunde and
Julia Hammelehle

Why is it that Germany, even in the opinion of many decision-makers, has fallen short of some of the promises of the “Munich consensus” and is struggling to adapt to a changed world? One of the standard arguments frequently cited in political circles in Berlin is that the public cannot be convinced of a more active foreign and security policy. They remain “skeptical or even hostile toward a more active security policy.”³¹³ In the interviews conducted with Germany’s top foreign policy personnel for this report, interviewees also regularly pointed out that an increase in defense spending or even Bundeswehr participation in more robust missions was difficult to sell. “In the political class,” as the defense and foreign affairs journalist Christoph von Marshell sums it up, “the idea seemingly prevails that the people cannot be expected to accept their insights; that out there among the people, a pacifist mood dominates, which makes it politically risky to expose oneself by advocating a foreign policy that other EU partners take for granted.”³¹⁴



“For foreign policy should not be a matter reserved for specialists or for the elite – and security policy definitely should not be. Basic existential issues should be a matter for reflection in the heart of society. Matters that affect everyone should be discussed by everyone.”⁴⁰⁹

Federal President
Joachim Gauck,
Munich Security Conference,
January 31, 2014

However, leading foreign policy-makers do not see the German elites as entirely free of blame for the current state of affairs. The fear of taking all too great risks, which is particularly pronounced in German politics, does have a certain basis in the population. But the foreign policy establishment has succumbed to a kind of “self-hypnosis,” according to which policy-makers constantly tell themselves that foreign and security policy is simply “an exhausting and difficult topic to sell.”³¹⁵

This belief that foreign policy topics are difficult to communicate or do not interest anyone, however, does not line up with the results of the survey on the German population’s foreign and security policy attitudes that was conducted by the forsa Institute for Social Research and Statistical Analysis on behalf of the Munich Security Conference in August of this year. According to our survey, a clear majority of German citizens, namely 64 percent, are very strongly (16 percent) or strongly (48 percent) interested in foreign and security policy. This interest on the part of the population is also reflected in forsa’s weekly issue check, in which the respondents can openly name the issues that particularly interest them in the daily media coverage: For example, events such as Brexit, the US presidential election, or developments in other European and non-European countries attracted a great deal of interest and were sometimes among the most highly perceived topics in reporting.³¹⁶

On behalf of the Munich Security Conference, forsa Politik- und Sozialforschung GmbH conducted a representative survey among the general population in Germany for this report. In the course of the survey, a total of 1,002 citizens who were eligible to vote in Germany, selected by way of systematic random sampling, were interviewed. The survey was conducted from August 3 to 26, 2020, using computer-assisted telephone interviews.

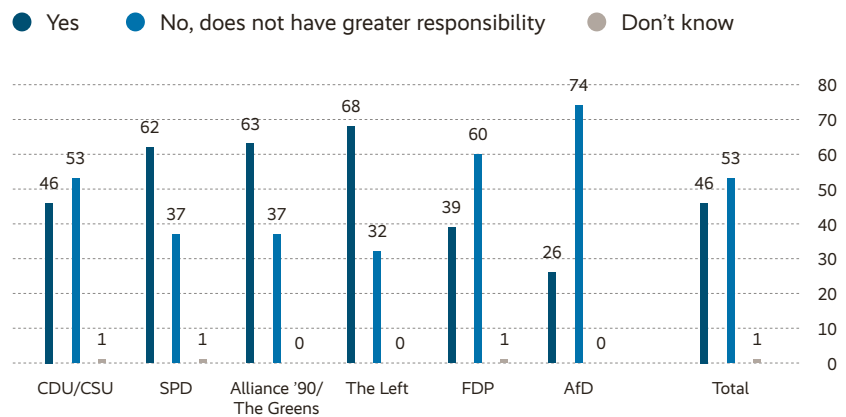
Germany's Role

A full 30 years after German unification, a narrow majority of Germans (56 percent) believe that their history does not give Germany a special responsibility to work for peace in the world. 46 percent think that it has a greater responsibility. This latter view is more widely held on the political left and among the over-60s, but around three-quarters (74 percent) of AfD supporters think that Germany has no particular historical responsibility.

Figure 5.1

German attitudes toward Germany's responsibility, by party preference, 2020, percent

Given its history, Germany has greater responsibility than other countries to promote peace in the world.



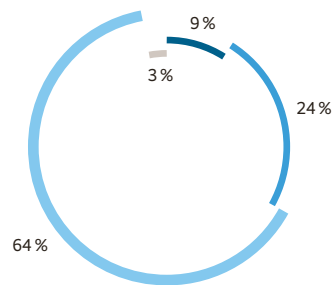
Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Almost two thirds of Germans consider the strength of Germany's influence in the world to be just right. For nine percent it is too great; for 24 percent it is too small.

Figure 5.2
German attitudes toward Germany's influence in the world, 2020, percent

Germany's influence
in the world is ...

- ... rather too big
- ... rather too small
- ... just right
- Don't know



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

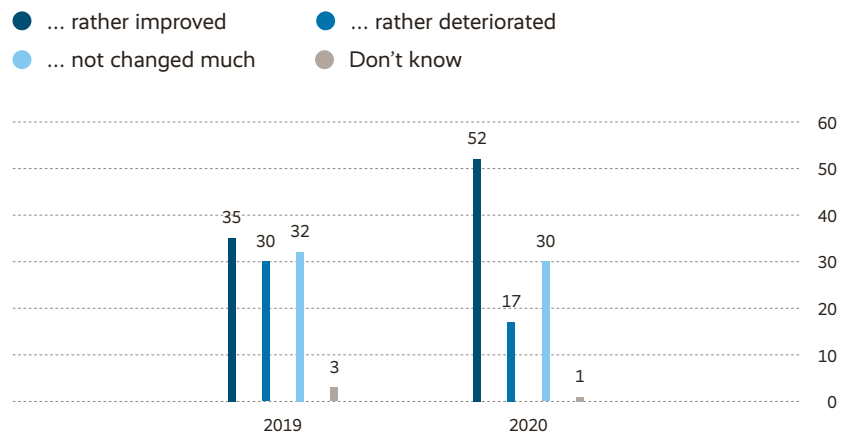
The role of their country within the European Union is also generally viewed favorably by Germans. Only 16 percent of those surveyed believe that Germany does not show enough consideration for its partners in the EU. A third (34 percent), on the other hand, believe that Germany shows too much consideration for its EU partners and is putting its own interests too far behind. However, almost half of Germans (49 percent) think that Germany is taking exactly the right approach toward its EU partners.

This self-confident picture is also reflected in the answers to the question of how Germany's reputation abroad has changed in recent years. Around half of the respondents (52 percent) believe that their country's reputation has improved. For 30 percent, there has been no significant change, while 17 percent believe that the country's reputation has deteriorated. Again, there are clear differences between the supporters of different parties: Supporters of the CDU/CSU and the Greens disproportionately believe that Germany's reputation has improved, while those of the AfD believe that it has worsened. Interestingly, the percentages shifted significantly between 2019, when this

question was also asked, and 2020. It is possible that the increase in the number of people who believe that Germany's standing has improved is in part due to the positive reporting on Germany's commitment to the coronavirus aid package, which was the subject of intensive coverage in recent months.

Figure 5.3
German attitudes toward Germany's reputation abroad,
2019–2020, percent

Over the last years,
Germany's reputation
abroad has ...



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference (2020); Forschungsgruppe Wahlen commissioned by the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government (2019).

Illustration: Munich Security Conference

More Responsibility or Just Less Restraint?

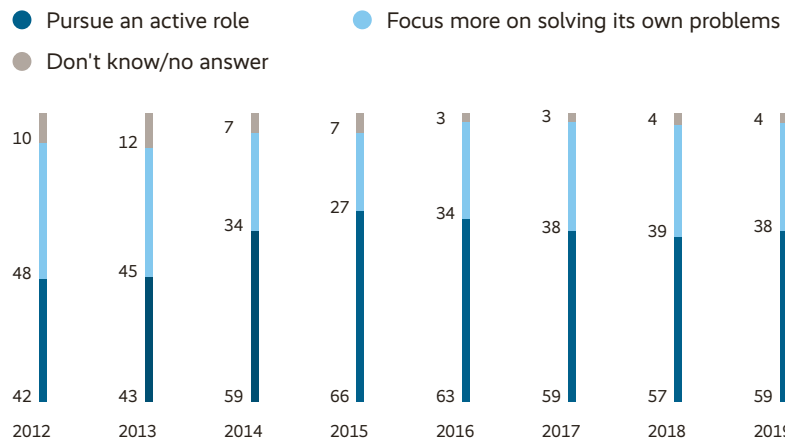
These survey results show a thoroughly self-confident German public that seems aware of the country's international importance. According to what is probably the most comprehensive opinion poll on German security policy, the *Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* poll, which is published every year by the Center for Military History and Social Sciences of the Bundeswehr (ZMSBw), in 2019 more than 40 percent of Germans believed that the responsibility “that Germany has to bear at the international level” had “generally increased.”³¹⁷ The great advantage of this survey, which is mainly discussed in circles of experts and, regrettably, is only rarely considered by the public,³¹⁸ is that it asks some core questions repeatedly with the same phrasing over a longer period of time, so that long-term changes can be detected without interference from differenc-

es in the framing of questions. The ZMSBw studies show clear trends in this respect: While approval for “active policies” to “help overcome problems, crises, and conflicts” declined slightly between 2015 and 2017 and have remained largely constant since 2017, they increased enormously between 2013 and 2015.³¹⁹ In these years, which featured multiple international crises and increasing political appeals to German politicians and the German people to take on more responsibility internationally, approval for Germany taking an active role rose from 43 percent in 2013 to 66 percent in 2015.

Figure 5.4

Attitudes toward Germany's foreign policy engagement, 2012–2019, percent

How should Germany rather act on the international scene?



Data: ZMSBw. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

In contrast to the ZMSBw surveys, according to data from the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government (BPA), the trend toward stronger support for a more comprehensive foreign policy commitment continued between 2016 and 2019. For example, the quarterly data available since 2016 on the question of whether Germany should assume “more responsibility” shows a gradual increase in approval.³²⁰ Based on these and other data sets, Philipp Rotmann, Sarah Bressan, and Sarah Brockmeier of the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) argue that this development of increasing support for greater international engagement is particularly evident among Generation Z (aged 18–29). For example, the BPA data showed that, at least since 2016,

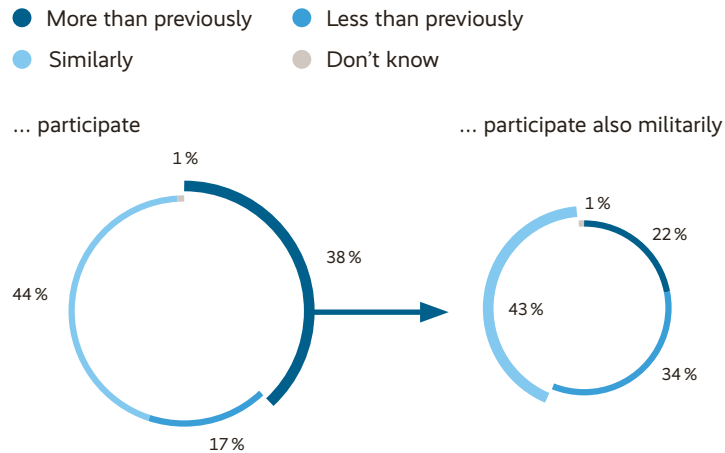
younger people have not only become more strongly in favor of policies that “assume more responsibility” in foreign policy, but also that “the difference between age groups in the BPA’s regular forsa survey rose to over 10 percentage points by 2019”.³²¹ This greater support for stronger German involvement among younger respondents is also reflected in our survey. While 38 percent of all respondents believe that Germany should participate “more strongly than before” in resolving global conflicts in future, the figure is 51 percent among those aged 18–29.³²² The differences according to party preference are also striking. For example, approval for Germany playing a more active role is particularly high among supporters of The Left (60 percent), the Greens (57 percent), and the SPD (46 percent). While the majority of FDP and CDU/CSU supporters are in favor of a stronger or at least the same level of German participation, 68 percent of AfD supporters favor less participation.³²³ Even though the question refers to participating in conflict resolution and is thus more concretely formulated than those in surveys that ask about Germany’s “responsibility” or “commitment,” it can nevertheless be assumed that respondents have different ideas about the type of participation. For example, most supporters of The Left are unlikely to have the same understanding of greater participation as respondents with conservative electoral preferences.

What Kind of Responsibility?

This is confirmed by the results of our follow-up question. Those who had previously stated that Germany should participate “more strongly than before” in resolving global conflicts in the world were subsequently asked about Germany’s military engagement. The view that Germany should participate militarily in the resolution of conflicts “less than before” was strongly represented among supporters of The Left, at 74 percent, followed by Green Party supporters at 38 percent. While a relative majority of supporters of the CDU/CSU, SPD, Greens, and FDP all favored retaining the same level of military involvement, slightly more CDU/CSU and FDP supporters favored stronger military involvement by Germany (30 percent of CDU/CSU and 34 percent of FDP supporters compared to 19 percent of SPD and 17 percent of Greens supporters). The only party with a majority of supporters in favor of greater military involvement was the AfD (74 percent). The fact that only slightly more than one-fifth of those who are in favor of greater German involvement in the resolution of international conflicts believe that Germany should also play a stronger military role underscores a central feature of the German public in foreign policy terms: the much greater skepticism toward the use of military means, even by international comparison.³²⁴

Figure 5.5
German attitudes toward participation in conflict resolution,
2020, percent

When it comes to resolving conflicts in the world, Germany should in future...



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

The annual ZMSBw studies also show a “pronounced preference of the German population” for the use of diplomatic means in foreign and security policy.³²⁵ In addition, the survey results are often fluctuate when it comes to approval for increased defense spending.³²⁶ Thus, the reporting includes surveys indicating that the German population is critical of additional spending in this area, as well as those according to which a majority is even in favor of meeting NATO’s two-percent target.³²⁷ In this regard, too, it is therefore worth taking a look at the time series from the aforementioned annual ZMSBw poll.

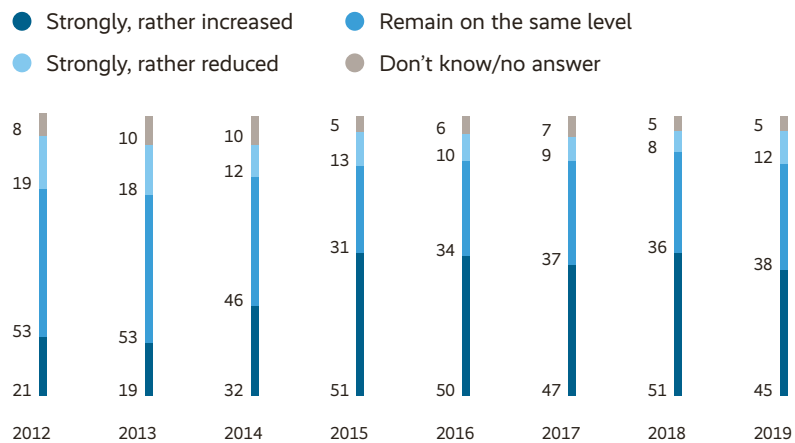
According to this data, support for increased defense spending has grown significantly since 2013/2014. While approval rates remained similar between 2015 and 2019, there was considerable change between 2013 and 2015, as is the case with the question of Germany’s foreign policy commitment. During these three years, for example, approval among CDU/CSU supporters increased by 32 percentage points (from 25 percent in 2013 to 57 percent in 2015). Among respondents who favored the SPD, approval jumped 37 percentage points (from 19 percent in 2013 to 56 percent in 2015).³²⁸ The ZMSBw researchers attribute this to the change in the security policy situation in the year of crisis of 2014, which was marked by the annexation of Crimea and

the strengthening of the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, and to the “strong focus of the German elite discourse on the country’s increased responsibility.”³²⁹ Interestingly enough, the increasing approval is evident in all regions of Germany. The largest increase since 2012 can be observed in eastern Germany, to the extent that the results there are now comparable with those in northern and western Germany; support remains highest in southern Germany. It is also striking that there is a high level of cross-party agreement on an increase in defense spending. In the ZMSBw 2019 survey, for example, the majority of supporters of the CDU/CSU, SPD, and FDP are in favor of increasing military spending (54 percent each). Support for this is lower among AfD (48 percent), Greens (41 percent), and The Left (34 percent) voters.³³⁰

Figure 5.6

Attitudes toward Germany’s defense expenditure, 2012–2019, percent

Should defense expenditures be increased, be reduced or should they remain on the same level?



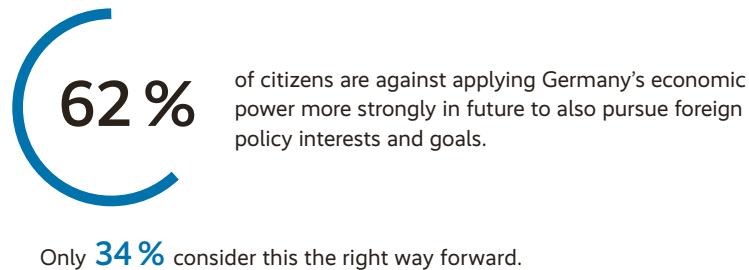
Data: ZMSBw. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Contrary to what one might think, respondents' attitudes toward the United States had no significant impact on their approval for an increase in defense spending.³³¹ The often-heard argument that publicly arguing for NATO's two-percent goal is politically dangerous simply because of President Trump's unpopularity³³² is not evidenced by the ZMSBw annual poll. In retrospect, it is therefore hardly surprising that the election campaigning attempts to inveigh against the two-percent goal agreed by Germany in 2014 were not met with success.³³³ Advocating for significantly higher military spending may still not be an electoral home run. But even though openly supporting higher military spending does not seem very politically risky, resistance to it does not seem to mobilize voters either.

In addition, the relatively high degree of openness toward an increase in defense spending and the high esteem in which the German population³³⁴ holds the Bundeswehr show that the truism, regularly repeated both domestically and abroad, that the Germans are a pacifist people is a superficial assessment. Thus, the experts of the ZMSBw conclude that the German population "less [rejects] the military as a means of foreign policy in principle and rather only the use of force."³³⁵ "Against this background, there is also a clear differentiation between Bundeswehr missions: The Bundeswehr's training and stabilization missions are favored by a large majority but combat missions are not."³³⁶ This also reflects the preference for soft foreign policy instruments. The same applies to coercive economic measures. A majority of 62 percent of Germans oppose the idea that Germany should use its economic strength more to pursue foreign policy interests and goals in future. Only 34 percent consider this to be the right course.

