



Report Review

White Paper on German Security Policy and Its Impact on the Palestinian and Arab Issues

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Since the reunification of Germany following the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, German political literature has increasingly expressed that the new international environment presupposes a rethink of the German role on two levels. First, the regional one (in Europe), and second, the international one (giving great importance to the Russian policy on one level, and the immediate vicinity of Europe on another; especially the south and east of the Mediterranean, which mostly falls within the Arab region).

This literature, when it describes this German trend, builds on the fact that Germany is the largest population in Europe (about 81 million people) and the fourth in GDP (about \$3.8 trillion), which places on it a European and global responsibility to play a leading role. In this context, “Germany has shown that it is willing to take responsibility in security policy,” and that it is “prepared to take the lead,” as indicated by the German Federal Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen in her presentation of the strategic report entitled “White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces].” Issued in 2016, the report defines the future of German security and defence policy, and its writing was “based on an inclusive participation phase. National and international experts as well as interested citizens were given various opportunities to participate in the discussion about the future of German security policy.” Thus, it is necessary to ponder over its implications, especially in terms of its reflection on the Arab region in general, and Palestinian issue in particular.

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Germany's Strategic Directions

The report identifies three main axes around which German defence policy revolves. These are:

1. The European Union (EU): The report stresses the importance of developing and strengthening the EU structure and institutions in all respects, so as to formulate a common defence policy for Europe, where the German-French partnership is considered “the driving force for deepening European integration and ensuring peace, freedom and security.” In addition, there’s a tendency to realize a common European defence, or “Europeanization” of the defence industries, which represents a clear feature of the German policy. The Maastricht Treaty 1992 and the publication of the first German “White Paper” in 2006, assert Germany’s interest to reach the level of a “unified European defence policy,” in which the Franco-German Brigade represents the core of this ambition.
2. Preserving NATO’s role in two key areas: curbing Russian ambitions through deterrence, on one hand, and cooperation agreed upon since the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997, on the other. Also, there is the role of mitigating the effects of the political instability in the southern neighborhood of Europe, especially the aspects of terrorism, control of trade routes and transfer of raw materials to and from Europe, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, increasing defence spending, climate change challenge, epidemics and pandemics, and uncontrolled and irregular migration (although the report states that this latter problem does not pose a threat to Germany; on the contrary, it needs it to compensate for its ageing population).
3. In order to accomplish the two previous tasks, the report presupposes the need to strengthen the German military force (about a quarter of a million) technically and in terms of training and financial resources, as well as determine the nature of the relationship between the military institution that serves these aspects, and the German society with its political and civil organizations.

In defining these aspects, the German vision relies on another vision, which sees that the international system is undergoing a transition period, heading towards multipolarity. This is the result of a change in the global distribution of power, the debate over the Euro-Atlantic system, pressures on the EU project, repercussions of



problems related to transnational terrorism, challenges from the cyber and information domain, interstate conflicts, and the problems of fragile states.

The report outlines the international landscape, whose effects will reflect in Germany in several ways:

1. Germany will not be able to retain its position as the world's fourth-largest economy, as emerging economies in Asia and Latin America will likely overtake the German GDP in the coming years. Suffice it to point out to the future position of China and India, where the former "could account for one fifth of the global economic output by 2030," while the latter "will account for approximately one sixth."
2. Recognizing the factors of change in the international system, represented by globalization and digitalization, with its benefits and challenges, in addition to demographic transformations and urbanization, challenges to the status of the state as a unit for international interactions, and the spread of nepotism and corruption.
3. Global military spending. While Germany's defence spending as a percentage of Germany's GDP fell by more than half after 1990, a number of European countries have also reduced their troops because of debt. Meanwhile, a number of major countries have invested heavily in their armed forces; China's military spending roughly equals to that of all EU countries combined. Therefore, the report suggests that Europe should aim to move toward spending approximately 2% of their gross domestic product on defence, as agreed upon in the 2014 NATO summit in Wales (the German percentage is currently 1.19%).²
4. Increasing regionalism in international blocs foreshadows a change in the current global order.
5. The United States will continue to ask partners to shoulder more NATO responsibilities, which will be accepted – according to the report. For the transatlantic security partnership will grow closer and become more productive the more the Europeans are prepared to shoulder a larger share of the common burden, and the more the United States engage in shared decision-making.

² Kimberly Marten, *Reducing Tensions between Russia and NATO*, Council Special Report No. 79 (Council on Foreign Relations, March 2017), p. 25.

6. Despite the Russian challenge and Russia's global ambitions, sustainable security and prosperity in and for Europe cannot be ensured without strong cooperation with Russia.

