

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

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THORSTEN FREI

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„We need to take on more responsibility!“

„Prevention is not merely a priority, but the priority!“ Already in his first speech in front of the UN Security Council, the new UN-Secretary-General António Guterres made abundantly clear what he will be focusing on during his term in office.

As a member of the German Bundestag and Speaker for the CDU/CSU faction in the subcommittee “Civil Crisis Prevention”, Thorsten Frei offered his thoughts on the future of crisis management. . During his stay in New York, he gave a speech about “German Approaches to Crisis Prevention and the Marshall Plan with Africa”. This event took place at the New York office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in cooperation with the American Council on Germany (ACG) on June 6th 2017.

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Thorsten Frei, Member of the German Bundestag, during his speech in the office of the KAS New York

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German Approaches to Crisis Prevention and the Marshall Plan with Africa

Since the inauguration of President Donald Trump, there has hardly been a day when societal developments and politics in America have not surprised. From Germany and Europe, we can look at this with relative sobriety and serenity. It is mainly about domestic politics. I am thinking, for example, of the dismissal of the national security adviser, the abolition of "Obama-Care" or the "Muslim ban".

The importance of US-German relations

Nevertheless, it is clear that Germany and the US as the most important actors on their continent have a great interest in an intact transatlantic partnership. This alliance will be more important than ever before. We share the same values of liberty and democracy, which are met with rejection or at least skepticism elsewhere. The rapid demographic and economic growths in Asia or Africa also play a role.

Central to our friendship and serving as a bridge across the Atlantic is NATO - a value and defense alliance. We were all happy that President Trump has changed his view that NATO should be regarded as obsolete. It is not. This is demonstrated by the permanent tensions with Russia, the great threat of terrorism, the nuclear dangers hailing from North Korea, and threats within the cyber-space. In this regard, we all benefit from NATO.

From a German perspective, we owe it to NATO, and above all to the United States, that our war-torn continent has had the longest period of peace in recent history and that Germany was able to return to the international community as a respected member. We are very grateful.

Although it is the self-understanding of the US to be the world's leading power, which is also reflected in a defense budget of round about 600 billion Dollars, it is clear that Washington cannot single handedly take responsibility for security in the world. Therefore, the demand of President Trump for a fair burden sharing is justified. In particular, Germany must contribute more to the security in the world and within NATO.

We want to take on more responsibility

Germany can and will take on more responsibility. Former Federal President Joachim Gauck, Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen and the former Foreign Minister and current Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier reiterated this notion very clearly at the Munich Security Conference in 2014. Today it is underlined by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel. We are heading towards NATO's two percent target.

It is clear, however, that we cannot or will not compete with the USA. The US is and remains the leading force in NATO, which the members depend on in many cases. First and foremost in nuclear deterrence.

Even though the majority of Germans see a stronger Bundeswehr and an enhanced military commitment very critically, a reevaluation of priorities has developed within the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Security is not for free. Europe has experienced this time and time again during the various crisis the continent has had to deal with.

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For this reason, we have increased our defense budget by more than 2.7 billion EUR up to more than 37 billion EUR over the last year. Last year the Defense Minister also said that she wants to invest an additional 130 billion EUR in weapons and systems over the next 15 years. Only recently, the decision fell to buy five Corvettes. We are also moving forward in other relevant fields. A few weeks ago a cyber-branch for the armed forces was founded. Nevertheless, we are still at the beginning of necessary developments with the defense expenditure currently at 1.2% of GDP.

However, reaching the two percent target will not happen overnight. Reaching the goal will take time. A deadline in the year 2024 issued by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg seems realistic.

Germany has a more comprehensive understanding of international responsibility due to its history

Germany has traditionally favored to contribute noncombatant measures throughout the last decades. It is however equally important to back up a country's values and ideals with credible strength. This is demonstrated by the relationship with Russia. Nevertheless, we follow the primacy of diplomatic means as well as of dialogue and cooperation in the multi-lateral framework. That is why we are the third largest donor to the United Nations today.

Finally, I see this approach not as a weakness, but as a sign of strength. Especially for NATO, it is positive that there is certain heterogeneity within the members who can thus complement each other. This strengthens the ability to act. On the one hand, this is necessary because President Trump has announced his intention to cut the US's funds for the UN and its programs. On the other hand it is also clear that many problems can't be solved by military means. We see this in Syria or Yemen. Even if combat operations ended, reconciliation, state structures and economic prospects with adequate employment opportunities are essential for lasting peace. Education and medical care – especially for youth – is vital for stability. People must be able to found a family.

Following this approach, the German Federal Government has drawn up an action plan entitled "Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Management and Networked Action." Institutionally- as conceptually. Financial resources have increased by more than tenfold since 2004.

Even if there are still open questions among the ministries, last year Government and Parliament have worked intensively on the further development of main guidelines for civilian crisis prevention. As a result many guidelines were confirmed and existing shortcomings were clearly identified.

For us, prevention is a clear priority. It is also clear that after an escalation, it may be necessary to use soldiers to prevent genocide or political turmoil or to separate conflict parties in order to create a stable environment. Experience shows that the best way to reach sustainable peace is the networked approach, which means the combined use of diplomacy, civil society, development policy, police and military means. The primary goal for us is the establishment of good governance, the protection of human rights, the enforcement of the principles of the rule of law, secure water and food supply and a functioning education and health system. Every investment in precautionary foreign policy and development means preventing human suffering as well as potentially higher consequential costs that arise when crisis break out.