Figure 5.7

German attitudes toward applying Germany's economic power in foreign policy, 2020, percent



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Multilateral Cooperation

In addition to this preference for soft foreign policy tools, the ZMSBw surveys have confirmed a second cornerstone of Germany's basic foreign and security policy stance year after year: The Germans are and remain multilateralists.³³⁷ The ZMSBw studies thus indicate high approval for close cooperation with friendly states and allies. For example, 77 percent of those surveyed say that Germany and its allies should agree on a common stance in the event of an international crisis.³³⁸ Against the backdrop of the coronavirus crisis, too, Germans' desire to cooperate with other states remains high. In the survey conducted by the Körber Foundation in April 2020, 61 percent of those questioned stated that Germany should "definitely" cooperate with other states in solving global challenges. In addition, 28 percent were "mostly" in favor. It is remarkable that 71 percent favored cooperation even if it meant that Germany would have to "put its own interests on the back burner" (25 percent "completely agree," 46 percent "mostly agree").³³⁹

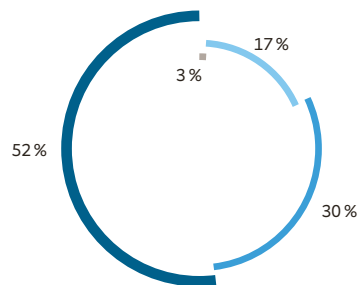
This high level of support for international cooperation extends to both political cooperation and to international interdependence in general. Thus, the survey conducted for this report shows that the German population continues to have a positive view of globalization. 52 percent of those surveyed regard globalization, in the sense of an economic, political, and social interdependence between states, individuals, and companies worldwide, as something “mostly good.” Even given the coronavirus crisis, approval remains at 2019 levels and is, remarkably enough, 17 percentage points higher than in 2007.³⁴⁰ And even if the proportion of those who regard globalization as something “mostly bad” has increased by 16 percentage points compared to 2019 levels, it is still relatively low, at less than a third.

Figure 5.8

German attitudes toward globalization, 2020, percent

Globalization is ...

- ... rather a good thing
- ... rather a bad thing
- ... both
- Don't know



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

This thoroughly positive view of globalization on the part of the German population, in contrast to the “decoupling” trend across the world, is also confirmed by the Körber Foundation study conducted in April 2020. According to the study, 65 percent would consider it a “negative development if the degree of interconnectedness and globalization were to decline after the coronavirus crisis.”³⁴¹ Reflecting on the crisis of multilateralism and the resurgent nationalism in many countries, the FAZ newspaper summarized the study by the Allensbach Institute on Germans’ attitudes to globalization and international cooperation with the words “Germany is different.” There was little, it read, to suggest that a majority in Germany would be in favor of a policy of isolationism and protectionism.³⁴²

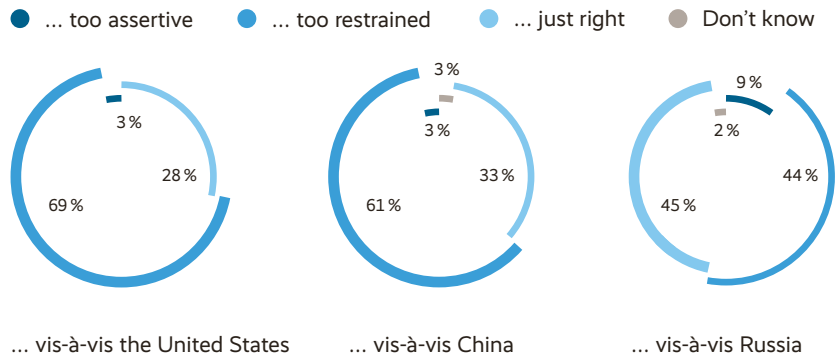
Self-Assertion in the Era of Great-Power Competition

The great desire for cooperation and collaboration has so far also been reflected in surveys that look at the public’s assessment of Germany’s bilateral relations: “As critical as the German population is of American and Russian policy today, the vast majority hope for rapprochement and constructive cooperation.”³⁴³ The German view of China has also been relatively positive³⁴⁴ in international comparison, although a noticeable deterioration has recently become apparent.³⁴⁵

In general, our survey reveals a strong desire among the population for a less reserved approach toward all three countries: China, Russia, and the United States.

Figure 5.9
German attitudes toward Germany's conduct vis-à-vis the great powers, 2020, percent

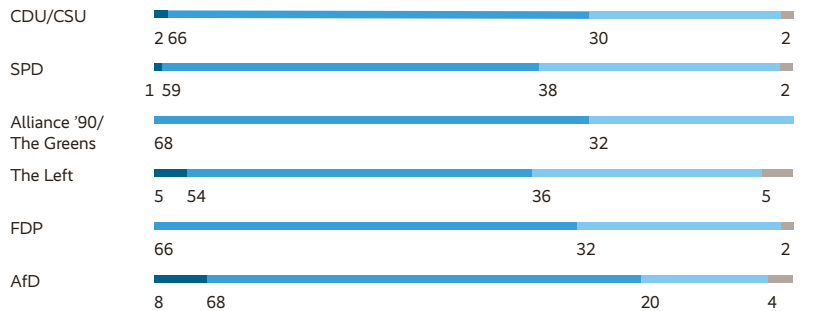
In asserting its interests vis-à-vis the United States/China/Russia, Germany acts in a way that is ...



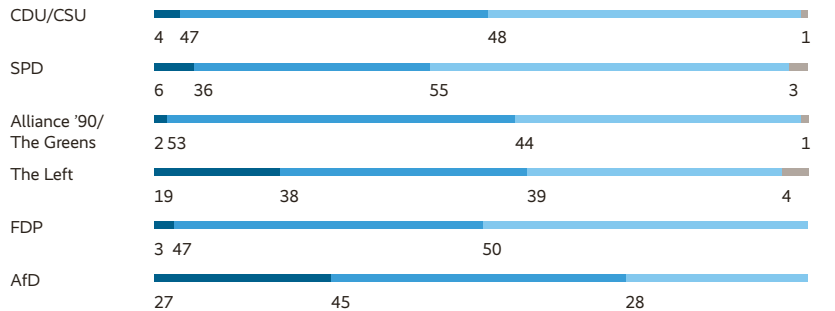
According to party preference ... vis-à-vis the United States



... vis-à-vis China



... vis-à-vis Russia



This particularly applies to the United States. For example, 69 percent of those surveyed stated that Germany was too cautious in asserting its interests vis-à-vis the United States. Only 3 percent of people believe that Germany is acting too assertively toward the United States. The belief that Germany's attitude is "too restrained" is particularly strong among supporters of The Left.

While perceptions of the United States have deteriorated particularly sharply since the inauguration of President Donald Trump and are closely linked to a rejection of him in political and personal terms,³⁴⁶ the Allensbach Institute's studies have shown a certain alienation of the German population from the United States since at least the Iraq War.³⁴⁷ The considerable loss of trust that accompanied the Iraq War could not be completely reversed even during the Obama administration.³⁴⁸ According to the ZMSBw survey results, in 2019 less than one third of the population saw the United States as a reliable partner for Germany.³⁴⁹

With regard to China, too, a clear majority of those surveyed (61 percent) believe that Germany is too reluctant to assert its interests. 33 percent think that Germany is on the whole behaving correctly. It is possible that the times of "benevolent ambivalence"³⁵⁰ toward China are therefore over.³⁵¹ It is unclear, however, what price the population would be prepared to pay for a more self-confident approach. The survey conducted by the Körber Foundation also shows that more than three-quarters of the population (76 percent) believe that Germany should stand up for its political interests vis-à-vis China to a greater extent – even at the expense of economic relations. At the same time, however, 54 percent of those surveyed were against taking a tougher stance in trade policy.³⁵²

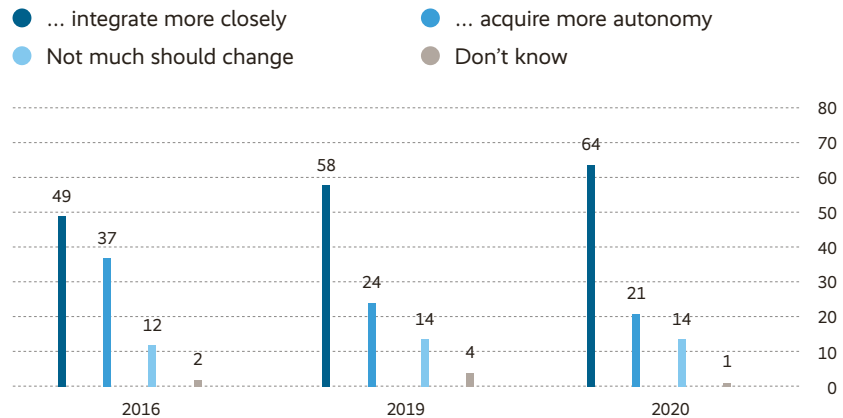
With regard to Russia, a large share of those surveyed in August 2020 – before Alexei Navalny was poisoned – but not a majority (44 percent), also believe that Germany is "too restrained" in asserting its interests. 45 percent consider the approach to be "just right;" only nine percent think it "too assertive." However, in contrast to attitudes toward China and the United States, when it comes to Russia, there are noticeable differences between east and west Germany and between individual party supporters. While 47 percent of those surveyed in west Germany believe that Germany is too cautious toward Russia, only 30 percent of those in east Germany think so. Green Party supporters most frequently rate Germany's approach as too restrained (53 percent), followed by CDU/CSU and FDP supporters (47 percent

each). This position is significantly less common among supporters of the SPD (36 percent) and The Left (38 percent). The proportion of those who consider Germany's conduct toward Russia to be "too assertive" is above average among respondents with preferences for The Left (19 percent) and the AfD (27 percent). However, it is noteworthy that 45 percent of AfD supporters also believe that Germany is too restrained in its dealings with Russia.

Figure 5.10

German attitudes toward the future development of the EU, 2016–2020, percent

Preferences for the future path of the EU: Member states should ...



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference (2020); Forschungsgruppe Wahlen commissioned by the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government (2016, 2019).
Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Even in the ZMSBw 2019 poll, only 22 percent are in favor of showing "more understanding" for Russia's position.³⁵³ This may reflect an increasingly critical attitude toward the Russian leadership following an ambivalent immediate reaction among the German population to the annexation of Crimea. For example, according to the results of an Allensbach Institute survey commissioned by the FAZ newspaper in April 2014, 43 percent agreed that it was "outrageous" "that Russia is incorporating Crimea into its territory," but 33 percent supported the statement that there are "good reasons" for "Crimea to belong to Russia again."³⁵⁴ The latter position was particularly widespread among east Germans. This is also reflected in the attitudes to the sanctions in April 2014. 43 percent of those surveyed were in favor of sanctions, where

as in east Germany, the figure was only 28 percent.³⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the Ukraine crisis was followed by a “landslide” shift in views on Russia and German-Russian relations. While, at the end of 2013, 55 percent of those surveyed considered relations to be “intact,” in April 2014, the figure was only 15 percent. 65 percent said they “do not have a positive opinion” of Putin, compared to 48 percent in 2011 and 10 percent in 2001. The proportion of respondents with a “positive opinion” of Putin decreased from 43 percent in 2001 to eight percent in 2014.³⁵⁶ One year after the annexation of Crimea, in March 2015, awareness of the causes and dynamics of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine seemed to have grown. For example, when asked “Do you believe that Russia and Germany will have a good relationship in the long term, or do you not believe so?” only 27 percent indicated that they believed that the relationship would be good (compared to 65 percent in May 2004 and 45 percent in September 2008). Support for the sanctions also rose to 58 percent, compared to 44 percent in January of the same year.³⁵⁷

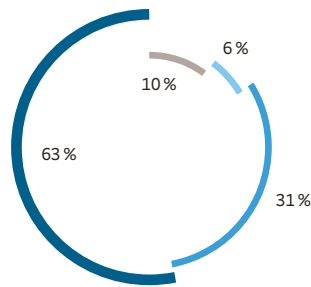
It is also possible that this desire for greater assertiveness vis-à-vis the three major powers explains the further increase in approval for the European Union as shown in our survey.³⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that this has increased rather than decreased against the backdrop of multiple crises.³⁵⁹ According to the survey conducted for this report, a majority of the population is in favor of a closer union of the EU member states. 64 percent of those surveyed indicated they would support this, a figure that is 6 percentage points higher than in 2019 and 15 percentage points higher than in 2016.³⁶⁰ The approval for a closer union is significantly lower among east Germans (52 percent compared to 66 percent among west Germans) and among low- and intermediate-level secondary school diploma holders (Hauptschule and Mittlere Reife) – the figures are 54 percent compared to 71 percent among respondents with a university-entrance diploma (Abitur) or a university degree. The approval rate is also higher among those who feel very well informed or well informed about foreign and security policy (60 percent compared to 56 percent among those who felt less well informed or poorly informed). There are also great differences according to party preference. While support for greater integration is strongest among Green Party supporters (84 percent), it is lowest among AfD supporters (25 percent). Among the latter, 63 percent are in favor of greater autonomy for member states.

Figure 5.11

German attitudes toward the EU's future conduct in foreign policy, 2020, percent

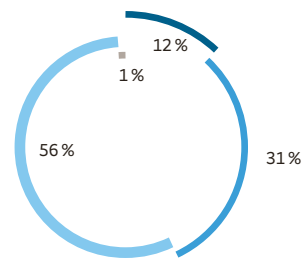
A united EU front on foreign policy issues is ...

- ... very important
- ... important
- ... not that/not at all important
- Don't know



Will the EU present a more united front on foreign policy issues?

- More united than previously
- Less united than previously
- Unchanged
- Don't know



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

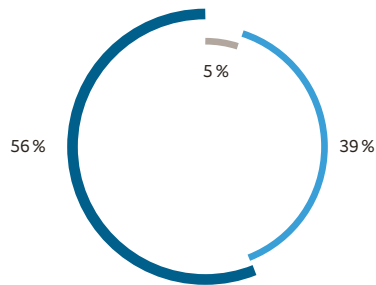
94 percent of those surveyed consider it very important or important for the EU to present a united front. However, only 12 percent believe that the EU will present a more united front in the future, while a majority (56 percent) thinks that not much will change. Almost a third of those surveyed (31 percent) even believe that the EU will appear less united than before.

Figure 5.12

German attitudes toward EU defense cooperation, 2020, percent

In future, EU member states should cooperate more closely than previously in the area of defense policy, e.g., assume tasks previously performed by NATO.

● Yes ● No, I do not consider this reasonable ● Don't know



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

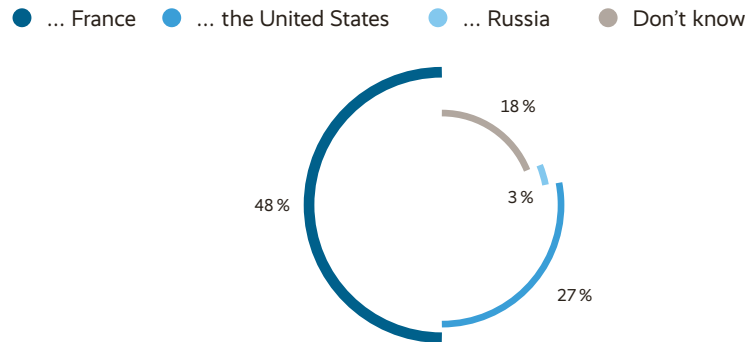
Germans also feel very positive about a European Union common security and defense policy and close cooperation between the European armed forces. In the Eurobarometer poll of November 2019, 85 percent of those surveyed in Germany were in favor of this; the European average was 75 percent.³⁶¹ In the ZMSBw 2019 poll, 12 percent of those surveyed supported the notion that there should be a common European army instead of national armed forces. 32 percent said that there should be a European army in parallel to the national armed forces, while 38 percent believed that national armed forces should work together more closely within the European framework. 11 percent wanted solely national armed forces, and five percent no armed forces at all.³⁶²

In our survey, 56 percent of those surveyed were in favor of the EU states cooperating more closely in the future and taking on tasks that NATO had performed in the past. 39 percent do not consider this a good idea.

Abbildung 5.13

German attitudes toward Germany's most important allies,* 2020, percent

Germany's most important alliance partner when it comes to military defense, is ...

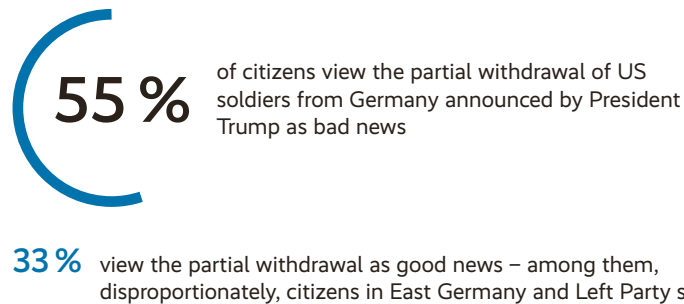


Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference
*open question, responses >3% listed

However, these figures do not indicate a desire to turn away from NATO, since the German population generally perceives the EU and NATO as complementary. Increased defense cooperation within the EU should not take place instead of the NATO framework but within it.³⁶³ The majority of the German population also favors close involvement by the United States in the defense of Europe.³⁶⁴ The Transatlantic Trends of the German Marshall Fund, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, and the Institut Montaigne bear this out. When asked how strongly the United States should be involved in European security and defense, a clear majority of 59 percent said they were in favor of continuing US involvement. 25 percent said that they think the United States should be significantly involved; 34 percent responded that the United States should be somewhat involved.³⁶⁵

However, according to our survey, only 27 percent of respondents consider the United States to be the most important ally when it comes to military defense. France, on the other hand, was named as the most important military ally across party lines, with the exception of AfD supporters. 48 percent of all respondents selected Germany's European neighbor as its most important military ally.

Figure 5.14

German attitudes toward the partial withdrawal of US soldiers from Germany, 2020, percent

Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference.

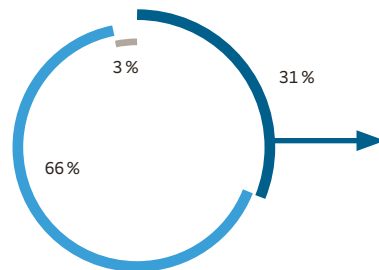
The fact that, according to our survey results, 55 percent of those surveyed consider President Trump’s announcement to withdraw about one third of American soldiers stationed in Germany to be “bad news” indicates that the population is well aware of the importance of the United States for European defense. One third (33 percent), however, see the withdrawal of troops in a positive light.

Figure 5.15

German attitudes toward nuclear sharing, 2020, percent

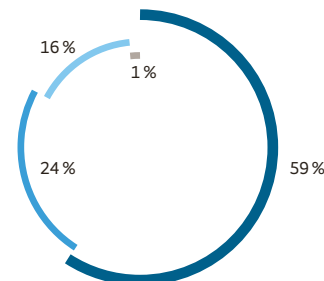
Germany should also count on nuclear deterrence in future.

- Yes
- No, should renounce nuclear deterrence entirely
- Don't know



Respondents who believe Germany should also count on nuclear deterrence in future: To ensure this nuclear deterrence, Germany should ...

- ... strive for nuclear deterrence via France and the UK
- ... continue to rely on nuclear deterrence via the United States
- ... develop its own nuclear weapons
- Don't know



Data: forsa commissioned by the Munich Security Conference. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

Germans are much more critical on issues of nuclear deterrence. For example, two thirds (66 percent) of Germans believe that Germany should completely abandon deterrence with nuclear weapons. In talks with representatives of the security policy elite, many admit that these findings should not come as a surprise given the lack of public discussion of Russia investing massively in new nuclear capabilities that also threaten Germany.

