
WHAT GERMANY SHOULD DO ABOUT EUROPE

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BERLIN — January marks the beginning of Europes Schicksalsjahr: its fateful year.

Ahead of the European parliamentary election in May [] first after Brexit [] and anti-European parties are locked in a battle of ideas with Europes political defenders. Its no exaggeration to say the future of the European project is at stake.

For pro-Europeans across the Continent, the battle is an uphill one. Euroskeptics are forming alliances across borders [] aided by figures like U.S. President Donald Trumps former campaign manager Steve Bannon [] and are loudly drawing attention to their vision of a European Union redesigned in their image. Meanwhile, democratic and liberal voices are being drowned out by political problems at home.

In Germany, the era of Chancellor Angela Merkel is waning, and the far right is injecting anger, division and hate into our political discourse. In France, President Emmanuel Macron, who campaigned as a radical centrist and defender of a strong Europe, is facing similar vitriol, in the form of chaotic and violent Yellow Jackets protests taking aim at his presidency.

This turmoil is a symptom of Europes internal crisis: Europeans have lost trust in liberal democratic institutions and in their governments ability to deliver economic prosperity and navigate the destabilizing effects of migration, globalization and digitalization. Increasingly, they are turning to populist strongmen who offer easy answers — but no real solutions.

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This battle of ideas is one that pro-European democratic forces can, and must, win. And it is one in which Germany must take a leading role.

Since the era of former Chancellor Helmut Kohl [] the leader who brought a unified Germany through the end of the Cold War [] the country has been an engine of European integration, dedicated to a vision of Europe as a Continent that safeguards democracy, human rights and the prosperity of its citizens.

Germany is the blocs undisputed economic heavyweight and has the diplomatic clout to tackle the strong headwinds the EU faces from the outside its borders. These include a weakened but belligerent Russia, flexing its muscles in Ukraine and exploiting populist movements; a neo-

authoritarian China seeking to divide the bloc; an unpredictable U.S. president who sees Europe's gains as America's losses in a zero-sum competition for global power.

To lead the Continent through these increasingly choppy waters, Germany will have to reorient its foreign policy in several concrete ways in the year ahead.

It's becoming increasingly urgent for Germany to take a firm stand against Chinese investments in domestic companies that would result in technological transfers in critical industries.

First, Berlin must realize that Europe can't move forward without a strong Franco-German engine and should accept Macron's repeated invitations to build a stronger Europe together.

We need to work with Paris to strengthen the eurozone's financial system and budget, enhance defense and intelligence capabilities after the U.K. leaves the EU, push back on Poland and Hungary's illiberal turns and develop an effective European asylum policy. The recent approval by German and French cabinets to extend the post-World War II Elysée Treaty and deepen cooperation across our economic and security sectors is a welcome step forward.

Second, Germany must double down on efforts to solve the migration and refugee crisis that has destabilized Europe.

The Continent needs a EU-level solution that will efficiently grant asylum to those who are eligible and just as quickly return those who are not back to their countries of origin. Its clear frontline states such as Spain, Greece and Italy cannot handle the crisis alone. The backlog of applications is turning entry posts such as the Greek island of Lesbos into permanent refugee camps.

We must also remember that climate change is a powerful driver of migration. If all nations do not play their part in reducing carbon emissions, more people will be forced to leave their homelands due to severe droughts, rising sea levels and powerful storms.

Third, Germany should withdraw its support for the Nord Stream 2 pipeline deal with Russia, a project that would carry Russian gas to Germany across the Baltic Sea and bypass traditional routes through Ukraine. The deal hurts Germany's energy independence and makes Europe more susceptible to Russian influence. It is a geopolitical mistake that sends the wrong signal to Moscow at a time when Putin is stoking tensions with Ukraine, intervening in democratic elections and fomenting chaos in Syria.

Fourth, Germany must develop a comprehensive geopolitical strategy to respond to China's growing influence in Europe, where it is attempting to divide the bloc by building political leverage in Central and Eastern Europe.

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It's becoming increasingly urgent for Germany to take a firm stand against Chinese investments in domestic companies that would result in technological transfers in critical industries. We must also seriously debate whether it would be wise to allow Germany's next-generation 5G network to be developed by Chinese company Huawei, which could hurt Germany's technological sovereignty.

Germany and other EU members must speak to China with one voice when it comes to Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative in order to ensure that European companies can compete fairly. The EU

should also lodge a broad, multiactor complaint at the World Trade Organization to address China's unfair trade practices, and work to reform the institution to strengthen the rules-based international system and respond to Chinese misbehavior.

These four foreign policy priorities will provide Germanys pro-European voices with a solid strategic platform going into the May election and a strong counterpoint to messages of fear from populist groups.

There is no direction for Europe but forward. Yes, populists and authoritarians are seeking to divide us. Yes, Europe is in danger. But we can, and will, overcome this risk if we match it with equal resolve and creativity.

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