

Whose Zeitenwende? Germany Cannot Meet Everyone's Expectations

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Stellungnahme / comment

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Raik, K., & Quencez, M. (2023). *Whose Zeitenwende? Germany Cannot Meet Everyone's Expectations*. (DGAP Policy Brief, 17). Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-87682-5>

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DGAP POLICY BRIEF

ACTION GROUP

ZEITEN
WENDE

Whose Zeitenwende?

Germany Cannot Meet Everyone's Expectations



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Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine pushed Germany to fundamentally revise its foreign and security policy, including its assumptions about European security, its relations with major powers, and its role as a mediator of intra-European disputes. The Zeitenwende's level of ambition entails a profound reckoning of the failure of past policies, and has to be both European and global. Germany bears a special responsibility for strengthening European defense vis à vis Russia, reducing Europe's vulnerabilities vis à vis China, maintaining a strong transatlantic alliance while also preparing Europe for a possible reduced US commitment in the future, and ensuring a coherent EU. Germany's European partners, on the other hand, should anticipate that the cost of a more strategically driven Germany is a Berlin that is likely to become more explicit in promoting its own national interests. A successful Zeitenwende will not make Germany more French or Polish, but more assertive in pushing for a German vision of Europe.

– The required strategic, cultural, and institutional transformations entail costly trade-offs in terms of public spending and political capital to pass difficult reforms.

– Berlin will have a hard time managing the expectations of its allies, who tend to expect that the Zeitenwende will make German foreign and defense policy align with their own.

– Germany's relationship to the US faces the risk of deep tensions as Berlin opposes the emergence of a US-led bloc against a China-led bloc.

INTRODUCTION

The Zeitenwende is happening around us — as China and Russia challenge the post-Cold War, US-led international order and a new form of great power competition emerges. For Germany, the Zeitenwende in foreign and security policy will require profound changes beyond increasing the defense budget and modernizing the Bundeswehr. The challenge, for both political leadership and the public at large, will be to move from reactive to proactive and strategic approaches to the crises and geopolitical shifts currently reshaping the European and global order.

This comes with real political risks for any German government. The strategic, cultural, and institutional transformations entail costly trade-offs in terms of public spending and political capital to pass difficult reforms. Political leaders will continue to feel the temptation to adopt minimal policy changes and return to the more comfortable principles of the status quo-seeking Merkel era. This can be rendered more difficult even in the context of a fragile coalition, as internal disagreements and diverging electoral interests come in the way of ambitious agenda setting.

Yet, this moment is also an opportunity to reduce the unsustainable tension between Germany's "sources of prosperity" and "sources of security."¹ Finding a new coherence between the country's economic and industrial model and its geopolitical interests will eventually make Germany stronger in Europe and in the world.

In this process, Berlin will also have a hard time managing its allies' expectations. Germany's partners and neighbors tend to expect that the Zeitenwende will make German foreign and defense policy align with their own. Convinced that their vision of European security is right, Paris, Warsaw and others may be tempted to consider that a failure on the side of Berlin to accept their arguments will mean the failure of the Zeitenwende. In reality, Germany is not likely to become more French or more Polish, but rather to embrace a more "German" and more assertive mode of leadership in Europe. Berlin's national interests may clash with those of its neighbors. But this, in turn, will allow for a more transparent strategic dialogue with Washington, Paris, Warsaw, and others.

WHY DID WE GET HERE?

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has made clear that the post-Cold War European order is broken beyond repair, while a new order is yet to take shape. These epochal changes have pushed Germany to undertake its own Zeitenwende and fundamentally revise its foreign and security policy, including its assumptions about European security and relations with major powers.

More than any other European country, Germany got its Russia policy wrong, as it clung to the idea of positive economic interdependence and neglected its defense capabilities even after the war in Ukraine started in 2014. These mistakes came with fatal implications for Ukraine and major ramifications for Europe as a whole. Hence Germany bears a special responsibility to correct course — which it indeed started to do in February 2022.

However, the moment of reckoning goes beyond Russia policy. Germany has to answer for years of US and European frustration regarding its defense policy and its lack of leadership in European security more broadly. The lessons learned from the Russian invasion of Ukraine also require questioning the notion of positive economic interdependence with China and reducing Germany's critical dependencies. Geopolitical developments challenge the export-based system on which Germany has built its economic success.