Of the 31 percent of Germans who believe that Germany should continue to rely on nuclear deterrence, the majority (59 percent) believe that Germany should seek nuclear deterrence via France and the United Kingdom. Only about a quarter of those in favor of nuclear deterrence believe that Germany should continue to rely on deterrence that involves American nuclear weapons. By contrast, 16 percent of proponents of nuclear deterrence actually believe that Germany should develop its own nuclear weapons.

Alliance Solidarity as a Fundamental Principle of German Governance?

Overall, it is fair to conclude that Germans continue to have a very strong multilateral outlook. This orientation is also reflected in the high level of support for Germany's security and defense policy commitments within the EU, NATO, and the UN.³⁶⁶ However, Germans' multilateral outlook may be in conflict with the fundamentally pacifist attitude described above.³⁶⁷ For, critics argue, "as soon as the demands become concrete, as soon as it comes to describing Germany's contribution to this strengthened defense, or even to just point out cautiously that this would mean more German military involvement, the pacifism of the population shows through. The reflex practiced over decades of preferring to be defended by others rather than taking responsibility for oneself will probably take a long time to strip away."³⁶⁸ Germans are multilateralists in general and anti-militarists in particular.

For a country that understands NATO solidarity as a fundamental principle of its governance, this may become a problem. For example, a startling opinion poll conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2015, which found that 58 percent of respondents in Germany were against providing military support to NATO allies in the event of a conflict with Russia,³⁶⁹ led to an international debate on Germany's reliability in terms of NATO policy.³⁷⁰

It is therefore all the more regrettable that the German government initially largely missed the opportunity in 2017 to communicate the remarkable development in German security policy that accompanied the Bundeswehr's assumption of leadership responsibility for the multinational battalion stationed in Rukla, Lithuania, as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP).³⁷¹ Chancellor Merkel personally visited the German contingent in September 2018, about a year and a half after its deployment, and found the right words there: It was right that NATO should once again concentrate more on the defense of the alliance. Germany, she said, cannot and does not want to "stand on the sidelines."³⁷²

Nevertheless, the fact that the Bundeswehr has been engaging in alliance defense through deterrence day-to-day for the past few years has hardly been communicated to the public. While some overseas missions, such as the anti-terrorism mission in Syria to combat the "Islamic State" (38 percent), the KFOR stabilization mission in Kosovo (33 percent), the Resolute Support training mission in Afghanistan (29 percent), or the Atalanta anti-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia (24 percent) enjoy at least a certain

degree of familiarity among the population, only 16 percent of those surveyed are familiar with the Bundeswehr's presence in Lithuania. Only 15 percent are aware of the involvement of the Luftwaffe in airspace surveillance in the Baltic States.³⁷³ The researchers of the ZMSBw clearly point out this shortcoming: "There is a lack of popular support for the concrete defense tasks of the German armed forces within the NATO alliance in the context of the enhanced Forward Presence. As a result of the existing discrepancies between security policy guidelines, military activities, and the formation of public opinion, it is necessary for German security policy to advocate for alliance defense more actively and intensively."³⁷⁴ Since deterrence only works if it is considered credible, a very skeptical attitude on the part of the population is also potentially problematic for the effectiveness of the NATO mission. After all, how effective is deterrence if a potential adversary could speculate that Germany might ultimately shy away from a military response?



"We must talk more, explain more, argue more about alternative options. We should not aim to achieve superficial consensus, but to talk more about German security and defense policy, not so we can say that we have talked about it, but so we can do more."⁴¹⁰

Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer,
Bundeswehr University,
November 7, 2019

The need to explain decisions even better, however, not only applies to the Bundeswehr's activities in the area of NATO defense but also in general. For example, the experts of the ZMSBw criticized that "the number of people who feel very well or quite well informed about the Bundeswehr's missions abroad has decreased by more than half since 2015."³⁷⁵ This is particularly unfortunate given the great influence that the subjective level of information about foreign deployments has on the propensity to support them. Studies conducted by the ZMSBw show that – regardless of the type of mission – much of the disapproval is concentrated among those who have little or no knowledge about the missions. In contrast, more than half of those who claim to have basic knowledge consistently support the various Bundeswehr commitments.³⁷⁶

Of course, it is not just important that one talks about something in the first place but how one talks about it. Markus Steinbrecher, a researcher at the ZMSBw, argues based on a framing experiment conducted as part of that organization's annual poll that Germans are more receptive to certain justifications deploying the Bundeswehr in an Article 5 scenario. For example, referencing NATO treaty obligations or solidarity among the allies in the Cold War has a positive effect on support, while support rates are lower if increasing tensions are cited as a reason.³⁷⁷ Such considerations may become even more important in the coming years when it comes to communicating and justifying decisions that are fundamental to the security of Germany and its partners.

Political Leadership

The presented survey results clearly show that public opinion can change but also stick to old habits. Trends in public opinion depend on basic foreign policy attitudes, such as the degree of national or international orientation, key political events, and the positioning and public reasoning of political decision-makers.³⁷⁸ This opens up space for political argument and persuasion.

A current example of this is the high support for the EU's coronavirus aid program. According to the results of the ARD-DeutschlandTrend poll of July 2, 2020, 69 percent of respondents think that the program is "basically going in the right direction." It is particularly noteworthy that, for a clear majority of respondents, 59 percent, even shared debts are "acceptable."³⁷⁹ This contrasts with the situation in 2011, when the majority of the population opposed additional financial aid for other EU member states in the context of the eurozone crisis (66 percent) and were particularly opposed to an expansion of the EU rescue fund (76 percent) and Eurobonds (79 percent).³⁸⁰ However, the fact that criticism has largely faded away and that the population now supports measures it previously rejected is probably also due to the political leadership of key decision-makers. Politicians such as Wolfgang Schäuble³⁸¹ and leading economic experts who used to be known for their tough financial and economic austerity measures also spoke out in favor of the rescue program. The German government made intensive efforts to explain the measures and to elicit support. For example, the chancellor cited economic interests in addition to value-based arguments. Merkel stressed that European solidarity is "not just a humane gesture, but a long-term investment"³⁸² and that a strong European internal market is "in the best interests of all member states."³⁸³

There is another example of a courageous decision by the federal government that broke the classic pattern of German foreign policy and suggests that approval can be won or at least resistance overcome within a political debate if leading politicians make an active effort. Against the backdrop of the Islamic State further expanding the areas under its control in Iraq and Syria in July and August 2014 and the existential threat to the population living there, the German government announced in mid-August that it would examine the option of providing both military and humanitarian support. At that time, resistance cut across party lines: According to a survey by the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen polling organization in August 2014, 67 percent were against the delivery of weapons, while only 27 percent were in favor.³⁸⁴ Following the German government's decision to supply weapons,

however, approval in September 2014 was already at 40 percent.³⁸⁵ A study commissioned by the Ministry of Defense in December 2014 even registered 43 percent support; only 25 percent were opposed.³⁸⁶

It is also essential to make increased efforts in communication and discussion in light of the increasing polarization, since elements of the German foreign policy consensus are now at stake that were being questioned only in the marginalized fringes of political discourse a few years ago. Growing polarization in the political arena is increasing public attention and thus, at the same time, the need for the established parties to explain their own positions and decisions more regularly, earlier, and better, and to actively solicit support: “Because the ability to act in the field of foreign and security policy, too, is increasingly tied to domestic political approval.”³⁸⁷ This realization has already created a situation in which the German Foreign Office, for example, has made more determined efforts to involve the public in the review process than was the case in earlier strategy-building processes.³⁸⁸

The debate on the UN migration pact can serve as a “history of communicative failure,” as an example of what happens when open discussion is avoided. It was only when the extreme right used the debate on the agreement for its own purposes and spread wild rumors that politicians woke up and slowly began to think about “how to explain everything to the people.”³⁸⁹ In the long run, relying on a “tacit” consensus that is best not upset by discussing supposedly unpleasant issues is not sufficient for securing public support. The examples discussed above show that politicians can convince at least a significant portion of the population if they want to. Foreign and security policy is an acceptable topic for discussion.

This brings us to the discussion of the strategic debate. A fixture thereof is the complaint that “a genuine strategic debate in the broader public” is lacking in Germany.³⁹⁰ Some, however, regard this diagnosis as fundamentally problematic because it is attached to the “illusion of a major security policy debate” and, moreover, implicitly leans toward a specific position, i.e., it is far from open-ended.³⁹¹ Indeed, the idea of a broad-based debate that “sweeps across the landscape of German security policy like a cleansing thunderstorm and could end with the sunshine of a security policy consensus” remains an idle wish.³⁹²



“To be honest, I have always been a bit surprised when I came across the cliché that in Germany there is no strategic community, no security policy think tanks, no proper debate. [...] Is it possible that some participants in the debate that is actually taking place in Germany really want to say: it’s the wrong strategic debate, it’s the wrong topics, the wrong results, the wrong German political practice?”⁴¹¹

Hans-Peter Bartels,
“Was haben die Römer
je für uns getan?,” 2019

There are also frequent complaints about the declining interest in foreign and security policy in the Bundestag, the central venue for such debates. In his speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2014, Federal President Gauck emphasized that it is not a good sign “that younger members of the German Bundestag feel that focusing on foreign and security policy is not beneficial to their careers.”³⁹³ This concern was also shared in the background talks for this report. “People tell young party members, don’t go into foreign policy, that is a dead end. First, this is factually incorrect, and second, it is disastrous.”³⁹⁴

Nevertheless, the accusation that there is no strategic debate in Germany is often vehemently objected to, especially from the political sphere. Some Bundestag members seek to defend themselves against the preconception that foreign policy is not discussed strategically in the Bundestag. In 2008, for example, SPD foreign policy expert and current parliamentary party leader Rolf Mützenich complained in a speech about “the perennially popular lament about the country’s incompetent foreign policy elites,” and stressed that it was simply not true “that there are no longer any foreign policy debates in the Bundestag or in the committees and working groups responsible for them.”³⁹⁵ Federal President Gauck also emphasized that “the German Bundestag has held some 240 debates on overseas deployments of the Bundeswehr since 1994” – and that these had been “conducted in an exemplary manner.”³⁹⁶

But Gauck also put his finger in the wound: “However, in the same period, parliament has held fewer than ten fundamental debates on German foreign and security policy.”³⁹⁷ In fact, many parliamentary debates on foreign policy have been limited to the Bundeswehr’s overseas missions. As important and correct as this is for a parliamentary army, it is regrettable that too few fundamental foreign policy debates, in which the government and the opposition debate the direction and strategies of German foreign policy, have taken place. Thus, the German debate is all too often limited to the question of whether the Bundeswehr, and hence Germany, should participate in an international mission. There is less focus on arguing about the basic strategies, goals, and instruments of German foreign policy.

For this reason, specialist politicians who want this kind of debate to happen have repeatedly argued for “a regular general debate on security policy in the Bundestag.” The German government would have to present a document

on the security policy situation every year, which would then be discussed in a plenary session. A debate of this kind could “contribute significantly to focusing German security policy, making it transparent for the German public and comprehensible for our partners.”³⁹⁸ It would also be conceivable, as suggested by Roderich Kiesewetter, Andreas Nick, and Michael Vietz, to discuss an annual report by an “Advisory Council on Global Issues for the Federal Government,” which could deal “not only with regional priorities but also with the impact of German engagement in collective security alliances and other organizations” and thus contribute to generally evaluating German foreign and security policy.³⁹⁹



“That is why ‘more’ German responsibility in the world necessarily requires more courage to publicly debate foreign policy decisions. People often do not know where and why Germany is involved in crisis management. [...] In foreign policy, too, we have to go where it hurts much more often in public debate.”⁴¹²

Member of Parliament
Omid Nouripour,
Frankfurter Rundschau,
January 19, 2019

In general, it is striking that in German foreign and security policy, there have been – apart from a few well-known exceptions, such as the Weizsäcker Commission or the Rühle Commission – very few attempts to date to have certain issues examined by expert commissions. This is despite the fact that the primary concern of such commissions need not necessarily be coming up with specific solutions to concrete problems. Rather, their very existence would help to start a debate on difficult issues or to work through controversial experiences from the past. There have been repeated calls, for example, for an evaluation of the Bundeswehr’s overseas missions of recent decades. Countries like Norway have demonstrated how one’s own engagement in Afghanistan can be reviewed.⁴⁰⁰ A structured but broadly based investigation could be extremely helpful as it would provide a good basis for drawing lessons from German missions that would otherwise be drawn without such information. Further proposals for structuring the debate include calls for a “Council of Experts for Strategic Foresight,” which would, to a certain extent, serve as a security policy counterpart to the German Council of Economic Experts, the so-called “Five Sages of the Economy,” whose assessments are reported and discussed in the media.⁴⁰¹

Society and Foreign Policy

From a societal perspective, the general conditions for an informed debate on foreign and security policy issues appear to be improving. It would certainly be desirable if a greater share of security policy reporting were to focus more on difficult security policy issues and less on procurement scandals or other challenges in the organization of the Bundeswehr.⁴⁰² It is also true that President Gauck’s speech in Munich was often presented one-sidedly in the media and that the reporting thus ran counter to the ideal of a fruitful debate centering on the common good.⁴⁰³

But even in international comparison, Germany has an impressive range of daily and weekly newspapers with sound reporting on foreign and security policy issues. Public television stations provide comprehensive coverage of the world, high-quality documentaries, and regular reports from around the world in special magazine formats such as *Weltspiegel* and *Auslandsjournal*. Specialist journals – such as *Internationale Politik* with a bimonthly circulation of now at least 5,500 copies or *WeltTrends* with 2,500 copies – provide input for the foreign and security policy debate. The *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* or *Sirius: Zeitschrift für strategische Studien* provide information with a stronger scientific orientation, but always with contributions from and for practitioners.

There is a lively debate on foreign and security policy issues on social media, which is predominantly constructive. Podcasts such as *Peace by Peace* or *Sicherheitshalber* show that there is an audience that is interested in an in-depth discussion of current security policy issues. The Federal Agency for Civic Education provides information on security policy in a regular press review. Many may not consider this enough, but it remains difficult to support the thesis that the foreign policy debate has not developed much in recent years.

The think tank landscape is also more diverse and active today than it was a decade ago. It is no longer just the two major traditional institutions, the German Institute for International and Security Affairs and the German Council on Foreign Relations, along with the political foundations that determine the foreign policy debate in the strategic community. Younger and more agile think tanks such as the Global Public Policy Institute or the Stiftung Neue Verantwortung have long since established themselves by cleverly occupying niches that have long been neglected by other institutes. Newly founded institutions from the last decade, such as the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) or the Center for Eastern European and International Studies (ZOiS), are dedicated to actors and regions that are of particular importance for the future of German foreign and security policy. The Institute for European Politics, the Jacques Delors Institute, or the Genshagen Foundation are devoted to European issues – the latter with a focus on Franco-German relations or the countries of the Weimar Triangle. Outside the capital, important institutes such as the German Institute for Global Affairs (GIGA) and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, the Bonn

International Center for Conversion (BICC), or the German Development Institute (DIE) in Bonn are contributing to the debate. Many of these institutions have experienced changes in leadership in recent years, so that a younger generation is now at the helm, ready to break new ground. These have recently been joined by German branches of international think tanks. The London-based Centre for European Reform, for example, has an office in Berlin. The European Council for Foreign Relations (ECFR) even moved its headquarters from London to Berlin. All this has noticeably stimulated and expanded the debate on foreign and security policy.⁴⁰⁴

Developments at German universities are also underway – albeit very slowly. In an interview in 2012, the then minister of defense, Thomas de Maizière, complained that he could not discern “any great intellectual contribution by German universities to the question of war and peace,” although they could be “a kind of initiator for social debates.”⁴⁰⁵ Even if this sweeping criticism was certainly unfair, it is not unreasonable to ask whether the subject is represented in sufficient breadth and depth at German universities. Courses that explicitly deal with foreign and security policy or offer such a focus are still rare overall.⁴⁰⁶ In his Munich speech, Federal President Gauck rightly asked: “I wonder if it isn’t time for all the universities to mobilize more than a handful of chairs where German foreign policy can be analyzed. Doesn’t research on security issues need to be invigorated, to boost work on matters such as defense against cyber attacks by criminals or intelligence services?”⁴⁰⁷ Students interested in such questions have so far typically looked abroad. But almost every year, new courses of study or institutes that deal with security policy in the broader sense are being founded.⁴⁰⁸

In addition, other initiatives are being founded at universities, in foundations, or in associations. Polis180, a student think tank, regularly brings interested students together for expert discussions and produces its own papers. The Academic Association for Security Studies (BSH) comprises 25 university groups and organizes the “Sicherheitspolitische Grundakademie” (Basic Academy for Security Policy) and other seminars. The Federal Academy for Security Policy has also expanded its target audience: In addition to the Young Leaders in Security Policy group, there has been an annual student conference for a few years now, which the Federal Academy for Security Policy organizes together with the Federal Defense Ministry. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation has had a Working Group of Young Foreign Policy Experts for many years. Recently, the Hanns Seidel Foundation and the

Heinrich Böll Foundation have followed suit with the Forum Neue Sicherheitspolitik because they have all recognized the importance of promoting young foreign and security policy talent. The German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) and the Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik (GSP) also maintain formats explicitly aimed at younger people interested in security policy – the Young DGAP and Young GSP. All of these represent a significant step forward over the foreign and security policy debate of a decade ago.

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Key Points

- ① The German population remains true to its basic convictions: It is open and self-confident toward the world and has a generally multilateralist and anti-militarist attitude. The population is aware that the security policy situation has deteriorated.
- ② In recent years, support for taking on “more responsibility” has generally increased. Most Germans prefer more German involvement to happen via civilian instruments. Nevertheless, good arguments are capable of swaying the population in favor of decisions that go beyond Germany’s traditional scope of action.
- ③ Democratic foreign policy requires the support of the population. Politics and society will not be able to avoid discussing foreign and security policy more regularly, intensively, and honestly. This is especially true in those areas where Germans’ different fundamental foreign policy orientations – such as multilateralism and anti-militarism – collide.

A View from Italy: Out of the Comfort Zone



Nathalie Tocci

Germany is slowly coming of age. For over a decade now, it has been described as Europe's reluctant hegemon. Its hegemony, premised upon economic strength, has become increasingly apparent over the years. Its reluctance instead has taken different forms, from a knee jerk abhorrence of military interventions abroad to an unwillingness to act and not simply think European in the advancement of the EU project.

On European matters, that reluctance is fading. In the wake of Covid-19, Berlin has assumed the responsibility of leadership. By spearheading an ambitious recovery fund and multi annual financial framework, Germany has not simply set the foundations for the Union's post pandemic recovery and resilience. It has also and perhaps above all engendered a historic step forward in the integration process, picking up the work left undone after the Eurozone crisis, with all the lacerating divisions it gave rise to.

Foreign policy comes next. In words and on paper, Berlin gets it. It has championed the work on European defense and strategic autonomy, and it acknowledges that a healthier transatlantic bond passes through greater European responsibility, notably in our surrounding regions. It observes the crystallizing US-China confrontation and, while clear on where its alliances lie, it sees in European autonomy the recipe to avoid becoming the battlefield of a new great-power confrontation.

