

“THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF GERMANY IN THE GLOBALISED WORLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY”

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Christian Wulff served as President of Germany from 2010 to 2012.

Peter Gardosch was 13 years old when he was deported to Auschwitz. His mother, sister and grandparents were all murdered there. He has written a book about his experiences in Germany as a young boy. I recently had an opportunity to meet Peter Gardosch, and our talk made a lasting impression on me. We talked about his book, his life, about how Germany shouldered a huge burden of guilt about the collapse of civilisation that was the Holocaust, and also about how Germany has faced up to its responsibilities since then.

Today – a good 70 years after the Holocaust – Germany is respected around the world. Young Israelis even think our capital is totally hip. It’s amazing really.

In the wake of the Second World War, here in Europe we have achieved the seemingly impossible: the reconciliation of bitter wartime enemies. After all the horrors, hands were extended to us. Statesmen came up with visionary ideas. In 1946, just one year after the end of the war, Winston Churchill gave a speech at the University of Zurich in which he said: “We must build a kind of United States of Europe.” He went on: “The first step in the re-creation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany. In this way only can France recover the moral and cultural leadership of Europe. There can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France and a spiritually great Germany.” These were bold words after two world wars involving Germany and Britain in which Germany caused Britain great suffering.

Photo: © Laurence Chaperon.



Christian Wulff during his keynote address on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of *KAS International Reports* in November 2014: "Germany's success would not have been possible without its exchange with the world." | Source: © Jan Roehl, KAS.

Are we capable of this kind of vision today? Is Germany in a position to inspire other countries with our vision and our experience of dealing with our past? Do we have to keep repeating the same mistakes, simply committed by different people?

It's well known that I come from Osnabrück, home of the Peace of Westphalia. This simply heightens my concern that – as Henry Kissinger puts it in his book – the experiences of the Thirty Years' War will be replayed in other places around the world, triggered by other religious conflicts, such as that between Sunnis and Shiites.

I think it is a fascinating undertaking to seek to provide a model for how people of different faiths can live together in peace. I often hear it said that this isn't so easy because everyone is subject to our basic laws, and some religions simply don't fit into this. Then I re-read Articles 3 and 4 of our constitution. Everyone is free to have their beliefs, but they don't have to believe, and if they do, they are free to believe what they want. This is an inalienable right. And as Germans, after the Holocaust we bear a particular responsibility for ensuring that this right is upheld.

When I was President of Germany, I was always impressed when people from around the world told me about great things Germans had done in their countries. It made me feel very proud of our country. There have been German families in New Zealand, Hawaii and Australia, German settlements on the Volga, Bosnia and Slovakia, German expatriates in the USA, researchers in Antarctica, engineers working on the Baghdad railway, doctors and nurses in China, archaeologists in Turkey and land surveyors in Samoa. They have taken photos, made observations, collected and evaluated.

But unfortunately there have also been other examples: Germans have committed colonial crimes in other countries. It was under Bismarck, at the Berlin Conference of 1884, that the foundations were laid for the colonial division of Africa. And the suffering of the Herero people in 1904 also has to be a part of our historical consciousness.



German expatriates are positively remembered in many places. Erich Paulun, founder of Tongji University in Shanghai, is just one example. | Source: Mr. Pommeroy, Wikimedia ©©©.

But the overall picture also includes the fact that the greenest city in China is Qingdao, because the Germans laid out a number of avenues during the colonial period. The Germans built railways in Africa that are still in use today. Land disputes in Samoa are still settled by checking in land registers drawn up by Germans in the brief colonial era. And Tongji University in Shanghai is very proud of its German founder, Erich Paulun.

I hope we will continue to be outward looking over the coming years. Today our world is more interconnected than ever before. I think it would be interesting to publish a book about famous Germans who have left

their mark on the world, and about famous people from other countries who have left their mark on Germany. It would also be fascinating to establish a migration museum in Germany that would demonstrate how we would probably have gone out of the Brazil World Cup in the first round if it hadn't been for Sammy Khedira, Mesut Özil, Miroslav Klose, Lukas Podolski and Jerome Boateng. Germany's success has only been possible because we have been open to the world.

The German national soccer team would have probably gone out of the Brazil World Cup in the first round if it hadn't been for Khedira, Özil, Klose, Podolski and Boateng.

In what I view as an homage to our country, British writer Peter Watson has written a review of German intellect and culture from Bach to Benedict XVI. If it had been written by a German, I would be reluctant to quote it, because the author is so effusive in his praise for Germany. Peter Watson presents an encyclopaedic account of the "German genius" and points to German success in engineering, the natural sciences and its contribution to music, medicine, theology and philosophy. He suggests a number of reasons for this, stating that our dissatisfaction and perfectionism prevent us from being complacent.

