
GERMANY SEES BREXIT OPENING FOR EU DEFENSE UNION WITH FRANCE

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The U.K.s exit will open the door to more military cooperation among the remaining European Union countries, with Germany and France poised to take the lead, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said.

Presenting the German governments first overhaul of security policy in a decade, von der Leyen said Europes biggest economy needs to take on more military leadership on the international stage. That includes moving forward with talks toward a European defense union, which the U.K. has blocked, she said.

In the past, the U.K. has said that it wouldnt do precisely these things, which paralyzed the EU when it came to a joint external and security policy, von der Leyen said at a news conference in Berlin on Wednesday. Exactly this possibility is now there.

The remarks show how European leaders are planning to redraw the EUs political map in the wake of the U.K.s vote to leave, with Germanys position strengthened as the foremost power. Britain has resisted an expansion of EU security policy in favor of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Von der Leyen made the remarks as she laid out the Germanys revamped geopolitical strategy. Approved by Chancellor Angela Merkels cabinet on Wednesday, the so-called white paper says Germany needs to step up in part because a resurgence of classic power politics thats increasing the risk of violent conflict between states, including in Europe and its neighborhood.

Germany is ready to take on responsibilities and leadership, reflecting our increased role in international security policy, according to the document, which also backs further consolidation of Europes defense industry.

Von der Leyen said EU defense cooperation can take place within the blocs existing treaty, though that wouldnt diminish Germanys role in NATO.

Germany will always act only within the alliance, she said.

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