Yet the rhetoric is still to be followed by action. Germany is still tempted to believe that its comfort zone of an international liberal order resting upon American power can be restored and protracted forever. We must only endure the next few months and at most four years for change to take place in the United States and the good old days to return. Deep down however, Berlin must know that the future will most likely be more contested. It need not be illiberal, but it will certainly be non-liberal in which liberal and illiberal values will uneasily coexist. Yet it can be multilateral and rules based too. For it to be so, what is es-

sential is that Germany assumes as much European leadership on the global front as it is now doing on the internal one. A global Europe in practice is not achieved by Germany alone. But it certainly cannot come into being without it.

Nathalie Tocci is Director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome.

A View from Spain: Not a Normal Member State



Ana Palacio

From the time of Konrad Adenauer through Helmut Kohl, it was said that Germany would find its interests in the interest of the European Project. This is, of course, a gross generalization. But like all caricatures it was based on more than a kernel of truth. For the last 20 years, dating roughly from the European Union's fifth enlargement, Germany has been seen as progressively becoming a "normal" member state, pursuing its interests through the EU. Again, the reality is more complex. There is, however, a basis for that perception.

But Germany is not a normal member state. For a long time now, it has been clear that it alone possesses the oomph to make things happen in Brussels. When it engages and leads - as in this summer's budget negotiations, the impasse over European leadership following the 2019 elections, and the response to the 2008 financial crisis - things are done. When Germany acts alone, as on migration and in relation to Turkey, the rest of the Union grudgingly follows and the project sputters along. When Berlin opposes policies die. And when it is ambivalent, as so often happens, projects dither and then wither. Where are the Banking Union and Energy Union today?

As a result, the shape of the EU is bent towards the will (or lack thereof) of its strongest member. Where it is engaged, notably the functioning of the internal market, things are clear. When it is not there is a marked lack of direction.



This is especially stark in terms of foreign and defense policy. It has been assumed that others, the French, the British, the Americans, could lead. But what is now evident is that if Germany steps back or gets out of the way, there will be no progress towards a European vision of defense at a time in which it is desperately needed. This is not just a job for Paris, London, or Washington. Unless and until Germany recognizes that fact and leads a robust common foreign relations and defense construction, Europe will miss the future.

Ana Palacio is an international lawyer, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain and a former Senior Vice President and General Counsel of the World Bank Group.



Decision-making

6

The Berlin Disharmonic

What are the challenges for holistic foreign and security policy making? Why has the need for better coordination increased? How is the foreign policy decision-making process in Germany organized? And how could it possibly be improved?

The Berlin Disharmonic

Tobias Bunde,
Christoph Erber, and
Juliane Kabus*



“Germany’s national security architecture lacks a body for strategic debates, prioritization, and coordination. [...] Germany doesn’t have a National Security Council that can routinely convene ministers to review, weigh, and establish strategic priorities. [...] Process matters. Process is what can turn lofty rhetoric into policy. Process is what can pair policy decisions with actual resources.”⁴⁷³

Julianne Smith, War on the Rocks, February 18, 2019

In the German debate it is often said that Europe needs to learn to speak with one voice. Without exaggerating too much, one might note that it would go a long way if Germany were to speak with one voice in foreign policy. Differences of opinion on public display among cabinet members may not be unique to Germany. But the German political system seems to encourage them to a certain extent.⁴¹³

Coordination has long been considered a problematic area in German foreign and security policy. In part, the difficulties arise from the fact that governments normally are based on coalition of several parties and that the Basic Law, Germany’s constitution, explicitly gives ministries a strong position.

Taken together, this constitutes a noticeable handicap for the conception and implementation of German foreign policy. Effective coordination mechanisms within the Federal Government could compensate to some extent. Across party lines, many of the members of the German Bundestag surveyed for this report agreed that there was “plenty of room for improvement” in this regard. This chapter aims to shed light on the conditions and existing mechanisms and to outline options for possible improvement.⁴¹⁴

Chancellors, Cabinets, Coalitions

The German government’s foreign and security policy apparatus has hardly evolved since the 1960s, while the world around us has become increasingly complex and reaction times ever shorter.

In some areas, new ministries have been established (Environment), old ones were decommissioned (Intra-German Relations and Post/Telecommunications) and tasks or whole directorates have moved back and forth (for example, aspects of European coordination between Economic Affairs and Finance). By contrast, the core portfolios of foreign, defense, and development policy have seen great continuity. The last major change came with the founding of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in 1961, when Konrad Adenauer was chancellor. Since then, the basic division of labor between the three ministries has hardly changed.

* The authors would like to thank Boris Ruge for his support in the preparation of this chapter.

Since Adenauer, all chancellors have significantly shaped foreign policy. Making use of the policy-making authority accorded to them in the Basic Law⁴¹⁵, chancellors have time and again claimed the final say on central issues of German foreign policy. Just as Hans-Dietrich Genscher was not informed about Helmut Kohl's 10-point plan for German unification, the Greens were confronted in 2001 with the fact that Gerhard Schröder linked the decision to send the German armed forces to Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 with a vote of confidence.⁴¹⁶ In the Merkel era, important remits of foreign policy were increasingly run from the Chancellery, not least relations with China and Russia.⁴¹⁷

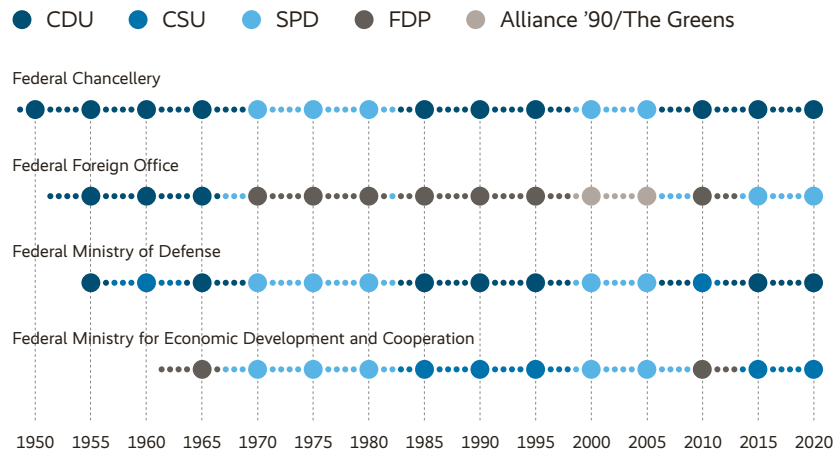
Probably the most significant strengthening of the chancellor's position occurred in connection with European policy. Foreign Minister Fischer and his successors each had to wage defensive battles against the increasing shift of EU policy to the Chancellery.⁴¹⁸ However, the strengthening of the heads of state and government vis-à-vis their foreign ministers became a reality with the Lisbon Treaty, which boosted the position of the European Council. With the onset of the EU's "polycrisis," the European Council has increasingly become the "central steering and control center for crisis management" over the past decade.⁴¹⁹ This is where heads of state and government deal with key foreign policy issues – and do so in the absence of foreign ministers.

At the same time, the German chancellor is much more restricted in her freedom of action than the French president, for example.⁴²⁰ As noted above, in the Federal Republic governments have almost always been based on coalitions of several parties. Given the evolution of the party system, the complexity may increase further if coalitions of two parties no longer command a majority and tripartite constellations make coordination within a coalition even more challenging.

In addition, there is the so-called Ressortprinzip (roughly: principle of ministerial autonomy), according to which "each Federal Minister shall conduct the affairs of his department independently and on his own responsibility."⁴²¹ A chancellor's margin of maneuver is thus limited by the need to reach agreement with the coalition partner. If the chancellor intervenes too heavily in ministries run by the coalition partner, she puts the government's viability at risk.

According to the Foreign Service Act, the Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt, AA) has the task of “safeguarding the interests of the Federal Republic of Germany abroad” and “coordinating the activities of the state and other public institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany abroad which affect foreign policy relations within the framework of the policy of the federal government.”⁴²² The foreign minister is typically one of the most visible and popular politicians in Germany. Since 1969, the smaller coalition partner has always insisted on claiming this portfolio.

Figure 6.1
Historical party affiliation of German ministries with key foreign policy competencies, 1949–2020



Data: Federal Chancellery, Federal Foreign Office, Federal Ministry of Defense, Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

In the event of a disagreement on issues that are not clearly within the remit of a single ministry, the cabinet decides.⁴²³ Of course, disagreements between ministries arise not only from differences in functional outlook and competence, but often reflect ideological positions of coalition partners. The fact that, since the 1960s, the ministries that are central to foreign and security policy have always been distributed among coalition partners means that German foreign policy is heavily dependent on the dynamics within the respective coalition.

From Silo to Network: The Coordination Challenge

In addition to the dynamic inherent in the Basic Law and coalition politics, fundamental changes in international relations have arisen in recent decades that makes the effective formulation and implementation of foreign policy an even greater challenge.

Issues such as energy, climate change, migration, and emerging technologies are now key issues in foreign and security policy. However, responsibility for these matters lies with the functional ministries. The debates regarding Nord Stream 2 and 5G demonstrate the extent to which supposedly “technical” issues play into foreign policy and highlight the importance of coordination to avoid setbacks.

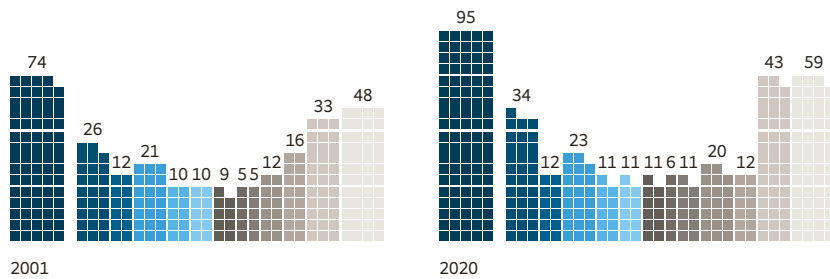
Due to the internationalization of numerous policy areas, all ministries today have units or even directorates for EU affairs to prepare decisions at the European level in their respective policy area.⁴²⁴ However, the trend toward greater involvement of other ministries can also be observed outside the realm of EU policy, namely in those areas that require close coordination at the international level. The result is that each ministry is now “simultaneously a ‘foreign ministry’ in its own field.”⁴²⁵

As early as 2001, Walter Eberlei and Christoph Weller concluded in a study that the number of units dealing with international issues in the specialized ministries significantly exceeded the total number of all units in the Foreign Office.⁴²⁶ Updated figures provided by the Centre for International Security at the Hertie School show that this trend has continued over the last two decades.

Figure 6.2

Units with international responsibilities in Federal Ministries, 2001–2020

- Foreign Office ● Finance ● Justice ● Interior
- Labor and Social Affairs ● Education and Research
- Nutrition and Agriculture ● Families, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth
- Health ● Environment
- Transport, Building, and Housing
- Economic Affairs and Energy ● Economic Cooperation and Development



Data: Institute for Development and Peace (Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden, INEF); Centre for International Security (Hertie School).
Illustration: Munich Security Conference

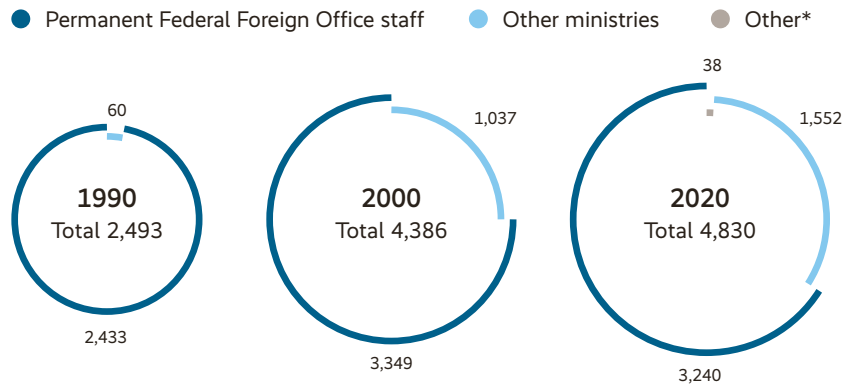


The growing role of specialized ministries is also reflected in the staffing of German diplomatic missions. While, in 1990, only two percent of staff came from ministries other than the AA, today it is almost one-third. The number of civil servants seconded from specialized ministries to German missions is now 25 times higher than it was at the time of German reunification.

Figure 6.3

Personnel structure at German diplomatic missions, 1990–2020

*Staff seconded to missions who cannot be clearly assigned to a dedicated federal department or agency, e.g., staff seconded from the Länder, Federal Bank etc.



Data: Federal Foreign Office. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

As the relevance of foreign relations for other ministries has increased, the role of the Foreign Office in the institutional structure of the decision-making process has also changed. Like most European foreign ministries, the AA has long since become “unable to steer the international work of the other ministries.”⁴²⁷ It is instead a “cross-cutting ministry,” which, in many areas, no longer plays the leading role but supports other ministries in negotiations – such as the Ministry for the Environment in the area of climate policy.⁴²⁸

Germany is now a member of some 300 international organizations. The other ministries represent Germany there and contribute their expertise to the negotiations. Experts from the Ministry of Finance take part in consultations at the International Monetary Fund, while the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs oversees negotiations at the International Labor Organization. The list could go on.

Thomas Bagger, former director of policy planning at the Foreign Office, therefore argues that the task of the AA in a world in which there can be no talk of a monopoly on shaping foreign relations should be understood as “network-oriented foreign policy,” which does not regard the increasing role of other ministries as a loss in a zero-sum game, but rather as “part of the reality of globalization.”⁴²⁹

The Foreign Office is not the only ministry that has to contend with the fact that essential competencies for fulfilling its own mission lie with other ministries. Jörg Faust and Dirk Messner, for example, warned a few years ago that, for similar reasons, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development “in its present form and structure will find itself increasingly unable to effectively implement a broad-based development policy.”⁴³⁰



“Today, development cooperation is a cross-cutting task in all policy areas. The Ministry for Development must develop into a Ministry for Global Cooperation and needs more of a voice and legislative competence.”⁴⁷⁴

Development Minister
Gerd Müller, Umdenken.
Überlebensfragen der
Menschheit, 2020

In addition, increasingly there are issues that are not easily addressed in the traditional departmental structure. Germany finds it difficult to deal with new types of cross-cutting threats that arise “between ministries.” This challenge is particularly evident in the area of new technologies. No fewer than ten ministries and the Chancellery are involved in Germany’s cybersecurity architecture at the federal level, supplemented by 29 subordinate agencies and other organizations. An overview of the “Actors and Responsibilities in German Cyber-Security Policy,” which the *Stiftung Neue Verantwortung* regularly updates, illustrates the complexity in this area, which is further exacerbated by the competencies of the federal states.⁴³¹

This coordination deficit is even more evident in the area of hybrid threats, which, by their very nature, pose complex, often simultaneous challenges to a large number of ministries and areas of responsibility at the federal, state, and local levels. The nature of the threat and the resulting need to establish interagency coordination has been recognized by NATO and the EU since 2016. Thus, the Hybrid Fusion Cell of the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (EU INTCEN) is able to base its situational analyses on input from all relevant areas of the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), and member states and make them available to all concerned. In Germany, an interministerial structure that could serve as a counterpart to the bodies at the EU and NATO level is lacking but is urgently needed.⁴³²

Coordination: The Status Quo

On paper, Germany has an instrument for comprehensive and systematic coordination of foreign and security policy. All but unknown to the public, the Federal Security Council (Bundessicherheitsrat, BSR) is a cabinet committee.⁴³³ Its permanent members are, in addition to the chancellor and the head of the Chancellery, the ministers for foreign affairs, finance, the interior, justice, defense, economic affairs, and development.

While, in the 1950s and 1960s, the BSR concentrated on civil and military aspects of defense, the focus later shifted to disarmament and arms control. Since the 1990s, the BSR has been concerned almost solely with approving defense exports.⁴³⁴

In the 1998 coalition agreement of the SPD-Green government, the parties agreed that the new government would restore the Federal Security Council to its originally intended role as an organ for coordinating German security policy and create the necessary conditions for this.⁴³⁵ In practice, it appears that a “security cabinet” established by Chancellor Schröder, consisting of the chancellor, the state secretary in the Chancellery, and the ministers for foreign affairs, defense, and the interior was the key coordination mechanism outside the cabinet.⁴³⁶

In contrast, the 2006 White Paper, which was prepared during Chancellor Merkel’s first term, did not even mention the BSR.⁴³⁷ Ten years later, in the White Paper of 2016, the government again announced it would ensure that “in accordance with the principle of ministerial autonomy, the Federal Security Council more consistently addresses strategic issues and resulting threat scenarios in order to further strengthen its role as a provider of strategic stimulus.”⁴³⁸ However, this statement does not appear to have had much impact on the work of the BSR. By and large, its role remains limited to the approval of arms exports.

In practice, foreign and security policy coordination (to the extent that it does not take place informally between ministries or between ministries and the Chancellery) primarily takes place in a weekly meeting among state secretaries in preparation of cabinet meetings. A further format of state secretaries with the addition of the heads of the Federal Intelligence Service and security agencies known as the “Intelligence Briefing” also occurs weekly.

In addition, there are various formats at state secretary level devoted to specific issues. These include operations such as those in Mali and Afghanistan but also relations with countries such as China and the United States.⁴³⁹ Since approximately 2011, these have been supplemented by interdepartmental “task force” formats that focus on individual countries (Libya) or regions (such as the Sahel or Lake Chad regions) and that typically meet at directors level.⁴⁴⁰ How well the ministries work together ultimately depends

on the goodwill of those involved. At the end of the day, these formats are nonbinding and the frequency of meetings varies greatly.⁴⁴¹ In addition, “transmission belts” that would deliver the output of task forces and other formats to state secretaries and the cabinet are lacking.

The interdepartmental coordination group “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace,” which was created as a follow-up to the eponymous guidelines published in 2017 could have been such a mechanism. The group meets at the director-general level and was intended as “a central decision-making body” and as a link between the operational and strategic levels.⁴⁴² In response to a question from the FDP parliamentary group, the government stated that the group was intended to meet “about every two months.”⁴⁴³ It is not known how often it meets in practice. The fact that the chair rotates among the ministries further impedes living up to the intended steering function.⁴⁴⁴

In the summer of 2019, a situation room for foreign and security policy was set up at the Foreign Office as part of the implementation of the 2016 White Paper. Apart from the AA, the Chancellery, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Defense participate.⁴⁴⁵ The situation room produces a daily situation analysis of the most important foreign crisis and conflict situations.⁴⁴⁶ Its work has been rated positively by the ministries.⁴⁴⁷ But in the current constellation, it can only represent a small fraction of the analytical input that would be necessary for a holistic decision-making process.⁴⁴⁸

Germany’s EU coordination is based on a separate set of mechanisms. For the basic coordination in Berlin, the key bodies are the state secretaries for Europe chaired by the minister of state for Europe (belonging to the Foreign Office), and the monthly meeting of the directors-general for Europe (alternately chaired by the AA and the Ministry of Economic Affairs). Instructions to Brussels are coordinated by the AA and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The AA is responsible for coordinating the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) II, while the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs is responsible for coordinating COREPER I. Further, the Ministry of Finance, plays a role with regard to the Eurogroup. Germany’s permanent mission in Brussels functions as a hub. The permanent representative plays a key role because many outcomes are negotiated in COREPER. Since difficult questions often end up being referred to the European Council, the job of finding compromises is often in the hands of the Chancellery.

