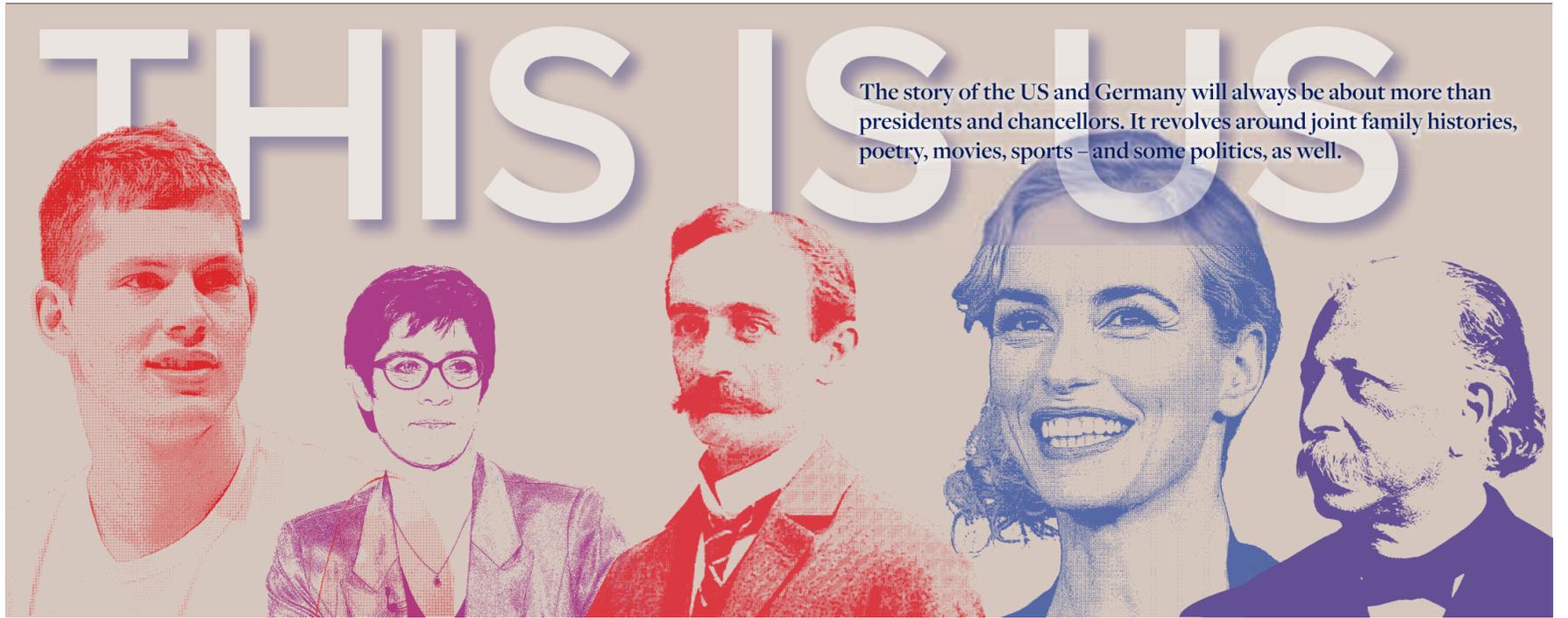


The German Times

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THIS ISSUE ...

... of *The German Times* tells the stories of people that make up the past, present and future of the “special relationship” between the United States and Germany.

From left to right: Sharp-shooting big man **Moe Wagner** is trying to find his role alongside LeBron James with the NBA’s Los Angeles Lakers (page 19). **Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer**, the new chairperson of the Christian Democrats, could succeed Angela Merkel as chancellor (page 3). **Frederick Trump** was born in the small German town of Kallstadt, which is bracing for a possible visit by his grandson Donald (page 20). The actress **Nina Hoss** is the star of many of Christian Petzold’s movies. The director was recently invited to become a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (page 18). And every German child knows the American John Maynard – the heroic helmsman in the eponymous poem by **Theodor Fontane**, author of the novel *Effi Briest* and the greatest German writer of the 19th century. He was born 200 years ago this coming December (page 23).

