



# INTERNATIONAL SECURITY FORUM BONN 2020

A TIME OUT OF JOINT – NEW REALITIES, NEW IDEAS  
1-5 DECEMBER 2020

FULL REPORT  
RAPPORTEURS:  
CORNELIUS LILIE  
LUKAS PAUL SCHMELTER





## FOREWORD



The International Security Forum Bonn 2020 facilitated a high-level international dialogue on contemporary topics of foreign and security policy. The goal of the Forum was to foster exchange between experts and practitioners, to identify vital aspects of a successful European foreign and security policy, and to develop holistic strategic solutions for pressing problems. The 2020 Forum focused on the challenges posed by the shifts in transatlantic relations, discussed the findings of the Task Force "The Future of Transatlantic Relations", and evaluated the upcoming global geo-economic and geo-political rivalries which were reinforced by the SARS-CoV-2-pandemic. It was concluded by a two-day workshop on strategic foresight.

Like no other event in the 21st century, the SARS-CoV-2-pandemic has put the international order, as well as the societies, economies, and policies of almost every country on earth to the test. It remains to be seen whether those in positions of influence will succeed in containing the pandemic and in responding successfully to its consequences.

As hardly ever before, political, and economic decision-makers depend on science – first on virologists, but also on other natural and social science expertise. Expertise and novel insights are key, particularly since any political or inaction is likely to have serious social, economic, and political consequences.

*From left to right:  
Prof. Dr. Wolfram Hiltz, Prof. Dr. Volker Kronenberg,  
Prof. Dr. Ulrich Schlie, Dr. Enrico Fels*

Last December's International Security Forum Bonn 2020 served as an opportunity to identify new topics and redeem existing instruments of political and economic governance in order to open a new chapter in the transatlantic relations. Joe Biden's election as 46th President of the United States offers Europe and the United States the perspective to redefine a precious partnership and to find common answers to shared problems.

Although common sense would suggest that an existential threat can only be countered cooperatively, in many places the political reactions, especially of the two great powers USA and China, reinforced the existing geo-economic rivalry, which puts Germany and Europe in particular in a quandary and requires strategic thinking.

Only the historical retrospective will show whether the year 2020 marks a break. However, historians and other scholars can already help to place things into a wider temporal frame, and in doing so contribute to mastering the future.

Little is inevitable, and the future lies in our hands – with this mindset, contributors from Bonn and from around world defied the Covid19-driven impossibility to meet in person., instead meeting in the virtual world.

CASSIS remains committed to fostering new approaches to international security, normative initiatives, and no-smokescreen debates. New realities require new ideas.

*Bonn, 2 March 2021*

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as of November 30, 2020



## Executive Summary

The International Security Forum 2020 was conducted under truly unique circumstances. Given the global Covid-19 pandemic, and the restrictions on public life it has necessitated, our usual format, which typically brings people from all around the world together for a multi-day conference at the University of Bonn, was not viable this year. Yet it was our firm conviction that the global pandemic has not reduced the salience of the larger geopolitical questions typically discussed at the ISFB but has rather heightened their importance.

We were thus determined to enable our annual forum to go forward despite the ongoing pandemic, albeit in an unfamiliar fashion. Over the course of five days, we assembled a group of high-profile experts from politics, business, and academe in a virtual conference space that, while no replacement for an actual physical conference setting, proved capable of facilitating the rigorous and stimulating exchange of ideas for which the ISFB has become internationally renowned.

Setting the agenda for this year's forum proved a difficult task. For in addition to addressing the many issues that have faced researchers and policymakers in the foreign and security policy space for the past years, including the future role of American power in the world, the struggles of the European Union, the ascendance of illiberal and autocratic forces and the impact of rapid technological change, this year's Forum also had to tackle the immense, not yet fully quantifiable impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In an effort to do justice to this wide range of important and complex topics, the Forum was divided into two days of substantive discussion.

The first centered around the question of how transatlantic relations will unfold as a new U.S. president prepares to take the reins of power following a highly contentious election and unusually tempestuous transition period. While tensions within the transatlantic relationship have been high over the course of the past years, and the shift in the global balance of power away from the Atlantic to the Asian-Pacific theatre continues, the transatlantic relationship remains



*Dr. Jana Puglierin  
of the European  
Council on Foreign  
Relations (ECFR)  
speaking during  
ISFB 2018*

of vital importance, not just to the states constituting it, but also to the overall stability and prosperity of the international state system.

Against this background, the Forum asked participants to explore the potential avenues toward improved transatlantic relations under a Biden presidency. While many difficulties will continue, not least because the Biden administration will have to deal with a formidable domestic agenda, cooperation in areas such as trade and climate action are well within reach. Progress on these fronts may restore the mutual trust needed to tackle some of the more intractable issues, such as NATO defense spending and the lack of a common strategy vis-à-vis China, that have been sources of acrimony in the U.S.-European relationship.

The Forum highlighted the importance Germany will play in enabling the implementation of such a revamped transatlantic agenda. Facing an historically important federal election that will bring into office a new Chancellor, and almost certainly a new governing coalition, Germany needs to bring focus to its foreign and security policy debate if it is to play a meaningful role in shaping the transatlantic relationship. In an effort to provide an impulse in this direction, the CASSIS Task Force on the Future of Transatlantic Relations presented its final report to the state government of North-Rhine Westphalia at the outset of this Forum.

Building on substantial analysis of the present state of affairs, and the likely future trajectory of the transatlantic relationship, the report presents a series of concrete recommendations for policymakers at both the state and federal levels to implement as they work to capitalize on the opportunity offered by Joe Biden's election to reset transatlantic relations and formulate a new cooperative agenda.

The Forum's second day was dedicated to an exploration of how the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic has altered our world. Intensifying existing problems while also creating new ones, the Covid-19 pandemic has rendered the year 2020/21 a potential watershed moment. While it remains to be seen how the long-term consequences of the pandemic shape our global

political and economic landscape, we can be certain that virus has already had a profound impact on how we perceive each other, the societies we live in and the world as a whole.

By the time the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic in March 2020, most parts of the globe had been struck by Covid-19 and governments across the world were forced to adopt radical, previously unimaginable measures to contain the further spread of the virus. Individual liberties were curtailed, and the global economy sent into a tailspin as governments shutdown virtually all forms of public life and economic activity. The rapid rate of increased globalization, so familiar to us as the defining feature of our century thus far, abruptly decelerated as international travel and global trade and commerce ground to a halt.

While the pandemic continues to rage, despite the distribution of vaccines having commenced, the ISFB took stock of the consequences of the virus' rapid spread across the globe. Which measures have been effective? To what degree have government responses to the pandemic exposed the strengths and weaknesses of different political systems? What are the geopolitical ramifications of this pandemic? How might the world economy recover in the wake of an unprecedented cessation of global economic activity? And when the virus is finally contained, how might our lives resemble and differ from the pre-pandemic state of affairs? All these questions were front and center during this year's Special Focus Day, with keynote addresses and panel discussions designed to bring some clarity to a jarring and in many respects deeply unsettling 2020.

In the final analysis, the ISFB 2020 cast a stark light on a world in flux. As has always been the case at our Forums, many new questions were raised as others were answered. We are thankful that so many distinguished researchers and policymakers agreed to join our virtual format and are hopeful that our traditional conference format will be possible in 2021. We then look forward to physically reconvening in Bonn and taking stock of where the world stands a year on from this in many ways extraordinary and strange year 2020.

# International Security Forum Bonn 2020 (digital event) Program

## *"A Time Out of Joint – New Realities, New Ideas"*

Hosted by the Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies  
University of Bonn  
1–5 December 2020

The International Security Forum Bonn 2020 facilitated a high-level international dialogue on contemporary topics of foreign and security policy. The goal of the Forum was to foster exchange between experts and practitioners, to identify vital aspects of a successful European foreign and security policy, and to develop holistic strategic solutions for pressing problems. The

2020 Forum focused on the challenges the challenges posed by the shifts in transatlantic relations, discussed the findings of the Task Force "The Future of Transatlantic Relations", and evaluated the upcoming global geo-economic and geo-political rivalries which were reinforced by the SARS-CoV-2-pandemic. It was concluded by a two-day Strategic Foresight Workshop.

The International Security Forum Bonn 2020 was realized in cooperation with the following partners:



## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2020

"What is the current German contribution to transatlantic security requirements?"  
(6 p.m. – 8 p.m.)

Webinar – hosted by the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS)

### Introduction and Chair

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- **Jeffrey Rathke**, President of AICGS
- **Ulrich Schlie**, Henry Kissinger Professor for Security and Strategic Studies, and Director of CASSIS, University of Bonn

### Webinar

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- **David Bertolotti**, Former Director of Strategic Affairs at the French Foreign Ministry
- **Slawek Debski**, Polish Institute of International Affairs
- **Claudia Major**, Head of Research Division International Security, SWP
- **Omid Nouripour**, Member of the German Bundestag, Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs of Alliance 90/The Greens' Parliamentary Group
- **Volker Ullrich**, Member of the German Bundestag, CSU, Committee on European Union Affairs



Participants  
listening to a talk  
during ISFB 2019

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020

### "The Future of Transatlantic Relations – New Realities, New Ideas"

Hosted by AmerikaHaus NRW e.V., Hanns Seidel Stiftung, Deutsche Atlantische Gesellschaft e.V. and Institut français.

#### Introduction

**12.40 p.m. – 12.45 p.m.**

**Ulrich Schlie**, Henry Kissinger Professor for Security and Strategic Studies, and Director of CASSIS, University of Bonn

#### Welcoming Remarks

**12.45 p.m. – 1.00 p.m.**

**Michael Hoch**, Rector, University of Bonn

**Volker Kronenberg**, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Director of CASSIS, University of Bonn

#### ▶ Keynote Speech "The Future of Transatlantic Relations: A View from North Rhine-Westphalia"

**1.00 p.m. – 1.20 p.m.**

**Mark Speich**, State Secretary for Federal, European and International Affairs, State of North-Rhine-Westphalia

#### ▶ Presentation: Report of the TASK FORCE "Future of Transatlantic Relations"

**1.20 p.m. – 1.30 p.m.**

**Ulrich Schlie**, Henry Kissinger Professor for Security and Strategic Studies, and Director of CASSIS, University of Bonn

#### ▶ Session One: "Germany and the Future of Transatlantic Relations"

**1.30 p.m. – 3 p.m.**

##### Panel Discussion:

- **Franziska Brantner**, Member of the German Bundestag, Spokesperson on European Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary of Alliance 90/The Greens' Parliamentary Group
- **Melissa Eddy**, Berlin Correspondent, The New York Times
- **Sigmar Gabriel**, Chairman, Atlantik-Brücke, former Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
- **Alexander Graf Lambsdorff**, Member of the German Bundestag, Deputy Chairman of the Free Democratic Party Parliamentary Group
- **Stefan Kornelius**, Head of the Foreign Policy Department of Süddeutsche Zeitung
- **Christian Schmidt**, Member of the German Bundestag, President of the German Atlantic Association, former Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture

Chair: **Ulrich Schlie**, Henry Kissinger Professor for Security and Strategic Studies, and Director of CASSIS, University of Bonn

▶ **Session Two: "Geo-Economics and Great Power Competition"**

**3.30 p.m. – 4.15 p.m.**

Introduction: **Thomas Weber**, Professor, Chair in History and International Affairs, University of Aberdeen

▶ **Keynote Speeches "What should Germany's role in transatlantic relations and in international affairs be? – Two Perspectives"**

- **Niall Ferguson**, Milbank Family Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University
- **Harold James**, Professor, School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University

**4.30 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.**

**Panel Discussion II**

- **Peter Beyer**, Member of the German Bundestag, Coordinator of Transatlantic Cooperation, Federal Foreign Office
- **Heiko Borchert**, Borchert Consulting & Research AG, Zurich
- **Cathryn Clüver Ashbrook**, Executive Director, The Future of Diplomacy Project, Harvard Kennedy School
- **Ben Hodges**, Pershing Chair in Strategic Studies, Center for European Policy Analysis
- **Frank Sportolari**, President, The American Chamber of Commerce in Germany e.V.
- **Friedbert Pflüger**, Managing Partner Bingmann Pflüger International, Professor for International Relations, King's College London, Executive Research Fellow, CASSIS, University of Bonn

Chair: **Ulrike Franke**, Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Affairs, London

▶ **Concluding Remarks** **Jana Puglierin**, Head of Berlin Office, European Council on Foreign Relations

▶ **6 p.m. Evening Talk "Thinking Ahead – Transatlantic Security" – Public Event**

Hosted by the AmerikaHaus NRW e.V.

**Introduction:** **Benjamin Becker**, Director of the AmerikaHaus NRW e.V.

**Remarks:** **Elbridge Colby**, Principal, The Marathon Initiative

- **Laura Kupe**, Legal Counsel on the Committee on Homeland Security, US House of Representatives
- **Detlef Wächter**, Ambassador, Policy Director at the German Federal Ministry of Defence

Chair: **Ulrich Schlie**, Henry Kissinger Professor for Security and Strategic Studies, and Director of CASSIS, University of Bonn

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2020

### Special Focus Day "What to Learn from the Pandemic: Security in the Light of COVID-19"

Hosted by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

#### Introduction and Welcoming Remarks

9.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.

- **Maximilian Mayer**, Professor, CASSIS, University of Bonn
  - **Volker Kronenberg**, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Director of CASSIS, University of Bonn
  - **Jens Spahn**, Federal Minister of Health
- ▶ **Keynote Speech "What to Learn from the Pandemic: Security in the Light of COVID-19"**

**Ilona Kickbusch**, Director, Global Health Centre

Chair: **Daniela Braun**, Foreign and Security Affairs, Konrad Adenauer Foundation

#### ▶ Session One: "Prelude: Health and Security Policy - A Neglected Relationship?"

10.30 a.m. – 12.00 a.m.

##### Panel Discussion I

- **Annamarie B. Šehović**, Associate Fellow, University of Warwick/ University of Potsdam
- **Simon Dalby**, Professor, Balsillie School of International Affairs & Wilfried Laurier University
- **Stefan Elbe**, Professor, Director Centre for Global Health Policy, University of Sussex
- **Dorit Nitzan**, Regional Emergency Director Europe, World Health Organisation
- **Michael Rabbow**, German Health Alliance
- **Jakob Rhyner**, Scientific Director, Bonn Alliance ICB

Chair: **Daniela Braun**, Foreign and Security Affairs, Konrad Adenauer Foundation

12 p.m. – 1 p.m.

##### Lunch Break



*Discussion during one of the breaks during ISFB 2019*

▶ **Session Two: "Outbreak: Tackling the Pandemic – Locking Down or Keeping (Too) Cool?"**

**1 p.m. – 2.30 p.m.**

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**Panel Discussion II:**

- **Martin Exner**, Professor, University Hospital Bonn, University of Bonn
- **Klaus Ferdinand Gärditz**, Professor, Public Law, University of Bonn
- **Werner Gephart**, Professor, Director (Founding Director) at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Center for Advanced Study in the Humanities "Law as Culture", University of Bonn
- **Elvira Rosert**, Professor, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, Hamburg University
- **Hans-Martin von Gaudecker**, Professor, Institute for Applied Microeconomics, University of Bonn

Chair: **Tara Varma**, Head of Paris Office, European Council on Foreign Relations,

▶ **Session Three: "Aftermath: The Geopolitics of the Pandemic – Trend Multiplier or Game Changer?"**

**3.15 p.m. – 4.45 p.m.**

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**Panel Discussion:**

- **Antoine Bondaz**, Research Fellow, Foundation for Strategic Research
- **Christian Haggemiller**, Research Coordinator, Health Security Interface, GIDS
- **Anna-Katharina Hornidge**, Director, German-Institute for Development (DIE)
- **Conrad Schetter**, Director for Research, Bonn International Center for Conversion
- **Maïke Voss**, Research Division: Global Issues Associate, SWP
- **Olaf Wientzek**, Head, Multilateral Dialogue Geneva, Konrad Adenauer Foundation

Chair: **Katharina Cramer**, Research Fellow, CASSIS, University of Bonn

▶ **Keynote Speech "Human agents in pandemic scenarios"**

**4.45 p.m. – 5.15 p.m.**

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**Michael Meyer-Hermann**, Professor, Head of the Department of Systems Immunology, Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research

**Conclusion:**

**5.15 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.**

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**Maximilian Mayer**, Professor, CASSIS, University of Bonn

▶ **Digital Dinner Talk**

**6 p.m. – 8 p.m.**

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**Introduction:** **Thomas Birringer**, Deputy Head of Analysis and Consulting Department, Konrad Adenauer Foundation

**Remarks "Strategic Uncertainties and Sars-CoV2"**

**Hendrik Streeck**, Director, Institute for Virology, University of Bonn

Chair: **Katharina Cramer**, Research Fellow, CASSIS, University of Bonn

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2020

### Foresight Workshop "Transatlantic Security 2025" I

Hosted by Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom & Junge DGAP NRW/Bonn

#### Introduction and Welcoming Remarks

- 11 a.m. – 11.15 a.m.**
- **Iris Müller**, Communications Specialist, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom
  - **Philip Ackermann**, Regional Coordinator Young DGAP NRW/Bonn
- Chair: **Victoria Toriser**, Consultant for Strategic Foresight and Strategic Management, REPUCO Management Consultancy

- 11.15 a.m. – 1 p.m.**
- ▶ **Session One: Identify Key Scenarios**

- 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.**
- ▶ **Session Two: Scenario Assessment and Analyzing Consequences**
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## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2020

### Foresight Workshop "Transatlantic Security 2025" II

Hosted by Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom & Junge DGAP NRW/Bonn

- 9.30 a.m. – 10.00 a.m.**
- ▶ **Keynote: Strategic Foresight as Contribution to Strategy Development**

**Olaf Theiler**, Branch Head Future Research, Bundeswehr Office for Defence Planning

- 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.**
- ▶ **Session Three: Pick Areas of Strategic Action**

- 1.30 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.**
- ▶ **Session Four: Recommendations for Action and Strategies**

- 3:30 p.m. – 3.45 p.m.**
- ▶ **Conclusion**

- **James Bindenagel**, Senior Professor, CASSIS, University of Bonn
- **Enrico Fels**, Managing Director, CASSIS, University of Bonn

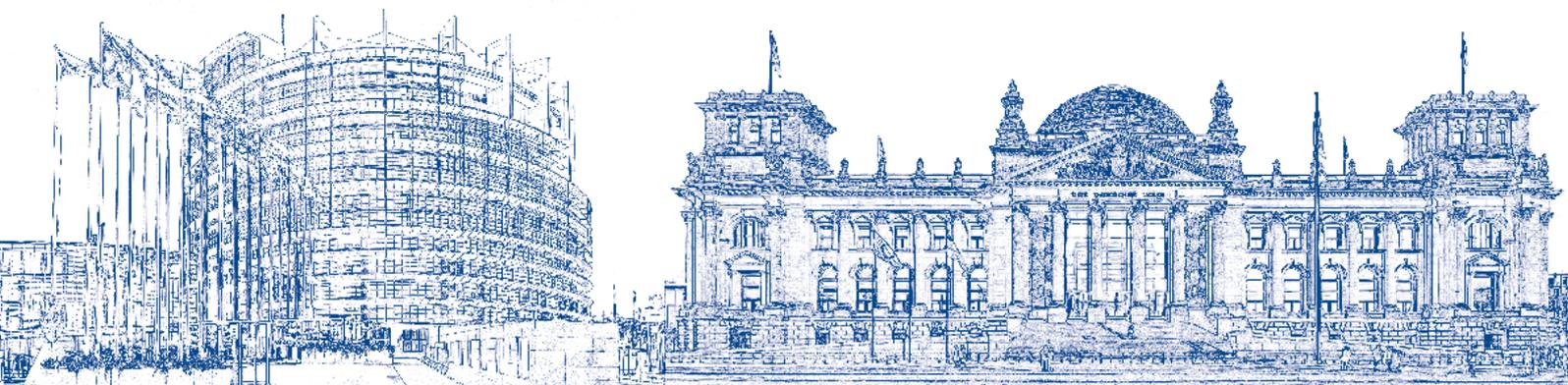


## Introduction and Presentation of Task Force Report:

This year's ISFB was officially opened by Prof. Dr. Ulrich Schlie, Henry Kissinger Professor, and Director of CASSIS at the University of Bonn. He emphasised the importance of holding the forum despite the extraordinary circumstances presented by the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic and expressed confidence that participants would be engaging in series of fruitful discussions, albeit virtually. He introduced Prof. Dr. Michael Hoch, Rector of the University of Bonn, and Prof. Dr. Volker Kronenberg, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Director of CASSIS at the University of Bonn, who both welcomed participants on behalf of the university at large and CASSIS respectively. Both expressed pride over the fact that the ISFB continues to uphold its reputation as a renowned forum for the discussion of international relations, as evidenced by the stellar collection of speakers assembled once again by the organising team.

After these welcoming remarks, the floor was turned over to Dr. Mark Speich, State Secretary for Federal, European and International Affairs of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, who proceeded to give the conference's opening keynote. State Secretary Speich underscored the importance of hosting such a forum

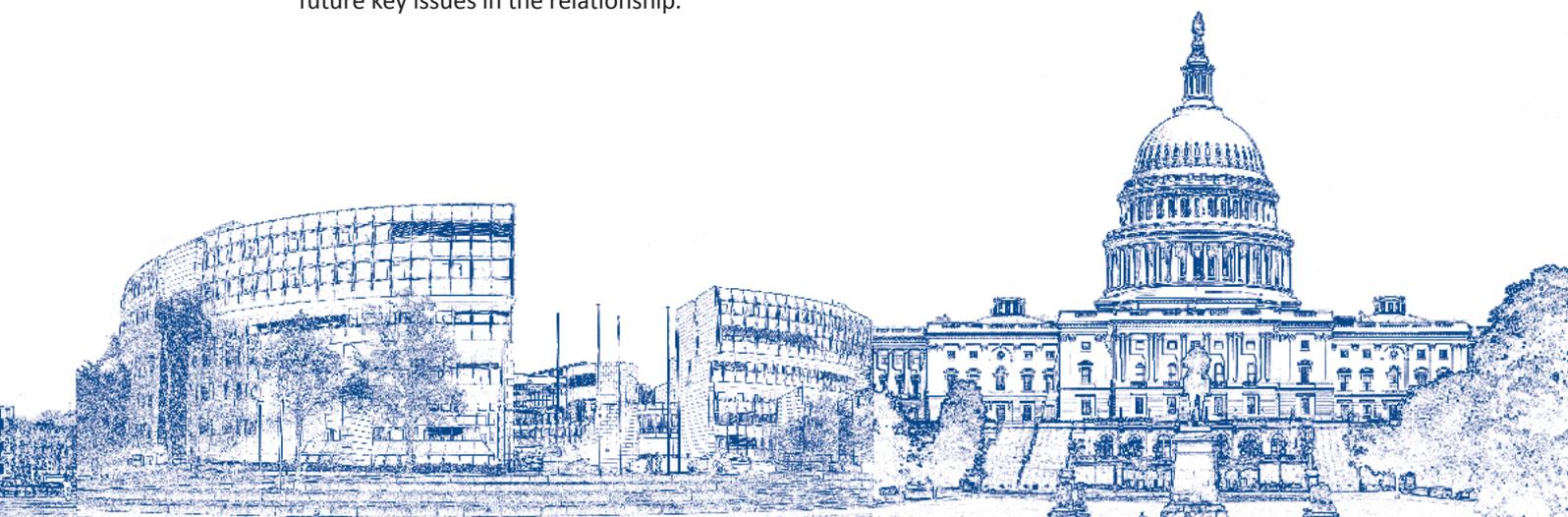
at a time of transition on both sides of the Atlantic. In the midst of an unprecedented global health crisis, with not yet finally determinable economic consequences, the United States is preparing for the inauguration of a new president, Europe is getting its bearings as the United Kingdom prepares to exit the European Union and Germany is gearing up for an historic federal election in the fall of 2021. He went on to outline how regional states such as the North-Rhine Westphalia hold an equally vital interest in stable transatlantic relations as the German federal state or the EU. North Rhine-Westphalia is, after all, State Secretary Speich explained, one of Europe's largest economic hubs with trade and commerce ties throughout the world, including to the United States. It is therefore of utmost importance that state governments play an active role in shaping the agenda for transatlantic relations going forward. In this context, forums such as the ISFB and institutes such as CASSIS are important points of contact for the state government to seek advice from experts, and State Secretary Speich expressed the hope that relations between the University of Bonn and the state government will continue to prosper as transatlantic relations entered into this new phase.



Following this opening keynote, Prof. Dr. Schlie proceeded to present the final report of the CASSIS Task Force on the Future of Transatlantic Relations, an interdisciplinary group of researchers and policy practitioners from both sides of the Atlantic, which, at the invitation of the Henry Kissinger Professorship at the University of Bonn and with the generous support of the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia, spent the latter half of 2020 working on the future framework conditions and the resulting political scope for shaping transatlantic relations. The reports starting point, as Prof. Dr. Schlie outlined, was the consideration that the current geopolitical shifts and the expected priorities of the incoming U.S. administration would require considerable efforts and new emphases from the European allies.

A further focus was the goal of formulating North Rhine-Westphalia's role and contribution in a newly defined transatlantic partnership. This includes in particular strengthening the attractiveness and competitiveness of North Rhine-Westphalia as an economic region. The guiding principle here was that in a rapidly changing world, investment prospects, competition issues, priorities, and economic policy strategies depend to an even greater extent than before on trends that must be considered in the context of geopolitical developments. In its final recommendations, the report outlined the global political framework for the future transatlantic relationship and presented concrete proposals identifying current and, above all, future key issues in the relationship.

Both Prof. Dr. Schlie and State Secretary Speich emphasised that the Task Force Report ought to be the beginning of a longer process of policy deliberations between the state government and CASSIS. Collaboratively, an effort should be undertaken to swiftly translate the report's recommendations into concrete policy actions and consider further offshoot projects to more deeply explore the points made across a range of policy areas.





**COMMENTS AND PERSPECTIVES**

Main Day:

"The Future of Transatlantic  
Relations – New Realities,  
New Ideas"

## KEYNOTE SPEECH

## What Should Germany's Role in Transatlantic Relations and in International Affairs Be?

by Niall Ferguson



*Prof. Dr. Niall Ferguson,  
Professor, Family  
Senior Fellow,  
Hoover Institution,  
Stanford University*

I start from the premise that we are no longer in the time of Chimerica. We are in Cold War II, and we have been in Cold War II since 2018, if not sooner. In this Second Cold War between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, the German question is obviously less central, less important than say, the Taiwanese question. But it's still there and I want to suggest that it is surprisingly similar to the German question as it stood 56 years ago when I entered the world. I will come back to the German question in 1964 later.

I think there are three conventional assumptions in Europe and in the United States when we talk about Germany today. The first is that Germany is the biggest of the European Union member states and its role should therefore be to lead Europe in some informal partnership with France, but not necessarily. Germany, we expect to lead Europe. The second assumption that we tend to make is, that because Germany is an export orientated economy, its relationship with China should be a friendly one and it should be a committed supporter of that liberal international order that American scholars of international relations like to talk about. The third assumption that we still tend to make, is that for historical reasons, Germany should not be a strong military power. Now, when we put

these three assumptions together, you arrive at a view of Cold War II which is very different from Germany's situation in Cold War I. Back then, Germany was divided and the two parts were on different sides of the Cold War superpower rivalry. In Cold War II there seems to be a belief, that Germany can be non-aligned, rather as say India or Yugoslavia in Cold War I. Some of you will have seen the recent Körber-Stiftung pole based on surveys carried out in September and November of this year, in which the participants were asked: "If there is a new US-Chinese Cold War, how should Germany position itself?" 12% of respondents in Germany said, it should be on the US side. Three percent said that it should be on the Chinese side. 82% said that Germany should be neutral. And this is not the only survey published this year to imply German non-alignment. Körber did one earlier back in May, that pointed to a strange state of affairs, in which suspicion of alienation from the United States was greater than suspicion of China.

Now I think this is all very wrong-headed. I think that all three of the assumptions that I started with are actually wrong. And what I want to do next is to look at the three realities of the German geopolitical and geo-economic situation.

The first point I might make is that Germany under Chancellor Angela Merkel has really struggled to give leadership to the European Union. For example, during the financial crisis – which began in the United States in 2008 but spread to Europe and lasted actually longer in Europe because it became a crisis of the Eurozone – German leadership was, I think, hard to find. We do not have time to go into the details, but it certainly could not be claimed in retrospect that the German government did a great job of mitigating the shock to the Eurozone that the financial crisis created. Missing in action again was German leadership during the Arab revolutions. German leadership was conspicuous by its absence during the migration crisis, in fact Germany acted in unilateral ways that threw the European continent to considerable confusion. And I have always felt, looking back on the events of 2016, that the German government mishandled the BREXIT crisis, gravely underestimating the risk that British voters would vote to leave the European Union if they felt that insufficient heed was paid to their concerns about migration.

Now, it is true that the agreement reached this year on the Next-Generation European Union Plan to create a European Recovery Fund funded out of Eurobonds, has been an improvement on that track record of inadequate leadership. But my sense is that historians in the future will give more credit to the French presi-

dent Emmanuel Macron than to Angela Merkel, for that breakthrough. It was Macron who declared, in an interview to the Financial Times, that if we can't do this today, "I tell you the populists will win. Today, tomorrow, the day after, in Italy, in Spain, perhaps in France and elsewhere." In any case the extent of this achievement that we have seen this year should not be exaggerated. It is a complete misreading of history to call it a Hamilton moment, an illusion to the first Treasury Secretary of the United States, Alexander Hamilton, made famous by a Hip-Hop Musical. In reality what has been done this year is nothing like what Alexander Hamilton did, which was to consolidate the debt of the founding States of the United States. This is a far less far-reaching achievement, that does not solve the fundamental problems of national public finance and countries such as Italy. The economic performance of the European countries in the crisis caused by the pandemic of COVID-19 is not in fact all that encouraging. If you look at the most recent OECD projections for the EU economies in 2020, both France and Italy are contracting by around 9.1 %, Germany by 5.5%. And this compares quite unfavorably with the US which is contracting by an estimated 3.7% and China, which is grown by 1.8% this year, despite having been the Fons Et Origo of the global disaster of Covid-19. Moreover, the OECD foresees Germany next year growing by just 2.8%.



I think there is a profound difference that needs to be explored more closely between the German and the French conceptions of Europe and that difference has grown much more profound as President Macron has reinvented himself as a Gaullist in the wake of the Gilets Jaunes protests in France. And that is why the whole notion of joined Franco-German leadership, which is a familiar trope of European politics, is far less convincing on close inspection. Remember it's only a few months ago that Macron spoke of the brain death of NATO. So, I am skeptical about the notion of German leadership of Europe, and I am especially skeptical of the notion of Franco-German leadership of Europe. The second thing I am dubious about, is that because Germany's economy is export-orientated, then Germany should have good relations with China. I have heard this numerous times from German business leaders in Beijing, where they nearly always seek to outdo their western rivals in paying homage to the red emperor Xi Jinping. But when you look at the structure of German exports its far less obvious that China is the key to Germany's economic future. Actually in 2018 the United States accounted for 8.6 % of German exports, France for 7.96%, China for 7.07%, according to the data in Ricardo Houseman's observatory of global economic complexity. In any case, Germany, according to at least some polling data – the polls carried out by Pew in the last few months – has in some way come out of denial about China as a partner. It's interesting that according to the Pew survey data the unfavourables amongst German views of China have gone up from around 46% a few years ago to 71% today, which is only slightly less than the 73% unfavourable rating of Americans in their view of China.

