MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

READER

Contributions of leading foreign policy makers and journalists about the global security situation. February 2018
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Munich Security Conference
Over the past five decades, the Munich Security Conference (MSC) has become the major global forum for the discussion of security policy. Each February it brings together more than 450 senior decision-makers from around the world to engage in an intensive debate on current and future security challenges. Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger has been chairman of the Munich Security Conference since 2008.

Science Match Future Security
The Science Match Future Security brings together the brightest minds and their analysis on the future of security – on the eve of the Munich Security Conference. In five-minute talks problem-solving approaches to the worldwide crises and their resolutions are presented. Hans-Wilhelm Dünn and Ulrike Franke were speaker at the Science Match.
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Europe’s armed forces are in a dire state. European defense capabilities have declined for a combination of reasons: a drop in spending since the mid-1990s, largely uncoordinated cuts in national defense budgets, a lack of alignment when decommissioning weapons systems, and an increase in missions abroad. In many countries, up to half of military equipment – from helicopters to planes – is unavailable at any one time. In October, the fact that none of Germany’s six submarines was available made headlines.

Europe’s fragmented approach to defense exacerbates the situation: all too often, countries involved in European defense projects put the interests of their national industries ahead of European capability building, military cooperation, and interoperability. In light of the very serious security challenges in Europe’s vicinity and uncertainty about the United States’ future role in European security, this situation is unacceptable.

Recently, Europe’s governments have taken some first steps to reduce these capability gaps, including spending more on defense. At the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, all NATO member states committed to increasing defense spending to
2 percent of GDP by 2024. Many countries, albeit not all, seem to be on track to meet this goal.

But spending more is, at best, only part of the answer. The most important question is how to spend the additional funds. A recent study by the Munich Security Conference, McKinsey & Company and the Hertie School of Governance provides answers. The report, published on November 30, 2017, calculates how extensive the available funds might be and analyzes how Europe might best use them to establish a more effective and efficient security and defense policy.

First, Europe must prioritize investments into equipment, building capabilities in critical areas like air-to-air refueling and air defense. Furthermore, over the coming years Europe must close an investment gap of USD 120 to 140 billion in interconnectedness and digitization. The resulting improvements will enable existing platforms to communicate with one another, allow forces to process and analyze data jointly, and provide effective cyberforces to defend the interconnected forces. The ability to make these investments depends on Europeans increasing the equipment share of their defense budgets beyond the 20 percent recommended by NATO and moving towards 30 percent instead.

Second, Europeans should invest in system availability. Making more equipment available is the fastest and most cost-effective way to increase military capabilities in the short term. Adding just one additional percentage point of availability across Europe’s platforms equals procurement spending in the range of USD 10 billion. Massive amounts of money could be freed up through better maintenance systems. Given that maintenance costs are 30 to 70 percent of the lifecycle costs of any platform, joint maintenance needs to be at the heart of any future European defense collaboration – it will keep costs down and availability up.

Third, Europeans must move towards joint planning and procurement. Our team’s research shows that joint European defense procurement can deliver savings of 30 percent on equipment investment. In addition, joint procurement would facilitate interoperability, joint maintenance, and joint training. In 2016, the different types of major weapons systems in Europe outnumbered those in the US six times over. As a result, procurement, maintenance and training are very expensive. We must harmonize our requirements.

Fourth, there is no way around further consolidation of the European defense industry. In fact, consolidating suppliers is a precondition to fostering European cooperation and improving training, maintenance, and procurement – and increasing the competitiveness of Europe’s defense
industry. Governments will need to make consistent, systematic efforts and agree on a clear framework. Without such a top-down approach, each country will tend to continue favoring its own defense contractors at the expense of interoperability and Europe’s common security.

Finally, Europe should triple its budget for defense research and development to push innovation. These efforts should include finding new ways of working with startups and other disruptive players who don’t routinely operate in the field of defense. Europe might draw inspiration from the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). DARPA’s investments have often led to major innovations for both civil and military use.

Some important steps have been taken over the last year, not least the European Defence Action Plan and the activation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework for EU defense policy.

Today’s rising defense budgets offer a great opportunity to take the necessary steps to build forces that are more efficient and more effective: more European, more connected, and more capable. At the same time, repeating the mistakes of the past and missing this unique opportunity to go beyond “more of the same” could cement the current state of European defense for decades to come.

February 2018
Hello, Problems! Here are Global Solutions.

The Global Solutions Initiative (GSI) provides a new, permanent, supportive advisory structure to G20 and G7. Independent of the official processes, yet firmly connected with official engagement groups and working groups, the GSI delivers independent, long-term oriented Policy Briefs for world leaders. Behind this initiative is a network of world-class think tanks with excellent contacts to policymakers in their respective countries (G20/G7).

On 28/29 May 2018, the Global Solutions Summit will bring together think tanks from around the world, visionary business leaders, future-oriented politicians and constructive NGOs with only one aim: to find solutions for global challenges.

More information: www.global-solutions.international
Pillars for international cyber security

With the digital transformation advancing, holistic approaches for cyber security in business and politics are inevitable. That is because cyber criminals will become more professional and sophisticated in their attacks and eventually also take advantage of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain or quantum computing.

Hans-Wilhelm Dünn is founding member and General Secretary of the Cyber-Security Council Germany.

Cyber security as a pan-societal task

For companies and authorities, these developments require cyber security to be communicated as a pan-societal, and not just as a technical-operational task. Digitisation affects all departments no matter if responsible for personnel, finances or legal affairs, meaning that all of them have to be integrated into the internal cyber security architecture. Furthermore, although there is an exchange on cyber security issues on management levels, it often lacks definite will for more investment in implementation of IT security measures. These are often considered a mere expense factor, but their added value becomes obvious when compared to expenses of a successful cyber attack. Even more, cyber security is a huge competitive advantage, as it drives business and enables growth.

Cooperation between industry and educational bodies to tackle IT skills shortage

Besides lacking will for stronger investments, it is the IT skills gap which hinders the effective implementation of IT security measures. The ongoing fight for talents has to be addressed by state and economy with joint efforts. It needs new educational initiatives and targeted learning
modules, designed by educational institutes in cooperation with industry. Simultaneously, a long-term solution is the teaching of IT skills starting in elementary and secondary schools.

**Network of heads**

At the latest last year’s ransomware epidemics WannaCry and NotPetya demonstrated that cyber security is an international and demands global solutions. The fight against cyber crime, cyber terrorism and cyber espionage can only be managed successfully, when international, voluntary networks like the Cyber-Security Council Germany as well as persisting cooperation with actors from state, research and industry are brought together. Here, it is not about the IT network, but about the network of heads.

Most importantly, however, is to actually pursue the realisation of cyber security in companies, authorities and on the international level. Demands for cyber security will only be effective, if they are finally implemented.
Drones – hope, hype, hysteria

A paradox surrounds drones. On the one hand, drones are regularly classified as “emerging technology”, together with cyber, artificial intelligence, and 3D-printing. They appear novel and inspire commentators to muse about ‘Terminator wars’. On the other hand, the New York Times noted in 1946: “Drones are not new”. Both these assessments bear some truth. The first mass-produced unmanned plane in history, the 3m long ‘Dennymite’, was a target drone which was used from 1940 onwards by the US Army. The Israeli military was highly successful in employing drones to detect enemy radars in the 1982 Lebanon War, and the Soviet Union operated drones able to fly at Mach 2.5 throughout the Cold War. And yet, drones only really took off around the turn of the millennium. The now-iconic US ‘Predator’ emerged in the late 1990s, and was armed in 2001. Most European countries acquired the drones they use today in the mid-2000s. Today, at least 90 countries around the world have some military drone capability.