I would like to cite an example from my own experience. Suppose an engineer inspects a car and finds the boot lid rattles a little. In some countries they would say "it's doesn't matter if it rattles at 180 because we have a maximum speed limit of 80 miles an hour". In other countries they would say "The boot lid rattles at 180", whereas a German engineer would say "No, we have to stop it rattling at 180." This is why we build the best cars in the world.

So it is also interesting to ask whether we have appropriated a few things that are part of our way of solving problems. I'm thinking about our "Mittelstand" of family-run companies; the long-term

management of our businesses; our principle of co-determination; our dual study system; the defence of our industrial core; our method of training people for top careers in industry without insisting on an academic focus.

I am delighted to see that Watson refers to the positive effects of local administration and, above all, federalism. Without federalism, we would not have so many top universities such as those in Tübingen, Freiburg, Karlsruhe, Stuttgart and elsewhere. It is this that had led the individual states to compete and build up their own universities.

Last year, Alain Minc published a book in France titled *Vive l'Allemagne*, rather than "Vive la France". Minc is an intellectual and advisor to former French President Sarkozy. In his book, he states that Germany has become "the healthiest and most democratic country" in Europe.



The French intellectual Alain Minc has published a book titled *Vive l'Allemagne*, in which he praises Germany as "the most democratic and healthiest country" in Europe. | Source: Nigel Dickinson, Fondapol, flickr ©📷📷📷

But at the same time, he criticises Germany for attempting to become a kind of "big Switzerland". He believes the French need to ask themselves whether they would prefer a Germany that has largely said goodbye to its past or a Germany that is ready to take on a position of moderate power. German diplomacy is the exact

opposite of its British and French counterpart. As former colonial powers, Britain and France have sought a position on the world stage that in fact exceeds their significance. In contrast, Germany aims to perform below its true capacity.

Poland and Britain would both like Germany to play a stronger role. In *Cicero*, British journalist Roger Cohen called for new investment in the German armed forces, along with German leadership on the Russian question and a bold revival of transatlantic relations. The 21st century will never live up to its promise if Germany fails to think big.

We know the times are changing when Poland, France and Britain advocate for Germany to play a bigger role. We are still reacting to this with restraint, which I think is a good thing. It is better to think twice about stepping back from spirals of violence, better to negotiate one more time, than to prematurely turn to what should be our last resort: military intervention. I believe this interplay of mutual trust and joint responsibility in Europe is a good one.

We have noted how the British House of Commons rejected military intervention in Syria, running counter to previous decisions, and how the USA has pulled back from some operations. We have seen how the Military Academy at West Point has raised the threshold for U.S. military operations, and that we Germans are now taking on greater responsibility – in the Balkans, Afghanistan and by supplying arms to Kurdish fighters.

Today many areas can no longer be viewed as purely matters of domestic policy because issues such as climate change, food security, financial and monetary policy and fighting terrorism can only be resolved together. I would like to briefly outline seven areas for action in multilateral policy.

1. FINANCIAL MARKETS

I believe the global financial crisis is not yet over. Germany is particularly known for its frugality and stability, for example monetary value. But this doesn't make us popular everywhere in the world. Often it is easier for our politicians to pump more money into the market than to manage expenditure in a sound way. But this will lead to problems in the long term.

We urgently need to reach a consensus, at least on the goal of not constantly living at the expense of future generations. We should be united in our goal, even if we have different ideas about how to get there and how long it will take us. Many countries are looking to Germany in this respect. But we are under pressure from the Americans and others to maintain low interest rates to keep the economy running for a certain length of time, without being able to fully assess the long-term consequences.

2. EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

With 24 official languages, eleven currencies and 28 independent nations, Europe is an unprecedented project, but also a project that serves as a model. So we have to work out our differences, which of course is not always easy.

In France the party with the slogan "The French come first" is now the strongest party. The UK has been a member of the EU since 1973 but is seriously considering leaving. Hungary is putting domestic policies before European issues in a rather peculiar way. The list goes on. So we have to show how we can live and internalise a Europe that is united in diversity, above and beyond national, linguistic, cultural and religious boundaries.



It is crucial for the European project to overcome differences, particularly when countries such as Viktor Orbán's Hungary prioritise national policies over European issues. | Source: Pietro Naj-Oleari, EU / PE-EP, flickr ©①③③.