The third point I want to make is that far from being barred from military power, Germany urgently needs to play a bigger role in European defense, and to stop its long pattern of free riding within NATO. The increase in the German defense budget as a percentage of GDP according to the NATO data in the last seven years has been pulled free from 1.2% in 2013 to 1.57% estimated for this year, less than half the US share of GDP spent on defense, which is 3.87%. Once again, I think there is a fundamental difference in attitude between Berlin and Paris, and it was once again exposed by a difference of opinion this very month or rather last month, when Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Germany's Defense Minister, declared illusions of European strategic autonomy must come to an end.

President Macron's response was that this was a "historical misinterpretation", fortunately he added, "if I understood things correctly, the chancellor does not share this point of view".

So, my view is that the three guiding assumptions of the US-German relationship is they have emerged in recent years, are each in their different ways misleading. It is not clear that Germany is leading Europe or should lead Europe, least of all in some incoherent partnership with an increasingly Gaullist France. It's not clear that Germany should at all costs conciliate China, and it is not clear that Germany should be forever barred from paying its way within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

So, let me draw my remarks to some kind of conclusion by thinking about the implications of the events of this extraordinary year for Germany and its place in the world. Tom Weber already alluded to one important point. Germany has had a good pandemic, excess mortality has been only around six percent this year compared with French excess mortality of 15%, 24% in the US, 31% Belgium, Spain 33%, the UK 37%, Italy 38% – and I do think excess mortality is the best measure of the public health impact of this pandemic. Secondly, as I said Tom mentioned two German scientists of Turkish heritage, the founders of BioNTech, came up with the first high efficacy mRNA vaccine, in collaboration with the US pharma giant Pfizer, that must be said, but the founders of Pfizer are back in the 19th century were themselves German.

The coming of the Biden Administration is of itself going to improve transatlantic relations, but I think more in the atmospheric than in the substance, for the simple reason that Europeans – and especially Germans – tend to loathe Republican presidents and love Democrats. This is not a new feature of the Trump era, though certainly Germany swung more than almost any other country in its sentiment towards the United States when Barack Obama was replaced by Donald Trump. But I have been around long enough and spent enough time in Germany in the 1980s, as a graduate student, to remember the antipathy that many Germans felt towards Ronald Reagan. And I can remember even more vividly the antipathy that many Germans felt towards George W. Bush. So, we can brace ourselves, if that is the right phrase, for very much more harmonious mood music with Joe Biden in the White House. The question is

whether it will be anything more than ambient music. The central problem I think remains. The fundamental and growing difference between the German and French conceptions of Europe, made all the more important and visible by the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union, as well as the ongoing problems of the Russian authoritarianism and central European populism.

As I said, some of this is distinctly familiar to scholars of the Cold War. As I wrote my first volume of the Biography of Henry Kissinger, I was struck by the way he characterized the transatlantic relationship in his 1965 book, which actually began as 1964 lectures at the Council on Foreign Relations, "The Troubled Partnership". Re-reading that, I was struck by how familiar many of the problems identified by Kissinger are today. His vision of and I quote "an Atlantic Commonwealth in which all the peoples bordering the North Atlantic can fulfill their aspirations" sounds very well and good in Washington, it can even sound plausible in Bonn or now Berlin. But it proved to be fundamentally at odds with the vision of President de Gaulle. Shortly after the publication of the book, de Gaulle pulled France out of the integrated NATO command structure, declined to sign the Non-Proliferation

Treaty, and not long after that, to Kissinger's considerable unease, Germany began its first moves in the direction of an "Ostpolitik", that it was never easy for Washington to feel it had under control.

I'm left with a sense that the troubled partnership is still troubled and troubled in the same ways as it was in the first Cold War. And if Germany is to sort out its relationship with the United States, so badly weakened by the Trump Presidency, if it is to sort out its role in Europe, which I do not think has been a distinguished one during Angela Merkel's Chancellorship, there are going to have to be some hard questions asked about the three assumptions I began with:

1. That Germany is somehow naturally the leader of Europe – which I do not think it has been,
2. that Germany as an export economy should at all costs be on good terms with China – which I don't think it should be,
3. that for historical reasons Germany is entitled to shortchange the other NATO members when it comes to contributing to Europe's long-term security.

I'll leave it there.



# A Window of Opportunity: Let's Build the New West

by Peter Beyer



*Peter Beyer MdB,  
Member of the German  
Bundestag, Coordinator  
of Transatlantic  
Cooperation, Federal  
Foreign Office*

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of bipolarity, the world has – contrary to many predictions – generally become more turbulent, harder to grasp, and increasingly complex. Although the United States is still the world's only superpower, more and more observers are saying that the country is in decline. They often refer to "imperial overstretch", the term proposed by Paul Kennedy. Against this background, politicians in Germany and Europe regularly call for a reduced role of the U.S. Some speak of "decoupling", while others skirt this issue by referring to "European autonomy."

I firmly believe that the United States – although it is experiencing severe social polarization and is grappling with racism and the COVID pandemic – will remain a superpower, in particular thanks to its economic and military strength, along with its ability to innovate, especially in the field of technology. For political interaction with our ally, this means we must not take our Western ties as a given, much less let them fall into disrepair. Instead, we need to reinvest into our partnership with the United States.

Inauguration day on January 20, 2021, opened a window of opportunity: Joe Biden made us an offer we should accept. "The transatlantic alliance is back!", Biden said at the virtual Munich Security Conference. He even spoke of a "new moment in history".

This opportunity is also an obligation for us Germans and Europeans. We must, at long last, manage to forge an alliance with the United States as equal partners. We must become partners in leadership, taking up the offer that George Herbert Walker Bush made more than 30 years ago. The 21st century is still young, and it will surprise us time and again – just like 9/11, Europe's debt crisis, or the COVID pandemic were almost impossible to predict. It's all the more important that we revitalize the transatlantic partnership and make it more resilient, so that we can master future tasks and challenges.

Good policy begins with a close look at reality. "We must take the world as it is, if we want to improve it", Armin Laschet said in his first foreign policy interview as CDU chairman, which he gave to *Internationale Politik*. Against this backdrop, we must now get specific. Below, I will outline in four areas what I believe our close cooperation with the United States should look like, with the aim of building a New West.

## 1. Trade

Economic ties between Europe and the United States are essential for both sides. After a time of punitive tariffs that were unilaterally imposed by the Trump Administration, we need to finally return to rational trade policy. We are allies, and we must cooperate – and not opponents who burden each other with sanctions. When punitive tariffs have been abolished and a solution has been found for Nord Stream 2, Europe and the U.S. should take up negotiations on a free trade agreement that is built on strong standards and is fair to both sides.

We've learned from the failure of TTIP – most importantly, that we should not aim to do this in one fell swoop by addressing all issues at once. It is advisable to negotiate the chapters one by one, and to subsequently swiftly enact them. This will also help increase acceptance among the general public. Putting high-quality regulation and the highest standards in place will serve as a counterweight to the RCEP free trade agreement that has been concluded by China and 14 other states in the Asia-Pacific region.

## 2. Security

Here, the primary focus is on burden sharing, readiness, and capabilities. Germany and Europe must contribute their share – and especially help bring order to the Mediterranean area. The Middle East and North Africa are fragile regions, and the United States will be less willing to get engaged there. Russia will create geopolitical realities in all places where Europeans hesitate – prime examples are the failed states of Syria and Libya. To be able to take action and restore order, however, European cooperation in the sphere of defense must be intensified and become more efficient. At the same time, Germany should support the U.S. Navy in the South China Sea, a geopolitically important region.

Germany in particular must make up lost ground and become more agile. Our security policy structures require modernization. I am campaigning for the creation of a national security council that would coordinate foreign, security, and economic policy. There must be no doubt whatsoever that Germany is committed to NATO's two-percent target. In recent years, investments have risen steadily. But we must redouble our efforts in this regard. We owe this to our allies, as well as to the servicemen and -women of the Bundeswehr. This includes procurement of armed drones to protect the women and men that we deploy. We must just as clearly say yes to the continuation of nuclear sharing agreements, and to the modernization of this regime.



### 3. China

U.S. Secretary of State Tony Blinken has described China as "the biggest geopolitical test of this century." One thing is clear: the "land of smiles", as it is sometimes referred to, is not as welcoming of the West as we maybe thought 15 years ago. A brief look at China gives us an idea of what a world in which the Communist Party gains more influence would look like: Beijing keeps its citizens under digital surveillance, oppresses the Uighurs, and dismantles democracy in Hong Kong – in contravention of its agreement with the United Kingdom. In foreign policy, too, the Chinese are becoming more reckless, as Canada and Australia have already experienced.

The U.S. and China are on the cusp of a new Cold War that will shape the coming decades. In this situation, Germany and Europe should not see themselves as intermediaries, or even as passive onlookers. Remaining equidistant between Washington and Beijing would be as naive as it would be dangerous. Rather, in a close alliance with the U.S. and Canada, we must develop an ambitious strategy vis à vis China.

We have a number of advantages in this regard that we should make use of. China has no allies, whereas the West thrives on being a close alliance of like-minded, democratic nations. China is surrounded by states that take at least a skeptical view of its ascendant power – and we should work more closely with India and Australia in this regard. Our most important lever, however, is trade. By reforming the World Trade Organization, we must force China to finally play by the market economy rules and adhere to the standards of the West. If need be, we must impose tough sanctions.

### 4. The digital transformation

The most troubling aspect is the speed at which China is pursuing the digital transformation. In some areas, the country has outpaced Silicon Valley. This is where the ambition of the current top-level officials surrounding President Xi Jinping becomes clear: China missed the industrial revolution – and now they want to be at the forefront of the tech revolution, no matter what the cost. They have understood that whoever leads this race will ascend to superpower status.

Despite promising projects such as GAIA X, Europe is still lagging behind in the digital transformation. That could have negative economic and security policy consequences. A transatlantic approach is therefore all the more urgent in this sphere, as well. We need stronger cooperation with research that is being conducted in the U.S. and a significant increase in funding for start-ups in Germany. In parallel to this, we must encourage closer cooperation on other issues that will shape our future, such as climate, science, and health. Together, Europe and North America can set standards that will become global norms.

Ultimately, it's quite simple: Europe and the United States of America need each other. What's crucial now is not to be halfhearted. Only by acting in concert can we stabilize our Western world – which is not perfect, but better than every other world that we know. Only by acting in concert can we safeguard freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and economic prosperity.

## Biden's World

by Stefan Kornelius



Stefan Kornelius  
Head of Foreign  
Policy Department,  
Süddeutsche Zeitung

One of the eternal truths of American election campaigns is that only those who represent the antithesis of their predecessor and the dawn of a new era have a chance of becoming president. Thus, Bill Clinton embodied the antithesis of George Bush the Elder; so it was between Bush Junior and Barack Obama, and finally between Obama and Donald Trump. Joe Biden's problem: He may be the antithesis of Trump, but he comes from the past. With him, voters are buying a ticket for a trip back to the good old days, not to the future.

Joe Biden has performed below expectations in this election. He has failed to channel the unfathomable abyss that was the Trump presidency into a massive voter movement in his favor. While his mobilization ability has been tremendous, he has not seriously swayed Trump's electoral clientele. In any case, what swept Trump away was not a Biden storm. This lack of unambiguity casts a shadow over Biden's campaign. Four years of Trump have apparently not been enough to fathom the sociography of Republican voters and draw them towards the Democratic side in large numbers by making them a compelling offer.

Biden has failed to find their language and break Trump's appeal for two reasons. He can't be blamed for either. Firstly, after 26 years in the Senate and eight years in the White House, he embodies that elite of power, education, and wealth that Trump has successfully made the target of his furor. Secondly, he leads a party that also and especially represents the inclusive, multiethnic America of the larger cities, not the white America of the rural regions.

Neither of these reasons speaks against Biden as a person, but they do explain why this man in particular cannot break the polarization that Trump thrives on. It is not enough to merely be "not Trump." And it is not enough to preach about being a sinner if you are not a saint in the eyes of the church.

America has made a massive emotional decision. It testifies to a split in society along the center line. One half accepts the president's style, rule-breaking, and leadership deficiencies because their idol shines brighter still. The prospect of normalcy à la Biden has failed to convince them thus far. The other half is consumed in their outrage over Trump's style, rule-breaking, and leadership deficits – but also does not know the way out of the vale of tears of the despondent who suffer from too much speed, modernization, world pressure, and the new American demographics.

Biden's performance in swing states, his partly razor-thin lead, owes much to a show of force born of anger towards Trump. Anger at the president has mobilized – but it has also triggered a counter-mobilization that Trump is instinctively capitalizing on. It would have been wiser for Democrats to better identify – and destroy – the foundation of the Republicans' success.

That foundation is actually well-researched. A look at the fault line today, as it was four years ago, explains Trump's continued success. The tectonic fault lines of the U.S. are called education and privilege, or money. Social inequality in the country has created a vast mass of white, low-wealth, middle-, and lower-class voters without college degrees: they are Trump's loyal acolytes. Once classic voters of the labor party that used to be the Democrats, they have now defected to the right-wing populist Trump. Parallels to the fate of European social democracy are no coincidence. The nationalist-right populist Brexit was made possible by the votes of precisely this clientele, and the voters of the German AfD would vote for Trump in the United States.

Biden had the chance to make an offer to this group. Unlike the less mobile voter milieu in Europe, the willingness to change is more pronounced in the USA. Alas, the Democrats have failed to speak the language of these voters as well as to understand their needs. Their chief concerns are social advancement, job and income security, and education for their children. It is the hope that this American dream still applies to them, just as the first black president promised back in 2008.

Joe Biden now has the chance to demote the worst U.S. president ever to a chapter of deterrence in history. It would have been easier for him, had he first convinced this president's voters of the error of their ways.



# Transatlantic Relations

by Alexander Graf Lambsdorff



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Transatlantic relations underwent a serious stress test over the past four years. A tumultuous era officially ended as Joseph R. Biden Jr. was sworn in as the 46th president of the United States, promising, with Lincoln's words, "my whole soul is in it," as he prepared to lead a divided nation. The appeal to America's soul is at the heart of nearly every major Biden speech. It links empathy, respect for democracy, and unity. On his first day of the presidency, President Biden signed multiple executive orders. He rejoined the Paris Agreement, ordered the wearing of masks on federal property, and repealed the so-called Muslim travel ban. These decisions all had something in common: They reversed policies of the previous administration and were welcomed by allies around the world.

With an inauguration, a new chapter in a nation's story begins. European leaders had extended an invitation to resume closer cooperation. They had also made clear, however, that the past four years have changed the nature of transatlantic relations. Rebuilding American credibility will not be easy for the Biden administration, given the deep divisions within the U.S. and the tensions in international relations. Surveys by the Pew Research Center show that the

worldwide perception of the U.S. has suffered significantly, even among close allies like Germany, the UK, or France. The positive international response to Biden's election is a promising start, however, and gives reason for hope that these attitudes may change for the better in the medium term.

Nevertheless, turning back the clock to 2016 will not be possible: The world has changed in many significant ways, primarily with the rise of a self-confident China. Other powers like Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, or the UAE have attempted to fill the vacuum the U.S. left behind when the Trump administration renounced US leadership in many theaters around the world. Global governance structures have been affected as well and are now bending under the pressure of competing great powers. Furthermore, since political divisions within the United States run deep, bipartisan consensus in foreign policy may be hard to achieve, particularly in the Senate, making it difficult to foresee whether there will be policy continuity beyond 2024. Therefore, it is time to review common transatlantic interests and values to shape a new form of Atlantic alliance, one that is more tailored to a multipolar world.

It is very positive that President Biden believes in the idea of partnership and the value of alliances. He places considerably more importance on multilateralism than his predecessor. There are many policy areas in which the EU and the Biden administration could seek to work in unison. Reforming WTO rules to reflect the modern global economy should be of great interest to both the U.S. and the EU. Moreover, both could join forces on funding the research on challenging medical treatments like cancer, Alzheimer's or, currently, Covid. With regard to climate change, a strong transatlantic alliance could push for ambitious agreements at this year's UN climate conference. The need to promote multilateral solutions is more urgent than ever. A global "Summit for Democracy" planned to be held this year will be conceptually and diplomatically demanding, its underlying idea is valuable, however. The selection of Antony Blinken as Secretary of State also indicates another clear priority: The revitalization of U.S. diplomacy through professionalism and reliability.

Diplomatic skills are key to uniting allies around common policies, since there will be topics where tensions can easily arise, especially over trade, the approach to China and Russia, and the future of NATO. Options for Afghanistan or the future of the JCPoA need to be discussed. Long-running debates about burden sharing or aircraft subsidies will not disappear overnight. Therefore, Germany and the EU need to swiftly define and evaluate their interests in policy areas where transatlantic collaboration is essential. In addition, they could approach the Biden administration with new ideas for exploring the diversity of the transatlantic coalition instead of waiting for U.S. initiatives. A lot could be accomplished over the next four years if Germany and some other European countries were willing to take on more responsibility and contribute a fair share to resolving international issues. Major global challenges in health, security, trade, or climate protection call for a revitalization of transatlantic relations and for the restoration of trust. The EU and the United States must stand together to work towards a renewed and more balanced partnership.



*Welcoming remarks by Prof. Dr. Michael Hoch, Rector of the University of Bonn, at ISFB 2018*

# A Transatlantic Geo-Economic Compact

by Heiko Borchert



Dr. Heiko Borchert,  
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A few days after the attack on the Capitol in Washington, DC, President Joseph R. Biden promised to heal wounds – domestically and internationally. In his inaugural address on 20 January 2021 he underlined his willingness to repair alliances to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges and to lead "not merely by the example of our power but by the power of our example."<sup>1</sup>

But President Bidens open hand to the international community meets a geo-economic environment that has drastically changed since he left office as then-Vice President Biden in 2017. Norman Angell's "The Great Illusion" perhaps best captures the current state of affairs. Today the great illusion refers to the belief that globalization would make geopolitics and geo-economics irrelevant because distance and territoriality no longer matter. This ignored the fact that all economic supply lanes – at land, at sea, in the air as well as in space and cyberspace – run through geospatial corridors that are subject to national and corporate interests. There is no such thing as an interest-free geospatial corridor. That's why the forces of geopolitics and geo-economics have always been at play – even when decision-makers ignored them.

Western nations relearned this ground truth as the unipolar moment comes to an end and assertive

emerging nations are increasingly vocal in demanding their seat at the international table. The global power shift that started with the 2008/09 global financial crises has been significantly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic that has put a stark light on government failure in the West. The fading unipolar moment affects the strategic framework as it changes all constitutive elements such as norms, rules, and principles, industry standards, economic policy tenants as well as the use of different instruments of power and strategic narratives thus igniting true grand systemic competition.

The three decades that followed the end of the Cold War have been a gigantic testbed for real-life geo-economic experiments. Almost completely unchallenged, the US has perfected its geo-economic toolbox ranging from smart sanctions to technology export controls and the use of corporate monitors as well as extraterritorial security reviews. In strategic affairs, however, first mover advantages can turn toxic as peers are watching closely. So, the big question is if and to what extent other nations will use the same toolbox against the US, its allies and their companies. When it comes to sanctions levied against actors in the West, for example, most economies are badly prepared because a comprehensive understanding of the respective vulnerabilities is lacking.

<sup>1</sup> The White House (2021): Inaugural Address by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 20 January, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/>.

Against this background, Germany, the EU and the transatlantic partners need a more strategic approach to economic statecraft. **In this regard, the China challenge is first and foremost about the art of policymaking in a contested world** in which Western nations are no longer the sole dominating actors. The art of policymaking refers to the comprehensive use of all instruments of power and the synchronization of public and private actions in light of the new grand systemic competition. Under the impression of globalization, many Western governments came to believe that trade can be separated from security. This misconception needs to be corrected by joint efforts at transatlantic, European and national levels.

### Transatlantic Action Items

Traditionally, transatlantic allies have paid significant attention to military interoperability to ensure joint responses to defense challenges. **In a geo-economic environment, transatlantic partners need supply chain interoperability to provide joint responses to economic challenges.**

Today, however, supply chain interoperability is in danger. President Biden's plan to rebuild US supply chains<sup>2</sup> and the EU's idea of open strategic autonomy<sup>3</sup> can work together, but there is no autopilot guiding both sides to complementary policies unless they work hard to achieve mutually reinforcing goals. Therefore, supply chain management should become a top transatlantic priority. Four aspects are key:

- First of all, there is a need for an **instant US moratorium on supply chain disruption**. This should lead to a halt of unilateral US actions such as tariffs and sanctions against European partners and against third parties that affect Europe. At the time of writing, US President Biden is expected to sign a new executive order to review critical US supply chains. This review should be conducted in close cooperation with transatlantic allies to frame a joint understanding of the respective interdependencies and vulnerabilities.
- Analyzing supply chains in order to identify vulnerabilities puts the focus on supply chain transpar-

ency. Today, most supply chain partners are familiar with their immediate interlocutors, but beyond that darkness prevails. Whereas big companies and the public sector enjoy access to liquidity on favorable terms, smaller supply chain partners don't. This creates liquidity asymmetry along the supply chain. **Overcoming unequal access to liquidity is the strongest lever to tackle supply chain opacity.** Establishing liquidity flows among supply chain partners in return for accomplishing specific tasks monitored and verified by exchanging comprehensive data sets can significantly increase transparency. Europe should take the lead by using Gaia-X, Europe's ambitious initiative to set up an open and federated tech-ecosystem.<sup>4</sup> Gaia-X could serve as the digital backbone to ignite a new liquidity-for-data incentive mechanism to advance supply chain transparency with the help of a transatlantic tech-ecosystem open to partners in third countries.

- Third, the US and the EU need a **strategic-level dialogue to discuss the interplay of supply chain management, emerging technologies, and foreign direct investment (FDI) screening**. Divergent views on what endangers national security lead to fundamentally different criteria to assess the impact of FDI on national security. This, in turn, affects science and technology cooperation and technology sharing thus hampering supply chains and corporate agility. That's why a strategic dialogue is needed to harmonize assessment criteria and risk analyses and synchronize policy responses.
- Finally, the EU and the US need to **reinvigorate the World Trade Organization (WTO), because this is the prime instrument to stop economic decoupling**. The problem is that supply chain management cannot be discussed among the members of an exclusive democratic club as a complete withdrawal of Western corporate supply chains from emerging countries is not feasible. Thus, the need to avoid supply chain disruptions or global-scale supply chain reorganization requires constant dialogue even with strategic competitors. And the WTO is the only place where this can be done.

<sup>2</sup> <https://joebiden.com/supplychains/>.

<sup>3</sup> Sabine Weyand (2020): 'EU Open Strategic Autonomy and the Transatlantic Trade Relationship', Opening remarks, AICGS, Johns Hopkins University, 15 September, [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/united-states-america/85321/eu-open-strategic-autonomy-and-transatlantic-trade-relationship\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/united-states-america/85321/eu-open-strategic-autonomy-and-transatlantic-trade-relationship_en).

<sup>4</sup> Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy: GAIA-X. A Federated Data Infrastructure for Europe, <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Dossier/gaia-x.html>.

## European Action Items

In April 2020 Josep Borell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, signaled that Europe needs to rethink its approach to economic security amid a changing geo-economic landscape and the vulnerabilities that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the fore. In his view the creation of the single market meant "that all protection mechanisms were viewed as obstacles hindering the construction of that market. As a result, while member states progressively reduced protection to allow the single market to take shape, Europe forgot to build collective protection."<sup>5</sup>

Based on this statement and a series of policy actions adopted since then, the EU-US agenda for global change proposed by the European Commission and the High Representative<sup>6</sup> underlines the need for closer transatlantic cooperation on technology, trade, and standards. This focus is all the more important as all three policy areas constitute the core of today's geo-economic competition. In trying to find common ground with the new US administration, European action should emphasize three strategic ideas:

First, Europe should refrain from mimicking US digital platform champions. Platform champions are an epitome of the unipolar moment in international affairs that comes to an end. As more and more centers of economic and political power emerge, it will become increasingly challenging to uphold the dominance of single platforms. Rather, withstanding economic decoupling requires the EU to focus on the ties that bind economic blocs together. **Safeguarding connectivity today requires the EU think about the geoeconomic equivalent of the freedom of navigation in international law.**

Second, Gaia-X is one way to ensure geoeconomically important flows of goods, services, capital, and data in an increasingly digitized world economy. But Gaia-X and the European data strategy presented in February 2020<sup>7</sup> are still very much inward looking and focused on the single market. In contrast, **Europe should understand Gaia-X and open and federated tech-ecosystems as prime geo-economic instruments that help integrate third countries into Europe's "digital orbit"**, in order to strengthen stability and prosperity to mutual benefits. By emphasizing open architectures and open standards as well as the need to share rather than monopolize data, Gaia-X could become an important means to support Europe's concept of open strategic autonomy while at the same time upholding connectivity across different regions and bolstering transatlantic digital cooperation.

Finally, Europe should **use its connectivity strategy more vigorously** by combining foreign policy, trade and finance policy, technology development and overseas development aid to create zones of prosperity in regions of strategic importance to Europe. In the end, connectivity is all about infrastructure development. As the discussion about weaponized interdependence suggests, infrastructure constitutes a key vector of geo-economic competition as hubs and networks can be used to exert power. A European response could look at smart ports as a focal point, for example. Seaborne trade is essential for world trade, and smart ports that benefit from communication, digitalization, and automation are the main gates. A European smart port initiative designed to ensure connectivity would focus on shaping the respective standards, developing next-generation technologies, advancing governance frameworks for public-private interaction and offer attractive funding solutions in an integrated package.

5 Josep Borrell (2020): 'The post-Coronavirus world is already here', ECFR Policy Brief, p. 7, [https://ecfr.eu/publication/the\\_post\\_coronavirus\\_world\\_is\\_already\\_here/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/the_post_coronavirus_world_is_already_here/).

6 European Commission (2020): Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council. A new EU-US agenda for global change, 2 December, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0022&from=EN>.

7 European Commission (2020): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A European strategy for data, 19 February, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0066&from=EN>.

## German Action Items

As a powerful economy, Germany has taken a market-based and rules-oriented economic order for granted. But the rise of geo-economic competition constitutes a fundamental structural change in Germany's strategic environment. As a consequence, the new German government that will take office after the 2021 general election will need to make economic security a top national priority.

**Economic security emphasizes the interplay between national security, economic policy, technology, and innovation.** Economic security is meant to identify economic disruptions as early as possible in order to prevent them from arising and strengthen the coping capacity to deal with emergencies. Economic security ensures the continuity of strategic flows and makes sure that the respective infrastructure and technologies needed to enable these flows will be available at all time. To this purpose economic security nurtures and strengthens Germany's scientific-industrial ecosystem at home and in key markets abroad. Economic security adopts a comprehensive understanding of risks encompassing natural, technological, and socio-political disruptions. As corporate supply chains span different regions, economic security needs to be process-based thereby taking into account risks emanating from countries of origin, transit, and destination.

Against this background the new German government's approach to economic security will require

- **strategic-level public-private dialogue** involving the top ministries, leading multinational corporations, and the German Mittelstand to discuss the consequences of the new geo-economic environment for German business activities, identify German responses and shed light on how to best combine political and corporate efforts to protect and advance Germany's economic goals and ambitions;
- **closer synchronization of Germany's instruments of power** in particular with regard to trade, security, defense and foreign policy, research and education as well as development cooperation in order to project stability and prosperity to third countries that matter most to advance Germany's strategic agenda;
- investments in **competitive intelligence** as a key building block to understand how other nations and their corporate champions act and what how this is going to affect Germany's political and corporate leeway.



Prof. Dr. Karl  
Kaiser of Harvard  
University during  
ISFB 2019

# Transatlantic Relations: Where Do We Go From Here?

by Ulrich Schlie



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The current tectonic shifts in world politics fundamentally affect the relationship between Europe and America. China's rise, in particular, has been a cause of global power re-distribution. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will continue to change the world, reshaping politics, and society permanently. They create a new balance of power, and the United States is forced to redefine its role in world politics. The problems associated with North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Libya, Sudan, and Western Africa threaten world peace and international security. As a result, they affect the United States and Europe together. They also pose challenges to the United States' political and military position in the regions concerned. Questions of power rivalries are increasingly being played out beyond traditional intergovernmental patterns. For these reasons, the United States is more important than ever as a partner for the German economy.

Against this background, the Henry Kissinger Chair of the University of Bonn, puts a special emphasis on revitalizing transatlantic relations. In 2021 a series of events will focus on various aspects of the relationship between Europe and North America. New realities need new ideas – the motto of the International Security Forum Bonn 2020 is also reflected in the findings of an expert group which published a report in December on "Partnership in leadership- A new beginning in transatlantic relations" at the occasion of the annual Bonn Security Forum. The central message of this report is that it is high time to bring the 1989 proposal of President George H.W. Bush for a "partnership in leadership" to life out of the conviction that the United States and Europe can only master the challenges of the coming decade of the 21st century if they work together.

It is our firm belief that Europe's ability to shape security, both regionally and globally, is dependent on the political will and military capacity of the members of the European Union and Europe's other NATO member states. There is a danger that the "pivot to Asia" will lead to a further loss of Europe's strategic importance, unless the European states find their way to a "partnership in leadership" alongside the United States. The "pivot to Asia" was a logical consequence of the geopolitical shifts since the end of the Cold

War, as well as of global – i.e., technological, infra-structural, and energy industry – developments and the associated shifts at the center of gravity of the last two decades. Europe’s influence over oil and gas sources, for example, has been weakened by the growing energy independence of the United States, achieved directly through moving away from Europe’s oil and gas neighborhood in North Africa and the Middle East, and the expansion of the US domestic scale oil and gas industry. This has meant that European oil and gas interests are no longer a decisive factor in US foreign policy considerations. These developments should be incentive enough for Europe to regain its power to shape the future through cooperation and political initiatives.

Geo-economic competition is a competition for technology and business models. This requires a stronger coordination and synchronization of governmental and corporate efforts in the field of technology development in order to effectively present a competitive challenge to the international markets. Technology development will be high up on the future transatlantic agenda. This also applies to fields such as biotechnology. The fields of action in which Europe and America should shape a common future transatlantic agenda cover the entire spectrum of economic and social life. The common understanding must be that we will only be able to master the challenges together if we succeed in establishing a policy based on partnership, further deepening our relations and developing joint solutions for future challenges. We can fall

back on established and proven methods, but at the same time we must take innovative paths, develop new ideas, and prepare for the future. The prospective return of the United States to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change under President-elect Biden and the announcement of the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050 while investing in renewable energies opens up new areas of cooperation in transatlantic relations in the field of climate policy. This cooperation can also be seen as a new beginning and impetus in global climate policy. A rapprochement on the climate issue would also help to overcome the emotional alienation of many European societies from the United States and contribute to a greater sense of mutual understanding. This will succeed best if it is presented without moral lessons but rather as an offer of cooperation.

Climate policy cannot be conceived without taking energy policy into account. In this area, too, new opportunities for cooperation are opening up. Europe and America will come together again in their common belief in sustainability. Energy policy is undergoing profound change: new technologies are bringing us closer to the goal of decarbonization and creating attractive growth opportunities in the process.

The need for a foreign policy focus on climate change has the potential to bring Europeans and North Americans closer together. We will use the International Security Forum Bonn 2020 to discuss climate issues centerpiece. We know that Technological innovation,



Plenary Discussion  
during ISFB 2019

investments in sustainability, and the solution of problems caused by climate change should therefore be given political priority. The area of climate research and the development of climate-related data collection, as well as incentives for the rapid use of new technologies ready to be applied purposefully and efficiently, are directly related to this political prioritization. The return of the United States to the Paris Agreement, and the consistent pursuit of the strategic goal of climate neutrality by the year 2050 will constitute an important step in this direction.

