
HISTORY & RESPONSIBILITY: GERMANY'S GLOBAL ROLE | UNCUT WITH FISCHER AND VON DER LEYEN

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08.10.2018

EuroNews (5 October 2018)

In the latest episode of Uncut with Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the former May 68 student leader and Franco-German politician looks at why Germany is reluctant to take responsibility in Europe and the world. Cohn-Bendit is joined by former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and current defence minister Ursula von der Leyen.

As Europe's economic powerhouse, Germany is an obvious candidate to take a larger role on the international stage now that America appears to be backing away from the post-war multilateral order. But the country's dark history still casts a long shadow. After the horrors of World War II, Joschka Fischer explains, Germany instinctively drew the conclusion: Never again! Not only never again war, not only never again genocide, but also never again world power! Never again world politics.

After the war Germany agreed to share the work of global leadership with the winning power, America, Fischer says: For the hard, for the dirty - sometimes very dirty - things, for security issues, the USA is responsible and it is under this umbrella that we are able to develop our civil strengths. This division of labour is now gone!

So as the new world order shifts toward East Asia and the Pacific, Germany must work more closely with France to maintain the relevance of Europe and the West, Fischer says: We are in real danger of being lost. We still have exactly one chance, not one more * relationship with America, the future of the West will depend on whether the Europeans manage to unite. And that will depend to a large extent on Germany and France.

Current Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen agrees that Germany can no longer sit on the sidelines of global politics. She says that as well as being politically and economically influential, Germany must also be prepared to take responsibility in those areas where there is no applause, where there are crises and conflicts. This means focusing on various skills, including diplomacy, development cooperation [and] also in the military.

And while Germany's history has meant the country stayed out of global conflicts, von der Leyen argues that its history can sometimes require that it get involved:

One example: three years ago when ISIS took Mosul and attempted a genocide against Yazidis. Then Germany said exactly because of its history, for the first time since World War II, we're ready to send weapons to a war zone and to train and equip the Peshmerga over there, so that they are

able to defend the Yazidis and their homeland.

German armed forces are also working with international missions in Afghanistan and Mali and have helped launch the European Defence Union.

And that, von der Leyen says, is where the future of German and European defense and security lies: We, as Europeans, must work together to tackle the problems at our door, no one will help us there anymore. We have made tremendous progress and because we are so consensual and proceeded so fast, it has also not stirred up any big dust, but it has been well carried forward. So we should go on like this.

Joschka Fischer (born 1948 in Gerabronn, Germany)

- 1985: Green minister in the regional govt of Hesse, attains first federal party list position
- 1998: Vice chancellor and foreign minister in the first Green federal government coalition.

∇ 1999: Sends troops to Kosovo War - first German military intervention since World War II, also becomes president of the Council of the European Union.

- 2002: Green party gains in general elections, second term of Schröder/Fischer cabinet.
- Since 2005: career as strategic counselor and lobbyist (Siemens, BMW).

Ursula von der Leyen (born 1958 in Ixelles/Esene, Belgium)

- 2003: CDU (Christian Democrats) minister in the regional govt of Lower Saxony.
- 2005: Federal minister of family affairs/senior citizens/women/youth in Merkels 1st cabinet.
- 2009: Federal minister of labour and social affairs in Merkels 2nd cabinet.
- Since 2013: Federal minister of defence in Merkels 3rd cabinet.

∇ 2015: After plagiarism accusations, the Hannover medical school reconfirmed her degree, despite saying that 20% of her thesis are flawed.

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