This development has an interesting parallel to mobile phones. The first mobile phones existed already back in the 1970s. Smart phones, however, appeared only in the early 2000s, and the iPhone began its global conquest in 2007. This temporal parallel is not an accident. Contrary to other military technologies such as nuclear weapons, drones’ development did not depend on one technological breakthrough. Rather, drones came about as the result of a series of technological improvements: smaller and lighter sensors, including
cameras, smaller data storage and better data links, and GPS technology—exactly the same technologies that made smartphones possible.

Much like the iPhone, the modern military drone is now in use all over the world. A minimum of 90 countries have military drones. For the moment, these are mostly smaller reconnaissance systems. 27 states are estimated to have “advanced” drones: UAVs that can remain in the air for at least twenty hours, operate at an altitude of at least 5000m, and have a maximum take-off weight of at least 600kg. At least 11 countries have armed drones, including China, Israel, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, US, UK, Turkey, and many more are pursuing their acquisition.

Despite this global use, the international attention is firmly placed on one specific use of drones: the use of armed drones for targeted killings outside official battlespaces. The US began this tactic in November 2002, killing an al-Qaeda operative in Yemen. Since then, the US has killed between 2400 and 4000 people in Pakistan alone, all of which by drone strike. This highly controversial tactic has tainted the debate on drones, and their acquisition processes in many countries.

Other countries following the US precedent remains a major concern. However, after years during which drones were an exclusively military technology, the civilian drone sector is now taking off, and set to overtake the military sector. Drones scare away poachers in African National Parks, inspect pipelines in Siberia, and a multitude of delivery services are waiting in the starting blocks. Hobbyist drones have become a staple Christmas gift. Civilian drones have begun to rival military-grade equipment. Which is why non-state actors have discovered the usefulness of drones for them. While there have been some precedents of non-state groups using drones – Hezbollah sent a drone over Israeli territory already in 2006 – over the last year, this practice has grown exponentially. In some areas of Iraq and Syria, military forces now encounter non-state drones several times a day. Initially only used to spy on enemy forces, groups such as Daesh quickly moved to arm their drones, fitting them with explosives and grenades. Although these systems are a far cry from military systems such as the US Reaper, able to carry a payload of several ‘Hellfire missiles’ and 250kg bombs, these drones have quickly evolved into a real danger for troops.

This threat, combined with a growing concern over terrorist drone use against civilian targets – against commercial airliners or with drones flying explosives into sport stadiums – have led to frantic work on anti-drone technology. Much like suicide bombers, drones carrying explosives can be sent to where they...
are likely to cause the biggest level of destruction, without being deterred by barriers. Which also makes them the perfect assassination tool. So far, no anti-drone solution has squared the circle of being able to (1) detect the drone, which, as it flies low and slowly closely resembles a bird on a radar, (2) down it in a way safe for people nearby, and (3) do this at acceptable prices. For the moment, most countries have opted for over-kill when detecting a drone. In May 2016, the North American Aerospace Defense Command dispatched two CF-18 fighter jets when a drone was spotted near Ottawa airport in Canada. Israel closed its entire airspace in April 2013 when a Hezbollah drone was detected, and shot it down with F-16 fighter jets.

Well over a billion iPhones have been sold globally. Drones are not quite at that level yet, but in any future conflict, we can expect drones to play some role – for ISR, kinetic strikes, transportation and more.
HACKERS BREAK THROUGH BORDERS.
WE MAKE THEM HIT THE WALL.

#MUNICHSECURITYCONFERENCE

DIGITAL FORCES PROJECT

Bundeswehr
Justine Powell, CEO

Mrs. Justine Powell is currently the CEO of Handelsblatt Global in Germany. She was appointed to the role in April 2017. Justine is an executive with 20 years’ experience in technology, media and telecoms. Before her position at Handelsblatt Global, Mrs. Powell was the Chief Commercial Officer at IROKO, a start-up film website funded by Vivendi. Prior to this role she held senior management positions at the Associated Press, CNBC and BBC. She started her career as a journalist before moving into commercial roles. Mrs. Powell lives with her husband and two children in Berlin.

Andreas Kluth, Editor-in-Chief

Mr. Kluth became editor-in-chief of Handelsblatt Global in March 2017. Before his position at Handelsblatt Global Mr. Kluth was Correspondent for The Economist from 1997 to 2017. During that time he was Berlin Bureau Chief and Germany Correspondent for nearly five years. He was previously the US West Coast Correspondent, covering politics, society and economy in California and the western states. Before this, he covered technology from Silicon Valley, Asian business from Hong Kong, and finance from London. Andreas is the author of Hannibal and Me: What History’s Greatest Military Strategist Can Teach Us About Success and Failure. Mr. Kluth lives with his wife and three children in Berlin.
An ever closer military union
Ursula von der Leyen

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An ever closer military union

Faced with terror and an “America first“ president in Washington, the European Union is building up its own battle forces and establishing a unified arms policy, writes Germany‘s Defense Minister.

Ursula von der Leyen is Germany’s minister of defense, previously serving as labor minister.

What’s next for Europe? Only a few months ago, pessimists dominated the discussion. After the British had bid farewell to the European Union last year by voting for Brexit and Donald Trump won the US presidency, right-wing populists used anti-European tirades to try to win votes in several member states. But then, with the election of pro-European French President Emmanuel Macron, the mood changed. Now many are looking to Germany. No matter what Germany’s next federal government looks like, it has a great opportunity to join forces with France and make decisive strides forward for Europe. This is especially true when it comes to policies related to peace and security.

Already over the last few years, there has been a growing sense among Europeans that we need to become more capable and efficient when it comes to defense. Tensions in our neighborhood, the crises in Ukraine and in North Africa, the civil war in Syria and, most of all, the increase in Islamist terrorist attacks have clearly heightened the need for security in our countries.

We often waste resources in Europe because we duplicate operations. It usually takes a very long time for us until we act in concert or at least in agreement with one another. But speed is important, especially in crisis situations. What is often lacking is less a common will but rather a tried and tested framework. This became clear, for example, when...
Mali, driven by the chaos in Libya, was threatened by collapse due to an explosive mix of Islamist terror, violent separatism and crime. It took Europe several months to assemble a training mission for the new Malian army, and it was only thanks to the French that the worst was averted. In such situations, Europe needs to become faster.

It is a question of self-reliance, which does not distance us from the Americans, but makes us a more relevant partner.

Many member states were long skeptical about whether Europe, in addition to NATO, truly needs an independent defense policy and military options for action. This has changed fundamentally. It is not without a reason that the framework we are operating within today was established in the 2007 Lisbon Treaty in the form of the “Permanent Structured Cooperation,” or PESCO. But, as so often, the willingness to make the great leap and dare to change only emerged in response to internal and external pressure: an “America first” president in Washington, the pressure to consolidate in many European countries caused by the financial and euro crises, and instability stretching from North Africa across the Middle East to Ukraine. Now is the right time to establish a European defense union.

We presented the first concrete proposals together with France about a year ago, and Italy and Spain quickly voiced their support. In the spring, as a first milestone, we created the joint European command center for education and training missions. Now, the time has come to make decisions: In the coming weeks, EU countries will forge the rough framework of PESCO. We are writing the rules for access and participation. In doing so, we are for the first time making commitments in Europe to jointly equip ourselves, to invest smartly, to vote on the procurement of important weapons systems and, above all, to be available and ready for joint missions in case of a crisis.

In order to be concrete, we are also starting to define initial projects: joint troops that can be deployed quickly in times of crisis, better joint cyber defense, or a military logistics network that spans Europe. We are keeping the door open for all those who are truly serious about wanting to advance the European Defense Union. The number of supporters has grown rapidly since the German-French initiative was launched. In all likelihood, around 20 member states will participate in the end. They all want more than just loose, on-call cooperation, and are instead committing themselves to ambitious goals.