Possible Scenarios for the Impact of the Report on Palestinian and Arab Issues

In the context of describing Germany's general trends, the report emphasises Germany's "close relations with Israel, and support for its right to exist," considering it "an unalterable element of German policy." Whereas the report is completely devoid of any reference to the Palestinian issue, Palestinian institutions, and the Arab-Israeli conflict in general. The report, especially when handling the issues of the southern periphery of Allied territory, focused on topics like "the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its attempts to project power throughout the entire Middle East as well as North Africa, the phenomenon of failed states (as a result of weak legitimacy, poor governance, weak structures, an inadequate supply of basic goods and services, unequal access to social prosperity, corruption and—at the same time—weak economies) leading to political unrest and rivalry between regional powers on ethnic, sectarian and national bases, in a way that negatively reflects on international security in general and European security in particular. The report sees that these "problems will be intensified in the future as a result of high population growth rates and the depletion of natural resources."

In light of this Middle Eastern environment, Germany's main goal is to curb all the effects of this turmoil and prevent their impacts on German interests in particular, and European interests in general, through achieving two objectives set by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel in the report's introduction; strengthening the EU and NATO and leaving Germany's partners in other regions to "do their part" and "resolve [their] crises and conflicts by themselves."

However, the report implies signs of a more "interventionist" trend—sometimes military—in the internal affairs of Middle Eastern countries, specifically when it said that "detection and prevention of state failure and the long-term stabilisation of fragile and failing states require a comprehensive approach that can make a timely and substantial contribution to the mobilisation of appropriate foreign, development and security policy instruments in the area of prevention and crisis management."



The report also refers to the “enforcement of embargos and sanctions” and strengthening international criminal prosecution and jurisdiction. Germany will work to achieve these goals through the United Nations (UN), EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as other regional organizations. (noting that it didn’t mention the Arab League).

Strangely, the report considers the expanded concept of security is of central importance for the UN and is reflected, for example, in “the safeguarding of human rights, the concern for sustainable development, peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, the fight against hunger, poverty, pandemics, diseases and drug trafficking, and the protection of the climate, the environment and natural resources,” while completely ignoring the issue of occupation (at the same time, the issue of Israeli security was present in the report).

Although the report stresses that Germany remains “committed to the goal of laying the foundations for a world without nuclear weapons,” which was adopted in 2010, it overlooks the fact that Israel, a state close to Europe, in the neighbouring Middle East, possesses these weapons.

German Future Trends in the Palestinian Issue

1. It is necessary to bridge the gap between the position of the German government and that of the German society toward the Palestinian issue. Recent polls have shown that 67% of Germans negatively view Israel compared to 11% who view it positively.³

Perhaps Palestinian media and diplomacy must give more importance to these polls; Palestinian organizations must take clear and public positions that denounce the terrorist operations taking place in European communities, given the repercussions of these operations on the attitude of European citizens. This image is reinforced by the results of a report published by a joint German-Israeli committee which reviewed the German school textbooks (its first report was published in 1985, and its publications continued until 2015). The committee found that Israel’s image in these textbooks is “very negative,”⁴ which requires the Palestinian side to strengthen links with the German educational institutions and provide documents and reports that enhance this

³ Negative Views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll, site of World Public Opinion.org, 3/6/2014, <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/country-rating-poll.pdf>

⁴ See <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4706417,00.html>

image, especially that there are four million Muslims in Germany, who can be communicated with in this regard.⁵

2. According to the German defence report, the German policy is moving toward more engagement in Middle Eastern politics; Germany's provision of weapons and training to the Peshmerga in northern Iraq since 2014, with the approval of the German parliament, is indicative of this.⁶ All this is consistent with Germany's engagement in some Middle Eastern affairs; for example, its mediator role in the exchange of prisoners between Arab and Israeli forces, as well as being part of the P5+1 group, which made the nuclear deal with Iran; nevertheless, it is not part of the Middle East Quartet entrusted with the peace process, despite the fact that it is represented by the EU delegate in the group.
3. General data on the German economic situation indicates that the economy is suffering from several issues, including the burden of Britain's withdrawal from the EU (Brexit) and the tendency toward increasing defence spending (as previously stated), which is a demand that President Donald Trump insists on. There is also the burden of the continued influx of migrants, whose numbers reached about a million and 400 thousand in 2015-2016,⁷ with the economy achieving a modest growth (1.9% in 2016). There will also be parliamentary elections in Germany in September 2017, with indications of right-wing growth.⁸ All this suggests that prospects of German aid provision to the Palestinians might see some decline, or it might be beyond Palestinian expectations.
4. Despite the German policy's opposition to the Israeli settlement in the 1967 occupied territories, the decline in the status of the Palestinian issue in diplomatic efforts and Arab policies will make Germany, like the rest of the European countries, less concerned with the Palestinian issue, except insofar as it relates to the topics referred to in the report.

⁵ Christian P. Hanelt, "The International response to crisis in the Middle East: A German Approach," *Newpolitik*, site of Bertelsmann Foundation, p. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷ See <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-marks-steep-drop-in-migrant-arrivals/a-19388287>

⁸ Kimberly Marten, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

مراجعة علمية

الورقة البيضاء حول السياسة
الأمنية الألمانية وأثرها على
القضايا الفلسطينية والعربية

أ.د. وليد عبد الحي