Climate policy may serve as an example of the challenges of foreign policy coordination in a new issue area. The AA rightly describes climate change as a key foreign policy issue.⁴⁴⁹ At a meeting of the UN Security Council during the German presidency in July 2020, Foreign Minister Maas stated that the consequences of climate change for peace and security were already real and made a number of operational proposals.⁴⁵⁰ In their new draft program the Green Party states that climate policy is a “central component of global foreign, security, and development policy” and calls for an international framework at the UN and EU level to avoid climate and environmental conflicts, termed “Responsibility to Prepare.”⁴⁵¹

So far, however, there is little in terms of operational structure at the national level to deliver on climate diplomacy. The “Climate Cabinet” established in 2019 includes neither the AA nor the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and seems to meet only at large intervals. Below the political level, the Ressortprinzip and a lack of binding coordination mechanisms seem to be hampering the articulation of effective climate action.

It is noteworthy that during the coronavirus crisis, the German government quickly created new coordination structures bringing together internal and external security actors. The core is a “Small Corona Cabinet” with “flat hierarchies and rapid escalation steps.” The ministers are supported by other newly created formats below cabinet level. These include a joint crisis team of the Ministries of Health and the Interior already envisaged in the government’s 2007 pandemic plan. Nonetheless, the question arises whether permanent interministerial structures would not enable a faster and more targeted response.⁴⁵²

Finally, when considering coordination mechanisms, the coalition committee is also noteworthy. It is a political rather than a government structure, but can play a key role when it comes to making fundamental foreign policy decisions.

To summarize: Germany has a multitude of bodies and mechanisms to coordinate foreign and security policy. However, most of these formats are nonbinding in nature. There is a lack of both “transmission belts” and a common institutional framework for integrated decision preparation, decision-making, and implementation. The Federal Security Council continues to be used only sporadically and has no established and effective support structures to draw upon. As Christian Thiels concludes, Germany continues

to struggle with the complexities of today's strategic environment by working through its traditional ministerial structure.⁴⁵³

For Julianne Smith, former deputy national security advisor to Vice President Biden, the lack of such a structure is a major reason for the “political paralysis” of Berlin and the absence of a “German voice” on key strategic issues: “Where can German leaders come together and weigh individual, tactical decisions against a broader set of strategic objectives? I’ve spent months asking policymakers these questions and have yet to hear a reassuring answer.”⁴⁵⁴

A Look over the Fence

In recent years, some of Germany's close partners have revamped their foreign and security policy structures and decision-making processes. The cases of Japan and the United Kingdom are particularly relevant.⁴⁵⁵

In the UK, a National Security Council (NSC) was created in 2010, which meets weekly at ministerial level. It has a secretariat with a staff of about 200 people, headed by the national security advisor, who acts as foreign policy advisor to the prime minister and as intelligence coordinator.

The meetings of the NSC at permanent secretary and ministerial levels are prepared by senior officials in so-called implementation groups, with the chair of each being delegated to different ministries on a case by case basis. One of the ways in which the system adds value is that discussions at political level are systematically prepared and decision papers jointly drawn up.⁴⁵⁶ In this regard, the Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) in the Cabinet Office, with its assessment staff, plays an important role; its situation analyses, which are supported by all British intelligence services, security authorities, and general departments, are incorporated into the NSC's deliberations. Decisions are based on a cross-departmental situation analysis and action recommendations, for which all departments are jointly accountable.⁴⁵⁷

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) plays a key role in the preparation of NSC meetings and systematically provides input on strategic issues. In addition, important positions in the NSC are staffed by officials from the FCDO. Concerns that the position of the FCDO might be undermined by the new structure seem to have proved unfounded.⁴⁵⁸ In 2019, the British parliament assessed the improved coordination of British foreign and security policy as clear progress.⁴⁵⁹

Japan, too, first established a National Security Council in 2013. The reform, which was driven by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe, initially met with strong resistance in the bureaucracy, but it is now also viewed positively.⁴⁶⁰

France, with its presidential system, operates according to a different logic than Germany. In the case of France, it is nevertheless noteworthy that in recent years President Macron has increasingly drawn on the *Conseil de Défense* to intensify foreign and security policy coordination. The *Conseil de Défense* now meets weekly under the chairmanship of the president and covers both external and internal security issues, including the pandemic.



We should further develop our current Federal Security Council, with its limited tasks and responsibilities, to create a body that guarantees the reliable coordination of our strategic instruments. A body that combines everything that is needed to create a humane international order: diplomacy, military, economy and commerce, internal security and development cooperation. For if we want to fill our comprehensive, networked approach with life, we must organize it at a prominent level.”⁴⁷⁵

Defense Minister
Annegret
Kramp-Karrenbauer,
Speech at the Bundeswehr
University Munich,
November 7, 2019

The model of the US National Security Council appears less relevant in terms of informing the German debate. However, it does point to the dangers of oversized coordination mechanisms, especially through excessive centralization at the expense of the ministries.⁴⁶¹

Room for Improvement: Closing the Coordination Gap

The debate for or against greater use of the Federal Security Council or the creation of new structures has been ongoing for more than 20 years.⁴⁶² Despite the statements in the coalition agreement of 1998 and the White Paper of 2016, to date there has been no significant progress in the coordination of German foreign policy.

Roughly speaking, one can distill the following options for improving coordination from the numerous contributions of the past decades: The first is a “status quo plus” that supplements existing coordination bodies with informal structures. A second option is the more systematic use of the BSR, as outlined in the 2016 White Paper, combined with additional staff and supporting structures including situation assessment and evaluation.⁴⁶³ The creation of an entirely new coordination structure would be another possibility,⁴⁶⁴ as would the establishment of the position of a state secretary or minister of state in the Chancellery in order to bring together the threads of foreign and security policy.⁴⁶⁵

These options must be weighed and assessed in terms of their utility. Drawing on the Federal Security Council as an already established cabinet committee with agreed rules of procedure would be relatively easy. The BSR is essentially an “off-the-shelf” solution. Disagreements over composition, tasks, and constitutional issues could thus be avoided. It is also important to

note that the BSR is an advisory and preparatory body; decision-making is reserved for the cabinet (unless the BSR is specifically authorized).⁴⁶⁶

The notion that improved coordination would come at the expense of the ministries no longer holds in 2020. On the contrary, given the power shift in favor of the Chancellery, ministries should have an interest in coordination structures that allow them to systematically feed in their knowledge and expertise – in terms of preparing decisions and with regard to decision-making at the political level. The staff needed for coordination structures of this kind could be recruited from the ministries, with key positions being allocated to personnel from relevant ministries. The experience of our partners shows that strong ministries and effective coordination are no contradictions.



“Political discipline – speaking with a single voice on the international stage – and coalition government are not contradictory. Germany must speak with one voice abroad. An upgraded Federal Security Council would strengthen the professionalism and cohesiveness of the government and thus its international clout.”⁴⁷⁶

Wolfgang Ischinger,
Der Spiegel,
March 1, 2010

A decision to engage in greater coordination via the Federal Security Council could also entail ministries chairing specific bodies as part of a support structure. For example, the AA could chair coordination in the area of stabilization. Accordingly, the Federal ministries of defense, economic cooperation, and environment could take the lead in areas of their core competencies.⁴⁶⁷

In recent crisis situations, the German government has shown that it is capable of taking decisive action and making far-reaching decisions, as in the case of the Franco-German initiative on the European recovery package. Overall, however, there is a sense that the tool box of the “Bonn Republic” is no longer sufficient to meet the foreign policy challenges of our time.

Any reorganization should meet a number of requirements. It should improve crisis response, not least with regard to hybrid threats and simultaneous crises. It should establish “connectivity” with partners, allies, and international organizations. It should ensure that cabinet members are equipped to brief the Bundestag and the general public in a timely manner and on basis of coordinated assessment and decision-making. Finally, it should enable the systematic development of policies on complex issues such as climate diplomacy and artificial intelligence.

In Search of a Comprehensive Strategy in the Land of Gesamtkonzept

Institutions and structures are not everything. Without developing our strategic culture, any reform of German decision-making processes would be pointless. At the same time, improving our structures for coordination could help by giving German foreign policy “a place where a strategic culture could finally grow.”⁴⁶⁸

Good foreign policy not only requires a strategic culture but also mechanisms for understanding the strategic environment and one’s own position. Despite Germany’s predilection for the Gesamtkonzept,⁴⁶⁹ the Federal Republic to date has never produced a national security strategy. Instead, “White Papers on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr” are drawn up at irregular intervals in consultation among the relevant ministries, with the Ministry of Defense leading. Since reunification, Germany has only published three White Papers in total: in 1994, 2006, and 2016. In effect, there was an interval of at least a decade between each.

In practice, the coalition agreements customary in Germany contain sections on foreign and security policy and are an important reference point for governments coming into office. However, foreign policy issues are rarely front and center in these agreements and they are negotiated under great time pressure by the political parties, rather than civil servants in the ministries.

There appears to be a strong case for introducing a national strategy document to be submitted regularly by the German government as is customary among all our important allies and partners.⁴⁷⁰ Such a document and annual interim reports could be debated in the Bundestag and would thus help to raise public awareness of the most important international issues.

With a comprehensive security strategy, existing strategy papers such as the “Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific”⁴⁷¹ adopted by the German government in September 2020 or the aforementioned 2017 guidelines on “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace” could be integrated into an analytical framework that would also allow for better prioritization.

If one decided to introduce a national security strategy, international partners could be included in the process, as is the practice in France with the *Livre blanc*. In addition to the involvement of Germany's closest allies, the EU in particular should be included in the process to ensure that the "European imperative" is always kept in mind when defining German foreign policy positions.⁴⁷²

Key Points

- ① Adjusting and improving German foreign policy coordination appears overdue. In addition to an orderly decision-making process at the political level, effective integrated support structures are needed.
- ② In the absence of such changes, it will be impossible to implement credibly the concept of “networked security” or to address complex issues such as climate change or new technologies.
- ③ On closer inspection, this is by no means a zero-sum game for the ministries and coalition partners involved.
- ④ For the further development of our strategic culture, as a framework for policy-making, and for strategic communication, it would be advisable to introduce a national strategy document to be submitted on a regular basis.

A View from France: Not There Yet



François Heisbourg

During the 1990s, a consensually united Germany was moving towards the role of multilateralist rule-maker and risk-taker. Full belligerency in the Kosovo campaign was the crowning point of this process. The US's unilateral action in Iraq ended this evolution. A period of so-called "eman-cipation" began in which Berlin became a more passive and reactive player, displaying a minima solidarity in the form of Afghanistan caveats and defense budget reductions in Europe.

Some of this changed with the use of force by Russia in Ukraine in 2014. Germany, to Russia's surprise, took the lead in ensuring EU unity in terms of sanctions and diplomacy. Defense spending began to increase. EU security and defense policy remained embryonic, but at least new concepts emerged with the introduction in 2016 of "strategic autonomy" while a European defense fund has been set up.

The challenge facing Germany and the EU today is that of a reduced US commitment. China, not Russia, is America's peer competitor, posing a threat to the West as a whole. US perceptions of whether Europe is helping or hindering it vis-à-vis China will shape the future of the transatlantic relationship. *Bündnisfähigkeit* will have Chinese characteristics. The good news is that in a post-Trumpian age, such a US may no longer discourage more EU-centric defense efforts and welcome more EU engagement in our Mediterranean and African periphery. The bad news is that the EU and its most important member, Germany, are not ready for this.

Germany's blind-spots include burden-sharing and a risk-adverse "strategic culture." But the most glaring and often underestimated weakness is the lack of a full-spectrum national security outlook, demonstrated by the absence of a fully-fledged national security body served by the integrated resources of diplomacy, defense and intelligence. Indeed, intelligence remains an unloved stepchild in the German system. This is a dangerous shortcoming in an interconnected world with fast-moving and multifaceted crises. This situation can be put right through political initiative, without waiting for the budget outlays required by burden-sharing and with-

out depending on the fraught process of transforming popular attitudes towards the use of force.

François Heisbourg is Senior Advisor for Europe at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London and Special Advisor at the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique in Paris.

A View From India: A World Between Orders



Shivshankar Menon

The reunification of Germany marked a sea change not just in European politics, but in the world's expectations of Germany. Even those who were previously uncertain looked to Berlin, already a global economic power, to help build a new cooperative future in a globalized, unipolar world. If these expectations did not come true, it was not because of Germany, but because of the march of events: The global financial crisis, the inward focus of the United States as the sole superpower, and the rise of China and other emerging economies combined with the backlash to globalization creating weaponized interdependence.

We are now in a world between orders, where the center of gravity of the global economy has shifted eastward from mid-Atlantic towards the Asia-Pacific, as has the focus of great-power political contention. Traditional great-power rivalry is back, most evident in Asia. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated and reinforced these trends. These shifts have opened up space for a more active role for Germany. The world today needs precisely the strengths that Germany has displayed under Chancellor Merkel's leadership: the strong economy, technological prowess, steady and calm politics, and reliance on negotiated solutions to international issues, as illustrated by Germany's example of responsible leadership in Europe after 2008.

There are three aspects in which Germany's role could be crucial to the world's strategy to overcome the present crisis: in restoring the world to economic health, in the evolution of norms and standards for the world order that is being born, and in integrating Russia into Europe.



Concerning the first aspect, Germany has the economic position and credibility to work with those who have the most to lose from fragmentation and regionalization to minimize the harm that such trends would do to global prosperity and growth.

Second, Germany, with its technological prowess and political reputation of adherence to international norms and standards, comes to mind as the power that could convene and lead a coalition of the willing to endeavor developing international norms for newly contentious domains such as cyber, outer space, and other new technological fields.

Third, Germany is also the power that could help with the West's increasingly fraught relationship with Russia. Here too, Germany has the experience, location, and credibility for her diplomacy to play a central role.

It is possible that the recent shocks to the international system have opened up possibilities. If we are able to seize them, we would have turned crisis into opportunity.

Shivshankar Menon is a former National Security Advisor of the Republic of India.



Outlook



Wendezeiten

What does the *Zeitenwende* mean for German foreign and security policy? What is the most important foreign policy challenge for Germany?

Wendezeiten

Tobias Bunde

Our country is not alone with the epochal challenges of the *Zeitenwende*, of course. Many other European democracies find themselves in a similar situation. But there are two reasons why it represents a very special challenge for Germany.



“The expectations of our partners and allies have increased because Germany’s importance has also grown. [...] Germany is not a superpower, but it is a country with political and economic influence. It is a matter of realistically assessing our opportunities to exert influence — or in other words: our power — and using them wisely. [...] It is not just what we do that has an effect elsewhere in the world but what we do not do. Keeping out of trouble when in doubt cannot be a foreign policy maxim.”⁵⁰⁴

Bundestag President Wolfgang Schäuble, speech at the farewell ceremony for Volker Perthes, September 9, 2020

First, there is hardly another country in the world that so fully adapted itself – in political, military, economic, but also intellectual terms – to the old order essentially established on the United States’ initiative after 1945, at least in the Western part of the world, which was in a sense “globalized” after the end of the Cold War (Chapter 2). As this report has shown, Germany is therefore also particularly vulnerable to the dissolution of this order (Chapter 3). The foreign and security policy toolbox is also still largely oriented toward the old order – and above all, it is not adequately equipped (Chapter 4). Although public opinion has shifted significantly, it is still partly at odds with growing expectations from abroad and the challenges of a changed situation (Chapter 5). And the foreign policy decision-making process still essentially stems from a time when foreign and domestic policy were somewhat easier to separate (Chapter 6). All of this makes it particularly difficult to adapt to a changing world. A status quo power like Germany does not have it easy in a world of radical transformation.

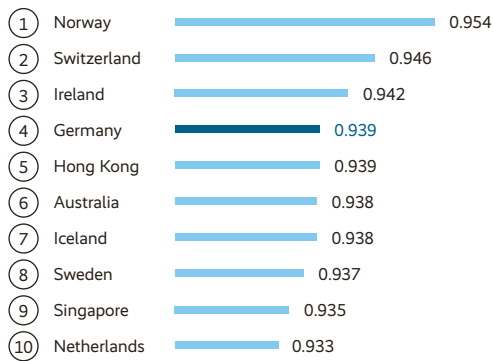
Second, Germany is one of the few countries in the world that is considered to play a decisive role in overcoming global political challenges. Looking at some key statistics, the question of who – if not Germany – could, together with others, make a greater contribution to global governance does indeed arise. Germany is still the fourth largest economy in the world, it is one of the most important trading nations in the world, it is the country with the largest population in the European Union, and it finds itself near the top in almost every international ranking. In addition, the country – just two decades ago dubbed the “sick man of Europe” – has weathered the crises of the recent past well compared to many of its neighbors and is now considered by some to be the “powerhouse of Europe.”⁴⁷⁷ The expectations of our country have risen steadily in recent years.

In simplified terms, one can summarize: While foreign countries generally overestimate Germany’s role and capacities, Germans clearly underestimate their own country’s power and influence.