The recommendations of the expert group report serve as a guideline for the "recovery program" for transatlantic relations of the Bonn Henry Kissinger Chair for Strategic and Security Studies at the University of Bonn, namely:

"Close cooperation and coordination on trade, technology, industrial, health, safety, environmental, human rights, and property rights issues, particularly through cooperation in international organizations.

1. Promotion of the conclusion of a transatlantic free trade, innovation, industrial goods, and investment agreement between the EU and the United States (with the prospect of opening the agreement to the regions bordering the southern Atlantic in the medium term) and a commitment to reducing industrial goods tariffs, non-tariff trade barriers, and red tape.
2. Geo-economic and geostrategic coordination and the development of a common risk early warning infrastructure; the creation of a common China strategy; joint securing of supply routes, supply chains, raw materials, and technologies.
3. The annual preparation of a "Strategic Risk and Prevention Report." This report should be prepared in close cooperation between transatlantic think tanks, the American Chamber of Commerce, and leading German business associations. In a comprehensive risk analysis, geostrategic and geo-economic perspectives could be combined and global and regional risks for prosperity, innovation, and security could be regularly recorded and evaluated. The requirements of this report include a particular emphasis on evaluating the progress of linking developments in the energy industry and telecommunications, critical infrastructure issues, and artificial intelligence with security policy issues.
4. Joint promotion of hydrogen technology and infrastructure; the development of a common technological standard for green hydrogen; the creation of a common hydrogen market; cooperation in the financing and promotion of innovation in the field of hydrogen; the creation of a green hydrogen fund and living laboratories as well as coordination and synchronization in the field of technology development, in particular biotechnology.
5. The establishment of a joint data collection on climate research.
6. The strengthening of the role of the Coordinator of Transatlantic Cooperation with a view to pooling and encouraging initiatives from government institutions, foundations, associations, and private patrons, also with the aim of intensifying further scientific cooperation."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Partnership in Leadership: A New Beginning. New Impulses for Transatlantic Relations", January 2021.

# Religious Values, Democracy, and the Future of Transatlantic Bonds

by Thomas Weber



*Prof. Dr. Thomas Weber,  
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In much of the Global North, the global crisis of democracy has been one of values, norms, and of polarization, not in the first instance one of institutional design. The fabrics of liberal democracy has been disintegrating. As a result, democratic polities have been floundering. And both transatlantic and inner-European bonds have been fraying.

One of the greatest challenges of our times thus is to find an answer as how to reweave the fabrics of democracy and how to rebuild a sense of common transatlantic bonds. How can we return to a more depolarized mode of politics, not one of enemies, but one of adversaries, marked by dignity, civility, and mutual respect, and thus heal democracy? How can people focus, not on what stands between them, but on what unites them and thus be able to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities that stand before them?

There is an urgent need to find answers to these questions. One curiously underexplored way of addressing these existential challenges is to look at the role of religious beliefs in public life in the second decade of the 21st century. Even though organized

religion has been in retreat in parts of Western Europe, religious beliefs continue to be paramount in much of the rest of the world. Even where religious beliefs have seemingly all but disappeared from public life, secularized versions of Christian values and ideas continue to be omnipresent. And, as history teaches that times of crises tend to go hand in hand with religious revival, the confluence of economic crises, global transformations, pandemics, and natural disasters is likely to fuel a surge of religiosity for years to come.

We thus urgently need to investigate the role religious beliefs have played in producing the current crisis of democracy, and what role they may play in repairing democracy as well as transatlantic and European bonds. We need to understand better the conditions under which religious beliefs foster democracy, and under which they hollow out liberal democracy. We need to look at the role that religions have played, do play, and can continue to play in the political life of democratic societies in what seems likely to remain an era marked by a disruptive and iconoclastic populism.

We need to consider the relationship of both pluralism and democracy with Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Sikh and Hindu beliefs, the religions of First Nations and native Americans, and the many other religions that make the Global North such a culturally rich and diverse region of the world in the 21st century. I am using the case of the nexus of Christianity and democracy as an exemplar on how religious values may facilitate a reweaving of the fabrics of democracy and of transatlantic bonds.

Rather than look at the interplay of different modes of Christianity and democracy in the Global North in isolation from each other, it will be more productive to bring three selected modes of Christian democracy into conversation with each other, with the aim of identifying areas in which a crossbreeding might help strengthen democracy:

1. The West and South European tradition that defines and labels itself explicitly as Christian Democracy (i.e. Christian Democracy in capital letters);
2. North American and European traditions in which religious identities and beliefs sustain politics but are not explicitly conceptualized as Christian democracy; and
3. the post-Communist revival of a nexus of Christianity and democracy in East Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe.

The goal here is to bring the different strands of Christian democracy into conversation, not just with each other, but also with other forms of religious democracy and of secular non-religious modes of democracy. While I am proposing that, at least in the first instance, we should explore the nexus of Christianity and democracy in Europe and North America, the ultimate goal has to be to explore how democracy can be strengthened with values that are fully compatible with those of the Global South. This would create the precondition for the creation (and strengthening) of a democratic and economic bloc encompassing both the south and the north Atlantic. In other words, the rebuilding of transatlantic bonds is both a goal in its own right, and a means to an end: for the creation of an Atlantic union of the Americas, Europe, and Africa.

We will be able to find answers to the challenges laid out here, if we break them down into manageable pieces. An obvious still fairly broad question to ask is what the role of mainstream political parties with an explicitly Christian heritage can be in an increasingly secular age. Are they more or less able to confront populist rivals to their political left or right? And what is the role of Christianity in new populist parties? Is there an identifiably Catholic or evangelical Protestant way of 'doing' democracy, understood as practical politics, and does that differ from country to country? Does the term 'Christian Democracy', as understood in much of Europe, retain any specifically Christian meaning, and if so, what is that meaning? What role can Christian modes of democracy play in addressing and defusing populist discontent? These are obvious questions to ask.



Group photo of  
the ISFB 2018  
participants

Yet it is of equal importance to address less obvious ones that nevertheless determine the degree to which religious values will, or won't, be able to reinfuse democracy with life. Amongst them are: Why is Christian faith less controversial in some political cultures than in others? Why is personal faith embarrassing in a British prime minister, accepted in a German chancellor, and expected in an American president? And even if the crisis did not start with a crisis of institutions are our institutions still fit for purpose, or do they need to be reformed?

Looking at Europe to the east of the former Iron Curtain, the most pressing challenge it to understand as to why post-Communist Christian democracy resulted in some cases in the hollowing out of democracy, while in others it has produced what looks like sustainable liberal democracy? A fascinating case to study here is that of Montenegro, due to the resurgent importance of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the country.

Moreover, we should turn to the Global South for inspiration as to how depolarization can be brought about and how democracy can heal. For instance, the emergence of consensus politics in 1980s Chile (and the role played by Christian Democrats) might provide a model for the Global North on how to depolarize politics. It is also worth asking if the history of West European Christian Democracy between the 1940s and 1960s may serve as a model for defusing polarized, undemocratic societies and fostering democratization and deradicalization.

The Catholic majority on the bench of the U.S. Supreme Court, the election of Joe Biden, as well as more broadly the rising prominence of Hispanics in public life in America, meanwhile, point to a fundamental transformation of America. Protestantism, while having been the midwife of American democracy, is no longer its sole guardian. What is thus the future of Catholic democracy in the United States? And how does it interact with the various incarnations of American Protestant democracy?

It would be particularly promising to look at the role of Catholic social theory, rather than that of liberal Catholicism, in President Biden's approach to politics as well as that of American Catholics more broadly. This would allow us to consider if a secularized version of Catholic social theory may be able to help restore the fabrics of American democracy and build bridges to Latin American and European modes of democracy. Following from that emerges the question as to whether religious beliefs may be able to give structure and stability to the international system at a time at which liberal formal institutions and norms as the foundation of the international system are under attack.

As long as religious values do not run counter to pluralism, different religion traditions can be brought into conversation with each other. If we can identify their points of convergence in a pluralist world, they can function to create a set of democratic values shared on both sides of the Atlantic.

Religious values are of course not a panacea to solving all the problems of democracy and international affairs. Quite to the contrary, they can frequently facilitate the emergence of illiberal democracy. Moreover, religious fundamentalism frequently produces polarization, fragmentation, democratic collapse, and war. However, while there is a continued urgent need to understand the nexus of religious values, illiberal democracy, and conflict, it is an even more urgent, and even more important task to look at the nexus of religious values and democratic revival. We need to become as interested in healing democracy as we are in studying how things blow up. Understanding the success factors of the interplay of religious values and democracy will aid us in reinvigorating liberal democracy and in rebuilding strong Transatlantic bonds.

# The Future of the Transatlantic Relationship

by Detlef Wächter



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In January, Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer described 2021 as *"a year of new departures in security and defense policy."* The following principles should guide the transatlantic relationship in 2021:

## First

NATO is and remains the anchor of our security in Europe. We should therefore seize the opportunity offered by the new U.S. administration under President Joe Biden for the urgently needed revitalization of the transatlantic relationship. However, this also requires that all NATO member states provide adequate capabilities and resources and meet agreed planning targets. Reliable funding for our armed forces, as called for in the position paper *"Reflections on the Bundeswehr of the Future"*, must therefore also be ensured against the backdrop of resource constraints imposed by Covid-19. Simultaneously, to strengthen NATO's political dimension, a reflection process was launched in 2019 on Germany's initiative. The recommendations made by an external group of experts contributed substantially to the debate on adapting NATO to future challenges. A summit of NATO heads of state and government this summer is also expected to give the go-ahead for updating NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept.

## Second

A strong Europe in the area of security and defense is an indispensable element of the transatlantic partnership. The milestones achieved during the German presidency of the Council of the EU, such as the finalization of the joint EU threat analysis, or the agreement on a regulation on the participation of third countries in PESCO projects, will further increase the EU's resilience and ability to act. The task now is to continue consistently along this path to further strengthen the EU's role as an actor in international crisis management.

## Third

The EU's defense policy measures are complementary and do not contradict NATO's increased defense and adaptation efforts. NATO will continue to expand its range of capabilities, benefiting from the stronger European commitment to security. We will continue to promote cooperation between the EU and NATO, an important goal of the German presidency of the Council of the EU.

#### Fourth

Alongside our partners, we will have to face a broad spectrum of security challenges in the coming years. In addition to the current pandemic, the list ranges from Islamist terrorism to Russia's massive rearmament on NATO's eastern border, the rise of China, which is also relevant in terms of security policy, cyber threats, including political disinformation campaigns, space security, and the consequences of climate change. Both NATO and the EU must therefore understand resilience as one of their core tasks – not as a substitute for our deterrence and defense capabilities, but as a necessary complement.

Finally, Germany and the Bundeswehr remain active on operations abroad and have been involved in Afghanistan for 20 years. The intra-Afghan peace process is the only solution for the future of Afghanistan. We will accompany this development within the framework of our NATO alliance until the alliance considers that the conditions for an orderly withdrawal from Afghanistan have been met.

#### Fifth

More than ever, the so-called "*Munich Consensus*" of 2014 applies, to which we must now add a "*Munich Consensus of Action*," in the words of Defense Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer. Due to its size, strength, and geographic location, Germany has a special responsibility to stabilize the challenged liberal international order.

Jeffrey Rathke  
giving a talk  
during ISFB 2018



# European Strategic Autonomy and the Revived Transatlantic Partnership

by *Iulian Romanyshyn*



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The post-Cold War transatlantic relations have been fraught with the law of opposite effects. When the relationship is vibrant, Europe's defence cooperation stagnates. When the relationship is in trouble, Europeans pull themselves together to advance their security and defence interests. During the Clinton presidency Europeans have comfortably outsourced to Washington military crisis management in the Balkans. In contrast, a major transatlantic rift over the Iraq war during the Bush administration triggered the launch of the European Security Strategy and a bulk of EU military operations under the European Security and Defence Policy banner. The EU-US relations were back on an even keel during the Obama era, the time when Europeans haphazardly reduced their defence budgets and lost a great share of their military capabilities.

Come Donald Trump to the White House followed by the deepest crisis of confidence among transatlantic allies in decades, Europeans re-energized their defence integration with a set of new initiatives, such as permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund (EDF). It is therefore somewhat logical and far from unexpected that when Joe Biden has emerged as a winner of the 2020 US presidential elections, there yet again has been a heightened risk that Europeans would fall back into

a lazy, self-defeating mindset of dependency on the US military shield. Breaking this pattern of reverse effects and avoiding European complacency is crucial for a healthy transatlantic partnership moving forward, but it requires concerted efforts on both sides of the Atlantic.

## European Defence in the Age of 'America First'

Four years of the Trump administration have been a rough ride for Europeans. Instead of a familiar partner and a reliable leader, Europeans faced unpredictable and erratic Washington that sought – under the guise of 'America First' doctrine – short-term economic gains and bilateral deals with member states at the EU's collective expense. On President Trump's watch, the US pulled troops out of Syria with no warning to allies, announced a drawdown of 12,000 US soldiers stationed in Germany as a personal snub to Chancellor Angela Merkel, actively encouraged anti-European nationalist forces across the continent and allegedly attempted to strike 'a grand bargain' with Vladimir Putin's Russia over European heads. Trump's criticism of NATO as just another 'bad deal' for America and his initial refusal to guarantee the US commitment to European security, something every US president

since NATO's founding in 1949 did upon entering office, sent shockwaves across Europe and left many allies in disarray. A recent US Senate report on the legacy of Trump's foreign policy admitted that in treating Europe (and other allies) as an adversary and competitor America under Trump has not been much different from Russia and China which sow divisions within the Western alliance and exploit Europe's vulnerabilities as a matter of systematic policy.<sup>1</sup>

The Trump administration has also shown reluctance – if not outward hostility – to fully embrace the EU's renewed efforts in defense cooperation. When the EU launched PESCO in 2017 and proposed the EDF a year earlier, multiple US officials expressed concerns that these initiatives could weaken NATO and fence off American defense companies from participating in procurement of European military equipment. US Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchinson cautioned PESCO against becoming 'a protectionist vehicle' for the EU adding a thinly veiled warning: '[I]f that becomes the case, then it could splinter the strong security alliance that we have'.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Washington characterized restrictions and a lack of clarity on participation of non-EU members in PESCO military projects as a 'poison pill' that could raise a risk of retaliatory measures.<sup>3</sup> The US lukewarm attitude towards the enhanced EU defence cooperation reflected a narrow, transactional approach of the Trump administration to international partners, the one that leverages American defence commitments to extract economic benefits. More importantly, Washington's skepticism has reawakened the language that many considered a thing of the past – better known as former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's 'three D's' – about dangers of a nascent EU defense identity that would duplicate NATO capabilities, decouple European decision-making from alliance structures and discriminate against non-EU NATO members.

## A Resurgent Europe?

While it is easy to disagree with Trump's self-serving motives and bullying methods, he had a point about criticizing Europeans for not sufficiently shouldering defence responsibilities with the US. If the Trump presidency has achieved anything, it is a long overdue conversation about future of European security and Europe's place in the transatlantic alliance. Previous US administrations also slammed Europeans for shallow defence spending and free riding on security, but the shocking prospect of the US rejecting NATO's mutual defence pledge and walking away from its allies pressed Europeans out of their comfort zone. 'The times when we could completely count on others, they are over to certain extent', bluntly declared Merkel shortly after meeting Trump at the G7 Summit in May 2017.<sup>4</sup>

As a result, Europeans quickly boosted their defence budgets. In 2016, only 5 member states were spending at least 2% of their GDP on defence in line with NATO commitments, while the number grew to 10 in 2020.<sup>5</sup> Germany alone increased its military spending by 35% since 2016. In November 2017, 25 EU member states launched PESCO, which has been widely perceived as a watershed moment for EU defence cooperation.<sup>6</sup> Together with the €7 billion EDF, PESCO aims at enhancing joint development of EU defence capabilities, increasing investment in defence research and technology and improving the availability of deployable armed forces. At present, PESCO includes 47 collaborative projects, twelve of which are said to be reaching operational capacity.<sup>7</sup>

Galvanized by their opposition to President Trump, Europeans actively embraced the goal of strategic autonomy. In fact, this ambition had been articulated before Trump even took office, foremost in the 2016 EU Global Strategy. The Strategy, however, did not spell out an operational definition of the concept which made EU strategic autonomy in security and

1 Bob Menendez (2020): 'The Cost of Trump's Foreign Policy: Damage and Consequences for U.S. and Global Security', Report to the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Washington, 21 October, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/download/2020-sfrc-minority-report-the-cost-of-trumps-foreign-policy--damage-and-consequences-for-us-and-global-security>.

2 US Mission to the NATO (2018): Press Briefing by Ambassador Kay Bailey Hutchinson, 13 February, <https://nato.usmission.gov/february-13-2018-press-briefing-ambassador-kay-bailey-hutchinson/>.

3 Guy Chazan, Michael Pell (2019): 'US Warns Against European Joint Military Project', Financial Times, 14 May, <https://www.ft.com/content/ad16ce08-763b-11e9-bbad-7c18c0ea0201>.

4 Khatya Chhor (2017): 'Merkel's blunt speech sparks fears of rupture in transatlantic pact', France24, 29 May, <https://www.france24.com/en/20170529-merkel-comments-fears-fracturing-transatlantic-usa-alliance-trump-eu-brexite>.

5 NATO (2020): 'Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2020)', Press Release, 21 October.

6 Sven Biscop (2018): 'European Defence: Give PESCO a Chance', *Survival*, Vol. 60 (3), 161-180.

7 Council of the European Union (2020): 'Council Conclusions on the PESCO Strategic Review 2020', 20 November.

defence a subject of controversy and uneven understanding. France, the most enthusiastic advocate of a stronger and capable EU in world affairs, stressed the need for the bloc to build independent defence assets and capabilities in order to be prepared for a day when the US is no longer willing or able to guarantee European security. Reducing dependence on the US is a sensible response to the perceived unpredictability of Uncle Sam. Yet, this maximalist articulation of strategic autonomy exposed a fear – especially among the Baltic States – that ‘a hedge can become a wedge’ leading to irreversible erosion of security ties with the US.<sup>8</sup> Paris’ push for European strategic autonomy has thus far been often misinterpreted as a call for strategic transatlantic decoupling, even though President Emmanuel Macron made it clear that European defence cooperation should not be conceived as an alternative to NATO.<sup>9</sup> When it comes to Germany, it frames strategic autonomy differently. For Berlin, what counts is an effort to strengthen the European pillar of NATO as a way to further anchor the US in Europe and to commit states on the Eastern flank to both the EU and NATO. ‘We must become more European in order to remain transatlantic’, as Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer summed it up.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the widespread confusion about the meaning of strategic autonomy, one thing is clear – Europeans are in a broad agreement that they have to take more responsibilities for their own defence. The real issue is what Europe can bring to the table in terms of capabilities and willingness to use them. This includes traditional capability shortfalls, such as strategic airlift and air-to-air refuelling, and the operational gaps related to new security challenges, be it missile defence, anti-drone capability or hybrid threats management. That said, development of defence capabilities cannot be an end in itself and therefore the ultimate question regarding European defence cooperation remains ‘what for?’. A recent survey conducted among defence officials and experts has revealed a balanced three way split among the preferences for acting worldwide, acting in crises around Europe or acting to protect the homeland.<sup>11</sup> In this context, EU member states started to work on a ‘Strategic Compass’, a new political military document to be adopted in 2022 during the French EU Presidency. The document is a welcome initiative as it intends to refine operational goals of EU security and defence policy based on a common analysis of threats and challenges.



Group photo of the ISFB 2019 participants

8 Jens Ringsmose, Mark Webber (2020): 'No time to hedge? Articulating a European pillar within the Alliance', NDC Policy Brief.

9 Elysee (2020): President Emmanuel Macron's speech at the Munich Security Conference 2020, 15 February, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/15/conference-sur-la-securite-de-munich-faire-revivre-leurope-comme-une-puissance-politique-strategique>.

10 Federal Ministry of Defence (2020): Keynote speech by the German Federal Minister of Defence at the Helmut Schmidt University in Hamburg, 19 November, <https://www.bmvg.de/en/news/second-keynote-speech-german-minister-of-defence-akk-4503976>.

11 Dick Zandee et al. (2020): 'European strategic autonomy in security and defence: now the going gets tough, it's time to get going', Clingendael Report.

## A New Transatlantic Bargain

With ‘America is back’ message, Joe Biden has naturally stirred up an enticement on both sides of the Atlantic of a return to ‘business as usual’, in which America leads the world and Europe plays a supporting role. This wish is unlikely to come true. Trump has done considerable damage to the notion of US leadership, while China and Russia have chipped away at the liberal international order increasing their global clout at Washington’s cost. Europe’s Eastern and Southern neighborhoods are in turmoil amid the strains of the UK’s exit from the EU. To make things worse, the coronavirus pandemic has had devastating effects on Western economies pushing many countries to look inward and, as a consequence, pay lip service to security and defence. All these challenges bolster the case for stronger ties between America and Europe, but to remain relevant the transatlantic alliance needs to be reinvented, rather than simply restored.

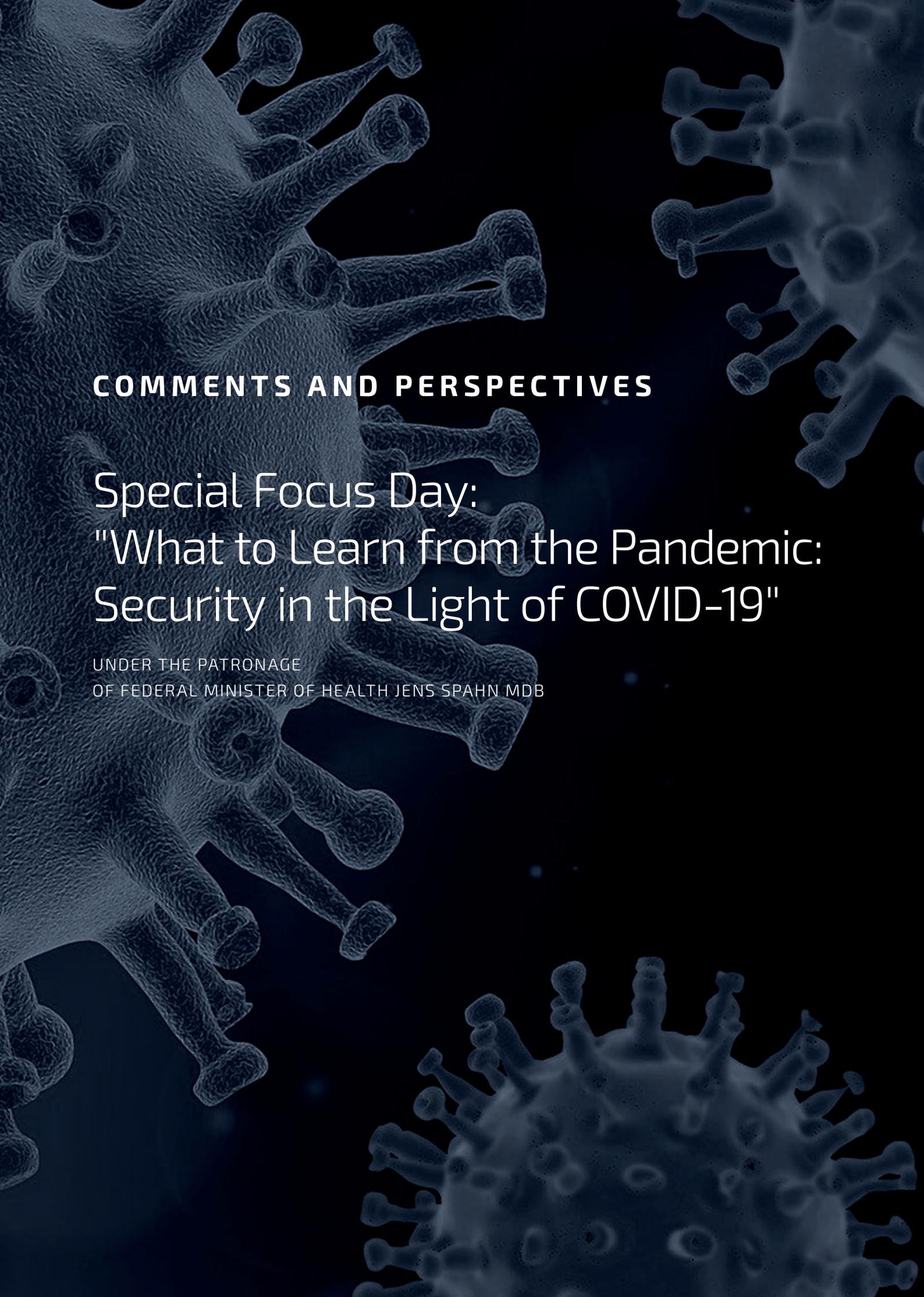
With respect to the US, the Biden presidency should avoid following the footsteps of previous administrations’ schizophrenic approach to European defence consisting of simultaneous complaints that Europeans don’t do enough and do too much. The US will be well-advised to embrace PESCO and endorse the goal of European strategic autonomy. This would send a powerful signal to sceptics within the EU that less dependent and more self-reliant Europe is not incompatible with NATO, but rather is a precondition for a revitalized transatlantic alliance. Today senior members of the US defence establishment prudently acknowledge that America cannot protect itself without the help of others.<sup>12</sup> It is in the American interest to have more capable European armed forces supported by more consolidated European industrial base, even though this may imply a certain loss of export markets for US defence companies. The new US philosophy should be guided by a principled belief that dangers of Europeans doing less are always greater than dangers of Europeans doing more.

When it comes to Europe, the critical task is to continue building its strategic autonomy in security and defence in the absence of mobilizing pressure and head-on rhetoric coming out of the White House. Rather than waiting for signals from Washington, Europeans should actively engage the Biden administration to discuss a new architecture of collective burden-sharing wherein France, Germany and others take the lead in certain areas, while the US assumes a supporting role. The European Commission’s proposal of a structured EU-US Security and Defence Dialogue is a good start.<sup>13</sup> A more balanced and equal transatlantic alliance implies, at the very least, Europeans taking over a lion’s share of responsibilities related to conflict resolution and crisis management in Europe’s neighborhood, including conventional defence and deterrence against Russia. Regardless who sits in the White House in 2024, Europeans should seize the opportunity offered by a new pro-European American government to redefine Europe’s place in the transatlantic partnership.

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12 Kori Schake et al. (2020): ‘Defense in Depth: Why U.S. Security Depends on Alliances – Now More Than Ever’, Foreign Affairs, 23 November.

13 European Commission (2020): Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: A New US-EU Agenda for Global Change, 2 December.

The background of the entire page is a dark blue, almost black, field filled with numerous microscopic images of coronavirus particles. These particles are spherical with a textured surface and are covered in numerous spike-like protrusions, characteristic of coronaviruses. The particles are scattered across the frame, with some appearing larger and more detailed than others, creating a sense of depth and scale.

**COMMENTS AND PERSPECTIVES**

Special Focus Day:  
"What to Learn from the Pandemic:  
Security in the Light of COVID-19"

UNDER THE PATRONAGE  
OF FEDERAL MINISTER OF HEALTH JENS SPAHN MdB

## Welcoming Remarks by Federal Minister Jens Spahn



*Jens Spahn MdB,  
Federal Minister of  
Health*

### Dear participants of the ISFB 2020 Special Focus Day!

In many areas of our lives including healthcare, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought many changes – last but not least – given a boost to digitization. The IT infrastructure is currently under particular strain. Moreover, cyber-criminals are taking advantage of the crisis situation to make profit.

It is obvious, that a combination of Coronavirus and computer virus is especially dangerous, as one alone can lead to death. This is why IT security is, besides distance and hygiene measures, particularly important in times of pandemics. Recent cyber security incidents, such as at the Düsseldorf University Hospital, demonstrate the risks of cyberattacks on healthcare structures. Suddenly, the abstract danger becomes reality. It shows that this is about nothing less than the maintenance of healthcare and thus, the saving of human lives.

A growing number of cyber criminals are seeking to capitalize on the vulnerabilities of the healthcare sector during this crisis. Hospital servers are encrypted by malware, intellectual property such as data relating to Covid-19 vaccine development, modelling, and experimental therapeutics, is stolen.

In these times of worldwide crisis firstly, we must invest in resilience, secondly, create trust and thirdly, strengthen the European Union and the international

organisations in which we are involved. Therefore, the federal government also finances investments in the cyber security of hospitals – which are our backbone in fighting the pandemic – with a 4 billion funding program. 15% of the funds must be spent on IT security for each individual digitization project. Pure cybersecurity projects are also funded separately, for example defence against attacks, next generation firewalls, or detection of attacks – intrusion detection systems. Furthermore, the federal government provides the telematics infrastructure for secure communication in the healthcare system.

One lesson that we have learned during the crisis is, that the trust of the population is of central importance for the success of all measures, including those offered by the federal government. We have seen that public trust is key. We have experienced that transparency creates trust. Thus, it was an important concern of the federal government, that the program code of the Corona warning app developed on behalf of the government was made available as open source and thus, became transparent and easier to understand for civil and developer society. Because transparency is the best remedy against uncertainty and mistrust, lastly, we Europeans must acknowledge the geopolitical importance of key digital technologies. We need both access to and control of the key security technologies.

I wish you all a good exchange today and most of all: Good health!

# What to Learn from the Pandemic: Security in the Light of COVID-19

by Ilona Kickbusch



Prof. Dr. Ilona Kickbusch,  
Director, Global Health  
Centre, Geneva

How must we learn from the COVID19 pandemic? The first thing we have learned is that the crisis is with us for much longer than many anticipated. This has made it much more difficult for all stakeholders to think NOW beyond the present crisis, even though that is the most critical thing we must do, if we want to be more prepared for future crisis. At the political level two big questions loom: how we better prepare the multilateral system to engage in an equitable global response to pandemics and how we "pandemic proof" our democracies. Indeed, looking forward we must ask: what type of crisis must both the multilateral system and democracies be prepared for? How can all people be protected?

This requires a transformatory approach which is based in three big resets in

- **Mindset: Rethinking our approach to security in a global risk society**
- **Governance: Shaping collective preparedness and response**
- **Resources: Ensuring reliable financing mechanisms for global public goods.**

## Mindset

There are at least three major mindset issues we need to address as we consider security today.

First, we need to recognize that we are navigating in a very changed landscape of human and planetary health and wellbeing. We live in the Anthropocene, which is defined by the accumulation of risks – ecological, pandemic, financial, social, military, terrorist, biochemical, and informational – all of which are interconnected and feed off each other. Not only do we face many crisis, we must understand that each crisis – no matter in which sector it emerges – will have many dimensions and lead to an accumulation of risk. The Munich Security Conference in a recent publication speaks of the coronavirus pandemic as a poly pandemic – "a multifaceted crisis that threatens core development goals like equality and food security but that also endangers key democratic principles and international cooperation as a whole." This indicates that every crisis in the Anthropocene has a significant political dimension at the national and at the international level. This larger pattern of risk has a name: the global risk society. Because of the nature of these risks, we cannot exit: no one is safe until all are safe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sophie Eisentraut, Luca Miehe, Laura Hartmann, Juliane Kabus, "Poly pandemic: Special Edition of the Munich Security Report," Munich: Munich Security Conference (MSC), November 2020, <https://doi.org/10.47342/CJA03231>.