Furthermore, tightening multipolar competition is undermining Germany's claim and, more importantly, ability to be a defender of democratic values and the rules-based multilateral order. To defend democratic values and reinforce a meaningful rules-based order in Europe and beyond, Germany needs to become a credible, capable security actor. The Zeitenwende has started, but there is a long way to go.

SETTING THE AMBITIONS OF THE ZEITENWENDE

The definition of the Zeitenwende has been much debated since Olaf Scholz's original address on February 27th, 2022. Three days after the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the speech was

1 Josep Borrell, "EU Ambassadors Annual Conference 2022: Opening Speech to the EU Annual Ambassadors Conference," *European Union External Action* (October 10, 2022); https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-ambassadors-annual-conference-2022-opening-speech-high-representative-josep-borrell_en (accessed June 1, 2023)

meant to express the gravity with which the German government assessed the situation. In a *Foreign Affairs* essay published ten months later, the German chancellor translated the idea into “an epochal tectonic change,”² and the need to adopt a new mindset and new tools. What is at stake is not only Germany’s role in European security in the context of the war in Ukraine, but more largely its adaptation to a world defined both by a deep level of interconnection and heightened competition between powers.

The model that served Germany well in the 2000s and 2010s could not be sustained.

These two levels of understanding of the concept – European and global – entail different readings of the past and, eventually, different levels of ambition. Indeed, if the *Zeitenwende* marks an “epochal change,” which epoch has ended exactly? The most obvious answer, in light of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, is to look at the end of the post-Cold War era – or post-wall era, as defined by T.G. Ash – on the continent. The European security order which stemmed from the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the relationship between Russia and the West fundamentally changed on February 24th, 2022. The return of high-intensity warfare on European soil and the long-term political, economic, and strategic implications of the war will shape the new era. In this context, Germany, which was among the main beneficiaries of the past 30 years, must rethink its role and priorities in Europe.

At the global level, the Russian invasion can also be seen as accelerating existing trends of the post-Cold War order’s disintegration. The war has reinforced the emergence of geopolitical blocs led by the US and China, while some regional actors try to adopt

a hedging strategy. The joint Russo-Chinese statement of February 4th, 2022, and the deepening of the political, energy and military cooperation between Moscow and Beijing are characteristic of this division’s emergence. While Chancellor Scholz warned against dividing the world into blocs, Germany’s position as a global economic power is increasingly under pressure, as it is forced to reassess its trade and investment connections to China and rethink its supply chains around the world.

The war in Ukraine also marks the end of the Merkel era. The economic model based on cheap energy imported from Russia, trade with China, political stability in Europe, chronic public underinvestment, and security delegated to the US – strengthened Germany’s position as the industrial heart of Europe. While these principles predated Angela Merkel’s time in office, her European and foreign policy was meant to keep the status quo in these domains as it best served German interests. In 2022 it could no longer be denied that the political and economic model that had served Germany well in the 2000s and 2010s could not be sustained. While the 2023 German National Security Strategy aims to develop an integrated security approach which includes economic and societal issues, it is constrained by the deeply-rooted principles on fiscal and public spending issues.

The *Zeitenwende*’s level on ambition is therefore both European and global, and the imperative of a strategic rethink is not limited to a change in defense policy as a response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In other words, Germany’s adaptation to this new era should not only include a profound shift in its military ambitions as well as in its relations with Russia, but also a larger effort to reduce dependencies vis à vis both China and the US, assume a stronger responsibility for transatlantic burden sharing and European leadership, and rethink the implications of global multipolar competition for trade, energy, and technology.

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF ZEITENWENDE

Strategic

The changing geopolitical environment imposes at least two deep changes in Germany’s strategic thinking. Both of these processes of rethinking have in fact

2. Olaf Scholz, “The Global *Zeitenwende*,” *Foreign Affairs* (December 5, 2022): <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/germany/olaf-scholz-global-zeitenwende-how-avoid-new-cold-war> (accessed June 1, 2023)

been launched, as indicated in Germany's fresh National Security Strategy. And both have major implications for Germany's and Europe's relationship with major powers – including its allies as well as its rivals.

First, Germany needs to rethink the relationship between security and economic interests. For decades, German foreign policy has been strongly driven by the latter. This served Germany's economic growth well – for as long as the geopolitical environment remained favorable and there were no major challenges to the US-led international order. The idea of liberal interdependence, fully embraced by Germany, used to be shared by the US and other Western countries in the 1990s and 2000s. Integration of countries such as China and Russia into the global economy, *inter alia* by welcoming them as members of the WTO (respectively in 2001 and 2012), was expected to have a positive impact not just on their economic development, but also international security.

