

## World Order: The United States Resigned as Leader of the Free World, now Germany Has to Step Up

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Germany, whether it wants the leadership job or not, is the best hope to defend the liberal international order. A global power shift of rising nationalism in China and Russia is unraveling the international order. Europe imposed sanctions on Russia for violating Ukraine's border and annexing its territory. Then, in November 2016 Donald Trump was elected president and questioned whether the US would fulfill its defense commitments to Europe. Donald Trump's nationalist, interest-based policies have absented American international leadership from global affairs.

Recently, 88% of Germans surveyed by the Koerber Foundation think Germany's defense partnership with European States should have priority over that with the United States in the future. Gallup has reported Germany had a 41% approval rating as a global power eclipsing the U.S. rating of 30% for the first time. Germany's new international standing marks a historic shift in power relations.

The disruption in world order raises the quest of what kind of order would emerge and who will lead it. After the defeat of democracy in the 1848 Revolution, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck united Germany with "Blood and Iron". From 1871 through World Wars I and II, German militarism dominated German security strategy. After the defeat of National Socialism in 1945, Germany for the past seven decades has risen from the horrors of the Second World War and the Holocaust to become a 'Civilian Power' (Zivilmacht), Europe's leading democracy. The question remains whether this historical Hegelian shift from the one extreme to the other can now find the balance between war and peace.



The debate began in earnest in February 2014 at the Munich Security Conference when President Joachim Gauck and Ministers Steinmeier and von der Leyen called on Germany to accept more international responsibility. Since then, a new white book has been published stating that Germany has to act more proactively; Chancellor Merkel noted that "we (Germany and Europe) really must take our fate into our own hands"; and foreign minister Gabriel said at the Koerber foundation "either we try to shape the world or we will be shaped by it." Tentatively, Germany has agreed in theory to accept responsibility; and is poised to take a leadership role in Europe.

That role is needed. Jürgen Habermas reminded us of the challenge to protect democracy when he stated: "If the European project fails, then there is the question of how long it will take to reach the status quo again. Remember the German Revolution of 1848: When it failed, it took us 100 years to regain the same level of democracy as before."

There are three essential things to bear in mind:

First, since Habermas wrote, Germany has had another revolution. In 1989 Germans in East Germany rediscovered Thucydides secret of freedom, courage. With courage, they brought down the Berlin Wall, elected a democratic parliament and voted to join the West German constitution. In West Germany, the Basic Law created a democracy based on respect for human dignity. In East Germany, a Peaceful Revolution fought for freedom and democracy in the act of national self-determination to unite Germany in 1990.

Together the legitimacy of Germany's republic lies in the marriage of West Germany's constitution and the East German revolution that formed united Germany.

Second, Germany has exercised its sovereignty with 'sovereign obligation' to the EU to pool sovereignty in the European Union and to deploy the Bundeswehr only in alliance with the United Nations or NATO and with a parliamentary mandate. The country has rejected a German "Sonderweg" or unilateralism that was practiced in the past led to conflict. It has developed a never alone leadership model that could be called "leaders in partnership," („als Partner führen“).

Third, the German culture of remembrance (Erinnerungskultur) centered on the horrors of the Holocaust, the National Socialist and the Socialist Unity Party (SED) regimes act as a restraint on German leadership excesses. At the same time, Germany accepts more responsibility; it may not use its National Socialist and Holocaust and communist histories as an excuse not to act. As then Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski told the Germans in 2011: "And I demand of Germany that, for your sake and for ours, you help it survive and prosper. You know full well that nobody else can do it. I will probably be the first Polish foreign minister in history to say so, but here it is: I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity. You have become Europe's indispensable nation."

Finally, the political debate in Germany seeks a vision to build Europe. They should make Europe the strong transatlantic pillar and not let America's uncertain path question the ideas and institutions of the international liberal order. European security and prosperity rest on this order. Germany has national legitimacy and exercises its sovereignty with a sovereign obligation to Europe and the international order. Germany is called on to lead in Europe and to succeed needs a bold, strategic vision to sustain democracy, peace, and prosperity in Europe.

Germany needs now a National Security Strategy that supports a European Security Strategy. To accomplish that goal, Germany needs a twofold policy of strategic policymaking. One is to overcome the incoherence in security policy between elites and the general public. The other is to create a national institutional forum to coordinate and to strategize German foreign and security policy between relevant ministries and agencies. Such a strategic policy process links well with European initiatives in security including the European Defense Fund and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). More Europe strengthens the Transatlantic Alliance.

Can Germany lead, but not dominate Europe? Will Germany and Europe fill the leadership gap left by absent American leadership? The negotiators have their work cut out for them. As Friedrich Schiller concluded: „ Ich weiß das Land nicht zu finden, wo das gelehrte beginnt, hört das politische auf.“ Woody Allen once said that 80% of success in life was in just showing up. All the world is watching to see if Germany shows up for leadership.

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