We can also make many aspects of the military sector in Europe much more efficient. Instead of paying for 20 types of fighter aircraft with 20 different training courses for pilots,
20 lines of production along with the associated repair and logistics chains throughout Europe, we will in the future be able to employ a uniform European combat aircraft of the next generation. When today, in a European mission to Africa, three different helicopters are deployed, this means three times the spare parts, as well as a specialized mechanics and maintenance infrastructure.

But a functioning European Defense Union, in which everyone has the same equipment, does not come at zero cost. Joint solutions require upfront investments – and from Germany, the willingness to move ahead in a European way. But we should not shy away from the investments, because in the long run they lead to enormous synergies and economies of scale as well as medium-term savings for each individual country.

Sharing costs for development and maintenance does not only increase opportunities for the large member states. Systems operating in a network also open doors for smaller partner countries. For example, nations that do not want to pay for their own helicopter units can provide engineers or rescue crews for a joint helicopter unit. It is also a matter of technological independence, since investing together in modern systems means securing knowledge for our continent.

All these objectives are served by a European Defense Fund, to which the individual countries and the European Commission contribute. We Europeans are gaining strategic autonomy. It is a question of self-reliance, which does not distance us from the Americans, but makes us a more relevant partner. The European voice is given more weight in matters of peace and security.

The momentum for the big leap is now here: A new pro-European government in Germany, the clear, Europe-oriented course of French President Macron, but most of all, the citizens across Europe who want more security. Great politics means courageously taking advantage of the moment. Let’s make the Defense Union the next success story of our great continent.
Why Germany has lost faith in America

Even chancellor Angela Merkel, a life-long admirer of America, no longer recognizes the country of President Donald Trump.

Two German chancellors have been awarded America’s highest civilian honor, the presidential medal of freedom. The first was Helmut Kohl, honored in 1999 for reunifying a democratic Germany bound to Europe and the United States through the EU, NATO and the dense transatlantic cobwebs of trade, investment and friendship. The second was Angela Merkel.

During her ceremony in the White House Rose Garden in 2011, Ms. Merkel, who spent half her life in communist East Germany, spoke emotionally about growing up with a dream of freedom generally, and specifically “the freedom to travel to the United States.” America always supported liberty, she said, and “it is to this resolve that we Germans owe the reunification of our country in peace and freedom.”

Contrast those words with her remarks in a Bavarian beer tent this week, following a disastrous visit to Europe by Donald Trump. “The times in which we can fully rely on others are partially coming to an end, I’ve experienced that in the past few days,” Ms. Merkel told the audience, who cheered in support. Though she diplomatically avoiding mentioning America or Mr. Trump explicitly, nobody was left in any doubt that Germany had in effect declared its emancipation from its post-war overlord, role model and protector.

That message echoed from the beer tent across Europe and to Amer-
ica, for it may herald a historic shift. Through her mentor Helmut Kohl, Ms. Merkel traces her political lineage as a Christian Democrat back to Germany’s first postwar chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. A staunch Catholic and Rhinelander who grew up closer to France than Prussian Berlin, Mr. Adenauer was determined to rid his country of a nationalist tradition that viewed Germany as exceptional, anchored in neither the West nor the East, and destined to go it alone. Adenauer blamed that mentality for two world wars that had left Europe and Germany in rubble.

“We Europeans have to take our fate into our own hands.”

Adenauer’s answer was “Westbindung”, binding the Federal Republic unequivocally into the West. One layer of this integration was transatlantic, through NATO and the Bretton Woods System. Another layer was European, through reconciliation and friendship with France and the process of European integration. So staunch was Adenauer in giving primacy to unity with the western Allies (America, Britain and France), even at the apparent expense of reunification, that his opponents on the center left and far right questioned his patriotism and attacked him for being a “chancellor of the Allies.”

All of Adenauer’s successors adhered to Westbindung. Willy Brandt, the first Social Democrat to become chancellor, supplemented it with a so-called “Ostpolitik”, striving for detente and rapprochement with the eastern countries behind the Iron Curtain. But no German government questioned American troops stationed in Germany, and the basic dynamic of American leadership and German loyalty.

The West German population was torn, however. Some Germans adored America, as personified by the photogenic John F. Kennedy when he toured the besieged West Berlin in 1963, telling rapturous throngs: “Ich bin ein Berliner.” Other Germans became anti-American, especially on the (anti-capitalist) left and the far right. Under the mantle of pacifism, hundreds of thousands of Germans took to the streets in the 1980s to protest the deployment of new American nuclear weapons intended to deter Soviet aggression. Culturally, too, West Germany was riven. American pop music, movies and clothes were all the rage. But many Germans looked down on American culture as “superficial,” and, at least initially, saw their stereotype confirmed when an actor wearing cowboy hats became US president in 1981.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, however, Germans were quickly reminded of the value of America’s friendship. Of the four wartime Allies, only American under George H.W. Bush immediately favored German reunification, and persuaded Britain, France and the Soviet Union to
agree to it. But the eastern Germans who joined the Federal Republic had different ideas about America. After decades of communist propaganda, many felt closer to Russia and wary of America. Today the two parties that are most anti-American, the ex-communist The Left and the far-right Alternative for Germany, are strongest in eastern Germany.

The first shift away from the tight transatlantic relationship occurred in 2003 under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, a center-left Social Democrat. Mr. Schröder refused to back the US-led coalition in Iraq, resulting in a deep rift with the administration of George W. Bush. Ms. Merkel, then leading the opposition, believed Mr. Schröder had isolated Germany in his rush to oppose US policy.

As the longest-serving Western leader, Angela Merkel may decide that America has metamorphosed from partner and protector to adversary and threat.

As chancellor, Ms. Merkel had her own run-ins with Washington. Two years after she received the medal of freedom, Ms. Merkel’s faith in America as a guardian of liberty was tested when a former US intelligence agent named Edward Snowden revealed that the National Security Agency was spying on allies, and had even tapped Ms. Merkel’s cell phone. The chancellor was reportedly livid, comparing the NSA to the Stasi, the East German secret police. But Ms. Merkel always returned to her default position: that America and Germany had to remain close partners to keep the world free, open and safe.

The election of Donald Trump on a nationalist, America-first platform shook that assumption. Since his inauguration, Ms. Merkel’s doubts have only grown. Mr. Trump has repeatedly criticized Germany for its trade surplus. He has so far declined to back NATO’s mutual-defense clause. And he praised Britain’s decision to leave the EU, predicting that other countries will follow. In all these ways, Mr. Trump is undermining Germany’s national interests and breaking with decades of US foreign policy.

These tensions erupted during his recent visit and will emerge again when the leaders of the G20 countries meet in Hamburg in July. As the chair of that gathering this year and the longest-serving Western leader, Angela Merkel may decide that America has metamorphosed from partner and protector to adversary and threat.

May 2017
Why Germany views France as its most important partner

Enemies for centuries, France and Germany have become closest friends in the past six decades. But German strength and French weakness are now straining this Franco-German partnership.

Jean-Michel Hauteville is an editor at Handelsblatt Global with past experience in European industry and media.

For centuries, Germans kept a “watch on the Rhine” toward what they used to call their “hereditary enemy,” France. But in recent weeks, as France decided in two rounds of voting who its next president would be, the Germans looked across the Rhine with entirely different emotions. For France is today Germany’s closest partner in Europe and the world. This fact is itself a testament to the success of European integration. And yet this Franco-German “tandem,” as it has been called, is at risk of stalling and falling, perhaps pulling the EU down with it. That is why Germans care almost as intensely about this French election as about their own in September.