More than 14 million Muslims live in Europe, making up the continent's second-largest faith community. In Berlin there are now as many Muslims as Catholics. Yet there are so many people who refuse to accept them. The problems of certain minorities, such as racism, anti-Semitism but also anti-Islamism have to be taken seriously. They cannot be part of an enlightened society and modern 21st-century democracy. We need more intensive debate and face-to-face encounters among equals. It is a case of accepting that others have their own identities.

It could be so simple, if only everyone would treat others as they want to be treated themselves – with respect and appreciation.

At the conclusion of the Synod in Rome, Pope Francis warned of the temptation of a destructive tendency to do-goodism in the name of a deceptive mercy that binds the wounds without first curing them and treating them. At the same time, he warned of the danger of hostile inflexibility. For him, it is of heartfelt concern to find an unerring path between the two.

This is done by deescalating problems, never letting them become so great that both sides rigidly cut themselves off – separated, split and divided. This is an important task we can shoulder in our society and our Europe and which may serve as an example to the rest of the world.

3. AFRICA

No continent is home to more religions than Africa. No continent has more languages than Africa. There are so many states, nations, interests and histories that it is impossible to generalise. Horst Köhler made a great contribution in this area. He warned us about the images in our heads. When we think of Africa, we all too often think of crisis and conflict, war and catastrophe, disease and corruption. Henning Mankell wrote: "The media tell us everything about how Africans die, but nothing about how they live." We should not forget the African economic miracle, the growth of African democracy and the increasing strength of many African countries. There are many brave people who are defending human rights and fighting against corruption. Civil society is gaining strength, women are campaigning for peace, and groups of farmers are vociferously demanding their rights.

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Africa is the youngest continent in the world – half of its population is aged 18 or less. By 2050 two billion people will be living on our neighbouring continent. Nigeria alone will be home to 400 million people, that's almost as many as the population of Europe.



Rescued in the Mediterranean: The flow of refugees can only be reduced through more education and better opportunities in life. | Source: © Darrin Zammit Lupi, Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS).

We must admit openly and honestly that while Africa needs to develop, our society also needs to undergo a transformation; that we need a fair system of international trade that encourages growth and gives African economies more opportunities to develop themselves; that we have to learn how to listen and to develop a culture of talking together as equals, in order to build a true partnership based on respect and trust in which we help people to help themselves and take responsibility.

4. ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

It took four million years before the world's population hit the one billion mark in the 19th century. In just a few decades, it will hit eight billion. Some of these eight billion people leave behind huge footprints, particularly those of us who live in the developed nations and regularly drive cars, fly in planes and so on. We simply can't go on like this. So the German government has drawn up its charter for the future titled "ONE WORLD – Our Responsibility". We need to create the kind of globalisation that is not only designed to benefit the markets and the economy, but that

also benefits people. We need a fundamental shift in our ways of thinking and acting on the national, European and international stages, so that we can change our behaviour as consumers and redefine our concept of prosperity.

I would like us to have a debate about how we can improve educational opportunities for all, increase productivity and give people real prospects, wherever they may live. Otherwise we will never halt the flood of refugees. Europe can do a great deal to help expand civil society and export prosperity.

5. TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

At the moment, transatlantic relations are not sailing smooth waters. We need to go beyond international organisations and strengthen the ties between democracies, from the U.S., Canada and South America to Europe, Korea and Japan and on to Australia and New Zealand. This will help us to tackle the weaknesses of the United Nations. When the power of veto constantly prevents meaningful action, we need other forms of cooperation in order to help and intervene effectively on the international stage.

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The friendship between the U.S. and Germany is one of our cornerstones. We could not have built our nation without the help of the Americans: liberation from the National Socialists, rebuilding with the aid of the Marshall Plan, help with German reunification. All this means we owe them a great debt of gratitude.

But the surveillance scandal has dealt a cruel blow to U.S.-German relations, and so far this has not been properly dealt with. We cannot allow bureaucratic reasons to be considered justification for abusing the human rights of prisoners or compromising the rule of law in court proceedings. Otherwise our Western values will fail to have any pulling power. We need new stimuli for our transatlantic relations. The free trade agreement with Canada should be ratified quickly, and the agreement with the U.S. should be accelerated. But in less concrete terms we need signs and symbols that will revive the relationship between Europe and America.

Europe also has to work on itself. Our actions are hampered by the fact that we only rarely speak with one voice. It was encouraging to see how Europe was united on the issue of Russian sanctions.