Swan song and legacy

Angela Merkel in Munich:
“Only together can the West survive!”

BY THEO SOMMER

This year’s Munich Security Conference (MSC) – the security and foreign policy twin of the Davos World Economic Forum – convened under dark clouds of doom and gloom. The over 800 participants – among them 19 presidents, 13 heads of government, 83 ministers of defense and foreign affairs, a 50-person US congressional delegation, high-ranking diplomats and military officers from all over the globe – came together at a time when the world order is in utter disarray. Wolfgang Ischinger, chairman of the MSC, made no bones about it. As he put it in his welcoming remarks, we are currently witnessing “a reshuffling of core pieces of the international order... The kind of new order that will emerge remains unclear.”

Not only is the world economy weakening, as tariff conflicts herald a pernicious trade war, but the certainties of international cooperation are also waning and vanishing in the political realm, as America’s retreat from global leadership and the rise of Xi Jinping’s China upend the prevailing power patterns of the past 70 years. Geopolitical conflict has become thinkable once again. “We find ourselves in a situation potentially more dangerous than at any point since the end of the Cold War,” said Ischinger. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has once again set its Doomsday Clock to 11:58 p.m. – two minutes before the symbolic midnight apocalypse, the same this year as back in 1953.

The worst feature of this depressing picture is the fraying of what used to be called the West, the free world or the liberal international order, a fraying to the point of dissolution. Roger Cohen, the perspicacious international correspondent for *The New York Times*, felt justified after the Munich conference to compose a “requiem for the West.” Like most Europeans, especially the Germans, he puts the

blame squarely on the shoulders of US President Donald Trump, his relentless Europe bashing and his disrespect for allies, international institutions and anything that reeks of cooperation and compromise; in other words, for multilateralism. A collaborative approach is not his cup of tea.

In the spirit of reckless unilateralism, Trump has been shedding America’s global commitments. He withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Paris Climate Agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal – and, most recently, from the INF arms control treaty with Russia. Having called Europe a “foe” and welcomed the EU’s breakup through Brexit, he has also repeatedly questioned the US commitment to defend NATO partners; reportedly he has privately told aides that he wants to leave the “obsolete” alliance.

In the spirit of reckless unilateralism, Trump has been shedding US global commitments

In Munich, the dissent within the trans-Atlantic community found its clearest expression in two speeches. German Chancellor Angela Merkel passionately invoked the spirit of multilateralism and togetherness, whereas US Vice President Mike Pence delivered a stilted teleprompter presentation of undiluted Trumpism.

Merkel’s message was clear. The world order shaped by the US after World War II is “coming under incredible pressure,” but we must not let it be smashed; rather, we must reform it. In meeting the enormous challenges facing mankind, one should not think “that each of us can best solve the problem single-handedly.” With approval she quoted Senator Lindsey Graham’s statement that “multilateralism may be complicated, but it’s better than staying at home alone.” Cooperation and compromise, she argued, are the order of the day.

Without ever mentioning Trump by name, the chancellor turned her fire on several aspects of the president’s America First policy.

Fusions and confusions

Germany is going to promote and protect industrial champions

BY NIKOLAUS PIPER

In late 2018, one of Germany’s most venerated and long-standing companies stopped being German. Linde AG was founded in 1879 by Carl Linde, the inventor of the refrigerator, and rose to become the world’s largest supplier of industrial gases, including oxygen and nitrogen. Late last year, it merged with its US competitor Praxair. Today, the new company, Linde plc, has its head offices in Dublin instead of Munich – for tax reasons.

In fact, what is officially being called a “fusion” is actually an outright takeover, and the German industry icon is now poised to become American. The transaction is not without historical irony, as Praxair was once the US subsidiary of Linde AG. During World War I, Linde assets in the US were confiscated and sold to a US company, which ultimately renamed

Germany’s agnostic attitude with regard to national industrial policy could be over

it Praxair and listed it as such on the New York Stock Exchange starting in 1989.