When Charlemagne was crowned emperor in the year 800, his empire covered almost the same geographic area as the six founding members of the European Economic Community did when they signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957. But in the Middle Ages, Charlemagne’s western and eastern lands went their separate ways and became rivals. It was Napoleon who overran and abolished the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in 1806, thus sparking German Nationalism largely as a reaction against French aggression. German unification in 1871 was achieved with a war and victory over France. France then exacted a revenge of
sorts by winning World War I, before being humiliated again by Germany in 1940. In 1945 France was officially among the victors, and Germany lay destroyed.

That is why a permanent peace between these two powers lay at the heart of the European idea that evolved into today’s EU. Both countries wanted to build a new relationship based on trust. But from the start this friendship was an unequal one, based on different interests. France, though a permanent member of the UN Security Council, was afraid of losing political clout in a Cold-War world dominated by America and the Soviet Union. It was also afraid of West Germany’s resurging economy. West Germany wanted to be readmitted into the community of Western nations and was prepared to cede political influence for that goal.

These converging interests led to the Élysée treaty, signed in 1963 by Konrad Adenauer, then chancellor, and Charles de Gaulle, the French president. It still symbolizes one of the strongest friendships between nations in history. And yet the implicit terms of the deal were already evident in the iconography of the events. When Adenauer and de Gaulle met in Reims cathedral for a mass of reconciliation, de Gaulle’s chair was slightly taller than Adenauer’s. The Germans thus accepted that the French should lead politically even if the Germans would lead economically. Several later German chancellors would follow Adenauer’s advice to bow three times to the French tricolor before once nodding to Germany’s black, red and gold.

In the following decades, the European project advanced whenever France and Germany could agree on a joint position, thus bringing other member states in line. By working together, for example, Helmut Schmidt und Valéry Giscard d’Estaing launched a European currency regime in the 1970s. And yet the relationship was never easy. France followed one tradition in economics, based on state intervention. West Germany followed another, based on its ideal of a “social market economy.” Another crisis came in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall. With reunification looming, France once again worried about German hegemony and “a German Europe.”

To rescue the partnership, Helmut Kohl renewed Germany’s commitment to France and Europe, which culminated in the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992 and a common currency, the euro. But the relationship kept fluctuating. Gerhard Schröder and Jacques Chirac couldn’t stand each other. By contrast, Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy at times got along so well that the pair was called “Merkozy.” Under François Hollande, there were tensions again. France wanted to respond to the euro crisis with
public investment and some form of debt mutualization (such as “euro bonds”). Germany insisted on fiscal discipline (dubbed “austerity” by others) and structural reforms. But outwardly the two countries still present a common front when it matters. During the Ukraine crisis in 2014, Ms. Merkel and Mr. Hollande together went to Minsk to broker an agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

The biggest problem today is that the pretense that France and Germany, as dual leaders of the EU, are roughly balanced in power is no longer tenable. Both German strength and French weakness have become too obvious. This causes renewed fear in France of a dominant Germany, which candidates on both the left and the right try to exploit. In Germany the fear is that French weakness could leave Germany alone in shouldering the EU’s problems, and perhaps even isolated among member states.
From Iran to North Korea, German policymakers are at a loss

Postwar German foreign policy is based on cooperation, rules and trust, not power, interest and threat. But with crises from Iran to North Korea likely to be play out the old-fashioned way, that approach looks naive, says a foreign-policy expert.

Josef Janning is a German political scientist and international relations specialist.

Looking at the world today, German policymakers keenly, and proudly, feel their European-ness. In European affairs, such instincts may rank behind Berlin’s national interests and suspicions about hidden agendas in Brussels, Paris or Rome. But on the global stage, German leaders see themselves and their European peers as the last to stand for multilateralism, a rules-based order and a notion of sovereignty that is tamed by treaties and international organizations. Europe, in this view, is about positive-sum thinking in a zero-sum world.

But the Germans are also plagued by self-doubt – doubt about their ability to uphold regimes that have been conducive to European preferences and policy styles. In tomorrow’s world, they worry, their skillfully crafted tower of Brussels may be nothing but a theme-park, a destination for political tourists eager to gaze at a fantasy of politics without hard power and national interests.

The current crises over Iran and North Korea illustrate this European and German dilemma. Both crises cast doubt on European presumptions. Both could be decided by fire and fury, rather than the usual European gloss of political incentives and economic opportunities.

Germans, like most of their European partners, have no clue what to do.
Since the 1990s, the Germans along with the French and the British, and supported by the small foreign-policy machinery of Brussels – have maintained what they called a “critical dialogue” with Iran. These so-called EU-3 patiently waited for a good moment to engage both the US and Iran to achieve a breakthrough. Iran agreed to stop its military nuclear program while keeping a civilian nuclear option. In return, the Europeans and Americans agreed to recognize the desire for status and security of the Islamic Republic and to ease sanctions.

The Europeans were, and are, hoping that Iran will not want to walk away from such a deal after the long stand-off, because Tehran will be too busy building the most dynamic economy in the Gulf. But the Americans have been skeptical about the deal, with all its post-modern sophistication, from the start. Even the Obama administration didn’t fully endorse the deal’s logic in the face of so much opposition – from Congress, lobbies or allies such as the Saudis and the Israelis.

The Iran deal always contained several unknowns. But policymakers in Berlin, Paris, London and Brussels were willing to accept these risks to avoid a bigger one: that of a military strike against Iran. They underestimated the domestic struggles in Iran and overestimated the capacity of the reformers around President Rohani.

The Europeans now find themselves at a loss in the geopolitical struggle between Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey that emerged from the ruins of Iraq and Syria. This regional cleavage is a new layer under the global power struggle between Russia, the United States, and China. Thus old-fashioned power politics has returned to the 21st century. And Germans, like most of their European partners, have no clue what to do.

The US has now in effect abandoned the agreement with Iran, written a blank check on Israel’s one-state policy, and sided with Saudi Arabia. Germans find all three positions dangerous because they could escalate conflict in the Middle East. The Iranians themselves have lost patience and are taking to the streets.

With their normative mindset, Germans should be supporting the Iranian people in their cry for reform. But German leaders fear that the Iranian hardliners might seize the protests as an opportunity to strike back against Rohani, to close ranks against the outside world, and to double down on their theocracy. This development would culminate in the Ayahtollahs calling the nuclear deal off. If this happens, Trump gets the Iran he likes to imagine, and Europeans will be proven embarrassingly wrong. Hobbes will have prevailed over Monnet.

Berlin remains convinced that dialogue of the sort that led to a deal
in Iran is also the right path on the Korean peninsula.

German policymakers are in a similar bind in the North Korean crisis. Berlin remains convinced that dialogue of the sort that led to a deal in Iran is also the right path on the Korean peninsula. But Kim Jong-un is observing developments in the Middle East, and has concluded that compromise has given Iran neither security nor recognition, nor economic boons.

China cares not a hoot about European-style order and regime-building, and instead scours the peninsula for opportunities to grow its own power. It also looks further afield. As soon as relations deteriorated between the US and Pakistan, Beijing was calling Islamabad.

The US, with its brinkmanship in posing as the defender of East Asia, is instead risking its traditional leadership in that region. If North Korea goes all the way and becomes an ensconced nuclear power with the ability to strike the US mainland, the US will be trapped in its own logic, and forced to go to war. Its defensive treaties with Japan and South Korea may unravel.

German policymakers are well aware of the growing rivalry between the US and China. Berlin expects Trump to act against China eventually, in the context of either trade or North Korea or both. This conflict would pose great risks to Europe’s economic and political interests.

Germany fears the ultimate lose-lose scenario: being forced to decide between the US and China.

Since 1949, German policymakers, with their own country’s violent history in mind, have avowed that might does not make right. They have placed all their hopes and bets on the supremacy of international law and cooperation over national interest and naked power. The atavism of today’s crises and rivalries has shown that worldview to be untenable, even naive. Berlin needs a new foreign policy. This time, Europe can’t answer for Germany, but the German answer has to include Europe.