However, the positive expectations did not materialize. In 2010s, the US gradually adopted a more critical view on the risks caused by economic dependencies on its authoritarian rivals. This created disagreements between Washington and Berlin. The most prominent examples were the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which was set to further increase Germany's dependence on Russian gas, and the presence of China's Huawei in Germany's (and other European countries') 5G networks, which the US assessed as a risk to national security. Germany froze the Nord Stream 2 project just before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (and subsequent explosions on the two Nord Stream pipelines by thus far unidentified saboteurs rendered the pipelines unusable). However, the issue of Europe's reliance on Chinese 5G equipment and its other economic and technological dependencies on China remain contentious.

Germany, together with the whole EU, struggles with the question of how to assess and manage the security risks caused by economic dependencies. Dependence on Russian fossil fuels has been drastically and successfully reduced, but economic ties to China remain extensive and are more complex than the connections to Russia ever were. Cutting dependencies on China come with economic costs, whereas a failure to reduce dependencies in strategically sensitive sectors would make Europe vulnerable to Chi-

nese influence and undermine relations with the US. Germany has yet to offer clear responses to these challenges.

A high level of ambition in tackling this issue requires Germany to stop prioritizing economic interests over security concerns and undertake a systematic, long-term effort in the EU framework to reduce dependencies on China in strategically important sectors. These include critical infrastructure, critical technologies, dual use items, and raw materials such as rare earths. This would advance two major strategic goals: maintaining strong transatlantic relations and enhancing the degree of Europe's strategic autonomy.

Second, Germany has to become a credible and leading European actor in the field of defense. This requires a major change at the level of both strategic thinking and military capability. Germany's reluctance to use military force or even talk about it has long historical roots that must not be forgotten. But these should not be allowed to block Germany's ability to address challenges and threats to European security.

There is an urgent need to strengthen Germany's contribution to defending Europe against the Russian threat. The new strategic approach needs to build on a realistic assessment of Western-Russian relations for the foreseeable future: the era of cooperation and positive interdependence is over, and Moscow wishes to violently remake European security architecture, as expressed in the two documents it presented in December 2021³ – and on the battlefields in Ukraine.

In the past decades, Germany took a cautious and rather reluctant approach to the strengthening of NATO's presence in Central and Eastern Europe, including the enlargement of the alliance in 2004 and introduction of enhanced forward presence in 2016. It seemed as if Berlin did not see credible defense and deterrence *vis à vis* Russia as a stabilizing factor in European security. In February 2022, it became evident that further strengthening NATO's defense posture was necessary for preventing further Russian aggression. Furthermore, as a sign of a major historic shift, Germany acknowledged the need to give military assistance to Ukraine, to be used against Russia. At the Madrid Summit in Ju-

3 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Agreement on Measures to Ensure the Security of The Russian Federation and Member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," (December 17, 2021): https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en (accessed June 1, 2023)

ly 2022 NATO decided on steps to move from “enhanced forward presence” to “forward defense,” with new commitments from allies – and to be prepared to push back a possible attack from Russia on the eastern flank. However, the implementation of these decisions, including the commitment of a German brigade to the defense of Lithuania, has been controversial.⁴

Germany struggles to assess and manage the security risks caused by economic dependencies.

The weakness of the Bundeswehr and low level of German defense expenditure have been long-term problems, not only for NATO but also for Germany's overall ability to address international security challenges and contribute to operations in conflict zones, be it Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali or elsewhere.

The pace of enhancing Germany's military contribution has been painfully slow with regard to actually acquiring new capabilities, as well as providing military aid to Ukraine. The special defense fund of €100 billion announced in February 2022 enables Germany to reach NATO's defense spending target of 2 percent of GDP, but only for a couple of years. There is no longer-term commitment.⁵ Germany's military aid to Ukraine during the first year of the full-scale war was substantial, but the decisions were often slow to come, with the saga of Leopard tanks in particular creating negative publicity and frustration among allies.