This is all interesting to historians and perhaps a few analysts, who question the business logic behind the takeover of one entirely healthy company by another. Politicians and the public, however, rarely take interest in the matter, which is not surprising. After all, the question of whether a company is “German” is usually irrelevant in Germany – the world’s export leader – as long as the jobs stay in the country.

The idea of fostering “national champions” has been a foreign concept in German politics for many years. When Siemens (Germany) and Alstom (France) sought to merge their rail operations in an attempt to create a European champion of railway technology, the European Commission disallowed the merger over concerns as to how it would affect competition. There was very little protest to this decision, except among those directly affected.

Similarly, nobody stepped in when Germany lost its leading market position in solar tech to the People’s Republic of China. In Germany, it doesn’t seem to matter whether a company is German or not – at least when it comes to investments.

We might soon have to say it *didn’t* seem to matter. It is possible that Germany’s agnostic attitude with regard to national industrial policy will soon be coming to an end. In early February, Peter Altmaier, Germany’s current minister for economic affairs and a close confidante of Chancellor Angela Merkel, presented a “National Industrial Strategy 2030” in Berlin. This plan foresees Germany using state funds to support, for example, a European

factory for car batteries, with one billion euro coming from Berlin and 700 million from Paris. It would also create a fund that invests in companies vulnerable to takeover, thus protecting them from being swallowed up. Altmaier is even

thinking about easing antitrust laws, with the aim of lowering the barriers to company mergers.

At the moment, there is much debate as to whether or not all of this makes any sense. Much more important, however, is the fact that the Ministry for Economic Affairs published such a paper in the first place. Since the days of Ludwig Erhard, West Germany’s first post-war economics minister and the architect of its “economic miracle,” stewards of the German economy have consistently promoted – in theory, not always in practice – a classic, economically liberal position; that is, decisions with regard to investments are made by companies, not politicians. It would appear that this is about to change.

There are three clearly identifiable reasons for this paradigm shift. First is the presidency of Donald Trump in Washington. His aggressive rhetoric against German export

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Read & greet

Gearing up for the Munich Security Conference (MSC): On the eve of the world's most prestigious international foreign policy conference, Detlef Prinz, publisher of *The Security Times*, hosted the Security Times Press Lounge. MSC Chairman Wolfgang Ischinger spoke about a troubling development, namely that more and more politicians are making specific demands before agreeing to attend the MSC. Some refuse to sit on panels with certain other guests. Others are willing to give a speech, but will not take part in the debate that follows. These new grievances run counter to the spirit of the MSC, which was founded for the express purpose of enabling the highest level of dialogue on all matters of security policy.

At the conference on Feb. 22, publisher Prinz handed Ivanka Trump a recent copy of *The German Times* with the US president on the cover. "This photo symbolizes the real balance of power," said Prinz. "Your father is sitting while all others are standing. It becomes immediately clear who the boss is." Ivanka Trump let out a hearty laugh and promised to put the paper on her father's desk in the Oval Office.



MSC Chairman Wolfgang Ischinger (left) and publisher Detlef Prinz present *The Security Times*.



All the security policy news that's fit to print: *The Security Times*, a special issue of *The German Times*.



Detlef Prinz gives Ivanka Trump a copy of *The German Times*.



Expert talks at the Security Times Press Lounge: Minister of Economic Affairs and Energy Peter Altmaier (left photo), Executive Editor Theo Sommer (left) in conversation with former Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern (right) and Jürgen Rahmig of the daily *Reutlinger Generalanzeiger* (middle). Right photo: Detlef Prinz with Vice President Mike Pence and Wolfgang Ischinger.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (left) and Bavarian Minister President Markus Söder (right) during a ceremony for the Prime Minister of North Macedonia Zoran Zaev (center left) and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece (center right). Together they were awarded the Ewald von Kleist Prize for their efforts towards resolving the dispute over the naming of North Macedonia.