January 2018
In a dangerous world, Germans need to get real on foreign policy

Since World War II, German elites have retreated comfortably, and sometimes hypocritically, into a mindset that amounted to absenteeism in global diplomacy. This is no longer tenable.

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It was a German journalist and politician, Ludwig von Rochau, who in 1853 – well before Germany was even unified – coined the term Realpolitik. He would feel completely estranged from his descendants today. That’s because Germany’s foreign-policy elite remains stubbornly stuck in the mental and moral asylum it sought after World War II and the Holocaust. This is a mindset unsuited to today’s world, in which America is forfeiting its traditional leadership role, China is asserting its claim to rival America, and Russia is playing willful spoiler. In this world, with crises festering from North Korea to Iran that could one day culminate in mushroom clouds, German elites are at a loss.

The postwar German stance in diplomacy is psychologically easy to fathom. To themselves and others, Germans after Hitler averred that never again must might make right. In effect, they disavowed the legitimacy of power as a tool in world politics and elevated morality to the position of arbiter. Outwardly, Germans thus disowned a tradition of realism that stretches from Thucydides to Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Kissinger.

Germans instead threw themselves into the intellectual embrace of Hugo Grotius, the Dutch thinker who in the 17th century formulated
the idealistic vision of international law. And they sought ultimate salvation in the “post-national” project of European integration, as embodied by the Frenchman Jean Monnet. Co-operation rather than confrontation, positive-sum rather than zero-sum games, and above all dialogue rather than war: these were the only instruments German diplomats accepted as properly belonging into their toolkit.

This German attitude was always a luxury that required allies to discreetly overlook two hypocrisies. The first was that German idealism, and even the entire European project, were only tenable under the American military and nuclear aegis. To invoke Thucydides again: The Germans were like the islanders of Melos in 416 BC, but in this version the Meleans are building an Aegean Community with the other little islands around them after getting Sparta to station troops on Melos and forming a protective ring around it against Athens. It always takes a lot of Thucydides somewhere to afford even a bit of Monnet anywhere.

The second hypocrisy was that German idealism in the diplomatic and military realms has always coincided with Realpolitik on the mercantile side. In effect, Germany outsourced defense to its allies while trading with, and especially exporting to, the world, including its trouble spots and irrespective of “values”. Germany vies for third place as the world’s largest peddler of arms – behind the US and Russia, and about even with China and France.

This is why German elites, defiantly isolated in their own intellectual bubble, should ponder an essay published this week in the National Review by Peter Rough, a fellow at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington. Mr. Rough proposes a new kind of German-American alliance – but only after doling out a good spanking.

“More than any other country, Germany has profited from the post–Cold War international system,” Mr. Rough begins, and “has had the luxury of abjuring hard power.” The aim of German foreign policy, he continues, is “to defend this advantageous position from the forces of change. All around, however, centrifugal pressures are cracking the liberal international order on which German strength depends.”

German policymakers, Mr. Rough acknowledges, blame this deterioration on the US under Donald Trump. But their “view is amplified by a sense of cultural superiority that sees in the president all of the boorish qualities of American materialism. This obsession has blinded Germans to their own shortcomings.” To many Americans, and even other Europeans, Mr. Rough charges, “Germany represents the quintessential European free-rider.”
There you have it, Germany. But what can we do?, the Germans reply. Angela Merkel is taking her time to form a government, and may be on her way out anyway. Viewed from Beijing, the mantle of European leadership has already passed to Emmanuel Macron of France.

All true. But Germany is a middle-to-great power in the complex system that replaced the simple binary world of the Cold War, and thus plays a vital role. Sigmar Gabriel, the foreign minister, often appears unaware of this responsibility, sticking to talking points deemed safe in domestic politics. He is right to urge Mr. Trump to support rather than axe the West’s nuclear deal with Iran (Mr. Trump is slated to decide later tonight). But he offers nothing beyond waffle on the subject of North Korea. And he dabbles in a dangerous mix of dovish talk toward Russia and hawkish tones toward America, one that evokes pre-World War I demons of German “equidistance” between East and West and even another Sonderweg (“separate path”).

Now that “old-fashioned power politics has returned to the 21st century,” Josef Janning of the European Council on Foreign Relations wrote on our site this week, German policymakers “have no clue” what to do. “Berlin needs a new foreign policy,” he thinks. Otherwise, before long “Hobbes will have prevailed over Monnet.”
Germany’s strategic frivolousness

Because of their unique postwar history, Germans today lack a culture of thinking strategically about matters of war and peace, threats and interests. That is dangerous for all of Europe.

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One of the problems with German foreign policy today is that it is strategically frivolous. This frivolity is a stance of comfort and convenience. Germany prefers to leave the tough decisions and dirty work of foreign and defense policy to others, in order then to criticize its allies from a moral high horse in a tone of smugness and complacency.

The reason lies in Germany’s post-World War II culture. The partitioned country only slowly regained its sovereignty, while big strategic questions were often decided by others, primarily the war’s four Allied victors. And Germans learned to like the relative convenience of standing on the sidelines.

But the result was that Germany lacks a sober, analytical approach when discussing foreign policy concepts such as power, military force and national interest. Germans instead lurch into an emotional, excited and moralistic mode to condemn notions they view as politically contaminated. The upshot is that the nation that gave us the world’s most important strategist, Carl von Clausewitz, no longer does strategy.

Debates in Germany are first and foremost moral debates because Germans are – understandably, given their seven-decade effort to atone for the Nazi past – pre-occupied with staying morally clean. But foreign policy is rarely about moral clarity. It’s usually a choice between bad or
worse. Germany finds it harder to make such tough moral choices than others. Here are nine examples:

The nation that gave us the world’s most important strategist, Carl von Clausewitz no longer does strategy.

First, Germans lack a historic understanding about how unstable Europe is. They fail to grasp that the past 70 years of peace have been the exception to the rule of violent conflict in Europe over the last 1,000 years. They take the current situation as given and are unaware of the permanent political, diplomatic and military investments needed to maintain both the inner balance of Europe and protect it from external enemies.

Second, Germans underestimate the importance of the United States for Europe. They don’t understand or brush off Europe’s dependence on protection from America’s army, intelligence services and anti-terror operations. Too many Germans have delusions of adequacy regarding their limited efforts to ensure the continent’s security. Germans also underestimate the level of trust that the presence of Americans in Europe has created since 1945 by defusing old European rivalries.

Third, Germans, while mistrusting Vladimir Putin, are too often willing to make excuses for Russia. They refuse to recognize Moscow’s goal, which is the disintegration of the Western-liberal order and the preservation of the corrupt and violent regime in the Kremlin. Approaching Russia only with soft power – a policy popular across party lines but not with Chancellor Merkel – is a misreading of history and a perverse obsession with softness when hard policies are needed. Real Ostpolitik means cooperation from a position of strength.

Fourth, Germans dismiss the role of the military in the success of diplomacy and protection of the liberal democratic order. As a result, they haven’t protested against spending cuts over the past quarter century that have ruined the German army. The default German position in every international crisis is “military force is not the answer.” This is usually correct but rarely the full truth – and it masks the fact that diplomacy backed by military clout has a better chance of success.

German leaders need a plan against nuclear blackmail.

Fifth, Germans naïvely deny the importance of their own intelligence services. Spying is seen as morally objectionable and dishonorable. Germans need to grow up about the world’s second-oldest profession. Berlin not only spies actively, it is also the target of spies, even from – shock, horror – its own allies. The answer to the American tapping of Chancellor Merkel’s mobile phone isn’t moral grandstanding. It’s more money for the German intelligence services.
Sixth, Germans underestimate the importance of free trade and globalization for their own economic success. This is the only way to explain the huge demonstrations last fall against the EU’s proposed TTIP trade deal with the US. Germany would probably benefit most from TTIP, but a satiated, self-indulgent society fails to grasp the basis for its prosperity.