An ambitious new approach requires, first, broad acknowledgement of the need for a stronger German military contribution to European and international security, and second, a long-term effort to strengthen the Bundeswehr. The new Security Strategy does include a commitment to “allocate two percent of our GDP, as an average over a multi-year period, to reaching NATO capability goals” but questions remain over the pace of its implementation. Once again, the change is necessary for both maintaining strong transatlantic relations and for gradually moving towards a stronger European strategic autonomy.

Both of the strategic changes outlined above are particularly pressing, with a view to the possibly more difficult times ahead in the transatlantic relationship that may follow the US presidential election of 2024.

Cultural

These necessary strategic changes cannot take place without a strong and sustained support from the German population. At the cultural level, a successful *Zeitenwende* will require a deeper evolution of the way German electors conceive the role of Germany in Europe and the world, and approach the question of its military action. Sustained engagement with the population will therefore be paramount, as the strategic changes would entail political and economic costs for Germany in the short-term future. The evolution of the public debate on the war in Ukraine, both in the media and through political initiatives, will notably define the margin of maneuver policymakers have in future defense policy decisions.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shaken traditional assumptions about German pacifism and use of force. Indeed, while some observers and allies have criticized the pace and scope of Germany's military aid to Ukraine, the delivery of main battle tanks, ammunition, infantry fighting vehicles, rocket launchers, and Patriot air defense system, among others, marks a direct contribution to the war effort that should be underlined. The polling numbers supporting military supplies to Ukraine were well above 50 percent in 2022⁶, but the latest surveys tend to show a certain fatigue in the German population. Whether the specific experience of the war reflects a deeper change in the population with regards to

4 Lidia Gibadto and Joanna Hyndle-Hussein, “Controversy over Deployment of German Brigade in Lithuania,” *Centre for Eastern Studies* (May 4, 2023): <https://www.oswwaw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2023-05-04/controversy-over-deployment-german-brigade-lithuania> (accessed June 1, 2023)

5 Claudia Major and Christian Mölling, “No Time to Lose: How Germany's *Zeitenwende* in Defense Can Succeed,” *Internationale Politik Quarterly* (April 5, 2023): <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/no-time-lose-how-germanys-zeitenwende-defense-can-succeed> (accessed June 1, 2023)

6 The German Marshall Fund and Bertelsmann Foundation, “Transatlantic Trends 2022,” (September 29, 2022): <https://www.gmfus.org/news/transatlantic-trends-2022> (accessed June 1, 2023)

the use of German military force is therefore not clear. The sustained implementation of the National Security Strategy, and notably its commitment to increase German permanent military presence in Allies' territories, will also constitute an important test in the mid-term future.

Similarly, the subordination of economic interests to national security interests is a slow, incremental process. This issue predated the Russian invasion, as illustrated by the controversy around Nord Stream 2 and the release of the BDI's strategic position paper on China in 2019.⁷ It further gained traction in the German debate during the Covid crisis, and is now at the center of the discussion on strengthening European supply chains and diversifying energy suppliers.

A marker of this evolution towards a more cautious approach to free trade and free market principles is the position of the Free Democrats – a member of the current governing traffic light coalition also including Scholz's Social Democrats and the more hawkish Greens. Through the voice of Germany's Finance Minister Christian Lindner, the liberal party admitted that the German business model has to change, and that "China is not only a place to do business, but also a systemic rival."⁸ These cultural changes, however, may take too long to translate into actual policy. In the short-term future, high energy costs, overreliance on the Chinese market, and the attractiveness of US new industrial legislation may lead companies to choose to invest outside of Germany rather than implement difficult reforms. While strategic culture takes a generation to evolve, Berlin simply cannot afford to take that long.

Institutional

At the institutional level, Germany needs primarily to reform in order to be able to implement the defense spending increase promised in the Zeitenwende speech. The €100bn extraordinary fund constitutes a test in two ways.⁹ First, the procurement process is not adapted to spend that amount of money in the set timeline of five years. There is a risk that stockpiles will not be efficiently rebuilt, or that they ground may not be laid for long-term improvement of Germany's military forces. Second, this sudden and significant investment is a unique op-

portunity to include European and transatlantic allies. The balance between purchase "off the shelf" and the financing of long-term joint projects needs to be struck, taking into account European security as a whole. Political constraints and the possibility of a decreasing German defense budget after five years have reduced transparency and coordination so far.