Second, we need to better consider the manifold social dimensions of any crisis. The COVID19 pandemic has taught us that there can be no health security without social security. The social contract matters – nationally and globally. We do have a sort of global social contract that we call the Sustainable Development Goals, hoping to leave no one behind by the year 2030. Yet as the World Bank has calculated the COVID19 pandemic will push an additional 88 million to 115 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, with the total rising to as many as 150 million by 2021, depending on the severity of the economic contraction. But the social contract means much more than that.<sup>2</sup>

As Yves Daccord has indicated: in many countries significant tensions have arisen over the management of Covid-19 and what it means for each person and for society. He maintains that in many countries there is no longer any incentive to seek a minimum of understanding and consensus. The issues he maintains will define our future are trust, data, safety, and cooperation.<sup>3</sup>

Third, the High-income countries in the Western World need to overcome the dominant narrative as to who is advanced and who is backwards and recalibrate the notion of knowledge and expertise. The lack of preparedness is also a mind frame. Clearly a range of

Asian countries dealt better with the pandemic than many countries in Europe and the USA, yet their experiences – also related to previous outbreaks like SARS – were not considered relevant. The lockdowns and digital tracing introduced by China were initially only seen through ideological eyes – as measures that only an autocratic society would implement, rather than considering them through a public health perspective. This made it even more difficult to explain such measures to the populations in the Western democracies when they proved necessary. In the same way the approach to vaccination is seen mainly through Western eyes, also in the development community.

Many Western countries are finding it hard to gear up vaccinating their populations – meanwhile India, China, Nigeria, and Indonesia, some of the most populous countries in the world are moving forward with high speed. India hopes to have vaccinated 300 million of its 1.3 billion people by August. It has trained more than 200,000 vaccinators and 370,000 team members for the rollout; 29,000 cold storage units are ready to transport and hold the vaccine safely. Two vaccines have been given emergency approval: the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, known in India as Covishield, and a domestic product, Covaxin, developed by the pharmaceutical company Bharat Biotech.



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- 2 World Bank: "COVID-19 to Add as Many as 150 Million Extreme Poor by 2021." Press Release 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/07/covid-19-to-add-as-many-as-150-million-extreme-poor-by-2021>.
- 3 Daccord, Yves: "It's time to build a new social contract and reflect on what unites us all." 2021, <https://genevasolutions.news/peace-humanitarian/yves-daccord-it-s-time-to-build-a-new-social-contract-and-reflect-on-what-unites-us-all>.

## Governance

From a political perspective it is not true that viruses do not discriminate; they feed off the political, economic, and social flaws in our societies and so take on the features of those respective societies. They put the spotlight on just how unequal, unhealthy, racist, and misogynist many societies are. The virus exploits system weaknesses in every way, nationally and regarding regional and international collaboration. Looking back some key malfunctions can be identified:

- **Nationalism:** The first call was to "save ourselves," spearheaded by the very country that had been at the centre of creating the United Nations, but also in Europe (especially in the early phases of the pandemic). Nationalist perspectives also led to political divides within countries. A new word and concept entered the global health vocabulary: vaccine nationalism. It describes the extent to which countries prioritize their domestic vaccine needs at the expense of others but also includes the use of making vaccine available to other countries with a national geopolitical gain in mind. This then is also referred to as vaccine diplomacy.

- **Global instruments:** several global instruments were experienced in all their limitations. Especially the constraints the WHO was under when following the International Health Regulations became abundantly clear. Especially Western Countries did not heed the declaration of a Global Health Emergency of International Concern in late January, many countries did not follow the IHR agreements in relation to travel bans and China did not concur fully with the notification and transparency requirements of the IHR. All these issues will now be reviewed in various commissions. The European Union has now proposed and International Pandemic Treaty to coordinate a global response to future outbreaks.

Agreements in the WTO multilateral trading system are also being questioned, as the TRIPS agreement and the DOHA Declaration are confronted with intellectual property agreements combined

with vaccine nationalism that hinders the fair distribution of vaccines around the world. A proposal has been submitted by India and South Africa for a temporary waiver of certain TRIPS obligations they say would facilitate an appropriate response to COVID-19. The proposal suggests a waiver for all WTO members on the implementation, application and enforcement of certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement in relation to the "prevention, containment or treatment" of COVID-19.

A still undervalued and less discussed instrument are the information and intelligence systems required global level surveillance and analysis of risks (multi-hazard –multi sectoral forecasting) and anticipatory triggers as well as a global open source pandemic alert system. WHO has now established The Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources (EIOS) initiative which brings together new and existing initiatives, networks and systems to create a unified all-hazards, One Health approach to early detection, verification, assessment and communication of public health threats using publicly available information.

- **Multilateralism:** collective action for health by states has been hampered significantly in the course of 2020 especially because the USA declared its intention to leave the WHO and weakened approaches by political bodies like the G7 and the G20 to give stronger support to pandemic response especially when it involved including the WHO. Others – like the European Union – did step into the void and helped organize strong political and financial support to the WHO and COVID response in general, especially the new ACT – Accelerator that was created. Yet the pandemic highlighted the present weakness of multilateralism clearly – and showed how a decoupling of world powers can very negatively affect the health of the whole world. Governments must use the COVID19 crisis to address the flaws in our multilateral system and structures so that it does not implode if some members spiral out of control of and can continue ensure collective action and global solidarity.

## Resources

The COVID19 pandemic has brought the discussion on Global Public Goods back on the political agenda. This is critical because 75 years after the founding of the United Nations there is still no reliable mechanism at a global level to raise revenues for global functions produced by the United Nations system. Especially making the COVID19 vaccine available to all countries is proving to be a global solidarity test case. The make and break for a new dynamic of ensuring a fair access of vaccines lies with the COVAX facility – the new global risk-sharing mechanism for pooled procurement and equitable distribution of eventual COVID-19 vaccine; the ambitious goal is to distribute 2 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines before the end of 2021. The distribution of coronavirus vaccines is proving to be the defining global challenge of 2021. AS the Director General of the WHO has stated at the WHO Executive Board in January 2021: "the world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure – and the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world's poorest countries."

COVAX is the biggest multinational effort since the Paris Agreement on climate change and both ventures aim high to do something that has never been done

before. As of December 2020, COVAX includes 190 participating economies. This also includes China, making it a remarkable feat of collaboration and will hopefully include the United States after a change in administration. **But there is no reliable financing mechanism except a pledging and fundraising approach – as is the case with GAVI and the GFATM.** COVAX currently estimates it needs to raise an additional US\$ 6.8 billion in 2021 – US\$ 800 million for research and development, at least US\$ 4.6 billion for the COVAX AMC and US\$ 1.4 billion for delivery support.

The message from COVAX as vaccine nationalism looms is the strong need to transform global health funding. It requires a financing framework that ensures a sustained source of revenue for global public goods for health, possibly through a global or multinational taxation system or mix of national, global and regional taxation. A digital tax is frequently mentioned in this regard as well as taxing financial transactions.<sup>4</sup>

The world must overcome an approach to global health financing that is stuck in a development model combined with philanthropy and charity.



Norbert Röttgen  
MdB, Chairman  
of the German  
Bundestag Foreign  
Affairs Committee,  
during ISFB 2019

4 Soucat, Agnès, and Ilona Kickbusch: "Global Common Goods for Health: Towards a New Framework for Global Financing." 2020. Global Policy 11 (5): 628–35. doi:10.1111/1758-5899.12875.

## "Pandemic proof" democracies

One of the most surprising observations for many analysts was that neither level of development nor political regime type were good predictors of pandemic management. For us it is critical to see how democracies have fared. Looking closer it has become evident that in the first wave of the pandemic those democracies that were characterized by more populist and divisive politics did not deal as well with the virus and this continued throughout 2020. They searched for scapegoats, neglected scientific advice, and refused global solidarity. Over time in some Western democracies alliances emerged between right wing movements and a wide range of COVID19 deniers.

Clearly the countries that did best had capable governments and were able to establish the social and political consensus among citizens that to fight the virus was a priority – and that only by giving up certain freedoms for a defined period could there be a reinstatement of those freedoms. Government communication became critical, heads of government began to play a central and very public role to engage their citizens and to establish trust in political institutions. One of the major lessons learned by democratic leaders has been there can be no successful pandemic response without the trust of citizens in their government.

In the course of the pandemic a new pandemic risk at least as dangerous as the virus began to emerge for which democracies were ill prepared: purposeful disinformation and digital hate. WHO has termed this phenomenon the "infodemic" and defines it "as a tsunami of information – some accurate, some not – that spreads alongside an epidemic. If it is not managed accordingly, an infodemic can have direct nega-

tive impacts on the health of populations and the public health response by undermining the trust in science and interventions. We are also seeing that infodemics hinder the cohesiveness of societies by increasing existing social inequities, stigma, gender disparity and generational rift."<sup>5</sup>

This makes clear how dependent democracies are not only on health and digital literacy in a pandemic but perhaps even more so on civic literacy, democratic engagement and community involvement.

In all contexts over the course of the "pandemic year 2020" the virus has affected the institutions and processes of government, the role of the media and the intersection between science and politics. It has significantly influenced the way political campaigns were conducted and how data were used to show success or failure. No pandemic preparedness plan had considered these dimensions – this is what is meant by "pandemic proofing" democracies: what must be done to maintain and even strengthen democracy in a pandemic crisis, especially when is of long duration.<sup>6</sup>

The major lesson we have learned is that now we know that alongside fighting the pandemic to be safe we must protect multilateralism at the global level and the democratic model at the national level. This is critical because the COVID 19 pandemic is also testing our democratic way of life. The pandemic reminds us that we can only thrive if we protect each other against existential risks. We can never be fully secure in a global risk society, therefore preparedness, collective action and solidarity are our best bet. For pandemics as well as the other incalculable risks our way of living has generated, we need to prepare with a new mind frame; by being responsible for one another and for the planet on which we live.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization: "Call for Action: Managing the Infodemic." 2020,

<https://www.who.int/news/item/11-12-2020-call-for-action-managing-the-infodemic>.

<sup>6</sup> Bollyky, Thomas J., and Ilona Kickbusch: "Preparing democracies for pandemics." 2020. *BMJ* (Clinical research ed.) 371: m4088.

# Prelude: Health and Security Policy – A Neglected Relationship

by Michael Rabbow



Dr. Michael Rabbow,  
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## Health as Integral Part of Security

In history, Health and Security were mostly seen as two entities with the scope limited to physical health and military security. In the mind of many the only interface was military medicine.

In Public Health a link to security can be dated back to 1978 when Halfdan Mahler as secretary General of the World Health Organization (WHO) presented the Declaration on Primary Health Care in then Alma Ata (Almaty) in the former USSR (now Kazakhstan). Security was not directly mentioned in the eight elements and seven principles, but was hidden for instance in adequate nutrition and provision of safe water.

Shortly thereafter WHO launched the programme EPR/ERO (Emergency Preparedness and Response/ Emergency Relief Operations). This was complemented at a later stage by respective bodies with other United Nations organisations and the European Commission (EC); in response to the Ebola crisis the World Bank (WB) established the Fragile Countries Facility and the Pandemic Emergency Fund (PEF), almost at the same time the EC commissioned the European Medical Corps. Before that, Civil-Military

Cooperation became more prominent with the rise of HIV/AIDS as Public Health Problem and its effects on societies around the globe. However, with maturing of the pandemic the structures enabling for emergency operations were unnecessarily cut back, operations more or less seized and EPR/ERO as unit disappeared. This kind of negligence could also be observed with other health conditions such as tuberculosis; once the problem seems to be under control budgets are cut back. It seems that mankind tends to quickly forget catastrophies and waits until the next one arises... Also the connexion between health and security was never broadly discussed and agreed upon at any level.

In a new and more lasting turn in 2007, Ilona Kickbusch published on Global Health Diplomacy and how foreign policy can influence health care issues; the concept has gained centre stage in the meantime. The interdependence between health and security has become undisputed, but leaving room for interpretation. In the same context, the German Foreign Office has set up a Global Diplomacy Lab recently devoted also to the topic of emergency programmes.

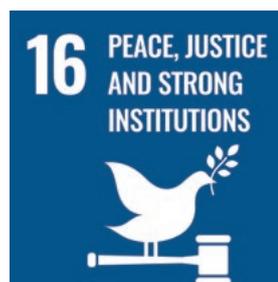
## The Impact of the current COVID-19 Pandemic on Global Politics

"Security demands Development", this was said by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, in an interview on Nov 13, 2020. This is not the only statement towards a multi-stakeholder approach; others indicate the importance of sharing common values, the need of intensified cooperation and to talk to each other, multilateralism as key topic which needs increased awareness, and health care issues as a matter of utmost priority. The world community at large (with some nasty exceptions) realises that this is the only way forward. Local solutions developed haphazardly in silo thinking proved wrong. This pandemic finally demonstrates the need for the recent concept of Global Health and One Health encompassing human and animal health plus environmental health, as part of a universal security strategy. Health is now defined in a much broader way (e.g. including access to safe water) as is security including food and job security.

This is even more important keeping in mind the high level of migration worldwide. According to OECD 2019 up to 230 million people are on the move for different reasons, forced or voluntarily, with around 80 mio South-North but substantially more South-South migrants including refugees. These alone account for roughly 80 mio; health and security actions to be taken are enormous.

In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). One remarkable change is that the 17 goals apply to all signatory states, i.e. high, middle and low-income countries according to the WB classification. In this context quite a few of the SDGs are of special relevance:

- SDG 1: No Poverty
- SDG 2: No Hunger
- SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being
- SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 13: Climate Action
- SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions



These goals are part and parcel of an international response. It goes without further explanation that they can only be reached in a mutual way, linking all nations together. Looking at the "hard ware" of technology, digitalisation, and the like we often tend to forget the "soft ware" which can be defined as inter-cultural competence and communication.

Looking at a global map we realise that next to Asian countries the African continent shows a remarkably lower rate of infection so far than other regions, in particular Europe and North America. This can be ascribed to a reasonable awareness for disaster preparedness with the lessons learned from Ebola, HIV/AIDS, droughts and floods with their serious impact not yet forgotten. African countries are experienced in masterminding critical care situations; they were in particular fast in declaring and maintaining a state of emergency with the aim not to import COVID-19 on top of other pertaining health problems. However, the subcomplete closing of borders could not prevent from the virus to enter; as in other parts of the world health care policy focused on COVID-19, thereby neglecting ongoing programmes such as Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI), TB and chronic diseases. The sad results can be read from the health management information systems, as one example in Namibia the infection rate of Hepatitis E rises again.

As can be witnessed in all parts of the world, African countries struggle to balance health and economy, most of them without sufficient financial resources. Tourism may be mentioned here as only one sector suffering high losses. As direct effect of the borders closed a massive loss of jobs could be measured with increasing poverty and starvation as additional security risks. In some parts of the continent poaching became a serious concern. Efforts in capacity building and value creation are severely endangered with the in most countries substantial informal sector suffering the most. African leaders however need to be commended for the swift action taken to bring emergency regulations under way, Uganda was spearheading, and at the same time to having established financial instruments at national, regional and African Union (AU) level; as an example the Corona Trust Fund in Ghana may be mentioned.

At present, the world community talks a lot about who should be vaccinated first. Again, national ego-centric thoughts enter the debate, for instance in Britain and the US. We could witness similar experiences with face-mask production and procurement and also with the purchasing of ventilators. After initial confusion during the first wave of the pandemic the coverage and pricing became reasonable and satisfactory in many parts of the world. It is common understanding that priority risk groups to be taken care of consist of elderly, people with high exposure like health personnel, teachers, security forces and customs officers. Also, calls are mounting for strategies like equitable licensing in order to broaden access to life saving drugs and vaccines in particular for the poor. As we are all aware of, the situation changes rapidly since the virus' appearance; this time around people trust that politicians and other stakeholders will deliver based on scientific evidence, pragmatism and humanitarian reasons.

### **Potential for contributing to a health and security concept frame**

As already said, a global response is requested and great efforts are under way at UN level and regional bodies such as the AU, the East African Community (EAC), or the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Together with the EC, the Vaccine Alliance Gavi and WHO launched the COVAX facility in order to guarantee equal access to any vaccines still under development with 180 countries being signatories, notably not the US and Russia. Parallel to vaccines development pharma companies invest in research of drugs capable to combat the clinical effects of COVID-19.

The World Health Summit (WHS) which meets annually end of October in Berlin provides an ideal platform for exchange for politicians, scientists, private sector representatives and civil society. This year's virtual conference was mostly devoted to COVID-19 and combatting strategies. Sessions are continuously dedicated to Health and Security and Universal Health Coverage (UHC) with high level participants monitoring progress made. The debate will be continued at the Regional Summits, e.g. for the African Region in Kampala, Uganda, in June 2021.

WHS closely collaborates with the German Health Alliance (GHA), a partnership hosted by the Federal Association of German Industries (BDI) and consisting of over 100 German health care companies, leading Non-Governmental Organisations and observers from government, and executive agencies such as German International Cooperation (GIZ) and the German

Development Bank (KfW). GHA is instrumental in the newly established Coalition for Health under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), but with active participation of other ministries. The Coalition binds together stakeholders from academia, government, civil society and the private sector. Major aim is to strengthening health services globally. Health services were, are and will be the backbone of any health care development. Private sector involvement is seen as crucial in order to reach the SDGs with SDG 3 on health in the centre.

Security for all can only be achieved together with health for all in a most comprehensive manner.



*Dr. Ulrike Franke  
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Affairs participating  
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during ISFB 2019*

# Global Health Security: Safety and Security

by Annamarie Bindenagel Šehović



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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has focused a lens on global public health and global health security. Yet while the former has taken on the form of individual safety measures, however short-sighted – tracing and tracking, counting intensive care capacity, more recently hoarding vaccine (pre-)orders when it remains unclear how many doses how often each person might be to ward off (severe) COVID-19 infection – the latter has gotten short shrift. Where are the health regulations requiring interruption of transmission as a measure included in vaccine approval? Where are the provisions not only for COVID-19 vaccines, treatment and care, but also for other health emergencies: measles is spreading again, syphilis is re-emerging, chronic care may be suffering. Where are the protections for vulnerable populations, including non-nationals, to access health services at a moment of increased nationalism across the world? A global pandemic can only be addressed by focusing not only on individual health (of nationals), but rather demands attention to the health security of all around the globe.

## Background

In the public debate, the laser focus has been on the life and death of individuals, highlighting provisions for the protection of health. This focus has been applied amidst a maelstrom of political activity, some of which threatens to ignore local and global health writ large: health is not merely the absence of disease as noted in the Constitution of the WHO in 1948. It is a broader well-being. In the time of COVID this includes the recognition that epidemics and pandemics wash over communities around the world in waves. Addressing these waves requires strategic epidemiological but also social, economic and political planning that identifies priorities in physical and mental health, in educational access and economic activity, in political innovation and political stability. In short, pandemics demand a focus on individual safety but also communal – local, regional and global – security.

This has to an extent, occurred. In the epidemiological and sociological debates, the perspective has widened to include communal, regional and global health. The former has propelled spectacular vaccine success

when viewed at the individual level, with a significant caveat: while the vaccines currently entering the market indeed protect from (severe) individual infection, it is unclear whether they interrupt transmission and thereby provide health security at the communal, regional and ultimately global levels. This means that there is a disconnect between health and health security. Bringing this bifurcated view into focus is vital in order to achieve genuine global health security.

Achieving global health security requires reconciling two key perspectives into two areas of focus:

### I. Safety and security:

Safety is measured at the individual level. The safety effect of a seatbelt or a bicycle helmet is to protect the individual wearing each. The current crop of COVID-vaccines promise to protect individuals who are inoculated from (severe) infection. However, this individual safety does not health security make because security refers to the relative, cumulative safety of a group or groups of individuals. It is practically impossible for the entire world to be safe via medical intervention – including the notion of every individual being possibly repeatedly and annually inoculated against COVID-19 as it likely weakens to resemble the annual seasonal flu. More pertinent to safety is collective security also because more COVID-19-like pandemics, more and less severe, are likely to emerge in the next years and decades also due to zoonotic infections induced by incursions caused by human- planetary-veterinary interactions and intensified by climate change.

Security in health security requires vaccines to interrupt the transmission of infection, for instance, combined with behavioral changes. Lessons from the HIV and Ebola pandemics, to cite two recent examples, illustrate that even with medications, behavioral change (condoms and hand-washing) and access to comprehensive healthcare and social services to address co-morbidities as well as gendered, socio-economic and financial vulnerabilities are essential to stemming the tide of outbreaks.

A global pandemic outbreak can never be contained with safety measures alone. Only comprehensive health security measures can control and end such a pandemic because it will always be impossible to inoculate or medicate – possibly continuously – the entire world's population. In order to conceive of, design and apply such globally applicable health security measures the two following areas must be addressed: (non)national jurisdiction and health systems, including universal health coverage.

### II. Human and State Security: the role of (non)national jurisdiction:

Following decades of progress expanding human rights – political and civil rights, economic and social rights, women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights – more recent geopolitical change is constricting this space. Where universal human rights once seemed ascendant, states' rights threaten to exclude these as the axes prioritizing and apportioning rights, including health rights, shift between human and states security. As such, in this current moment, human and health rights risk being as limited or as expansive as each state declares. This also means that each state decides which individuals – state nationals or also non-state-nationals – are afforded which rights. The realization of human and health rights thus depends upon state protection and implementation. This creates a delicate balance between use and abuse. It is worth emphasizing again that a global pandemic cannot be contained when only **some** of the people have their health rights recognized and protected.

Therefore, a key linchpin in successful pandemic response depends upon the recognition, protection and implementation of health rights for all individuals irregardless of their state-status. However, in the current global governance order, it remains the responsibility of states to bestow health rights recognition, protection and implementation. Universal health coverage (UHC) can be the link between this individual recognition to successful global pandemic response.

## One Key to Safety and Security: Universal Health Coverage

Protecting the most vulnerable brings us back to the argument offered at the outset: individual safety does not equal health security. Health security depends upon universal communal, regional and ultimately global health. Universal health coverage can be one instrument in the toolbox towards non-nationally constrained, recognized, protected and implemented health security.

Universal health coverage (UHC) offers one way to bridge the gap between human and state security. UHC is a financial instrument whose purpose is to bridge the gap between enabling access to health care and protecting those accessing health care from associated financial ruin. "Universal, equitable access to health care with financial protection" "is indispensable for achievement of individual health security and, therefore, collective health and human security." (Heymann et al, 2015). Of course, as outlined above, national states decide the extent of UHC coverage: both in terms of eligible individuals and in terms of health care and financial coverage.

UNGA Resolution A/74/L.4, paragraph 9 recognizes "that universal health coverage implies that all people have access, without discrimination, **to nationally determined** sets of the needed promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative essential health services, and essential, safe, affordable, effective and quality medicines and vaccines... (emphasis added). But with a nod to the global nature of health security, UNGA Res A/74/L.4, paragraphs 71 and 72, specifically name as necessary UHC protections for "the particular needs and vulnerabilities of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and indigenous peoples" (P71) and to "promote strong and resilient health systems, reaching those who are vulnerable or in vulnerable situations" (P72). The measure of society is taken by how it treats its **most vulnerable**.

## Conclusion: health security beyond COVID

COVID-19 has brought this reality of mutual vulnerabilities and necessary global health security into focus, not for the first and not for the last time. It is time to put paid to pledges: to inoculate not only individuals, but also societies; to provide individual safety, but also collective security. Only when all around the world are afforded both safety and security at the international level will it be possible to have true global health security.



# When Health Issues Challenge Security

by Christian Haggemiller



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After one year into the SARS Cov2 pandemic, the link between health issues and foreign policy or security issues seems to be obvious. That was not always the case, in contrary, in the past public health concerns played only rarely a role as national priority. The shift of perception happened mainly in the last two decades, when national policy-makers have increasingly recognized that health security is more than a national concern and that health emergencies impacts not only national but also global security interests<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, militaries and security organizations are now routinely requested to respond to multifaceted public health disasters triggered by a complex interplay of environmental, economic, and political factors. With emerging technologies that enable production of new human-made bio-threats likely to add to this complexity several trends have come together to fuel interest in the security community's role in global health crisis.

The visible turning point was the 2014 Ebola Crisis in West Africa when international militaries ended up responding to the epidemic in part because of their rapidly deployable logistics capabilities but also because of the social and political fears the pandemic

sparked around the world. At that time globalization of transportation and economies also increased the rapidity and impact of the disease's spread. More importantly, the fear among Western countries the disease would arrive on their shores triggered an enormous effort to invest more in national and international preparedness and response capabilities. Previous epidemics led nations and international organizations to build initiatives such as the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) to assess and empower the epidemiologic preparedness systems. The interest in Global Health Security was not only mirrored in the fora's such as the Munich Security Conference or World Health Summit but also received notably attention of governmental policy makers as health becomes hybrid instrument for security and foreign political affairs.

Another observation by the international security community's growing awareness of the relationship between armed conflict, health system destruction and global health crises pushed health issues on the security agenda. For example, Ebola in Liberia and Cholera in Haiti and Yemen originated in post-conflict states, quickly overwhelming fragile health systems that had never fully recovered.

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization: Global health security is integral to foreign policy, <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/health-diplomacy/foreign-policy.html>.

It seems that understanding the nature and pathology of an existing or emerging health crisis requires new multidisciplinary approach which includes expertise from the health and security community.

The lessons learned to combat epidemics led the WHO requesting in their latest strategy update; a significant shift in the international system to support countries to plan, finance and implement their response to a health emergency crisis. Specifically, countries need authoritative real-time information on the evolving epidemiology and risks; timely access to essential supplies, medicines and equipment; the latest technical guidance and best practices; rapidly accessible and deployable technical expertise, access to an emergency health workforce and medical teams; and equitable access to newly developed vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and other innovations, as well as complementary socio-economic measures, including material and protection assistance<sup>2</sup>.

## Specific Health-Security challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic

### Infodemic & disinformation

The influx of fake news around COVID-19 was not only a major concern for public health officials including the WHO, but the epidemic was also used for political polarization and deliberate dis- and misinformation campaigns. The lack of knowledge of the origin of SARS Cov2 was subject of many accusations, the most prominent one between the US and China. While the term "China or CCCP Virus" circulated in the western world, China blamed the US of bringing the virus into China. NATO reported several disinformation cases for example a fake interview claiming that Canadian troops in Latvia had brought the virus to the country or Russian state-controlled media suggested a Latvian lab could have developed the coronavirus or about some 'secret US/NATO laboratories' in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine for creating COVID-19 as a biological weapon. All this being part of the new hybrid warfare<sup>3</sup>.



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- 2 World Health Organization (2020): Covid-19 Strategy Update, 14 April, [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid-strategy-update-14april2020.pdf?sfvrsn=29da3ba0\\_19](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid-strategy-update-14april2020.pdf?sfvrsn=29da3ba0_19).
  - 3 NATO (2020): NATO's approach to countering disinformation: a focus on COVID-19, 17 July, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/177273.htm>.

## Cyber crime

Cyberattacks targeting the health care sector and taking advantage of the pandemic are not new, because their infrastructure offers many vulnerabilities that can be exploited but the scale has reached a disturbing dimension. Major IT companies have sounded the alarm bell regarding the significant increase of cyberattacks against the health care sector. Behind the highly sophisticated and complex attacks, there is a disturbing high number of hackers linked to State-Actors trying to steal information about the virus and its potential treatments. Microsoft identified specifically some groups from Russia and North Korea targeting pharmaceutical companies and vaccine researchers and are urging governments to act<sup>4</sup>. One of the latest attacks were reported by IBM X-Force targeting the COVID-19 cold chain – an integral part of delivering and storing a vaccine at safe temperature<sup>5</sup>.

## Increasing violence

The current pandemic seems to fuel not only crime in the virtual world but unfortunately in the real one as well. Specifically, transnational crime organizations, gangs and cartels have used the specific circumstances to translate those for their operations while police and security forces are concentrating on the lockdowns and health measures. According to the Wilson Center<sup>6</sup> there is a certain disruption of drug supply chains and trafficking caused partially by the travel restrictions. However, at the same time for example Mexico suffered an increase in violence/homicides compared to the year before. Additionally, cartels are using the security vacuum to build legitimacy and acceptance by offering aid and goods to the population which strategically undermines the stability and outreach of the Mexican authorities.



*Col. i.G. Sönke Marahrens, Program Director of the German Institute for Defense and Strategy Studies (GIDS), during ISFB 2019*

4 Tom Burt (2020): Cyberattacks targeting health care must stop, Microsoft On The Issues, 13 November, <https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2020/11/13/health-care-cyberattacks-covid-19-paris-peace-forum/>.

5 CISA (2020): IBM Releases Report on Cyber Actors Targeting the COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chain, 3 December, <https://us-cert.cisa.gov/ncas/current-activity/2020/12/03/ibm-releases-report-cyber-actors-targeting-covid-19-vaccine-supply>.

6 Wilson Center (2020): Violent Non-State Actors and COVID-19: Challenge or Opportunity?, 26 May, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/violent-non-state-actors-and-covid-19-challenge-or-opportunity>.

## Impact on armed conflicts

While the facts observed by ACLED shows a decrease of 12% of political violence events and fatalities compared to last year<sup>7</sup>, the special report of the Munich Security Conference "Polypandemic"<sup>8</sup> describes another picture. There, it is stated that for many violent nonstate actors, the pandemic seems to represent an opportunity, while governments being distracted to fight the outbreak many counter-terrorism missions are put on hold. Similarly, diplomatic missions, UN peacekeeping missions and other bi/multi-lateral stabilization efforts had to halt rotation and deployments or had to operate under the imperative to keep peacekeepers safe from the virus which impacted the mission effectiveness. Furthermore, the concern of catalyzing the infection through peacekeepers and therefore undermining the missions goals could not only be seen lately in South Sudan, which triggered tensions after the first official Covid-19 case in the country was detected in a UN staff member, this could also be seen at another scale in Haiti where the UN mission MINUSTHA was also associated with the Cholera outbreak and then sparked a national security crisis<sup>9</sup>.

## Conclusion

To face those multifaceted issues, it is evident that new paradigms and a new interdisciplinary expertise are required to provide short- and long desired results. Therefore, new forms of partnerships among cross-governmental stakeholders' diplomats, development, defence, health and non-governmental civil society, private sector including military and civilian research academic institutions are required. However, the pandemic has revealed the fragility of society and the security aspects of many countries are more vulnerable than ever before.

Complex global health security issues are a shared responsibility that requires a comprehensive multi-sectoral and multinational approach as part of any government responsibility to protect the safety and security of its citizens, health and security.

Therefore, further development and investments should be conducted, specifically in:

- Advancing a comprehensive near real time and reliable disease surveillance systems that includes multi hazard risk assessment from areas other than traditional epidemiology to generate an accessible common situation awareness and early warning.
- An improved interdisciplinary cooperation which includes expertise from the health and security community as well from the private sector to improve global preparedness and response and reestablish local and regional resilience towards critical infrastructure and supply chain disruption.
- A proactive risk communication to counter intentional dis- and misinformation and promote trust in local/national/international authorities. Furthermore, this should improve interaction and exchange among the scientific community beyond the geopolitical heated polarization.

7 ACLED Dashboard: <https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard>.

8 Sophie Eisentraut et al. (2020): Polypandemic. Special Edition of the Munich Security Report, Munich Security Conference, [https://securityconference.org/assets/02\\_Dokumente/01\\_Publikationen/201104\\_MSC\\_Polypandemic\\_EN.pdf](https://securityconference.org/assets/02_Dokumente/01_Publikationen/201104_MSC_Polypandemic_EN.pdf).

9 NATO's Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (2012): The Haiti Case Study. Towards a Comprehensive Response to Health System Strengthening in Crisis-affected Fragile States, Working Paper of the collaborative NATO-Harvard project, [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/36585\\_haiticasestudy.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/36585_haiticasestudy.pdf).

# Cyberattacks on COVID-19 Research Infrastructures in Europe: A Brief Overview

by Katharina C. Cramer



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The COVID-19 pandemic hit the world with unprecedented severity in early 2020. Vaccines and treatments became soon considered as one of the wishful lights at the end of the pandemic tunnel. Scientific advancements on understanding the characteristics of the novel coronavirus were made in record time. And so was the development of effective vaccines. These developments are stunning examples of scientific achievement including an inherent spirit of science, namely, to serve humankind for the good. But they are also cause and effect of highest national and global politics and new funding priorities including political rhetoric that regards successful vaccine development as a symbol of national superiority and power.