Seventh, Germans have no idea about the importance of Asia for global stability and European prosperity. Too often Asia is simply seen as a place to sell BMWs and Audis. But any conflict between the US and China would force Germany and Europe to pick sides.

Eighth, Germans have misdiagnosed the migrant crisis. They blame the US invasion of Iraq and the colonial powers’ carve-up of the Middle East after World War I. In reality, the main cause is the brutal despotism and economic misgovernment of many Arab and African rulers following independence. No doubt, the West has often played a less than illustrious role in the region. But failing to identify what has caused these failed states undermines any effort to help them.

Ninth, Germans deny the role of nuclear deterrence. They feign astonishment at Berlin’s nuclear sharing with the US and ignore the importance of the American nuclear umbrella in staving off Russian nuclear blackmail. Now the question is whether President Trump will maintain NATO and the nuclear umbrella for allies. Germany needs a discussion on what it will do if it’s dumped by its nuclear protector in Washington. Can British and French nuclear weapons serve as a European deterrent? If not, the “unthinkable” will happen: the nuclear arming of Germany. Either way, German leaders need a plan against nuclear blackmail.

This is, collectively, what we mean by strategic frivolousness. It is dangerous because America has since 1990 been withdrawing from Europe and new threats, from terrorism to Vladimir Putin, have risen. Strategic frivolousness creates uncertainty and mistrust and, potentially, a power vacuum in Europe. Germany is too important and the other European states are too weak. Germany cannot be strategically frivolous and lead. And without German leadership, Europe’s future is dark.
Why Germans are so ambivalent about Russia

Germans and Russians share a long history of attraction and repulsion, fear and embrace, conflict and harmony. That endlessly complicates their relations today.

Daniel Tost contributed to Handelsblatt Global as a freelance journalist and editor.

The longest sea-floor pipeline in the world runs through the Baltic from Russia to Germany. Russian gas has been flowing through Nord Stream 1 since 2012, and in a few years a twin, Nord Stream 2, will double its capacity. Everything about it is controversial. Poles and Balts hate it, because the pipeline, by circumventing them, threatens their energy security and could leave them open to Russian blackmail. America distrusts it and will probably include it in a new round of sanctions to punish Russia. In Germany the controversy is personal: The chairman of Nord Stream’s board is Gerhard Schröder, the former German chancellor and bosom buddy of Vladimir Putin.

In a more symbolical sense, Nord Stream thus represents an umbilical cord that connects, often awkwardly, two nations that have one of the most tangled, tragic and consequential bilateral relationships in the world. Russians and Germans share an ambivalence toward one another – between attraction and repulsion, fear and embrace, conflict and harmony – that goes back centuries.

During the 19th century, almost half of the army officers in Czarist Russia were of German descent, and this elite stood by Germany against Napoleonic France. As the German historian Heinrich August Winkler has shown, Germany’s elite was also Russophile. Intellectuals such as Thomas Mann dabbled in vague notions about affinities between the
Russian and German “souls,” implying that they are culturally deeper than the rationalist civilizations of “the West.”

That changed under Adolf Hitler. Nazi Germany viewed Eastern Europe and Russia as racially inferior, as “living space” (Lebensraum) to be conquered and colonized for Aryans. The Germans killed tens of millions in the east. Other Germans, especially now-elderly women, carry with them the trauma of mass rapes by the Soviet soldiers as they swept westward to destroy Nazi Germany.

Beginning in 1949, Germany split in its views of Russia. Chancellor Konrad Adenauer “bound” the new West Germany into the West, to America within NATO and to France and other neighbors through European integration. The Soviet Union became an existential threat to be deterred. East Germans, meanwhile, were under Soviet influence and, while not free, became friendly with their Russian overlords over the coming decades in what has been called a case of Stockholm Syndrome.

Relations changed permanently once the first Social Democrat became chancellor of West Germany in 1969. Willy Brandt began the German tradition of Ostpolitik (“eastern policy”), based on “change through rapprochement,” or what later became the better-rhyming Wandel durch Handel – “change through trade.” To this day, many Germans, and especially Social Democrats, credit this opening toward Russia, more than America’s deterrence and superior might, with ending the Cold War.

Mr. Schröder and Mr. Putin became pals, united by a macho style of leadership that made for good bonding in the sauna.

When Mr. Schröder, also a Social Democrat, became chancellor in 1998, he picked up on this tradition of Ostpolitik. Germany and Russia deepened their commercial ties, pro-Russian business lobbies in Germany became powerful, and various German-Russian forums – above all the so-called Petersburg Dialogue – brought Germans and Russians into regular contact. Mr. Schröder and Mr. Putin became pals, united by a macho style of leadership that made for good bonding in the sauna. Soon after losing the chancellorcy to Ms. Merkel, Mr. Schröder was made chairman of Nord Stream, which is majority-owned by Gazprom, Russia’s state-owned energy giant.

Ever since, Mr. Schröder has remained a reliable apologist for Mr. Putin, even when the Russian president annexes Crimea, stirs up trouble in Ukraine or supports the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. A loaded, and often ironic, German word for people like Mr. Schröder is Russlandversteher: “those who understand Russia.” From the extreme left to the hard right, Germany has lots of them. They often combine varying
degrees of anti-Americanism with a belief that Russia in recent years has only been reacting to years of NATO provocation.

Ms. Merkel represents Germans who are not Russlandversteher but view Russia warily. She grew up in East Germany and speaks fluent Russian – just as Mr. Putin, who used to be a KGB agent in East Germany, speaks good German. But instead of Mr. Schröder’s back-slapping cordiality, an icy mutual respect reigns between Ms. Merkel and Mr. Putin. It is she, more than any other Western leader, who has kept him in line since his invasion of Ukraine.

As Mr. Putin continues to crack down on free expression, the media, homosexuals and other minorities in Russia, German public opinion appears to be shifting against Russia. A survey last year by the Körber Foundation, a German think tank, found that while 60 percent of Russians see similarities between Russian and German values, only 11 percent of Germans do. But the differences between eastern and western Germans remain. In the same poll, more than half of westerners, but only about one third of easterners, regard Russia as a threat.

Following a high-profile but failed attempt by Russian propaganda to spread fake news in Germany last year and suspicions that Russia interfered in the recent American and French elections, Germans appear to be growing more vigilant about Russian disinformation. At the same time, Donald Trump in the White House is also a gift to those Germans who harbor anti-American prejudices. The old German habit of seeing Germany as culturally equidistant between West and East may yet return.

Ms. Merkel, it is said, is all too aware how viscerally a pipeline like Nord Stream threatens countries like Poland and the Baltic republics, which are still traumatized by the memory of the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 that spelled their doom. And yet, the lobbies and sentiment in support of Nord Stream are so strong in Germany that even Ms. Merkel cannot, or will not, stop it. Germany and Russia seem doomed to stay connected in ambivalence.
“There was a vacuum of business news in English from Germany until Handelsblatt decided to launch an international online version.”
Der Tagesspiegel is the leading medium in Germany’s capital Berlin. It has the largest circulation of any newspaper in the capital region and the highest number of online visits in the news section in Berlin with more than 10 years of growing market share. It is one of the most cited newspapers in Germany and reaches more political decision-makers than all national newspapers together. The paper’s Latin motto “Rerum cognoscere causas” (“To get to the bottom of things”) emphasizes its independent, liberal position. The Tagesspiegel is part of the D. v. Holtzbrinck publishing group, just like DIE ZEIT, Handelsblatt and Wirtschaftswoche.
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On Monday, the foreign and defence ministers from 23 EU countries agreed to work together more closely in military matters. The programme is called “Pesco”, and it’s a big thing. Some involved are even speaking of a defence union. At any rate, the initiative demonstrates the new pragmatism of European integration policy.