Figure 7.1

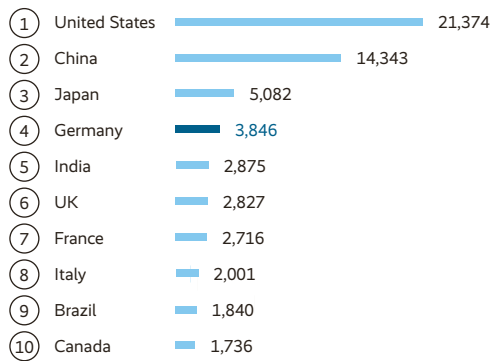
Germany by international comparison, selected rankings, 2019

Human Development Index, 2019, value



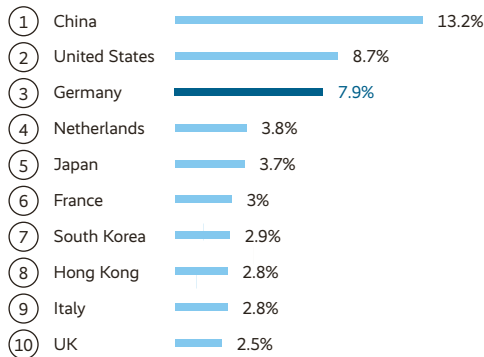
Daten: UN Development Programme (UNDP)

GDP, 2019, USD billions



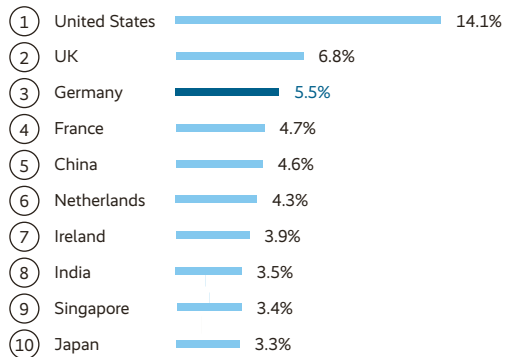
Data: World Bank

Leading exporters in world merchandise trade, 2019, share of world total, percent



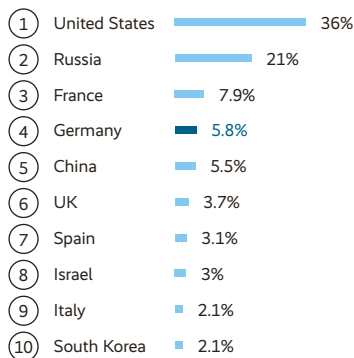
Data: World Trade Organization

Leading exporters in world trade in commercial services, 2019, share of world total, percent



Data: World Trade Organization

Exporters of major arms, share of global arms exports, 2019, percent



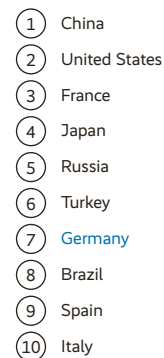
Data: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
Illustration of all rankings: Munich Security Conference

Nation Brands Index, 2019



Data: Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index

Lowy Institute Global Diplomacy Index, 2019



Data: Lowy Institute

On the Path to a Realistic Self-image

The gap between how others perceive Germany and how it perceives itself has widened in recent years.⁴⁷⁸ Abroad, at any rate, Germany is by no means seen as an insignificant player. Since the election of US President Donald Trump, the chancellor has been held up as the “leader of the free world,” especially in the English-speaking press, although Merkel, by her own admission, does not have much use for such praise.⁴⁷⁹ From an external perspective, Germany – especially in comparison to the other Western states⁴⁸⁰ – is considered a “bulwark for decency and stability,” as the British journalist John Kampfner describes it in his new book, *Why the Germans Do It Better*, which expresses the respect that Germany enjoys internationally today.⁴⁸¹

Recently, a Gallup poll that asked people from 135 countries about their views on the leadership role of the United States, China, Russia, and Germany made headlines: With an approval rate of 44 percent, Germany was well ahead of the United States (33 percent), China (32 percent), and Russia (30 percent).⁴⁸² This positive result for Germany may be partly due to the fact that it is playing in a different geopolitical league than the other three countries and its foreign policy tends to affect fewer people.⁴⁸³ But the mere fact that the question was asked about Germany’s leadership role speaks volumes about how Germany is perceived abroad.



“I will probably be the first Polish foreign minister in history to say this, but here it is: I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear its inaction. You have become Europe’s indispensable nation. You may not fail to lead: not dominate, but to lead in reform.”⁵⁰⁵

Polish Foreign Minister
Radosław Sikorski,
Financial Times,
November 28, 2011

Particularly within Europe, Germany has become a decisive power from the foreign perspective, without whom and against whom nothing can be accomplished. In the anglophone literature, Germany has for some time now been described as a kind of “reluctant hegemon” within the European Union.⁴⁸⁴ Of course, this also sparks criticism. The former British ambassador to Germany, Paul Lever, describes Germany as the undisputed leading power in Europe, the country that generally gives all the important answers and is experiencing a “golden age of power.”⁴⁸⁵ Critics such as Hans Kundnani have accused Germany of indeed pursuing its own interests with self-confidence but without at the same time living up to the responsibility that comes from having such a prominent position.⁴⁸⁶ During the euro crisis, then Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski called on Germany to finally accept the leadership role that was its due in a speech to the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin. And the Swiss journalist Eric Gujer argued that it is time to do away with the pretense: Germany is a great power.⁴⁸⁷

Most Germans will hardly recognize their country in such descriptions. While Germans like to see themselves as “model Europeans” and “model multilateralists,” they are often perceived as selfish, self-righteous know-it-alls, especially in parts of the EU.⁴⁸⁸ Above all, however, there is still a general lack of understanding in Germany of how important our country is for our neighbors and partners. At times, it seems that the German debate does not always take into account how German discussions are perceived abroad – something that can be marveled at in the recent debate on the future of nuclear sharing.⁴⁸⁹ The fact that Donald Trump’s criticism has been particularly directed at Germany, even though other allies are far from hitting the NATO targets, is also due to the fact that Germany’s behavior has a signal function for many other states.



“My main message is: This is not a moment to think or act small. But a moment for investing in an ambitious Europe. [...] Germany’s role and commitment have been a cornerstone of European integration, so we count on Germany to play its full role [...]”⁵⁰⁶

EU High Representative
for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy
Josep Borrell,
Conference the Heads of
German Missions, Berlin,
May 25, 2020

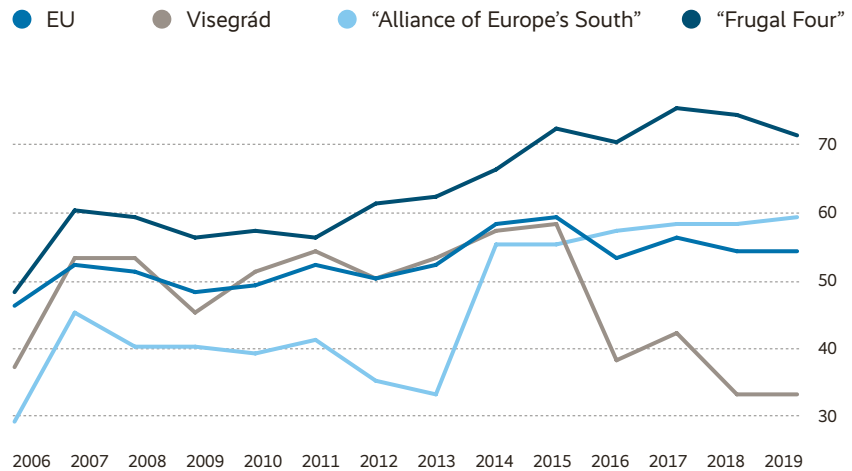
Berlin is struggling with its leadership role and the growing expectations it faces.⁴⁹⁰ In fact, the German government is not in an easy position here. If it does too little or holds back, it is quickly said that Germany is refusing to make good on its leadership role. If it pushes ahead or asserts its own positions in the face of resistance, there is soon talk of German dominance or a “German Europe.” It is the German question in modern form.⁴⁹¹

The task of continuously mediating between the various positions in east and west, south and north is likewise a thankless task for the “power in the center.”⁴⁹² After all, you cannot please everyone. What for some was enlightened leadership in the refugee crisis is regarded by others as moral imperialism. What some consider a responsible fiscal policy is, for others, a forced corset of austerity. What for some is appeasement of Russia is already an excessively hard policy for others. Thus, over time, the policies of the German government have been judged quite differently in different parts of Europe.

Figure 7.2

Approval of the job performance of Germany's leadership, 2006–2019, percent

The EU includes all 28 member states with the exception of Germany; the Visegrád group includes the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia; the "Alliance of Europe's South" includes Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, and Spain; and the "Frugal Four" include Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands.



Data: Gallup World Poll. Illustration: Munich Security Conference

GALLUP

Ultimately, as the leading European power, Germany has to contend with the same criticism that the United States, as a global leader, has been confronted with time and again for decades: Sometimes, both partners and allies criticize it for an excess of leadership and sometimes for too little leadership. For Germany, the most important thing is to learn that a leading power that benefits particularly strongly from an order must be prepared to bear special burdens.

Wendezeiten: From a Status Quo Power to an Enabling Power

To respond to the *Zeitenwende*, the new era, we need *Wendezeiten* – we need to embrace change. Today it is no longer sufficient to defend a status quo whose dissolution we cannot prevent. If we want to preserve what is of vital importance to us, we must find new answers to new questions. Germany, as we argued in the Munich Security Brief on the German EU presidency, must become “more proactive, visionary, and European” to achieve this.⁴⁹³

The core interest of German foreign and security policy is and will remain a strong Europe: “This maxim still applies to German foreign policy: Without Europe, it is all nothing.”⁴⁹⁴ Germany may play a central role in the European Union, but in the world of the 21st century, marked by a new era of competition between great powers, Germany alone cannot achieve much. Germany



“Those who merely want to maintain the status quo and not shape the future will be overtaken by reality sooner or later. Therefore: ‘Embracing Change!’ This must be the slogan for the future of Germany. But taking on and shaping the great global change – today we can only do this with and through Europe. It will not work without a functioning EU.”⁵⁰⁷

Wolfgang Ischinger,
speech for German
Unity Day,
October 2, 2016

lacks what it would need to be a major power in every respect.⁴⁹⁵ Germany can only achieve a real political capacity for action within and through the EU and NATO.

Conversely, however, it is also true that the European Union’s capacity to act in global politics depends largely on Germany. We recently described the vision of Germany as an enabling power, which sees its task primarily in putting the European Union in the position to become a capable actor in all areas of foreign and security policy.⁴⁹⁶ To this end, Germany should adopt what Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has called the “European imperative.” This means that member states should “see European interests as being national interests, and view our national interests through a European lens – and of course [...] act accordingly.”⁴⁹⁷

In recent years, Germany has not always done justice to the European imperative. The situations in which German policymakers put supposed national interests above European ones – as in the case of Nord Stream 2 – were, in the long term, not highlights of German foreign policy in the sense of a holistic grand strategy.⁴⁹⁸ German foreign policy has always been strong when it defines its interests within a European framework or when it brings together German and European interests in a complementary manner. As historian Andreas Rödder writes, a look at European history shows “that German strength and European order were only compatible if Germany made an active contribution that evidently created value for the other participants [...]”⁴⁹⁹

The powerful response of the German government to the challenge of the coronavirus pandemic, which the German government’s grand coalition decided on in close cooperation with France, could in this sense also serve as an example for other areas. As in fiscal policy, Germany must now shed its inhibitions on foreign and security policy.⁵⁰⁰ This does not mean that all the basic tenets of German foreign policy are outdated. Even in times of increasingly aggressive great-power competition, it is reasonable and desirable to defend the European model of multilateral cooperation. But Europe must be able to do so from a position of strength if it does not want to become the “plaything of great powers,” as France’s President Macron warned the German Bundestag.⁵⁰¹ For this reason, Germany must throw its political and economic weight behind Europe.⁵⁰² A German leadership role is not a sufficient but a necessary condition for a strong Europe.

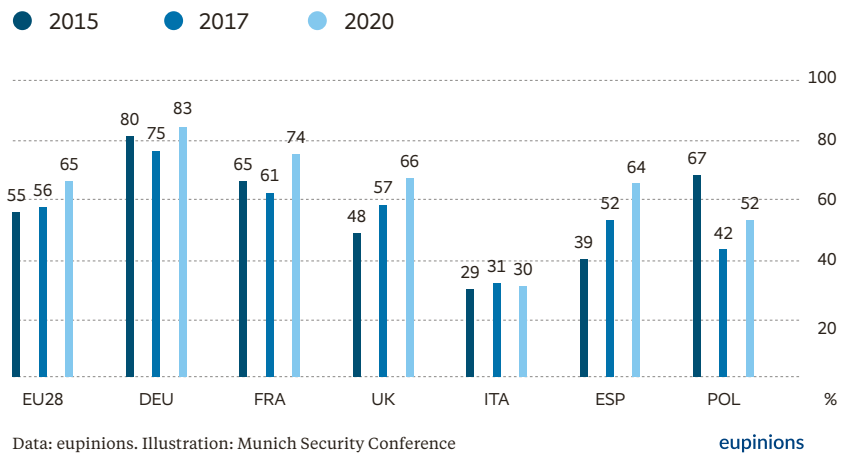


“Due to the country’s ‘critical size’ and the shadows of its past, the international role that the German public needs to understand and support is this historically unusual, difficult, carefully balanced one. For Germany can never be the prancing hegemon, just the steady, skillful football midfielder who keeps the whole team together – and doesn’t even get the applause for scoring goals. Yet sometimes those midfielders are the true heroes of the team.”⁵⁰⁸

Timothy Garton Ash,
The Guardian,
July 30, 2020

An enlightened German leadership role in the EU should also be in the interest of Europeans. In the eupinions survey conducted by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in June 2020, i.e., after the announcement of the Franco-German proposal for the coronavirus package, an average of 65 percent of respondents rated the idea that Germany should take on a leadership role in the EU as good or very good. In some European countries, support for a German leadership role has even increased significantly over the last five years.

Figure 7.3
Approval of the German leadership role in the EU,
2015–2020, percent



From the attitude of their neighbors, Germans may draw courage to go ahead as Europe's "enabling power." At this year's Munich Security Conference, Federal President Steinmeier warned that "there must be no timid heart beating at the center of Europe." We need "the courage to keep on re-examining the substance of our responsibility, not least in the light of the times."⁵⁰³ In view of the challenges of the global political *Zeitenwende*, this cannot happen quickly enough.



NOTES

Please note that the English edition of this report is a translation based on the German original. Where no authoritative English version was available for individual sources, quotes were translated. In case of doubt, please check the original source. Quotations originally in British English have been adapted to American English.

Endnotes

1. Joachim Gauck, "Germany's Role in the World: Reflections on Responsibility, Norms and Alliances" (Munich, January 31, 2014), <https://perma.cc/37Q3-DPAH>; Frank-Walter Steinmeier, "Speech by Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier at the 50th Munich Security Conference" (Munich, February 1, 2014), <https://perma.cc/JE5F-9ER2>; Ursula von der Leyen, "Speech by the Federal Minister of Defense, Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, on the Occasion of the 50th Munich Security Conference Munich" (Munich, January 31, 2014), <https://perma.cc/NQY4-TMS3>. For more on the perception of these terms, see the contributions in Gunther Hellmann, Daniel Jacobi and Ursula Stark Urrestarazu, Eds., „*Früher, entschiedener und substantieller*“? *Die neue Debatte über Deutschlands Außenpolitik* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2015). All speeches can also be found in the media library on the Munich Security Conference website.
2. Cf. for a more detailed discussion of the "Munich consensus" Bastian Giegerich und Maximilian Terhalle, "The Munich Consensus and the Purpose of German Power." *Survival* 58, no. 2 (2016), doi:10.1080/00396338.2016.1161909.
3. For more on the debate on Germany's role on the Libya question, see Wolfgang Ischinger, "Germany after Libya: Still a Responsible Power?" *In All Alone? What US Retrenchment Means for Europe and NATO*, edited by Tomas Valasek (London: Centre for European Reform, 2012); Sarah Brockmeier, "Germany and the Intervention in Libya." *Survival* 55, no. 6 (2013), doi:10.1080/00396338.2013.862937.
4. Joachim Gauck referred to this directly in his speech: "Some – both at home and abroad – have a quick and somewhat simplistic answer: They regard Germany as the shirker in the international community. They say that Germany is all too ready to duck difficult issues." Gauck, "Germany's Role in the World: Reflections on Responsibility, Norms and Alliances".
5. Jochen Bittner et al., "Wir tun doch nix..." *Die Zeit*, March 21, 2013, <https://perma.cc/DUD5-EG66>.
6. Robert M. Gates, "Secretary of Defense Speech: As Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Munich, Germany, Sunday, February 10, 2008" (Munich, February 2, 2008), <https://perma.cc/A6DU-DZZ8>.
7. R. N. Burns, Damon Wilson and Jeff Lightfoot, "Anchoring the Alliance" (Atlantic Council, 2012), 4–5.
8. Julian Lindley-French, "The Transatlantic Partnership in a Globalised World: Report on Wilton Park Conference 1011" (Wilton Park, April 2010), 6.
9. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik and German Marshall Fund, "New Power - New Responsibility: Elements of a German Foreign and Security Policy for a Changing World" (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik; German Marshall Fund, October 2013), <https://perma.cc/7A6G-JRZJ>.
10. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik and German Marshall Fund, "New Power - New Responsibility," 3 and 9.
11. Jochen Bittner, "Can Germany Grow Up?" *The New York Times*, February 12, 2014, <https://perma.cc/4NBE-P5MP>.
12. See, for example, Angela Merkel, "Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel on the Occasion of the 51st Munich Security Conference" (Munich, February 7, 2015), <https://perma.cc/X5WV-CBG4>.
13. For an example of such an interpretation, see Werner Ruf, *Vom Underdog zum Global Player: Deutschlands Rückkehr auf die Weltbühne*, Neue Kleine Bibliothek (Köln: PapyRossa-Verlag, 2020).
14. Klaus Stüttmann, "Die neue deutsche Außenpolitik" EB-Nr. LEMO 8/010 (Stiftung Haus der Geschichte, February 13, 2014), <https://perma.cc/BBK2-W6RA>.
15. Thorsten Benner, "Gegen das Geschwurbel." *Internationale Politik* 74, no. 2 (2019): 15.
16. For more on the German "leadership role" in relation to the war in the Ukraine, see Liana Fix, "The Different 'Shades' of German Power: Germany and EU Foreign Policy during the Ukraine Conflict." *German Politics* 27,

- no. 4 (2018), doi:10.1080/09644008.2018.1448789; Magnus G. Schoeller, "Tracing Leadership: The ECB's 'Whatever It Takes' and Germany in the Ukraine Crisis." *West European Politics* 43, no. 5 (2020), doi:10.1080/01402382.2019.1635801.
17. Volker Rühle, interviewed by Christoph von Marschall and Mathias Müller von Blumencron, Geburary 10, 2019.
18. In the Bundestag, Omid Nouripour, foreign policy spokesman for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen therefore advocated at least examining the use of military instruments, even if this would ultimately have meant direct intervention by the Bundeswehr: "Always talking about German responsibility in the world, and then hitting the bushes when things get uncomfortable, that is not good enough." Omid Nouripour, interviewed by Florian Gathmann und Matthias Gebauer, August 13, 2014. See also Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik e.V., Ed., *Wie viel Führung verlangt Verantwortung? Deutschlands ungeklärte sicherheitspolitische Rolle* (Frankfurt: Wochenschau Verlag, 2020), 110–111.
19. Wolfgang Ischinger, interviewed by Michael Backfisch and Sébastien Vannier, January 28, 2020.
20. Cf. Stewart M. Patrick, "Can an 'Alliance for Multilateralism' Succeed in a New Era of Nationalism?" *World Politics Review*, Septmeber 09, 2019, <https://perma.cc/T8D4-F376>.
21. Sebastian Enskat and Peter Fischer-Bollin, "Die Stärkung einer werte- und regelbasierten Weltordnung." In *Neue Weltordnung, neue Partner? Ein Partner-Atlas für die deutsche Außenpolitik*, edited by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2020), 13.
22. Tobias Bunde and Sophie Eisentraut, "The Enabling Power: Germany's European Imperative," Munich Security Brief (Munich Security Conference, July 2020), doi:10.47342/QTTQ4437.
23. Gauck, "Germany's Role in the World: Reflections on Responsibility, Norms and Alliances".
24. Leyen, "Speech by the Federal Minister of Defense, Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, on the Occasion of the 50th Munich Security Conference".
25. Steinmeier, "Speech by Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier at the 50th Munich Security Conference".
26. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, "'Defending the West': Speech by Federal Minister of Defence Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer at the Munich Security Conference" (Munich, February 15, 2020), <https://perma.cc/SZWR-WEF6>.
27. This chapter further develops some ideas that I have already discussed in the introductory chapters of the Munich Security Report and published elsewhere in recent years. Cf. especially Tobias Bunde, "Neue Lage, neue Verantwortung: deutsche Außenpolitik nach dem Ende der Gewissheiten." In *Deutschlands neue Verantwortung: Die Zukunft der deutschen und europäischen Außen-, Entwicklungs- und Sicherheitspolitik*, edited by Wolfgang Ischinger and Dirk Messner (Berlin: Econ, 2017); Tobias Bunde, "Ende der Gewissheiten." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 36-37 (2018); Tobias Bunde, "Make Strategy Grand Again: Gedanken zum Konzept der Grand Strategy in der deutschen Sicherheitspolitik." In *Das Weißbuch 2016 und die Herausforderungen von Strategiebildung: Zwischen Notwendigkeit und Möglichkeit*, edited by Daniel Jacobi and Gunther Hellmann, Edition ZfAS (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019).
28. This applies, for example, to the Peace of Westphalia, which, according to popular opinion, established the principle of sovereignty. For more on the myth of the "Westphalian system," see Andreas Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth." *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2001), doi:10.1162/00208180151140577. A critical discussion of "benchmark dates" can be found in Barry Buzan and George Lawson, "Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 2 (2014), doi:10.1177/1354066112454553.
29. For more on the debate, see Tobias Bunde et al., "Munich Security Report 2020: Westlessness" (Munich Security Conference, 2020), doi:10.47342/IAQX5691
30. In recent years, it has been clear in many places that the popular "have-your-cake-and-eat-it" strategy of German foreign policy is reaching its limits. Cf. Tobias Bunde, "Make Strategy Grand Again." In *Das Weißbuch 2016 und die Herausforderungen von Strategiebildung*, 43–44.
31. Emmanuel Macron, "United Nations General Assembly: Speech by President Emmanuel Macron" (New York, Septmber 25, 2018), <https://perma.cc/745N-SXCV>.
32. Heiko Maas, "Speech by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas: 'Courage to Stand Up for Europe – #EuropeUnit-

ed“ (Berlin, June 13, 2018), <https://perma.cc/2AQ9-P7F5>.