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In order to become even better in this area, we want to further expand the capacities for the early detection of crises and conflicts and for the mediation of existing conflicts.

With all our domestic political pressure, we must establish a political framework for conflict management in the long term. This concerns in particular the support of civil society projects. This applies to the planning of those projects and it should mark a departure from the principle of annual financing.

This also means that we will further increase financial resources in the area of crisis prevention –both for state action and also with regards to the support of civil society projects as well as for humanitarian aid.

Another important area in which we want to be more involved is reconciliation. This is most important to close rifts between formerly hostile social groups and to ensure a long-term resolution of conflicts.

In Germany, we must also improve the structures to find more judges, police officers and civilian experts for UN missions.

It is also problematic that our measures for crisis prevention have not been systematically evaluated so far.

In addition, Germany suffers from a lack of coordination between the ministries involved in crisis prevention. Perhaps the creation of a Bundessicherheitsrat (Federal Security Council), which not merely advises on weapons export decisions, would be a real alternative. The USA could be a good example.

But why all this? Why are we so much involved in this area?

The special challenge Africa

Especially due to the migration crisis of the years 2015 and 2016, which were primarily caused by the crises in Syria and Iraq, it has become very clear to us that Europe has very limited capabilities to receive refugees. On the one hand, this is associated with enormous costs and organizational challenges. Especially since a viable and fair distribution mechanism has not yet been found between EU member states. This is also due to the limited social readiness for a large-scale integration of migrants. The associated terrorist threats have further limited the acceptance of those political decisions.

Even with an end of all the conflicts in the coming years and decades we expect an increase of migration. This is due to known facts. While Africa is the fastest growing continent, it cannot provide food for its inhabitants today. Each woman in Africa bears an average of seven children. The population will double by 2050 to about 2 billion people. At this point it would be 5 times the size of the EU. Eleven of the 20 fastest growing countries are located in Africa. In 2035 the number of young people in Africa who are looking for employment will be bigger than in the rest of the world. Today, economic prospects are already lacking. Although some 50 billion EUR annually flow to Africa as development aid, there is little or no progress. So often only migration to the north remains as a last option. But this also produces dissatisfaction, terrorism and additional migration.

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Due to the gloomy outlook, it is expected that at least a quarter of all young people over 15 will leave their own country. It is true that not all migrants will come to Europe. Nonetheless, the figures are still on a permanent and lasting rise.

The problem is that migrants cause significant cash flows to Africa. That is why African governments have only little interest in preventing migration. According to the World Bank, the sum of these transfers is more than 36 billion dollars a year. Nigeria accounted for 20.5 billion dollars, corresponding up to 4% of GDP. In the case of Senegal, 1.6 billion dollars are transferred, which corresponds to 11.6% of GDP. In Mali, the monetary backflows are about 7% of GDP and in Gambia even 22% of GDP.

For many countries - particularly south of the Sahara – family money transfers play a far greater role than direct investment and development aid. Consequently no one must be surprised of the fact that Niger's State President recently refused an offer of Chancellor Merkel to accept aid of 77 million EUR. In return he presented a billion-euro debt to her.

What is clear is that we cannot accommodate all people within Germany and due to the large scale dimensions, the problems cannot be solved by Germany alone. But, of course, as an export-oriented country we have a strong interest in the improvement of the situation.

The Marshall Plan with Africa

The Marshall Plan with Africa as a multi-thematic approach treats Africa more than ever as a partner and is based on the Agenda 2063 defined by the African Union (AU) and the German Action Plan of Civilian Crisis Prevention. It emphasizes the need to overcome colonial thinking.

But Africa also has to do more than before. Africa's good raw material reserves are to be used for this purpose. In addition, there should be a stronger cooperation on education, trade, economic development and energy supply, as well as the reduction of trade barriers or the fight against illegal cash outflows and tax evasion. A hundred billion Euros are withdrawn from Africa annually through corporate tax fraud. Similarly, state structures and civil society should be strengthened through good governance and the fight against corruption.

In the future 20% of Germany's development aid will therefore go to countries that are implementing good reforms. Aids should no longer flow without quid pro quo.

Because state aid can only be used to support outstanding projects, Germany wants to promote significantly more private investment in Africa. Public funds are to trigger a leverage effect as a catalyst. Extensive credit guarantees for German direct investments could be a suitable way. Nowadays only about 1,000 of the more than 400,000 German companies active abroad open a business in Africa because of the uncertain legal situation. We want to change that.

In addition legal migration should be extended. One could also think of a permanent seat of Africa in the UN Security Council to take account of the growing population. Even if this reform is foreseeably unenforceable. An EU Commissioner for Africa, as well as the creation of a Mediterranean Union of southern Mediterranean countries with full access to the EU internal market or a free trade area between the EU and all 54 African countries are also

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conceivable options for the future. The talks will continue at the next EU-Africa Summit on the Ivory Coast.

We are certainly at the beginning of necessary developments. But the growing crises and poverty migration worldwide have shown us that we have a vital impact to act in this field. We may only make slow progress. But climate change, lack of food and water as well as failed states will further increase the pressure on industrialized countries. We have to start here. Not with weapons but with civilian means. Without perspective for every single man and woman in the third world, there will be no future for our western prosperity.