There is enormous pressure to cooperate more closely on security policy – geopolitically (Russia), politicking (Donald Trump), but also for practical reasons. National budgets are strapped and countries need to save billions, according to numerous studies. Until now, most European countries can boast only meagre investment as a ratio of total public spending. But defence spending of all the EU countries taken together is the second highest in the world – even if they have nowhere near the second-strongest army.

These political and practical pressures stand in contrast to the very diverse strategic ideas about what a common European security policy should be capable of. While the Baltic States mainly fear threats from Russia, the Southern Europeans prioritise the stability of North Africa, in particular to keep a grip on migration from there. While a “Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy” was agreed in June 2016, it is not legally binding and only defines general goals.

Pesco is therefore a clever way out of the dilemma of practical necessity and strategic differences. Cooperation is made “modular” in two ways: not all EU states have to participate, and not all Pesco states

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have to take part in all projects. That gives member states the opportunity to negotiate their political priorities in small groups, from project to project. Pesco’s founding documents have the air of trying desperately to be apolitical – of trying to avoid, if possible, any suggestion that it is actually a European declaration of independence from the US. It contains multiple pledges of allegiance to NATO.

That is clever. With Brexit, greater cooperation in security policy has become possible. Under pressure from populist movements, it seems opportune for countries to underline and strengthen their sovereign duties. Pesco offers a timely solution for them – but over the longer term governments must complement it with a common political strategy.
How can Europe defend itself?

23 EU member states want closer cooperation in military matter. But defence companies pose a problem – even for Berlin and Paris.

Albrecht Meier is a correspondent for Der Tagesspiegel. He covers European affairs.

What’s displayed on the walls inside French government buildings is not for the faint of heart. Glory battle paintings are meant to remind of the French Revolution or the Crimean War. Anyone meeting with French government representatives in Paris these days might well discover that these canvases fit the bill – quite literally. “We’re seeing a strategic awaking in Europe,” says one French civil servant. “That doesn’t make us jump for joy, but it is a reality we have to deal with.”

The new reality the EU is facing up to, French government officials say, looks something like this: “All Europeans face the same dangers – terrorism, cyber attacks, the Russia dimension, and challenges beyond the southern coast of the Mediterranean.”

The renewed preoccupation with closer European cooperation in defence and security policy is in part the result of the isolationist tendencies of US President Donald Trump. Even in Germany, which is by no means as self-assertive as France when it comes to military deployments around the globe, Chancellor Angela Merkel’s observation in a speech held last May still rings true: “We Europeans truly have to take our fate into our own hands now.” The era in which Europe could “completely rely” on others was “to a certain extent over,” Merkel said in reference to the US President.

In defence policy, Europe has just started to formulate a possible
joint answer to Trump’s policy. “Pesco” is the term EU member states have come up with for a common defence policy – Permanent Structured Cooperation among the defence establishments of the European nations. What might sound like an unwieldy term does no less than breathe life into a part of the EU’s 2009 Lisbon Treaty, which allowed “coalitions of the willing” in defence matters.

Pesco is not meant to become a rival to NATO; it is meant to foster joint EU military operations and better mesh together national defence companies. At the moment, Europe’s armies count 178 different weapons systems – while the US military uses only 30. Better cross-border cooperation is in future meant to assure that Europe can hold its own in the global race to develop new weapons technology. Unabating budgetary pressures are another reason for the move. “We want to strengthen cooperation because defence hardware is becoming ever more expensive,” said Jean-Jacques Bridey, chairman of the French Parliament’s Defence Committee.

It’s not the first time that Europe has tried to pry soldiers from national armies and place them under joint command. The past decade saw the creation of EU Battle Groups, military units ready to act as rapid-response forces in crisis regions – although they in the end never saw action. This time around, Pesco is meant to provide an instrument viable for all participating EU nations. At the start of the month, 23 states – excluding the UK, Ireland, Denmark, Malta and Portugal – signed a document designed to anchor a new chapter in permanent military cooperation. The countries plan to seal an agreement at the next EU Summit in December.

Germany and France are seen as the drivers of the project. Even then, Berlin and Paris appear to be looking at the prospect of military cooperation from very different viewpoints. After the UK’s June 2016 Brexit vote to leave the EU, Brussels officials say, Angela Merkel’s Federal Chancellery was the first to propose Pesco as a way of showing that the remaining EU member states remained committed to closer cooperation. The French, for their part, were said to have been less keen on such a purely political signal – Paris wanted tangible help for military operations abroad. “We are not interested in creating a new defence policy instrument for its own sake,” according to French government sources. “We need the capacity to deploy troops as and when they are needed.”

What the French government has in mind is best illustrated by its ongoing military operation in Mali. When operation “Serval” began in the north of the country in January 2013, French troops had no partners they
could call on to help drive back radical Islamist forces. Today, more than 13,000 soldiers from 52 countries are part of the UN mission “Minusma”, designed to stabilise the West African country. Germany, which came to support the mission only weeks after France sent in its troops, has now deployed 950 soldiers. Officials in Paris now expect that France will in future not be left in the lurch again: intelligence agencies will exchange information earlier, and armies conduct joint exercises sooner. “Next time, when we want to launch a joint operation with other nations, we’ll involve them well before the beginning of the operation,” according to a government official in Paris.

Whether Pesco can actually deliver remains to be seen. The 23 countries have identified some fifty joint projects, of which five or ten are meant to be prioritised in time for the next meeting of EU defence ministers on 11 December. But these are more likely to be modest undertakings, rather than major defence projects. Berlin, for example, would like a joint medical corps and a logistics network for equipment supply; in Paris, officials are talking about setting up joint training missions.

However, the defence industry will probably be the litmus test for Europe’s new military cooperation. Battle-tank manufacturers Krauss-Maffei Wegmann (KMW) of Germany and Nexter of France have merged and last year announced the development of a joint successor for the German Leopard 2 and the French Leclere tanks. And Chancellor Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron announced their readiness in July to develop a new European fighter jet. But these are long-term projects that promise little immediate effect – it will take well over a decade to come up with a new aircraft to replace the Eurofighter/Typhoon, flown by the Bundeswehr, and the Rafale, made by French defence company Dassault.

Even then, it’s by no means certain that a French company like Dassault will ultimately open up to the idea of European cooperation, according to Philippe Ricard, a journalist at French newspaper Le Monde. On top of that, says Ricard, there are factions within the French government’s procurement agency, the Directorate General of Armaments (DGA), strongly opposed to the Europeanisation of industrial cooperation. Should it come to cross-border defence industry cooperation, Paris would demand the technology lead.

Pesco also faces problems on the political front. Paris wants participating EU states to make ambitious strides in developing an independent EU defence policy. On the other hand, Berlin wants the number of countries taking part to be as large as possible – with the result that even
Poland is now part of the initiative, a country renowned for its scepticism about European integration. Poland’s participation is all the more remarkable given that its role in European defence industry cooperation – like the Airbus A400 military transport plane – has until now been defined by its absence. When member states gathered in Brussels at the beginning of the month to sign Pesco’s founding charter, Poland’s Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski and Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz presented a letter to their colleagues outlining three conditions for their country’s participation. One of these stipulated that any EU defence cooperation had to give precedence to any plans agreed by NATO.