The high politics of research on COVID-19 and the economic and financial benefits behind the development of treatments and vaccines came with a price, namely that of increasing (cyber)security threats and

pressure on research infrastructures.<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 research infrastructures are defined in the context of this contribution as "comparably large and centralized physical and technically advanced resources that are used for experimental research in the natural sciences"<sup>2</sup> including research institutions, hospitals, biopharmaceutical and biotechnology companies or laboratories. This contribution provides a brief overview of the varieties of cyberattacks targeted at COVID-19 research infrastructures in Europe. It highlights that the rationales behind these cyberattacks are closely linked to the work these research infrastructures carry out and to the knowledge they generate. Put differently, and this is the core message of this contribution, cyberattacks on COVID-19 research infrastructures do not necessarily aim at collecting scientific knowledge and research results per se. But, most often, they intend to access sensitive and critical data understood as a demonstration of power capabilities and financial benefits.

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1 ENISA (2020): 'Cybersecurity in the Healthcare Sector During COVID-19 Pandemic', News Release, 11 May, <https://www.enisa.europa.eu/news/enisa-news/cybersecurity-in-the-healthcare-sector-during-covid-19-pandemic>; INTERPOL (2020): 'Cybercriminals Targeting Critical Healthcare Institutions with Ransomware', 4 April, <https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2020/Cybercriminals-targeting-critical-healthcare-institutions-with-ransomware>; James Philpot (2020): 'Security Incidents in Healthcare Infrastructure during COVID-19 Crisis', SafeCare, 18 November, <https://www.safecare-project.eu/?p=588>; Center for Strategic and International Studies: Significant Cyber Incidents, <https://www.csis.org/programs/strategic-technologies-program/significant-cyber-incidents>.

2 Katharina Cramer et. al (2020): 'Big Science and Research Infrastructures in Europe: History and Current Trends', in: Katharina Cramer, Olof Hallonsten (eds.): Big Science and Research Infrastructures in Europe, Cheltenham, 1-26.

Cyberattacks on COVID-19 research infrastructures did not come unexpected. Several organizations, such as INTERPOL (International Criminal Police Organization) or ENISA (European Union Agency for Cybersecurity) have warned of emerging cybersecurity threats for health care facilities and laboratories.<sup>3</sup> Knowledge on COVID-19 treatments and vaccines, sensitive data of clinical trials and confidential patient data are of immense interest for both state-sponsored as well as private hacking groups that look for financial benefit. This is one of the rationales behind ransomware attacks that lock access to data and

encrypt databanks until a ransom, that can amount to millions of US-\$, is paid. But ransomware attacks can also be characterized as demonstrations of power testifying of the ability to access sensitive and confidential data as well as to harm the material fundaments of infrastructures by, for instance, shattering operation.<sup>4</sup>

Several COVID-19 laboratories and vaccine test centers across Europe became victims of such attacks that gained access to personal information and sensitive research data.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, ransomware was also



Dean Cheng of the Heritage Foundation giving a talk during ISFB 2019

- 3 ENISA (2020): 'Cybersecurity in the Healthcare Sector During COVID-19 Pandemic', News Release, 11 May, <https://www.enisa.europa.eu/news/enisa-news/cybersecurity-in-the-healthcare-sector-during-covid-19-pandemic>;
- INTERPOL (2020): Cybercriminals Targeting Critical Healthcare Institutions with Ransomware, 4 April, <https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2020/Cybercriminals-targeting-critical-healthcare-institutions-with-ransomware>.
- 4 Amin Kharraz et al. (2015): 'Cutting the Gordian Knot: A Look Under the Hood of Ransomware Attacks', in: Magnus Almgren, Vincenzo Gulisano, Federico Maggi (eds.): Detection of Intrusions and Malware, and Vulnerability Assessment, Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht, London, 3-24.
- 5 Jessica Davis (2020): 'Hackers Target WHO, COVID-19 Research Firm with Cyberattacks', Health IT Security, 24 March, <https://healthitsecurity.com/news/hackers-target-who-covid-19-research-firm-with-cyberattacks>.

used to disrupt the operation of several hospitals. Such attacks were, for instance, reported from hospitals in Spain, Italy or the Czech Republic.<sup>6</sup> There is also some evidence that individuals involved in COVID-19 research and health care have become victims of such attacks.<sup>7</sup> It can thus be concluded that these ransomware attacks did not only exploit the vulnerabilities of inadequately prepared IT systems and the vital need to access and store digital data during this pandemic crisis. But they also targeted the vulnerabilities of individuals that worked under immense stress and pressure.

Cyberattacks on sensitive information around vaccine development, distribution and testing are another crucial aspect. On 9 December 2020, the European Medicines Agency has been subject of a cyberattack accessing documents of BioNTech and Pfizer vaccines.<sup>8</sup> Similar attacks already occurred in July on information about vaccine development in the United States, the

United Kingdom and Canada (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency 2020). Such attacks can equally be characterized as demonstrations of power to the extent that they look for financial benefit from biotechnological companies. But they also escalate beyond these rationales: Hackers are also interested in the scientific knowledge base of vaccines, in packaging and distribution logistics to unlawfully develop and market counterfeit vaccines.<sup>9</sup>

There also exist a couple of research infrastructures in Europe that provide rapid access to experimental resources and research settings to foster COVID-19 research.

There are, for instance, distributed infrastructures that work under the umbrella of the Alliance of Medical Research Infrastructures (AMRI). AMRI is a joint European effort including dozens of research institutes and hospitals across Europe offering expertise



*Prof. Dr. Volker Kronenberg, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Director of CASSIS at the University of Bonn, giving a Speech during ISFB 2019*

- 6 Sophie Porter (2020): 'Cyberattack on Czech Hospital Forces Tech Shutdown During Coronavirus Outbreak', Healthcare IT News, 19 March, <https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/emea/cyberattack-czech-hospital-forces-tech-shutdown-during-coronavirus-outbreak>; Patricia Ortega Dolz, Jordi Pérez Colomé (2020): 'La Policía Detecta un Ciberataque al Sistema Informático de los Hospitales', El País, 23 March, <https://elpais.com/espana/2020-03-23/la-policia-detecta-un-ataque-masivo-al-sistema-informatico-de-los-hospitales.html>; Rinaldo Frignani (2020): 'Virus, Attacco Hacker: 'Ladri, Non Terroristi o Spioni Allo Spallanzani'', Corriere della Serra, 1 April, [https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/20\\_aprile\\_01/virus-attacco-hacker-ladri-non-terroristi-o-spioni-spallanzani-9609381e-7431-11ea-b181-d5820c4838fa.shtml](https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/20_aprile_01/virus-attacco-hacker-ladri-non-terroristi-o-spioni-spallanzani-9609381e-7431-11ea-b181-d5820c4838fa.shtml).
- 7 Maggie Miller, Olivia Beavers (2020): 'Hospitals Brace for Increase in Cyberattacks', The Hill, 19 April, <https://thehill.com/policy/cybersecurity/493410-hospitals-brace-for-increase-in-cyberattacks>.
- 8 EMA (2020): 'Cyberattack on the European Medicines Agency', News Release, 9 December, <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/news/cyberattack-european-medicines-agency>; BioNTech (2020): 'Statement Regarding Cyber Attack on European Medicines Agency', Press Release, 9 December, <https://investors.biontech.de/node/8886/pdf>.
- 9 EUROPOL (2020): Vaccine-Related Crime During the COVID-19 Pandemic, [https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/early\\_warning\\_notification\\_-\\_vaccine-related\\_crime\\_during\\_the\\_covid-19\\_pandemic.pdf](https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/early_warning_notification_-_vaccine-related_crime_during_the_covid-19_pandemic.pdf).



and support, but also access to clinical trial data, studies and screening resources. Next to these networked efforts, there also exist some physically centralized facilities such as synchrotron radiation sources, free-electron lasers or neutron research reactors and neutron spallation sources. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these and similar facilities across Europe began to offer rapid access to experimental resources to investigate the fundamental structures and properties of the novel coronavirus.<sup>10</sup>

There is no evidence that these centralized research infrastructures experienced a significant increase in cyberattacks and cybersecurity concerns. This is interesting, but also important, because they can well be characterized as major cornerstones within the European research landscape on COVID-19. However, the work that these research infrastructures carry out and the data and knowledge they generate is different to that of hospitals, laboratories or other COVID-19 research institutes. These centralized research infrastructures carry out fundamental research that is openly accessible and that provides a baseline for further research to build on. The knowledge and data that they generate is also highly specialized and abstract. This is different to vaccines as physical

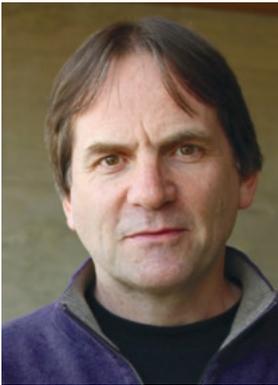
assets that can be manipulated and unlawfully put on the market. It can thus be speculated that these research infrastructures rarely possess and generate data whose access is (financially) beneficial and powerful enough to the extent that it is worth of a sophisticated cyberattack.

Reconciling from above, cyberattacks on COVID-19 research infrastructures vary with regard to their underlying rationales. On the one hand, hospitals, laboratories or biotechnological companies carry out application-oriented research and/or that generate and store large amounts of sensitive and confidential data. Cyberattacks on these COVID-19 infrastructures largely aim for immediate financial benefit, the manipulation of products and physical assets. But these attacks also serve as demonstrations of power. On the other hand, research facilities such as free-electron laser or synchrotron radiation sources provide experimental resources to carry out fundamental research. They generate fundamental, highly specialized knowledge as a baseline for further research. But unlike information and data on vaccines or clinical trials, hacking groups apparently do not consider these knowledge and data as powerful and (financially) relevant being accessed and/or locked up.

10 European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (2020): 'RIs Against COVID-19 Pandemic', <https://www.esfri.eu/covid-19>.

# Adapting Security for Changing Times

by Simon Dalby



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## A World Unprepared?

Numerous warnings about forthcoming pandemics were issued in the years prior to the emergence of COVID-19 but clearly many national institutions were caught unprepared. States that on paper at least ought to have been well prepared fared poorly; the United States and the United Kingdom being prominent examples, but far from the only countries that failed to respond appropriately. In the United States pandemic plans were discarded, and under the Trump administration key national health security programs had been dismantled. In Canada its global pandemic monitoring office was discontinued too; apparently national issues were to get higher priority. Thus, key states had acted as though pandemic dangers were not to be taken seriously – a major failure of foresight that has had tragic consequences.

While much media commentary has focused on the ideological inclinations of regimes as being an important factor in shaping pandemic responses, it is probably more accurate to suggest that states with well-planned and prepared public health systems fared better through 2020. Taiwan, Cuba, New Zealand and Vietnam were among the success stories in limiting the spread of the disease, and these hardly share any

common governmental ideology. Crucially, in each case monitoring what was happening elsewhere, and anticipating the likely connections to the domestic population, made the difference. Practical measures implemented in a timely fashion, with widespread trust in public institutions seems to be the key, and as such this has clear implications for rethinking security elsewhere in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Where there was a failure to adequately prepare, or implement public health measures in a timely way, draconian responses have been needed to slow infection spread, and this has led to repeated lockdowns and restrictions on routine economic activities. These disruptions have eroded public confidence in institutions in many states, weakening social cohesion and trust in both experts and political leaders. Where politicians have overruled the advice of epidemiologists and health systems are overwhelmed, both public trust and the capabilities of medical professionals have been reduced. All of which has been aggravated by the spread of misinformation about the pandemic and its causes on social media. Conspiracy theories likewise have cast blame in unlikely places and made sensible medical responses more difficult. Failures of clear and consistent communication have compounded political difficulties.

## Thinking Ahead

The failures to prepare for an entirely predictable pandemic suggest forcefully that security has to be reformulated if it is to be understood as a core value for all states in the twenty first century. Obviously, it has to be about thinking ahead and putting in place policies and procedures that facilitate rapidly responding to a changing environment. Anticipating dangers and vulnerabilities in a world of rapid change, both economically and ecologically, as well as in terms of health should be a priority for state institutions.

Pandemic preparedness is a matter of security in various forms. Individual state responses are important, but the larger issue of preventing the spread of infections is a matter of global security. This key point has to be kept in mind by all policy makers in the aftermath of this pandemic. Not least because there is no reason to believe that humanity may not face much more severe diseases in coming decades.

In terms of health, as with the rest of the security agenda, prevention is much better than cure. The attempts to respond to the virus, when it was already loose in a population has suggested once again that anticipation and preparation are much more effective

than draconian responses after the fact. Supporting sick people, with both food and financial assistance so they can stay home, rather than be forced to go to work and spread infection, makes it clear that in terms of health a comprehensive notion of human security is essential.

These lessons apply also to the looming threats of climate change disruption. This is another entirely predictable threat that requires anticipatory action to head off the worst disruptions and shape economies, so they rapidly move away from the use of fossil fuels. In a similar manner to pandemic responses, if states fail to anticipate coming disruptions and try to react only when disaster strikes, the responses are likely to be clumsy and much less effective that would be the case if effective anticipation had shaped policy in time.

The COVID-19 virus has made it clear that we all live in an interconnected and rapidly changing world. National security is no longer a viable strategy for any state if it doesn't consider these interconnections and focuses only on traditional military and political issues. The globalized world economy and the rapid speed of ecological change require thinking and policy that is flexible and adaptable, and that take science seriously.



## New Normals

Both infectious diseases and climate change suggest that once this pandemic has subsided returning to pre-pandemic "normal" is folly. It was a kind of normal that downplayed the necessity of both public health measures and tackling the accelerating environmental disruptions of climate change. A "new normal" designed to deal with such threats needs to be one in which the future is taken much more seriously and one in which widespread human vulnerability is not a taken for granted situation but understood as hazardous for both people and for sensibly functioning states.

More resilience is clearly needed in state institutions if a more encompassing sense of human security as a state priority is taken seriously. Flexibility in state and health institutions, with clearly better coordination of international health measures, and substantial funding arrangements are needed urgently. Crucially, habits of international cooperation need to be reconstructed; while state rivalries will undoubtedly continue in many spheres, the pandemic should have made it very clear that on matters of health and disease, international cooperation is essential to deal with what is obviously a matter of global security.

Likewise, long term research into viruses, vaccines and preventative measures is needed; corporate priorities with profits from drug and vaccine research are not enough to deal with the disease burden in many societies. The rising prevalence of anti-biotic resistant strains of infectious vectors also requires further global efforts to tackle another looming threat. Relying on philanthropic contributions from a few large private foundations is not a tenable strategy for future global public health; a rebuilt World Health



Organization would seem to be a logical first step. Likewise, duplication of key scientific institutions would seem to be essential; relying on single states to provide the expertise to monitor global health is obviously unwise, as the case of the recent difficulties in the American Center for Disease Control, given political interference there in the last few years, has painfully revealed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the need to build health systems that can rapidly ramp up responses when threats emerge. But the more important lesson is the need to contain new infections before they spread widely; recent Ebola outbreaks have been contained, although with great difficulty; the COVID-19 outbreak hasn't been. Preventing spread requires rapid responses by health authorities, and clearly reframing diseases as common threats to all humanity, not problems caused by particular states, is essential to policy making. Health security relating to infectious diseases simply has to be handled as a global security matter and international cooperation rather than nationalism is the needed security priority.

## Adaptive Security

In the past national security has been understood in terms of maintaining the existing social order and facilitating this by policies of ongoing economic growth. It has sometimes worked to support xenophobic or extreme nationalist formulations of policy but has been based on the premises of a system of relative autonomy for states in a basically stable set of environmental conditions. Neither of those assumptions are now valid premises for policy making, and security thinking has to be updated to deal with these new geographical realities. Not least it is necessary to think carefully about how to decarbonize economic activity; fossil fuels are now a threat to future prosperity, not the source of future economic growth.

In a globalized economy and the world of climate change, where past environmental conditions are no longer a guide to likely future events, adaptability has become a key part of the security puzzle. While autarchic policies may work temporarily in a crisis, albeit at very considerable cost to victims of closed borders and economic disruptions, security in a world of rapidly changing environments and infectious diseases requires that the interconnectedness of humanity and nature is taken as the context for intelligent planning.

Both the pandemic and climate change make it clear that something very different from border closings and xenophobic policies is needed to deal with rapid change. Diseases, climate change and other environmental changes are not constrained by national borders. It is clear that state and international agency capabilities to react to disasters and disruptions are a necessary part of global security architecture for the twenty first century. But these reactive capabilities are not nearly enough. Although it may be anathema to many traditional modes of security thinking, what is now clearly needed is the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Securing the ability to adapt, rather than protecting institutions of the past, is now the key to flourishing in a rapidly changing world.



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# The COVID-19 Pandemic in Germany: Policy Reaction, Economic, and Social Consequences

by Hans-Martin von Gaudecker



*Prof. Dr. Hans-Martin von Gaudecker, Professor, Institute for Applied Microeconomics, University of Bonn*

This text aims to describe some effects of the policy reactions to the pandemic in Germany on economic outcomes. I will argue that the initial policy reaction was close to optimal, if slightly too late. However, over the summer, too little was done to prepare for the second wave, leading to a long drag over the winter that harms the economy and society more than what would have been necessary. I speculate that this has to do with falling back from crisis mode into normal operations on the side of politics and bureaucracy, which prefers non-action for some time in the quest for perfection event at times where pragmatic solutions would be in order.

While very early in the pandemic there was much speculation about a trade-off between economic growth and containing the virus, it has become clear by now that this trade-off is not there for lower values of disease spread. Even letting the virus spread more or less freely – a strategy that has proven infeasible in several countries – has led to similar reductions in GDP growth as social distancing measures.<sup>1</sup> High-income countries that have acted early and boldly on the pandemic have seen smaller decreases in GDP or even experienced positive economic growth in 2020.

The basic reason for this is that a strategy of test-trace-and-isolate allows for an almost normal life. That is, only fairly mild restrictions on the number and type of contacts will need to be in place, for example on indoor gatherings. However, this strategy fails even for moderate case numbers – say, an incidence of 30 new cases in a population of 100,000 per week – quickly becomes infeasible because of hidden outbreaks<sup>2</sup>, which require strong restrictions on social and economic life to get them under control.

After some initial hesitancy and smaller measures, Germany introduced a nationwide lockdown in mid-March, which did not include measures like a general curfew, but proved effective in getting case numbers down quickly. On the economic side, these measures were accompanied by a large package of relief measures. Most importantly, these included the preservation of employment relationships via the short time work scheme, which allows firms to offload some of their labour costs for a limited period of time. At the same time, there were a number of emergency relief programmes for firms small and large, which were affected directly and indirectly by the pandemic. These programmes were set up at a record speed

1 Adam Sheridan et al. (2020): 'Social distancing laws cause only small losses of economic activity during the COVID-19 pandemic in Scandinavia', PNAS, Vol. 117 (34).

2 Sebastian Contreras et al. (2021): 'The challenges of containing SARS-CoV-2 via test-trace-and-isolate', Nature Communications, Vol. 12 (378).

and used existing channels for distribution. The first weeks of the crisis have shown the large option value in functioning bureaucratic and social support systems, particularly in comparison to countries like the United States or the United Kingdom.

The combination of firing restrictions and these economic support measures were effective in curbing the economic impact of the first months of the pandemic relative to countries like the United States or the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> We have shown for the Netherlands – where the policy reaction was broadly similar to Germany in terms of measures and timing – that people worked much fewer hours but their incomes did not drop by much across the distribution.<sup>4</sup> Unsurprisingly, Peichl (2020) comes to similar conclusion for Germany, where the data situation is more problematic. During the nationwide shutdown in the spring, economic activity fell by a lot. The quantitative effects of direct policy measures like closing stores and restaurants, of supply chain disruptions, and of production stops due to sudden declines in demand have not been disentangled yet and it is unclear to what extent that will be possible. By the end of the second quarter, however, much of business life was back to normal operations.

Over the summer, infection rates in Germany were very low. It is clear now that this period of time was wasted in terms of preparing for a second wave in the autumn, which experts had predicted all along. Local health authorities continue to rely on fax machines and have not been equipped to do effective contact tracing. The purchase of vaccines has been extremely late in Europe and quantities were far too small.<sup>5</sup> Testing almost exclusively focused on PCR tests, which are the gold standard in clinical diagnosis, but take too long to screen the population for outbreaks. When infection rates started picking up in late September, policy makers waited until the end of October to introduce effective measures to prevent the spread.

Hence, Germany has entered a period with closed bars, restaurants, tourism, and events (since November); closed schools, day-care centres, shops, and hairdressers (since mid-December), and some regions with travel restrictions (since mid-January). The economic impact of these measures is likely to be much smaller than in the spring of 2020 because demand for most goods and services is still there and supply chains are intact. However, the period is longer, and the death toll of CoViD-19 has been much higher. At the same time, it seems to be much more problematic



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- 3 Abi Adams-Prassl et al. (2020): 'Inequality in the Impact of the Coronavirus Shock: Evidence from Real Time Surveys', IZA Discussion Paper Series, No. 13183.
- 4 Hans-Martin von Gaudecker et al. (2020): 'Labour Supply during Lockdown and a 'New Normal': The Case of the Netherlands', IZA Discussion Paper Series, No. 13623.
- 5 Marcel Fratzscher (2021): 'Das Impfdesaster, an dem wir alle Mitschuld tragen', Der Spiegel, 6 January.

for businesses affected by closures or demand disruptions due to restrictions to access payments from economic relief programs than in the spring. Bureaucratic processes take a lot of time and some rules have been changed ex post. Nevertheless, the economic cost of the current situation seems to be limited relative to the Spring of 2020. While the businesses affected by closures are very visible, they contribute a minor share to overall GDP.

The reasons for these failures are manifold, but the common ground seems to be the way politics and bureaucracy operates outside of crisis mode. In spring, much has been possible due to pragmatic actions by policymakers. By the late summer, things have come back to the usual mode of operations, that is, a strive for perfection while disregarding timing issues. For example, it is clear that PCR tests are the gold standard for clinical diagnoses. If a medical doctor needs to make treatment decisions, she needs the information whether a patient carries the virus or not. However, it usually takes several days to obtain a result. This makes it near-useless for breaking infection chains, unless everybody who is tested actually isolates until the result is there, which seems unrealistic in practice. At the same time, a number of rapid tests are available that give an indication of whether somebody is **currently** infectious. Expanding this at

large scale would likely allow to bring infection rates down very quickly<sup>6</sup> and it has played an important role several places considered success stories when it comes to the containment of CoViD-19, such as Rostock or Liverpool. It could be used to protect particularly vulnerable groups, such as residents in nursing care homes, but only if used at a high frequency, which is not being done in general.<sup>7</sup>

Whether it is vaccination purchases and strategy, testing strategy, complete lack of preparation for schools to operate in pandemic mode, or the bureaucratic hurdles put into place for the economic relief payments since November 2020: There is a pattern of inaction or hesitant action when direct costs could be incurred, which later leads to indirect economic and social costs of a much larger magnitude. The difference is that it is easy to shift blame for those indirect costs ("there is no alternative because this is the nature of the virus"), whereas it is clear who made the decision to spend the money. In the context of the vaccine purchases, this has been nicely described by Fratzscher (2021). This way, Germany has squandered the excellent position it found itself in during the late summer of 2020; at the time of this writing, we can only hope that decision-makers quickly switch back to crisis mode.



*Participants of the ISFB 2018 listening to an expert panel*

6 Michael J. Mina, Kristian G. Andersen (2021): 'COVID-19 testing: One size does not fit all', *Science*, Vol. 371 (6525), 126-127.

7 Menno Baumann et al. (2021): Eine neue proaktive Zielsetzung für Deutschland zur Bekämpfung von SARS-CoV-2.

## Democratic Societies, Norms, and Decision-Making in the Pandemic

by *Elvira Rosert*



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for Peace Research  
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About a fifth of the world's 195 countries are currently on a good way to contain the coronavirus pandemic – among these countries, however, the number of OECD democracies is strikingly low. Quite the opposite: Many of them, after having suffered deadly first waves experienced even more severe second waves. This happened despite their comparably well-developed health systems, technological advancement, functioning administrative structures, and relative wealth, proving wrong earlier assessments like the one by the global pandemic preparedness index, which ranked the United States and European democracies top in 2019. In addition to being capable to prevent a pandemic, democracies should also be willing to protect their citizens from the threat of a highly contagious and potentially lethal virus, be it due to their human rights commitments or re-election interests. Even though most of them imposed more or less decisive measures at some point, they did so reluctantly, too late to choke off the epidemic on their territory, while at the same time rushing to lift the measures too early, which allowed the spread of the virus to pick up pace again.

Understanding why this is happening requires extensive research that will, hopefully, produce a panoply of explanations, each of which will add different

pieces to the puzzle. Aiming to contribute to this endeavor, in this short piece, I begin to develop an argument focusing on the interplay between democratic governments, their societies, and individual members with regard to the production and the enforcement of pandemic containment rules and the behavioral choices that people make. First, I argue that governmental rules and the evolving social norms have been deficient and incomplete so that they have impaired both the ability and the willingness of the people to comply with them. Second, the imperfect governmental and social guidance has strengthened the importance of individual personality types – with the altruistic and the egoistic type as two extremes – in guiding individual decisions. Third, the egoistic type, however rare, poses a particular problem now for two reasons: the specific problem structure of the pandemic in which individual decisions can have a huge collective impact; and the reluctance of democracies to enforce rules, all the more those pertaining to the private sphere.

So how do rules guide behavior and where do these rules come from? In times of relative stability, democracies can rely on legitimacy to motivate compliance. Even though many rules are backed by some kind of sanctions in democratic states too, the (ideal-typical)



democracy will cautiously guard individual liberties and reduce to a minimum its use of coercive means such as mass surveillance to monitor compliance and rigorous punishment to enforce it. Nevertheless, most people follow most rules most of the time – the limited governmental control is still sufficient to maintain order and stability as it is backed by another powerful force: social norms. Through socialization, democratic citizens learn what society expects from them in which situations, i.e., what kind of behavior is considered appropriate when. For the homo sociologicus, hence, social norms serve a double function: They allow him to satisfy his desire for social conformity through compliance, and they provide behavioral guidance, thereby simplifying decision-making. In short, in the absence of a crisis, people are guided well by both formal-legal and social rules.

The current pandemic, however, has tremendously weakened the orientation abilities of both governments and societies. In this unprecedented situation, neither is there a shared international expectation specifying the overall epidemiological goals and strategies that governments are supposed to pursue. Nor is it clear for the people how to act in the mundane situations that they need to navigate under the hitherto unknown condition of the pandemic. Because

the pandemic's impact is so broad and so deep, many new behavioral standards for different aspects of the public, professional, and private spheres are required. The governments seek to provide those standards for their citizens by amending laws, passing administrative orders, and issuing public health messages.

Three conditions make the creation of new rules particularly difficult now: urgency, uncertainty, and value conflicts. The governments face the challenge of effectively managing the pandemic while juggling and weighing up different public goods and doing only what is necessary in order to preserve individual freedoms to the largest extent possible. This emergency decision-making (necessarily) results in rules that are imperfect in many regards. Some of these rules are too abstract or too vague, others are overly specific; some are too volatile, others are too inert; some are inconsistent in terms of the underlying principles, others are too uniform and rigid. Overall, the guidance they provide is insufficient to enable people to act confidently and safely in the changed environment.

Exacerbating the problem, social norms, the other major source of guidance, are yet underdeveloped too. Societies need time to adapt their norms to new circumstances – standards of appropriate behavior take time to emerge and to turn into shared expectations and widespread practices. It is no surprise then, that even after almost a year of the pandemic, societies are still debating the dilemmas that this pandemic has created and searching for what is appropriate when. These processes have not been made easier by the magnitude of the shock, the changing scientific recommendations that evolve with new knowledge about the virus, and the variety of viewpoints, not always advocated by actors who can be assumed to have society's best interests at heart.

But people, having to go on with their everyday lives under new circumstances, need to make many decisions. Should they express their unease when their supervisors call an in-person meeting? Should they

ask others to wear masks or leave it at just wearing a mask themselves or not wear a mask too because no one else is doing so? Is it acceptable to refuse to meet friends and let your children be the only ones not going to their friend's birthday party? How to comfort people while maintaining physical distance? What risk is acceptable when visiting lonely relatives, who are, however, also particularly vulnerable to the virus? There are many questions like these.

I suggest that in this situation of unclear rules individual decision-making depends much more on the personality type than in times of routine when social forces are strong enough to contain and conceal personal predispositions. Now, however, the loosened mechanisms of social control allow the latter to surface and to guide actions. The two (ideal-typical) personality types that matter now more than usually are the altruistic and the egoistic personality – altruists understood as people who prioritize the consequences of their actions on others in their decision-making, and egoists understood as people who prioritize the consequences of their actions on themselves. To be sure, the ability to (fully) assess the consequences warrants further discussion as it cannot be taken for granted, in particular due to the complexity, delayed effects, and contradictory and volatile behavioral recommendations. Yet, for reasons of space, I leave this problem aside here.

Given the problem structure of the pandemic, it is not hard to see why altruistic decision-making – putting aside one's own benefits and focusing on the costs for others – is key to halting it. First, the high degree of interdependence means that individual decisions potentially have enormous collective externalities. Second, there are many trade-offs involved, not only such between different personal values, but also between individual benefits and collective costs, or between short-term gains and long-term losses. Third, while the risk from the coronavirus varies greatly by age, occupation, socioeconomic background, and sex, many still perceive it to be low for them personally. The threat of governmental sanctions, which too may motivate cautious behavior, is low as well. Under these circumstances, individual responsibility, a central figure in the public discourse, must be interpreted altruistically, namely as the responsibility towards others – those who might be at a greater risk to contract the virus or to experience a severe outcome, or forced to live under lasting restrictions with all their personal, social, and economic consequences. By contrast, the egoistic interpretation of responsibility, i.e. weighing only individual risks and (tacitly) accepting collective costs for the individual benefit, might have devastating consequences, even if practiced by comparably few members of society.



Strategic foresight  
workshop during  
ISFB 2018

To conclude, I want to outline two main messages following from this analysis. The first message opens up a perspective by bringing the social back in: What societies need now is both an improved supply of rules by the governments and an affirmative societal focus on altruistic behavior. This will give rise to and solidify new standards of appropriateness, which then, as social norms, will become guiding also for those who do not necessarily share or are aware of them. The second message takes issue with the occasional insinuation that democracies are incapable to deal with big crises because they are too democratic, in particular as this diagnosis is frequently accompanied by the suggestion to adopt practices of surveillance and sanctions from authoritarian states, some of which managed the pandemic more successfully in epidemiological regard. This is, in my view, not the

lesson to be learned here. On the contrary: If anything, democracies need to become more democratic in the sense that more individual members of their populations are willing and able to choose collectively beneficial courses of action even in the absence of unequivocal governmental and social rules and the threat of enforcement. The importance of this change goes beyond the current crisis and extends to other challenges, such as populism, climate change, post growth economies, or the next virus that might be even deadlier.



# Keeping the Distance: Why Europeans Find it so Difficult to Learn from East Asia

by Marina Rudyak, Maximilian Mayer, and Marius Meinhof



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of Bielefeld*

"We need not be at this point." Such was the verdict of virologist Isabella Eckerle commenting on the second lockdown in the German talk show "Hart aber fair (Tough but Fair)". With that, Eckerle, who heads the Centre for Novel Viral Diseases at the University Hospital in Geneva, contradicted all those who argue that it is still not clear how we should deal with this pandemic. Yet, when Eckerle pointed to the successful approaches in East Asia, she was interrupted by host Frank Plasberg: "they surely don't care much about democracy".