Two other initiatives have illustrated the institutional difficulties faced by any ambitious reform in the defense and foreign policy realm. The release of the National Security Strategy document, expected to provide guidance for the Zeitenwende, has been repeatedly postponed due to profound disagreements among the different ministries and parties within the coalition. Each round of the drafting process has lowered the ambition of the document, as contentious elements were removed. The foreign policy bureaucracy tasked to work on this document is not to blame. Rather, the specific political situation and the unclear leadership structure within the government for such initiatives do not allow for a successful process. Beyond this specific document, this is the whole endeavor of developing a new kind of strategic thinking, which is made more difficult by the current state of German politics.

In this context, the idea for a German National Security Council, founded on the model of the US NSC, had resurfaced. This old project, promoted for almost twenty years by political leaders from different parties as well as by influential strategic thinkers, could have been the embodiment of a real institutional change in German foreign policymaking, but its implementation failed. In practice, it was also a victim of partisan politics and tensions between the SPD-led Chancellery and the Green-led foreign ministry. There again, the task was made all the more difficult, as it was pressed by time and constrained by the coalition system's balancing act.

PARTNERSHIPS AS A KEY COMPONENT OF MANAGING THE ZEITENWENDE

Acting in cooperation with partners and forging European and transatlantic consensus have been much

7 The Federation of German Industries (BDI), "China – Partner and Systemic Competitor," (March 21, 2019): <https://english.bdi.eu/article/news/milestone-in-the-china-debate-bdi-presents-strategic-position-paper> (accessed June 1, 2023)

8 Reuters, "Germany's China strategy must include level playing field – Lindner," (November 4, 2022): <https://www.reuters.com/business/germanys-china-strategy-must-include-level-playing-field-lindner-2022-11-04/> (accessed June 1, 2023)

9 Sophia Besch, "To Really Modernize Its Armed Forces, Germany Needs a Long-Term Increase of the Regular Defense Budget," *49security* (January 18, 2023): <https://fourninesecurity.de/en/2023/01/18/to-really-modernize-its-armed-forces-germany-needs-a-long-term-increase-of-the-regular-defense-budget> (accessed June 1, 2023)

emphasized in German foreign policy rhetoric. Yet Germany's partners have often had the impression that this has been Berlin's tactic to avoid explicitly formulating its national interest, hiding selfish goals behind talk of common European interest, e.g., in the context of solving the financial crisis in the early 2010s or pushing ahead with the construction of Nord Stream 2 after 2014.

Indeed, Berlin has a long track record of creating frustration among allies and partners, which has continued in spite of *Zeitenwende's* launch. First, the US has been expecting Germany to take more responsibility for European defense for decades. In the meantime, Germany has enjoyed US security guarantees and looked to the US for leadership, while also nurturing anti-American sentiments among its political elite and public. To take a recent example, Germany's wish to hide behind the US on the issue of providing Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine – which Berlin decided to do in late January, after months of pressure from allies and only after the US announced sending its Abrams tanks – underscored Europe's continued dependence on the US even for the staunchest transatlanticists. Despite the Chancellor's claim, it did not help strengthen the US commitment to Ukraine's future, but rather gave new arguments to those who, on the other side of the Atlantic, are increasingly frustrated by the lack of European leadership in Europe's security – with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan pointing to how the US sent Abrams tanks in the interest of alliance unity, to spur Germany to act.

Germany's relationship to the US faces the risk of deep tensions as Berlin opposes the emergence of a US-led bloc against a China-led bloc. Olaf Scholz supported his argument against dividing the world into blocs by referring to the negative Cold War experience. Yet the emergence of blocs during the Cold War was part of the Western effort to prevail in the geopolitical and ideological rivalry of the time. In the current context of strategic competition between democratic and authoritarian systems, which involves a competition of not only interests, but also values, the German alternative remains unclear. Whether Germany wishes to maintain the notion of positive economic interdependence in relations with China is an open question at this point. Perhaps Germany's opposition to blocs refers to rejecting the idea of decoupling from China, but a full decoupling is not seen as a realistic or desirable alternative anyway by any Western country, including the US – and thus the dividing lines between the blocs of the 21st

century are bound to look different from those of the 20th century. The ongoing European debate on “de-risking” seeks to provide a nuance that focuses on reducing critical dependencies on China, while remaining engaged with Beijing.

France and CEE countries have expressed similar criticisms but their expectations are different.