Given all these difficulties, there’s no surprise that Paris is cautious when appraising Europe’s first steps toward renewed defence cooperation. “Will Pesco work?” asks one official. “It’ll take five years for us to find out.”
It was no coincidence that German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini on Monday took centre stage in a European family photo to mark an important milestone in EU history. Germany and France were the driving forces behind enhanced European defence cooperation, which was agreed on Monday in Brussels. In addition to von der Leyen and German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, foreign and defence ministers from 22 other European capitals signed off on a policy agreement to promote joint operations and armaments projects. Gabriel spoke of a “milestone in the development of Europe”.

Reaching this milestone was in no small way the result of last year’s election of Donald Trump as US President. Trump has made Europeans deeply aware that they will need to be more self-reliant in security and defence policy in the future. “It was important for us, especially after the election of the American president, to position ourselves independently as Europeans,” said von der Leyen.

The “Permanent Structured Cooperation” between individual EU member states – Pesco in EU jargon – is not meant to compete with the NATO. Instead, it aims to pool participants’ existing defence capabilities and make it easier to launch joint missions.

“Pesco” will now start to develop concrete projects. Possibilities
include joint development of battle tanks, drones, satellites or fighter jets; or, to give another example, a mobile hospital for crisis regions. Every year, the European Union spends billions of euros more than necessary because EU states each fund their own weapons system. Some systems are therefore redundant, others incompatible – fighter jets being a shining example. Permanent Structured Cooperation aims to curb such compartmentalised armaments policies.

According to EU High Representative Mogherini, member states have so far presented a list of more than 50 joint armaments projects or missions. Pesco countries are aiming to agree on ten of these joint projects at the next EU summit, in mid-December.

In the agreement signed Monday, participating states pledged to provide “substantial” financial and military support for fixed-term joint missions, such as the European military mission in Chad in 2008 and 2009. Originally, France had wanted only a relatively small “coalition of the willing” among the Pesco states, a bid to concentrate on more ambitious military missions. But the German government preferred to keep the group of participating states as large as possible and wanted to give small member states a chance to participate. The Germans did not want Pesco to divide the EU. Luxembourg

Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn also said the new military cooperation would have a civilian component. Austria will also participate in the cooperation – insofar as is possible for a neutral state.

Five EU countries did not join the new cooperation - Denmark, Ireland, Malta, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Above all, resistance from London had in the past thwarted closer defence ties in the EU. However, given the Brexit vote in June 2016 and the UK’s expected departure from the EU, the political winds have shifted and London is no longer an impediment to a common EU defence policy. Nevertheless, British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson said Monday in Brussels that London “supports” the EU’s plans.

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Nuclear weapons: prepared to be tough

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On Sunday, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Ican) will receive the Nobel Peace Prize. The movement had convinced 122 states to sign in July an agreement banning nuclear weapons. But the Nobel Prize committee has made clear that the award is not as much to honour this particular achievement as to warn against abandoning the fight against nuclear weapons – a statement aimed in particular at the nine countries and their allies, including Germany, that have access to nuclear weapons. These countries did not sign the Ican ban.

The Nobel Prize Committee’s warning comes at a critical juncture. The reduction in nuclear arms has slowed considerably, according to observers at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri). All nine nuclear powers are modernising their arsenals. Tensions in a number of hot spots are escalating, not only in North Korea, but also in close geopolitical proximity to Europe.

Friday marked 30 years since the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), the agreement to do away with medium-range nuclear weapons. But maintaining this important treaty is not a given, if you follow the arguments presented by the US. Since 2014, the US has accused Russia of again developing, testing, and stationing such weapons. Now the Americans are increasing pressure on NATO partners to take a common – and above all tougher – stance against Russia. Foreign policy hawks in the US are even demanding the stationing in Europe of cruise missiles that can be equipped with nucle-
ar warheads, in reaction to Russia’s purported breach of the INF Treaty. German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said last Tuesday, “We could be on the brink of a new nuclear arms race in the middle of Europe.”

That sounds dramatic. But, despite such concerns, it does not appear likely that the US is poised just yet to ask Germany to station medium-range nuclear weapons at the air force base in Büchel on the Mosel River in western Germany, where American nuclear weapons are stored to this day. Donald Trump has taken a cocky approach to the North Korea conflict, yet he is showing restraint in this stand-off with European nations. Indeed, America’s hawks do not appear to have the upper hand. The state department’s condemnation on Friday of Russia’s treaty violation was very carefully worded. Every second sentence pointed to a way out of the conflict and toward some kind of new normal. The goal for now appears to be getting the Europeans on board for a tough declaration against Russia. The media have reported that Trump wants sanctions against Russian companies involved in developing nuclear weapons.

Germany and other European countries appear to see their job as giving weight to their cautious stance. Germans in particular are understandably nervous about the rear-mament debate. Paradoxically, it is exactly for this reason that Germany must be part of a toughly formulated common declaration by NATO countries. A policy of small steps only works if there is a credible threat of escalation. This primitive logic is inescapable as long as some countries remain outside the agreement to ban nuclear weapons.
Donald Trump’s first year as US President was a lasting pandemonium of constantly new commotion. Europe should not be distracted by that – and emphasize its own strength in the alliance with the USA. A comment.

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His second breach of taboo concerns America’s role in the world. Trump does not want to be the guardian of the liberal order. The withdrawal from global responsibility likewise started before him, under Obama. Trump has turned it into a principle with “America First”. A national interest is only whatever yields a direct benefit – preferably countable in jobs or a growth in export. He does not have an eye on the benefits of a decades-long US-dominated peace order for America, for instance for the “soft power”. He likes “disruption”, the unsettling of the familiar. In a perfect world this must not be bad, provided that it is implemented with diplomatic calculation and sets rigid fronts in motion. However, where can such an effect be seen? The withdrawal from the climate treaty, the pulling out of UNESCO, the acknowledgment of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, the breaking away from the nuclear deal with Iran – all examples where the destructive

Donald Trump is a problem for the USA and the world. But does this not apply in the same way to our side of the Atlantic? Germany and Europe are struggling to find a response to the breaches of taboos and the confusion that he contributes to international politics.

Trump’s first breach of taboo: he poisons the political culture of the USA. The society had already been divided before him. He does not seek understanding between the camps. On the contrary: he provokes, insults, stirs up hatred and weakens the democratic system, instead of uniting.
impact is immediately visible, and a creative impulsion is at best a remote hope. The irony is that a lot of what pleases Trump’s grassroots supporters and incenses his opponents, is “false labelling”. For the time being, the USA remain as a party to the climate treaty, the embassy remains in Tel Aviv, the Iran deal remains in force.

Trump’s first year was a lasting pandemonium of constantly new commotion and distraction. How does the German public react? With even more commotion about the unreasonable demands. What he means for us, is missed out. As far as the tax reform is concerned, the complaint about the social injustice in the USA is dominating, not the question about the consequences that lower corporate taxes have on investment streams and hence on jobs in Germany. Mockery and anger about Trump are generally suppressing the analysis of how we defend our interests and how the liberal world order can be saved. It is the basis for the German success as an export world champion.

Some declare that Trump is highly dangerous, because the USA are so powerful, but anticipate at the same time the latter’s demise. Some dream that this is an opportunity for Europe, and that the EU will replace America as a world power. How does this tie in with the multiple crisis of the EU? And are the fans of a stronger Europe ready to pay the price, from a dramatically higher defense spending to the transformation of the EU into a confederation which is able to act with majority decisions, even when Germany is in a minority, and a Eurozone budget?

Others emphasize: The “checks and balances” will resist. The Congress, the courts and the media contain Trump. This is not wrong, but plays down the risk for Germany, if protectionism is spreading. Yes, Europe must become more capable of acting. But not through an emancipation from America but through its own strength in an alliance with the USA. They are under Trump, too, closer to us as China or Russia.

January 20, 2018
HACKERS BREAK THROUGH BORDERS.
WE MAKE THEM HIT THE WALL.

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DIGITAL FORCES PROJECT Bundeswehr