Plasberg's reaction is typical for a widespread rejection of East Asian strategies in dealing with the corona pandemic in Europe. Some – as in the debate about masks in spring – stress the Otherness of Asian cultures, invoking Confucian values or collectivism. Others habitually reduce the debate to remarks about the Chinese surveillance state. Yet, thus keeping the distance does not get us anywhere.

## Back to Normality?

The fact of the matter is that East Asian countries have largely returned to normality today. On 31 October, 130,000 people celebrated Taiwan Pride, Asia's largest LGBTQ parade. A total of 7 people have died of Covid-19 since the beginning of the pandemic in Taiwan and there have been no new infections for over 200 days and no lockdown, as in South Korea. In Vietnam, which has almost 30 million more inhabitants than France, only 35 people have died - in France, over 40,000 so far. China, too, has managed to bring the virus almost completely under control and the economy is recovering rapidly.

The goal of some of the massive restrictions on basic rights in spring this year was to gain time and to build up an infrastructure to keep the pandemic under control later on. Why have East Asian countries managed to do so while Europe has failed?

In East Asia, governments focused on rapidly suppressing local outbreaks, whereas in Europe local hot spots got out of control during the summer when epidemic measures were eased. East Asian countries tested on a massive scale and with public funding, while in Germany and other European countries testing was limited in availability and had to be paid for

privately in some cases. East Asia implemented early and consistent infection chain tracing with the help of Big Data; while in Europe, digital networking in the health sector lags far behind. More importantly, perhaps, despite the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which offers the strictest protection of privacy in the world, a high degree of distrust towards digital technologies remains the rule: we prefer putting everyone back into lockdown to using an effective app on a mobile phone, or to allowing the digital monitoring of a few on quarantine. Our irrational scepticism towards face masks has no equivalent in East Asia.

### The Principle of Eradication

From the outset, experts in Europe and East Asia adopted different strategies. After the experience with SARS in 2003, East Asian countries pursued the "principle of eradication". Australia chose a similar roadmap, aiming at preventing new infections as effectively as possible - successfully. In Europe, on the other hand, even the theoretical possibility of eradi-

cating the virus seemed unimaginable. Instead, epidemiologists presented the familiar "influenza model", according to which the virus cannot be stopped only contained and a slow global spread must ultimately be accepted, as the only alternative.

The fact that these two radically different models to the pandemic exist is hardly ever mentioned in Euro-American discourse. Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, China and Mongolia are seldom mentioned, or their success in combating the pandemic is dismissed with general references to insularity or autocracy.

Instead of demonstrating a healthy dose of curiosity about the political, organisational, technical and medical measures that made some of these stunning victories over Covid-19 possible, there is aloofness and ignorance. Scepticism towards autocratic China has made a rational debate and pragmatic learning about how to deal with the pandemic more efficiently impossible and instead has highlighted the question of who is to blame, accompanied by a moralising undertone of regime critique.



*Dr. Mark Speich,  
State Secretary  
of North  
Rhine-Westphalia,  
during ISFB 2019*

Reservations about learning from authoritarian China are understandable, especially in the current charged geopolitical climate. But South Korea and Taiwan are liberal democracies. Blanket delineations between democracy and authoritarianism have made a differentiated understanding of East Asian prevention measures impossible.

### The Habitus of Superiority

Asia experts in universities and think tanks across Europe could have helped point to successful approaches from Taipei to Seoul. Those with appropriate language skills have followed the corona outbreak in Asia closely from the start. A look at the European China Twitter in January would have been enough to see what was in store for Europe.

The intuitive distancing polemic against China's authoritarian regime and the stubborn ignorance of Asian success models can perhaps best be termed epidemic Orientalism, the latter a mindset that precludes all learning, because the Other is seen as inferior and therefore, never possibly a model, only a foil for ideological demarcation. In talk shows and crisis meetings from Bern to Berlin, neither the "eradication model" nor the epidemiological expertise and experience of scientists from East Asia were heard. An opportunity missed when it would have been possible to seriously discuss alternative ways of contact tracing or local mass testing to be implemented successfully in Europe.

Orientalist prejudice and a habitus of superiority have made us fail in our handling of Covid-19. It is an attitude diametrically opposite to the self-image of liberal, enlightened societies. Should not open public discussion of different approaches and the ability to learn from others be our strength? European governments could have started a dialogue with leading East



Asian experts in the spring. Already then, it was evident that it would be worthwhile looking for replicable concepts and instruments elsewhere. Instead, we now find ourselves in a second lockdown, with no predictable endpoint in sight. Isabella Eckerle was quite right: we need not be at this point.

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## COMMENTS AND PERSPECTIVES

# Foresight Online Workshop – Transatlantic Security 2025



# Strategic Foresight and Scenario Technique

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## Summary

The Foresight Online Workshop "Transatlantic Security 2025" was part of the International Security Forum Bonn 2020. Hosted by the Young German Council for Foreign Relations (Junge DGAP), the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies (CASSIS), the goal of this workshop was to develop possible scenarios for the year 2025 that have an effect on transatlantic security and to work on a flexible strategy from a German perspective that takes these potential challenges into account. Forty participants with different academic backgrounds and expertise were guided through the process of scenario- and strategy development by professional foresight experts using a state-of-the-art foresight software tool.

## Introduction to scenario technique

Whether and when the next crisis hits, is simply unpredictable. Nevertheless, it is possible to prepare for such events. One way is to develop scenarios, which is a common method used for thinking of possible futures. The aim of a scenario project is to enable decision-makers to find effective and accurate strategies in order to reach a desired future or to successfully deal with crisis once they occur.

By developing scenarios, participants of a scenario project develop different futures for their object(s) of investigation. They systematically collect, analyse and process information about future developments that already exist today and determine probabilities with which the most important factors might change in the future.

## Types of Scenarios

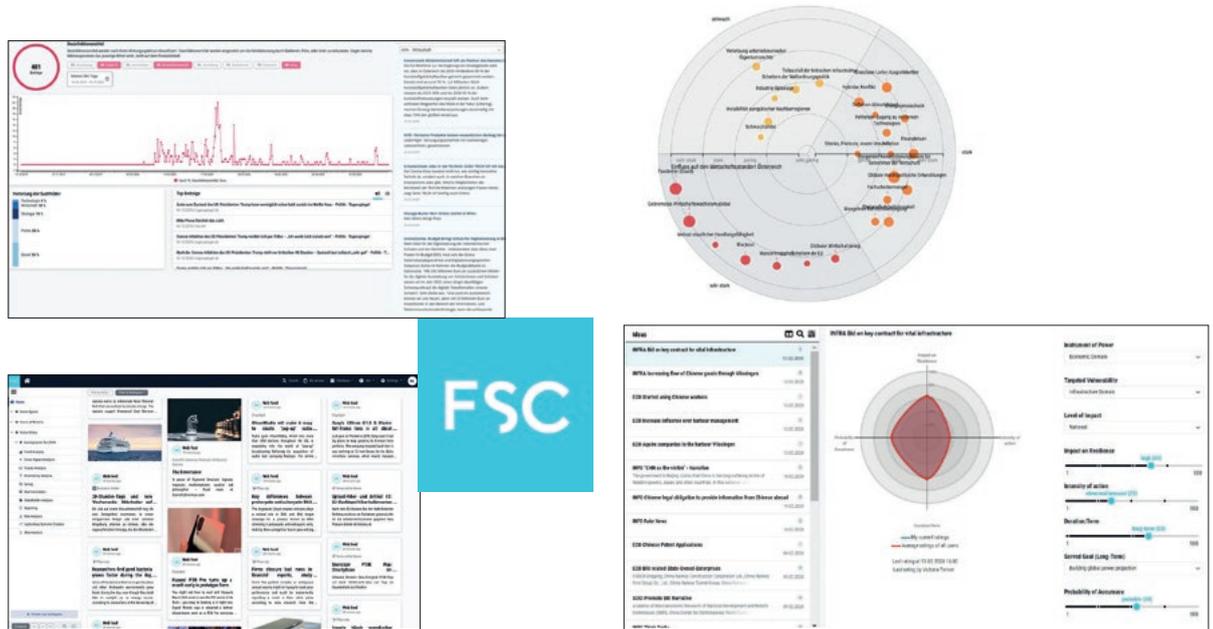
A scenario describes a possible future, which is created by combining data, information, experience, opinions, and assessments. There are three basic types of scenarios: *trend scenarios*, *best- and worst-case scenarios*. A *trend scenario* extrapolates the present into the future under the assumption that none of today's major trends significantly change. The *best-case scenario* describes a future, in which all major developments turn-out in the best-possible way. Logically, the worst possible future is captured by the *worst-case scenario*. Usually, all conceivable futures can be classified within the range of those two extremes. Often enough, the actual future lies somewhere between the best case-scenario and the worst-case-scenario. The trend scenario, on the other hand, almost never materializes.

## Scenario management and trend analysis software

In order to create and describe comprehensive scenarios and to better assess the magnitude of different factors and trends that shape the future, specialized providers of scenario projects use simulation software to identify and analyse complex relationships between a multitude of factors and possible developments.

The *Foresight Strategy Cockpit (FSC)* is a web-based tool that allows companies and organisations to manage a holistic foresight process ranging from trend analysis and risk analysis to scenario and strategy development. Situational analysis can be created based on real-time data and monitored easily. The FSC empowers users to employ over forty established methods and frameworks from futures studies to develop a systematic and professional approach to tackle future scenarios.

The FSC has been used by the workshop team to develop the following scenarios and strategies together with the workshop participants.

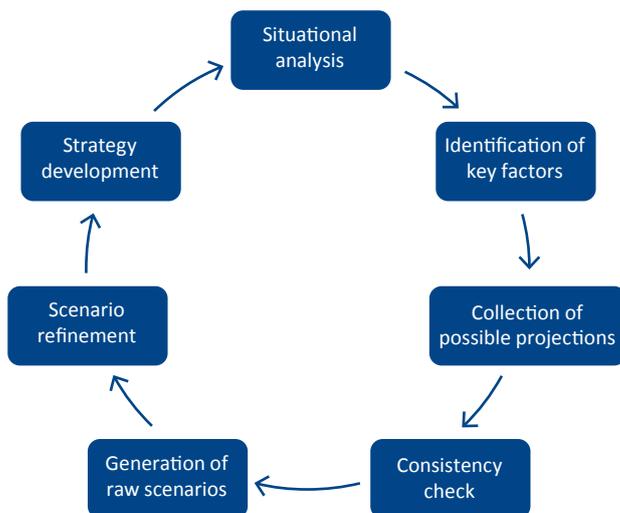


**Fig.1:** The Foresight Strategy Cockpit (FSC) is a web-based tool that allows companies to intelligently manage a holistic foresight process from trends and scenarios up to finalized strategies.

**Structure of the process and methods used**

At the beginning of any foresight project, the object of investigation has to be defined in terms of theme, context and time. The process therefore starts with a situational analysis to develop a system view, followed by a selection of spheres of influence and key factors that shape the future of the object under investigation.

The next step is to collect several possible (positive, negative or extreme) projections for each of the key factors, which is followed by a consistency check in order to ensure that none of the possible projections contradict each other. Then, so-called raw scenarios can be generated, which need further refinement to arrive at a set of comprehensive scenarios. Finally, the workshop team is asked to develop strategies for each of the scenarios and to identify a strategy that is best suited to react to all scenarios developed.



By exploring several possible futures while also taking multiple pathways into account, scenarios become a valuable basis for developing innovative strategies in order to face an uncertain future. However, if a strategy is found to be ineffective, the process can be adapted and both - the scenario- and strategy process - be carried out on a regular basis.

**Fig.2:** Scenario and strategy development process using scenario technique.

## Creating a system view for transatlantic security

As mentioned above, a foresight project should begin by clearly defining the object of investigation as well as the overall objective of the project. What is to be achieved by developing scenarios? What kind of strategies are to be developed?

Hence, a situational analysis of the field of interest should identify objectives, currently applied strategies, an actor's strengths and weaknesses as well as the timeframe the scenarios should consider (5 years, 10 years, 50 years).

With regard to the workshop, quite a large number of possible spheres of influence came into mind when looking at transatlantic security in five years. Although knowing that in international relations the slightest event somewhere on the globe can have an immense effect on world politics, a first reduction of complexity was necessary in order to arrive at a manageable number of possibilities. Hence, spheres of influence were identified, which likely cover the most important factors for the field of interest:



**Fig.3:** Spheres of influence that shape transatlantic security

## Identifying key factors

With the spheres of influence for transatlantic security identified, concrete factors had to be collected. A factor is a measurable or describable quantity, whose manifestation can change while time passes. Hence, the scenario team had to identify factors for each of the spheres of influence mentioned above, which have a direct impact on the future of transatlantic security.

Using intuitive methods to brainstorm ideas, the team was asked to list as many factors as possible, which was followed by an evaluation of these factors (cross-impact analysis) based on their level of interconnectedness (mutual influence) and relevance. The most relevant and interconnected factors were considered to be key factors, and, therefore, selected for further processing.

European Union	USA	Strategic interests of major non-European powers	Trade and economic relations	Other global developments	Special security challenges	Military strategies
Political developments within the EU	Political System of the US	US strategic interests	EU/China trade relations	Climate change	Terrorism and radicalisation	NATO's military strategy
Economic and financial system (Euro policy)	Economic and financial system of the US	China's strategic interests	EU/US trade relations	Migration	Regional conflicts	EU's military strategy
Social cohesion	Social cohesion within the US	Russia's strategic interests	US/China trade relations	Demographic developments	Hybrid threats	China's military strategy
France's European policy		Turkey's strategic interests	EU/Russia trade relations	Energy and resource supply	Cybercrime and cyber attacks	Russia's military strategy
Great Britain's European policy		Common interests of transatlantic partners	New economic alliances	Technological innovation	Iran	US' military strategy
Germany's European policy			Trade with Africa	International organisations	Israel	
European policy of the Visegrad states				Pandemics	Saudi Arabia	
European policy of the West Balkan states				National debt levels	Turkey	
					Failing and failed states	

Fig.4: Spheres of influence (blue), factors (white), and key factors (orange)



## Collecting possible projections for each key factor

Scenarios are constructed on the basis of key factors and their varying manifestations in the future. The different projections of a factor form multiple possible future states of a key factor. Thus, the scenario team's next task was to identify up to five possible projections of each of the key factors.

Political developments within the EU	Further European integration	Renationalisation and fragmentation of the EU	Reestablishment the European Union	Foundation of a "Core-EU"	
Germany's European policy	Germany as a benevolent hegemon	Germany as an honest broker	Germany First	Status Quo Power	Coalition of the Frugal Five
US strategic interests	"Back to Normal"	"Most expensive divorce in the world"	"Offshore Balancing"		
China's strategic interests	Chinas as a strategic investor	Chinas as a multilateralist	An aggressive China	China implodes	
Common interests of transatlantic partners	Transatlantic partnership revival	Partnership plus	Qualified partnership	Strategic cooperation	
EU/US trade relations	Global economic dominance	TTIP 2.0	Protectionism	Partners, but buy American	
US/China trade relations	Decoupling	Re-Globalisation	No dominance, mutual respect		
Climate change	Climate change continues	Mitigation of climate change through technological innovations	Failure of multilateral efforts to mitigate climate change		
Energy and resource supply	Endless energy	Battle for resources	Resource mining in space	Sustainable energy supply	
Technological innovation	Unregulated technological innovation	Regulated technological innovation	"Back to analog" – De-technologization		
NATO's military strategy	Transformation into global defence alliance	NATO Exclusive	"NATO no more"	Redefinition of security and defence (to include health and climate security)	
US military strategy	High-Tech warfare	Hybrid warfare	War in space	"Back to boots on the ground"	

Fig. 6: Key factors and their possible projections



## Refining, interpreting and evaluating scenarios

Building on the main characteristics of the scenario clusters and their distinctive features, the workshop team and the participants were able to formulate four comprehensive scenarios: "Sleep Walking"; "Space Rivalries"; "Imploding Dragon"; and "Digital Detox":

### Scenario 1: Sleepwalking

As the title of the scenario suggests, "Sleep Walking" assumes a linear development of most of today's trends. It could thus also be considered the "Baseline" scenario.

The European Union is plagued by further renationalization efforts of the individual member states as well as by an increasing fragmentation of interests. The slow process of disintegration continues. As a consequence of the abolition of the principle of unanimity and the introduction of the principle of qualified majority voting, the European Union is splitting into several interest groups organized primarily by geographical location. Germany and France are attempting to expand their leading role in this mixed situation. The question of how to position the European Union vis-à-vis China is becoming a fundamental issue of contention. While some states are striving for a pro-China policy and are moving closer to China and Russia, a pro-U.S. camp is forming on the other side, which is striving for strategic cooperation with its transatlantic partner.

Meanwhile, China sees the European Union as a "cash cow" for Chinese state-owned enterprises and part of the One Belt, One Road Initiative. It is continuing its strategic investments in EU economic sectors and, in parallel, is securing new markets, for example in Africa, which are still neglected by the European Union and the United States, through development aid and investments.

The U.S. is primarily focused on containing an expansive China and is holding military manoeuvres with South Korea and Japan. Hybrid warfare is becoming the dominant U.S. military doctrine,

requiring fewer "boots on the ground" and giving the impression that wars can be fought and won again. Internationally, however, the United States, contrary to expectations, is not making a new effort after the end of the Trump administration to reform and strengthen multilateral institutions. They are working constructively and strategically with the European Union in pre-existing forums, but are looking out for their own advantage.

Technological innovation is advancing almost unchecked and only partially controlled. Thus, a second digital revolution is beginning through quantum computing, improved AI, robotics, and the first bio-technological "upgrades" for humans.

Energy and raw resource supplies are secure due to declining consumption through technological advances and efficiencies in the European Union, the U.S., and the MENA region. Sustainable supply and energy sources dominate the energy market. Strong demand for cheap energy is shifting toward the emerging economies of sub-Saharan Africa, while oil- and gas-producing countries are struggling with political and economic destabilization due to the loss of their former major customers.

Meanwhile, climate change is advancing inexorably. Ongoing heat waves and progressive desertification are leading to food shortages in several emerging and developing countries. As a consequence, the number of climate refugees is rapidly increasing worldwide, along with the number of failed states and regional conflicts. The melting of the polar ice caps is causing local flooding and an opening for a new passage in the Arctic Sea.

## Scenario 2: Space Rivalries

Space is becoming the agenda-dominating security issue. It has become an additional arena for conflict between the major powers. A massive technological leap in and focus on space policy in several countries, notably China and the United States, has led to the development of offensive military satellites and space-to-Earth weapons. In parallel, resource extraction in space (primarily on the Moon) is becoming a multilateral challenge.

While the European Commission is desperately trying to prevent internal division, individual member states are increasingly turning away from European institutions. Different interest groups are formed by an orientation into Visegrad, North, South, and independent European states. Germany has accepted the foreseeable end of the European Union and is already concentrating on expanding bilateral trade relations. The fragmentation of the EU seems unstoppable and the breakup of the Union only a matter of time.

Meanwhile, China is acting as an aggressor, sensing its chance to accelerate its rise as a globally dominant superpower. It is emphasizing its own sovereignty in the South China Sea, increasing the

number of local incidents with Vietnam, the Philippines and Taiwan. The likelihood of a violent resolution of the Taiwan question is rapidly increasing. China strives for recognition as the world's superior leader and for supremacy in Asia.

The United States is engaged in "offshore balancing" and has abandoned its role as "world leader." It is focusing on domestic reforms, dominance in space and decoupling from other powers while demanding a more active foreign policy from its allies, effectively rejecting the concept of collective defense within NATO. The U.S. intervenes only when a regional power is about to become a regional hegemon. However, Congress is debating whether it is already too late in view of China's expansion in Asia to effectively protect Taiwan, and discusses whether the US should rather focus on the a possible confrontation on US technology and weapon systems in space.

With multilateralism in retreat, the EU on the verge of disintegration, and the U.S. decoupling from the world, global climate policy is imploding. The world is splitting into climate winners and climate losers.

### Scenario 3: Imploding Dragon

Due to a failed coup shortly after President Xi's death, China's one-party system implodes. The single party splits into several political factions and interest groups. The domestic order breaks down and individual provinces secede. They begin to participate in the world economic system and, thereby, partly gain political legitimacy and an upgrading of their own position of power in the country. Riots, conflicts and civil wars break out, leading to refugee flows to neighbouring countries with destabilizing effects.

Meanwhile, the loss of China as a secure sales market is leading to a serious weakening of international trade and a breakdown of global production chains. A shift of production and investment to other countries follows. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank loses its main financial backer, financial uncertainty increases, making a chain reaction on the global financial market likely.

The European Union is in a gridlock. While Germany forms the Frugal Five with the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark and Sweden, a transfer and debt union as well as further integration steps in the EU are prevented at the same time. While the Frugal Five continue to integrate among themselves, the rest of the Union is largely at a standstill.

The U.S. on the other hand, is focusing on the emerging power vacuum in Asia due to the collapse of China. For the time being, they are primarily concerned with driving economic decoupling in order to compensate for the effects on their own economy. Militarily, however, the U.S. is prepared to intervene in the Pacific without the use of its own personnel. The nation has massively advanced technological development toward a human-free battlefield and combined it with extensive use of cyber measures. As a result, the U.S. is more inclined to intervene militarily.

Great leaps in technology development have led to breakthroughs in fusion reactor development. An almost endless supply of cheap energy has led to economic growth and greatly reduced demand for oil and gas. The result has been a mitigation of climate change, pollution, and extreme weather.

#### Scenario 4: Digital Detox

A highly effective cyber virus that has taken on a life of its own has paralyzed civilian and military facilities in several industrialized nations. It has caused power outages on a huge scale, collapses in healthcare systems and goods production. Military systems have been severely disrupted as well, leading to drone crashes, communication breakdowns and command system failures. Thereby, the virus has exposed the vulnerability of highly digitized and interconnected networks and critical infrastructure. As a result, the value of resilient and redundant networks in energy, military and critical infrastructure has increased immensely.

Energy transition is being slowed down significantly due to this shift. Instead of further digitization, higher efficiency and networking of the systems based on renewable energies, natural gas and oil are again being increasingly pumped with outdated analog networks. Diversification and security of supply are becoming the top priorities, which is making fracking and the development of new oil fields a highly profitable business. Consequently, climate change accelerates. The number of natural disasters is increasing, as is the number of migrants. Food shortages and desertification are the result, further destabilizing already fragile states.

Before the spread of the cyber virus, the European Union was re-established on the basis of a new constitution, although several EU-sceptical to critical countries did not go along with this step. Thus, a pan-European government was created and endowed with further sovereign rights. The emancipation of the Union is achieved by a full

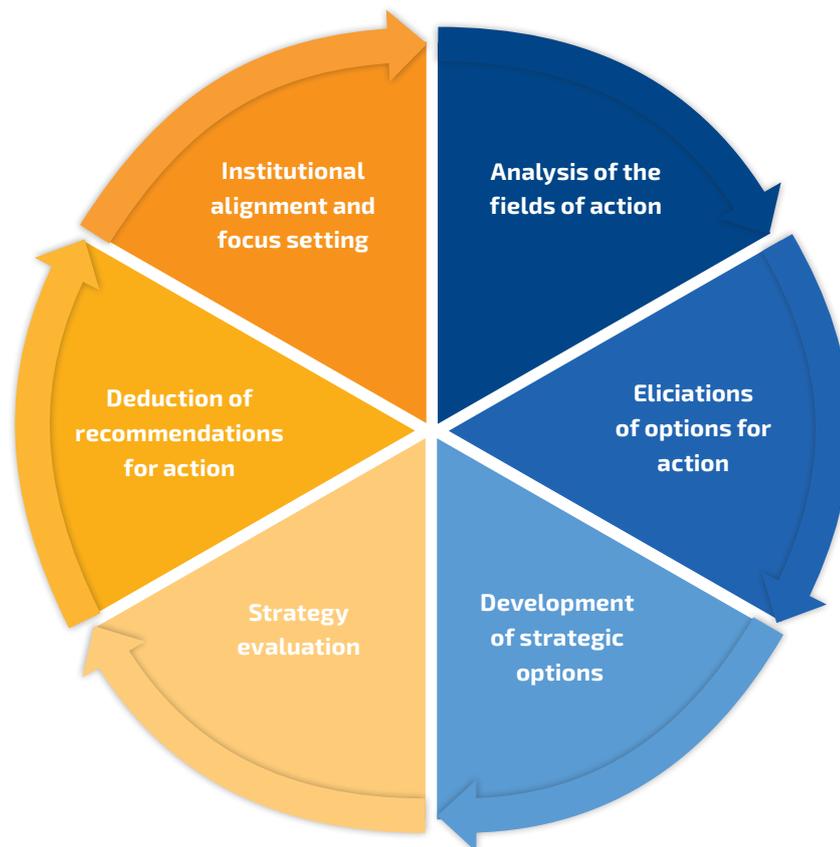
development of state-like powers. Elections of an EU president are introduced, the Council of the European Union is expanded to a 2nd chamber (Senate), and the right of policy initiative is granted to the EU Parliament. France takes over as the security guarantor of the EU (incl. the nuclear deterrence) and the UN Security Council seat becomes European - with France holding the seat.

Meanwhile, the United States is placing greater emphasis on multilateral forums and the restoration of existing international alliances. It seeks to forge a global "Alliance of Democracies" and a new multilateral forum with democracies around the globe to form common interests, especially in the field of technology and innovation. The transatlantic partnership with the re-founded European Union is thriving. A new transatlantic trade agreement is being negotiated and the partners are pushing for a non-proliferation regime for state and non-state cyber capabilities and/or digital disruptive technologies on the international level. Due to the European Union accepting France as the military leader of the continent, the EU's military became an equal partner within NATO leading to proper burden sharing. Toward China, the United States is pursuing a democratization by offering cooperation and investment.

China, on the other hand, has been hit hard by the virus and is striving for economic and political stability. To boost the economy, the Chinese leadership is pursuing an opening strategy and is increasingly relying on multilateralism, open trade agreements and transparency.

## Developing strategies

In contrast to simple extrapolations of current developments into the future, scenarios help to broaden one's own scope of perception and show alternative paths for action. Consequently, the strategies for each of the scenarios need to be sufficiently complex and draw from a multitude of strategic options. Hence, the workshop participants had to analyse the fields of action for Germany and identify strategic options within those fields of action. Then, they were able to develop strategies by choosing differing sets of strategic options for each of the strategies while keeping in mind that the objective is to find a strategy that potentially suits all of the scenarios. In an ideal world, this process leads to the implementation of the most flexible strategy in order to be prepared and to cope with multiple futures in case they become reality.



**Fig.8:** Regularly updated strategy development, strategy evaluation and -implementation process

### Identifying fields of action and collecting strategic options

To identify fields of action for a state, in this case Germany, was relatively easy. The main fields of action for a state are usually major policy areas like foreign policy, defence policy, and economic affairs. Hence, during the third session of the workshop, the participants defined Germany's fields of action regarding transatlantic relations in 2025.

Economic affairs and financial policy	Sanctions	Diplomatic initiatives	Foreign investment	Trade agreements	Fiscal restraint		
Security and defense policy	Deterrence	Development of specific capabilities to counter future threats	Implementation of the whole government approach	European army	Demilitarization	Status Quo-policy	Military assistance
Bilateral relations with the USA	Deepening relations	Open political conflict	Decoupling	Keeping the status quo	Hedging		
Bilateral relations with Russia	Deepening relations	Open political conflict	Decoupling	Keeping the status quo	Hedging		
Bilateral relations with China	Deepening relations	Open political conflict	Decoupling	Keeping the status quo	Hedging		
Germany's ambitions within NATO, EU, UN	Cohesion building	Regional task and burden sharing	Global alliance to reform the UN security council	EU-NATO defence development dialogue	Germany First	Decoupling	
Technology and digitisation policy	Close technology sharing amongst allies	Promote German regulation standards	Strengthen European (Tech) Champions	Massive investments in cutting-edge technology	Arms control for cyber capabilities		
Climate and environment policy	Demanding an EU tax on CO2 emissions	Promote energy efficiency	Sanction climate "sinners"	Implement the principle of "the polluter pays" on a mandatory basis	Promote international climate agreements	Abandon climate policy; focus on more pressing issues	
Resource and energy policy	Promote the use of alternative energy supplies	Build energy alliances	Promote a western strategic investment program on a global scale	Diversification of supply chains	Geopolitical initiatives to secure resource and energy sources		

Fig.9: Fields of action (blue), strategic options (white), selection of strategic options for the scenario "Sleep Walking" (orange)

## Choosing strategic options and evaluating strategies

Which sets of the strategic options should be selected to develop effective strategies for each of the scenarios? In multiple discussions, the workshops participants chose four sets of strategic options that seemed most effective for one of the scenarios.

The final step in a strategic foresight workshop is to evaluate the strategies in order to identify the most robust strategy that has the potential to be effective in case any of the scenarios materializes. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to fully complete this step during this particular workshop. However, the concluding discussion indicated that the strategy developed for the scenario "Sleep Walking" has the potential to be the most robust.

## "Reforming the West" (Sleep Walking)

Economic and financial policy	<p><b>Diplomatic initiatives</b></p> <p>Germany steps up its diplomatic efforts (within the EU) to put itself (or the Union) in a better negotiating position for possible trade agreements. At the same time, this offensive may also include a more confrontational approach to protect the domestic (the Union's) economy through tariffs and sanctioning unfair markets practices in third countries.</p>
Security and defense policy	<p><b>Whole of Government Approach</b></p> <p>The understanding of defense and security policy is fundamentally renewed. Foreign policy activities of the ministries are closely coordinated and subordinated to an overall strategy. Strategic foresight becomes a central component of comprehensive strategic planning within government.</p>
Bilateral relations with the USA	<p><b>Deepening Relations</b></p> <p>Efforts are being made to deepen relations at all political levels. This can range from trade agreements to joint military maneuvers and deployments to coordinated initiatives at the international level. It can also be part of a strategy to revive transatlantic relations along the "old lines" of band-wagoning with the USA as the only major strategic partner to rebuild a common understanding of "The West".</p>
Bilateral relations with Russia	<p><b>Decoupling</b></p> <p>Diplomatic exchanges as well as economic and resource dependencies are being reduced to a minimum level. The objective is to seek maximum independence from Russia.</p>
Bilateral relations with China	<p><b>Decoupling</b></p> <p>Diplomatic exchanges as well as economic and resource dependencies are being reduced to a minimum level. The objective is to seek maximum independence from China.</p>

Germany's ambitions within NATO, EU, UN	<p><b>EU-NATO joint development process</b></p> <p>Germany pushes for a close direct interaction between the military development of the EU and NATO. Procurement, military planning and capability development are to be closely coordinated with NATO as the main pillar of European defence.</p>
Technology and digitisation policy	<p><b>Strengthening European Champions/ Investing in European High-Tech</b></p> <p>Germany heavily invests in European firms (especially German firms) that have the potential to dominate the global high-tech market. It also pushes for a European program for building European Tech Champions in all major fields of technology.</p>
Climate and environment policy	<p><b>Promoting international climate agreements</b></p> <p>International climate agreements are being promoted and their expansion pursued. Germany tries to serve as a role model by taking bold actions at home in order to show that climate policy and a market economy can be mutually supportive.</p>
Resource and energy policy	<p><b>Looking for new energy alliances in North African, South American and the Persian Gulf markets</b></p> <p>Germany is expanding its view beyond its European neighbours and is trying to forge new energy and resource alliances in cooperation with other European countries.</p>

## Conclusion

This workshop demonstrated that the future of transatlantic security involves a multitude of different factors. These can range from the state of the political system of the United States and climate change to the military strategy of major powers. Considering that these factors can affect the future in many different ways and that their projections can be highly variable, a vast number of scenarios emerge.