33. Some inspiring reflections can be found in, for example, Robert Jervis et al., *Chaos in the Liberal Order: The Trump Presidency and International Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Amitav Acharya, "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order." *Ethics & International Affairs* 31, no. 3 (2017), doi:10.1017/S089267941700020X; Trine Flockhart, "The Coming Multi-Order World." *Contemporary Security Policy* 37, no. 1 (2016), doi:10.1080/13523260.2016.1150053.

34. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, "'Die Welt ist aus den Fugen geraten' - Rede von Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier beim Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchentag, Stuttgart" (Stuttgart, June 7, 2015), <https://perma.cc/75YT-THN5>.

35. See, for example, Angela Merkel, "Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Dr. Angela Merkel beim 101. Deutschen Katholikentag" (Münster, May 11, 2018), <https://perma.cc/J74Y-4CSP>: "This is also such a precarious time because the people who experienced the horrors of the Second World War are no longer among us or will soon no longer be among us. I once studied the Peace of Augsburg. It was concluded in 1555. And then it took only about a lifespan, until, in 1618, new actors arrived on the scene who thought: I can demand a little more here and act a bit tougher there. And all of a sudden, the whole order went down the drain and the Thirty-Year War broke out. The lesson of this is that, in the time in which we now live, we must consider the steps we want to take carefully, act calmly, and be clear in our language." See also the recording of her most recent remarks in a conversation with Donald Tusk, in which she speaks of the present era of peace and freedom as a historical exception that must be handled with particular care: "This is not the normal state of things!" See also Konrad Adenauer Foundation, "30 Jahre Deutsche Einheit: Deutschland in Europa und der Welt," live recording, September 10, 2020, <https://youtu.be/RJ5jgHWyMw?t=3999>.

36. For more on the "Zeitenwende," see already Tobias Bunde, "Neue Lage, neue Verantwortung: deutsche Außenpolitik nach dem Ende der Gewissheiten." *In Deutschlands neue Verantwortung*; Joachim Krause, "Die neue Zeitenwende in den internationalen Beziehungen – Konsequenzen für deutsche und europäische Politik."

SIRIUS - Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen 1, no. 1 (2017), doi:10.1515/sirius-2017-0001; Gunther Hellmann, "Deutschland, die Europäer und ihr Schicksal. Herausforderungen deutscher Außenpolitik nach einer Zeitenwende." *Zeitschrift für Staats- und Europawissenschaften* 15, 2-3 (2017), doi:10.5771/1610-7780-2017-2-3-329; Sigmar Gabriel, *Zeitenwende in der Weltpolitik: Mehr Verantwortung in ungewissen Zeiten* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2018).

37. For an explanation of why it is still fundamentally important for the United States to define itself as a "European power," see the essay by then Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs Richard Holbrooke, "America, a European Power." *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 2 (1995).

38. Cf. Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Barack Obama at Suntory Hall" (Tokio, November 14, 2009), <https://perma.cc/DG2Z-5JD5>; Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century." *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, <https://perma.cc/VHJ3-UTYB>; Robert M. Gates, "Remarks by Secretary Gates at the Security and Defense Agenda" (Brüssel, June 10, 2011), <https://perma.cc/MX9G-REDD>.

39. On the lack of a reaction to the speeches and documents mentioned, see, e.g., Wolfgang Ischinger, "Germany after Libya: Still a Responsible Power?" *In All Alone? What US Retrenchment Means for Europe and NATO*, edited by Tomas Valasek (London: Centre for European Reform, 2012), 47.

40. Thomas Jäger, *Das Ende des amerikanischen Zeitalters: Deutschland und die neue Weltordnung* (Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag, 2019).

41. Cf. in particular Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020). Some American experts even speak of the "abdication" and the "empty throne." Cf. Richard Haass, "America and the Great Abdication." *The Atlantic*, December 28, 2017, <https://perma.cc/5W9Z-BB5L>; Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *The Empty Throne: America's Abdication of Global Leadership* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2018).

42. See also Wolfgang Ischinger, *Welt in Gefahr: Deutschland und Europa in unsicheren Zeiten* (Berlin: Econ, 2018), 92–98.

43. Constanze Stelzenmüller, "Falken im Sturm: Was wird nach der Wahl aus der US-Außenpolitik, ob mit oder ohne Donald Trump? Vom Ausbuchstabieren intellektueller Grundlagen in Zeiten der Großmächtekonkurrenz." *Internationale Politik* 75, no. 4 (2020).
44. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, "Rede der Ministerin an der Universität der Bundeswehr München" (November 7, 2019), <https://perma.cc/G43W-DTZZ>.
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46. Heiko Maas in an interview with Hans Monath and Christoph von Marschall, "'Ohne kritische Presse keine freie Demokratie.'" *Der Tagesspiegel*, March 9, 2019, <https://perma.cc/72EW-MALS>.
47. Two years on, Jana Puglierin's criticism remains valid: "Since the Trudering 'beer-tent speech,' little in the way of concrete proposals has been heard from the Chancellery either, apart from a reference to the progress made in the area of the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)." Jana Puglierin, "Rolle rückwärts: Deutschland droht ein sicherheitspolitischer Ansehens- und Vertrauensverlust." *Internationale Politik* 73, no. 5 (2018): 11.
48. Constanze Stelzenmüller, "Germany Faces Its Worst Security Dilemma Since the 1950s." *Financial Times*, August 5, 2018, <https://perma.cc/M9NX-X4UB>.
49. Jean-Claude Juncker, "Speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the Opening Plenary Session of the Ideas Lab 2018 'Europe – Back on Track' of the Centre for European Policy Studies" (Brussels, February 22, 2018), <https://perma.cc/J7JT-DH7U>.
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52. Christoph Möllers and Linda Schneider, *Demokratiesicherung in der Europäischen Union: Studie zu einem Dilemma* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).
53. See on this point R. D. Kelemen, "The European Union's Authoritarian Equilibrium." *Journal of European Public Policy* 27, no. 3 (2020), doi:10.1080/13501763.2020.1712455 For more on the dimensions of self-enrichment among Viktor Orban and his network, see Selam Gebrekidan, Matt Apuzzo and Benjamin Novak, "The Money Farmers: How Oligarchs and Populists Milk the E.U. for Millions." *The New York Times*, November 3, 2019, <https://perma.cc/RE2R-X8UA>.
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60. Anna Lührmann et al., "Autocratization Surges – Resistance Grows: Democracy Report 2020" (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2020), <https://perma.cc/QY7P-URA6>, 6
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65. See on this point, among others, Hannes Adomeit, "Müssen wir Russland besser verstehen lernen? Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit den Argumenten für eine neue Russlandpolitik." *SIRIUS - Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen* 3, no. 3 (2019), doi:10.1515/sirius-2019-3002..
66. Sarah Kirchberger and Patrick O'Keeffe, "Chinas schleichende Annexion im Südchinesischen Meer – die strategischen Hintergründe." *SIRIUS - Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen* 3, no. 1 (2019), doi:10.1515/sirius-2019-1002. See also Tobias Bunde et al., "Munich Security Report 2018: To the Brink - and Back?" (Munich Security Conference, 2018), doi:10.47342/MXPT7760, 27.
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74. See the contributions in Matthew D. Stephen and Michael Zürn, Eds., *Contested World Orders: Rising Powers, Non-Governmental Organizations, and the Politics of Authority Beyond the Nation-State* (Oxford, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019).
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76. Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump to the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly" (New York, September 25, 2019), <https://perma.cc/22GE-J6BZ>.
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341. Körber-Stiftung, "The Berlin Pulse. German Foreign Policy in Times of Covid-19".

342. Renate Köcher, "Deutschland ist anders: In Deutschland wird die Globalisierung positiv gesehen, und es besteht kein Bedürfnis nach einem radikalen Politikwechsel." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 299 (December 22, 2016), <https://perma.cc/HSW6-H9FM>.

343. Renate Köcher, "Die große Entfremdung: Lange sahen die Deutschen Amerika als ihren wichtigsten Verbündeten an. Das hat sich geändert - doch schuld ist nicht allein Donald Trump." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 113 (May 17, 2018), <https://perma.cc/ASC7-544M>.

344. Bernhard Bartsch and Anika Laudien, "Survey: Europe's View of China and the US-Chinese Conflict" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, January 2020), <https://perma.cc/L6CG-KR7Z>, 9.

345. Der Spiegel, "Deutsche fordern mehr Distanz zu China." *Der Spiegel*, July 20, 2020, <https://perma.cc/6WPZ-GEXC>.

346. Timo Graf, "Einstellungen zum außen- und sicherheitspolitischen Engagement Deutschlands." In *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 80. For more on the role of government leaders in shaping public opinion about their country, see Meital Balmas, "Tell Me Who Is Your Leader, and I Will Tell You Who You Are: Foreign Leaders' Perceived Personality and Public Attitudes toward Their Countries and Citizenry." *American Journal of Political Science* 62, no. 2 (2018), doi:10.1111/ajps.12354.

347. Köcher, "Die große Entfremdung"; Thomas Petersen, "Schleichende Zunahme des Antiamerikanismus: Präsident Obama ist in Deutschland populär, und die Deutschen verlassen sich auf die Vereinigten Staaten. Negativklischees prägen aber immer mehr die Wahrnehmung Amerikas." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 23, 2013, <https://perma.cc/94V8-UPDV>.

348. Köcher, "Die große Entfremdung"; Thomas Petersen, "Die Entfremdung: Das Amerika-Bild der Deutschen hat sich verdunkelt. Hinzu kommt nun das verheerende Image des künftigen Präsidenten Trump." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 16, 2016, <https://perma.cc/WZF4-8NFP>.

349. Timo Graf, "Einstellungen zum außen- und sicherheitspolitischen Engagement Deutschlands." In *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 73.

350. Steinbrecher, Graf and Biehl, *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 6.

351. While the proportion of CDU/CSU and FDP supporters who consider the German approach "too restrained" is 66 percent in both groups, the highest figures are found among supporters of the Greens and AfD at 68 percent. Respondents who indicated a preference for the SPD (59 percent) and The Left (54 percent) share this assessment somewhat less frequently.

352. Joshua Webb, "Deutsche Zögerlichkeit: Einer Umfrage zufolge sieht eine Mehrheit in Deutschland die Beziehungen zu den USA kritisch. Auch die Außenpolitik der Bundesregierung wird skeptisch gesehen." *ZEIT Online*, November 26, 2019, <https://perma.cc/6ZJS-ZLJN>.

353. Timo Graf, "Einstellungen zum außen- und sicherheitspolitischen Engagement Deutschlands." In *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 70.

354. Renate Köcher, "Ein gefährliches Land: Bis vor kurzem hatte eine Mehrheit der Deutschen eine gute Meinung über Russland und Wladimir Putin. Das ändert sich gerade dramatisch." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 90 (April 16, 2014), <https://perma.cc/654V-KZ35>.

355. Ibid.

356. Ibid.

357. Thomas Petersen, "Die Grenzen der Propaganda: Die Kommentarlage im Internet zum Ukraine-Konflikt spiegelt nicht die Meinung der Bevölkerung zu diesem Thema wider." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 65 (March 18, 2015), <https://perma.cc/5FX3-9ZZL>.

358. With regard to the United States, this is also reflected in the results of the Allensbach study. For example, in December 2019, 62 percent of those surveyed stated that they considered it important "that the European Union becomes a real counterweight to the US in world politics." At the same time, only 33 percent expected the EU to succeed in this. Cf. Thomas Petersen, "Halbherzige Verteidigungsbereitschaft: Eine Mehrheit der Deutschen vertraut nicht mehr unbedingt auf den Schutz durch

Amerika.“ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 295 (December 19, 2019), <https://perma.cc/NVJ9-FW8S>.

359. Josef Janning, "The End of Angst: Germany Is Ready to Lead in Europe." European Council on Foreign Relations, <https://perma.cc/P274-K82P>.

360. Federal Press Office, "Polarisierung von Politik und Gesellschaft".

361. See European Commission, "Eurobarometer Interactive," November 2019, <https://perma.cc/KSZ7-3N4F>.

362. Timo Graf, "Einstellungen zum außen- und sicherheitspolitischen Engagement Deutschlands." In *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 59.

363. *Ibid.*, 49.

364. *Ibid.*, 80.

365. German Marshall Fund, Bertelsmann Stiftung and Institut Montaigne, "Transatlantic Trends 2020: Transatlantic Opinion on Global Challenges before and after Covid-19" (German Marshall Fund; Bertelsmann Stiftung; Institut Montaigne, June 2020), <https://perma.cc/UM4T-NJXH>, 19. Support for US involvement is particularly strong among supporters of the FDP (78 percent) and CDU/CSU (73 percent). The majority of supporters of the Greens (60 percent), SPD (59 percent), and AfD (57 percent) are also in favor. Among supporters of The Left, 42 percent are in favor, but 44 percent are against the continued involvement of the United States in European security and defense.

366. Cf. Timo Graf, "Einstellungen zum außen- und sicherheitspolitischen Engagement Deutschlands." In *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 47–9. Graf sums this up as follows: "The high level of approval for Germany's security policy commitment in all three organizations and the statistically significant correlations between these attitudes can be interpreted as an expression of the principled support among the German population for multilateralism as a guiding principle of foreign and security policy." *Ibid.*, 49.

367. John S. Duffield, "Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism." *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999).

368. Petersen, "Halbherzige Verteidigungsbereitschaft".

369. Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes and Jacob Poushter, "NATO Publics Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis, but

Reluctant to Provide Military Aid" (Pew Research Center, June 10, 2015), <https://perma.cc/5PMP-Z55G>.

370. John Vandiver, "Poll: Willingness to Defend Allies from Attack Low in Some NATO States." *Stars and Stripes*, June 10, 2015, <https://perma.cc/Z3S9-LV9V>.

371. Tobias Bunde, "Das gefährliche Schweigen." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 8, 2017.

372. Cited in Federal Chancellery, "Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel, der litauischen Präsidentin Dalia Grybauskaitė, dem lettischen Ministerpräsidenten Māris Kučinskis und dem estnischen Ministerpräsidenten Jüri Ratas." <https://perma.cc/4377-SAUC>. For more on the necessity for a stronger defense of NATO, see also Angela Merkel, "Statement von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel vor deutschen Soldatinnen und Soldaten der NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group Litauen" (September 14, 2018), <https://perma.cc/M3VJ-XPWE>.

373. Timo Graf and Heiko Biehl, "Einstellungen zu den Auslandseinsätzen der Bundeswehr." In Steinbrecher; Graf; Biehl, *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 177–178.

374. Markus Steinbrecher, Heiko Biehl and Chariklia Rothbart, "Wachsamkeit als Preis von Sicherheit und Freiheit? Einstellungen der deutschen Bevölkerung zur Bündnisverteidigung." In *Freiheit oder Sicherheit?*, edited by Markus Steinbrecher et al., Schriftenreihe des Zentrums für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr 17 (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018), 204.

375. Timo Graf and Heiko Biehl, "Einstellungen zu den Auslandseinsätzen der Bundeswehr." In *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsbild in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 190.

376. *Ibid.*, 185–187.

377. Markus Steinbrecher, "Cold War Revisited? Germany and the Renaissance of Alliance Defense" (Midwest Political Science Association Conference, Chicago, April 2018).

378. Sebastian Nieke, "Public Opinion on Germany's Security Policy: Military Restraint, Critical Events, and the Case for Political Argument." In *The German White Paper 2016 and the Challenge of Crafting Security Strategies*, edited by Gunther Hellmann and Daniel Jacobi, 93.

379. infratest dimap, "ARD-DeutschlandTrend Juli 2020: Repräsentative Studie zur politischen Stimmung im

Auftrag der tages Themen“ (June 2020), <https://perma.cc/PUW9-DQPD>, 16–17.

380. For an overview of the survey results in the form of a table, see Kai Oppermann, "National Role Conceptions, Domestic Constraints and the New 'Normalcy' in German Foreign Policy: The Eurozone Crisis, Libya and Beyond." *German Politics* 21, no. 4 (2012): 512, doi:10.1080/09644008.2012.748268.

381. Robin Alexander and Jacques Schuster, "'Niemand ist vor dem Beifall von der falschen Seite sicher': Wolfgang Schäuble." *Die Welt*, May 24, 2020, <https://perma.cc/K3QK-UYHM>.

382. Angela Merkel, "Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel on the German Presidency of the Council of the EU 2020 to the European Parliament in Brussels on 8 July 2020" (Brussels, July 08, 2020), <https://perma.cc/X7UK-B4NK>.

383. Cited in Daniel Brössler and Stefan Kornelius, "Merks Masterplan: Deutsche EU-Ratspräsidentschaft." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 27, 2020, <https://perma.cc/2ATT-MVM2>.

384. Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, "Politbarometer August 2014" (August 22, 2014), <https://perma.cc/FL7Z-4EQV>.

385. Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, "Politbarometer September I 2014" (September 05, 2014), <https://perma.cc/U2YT-8E7Z>.