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Swan song and legacy

■ She expressed her concern about the US withdrawal from the INF treaty, a pillar of Europe's security: "With our elementary interests, [we] will do everything in our power to facilitate further steps towards disarmament. Blind rearmament cannot be our response to this." She said that defense spending to the tune of two percent of GDP is a benchmark – Germany already raised its share from 1.18 percent in 2014 to 1.35 and will reach 1.5 percent by 2024. "For many, this is not enough, but for us it is an essential leap." And Germany is proud of its contribution to the defense of the Baltic Republics as well as to numerous NATO missions (e.g. Afghanistan, Horn of Africa, Mediterranean) and non-NATO missions (e.g. Mali).

■ She found America's non-transparent strategy in Afghanistan disquieting. The allies need to talk about "further development"; she would hate to have to abruptly withdraw the 1,300 German soldiers stationed at the Hindu Kush simply because there were no more "interconnected capacities," meaning American troops.

■ She pulled no punches about Washington's withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran: "Does it serve our common cause, our common goal of reducing the harmful and difficult influence of Iran by terminating the only agreement still in force, or would we help our cause more by keeping hold of the small anchor we have in order to perhaps be able to exert pressure in other areas?"

■ It does nobody any good, the chancellor argued, if everybody imposes their own sanctions on Russia. While castigating Moscow's annexation of Crimea and its support for the Donbass separatists, she remarked "things may look completely different again in a few years from now." She defended the Nord Stream 2 oil pipeline: "A Russian gas molecule is a Russian gas molecule, whether it comes via Ukraine or via the Baltic Sea.... But seeing as we imported Russian gas even during the Cold War... I don't know why the situation today should be so much worse that we can't say that Russia remains a partner."

■ Last but not least, Merkel poked fun at Washington deeming German automobiles a national security threat. BMW's biggest plant is in South Carolina, she pointed out, not in Bavaria. "If these vehicles... suddenly pose a threat to US national security, then this comes as a shock to us."

The motto of this year's Munich Security Conference was "The Great Puzzle: Who Will Pick up the Pieces?" Chancellor Merkel gave her answer in the last sentence of her address: "Nur wir alle zusammen – only all of us together!" A storm of applause was the reaction of the audience, a standing ovation lasting several minutes.

The next speaker was Vice President Mike Pence. His speech seemed to be geared only to one single listener, wrote the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, that is, President Trump, whom Pence obsequiously mentioned once a minute – 34 times all told. In fact, his speech was calibrated to suit a campaign rally rather than an international audience. And unlike Chancellor Merkel, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and the other speakers, upon finishing he cut and ran without taking any questions.

The vice president extolled the achievements of the Trump

administration with fulsome repetitiousness. "Today, America is stronger than ever before, and America is leading on the world stage once again," was the thrust of his address, neglecting the fact that it is leading largely without followers. His vision of US leadership appears to be telling other nations what to do. "The time has come for our European partners to..." he kept repeating; time to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, time to stop undermining US sanctions, time to take a strong stand against Nord Stream 2, time to do this and that. It sounded like a *Befehlsausgabe*, commented *Der Spiegel* – barking orders. Allies he treated as vassals. Common solutions? No way. Referring to Nord Stream 2, Pence even threatened putting an end to alliance solidarity: "We cannot pay for the defense of the West if our allies grow dependent on the East."

The reaction of the audience was more than tepid. This was not an expression of anti-Americanism. Indeed, there is a rift between most of Europe and his administration, but no animus against the United States as such. This became overwhelmingly clear when former Vice President Joe Biden stepped up to the rostrum. He repudiated Trump's go-it-alone politics, assuring the audience that the US will remain committed to its allies despite a perception that the country is pulling away from the world and its leadership responsibilities. "The American people understand," he said, "that it's only by working in cooperation with our friends that we are going to be able to harness the forces of a rapidly changing world, to mitigate their downsides and turn them to our collective advantage."

Referring to the isolationist policies of the current administration, Biden ended his speech: "I promise you, as my mother would say, this too shall pass. We will be back. Don't have any doubt about that." It earned him, too, a storm of applause. It gave the participants hope that the current alienation won't last. Discord won't be forever. Germany will do everything to make Europe a stronger partner in the trans-Atlantic community of the future.



Pulling no punches: Chancellor Angela Merkel

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