However, in order to arrive at a manageable number of scenarios, workshop participants identified the following factors as key factors for the future of transatlantic security:

- United States' military strategy
- Developments in technology
- Energy and resource supply
- Political developments of the European Union
- Common interests of the transatlantic partners
- Climate change
- China's interests as a great power
- The United States' interests as a great power
- Germany's policy towards Europe
- NATO's military strategy
- US/China trade relations
- EU/US trade relations

These factors should therefore be closely monitored as time progresses. Moreover, during the scenario workshop, it also became clear that China's strategic interests in relation to the US' strategic interests as well as technological innovation are the two main determining factors with regard to the future of transatlantic security. Hence, depending on how these two factors develop, transatlantic security will be fundamentally influenced by them.

With regard to the development of a strategy, it became apparent that the state of the European Union has an immense effect on the ability to formulate comprehensive strategies. Whether an open-source virus cripples networks worldwide, China implodes, offensive space weapons are developed, or current trends continue in a linear fashion, the stability and functioning of the European Union determines the extent to which Germany can respond to potential crises.

In this context, the strategy developed to cope with the scenario "Sleep Walking" was seen as the most robust among participants. A combination of a rapprochement with the U.S., decoupling from Russia and China, massive investments in European high-tech, and promotion of international climate agreements represents a flexible strategy that can potentially be applied from a German standpoint to more than one of the scenarios.

One could therefore conclude that revitalizing the "West" is one of the best starting points to prepare for future challenges.

One a more general level, the workshop, the discussions and especially the scenarios made clear that security has become more complex and unclear. To be able to cope with current and future developments and threats, we have to find answers at the earliest possible stage of a crisis. Thus, strategic foresight, a procedure that has become indispensable in the last few years, refers to the systematic analysis and discussion of the future. The aim is to identify potential challenges in the future as early as possible and factor them into decisions-making processes that are being carried out today. This involves much more than analysing today's trends. Rather, it is about how to deal with a highly versatile and uncertain future and the ways how politics and society can adapt.

The growing need for strategic foresight in the political decision-making process is followed by the development and training of various methods to enable systematic and practical implementation of foresight. To support interdisciplinary strategic foresight procedures, web-based foresight tools offer time-tested methods for agile and comprehensive scenario and strategy development based on relevant data and real-time insights.

To ensure a holistic implementation of measures, comprehensive cooperation has to start at the very beginning of a scenario development process. The prerequisite therefore is a multidisciplinary and multi-dimensional approach to strategic foresight. Mutual understanding must be established, and the different capabilities and capacities of the different actors have to be utilized.

Comprehensive security is based on an expanded understanding of security that includes internal and external as well as civilian and military aspects of security, and cooperation between state and non-state actors. The threat of hybrid warfare for example makes coordinated whole-of-government action a crucial prerequisite for effective deterrence. The interests of these social, political, economic, and military actors can hardly be reconciled in a concrete conflict. Yet this is precisely why a joint approach to strategic foresight is so essential; if not indispensable.

Hence, it is crucial that more governments include comprehensive foresight as a means to planning for an unpredictable future. However, this can only be achieved if all relevant ministries, stakeholder, experts and even the public are involved in the process at one point or another. Thereby, a more holistic picture of multiple possible futures can be created, which also challenges group thinking that has become one of the main obstacles for the development of innovative and effective strategies.

# Foresight Workshop in Transatlantic Security Policy 2025

by James Bindenagel



*Prof. James Bindenagel, Ambassador (ret.), James D. Bindenagel, Senior Professor, Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies (CASSIS), University of Bonn*

One of government's primary functions is to ensure its citizens remain safe from external and internal threats. From conventional military strikes to terrorist attacks, governments must have policies to protect their countries and provide stability. These include robust intelligence gathering, deep relationships with international allies and partners, and strong defense and military institutions. Political leaders need strategic foresight to create those policies.

Strategic foresight helps governments adapt their foreign policy to a rapidly changing world. Foresight's objective is to explore plausible, alternative futures and identify the challenges and opportunities that may emerge. Foresight helps us understand the forces shaping a system, how the system could evolve, and what surprises could arise. Foresight analysis provides a valuable context for developing policies and robust strategies across a range of plausible futures. It is oriented to intermediate and long-term developments to provide a solid foundation for a nation's strategy.

Foresight<sup>1</sup> provides a powerful context for policy development, strategic planning, decision-making, audit, and evaluation. Its longer timeframe enables organizations to anticipate and prepare for tomorrow's problems and not react to yesterday's crises. Foresight can also support innovation by exploring how problems could evolve, thereby improving effectiveness and reducing unintended consequences. Foresight's objective is not to predict the future but to prepare robust strategies across a range of plausible futures.

Foresight expert Victoria Toriser moderated the International Security Forum Bonn 2020 workshops, guided participants through scenario creation and strategy development, and introduced the Foresight Strategy Cockpit tool used by several governments. The participants identified and discussed key factors and their influence on the future-weighted scenario constellations. Finally, participants drafted response strategies and policy options for action. During this process, the group compiled four different relevant scenarios to today's policy planning process.

<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada: Module 1: Introduction to Foresight – Policy Horizons Canada, <https://horizons.gc.ca/en/our-work/learning-materials/foresight-training-manual-module-1-introduction-to-foresight/>.

The "Spaces Rivalries" scenario looked ahead to outer space as a future battlefield for power politics, e.g., exploiting resources or warfare through armed satellites. In the scenario "Sleep Walking," the EU becomes more and more fragmented and victim of Chinese and Russian takeover attempts. New dangers would arise in the form of hybrid warfare and the uncontrolled development of new technologies.

As "Imploding Dragon" suggests, the third scenario argues that a consequence of the Covid pandemic is a global economic decoupling. The Communist Party of China fails to maintain its rule over the People's Republic, which breaks out into civil war and the Chinese government's dissolution. The fourth and last scenario depicted as "Digital Detox" describes the highly increased vulnerability of digital-based network systems and critical infrastructures. Technology will focus on cybersecurity and a broadened security definition that NATO includes health security, climate change, and a race for natural resources.

All four scenarios of the Bonn International Security Forum 2020 show the importance of strategic foresight and culture of strategic thinking to anticipate future developments. The German crisis management

approach for reactive problem-solving is not sustainable in a changing world. It carries the risk of high costs of unprepared response to foreseeable events, leading to increased dependency on foreign powers.

The strategic foresight workshop tackled difficult issues in policy formation of conflicting indicators, mirror images, old paradigms, and wishful thinking that blur the analysis of current trends. Election cycles, the persistence of several competing political theories, and biased analyses are obstacles to reasoned analysis. Informed politics needs strategic foresight to identify trends and influencers of politics, strengthen early warning and reactive capabilities, analyze ongoing crises with fact-based, realistic scenarios, and finally, policy options. Strategic foresight can help counter the effects of cognitive and social biases such as selection bias, cognitive closure/denialism, short-term, linear, and wishful thinking, as well as bureaucratic politics.

Is strategic foresight necessary to agree on priorities, resources, and methods for competent, coherent policymaking? Could policymakers anticipate events earlier and avoid surprises?



*Dr. Hendrik Ohnesorge of the University of Bonn speaking during ISFB 2019*

Recent historical events, including the 1989 revolution in East Germany, the breakup of Yugoslavia, the 2008 Georgia War, the 2014 Ukraine conflict, the Arab Spring, the Syrian War, and the migration crises, are crises that politicians could have anticipated.

Several factors lead to hinder strategic foresight:

1. deficient expertise that is not paradigmatically analyzed or analysis caught in the security discourse bubble;
2. distorted perceptions based on wishful thinking or hubris;
3. deficits in understanding event influencers, interdependence, and causal relationships;
4. perceptions driven by crisis management; and
5. little or no ideas of possible alternative outcomes.

German politics needs strategic foresight to fulfill the gap between crisis management and strategic foresight to carry out its international responsibilities. Most important, political decision-makers urgently

need public legitimacy for their foreign and security policies. For instance, as long as the public is divided and polarized in its orientation toward transatlantic relations, relations with China and Russia, Africa, and even the European Union, policymaking will be challenging to manage coherently.

Germany can resolve these structural problems. Strategic foresight demands public debate as a basis for informed political decision making. Strategic foresight provides insight, trend evaluation, and risk analysis to help elevate and sharpen the assessment of our connected, complex, and rapidly evolving world. German strategic thinking can benefit from a look into the future that identifies risks and chances as well as alternatives for sound and coherent policies.

The European Union<sup>2</sup> is determined to give strategic foresight a central element in policymaking to capture intermediate and long-term perspectives in its scenarios. The EU Commission has a strong mandate to use strategic foresight, notably in the digital world's confrontation and climate change. On the new era's cusp, the EU intends to promote strategic foresight to encourage strategic thinking.



2 European Commission (2020): Mitteilung der Kommission an das Europäische Parlament und den Rat. Strategische Vorausschau – Weichenstellung für ein resilientes Europa, [https://www.bundesrat.de/SharedDocs/drucksachen/2020/0501-0600/545-20.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&t=1](https://www.bundesrat.de/SharedDocs/drucksachen/2020/0501-0600/545-20.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&t=1).

The Foresight Workshop in Transatlantic Security Policy 2025 explored scenarios around issues that confront policymakers and the public. These four scenarios - Sleep Walking; Digital Detox; Imploding Dragon; and Space Rivalries – addressed current trends in security, economic and financial policies, the future of outer space, and climate change.

Of course, European policymakers find themselves in constant crisis management with little time for foresight. That is particularly true after the migration crisis, the Covid pandemic, and even the Ukraine invasion with the annexation of Crimea. Those events pulled back the curtain on conflicts for the public to see what the government hoped would remain hidden and not debated. Could strategic foresight lead to the maxim "Make Europe Relevant Again?"

In April 2019, the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik published a study on Europe's unending crises: The Banality of Good. The withdrawal of American leadership posed the question of whether Europe could reshape the transatlantic partnership to manage situations.

Strategic foresight can help Germany out of this structural problem by promoting an informed public debate on foreign and security policy that helps create an informed basis for policymaking. Looking ahead to identify risks and chances and alternative approaches could significantly influence German foreign policymaking strategic capabilities.

Although Think Tanks and universities are centers of excellence to develop politically relevant ideas, politicians must debate and formulate policies. A new instrument to assist in promoting a debate culture is creating a Council of Experts for Strategic Foresight to identify risks from threatening conflicts, such as problems stemming from scarce resources, the impact of climate change, and trends from other complex, multi-dimensional conflicts.

A Council of Experts can develop and present scenarios based on facts and developments that shape future disputes, offering possible strategic options for policymakers. A Council would not decide policy, but parliament debates on scenarios can empower the members in their duties, hold the government accountable, and strengthen the electorate's trust in policymaking. The public's understanding of the potential risks is crucial for good governance. Scenarios can help demonstrate if, how, and when national interests and European interests are impacted. Anchoring the foresight debates in the Bundestag would contribute to the legitimacy of the political process.

A sovereign Germany needs strategic foresight for foreign and security policy based on strategic planning. At the same time, the EU needs a security strategy for Europe that includes strategic plans beyond crisis management. Germany's obligation to Europe and NATO can be met with the principle of Partners in Leadership and in recognition of German history, which is great hope for a reshaped transatlantic relationship. Hope alone is not a strategy.

Yes, Germany can lead in Europe, and a strong Europe can strengthen the transatlantic partnership. The world's expectations of Germany are growing, and the world is watching Germany take on this leadership role in Europe. Germany's engagement is necessary for the United States to have a strong European ally.

# Fundamentals of Strategic Foresight: Sisyphus was a Happy Man

by Christiane Heidbrink



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Strategic foresight was one of the key issues at the International Security Forum Bonn 2020. Basically, no panel took place without taking up this core topic. Not to mention that no thorough security debate deserves its name without including the fundamentals of strategic thinking. Simply looking at the panel names gives us an impression of what strategic foresight means: Discussing the future, a country's role in the world, thinking ahead, lessons learned, strategic partnerships, and uncertainties. The following contribution presents cornerstones of strategic foresight, its technological execution enabled by the benefits of the information age, and possible fallacies. These fundamentals are illustrated with references to the "Foresight Online Workshop" to bridge to other contributions in this report and provide practical insights to the readership.<sup>1</sup>

Scenario developments start with a definition of the strategic environment. The systematic analysis identifies key factors that influence alternative future projections. This requires profound knowledge about

one's own capacities as well as those of the partners and opponents. Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu considered it vital to know yourself and the enemy to be successful on the battlefield. Similarly, Carl von Clausewitz regarded holistic thinking as indispensable for strategy making. These tenets are not only valid in their original military context but can also be applied to the design of political or economic strategies. Neither is strategy making just a mental exercise, but a politically sensitive and unsparing analysis of the current state of affairs. Without criticism, no solid analysis of the current state is possible. At the same time, the stakeholders guiding action could be caught in the crossfire. Hence, political strategy-making usually takes place behind closed doors to ensure the secrecy of information and the necessary openness. For example, to encourage free expression of opinions, the Delphi method was developed as a technique for making predictions while simultaneously ensuring the anonymity of participants.

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<sup>1</sup> See the contributions by Philip Ackermann and Victoria Toriser.

Although every forecast is confronted with difficulties and uncertainty, uncertainty itself is the very reason for conducting foresight. To contain these uncertainties, different foresight techniques emerged, such as wargaming, trend analysis, visioning, horizon scanning, or scenario generation, which in turn involve a wide variety of technical tools.<sup>2</sup> Such tools may be fed with raw data (e.g., provided by the World Bank), indices (e.g., the Bonn Power Shift Monitor), or expert estimations. Current applications of these foresight techniques can be easily found: In 2020, the German Foreign Office put its new PREVIEW data tool into operation. PREVIEW (an acronym formed from prediction, visualization, and early warning) serves to identify crisis developments and assists in developing appropriate prevention strategies. The German Foreign Office also applies scenario planning in order to model the emergence and possible consequences of conflicts and develop political strategies.<sup>3</sup> While this underlines the growing relevance of strategic foresight in the civilian sphere, its military value has never diminished. The Bundeswehr Planning Office, too, conducts foresight. A 2019 report reviewed the usefulness of future case study methods. The review was assisted by a trend management software underscoring the significance of electronic tools for contemporary foresight studies.<sup>4</sup>

On the alliance level, the NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) provides strategic foresight analysis. It informs, for instance, the Framework for Future Alliance Operations and the NATO Defence Planning Process. Foresight is thus a widespread technique in civilian and security policy on a national as well as international level. Strategy has also become a new research paradigm. There is now a rich body of academic literature on how to strengthen German or international strategic capabilities, such as the idea of an expert council for strategic foresight.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the different functions of foresight analyses, they all answer three questions:

1. **Explorative: What might happen?**
2. **Normative: What is our goal?**
3. **Action-oriented: What can we do and how?**

The answers ultimately define strategic options by guiding creative and non-linear thinking. Dr. Olaf Theiler, Section Head Future Analysis at the Bundeswehr Planning Office, explained these fundamentals to the participants of the Foresight Online Workshop. His presentation paved the way for the upcoming scenario roundtables on the second day of the workshop. This provided a transition from the first day, where the raw scenarios from the preparatory phase were refined. In line with the guiding questions, the first day focused mainly on answering the first question and introducing the scenario technique. Similar to the featured policy actors, the participants also worked with foresight analysis software. Moderator and foresight expert Victoria Toriser (Repuco) introduced the Foresight Strategy Cockpit (FSC), a web-based foresight tool developed by 4Strat that is used by public and private institutions in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Based on a baseline survey of the participants, the FSC generated four scenarios titled "Imploding Dragon", "Digital Detox", "Space Wars", and "Sleep Walking". The scenarios concentrated on German foreign policy options in the year 2025. A factor polling of the participants revealed that the four scenarios can be classified along two axes: the degree of confrontation between the two major powers, the U.S. and China, and the direction of technological development. The prominence of these factors in politics can already be observed today. China's rise, its economic model, and its advances in potentially disrupt-

2 Monika Sus, Marcel Hadeed (2020): 'Theory-infused and policy-relevant: On the usefulness of scenario analysis for international relations', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 41 (3), 432-455.

3 Federal Foreign Office (2020): *Krisenfrüherkennung, Konfliktanalyse und Strategische Vorausschau*, 7 February, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/themen/krisenpraevention/-/2238138>.

4 Planungsamt der Bundeswehr (2019): *Future Case Study. Methodenunterstützung im Rahmen der Trendanalyse – am Beispiel des Trendreports von 2018*, <https://www.bundeswehr.de/resource/blob/140558/439994e6085f2e996266804ff3726577/fcs-data.pdf>.

5 James D. Bindenagel, Philip A. Ackermann (2018): 'Deutschland strategiefähiger machen. Ein Sachverständigenrat für strategische Vorausschau ist nötig', *SIRIUS – Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen*, Vol. 2 (3), 253-260.



tive technologies such as artificial intelligence are being debated around the world, as it is the case in Germany. At the same time, the transatlantic partnership with the United States has been difficult from a German perspective in recent years, due to the political style of the Trump administration. Apart from that, the workshop scenarios were created on extreme projections of the future to stimulate creative thinking. After all, strategic thinking is especially trained with the question: "How do I behave when something unexpected happens?"<sup>6</sup>

To illustrate, the "Imploding Dragon" scenario forecasts that China's central agency ceases to exist. First, the participants discussed the potential key factors that could trigger such a scenario in order to specify the field of action. Then, they defined, what the occurrence of this scenario might mean for Germany. The answer links back to the normative question of Germany's goals. The recently adopted Indo-Pacific guidelines help to comprehend the participants' reasoning in view of Germany's current position and objectives for the region.<sup>7</sup> These guidelines are often referred to as Germany's new Asia strategy, as they

describe Berlin's ideas of peace and cooperation in the region. The guidelines stress China's strategic importance. China is the most named Asian country of the paper, followed closely by India. Thematic priorities include sustainability, security, stability, economic prosperity, and human rights.

The scenario roundtable of the "Imploding Dragon" reflected these considerations and can be summarized by applying a SWOT matrix. An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within a given scenario allows for contextualization of an actor's position. While SWOT analyses are widely used primarily in the corporate sector, they can also be applied to political actors to identify the internal and external influencing factors, pressures, levers, as well as their linkages.<sup>8</sup> Starting with the threats of the scenario, Germany would be confronted with a cataclysmic collapse of a global power. The political collapse might have a cascading effect on the economy and society, not only within China but even globally. The power vacuum also gravely impacts international institutions such as the United Nations Security Council. This links the external threat dimension to Germany's

<sup>6</sup> Lennart Souchon (2012): Carl von Clausewitz. Strategie im 21. Jahrhundert, Hamburg, Berlin, Bonn, 159.

<sup>7</sup> The Federal Government (2020): Leitlinien zum Indo-Pazifik. Deutschland – Europa – Asien. Das 21. Jahrhundert gemeinsam gestalten, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2380500/33f978a9d4f511942c241eb4602086c1/200901-indo-pazifik-leitlinien--1--data.pdf>.

internal weaknesses because of its close economic ties to China. Dependencies on Chinese production sites have not only been an issue since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this is precisely what has triggered controversies about the costs and benefits of a diversification strategy as outlined in the Indo-Pacific guidelines.

In face of these horrendous challenges, it is worth recalling a leitmotif of strategy-making: Minimize the threats, maximize the attainment of goals. The scenario offers the opportunity of a democratic-revival and strengthening of the "West's" position after decades of presumed declinism and "Westlessness".<sup>9</sup> Hence, the participants called their political strategy "The West is back". It underscores a supportive, multilateral approach in line with the current Asia-Pacific guidelines. Germany's strengths, such as its deep integration into international organizations like NATO or the EU and its economic competitiveness, are to be harnessed for this purpose. The transatlantic partnership with the U.S. is also upgraded for the common goal to support the global economic and financial system.

This outline of the "Imploding Dragon" scenario illustrates the nexus between a fictitious scenario and empirical reality. This nexus is particularly prominent in the final step of the foresight process, which deals with strategy evaluation. There are several ways to conduct such an evaluation, which can be aided by the software of choice. In terms of quality criteria, a good strategy should be compelling, holistic and robust. The first criterion can be found in a number of international relations concepts. For example, deterrence also works only through the power of persuasion based on the necessary means, goals, and political will – so does any compelling strategy. In other words, the first criterion asks about (assumed) efficacy to assess the extent to which the strategy supports the predefined goals.<sup>10</sup> The second criterion connects to where we started. It describes the recognition of ponderabilities and imponderabilities.

Thirdly, each strategy is screened to determine whether it is suitable for scenarios other than the one for which the strategy was created. If a strategy optimizes target achievement in the face of multiple scenarios, it can be said to be robust. These criteria can be subject to further interpretation and refinement. This implies delicate bargaining, which also sparked debates in the Foresight Workshop. The political choices, the desirability and likelihood of the scenarios, and final remarks on the usefulness of strategic foresight underscored its difficulty of forecasting – especially since such deliberations actually take months or years.

Strategic foresight allows for a hedging of complexity. It is illusionary to regard foresight as a panacea for future risks, whereas it helps to detect and manage possible risks and to inform reasonable decision making. Foresight models foster intriguing and arduous debates. In addition, scenario simulations provide a creative framework while revealing political attitudes and thus options and objections. In the end, the political sensitivity of this process results in the fact that only a narrow fraction of future analyses is published at all. A quote from the workshop has stayed in my mind that is also beautifully suited for a conclusion: If you are convinced – to borrow a phrase from Albert Camus – that Sisyphus was a happy man, then you have the right mindset for working in strategic foresight.

8 Christiane Heidbrink, Kai Beerlink (2019): 'All Eyes on Germany. Industrial Policy for Future Power', Bonn Power Focus, Issue 3, <https://www.cgs-bonn.de/cms/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/BPF-03-eng.pdf>.

9 Tobias Bunde et al. (2020): Munich Security Report 2020. Westlessness, Munich Security Conference, <https://doi.org/10.47342/IAOX5691>.

10 Thomas Lehr et al. (2017): 'Scenario-based strategizing: Advancing the applicability in strategists' teams', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 124, 214-224.

# Strategic Foresight: Will Germany Dare to Shape the Post-Pandemic Future?

by Sarah Bressan



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Foresight is trending in foreign policy circles, owing its appeal to unexpected events like Brexit and the looming uncertainties inherent to an unraveling world order. While defense planners and organizations such as the OECD and UNESCO have already pioneered a systematic approach to studying the future, foreign policy bureaucracies in Europe are catching on – most notably in the EU, France, the Netherlands, and Germany.

Germany's upcoming leadership change after the 2021 election comes at a critical juncture, when the government will need to make strategic decisions on how to rebuild the economy after a global pandemic, address the crisis of fossil-fueled capitalism and navigate renewed global order competition. An ecosystem of institutionalized government foresight can help create the necessary long-term vision that's needed to meet those challenges.

## The Future Cannot Be Calculated

Our biases like to make us believe we know what is coming. And once an event has occurred, they tend to convince us that we saw it coming all along. But the future cannot be known with certainty.

Forecasts are only useful if they are expressed in terms of uncertainty, and only for the near future: for example, there is an 80 percent chance that it will rain tomorrow. Or there is an approximately 90 percent chance that there will be at least 25 fatalities from violent conflict in Nigeria in February 2021 – a result of Uppsala University's Violence Early Warning System.

Based on such forecasts of violent conflict, actors can choose to mitigate the impacts or prevent predicted events – a stated goal of German foreign policy. To better decide where to allocate resources, the German Foreign Office and Defense Ministry have heavily invested in so-called evidence-based decision support: conflict and crisis forecasting models for the short-term future of up to a few years.

Interpreted with caution and together with other evidence, such forecasts can be useful. For example, the European Union's External Action Service combines them with expert assessments and intelligence to adjust EU engagement in countries at risk – resulting in better coordination across foreign policy portfolios, including diplomacy, development, humanitarian action, and trade. Similar efforts are under way in Germany, even though the government, with its notorious conflicts between ministries held by different coalition partners, is far from coherent preventive foreign engagement and spending.

### Taming the Zoo of Future Threats

When we take a long-term perspective on the multiplicity of global challenges, the limits of the forecasting approach are apparent. The further into the future, the more uncertain forecasts become even weather forecasts are not very accurate beyond the next five days. The complex interdependence of social interactions that contributed to the conflicts in Tunisia, Syria, and Ukraine in the last decades far exceed computational capacity, available data and our limited understanding of causal links and systemic effects – not to mention the feedback loop of human action. While we know many political situations are unstable, we cannot know how and when they will break down.

As a remedy, scenario-based foresight methods are designed to help overcome biases, uncover blind spots and detect a variety of threats beyond the conventional imagination – including so-called black swans, grey rhinos, and whatever else futurists decide to call difficult-to-anticipate threats. And strategic foresight even goes beyond detecting possible threats: it helps to design policies that are robust across a variety of possible futures.

The German government has quietly ramped up its capacities for exploratory and strategic foresight. The Chancellery and other ministries have hired foresight experts and the German Federal Academy for Security Policy is establishing a department of strategic foresight. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office uses strategic foresight

methods to complement its conflict forecasting and inform inter-ministerial discussions on prevention. But it only does so with a narrow focus on how already well-known situations at risk could escalate, instead of potentially surprising threats that fly under the radar of diplomatic cables and newspaper headlines.

### Use Foresight Not to Understand, But to Shape

All of these efforts ignore a key tenet of foresight that transcends our obsession with what we can know and how to react, mitigate or prevent crises: the future cannot be known because it does not yet exist, waiting to be actively shaped by our actions.

Unstructured thinking about the future mostly consists of extrapolating from the past, while remaining constrained by recent events and totally failing to imagine any fundamental change. Any resulting statement about the future is more speculation than fact. In this way, analyzing a future that does not yet exist tells us more about the world as it currently is – people's assumptions, available data and recent trends – than about what is to come.

This is not to say speculation is useless. Quite the contrary: it defines what we consider possible, setting a course for the decisions and actions that gradually create our future. But the future isn't there to be discovered by any fancy analytical tools, and it matters greatly who has the chance to imagine it.

Asking those in charge about their predictions can be useful because it uncovers their inherent assumptions, blind spots, and constraints. But strategic foresight as practiced in German foreign policy today is misunderstood as a tool to ascertain how others shape the future and how we could react – mostly too little, too late – neglecting its potential to uncover the limits of imagination, break out of the conventional mold and shape the future in a strategic and robust way: open to a variety of options, but targeted toward clear goals.

1 See the contributions by Philip Ackermann and Victoria Toriser.

## High Time to Institutionalize Foresight

Many analysis and scholars have described Germany's understandably difficult time to take the lead, rather acting as a reluctant, involuntary leader or leading from behind. So, it's no surprise that the government has heavily invested in evidence-based decision-making tools to detect threats and react at the operational level, rather than using ambitious foresight to shape the future as part of strategic policy planning.

Continuing to forgo decisions on armed drones, fighter jets or ending the detention of migrants at Europe's border is indicative of a lacking long-term vision – a prerequisite for strategic decision-making. That's why in the lead-up to the 2021 elections, it is high time to give foresight the central role it deserves and institutionalize it.

As James D. Bindenagel put it in last year's edition of this report: Europe needs a long-lasting strategic debate, which is unlikely to succeed without a Germany that addresses its lack of strategic thinking, troubled history, the independence of its ministries in coalition governments, and public reluctance to support international leadership. As a remedy, he suggested to create a Parliamentary Foresight Council with the triple function of informing public opinion, consulting stakeholders, and facilitating informed debates for more strategic decisions.

Critics of the Parliamentary Foresight Council see three risks: a narrow focus on daily political priorities instead of blind spots, politicization, and irrelevance due to lack of independent expertise, and inability to overcome the political impasses that grind strategic decisions to a halt.

## Bringing Proactive Foresight into Foreign Policy

With a smart design, the Parliamentary Council can avoid a narrow focus, politicization, and irrelevance. First, the Council's agenda needs to be informed by the result of foresight processes that are designed to draw attention away from daily headlines towards blind spots – understanding foresight as a tool to understand the present and shape the future. Second, the Council needs to acknowledge that shaping the future in a normative sense is inherently political. This would mean saying goodbye to the misled quest for impartial subject matter experts, instead focusing on foresight method expertise to scrutinize assumptions and overcome constraints.

But the proposed Council does indeed risk being simultaneously too large and too small to have a significant impact. On one hand, a focus on foreign policy expert discussions will not suffice to achieve a democratically legitimized strategic outlook. To what extent should Germans feel responsible for atrocities committed elsewhere in the world? Does Germany want to keep viewing global mobility as a threat, or turn it into an opportunity? Answers to the difficult questions concerning Germany's foreign engagement require broader societal debates on how Germany defines its identity and role, and about the very real divisions and inequalities that exist – both at home and in relation to the world. Jumping to nonexistent decisions on nuclear sharing and armed drones will not help if no one addresses the fundamental sources of political deadlock.

On the other hand, as an advisory body with experts and larger debates, the proposed Council risks becoming too large and untargeted to have an effect on foreign policy decision-making between the German Foreign Office, Chancellery, and other ministries, which regularly fail to act strategically and would – similar to the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs – not get the attention it deserved.

## An Ecosystem of Proactive Strategic Foresight

That's why Germany needs a more ambitious solution. In the upcoming 2021 coalition talks, a potential National Security Council will likely be on the agenda. While institutional reform will be difficult, strategic foreign policy decision-making can only succeed with a clear vision of the future Germany wants to shape. Coalition parties should take institutionalizing foresight seriously and there is a lot they can learn from other countries.

After Brexit and in the midst of the pandemic, the UK government initiated a National Strategy process involving foresight, in which the public is not only consulted on the content of strategy, but on how future national strategy should be made in the first place. In any democracy, foresight should not only inform public opinion, but also consult it. In Germany, a national foresight consultation that addresses the fundamentals could build on efforts like Parliamentary President Schäuble's Citizen Councils.

In the US, the widely discussed National Intelligence Council's Future Trends report outlines the expectations that are influencing its policies. German intelligence agencies run similar analyses that greatly impact foreign policy but lack public resonance. The

German Parliament could mandate the executive branch to draft a periodic government foresight report. This would force ministries and agencies to scrutinize their expectations for the future, leveraging existing foresight capacities. Associated parliamentary hearings would allow for civil society and expert input, incentivizing parties to make their future visions more explicit.

To ensure ideas turn into policy, these processes would ideally be linked to foresight bodies at the center of decision-making. A model for this could be the Finish ecosystem of foresight, which includes a foresight group in the Prime Minister's office and a Parliamentary Future Committee with mandates for public consultation and government foresight accountability.

Of course, Germany neither can nor shape the new world order all on its own. Using multilateral ties and the EU, it has found ways to reconcile its desire to not seem as imposing on others with promoting interests. But bold futures thinking is notably absent. Ideally, Germany would take opportunities like the upcoming Whitepaper on Multilateralism to reimagine a thus-far uninhabited future together with its partners. But in Paris and elsewhere, they will like us to get our own strategic house in order first.



# Managing the Unknown Unknowns – Strategic Foresight as Policy Advice

by Olaf Theiler



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## 1. Strategic Foresight as Concept and Methodology

Strategic foresight is, first and foremost, a process for the systematic and long-term analysis of possible future developments. At the heart of this process are futures analysis methods based on scientific standards – in particular, approaches of trend and scenario analysis. These methods are the instrument used to build a solid basis for long-term political decisions (Government Foresight in Germany) which, in turn, are indispensable for the development of a truly sustainable and anticipatory policy (Buehler und Döhrn 2013, p.1). Unlike futures studies, strategic foresight is strictly geared towards action, i.e., directly adapted to the specific long-term decision needs of politics (Kraibich 2008). There is always a connection with uncertainty-management – in other words, dealing with what Donald Rumsfeld, former US Secretary of Defence, called the "known unknowns" and the "unknown unknowns" (DoD News Briefing 2002). With regards to the first group, the known unknowns, strategic foresight offers an approach for developing perspectives that have not been taken into account so far, as if to strategically prepare for the question "what if...?". The unknown unknowns, however, often require politics to deal with a lack of clear and valid answers to strategic questions. The pre-formulation of such questions can in itself be an important result of strategic foresight.

