

## What Remains to be Done: Some Conclusions

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As the established international order crumbles, old commitments weaken and the threats to Germany and the EU increase, the pressure grows on Germany to take decisive and truly consequential action. Five years have elapsed since Federal President Gauck, Foreign Minister Steinmeier and Defense Minister von der Leyen issued their much-quoted pleas for greater German responsibility, many studies have been published with the same tenor, and numerous speeches have been made by politicians calling for a greater German role. However, the tendency of the German public to underestimate the dangers of the contemporary situation and to leave safeguarding Germany's security to others who are in fact more reluctant to do so is as strong as ever. Politicians follow the trend. The German defense budget has increased only moderately. Those who argue against the target of 2 % of GNP for defense, supposed to create an overwhelming weight of Germany's armed forces in Europe, overlook that Germany could easily achieve 2% by assisting NATO partners in need and by contributing to shared systems and infrastructures while maintaining an acceptable size of its armed forces. It behooves a true leader to use its resources, considerable in Germany's case, to help others.

Germany's aspiration to be an anchor of the EU, shared by all German centrist parties, should move from a rhetorical posture to concrete policies. In the same way, as the US established the Atlantic community through the Marshal Plan a country with a balanced budget and large trade surpluses like Germany should keep the EU afloat by helping others rather than self-righteously preaching others to follow its virtuous example.

With regard to China, Germany has for a long time basked in the sunlight of its phenomenal trade and investment relationship – Europe's number one – and failed to see that the bilateral approach pushed by Beijing inherently undermines a common European posture, as does China's "16 + 1" policy vis-a-vis East Central European EU members and its bilateral action under the "Belt and Road Initiative". China likes to contrast its advocacy of free trade with the protectionism as the Trump Administration applies it, but at the same time, it denies true reciprocity in the treatment of foreign investors, enforces the transfer of technology and sponsors the theft of intellectual property. In this respect, Germany, as Europe's lead-

ing economic power, must actively pursue adherence to principles of openness and fairness and try to forge an alliance of like-minded countries including even the Trump Administration despite its predisposition to unilateralism.

Like practically the rest of the EU, Germany has for a long time seen its relationship with China almost exclusively in commercial terms. However, as a rising China raises territorial claims on its neighbors and refuses to accept the Law of the Sea ruling of the Hague Court on the South China Sea Germany and the EU can no longer afford to ignore the security implications of their involvement with China. This attention to security suggests by no means advocating a relationship of enmity, but Germany and the EU will have to join those who support efforts to keep China's rise peaceful.

Helping to develop the EU is at the core of Germany's central interest. This task requires a close relationship with France which, thanks to President Macron, has a new chance to recreate the Franco-German motor for the EU. Here again, Germany must consider giving up its orthodoxy in economic policy and be more forthcoming in security policy if it wants the relationship to succeed.

As President Trump's policies continue to undermine established relationships and the post-war liberal order, Germany must help the EU to focus on those elements of the Trump Administration's policies that preserve established cooperation across the Atlantic, avoid all policies that produce a lasting decoupling from America, limit the damage and preserve what is essential to the West's essence.