386. Cf. Sebastian Nieke and Jan Fuhrmann, "Krisenprävention und Rüstungslieferungen: Von der Notwendigkeit, genau hinzuschauen." PeaceLab, <https://perma.cc/8YE4-2T5V>.

387. Thomas Bagger, "Strategiebildungsprozesse: Chancen und Grenzen." In *Das Weißbuch 2016 und die Herausforderungen von Strategiebildung: Zwischen Notwendigkeit und Möglichkeit*, edited by Daniel Jacobi and Gunther Hellmann, Edition ZfAS (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 113.

388. For more on the public sphere as a "strategic problem" of German foreign and security policy, see Klaus Naumann, "'Einbinden' und 'Mitnehmen' reicht nicht aus: Öffentlichkeit als strategisches Problem der deutschen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik." In Jacobi; Hellmann, *Das Weißbuch 2016 und die Herausforderungen von Strategiebildung*.

389. Bernd Kastner, "Die Bundesregierung hat beim Migrationspakt versagt." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December

10, 2018, <https://perma.cc/9GXF-VALB>.

390. Nora Müller, "Den Schuss nicht gehört." *ZEIT Online*, January 22, 2019, <https://perma.cc/RB92-9GRU>.

391. See in particular Anna Geis, "Warten auf die große sicherheitspolitische Debatte in Deutschland? Jenseits von Defizitdiagnosen, Vermeidungsdiskursen, Erziehungskampagnen." In Jacobi; Hellmann, *Das Weißbuch 2016 und die Herausforderungen von Strategiebildung*.

392. Daniel Jacobi and Gunther Hellmann, "Zwischen Notwendigkeit und Möglichkeit: Herausforderungen sicherheitspolitischer Strategiebildung im 21. Jahrhundert" (Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik, 2018), <https://perma.cc/YZE5-2MTY>, 3.

393. Gauck, "Germany's role in the world: Reflections on responsibility, norms and alliances".

394. Background discussion, August 2020.

395. Rolf Mützenich, "Militärmacht und Friedensstifter." *WeltTrends* 16, no. 58 (2008): 106–107.

396. Gauck, "Germany's role in the world: Reflections on responsibility, norms and alliances".

397. Ibid.

398. Andreas Schockenhoff and Roderich Kiesewetter, "Impulse für Europas Sicherheitspolitik: Die Zeit zum Handeln ist gekommen." *Internationale Politik* 67, no. 5 (2012): 94. See also Roderich Kiesewetter, Andreas Nick and Michael Vietz, "Erklären, was wir außenpolitisch wollen: Zur Rolle des Parlaments in der strategischen Kultur." *Internationale Politik*, no. 4 (2017).

399. Kiesewetter, Nick and Vietz, "Erklären, was wir außenpolitisch wollen," 33.

400. The independent Norwegian Commission on Afghanistan was established in 2014, and in 2016, it presented a detailed evaluation of Norwegian civilian and military engagement in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014. Cf. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence, "A Good Ally: Norway in Afghanistan 2001-2014," Official Norwegian Reports NOU 2016: 8 (2016), <https://perma.cc/T6N2-34GF>.

401. James D. Bindenagel and Philip A. Ackermann, "Deutschland strategiefähiger machen. Ein Sachverständigenrat für strategische Vorausschau ist nötig." *SIRIUS - Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen* 2, no. 3 (2018), doi:10.1515/sirius-2018-3004.

402. Christian Thiels, "Das Land ohne Eigenschaften? Das Weißbuch 2016 und Deutschlands schwieriges Ver-

hältnis zur eigenen sicherheitspolitischen Strategie.“ In Jacobi; Hellmann, *Das Weißbuch 2016 und die Herausforderungen von Strategiebildung*, 180.

403. For a detailed account, see Christian Tuschhoff, "Distanzverbreiterung vs. Gemeinschaftsbildung: Die Rolle von Medien und Denkfabriken bei der Verarbeitung der Rede von Bundespräsident Gauck." *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 8, S1 (2015), doi:10.1007/s12399-014-0449-1.

404. A report by Christoph Bertram and Christiane Hoffmann on the development of the German think tank landscape, commissioned by the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Mercator Foundation, will be published shortly. In the coalition agreement, the grand coalition has agreed to invest in the "expansion of expertise in foreign, security, and development policy" and to strengthen existing institutions — including the Munich Security Conference. Cf. CDU, CSU and SPD, "Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land: Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD, 19. Legislaturperiode" (2018), <https://perma.cc/3PNK-DFAQ>, 146.

405. Thomas de Maizière in an interview with Thorsten Jungholt, Torsten Krauel and Simone Meyer, "Der Abzug ist nicht aus dem Ärmel zu schütteln." February 02, 2012, <https://perma.cc/7T3U-HQRA>.

406. A (now somewhat outdated) overview of university education in the field of International Relations can be found at Andreas Günther, Arne Niemann and Stephan Petzold, "Universitäre Ausbildung und Außenpolitikberatung und in Deutschland." In *Internationale Beziehungen: Aktuelle Forschungsfelder, Wissensorganisation und Berufsorientierung*, edited by Stephan Robel and Alexander Brand (Dresden: TUDpress, 2008). See also the evaluation of the German Council of Science and Humanities in the area of peace and conflict research, which, however, only marginally dealt with foreign and security policy programs.

407. Gauck, "Germany's role in the world: Reflections on responsibility, norms and alliances".

408. Compared to peace and conflict research, security policy research in the narrower sense is still weak in Germany. Fortunately, the strict demarcation between the two fields has weakened. Cf. Wissenschaftsrat, "Empfehlungen zur Weiterentwicklung der Friedens-

und Konfliktforschung" Drs. 7827-19 (July 2019), <https://perma.cc/J8HE-UMEY>, 13–14. The recommendations of the German Council of Science and Humanities also aptly state: "Even in view of the renaissance of thinking on geopolitical and security policy, the fact that peace and conflict research has opened up to security policy research is to be welcomed; in many cases, these two perspectives are already closely linked. However, security policy research, which in the Anglophone world is usually referred to as security studies, is only weakly represented in Germany in international comparison. It is therefore all the more important that peace and conflict research critically informs security policy debates from its specific perspective and identify political spaces for action in conversation with decision-makers in Germany and Europe, but also in international organizations. In this way, the ability to connect to certain international academic discourses can be improved and networking with institutions abroad can be further promoted."

409. Joachim Gauck, "Germany's role in the world: Reflections on responsibility, norms and alliances" (Munich, January 31, 2014), <https://perma.cc/37Q3-DPAH>.

410. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, "Rede der Ministerin an der Universität der Bundeswehr München" (November 11, 2019), <https://perma.cc/G43W-DTZZ>.

411. Hans-Peter Bartels, "'Was haben die Römer je für uns getan?'" In Jacobi; Hellmann, *Das Weißbuch 2016 und die Herausforderungen von Strategiebildung*, 157–159.

412. Omid Nouripour, „Deutsche Außenpolitik: Dahin, wo es wehtut“, Frankfurter Rundschau, 19. Januar 2019, <https://perma.cc/RL5T-DP4Q>.

413. A well-known example is the controversy over the NATO enlargement process in the conservative-liberal coalition of the 1990s. These began with Defense Minister Volker Rühe's speech to the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, in which he held out the prospect of NATO enlargement without — as he later wrote himself — having agreed this initiative with Chancellor Helmut Kohl or Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel. Cf. Volker Rühe, "Opening NATO's Door." In *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security after the Cold War*, edited by Daniel S. Hamilton and Kristina Spohr (Washington, DC: Foreign Policy Institute and Henry A. Kissinger Centre for Global Affairs, 2019), 218. The con-

troverly continued when foreign ministers and defense ministers publicly argued about the order of enlargement of the EU and NATO. Cf. Marne Suttén, Catherine Cousar and Robert Hutchings, "Germany." In *Modern Diplomacy in Practice*, edited by Robert Hutchings and Jeremi Suri (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 71, with further references.

414. Incidentally, there has also been critical reflection by members of the Bundestag on the formation of "pillars" among the departments and corresponding parliamentary committees, specifically with regard to the work of the Bundestag's foreign and security policy committees. See, for example, Roderich Kiesewetter, Andreas Nick and Michael Vietz, "Erklären, was wir außenpolitisch wollen: Zur Rolle des Parlaments in der strategischen Kultur." *Internationale Politik*, no. 4 (2017): 31.

415. Art. 65 Sentence 1 Basic Law.

416. Gunther Hellmann, "Wer macht deutsche Außenpolitik?" In *Deutsche Außenpolitik: Eine Einführung*, edited by Gunther Hellmann (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 47, with further references.

417. Harald Müller, "Diplomatie als Instrument deutscher Außenpolitik." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 66, 28-29 (2016): 27.

418. See, for example, on the disputes in the conservative-liberal coalition, Andreas Rinke, "Kanzleramt enttreißt Westerwelle Europapolitik." *Handelsblatt*, February 2, 2010, <https://perma.cc/7HQ6-AHWC>.

419. Nicolai von Ondarza, "Europas stille Revolution." *Euractiv*, November 2, 2017, <https://perma.cc/3RE9-FQ7L>.

420. Karlheinz Nclauß, *Kanzlerdemokratie: Regierungsführung von Konrad Adenauer bis Angela Merkel*, 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2015).

421. Art. 65 Sentence 2 Basic Law.

422. Foreign Service Act, §1(2).

423. Art. 65 Sentence 3 Basic Law.

424. Christoph Weller, "Bundesministerien." In *Handbuch zur deutschen Außenpolitik*, edited by Siegmund Schmidt, Gunther Hellmann and Reinhard Wolf (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007), 211.

425. *Ibid.*

426. Walter Eberlei and Christoph Weller, "Deutsche Ministerien als Akteure von Global Governance: Eine

Bestandsaufnahme der auswärtigen Beziehungen der Bundesministerien," INEF-Report 51 (2001), <https://perma.cc/Q4MC-KA8J>.

427. Christoph Weller, "Bundesministerien" In *Handbuch zur deutschen Außenpolitik*, 210.

428. "The Federal Foreign Office is supporting the delegation headed by the Federal Environment Ministry at the climate negotiations of the United Nations." Federal Foreign Office, "Climate Change – a Foreign Policy Challenge." <https://perma.cc/CN4R-GQLS>.

429. Thomas Bagger, "Netzwerkpolitik: In einer veränderten Welt wachsen dem Auswärtigen Dienst neue Rollen zu." *Internationale Politik*, no. 1 (2013): 48.

430. Jörg Faust and Dirk Messner, "Probleme globaler Entwicklung und die ministerielle Organisation der Entwicklungspolitik." *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 5, no. 2 (2012): 174, doi:10.1007/s12399-012-0250-y.

431. Sven Herpig and Rebecca Beigel, "Akteure und Zuständigkeiten in der deutschen Cybersicherheitspolitik," 4th ed. (Stiftung Neue Verantwortung, March 2020), <https://perma.cc/V29D-CD8Z>.

432. Cf. for an overview Mari Kert-Saint Aubyn, "EU Policy on Fighting Hybrid Threats" (NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence), <https://perma.cc/QDE4-F6LB>.

433. Kai Zähle, "Der Bundessicherheitsrat." *Der Staat* 44, no. 3 (2005): 472.

434. Wissenschaftliche Dienste des Deutschen Bundestags, "Der Bundessicherheitsrat," Aktueller Begriff 22 (May 9, 2008), <https://perma.cc/98FW-8GBU>.

435. Social Democratic Party of Germany and Alliance 90/The Greens, "Aufbruch und Erneuerung - Deutschlands Weg ins 21. Jahrhundert: Koalitionsvereinbarung zwischen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands und Bündnis 90/Die GRÜNEN" (October 20, 1998), <https://perma.cc/5USG-SVWW>, 46.

436. Chancellor Schröder "preferred this informal body because it could react quickly and flexibly to newer developments, e.g., in connection with the Iraq war; in addition, it offered a better guarantee of secrecy. The 'victim' of this 'Security Cabinet' was the Federal Security Council, whose competencies were largely reduced to applications for arms exports." Udo Kempf, "Schröder, Gerhard." In *Kanzler und Minister 1998-2005: Biograf-*

isches Lexikon der deutschen Bundesregierungen, edited by Udo Kempf and Hans-Georg Merz (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008), 325.

437. Federal Ministry of Defense, "White Paper 2006 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr" (2006), <https://perma.cc/7GD8-9SAH>.

438. Federal Government, "White Paper 2016 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr" (2016), <https://perma.cc/A8KV-NSWM>.

439. Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, Renata Alt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP*, Drucksache (Berlin, 2019), 19/13251, <https://perma.cc/PM33-XT3E>.

440. Federal Foreign Office, Federal Ministry of Defense and Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Für eine kohärente Politik der Bundesregierung gegenüber fragilen Staaten: Ressortübergreifende Leitlinien" (August 2012), <https://perma.cc/LRP9-EH8L>.

441. Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, Renata Alt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP*, Drucksache (Berlin, 2019), 19/13251, <https://perma.cc/PM33-XT3E>, 10.

442. Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, Renata Alt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP*, Drucksache (Berlin, 2019), 19/13251, <https://perma.cc/PM33-XT3E>, 9.

443. Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, Renata Alt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP*, Drucksache (Berlin, 2019), 19/13251, <https://perma.cc/PM33-XT3E>, 10.

444. The involved departments are the Chancellery, the Federal Foreign Office, and the Federal Ministries for Defense, the Interior, and Development and Cooperation. Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, Renata Alt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP*, Drucksache (Berlin, 2019), 19/13251, <https://perma.cc/PM33-XT3E>.

445. Deutscher Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Alexander Graf*

Lambsdorff, Grigorios Aggelidis, Renata Alt, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der FDP, Drucksache (Berlin, 2019), 19/8058, <https://perma.cc/C49U-GGA3>.

446. Dietmar Neuerer, "Neues Krisen-Lagezentrum soll Analysen für das Kanzleramt erstellen." *Handelsblatt*, June 3, 2020, <https://perma.cc/8F6R-KQFX>.

447. Background talks, August 2020.

448. Gerhard Conrad, "Warum wir einen Nationalen Sicherheitsrat brauchen." *Die Welt*, November 26, 2019, <https://perma.cc/CVT9-ZVY8>.

449. Foreign Office, "Federal Foreign Office Climate Diplomacy Report" (December 2019), <https://perma.cc/S3Z5-WFQM>.

450. Heiko Maas, "Speech by Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on climate change and security at the UN Security Council (video conference)" (July 24, 2020), <https://perma.cc/RKW5-9SGN>.

451. Alliance 90/The Greens, "Veränderung schafft Halt: Grundsatzprogrammwurf" (August 28, 2020), <https://perma.cc/4A7X-8N2X>, 53.

452. Federal Government, "Regierungshandeln in Zeiten von Covid19." Pressemitteilung, April 9, 2020, <https://perma.cc/V4J9-RGHT>; Gerhard Conrad, "Erhöhte Resilienz und Handlungsfähigkeit durch permanente ressortübergreifende Entscheidungsstrukturen?" *GSZ - Zeitschrift für das Gesamte Sicherheitsrecht* 3, no. 3 (2020).

453. Christian Thiels, "Ein Nationaler Sicherheitsberater - nur Zeremonienmeister oder Schlüsselfigur für eine ganzheitliche Sicherheitspolitik?" (PeaceLab-Blog, September 29, 2016), <https://perma.cc/9JB3-PCLF>.

454. Smith, "German Foreign Policy is Stuck in Neutral."

455. Julianne Smith, "A Question of Statecraft" (Berlin Policy Journal, January 3, 2019), <https://perma.cc/D3GX-KBKK>.

456. Background talks, June 2020.

457. UK Government, "Joint Intelligence Organisation".

458. Background talks, June 2020; Julianne Smith, "Eine Frage der Staatskunst: Deutschland sollte erneut über einen Nationalen Sicherheitsrat nachdenken." *Internationale Politik*, no. 1 (2019).

459. Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, "Revisiting the UK's National Security Strategy: The National Security Capability Review and the Modernising Defence Programme: Fourth Report of Session 2017-19"

(House of Commons; House of Lords, July 21, 2019), <https://perma.cc/JPY6-MDUR>, 26.

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List of Abbreviations

AA	Federal Foreign Office
BAKS	Federal Academy for Security Policy
BICC	Bonn International Center for Conversion
BMAS	Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education and Research
BMEL	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture
BMF	Federal Ministry of Finance
BMFSFJ	Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth
BMG	Federal Ministry of Health
BMI	Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community
BMJV	Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection
BMU	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
BMVg	Federal Ministry of Defense
BMVI	Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure
BMWi	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BSH	Academic Association for Security Studies
BSR	Federal Security Council
CARD	EU Coordinated Annual Review on Defence
CFSP	EU Common Foreign and Security Policy
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DEG	Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft
DGAP	German Council on Foreign Relations
DIE	German Development Institute
ECFR	European Council on Foreign Relations
eFP	enhanced Forward Presence
EU	European Union
EU INTCEN	EU Intelligence Analysis Centre
EUTM	European Training Mission in Mali
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIGA	German Institute for Global and Area Studies
GMF	German Marshall Fund
GNI	Gross national income
GSP	Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik
IISS	The International Institute for Strategic Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IS	So-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
IW	German Economic Institute
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
KFOR	Kosovo Force

KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
MERICS	Mercator Institute for China Studies
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MSC	Munich Security Conference
MSR	Munich Security Report
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PESCO	EU Permanent Structured Cooperation
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Institute
SWIFT	Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication
SWP	German Institute for International and Security Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
VJTF	NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZMSBw	Center for Military History and Social Sciences of the Bundeswehr
ZOIS	Centre for East European and International Studies



Team

Lead Author



Dr. Tobias Bunde is Director of Research & Policy at the Munich Security Conference and Postdoctoral Researcher at the Centre for International Security at the Hertie School in Berlin.

Managing Editor



Laura Hartmann is a Senior Publications Manager at the Munich Security Conference.

Project Assistance



Franziska Stärk is a Junior Policy Advisor at the Munich Security Conference.

The report team

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Project Team



Randolf Carr is a Policy Advisor at the Munich Security Conference.



Christoph Erber is a Program Manager at the Munich Security Conference.



Julia Hammelehle is a Junior Policy Advisor at the Munich Security Conference.



Juliane Kabus is a Policy Advisor at the Munich Security Conference.

Editorial Board



Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger is Chairman of the Munich Security Conference.



Ambassador Boris Ruge is Vice-Chairman of the Munich Security Conference.



Dr. Benedikt Franke is Chief Executive Officer of the Munich Security Conference.

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Editorial Board

Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, Ambassador Boris Ruge, Dr. Benedikt Franke

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Stiftung Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz gGmbH

Karolinenplatz 3

80333 Munich

www.securityconference.org

research@securityconference.org

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The world is witnessing a *Zeitenwende*, the turn of an era and the beginning of a new, more dangerous one. For Germany, which had settled into the liberal international order like hardly any other country, it represents a particularly substantive challenge. Foreign policy “certainties” have become fragile. Although many in Germany are beginning to recognize the enormous challenges, Berlin is struggling to make the necessary adjustments. The watchword is *Wendezeiten*, we need to embrace change. Only by doing so can the European Union - and with it Germany - become capable of acting in an increasingly rough security environment.