Strategic foresight approaches political uncertainties by going through possible scenarios and examining them with regard to three crucial questions: What can happen? Where do we want to go? And, of course, what are we able to do or how can we do it? This clear break with prognoses, forecasts or simple if-then assessments of implications is what differentiates this approach from older concepts of futures studies as well as from traditional methods of political consulting. Instead, foresight offers a well-founded methodical process to mentally prepare for future developments and their opportunities and challenges based on expertise contributed by the client. This offer to decision makers could explain the current high demand for this or similar instruments for dealing with what is referred to as "strategic surprises" in a number of different policy sections.

Strategic foresight first identifies trends in the form of well-founded assessments regarding the development of a situation and then predicts their progression. In addition to possible trend developments and their implications, the most important task is to consider "breaks" in trends and to use all of these aspects to develop a coherent vision of the future. This vision is supplemented by methodical analyses of scenarios, leading to multiple alternative versions of the future, or projections. These are created in the form of narratives and gain profile through the use of vivid and

pointed descriptions such as the fictional press releases quoted in the beginning. These descriptions are intended to render projections of the distant future as vivid and concrete as possible for the reader because based on these projections, the reader's attention can then be steered back to the nearer future. This way, identifiable developments or indicators can teach us lessons to use in today's strategic and long-term decisions.

## 2. Strategic Foresight at work: Challenges and Prospects

Many ministries as well as the Federal Academy for Security Policy used the momentum provided by the 2013 coalition agreement to promote strategic foresight and spread the word on this instrument. While some authorities such as the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Environment Agency, the Federal Criminal Police Office, or the Bundeswehr Office for Defence Planning have already successfully completed numerous projects in this context, other ministries are only just getting started (Nachtweih 2018). If we do not want our expectations to be disappointed, we must know the strengths and the limitations of strategic foresight. The practical experience gathered in the Futures Analysis Branch of the Bundeswehr Office for Defence Planning offers indications and possible conclusions in this regard.

### Proximity to Politics and Decision Making

Research or analysis units within the ministries or at subordinate authorities have a distinctive advantage compared to classical policy advice coming from outside institutions, but also a distinct disadvantage. On the one hand, they know the processes and subjects that the political leadership is currently focusing on. These units can thus directly and immediately adapt the subjects and methodology of their work accordingly and present their results in a language appropriate to the current discourse. On the other hand, however, these units are subject to the political necessities of such processes much more than any external political consulting agency. Every strategic foresight project can thus, at every stage, be significantly influenced or even hampered by political considerations or fears.

### Creativity and Institutional Culture

Creativity is a basic prerequisite for applying the methods of futures analysis. The origin and integration of personnel into the administrative environment of a modern administration do not always live up to this requirement. This means that the performance of the staff ultimately depends on skilful personnel policy as well as on specifically creating and preserving leeway for thinking out of the box. Without the ability to play the Maverick and the freedom to challenge the usual beaten tracks, the specific benefits of strategic foresight will be lost, its creativity potential be nullified, and the efforts and work be in vain.

### Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinary work is another important basis of successfully implementing strategic foresight. Experience has shown, however, that this is even harder to carry out within governmental structures than outside. An interdisciplinary composition of staff from the very beginning, as is the case at the Futures Analysis Branch of the Bundeswehr Office for Defence Planning, is thus a rare "luxury". The Future Analysis Branch offers a civil academic for each of the subjects of the STEEP Approach (Social, Technology, Environment, Economics and Politics) as well as two military staff offices, providing the necessary military thinking, and one IT officer, adding expertise about the cyber realm as one of the most important drivers of future development.

### Cross-Ministerial Cooperation

What is even more difficult is inter-ministerial cooperation, which is indispensable for whole-of-government-approach. This type of cooperation becomes necessary in government action whenever the complexity of a task requires the cooperation of several ministries and/or nations. In such cases, smooth cooperation is often inhibited by egoistic attitudes at the different actors, by questions of ministerial responsibility, budget issues or simply by practical problems such as working methods and ways of thinking that may differ greatly between the ministries. On the other hand, it is precisely these increasingly frequent cases where the largest benefits can be expected in the interest of a comprehensive approach to security policy.

### 3. Future-orientation as aid for decision makers

We have to keep in mind that even in the best and most successful scenario, strategic foresight does not replace strategic action, but is just one of many tools on the way to reaching a decision. The interaction of science and politics continues to be very complex. Neither of the two should overestimate its position and role. The current President of the German Parliament, Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, once explained that "Science, as important as it is, must accept to be only a tool for an end instead of being a navigation system for politics". In the end, no political decision maker could "transfer his responsibility to science" (Fichtner und Smoltczyk 2013, p.65 and p.68). Therefore, strategic foresight as an instrument for policy advice can provide mainly valuable pointers as to future developments, identify the most important signs and indicators for early recognition of decision points on the path to these developments, and offer concrete options for action to provide the best possible preparation for different future developments before they materialise. Experts call this future(-proof) robustness – the ability to achieve such an extent of flexibility in the present that one is prepared for several possible future developments. Meeting this criterion or at least pointing out ways of reaching this goal is an important objective of strategic foresight.

But even in this inevitably cursory description it should have become evident that strategic foresight can help policymakers, as Voß puts it, to take today's decisions on a more rational basis and safeguard them in a way that they will not have to be regretted later (Voß 1983). Strategic foresight can point out future potentials and give orientation for the future without what Opachowski refers to as "excessive prognoses or modern scepticism" (Opachowski 2015, p.45). All in all, strategic foresight is not competing with traditional approaches to political consulting, but should rather be considered a complementary concept, an additional means of assistance. Its particular strengths are the principle of robustness as well as the focus on the unknown unknowns of foreign and security policy that are of particular importance today. Albert Einstein allegedly once said: "I am more interested in the future than in the past, because I intend to live in the future." The method and concept of strategic foresight will help decision makers to actively take part in shaping the future, nothing more, and nothing less.



*Lt. Gen. Martin Schelleis, Chief of German Joint Support and Enabling Services, Bundeswehr, during ISFB 2018*

# Strategic Forecasts – Challenges, Complexities, and Personal Experiences

by Frank Umbach



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Strategic forecasting is a method for looking ahead in the future and planning for adjustments as well as different alternative outcomes. Organizations and companies are using strategic forecasts to support decisions about their future business and marketing strategy. It is widely used in various businesses and industries for determining what and how markets may develop, what resources the company needs to exploit those markets and define strategies to enter the markets before the competition does. Understanding markets and factors for causing shifts in customers behaviours, tastes and needs. Effective strategic forecasts are considered as a strategic decision-support tool. They also include impact assessments and cost-benefit analyses.

Given the unprecedented speed of globalization, technological innovation and digitalisation, strategic forecasting has become ever more important for companies – particularly operating on international markets. But the speed and ever-increasing numbers of variables and influencing factors have made strate-

gic forecasting simultaneously more complicated and difficult. While Western governments and decision-makers had often to cope with a lack of information on the Soviet Union and its armed forces, economy, and political decision-making, they are nowadays overwhelmed with an ever-increasing flood of information. The need for qualitative analysis becomes even more important by identifying the most determining factors, balancing the various variables with each other and defining strategic interests of various actors. Only on this basis and developed scenarios, an adequate strategy can be developed and defined.

In contrast to strategic forecasts for companies and industries, geopolitical strategic forecasts of governments, international organisations and globally oriented companies usually involve even more factors and variables, combining economic, ecological, social, domestic, external factors such as strategic interests by state and non-state actors as well as others.

## Personal Experiences and Examples of Failing Forecasts and Assumptions

The following examples I have experienced in over 20 years of my work highlight the complexities, and also some factors explaining wrong-headed assumptions and failing forecasts:

▶ The coronavirus (Covid-19) has caught the European governments and EU off guard though the previous H1N1 swine-flu outbreak or the Sars and Mers epidemics had already highlighted major insufficiencies and shortcomings. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed a major lack of regional and global cooperation, national preparedness, and major vulnerabilities of the European health-care sector on global supply chains by causing shortages and supply disruptions of medical equipment as well as basic chemical materials for generic medicine. The disastrous impact on the global supply chains was not limited just to the health and pharmaceutical sectors. The disruption of critical supplies also affected the worldwide car-making industry, electronic manufactures and others. These vulnerabilities of complex global supply chains are the result that private and state-owned companies have reduced or eliminated redundant capacities for short-term profits, cost optimization and cheapest prices as well as supply chain efficiency at the expense of supply security, diversification of suppliers, redundancy of industrial manufacturing capacities for medical equipment and long-term stability considerations for worst-case global challenges like pandemics. By ignoring geo-political risk management strategies, the global supply chains have not been able and flexible enough to substitute one supplier or component for another as needed for the healthcare sector and other national CIs. It is also the result of a worldwide globalization trend of specialization at the expense of substitution and redundancy. International experts, the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the WHO have warned for years that such a pandemic is only a question of time. But governments have not prepared their national healthcare systems for a global pandemic. Even defence and security white papers (including in Europe) have mentioned the potential threat of global pandemics. The German government, for instance, released a pandemic brochure to all

doctoral offices. But hardly any medical practices in Germany had followed its recommendations such as storing medical equipment for the worst-case due to ignorance or reasons of costs.

▶ An even more impressive example of overlooking and non-anticipating new energy developments has been the U.S. fracking revolution. Until around 2010, the international community had discussed for decades the "peak oil"-scenario. It assumes that the remaining conventional oil reserves would just last for just another 50 years. It was expecting around 2020 that the ratio between high production volumes and declining reserves would reach the tipping point. In the following years, the oil price then would steadily climb up from US\$100 of a barrel at that time with the geopolitical consequence of an increasing global rivalry for the remaining and ever declining oil reserves.

While the existence of the so-called unconventional oil and gas resources have been known for a long time, the assumption was that they are technically not exploitable and too expensive on the markets. Only small US oil companies tried to exploit those unconventional oil and gas resources, in which the bigger oil companies had no interest at all. The fracking technology revolution caused almost everybody by surprise. In Europe, this development had been overlooked even longer (particularly in Germany with its *Energiewende* by focusing on renewables). Then, the German perspective was that the fracking revolution would only have impacts for the U.S. oil and gas markets but not beyond.

With further technology innovation of the fracking revolution, the U.S. has become a net-exporter of LNG (once forecasted becoming the world's largest LNG importer surpassing Japan) and conventional oil. All the planned and constructed new US LNG export terminals had to be costly modernised and modified into export terminals. The overall impacts on the global oil and gas markets had been still marginalized in the following years. In Europe, the fracking revolution had been fought by NGOs, environment ministries and vested interests (renewable industries and others) in order to prevent any fracking of natural gas



Participants of  
ISFB 2019

resources (in Germany available for another 60 years of its natural gas consumption) due to supposedly high environmental risks.

But it could not prevent the gas oversupply on the global and European gas markets as well as the overall changes in the European gas contracts. In this case, not only all strategic forecasts have proved wrong until at least 2010, it also highlighted that also the overall geo-economic impacts on the global oil and gas markets had been underestimated or even completely overlooked until few years ago (with the notable exception of Russia and the Kremlin which had more to lose than anybody else).

- ▶ The third example is the miserable Western assessments of the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars after the end of the Cold War. At that time, I worked in the office of NATO's Secretary General, where I got some interesting insights in the heated discussions in 1992 whether and how NATO should react to the escalating wars in former Yugoslavia. The end of the Cold War and Francis Fukuyama's book of "The End of History" had spurred widespread expectations of peace dividends in Europe and other parts of the world. At that time, even conservative politicians in Germany advocated a dissolution of NATO and even the German Bundeswehr. The debate whether NATO should go

out-of-area and intervene in the Yugoslav wars to contain the military escalation was difficult from the beginning. Not only the former peace movement of the 1980s and many politicians were unwilling to consider any NATO intervention – though these were the first real wars in Europe since 1945! –, but also the majority of the NATO member states as well as of NATO's own international bureaucracy which all lacked any political will despite the overall recognition that the costs of preventive diplomacies, backed my military means, would be much less than intervening in escalation conflicts at a later stage. Characteristically, a French diplomat, with whom I discussed the pros and cons of a NATO-intervention, denied my arguments, and justified it with the old narrative, that the ethnic groups had fight for centuries against each other. In this regard, nothing was new and didn't favour a NATO intervention as it wouldn't have any impacts on the wider Europe. He even argued that the French government had been more concerned about the future economic and political weight of Germany on the Balkans rather than any slaughter and escalation of the regional conflicts. It was only the further escalation, the TV pictures of slaughter, ethnic cleansing and European helplessness and their standing at the side-lines as well as the huge refugee flows from the former Yugoslavia to neighbouring countries and Germany (causing social problems and

attacks on refugee houses), which finally – together led to NATO's intervention backed by the United Nations. Thus, domestic factors and traditional narratives – beyond all other variables – determined the failing European policies and explaining the political unwillingness based on insufficient and wrong-headed strategic forecasts. These European policies already caused 10.000s of civilians their life before the massacre of Srebrenica in July 1995 (when more than 8.000 younger and older Bosnian men had been killed) by Serbs. Together with the dubious role of the Dutch battalion of UNPROFOR, these factors changed the situation on the ground and the final outcome after an unprecedented European and UN diplomatic disaster undermining their basic political credibility worldwide.<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ The Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict and supply crisis in 2006 also caused the EU by complete surprise. Before it was almost impossible to warn that the new Russian President, who had written his dissertation on the use of energy policies as an instrument for Russia's foreign policy, may use energy dependencies of European countries even more than his predecessors.<sup>2</sup> But the widespread prevalent narrative in Germany's political class and its industry was until 2006 that – in a striking contrast to the U.S., Russia, China, and many other countries – German and European energy policies should be designed by separating energy and economic goods from government and other political interventions. Energy policies should be left by the industry and the balance of supply and demand factors of markets. Supply security was left (with the notable exception of oil and gas storage) largely in the hands of companies, though they are primarily dependent on their shareholders and not national supply security (as they later admitted at least unofficially). Thus basically no one

ware really in charge of supply security. The German and other West European foreign ministries did not work at all on other countries energy policies and pipeline diplomacies. These assumptions were also interlinked with another narrative: even during the Cold War Germany and Western Europe had never faced any serious gas supply disruption. These historical experiences were true – but only for Western Europe – quite contrary to the experiences of Eastern Europe, where even during the Cold War and the existence of the Warsaw Pact, energy dependence was an instrument of blackmail for the Soviet Union and the Kremlin. Thus, their experiences, confirmed in the 1990s by numerous Russian attempts, were quite different. Thus, the German and West European argumentations also revealed a remarkable lack of understanding and political empathy for the East European countries and their historical experiences. The involvement of the foreign ministries in the EU member states was actually only taking place in the aftermath of the first Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict in 2006, when the German foreign minister Steinmeier (now Germany's President) also created the term of "energy foreign policies" alongside of the EU's official description of "energy external relations".

The Yugoslav conflicts in the first half of the 1990s and later the Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict in 2006, which was the impetus for a common EU energy and climate policy in 2007, demonstrated that the European governments only reacted post facto on severe conflicts and crisis, and only after those lessons having learnt, they enhanced the EU's foreign, security and energy policies.

1 See also Frank Umbach (1996): 'Kyu Yugoslavia funso to NATO no yakuwari: Oshu anzen hoshō e no kyōkun (The Wars in the Former Yugoslavia and the Role of NATO: Lessons of War and Diplomacy for Future Security Challenges)', in: Kokusai Mondai (International Affairs, Tokyo), No. 434, 26-36; and Frank Umbach (1993): 'The Consequences of the Western Policy Towards the Yugoslav-Conflict and Its Impact Upon the Former Soviet Union', European Security No. 2, 244-270.

2 See also Frank Umbach (2003): *Globale Energiesicherheit. Strategische Herausforderungen für die europäische und deutsche Außenpolitik*, München, 186 ff.



Participants listening to a plenary discussion during ISFB 2018

### Why we need Scenario Planning as a Method of Strategic Forecasting

Our scenario workshop as part of CASSIS' International Security Forum in 2020 proved once again as a very useful method for thinking in different futures by adopting and developing multiple scenarios and thinking through their cascading consequences. Those scenarios are alternate futures, which help to define today's political and economic decisions for the future. Most experts recommend developing at least 3-4 scenarios to think through developments and impacts in the future for today's decision-making on specific topics. Each scenario should contain sufficient details to assess the likelihood of success and failure by balancing risks versus opportunities for different strategic options.

The thinking in multiple scenarios is useful and needed as people normally are just extending in linear continuity their personally professional experiences of the past into the future and don't think in alternate futures and pathways as the following figure highlights in the light of the examples described above.

Scenario-workshops are following a methodical, step-by-step process, which also includes a balancing potential risks, uncertainties and opportunities with creativity, free imagination and a moderate judgment based on knowledge, experience, and insights. But scenarios by themselves do not determine strategies nor forecasts do. A strategy needs to be developed rather in the light of multiple scenarios. Sometimes scenarios are developed after a strategy has already been defined. In this case, scenarios are rather used for stress-testing a strategy and its conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Without this alternate thinking, identifying, and brainstorming a long list of factors in alternative scenarios, we are constraining our options and being unprepared for "Black swans" and other unexpected developments as well as to cope with by overlooked various factors. The difficulty is of course to balance those various factors and determine the most important one. Without thinking in scenarios, we are unable to recognize determining factors, to raise important questions and to identify interrelated variables as well as cascading impacts.

At the end, we may still decide based on our "gut feeling", convictions personal experiences, but we are definitely much better prepared to deal with unexpected events and developments. We may even better prepare by shaping our futures instead of thinking

3 See also Jay Ogilvy (2015): 'Scenario Planning and Strategic Forecasting', Stratfor, 7 January.

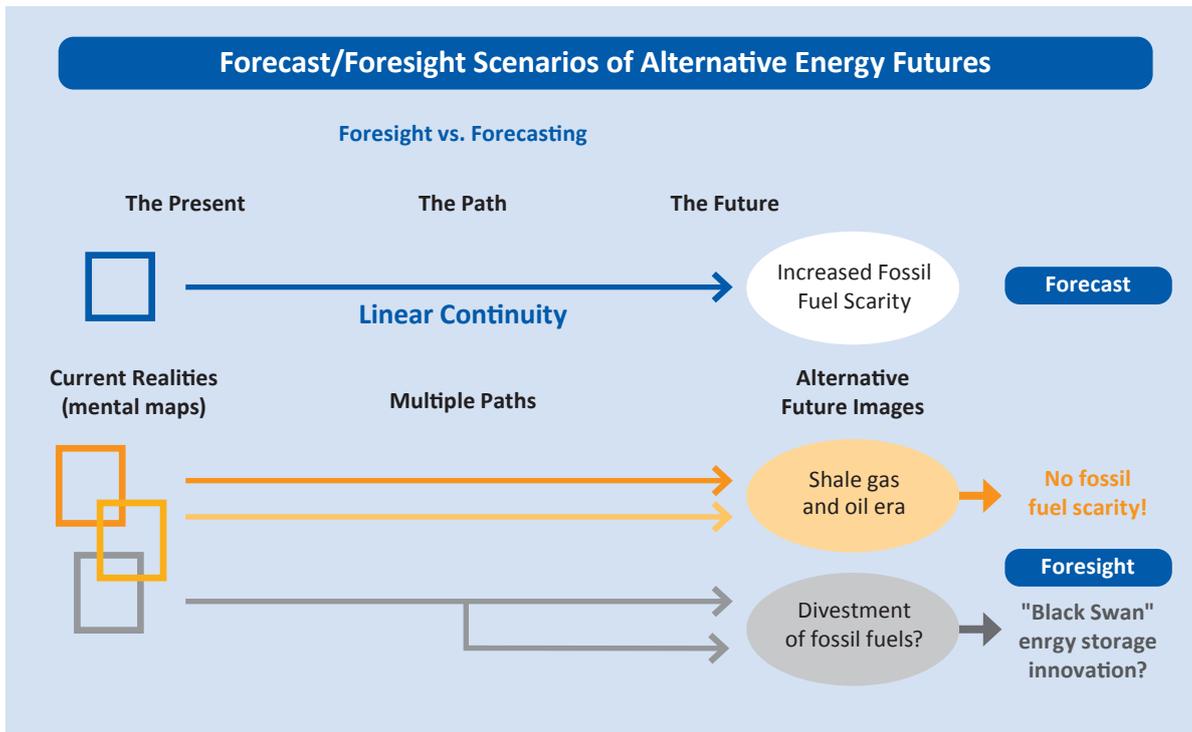


Figure 1: Alternative future, Source: F. Umbach/EUCERS

along just one future based on linear continuity of our past experiences. But the participants also need to think through the implications for and impacts the individual scenarios (for example by using the SWOT-analysis).

Another important pre-condition of a successful scenario workshop, as highlighted at our December event, is an interdisciplinary composition of the participants as they bring in various expertise and experiences from different professional fields, which minimizes options and futures as well as placing all eggs in one basket of just one forecast, regardless how well founded a forecast may appear. The interdisciplinary discussions at NATO's annual "Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA)"-workshops, with the participation of various subject matter experts (including from Academia like myself<sup>4</sup>), industry representatives, diplomats, and officers from usually more than 20 NATO member countries, its international staff, and partner countries (such as Australia, Austria, Switzerland, Finland and Sweden), serves its process of the long-term

military transformation (LTMT) for maintaining a high level of strategic awareness, anticipating and preparing itself for ambiguous, complex and rapidly-changing future security environments. The final reports of those workshops produce multiple scenarios of the future, emerging strategic trends and have highlighted even more strategic implications and impacts. The participation from almost all NATO member states as well as the alliance's partner countries highlight the great interest at the workshops with an often surprising and astonishing transparency of work and open collaboration.

In this light, the creation of CASSIS as an interdisciplinary research centre at the University of Bonn and the annual organisation of the "International Security Forum Bonn" by including an interdisciplinary expert scenario workshop have recognized the overall importance and need of strategic forecasting as well as its methodological tools and instruments for strategic decision-making of governments, organizations, and businesses.

<sup>4</sup> The author had the privilege to participate at NATO's SFA workshops at a subject matter expert for international energy security from 2013 to 2017.

# Stuck on the Road to Realpolitik What the Germans Could Do Easily and Should Do Now

by Joachim Weber



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In times of fundamental changes in world politics, national security concepts must be adopted to the new realities. Right? While almost anybody will highly likely agree on that notion, it will be clearly much harder to make politicians move on and change structures in fact. Moving away from national traditions, being in place since many decades, moving away from patterns of party traditions and rivalries, and moving away from comfort zones, in which questions of national security are dealt with in a way, whether they were nothing more than just a matter of most recent opinion polls to cope with, can be a demanding task. Many countries with a democratic system are facing that sort of difficulties, describing the smaller or wider gap between political challenges, wishful thinking and realities. What makes the German case so unique and different from its neighbors, has been described in numerous books, articles, and research papers.

As mentioned by so many observers and analysts, it is still holding true that German foreign and security policies is characterized by a national security culture, which can be only understood as a direct result of the tragic events in the first half of the 20th century. This widespread perception is characterized by a specific

mixture of feelings of guilt and reactive pacifism, of anti-militarism and a strong will to express high moral standards to any challenge in world politics. This has been and is still shaping more than anything else, how huge parts of the public, the media and most politicians alike approach matters of foreign and security policies in Germany. While this seemed to be a more or less appropriate approach for the decades after 1945, it is necessary to state clearly, that this is not the case anymore in the third decade of the 21st century and the different nature of the challenges of our times.

It is no exaggeration to state, that all attempts to adopt German security policies to the changing nature of outside challenges have largely fallen short, due to this overarching pattern of thought in German society.<sup>1</sup> Politicians, if they would be ready to change, still don't like to demand those changes publicly, because their party or the public doesn't want them to hear from them about "sweat and tears". Mentally, most Germans are still living in a comfort zone of peace and prosperity, in which they are placed on a (so far) safe hill – built of high moral standards – and can look down to the miseries of world politics in action in most parts of the planet. While no recipe

1 Ulrich Schlie has shown the changing security patterns and the lack of appropriate reform in a must read recently: Ulrich Schlie (2020): 'Deutsche Sicherheitspolitik seit 1990. Auf der Suche nach einer Strategie', SIRIUS – Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen, Vol. (4) 3, 304-314.

has been found yet to change those mental patterns in heads and minds, there is some hope on the impact of potential structural reform which could be done step by step, having the idea behind that the institutions themselves and more useful structures applied, will likely result in some positive impact rather than waiting for undecided people around to change their attitude. The German case not only holds a mental difficulty at its core, it is also a matter of dysfunctional structures.

As a widely known fact, the German governmental system has great troubles to define and to align national interests in a coherent way, expressing intentions with one voice abroad and to carry them out accordingly. Besides the mental problems, this is caused by a set of structures of the German political system: Elections every 4 years (too short for long lasting concepts), the so called "Ressortprinzip", in which ministries are highly independent not only on the details of their competences, but on the overall outcome of their policies, a dominant foreign ministry (since many decades in various coalitions always run by a party different from the chancellor's party) and the lack of structures for a better coordination of the work of the government. But a "whole of governance"-approach is simply a must in our days, otherwise the Federal Republic will go on with a political culture being completely reactive and thus being overwhelmed again and again in coping capacities by whatever comes up unexpectedly, from Arabellion to Trump, from Ukraine or Syria to Covid-19.

What to do? There has been a number of proposals in recent years by political scientists and practitioners to change or amend structures in German foreign policy making in order to gain more control of the political challenges the country is dealing with. Among those I see three interesting options which deserve (more than) some brief outline presented here:

1. At first and as a very modest approach without any law or even constitutional changes required, there should be a standing, joint committee of the ministries involved in issues of foreign and security policies. It should be comprised of Bundeskanzleramt (Fed. Chancellery), the Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Ministry), the MoD and the Ministry of Economics and Energy (mainly due to the fact that issues of industrial defense cooperation and exports of arms are located here). They could be reinforced by Ministry of the Interior (civil protection, disaster management and total defense issues) and various ministries involved, due to the specific challenge to be dealt with in certain situations, like Ministry of health in case of an upcoming pandemic challenge. Meetings at the level of head of department on a structured and regular basis with the obligation to have some sort of conclusions or proceedings as the result of their discussions presented, could be of some help. Those documents could become a guiding direction for their sub levels, being some first step on the road to "jointness" in pursuing certain tasks in which many ministries are involved. In the upward direc-



*Discussion at an evening event during ISFB 2019*

tion, the various heads of departments of various ministries would have the obligation to communicate the findings adopted by the joint committee to their political leadership in the ministries. If their undersecretaries or Ministers would not agree, there would be ways to discuss certain critical points by circulation in the aftermath of a session or to negotiate them at the next meeting a few weeks later. This would be definitely a step forward compared to current practices, in which cooperative meetings of ministries take place, but they are driven by demand (thus mostly reactive) and usually on the level of heads of unit and desk officers, which don't have the appropriate positions in the hierarchy to make and communicate findings straight upward. This unambitious reform would bridge gaps between ministries and break at least a window of opportunity in the wall of obstacles caused by "Ressortprinzip".

2. Another proposal from various sides and discussed since about a decade is the setup of a National Security council, as recently demanded in the Bundestag by the FDP parliamentary group (BT19/17739). Usually this proposal, as in this recent case, aims at changing the structure and competences of the "Bundessicherheitsrat" (BSR), an organ established as "Bundesverteidigungsrat" with some ambitions already in 1955. In fact, the BSR is a non-permanent working group of the members of the cabinet, headed by the chancellor, and it had been reduced since the 1980ties to an organ that purely makes decisions in the field of German arms exports. While this idea of reform deserves intensive discussions, one can be very skeptical about the outcome if structures wouldn't be changed massively. Are the same politicians in their function as members of the BSR will make any other decisions they have or could have made otherwise in their function as cabinet members of the Federal government? Will they be driven less by loyalty to their parties? One can be very skeptical about that. Serious discussions about a "BSR+" can start only at that moment, when there will be a significant change in its structure, making it a permanent organ with staff and

secretariat and the need to a regular release of findings and conclusions to the public to give some orientation about the state of national security and executive intentions to adopt. Of course there would be also some decisions not to be published right away, but that is normal for any high ranking GO in this field. It would take a simple law to establish this BSR+ structure.

3. A third idea which I consider to be a very promising one, has been outlined by James Bindenagel and his team at CASSIS already two years ago.<sup>2</sup> This is the installation of an expert council on national security, following the example of the "Sachverständigenrat zur Begutachtung der gesamtwirtschaftlichen Entwicklung", also known as "Die Wirtschaftsweisen". At the core of this council would be about half a dozen of renowned experts on foreign and security policies from universities and research institutions in Germany. Their duty would be to discuss among themselves and publish a report on their field of expertise once a year, which should be handled over to the chancellery or even better, to the Bundestag in order to stir up public debate, giving an estimation of the state of the current situation of German security policy and providing advice, what to do better without criticizing certain parties or politicians too obviously or directly. The government is free to follow the advice or can blow it in the wind. But the suggestions are there, and public and society could follow up in various ways. The debate of security matters could thus gain massively from such a report and could provide clearer ground for the public, not least in their decision for whom and what to vote next time.

While a new, multilaterally oriented government in the US has taken the helm, Germans should made up their minds quickly and start first steps of reform like described above. For what eminent challenges lay ahead, the recent paper of the German Marshall fund has set the agenda for discussion.<sup>3</sup> It is high noon to move on indeed.

2 James D. Bindenagel, Philip A. Ackermann (2018): 'Deutschland strategiefähiger machen. Ein Sachverständigenrat für strategische Vorausschau ist nötig', SIRIUS – Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen, Vol. 2 (3), 253–260.

3 German Marshall Fund (2021): More Ambition, Please!, GMF Policy Paper, [https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/More%20AmbitionEnglish\\_17Jan.pdf](https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/More%20AmbitionEnglish_17Jan.pdf).

## In Memory of Guido Goldman (1937–2020)



It is with great sadness that we learned of Guido Goldman's passing on November 30, 2020. He was a dedicated and trusted American friend of Germany, who contributed so much to shepherd the relationship through the decades. Guido Goldman's relentless efforts to promote international understanding, fight racial prejudice, support the arts, and help the needy are widely recognized. Guido was the architect of enduring partnerships between Germany and the United States that foster transatlantic interchange and mutual understanding.

When Bonn University established the Kissinger Chair, Guido Goldman generously supported the International Security Forum Bonn partnership with the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies. That Forum contributed significantly to the Kissinger chair's success. Guido met with Henry Kissinger in 2018 to share the University's decision to make the Kissinger Chair permanent. Bonn University has shown that it was grateful for his support.

All of us who were honored to know Guido Goldman sincerely appreciate his contributions to public life in the United States, especially transatlantic relations. He worked tirelessly with Chancellors Brandt and Kohl for the establishment and expansion of the German Marshall Fund (GMF), which he served for forty years as the founding Chairman of its Board. He was an essential contributor to German-American relations and a board member of the American Council on Germany.

His lifelong commitment to promoting international peace and prosperity included support for reconciliation with survivors of the Holocaust. The creation of the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future (EVZ) was an excellent example that the secret of reconciliation is remembrance. Guido knew the importance of remembrance.

Guido left us a legacy of institutions and individuals who will continue to maintain the German-American relationship.

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