Germany's resistance to the logic of blocs seems to imply not only reluctance to join a US-led bloc vis à vis China, but also rejection of the idea that Europe could be seen as an (emerging) bloc of its own. The war in Ukraine has made Germany all the more aware of European security's dependence on the US, which undermines the notion of Europe as an autonomous entity or, possibly, a bloc. This in turn is a significant difference in comparison to the French position and a disappointment to the French aspirations of European strategic autonomy. At the same time though, Germany's wish to pursue a distinct European approach to China is rather close to the French view. How to combine the alliance with and security dependence on the US, on the one hand, with a European approach to China that does not align with US China policy on the other, is a puzzle for Europe. This is especially so for a Germany that is more dependent on both the US and China than many other European countries are.

France and Central and Eastern European countries have expressed similar criticism with regard to Germany's underperformance on defense, but their expectations are different. France has hoped to work with Germany to strengthen the EU as a geopolitical and military actor. French leadership has long asked Berlin to spend more on defense and take a larger share of the security burden in Europe and its neighborhood. The spirit of the *Zeitenwende*

speech of February 2022 is therefore a positive evolution. Yet, the decisions made since the beginning of the Russian invasion are marked by a strong sense of German unilateralism, which Paris views as detrimental for Europe. The use of the €100 billion fund for defense has been criticized as it does not support long-term industrial projects, but rather focuses on off-the-shelf purchases. The air defense Sky Shield initiative, which includes over fifteen European countries, is also a topic of tension with Paris due to its lack of coordination at the French–German level and potential implications for European deterrence.

Poland and the Baltic states expect Germany to develop a strong long-term contribution, in the framework of NATO, to defending the alliance’s Eastern flank. This is perceived as not only in the interest of the Eastern flank countries, but also as needed for ensuring stability in Europe, which is obviously in Germany’s interest. At the level of strategic thinking, they expect Germany to reject the remnants of an imperialistic attitude towards the countries ‘in-between’ which have been an object of German–Russian wars and deals over centuries. Their strong role in defining the Western response to the war in Ukraine has raised their profile as subjects, rather than objects, in European security debates.

The strengthening of Central and Eastern European actorhood is even more remarkable in the case of Ukraine. The country has transformed from what many considered as a little-known post-Soviet state to a courageous nation defending European security and values against brutal Russian aggression. Since February 2022, the main focus in German and Western debates has rightly been on the provision of military aid to Ukraine. However, the longer-term challenge for Germany as a leading European country is to integrate Ukraine into European and Western structures, so as to ensure sustainable peace after the war.

CONCLUSION

While the expectations of Germany’s partners are high – and varied – Germany is bound to meet these expectations slowly, selectively, and often in a reactive rather than proactive manner. Future dynamics on the battlefields in Ukraine and the fractured political map of Europe, in US domestic politics, and the US–Chinese rivalry will all affect the speed and shape of change in German foreign and security policy.

In this context, Germany bears a special responsibility for strengthening European defense vis à vis Russia, reducing Europe’s vulnerabilities vis à vis China, maintaining a strong transatlantic alliance while also preparing Europe for a possible reduced US commitment in the future, and ensuring a coherent EU and a competitive European economy. Such an undertaking will require costly political trade-offs for German leaders and some luck to be spared from additional crises, as Berlin will have to put more skin in the game of European and international security and make difficult choices regarding its role in global competition.

If Germany successfully addresses these challenges, its actions will in turn trigger reactions from its European partners. The strengthening of German military capabilities, coupled with a more strategic approach to defending German economic interests, will give Berlin more leverage in intra-European debates. The consequences of the *Zeitenwende* could therefore affect the balance of power within Europe, and should not be seen as a purely German burden. The rippling effects of the current debate in Germany could force Paris, Warsaw, Rome, and all other European powers to undergo their own strategic rethinking, and leaves no space for complacency.



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DGAP receives funding from the German Federal Foreign Office based on a resolution of the German Bundestag.

Publisher

Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Auswärtige Politik e.V.

ISSN 2198-5936

Editing Aaron Burnett

Layout Luise Rombach

Design Concept WeDo

Author picture(s) © DGAP



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project “Action Group Zeitenwende” cultivates the comprehensive yet coherent approach that Germany needs to better define, express, and pursue its own interests as well as the goals and values it shares with its partners. It helps build a Germany that is ready, willing, and able to act.

“Action Group Zeitenwende” is funded by Stiftung Mercator.

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