But this is not the case when it comes to China and its human rights record, or the Middle East when it comes to the question of Palestinian autonomy and UN membership. But unless we speak with one voice we will not be heard in these parts of the world and we will not be taken seriously.

I am concerned that Russia and China are testing us. When the territorial borders of sovereign states are not respected, then there has to be an outcry from the international community, because we all want to live within secure, agreed borders. Annexations for the purposes of territorial expansion fly in the face of our basic beliefs.

We must understand that growth in the world's population means that Europe will – in quantitative terms – become less important. But in qualitative terms we can become more important if we are prepared to offer our values, our innovative solutions, our reliability and our experience. We have been through the Enlightenment, citizen's revolutions, the Reformation, the separation of church and state. These experiences mean we have something to offer the world and can perhaps help others to prevent the kinds of bloody conflicts we have suffered on our continent.

6. ASIA

Asia is even more diverse than Europe and Africa. It is home to Buddhists and Muslims, Confucians and Hindus, Christians and traditional religions. Some countries are ruled by military governments, others are democracies. Some have press freedom, others have very little freedom of expression. In Mumbai in India, the most expensive private residence in the world has been built for 800 million dollars next to the biggest slum in Asia. This speaks volumes about the tensions endured by this continent. They can lead to uprisings and revolution and border conflicts are a frequent occurrence.

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As Europeans, our close ties to Asia mean we have a fundamental interest in resolving border conflicts and ensuring that historic conflicts are reconciled. What power we could be unleashed if we could achieve this!



A slum next to an airport in Mumbai: opposites are ubiquitous in Asia. | Source: liquidcrash, flickr ©©©.

Here too, I tend to look on the bright side. We have all heard about the problems in East Timor and the attacks in Aceh province. But how many of us realise that Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population, peacefully elected a new president after ten years, that there is an autonomy agreement for Aceh and that reconciliation is being achieved in East Timor? In these times, we run the risk of barely being able to handle all the bad news, meaning we have little time to take note of the positive developments in places like Tunisia in Africa and Indonesia in Asia.

7. THE ARAB WORLD

We are concerned about the religious radicalisation of people in the Middle East. We need to hold international talks with the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council about the co-existence of Shiites and Sunnis, the co-existence of the different parties and groups in this region, and we have to come together to fight the international networks of Islamist terrorism. I welcome the fact that the leaders of the major Islamic denominations have distanced themselves from terror and clearly stated that these attacks violate the basic principles of Islam. Now the world has to come together to defend itself, using military force if necessary.

If we pursue multilateralism within a globalised world, if one country no longer simply attacks another country but the conflicts play out in quite different ways, then we need a kind of global police, a global action force. We have to build up the United Nations' forces so that they can be deployed when a resolution is passed by the General Assembly, without individual vetos being in a position to block them. These parties will not be obliged to take part in the operations themselves, but they should not be allowed to prevent such operations. Genocide should not be allowed to take place without international intervention because the pace is being set by the slowest member or by particular ideologies.

I believe we should not run around the world wagging our fingers but be humble enough to admit to the trials and tribulations that we have been through with National Socialism and Communism.

German history shows that democracy, freedom and law are often the result of long-drawn-out processes. So at the end of my tour d'horizon, I believe we should not run around the world wagging our fingers but

be humble enough to admit to the trials and tribulations that we have been through with National Socialism and Communism. We were brought back to the straight and narrow with the help of the Allies and led down the path to democracy and virtue. It is only 25 years since we achieved the unity of our land under the rule of law, freedom and democracy. Let's be grateful for that and allow others to benefit from our experiences.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung on its *International Reports*. A few days ago some criticism was voiced about increased funding for the political foundations. I can only say I think it is wonderful that we are continuing to strengthen this area, promoting democracy at home and civil society and democracy around the world. The idea that Germany needs to take more responsibility for the world should not always be reduced to new weapon systems and increased military expenditure. Instead, it should be possible to increase Germany's influence in all kinds of areas: our Foreign Service, the Goethe-Institut, the political foundations' offices in other countries – all these can make a major difference. They can effectively represent German interests with wisdom and enthusiasm and play their part in preventing armed conflicts. We offer up our model, our values but we don't force them on anyone. We encourage people who otherwise would have no platform to communicate with each other and I am proud that Germany and its political foundations are taking this special path of promoting democracy around the

world, standing up for women's rights and assisting in the spread of education and democratic structures.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Böll-Stiftung, the Naumann-Stiftung, the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung – all these are working in different countries with different focuses and often under very difficult conditions. Some of their local staff have been sentenced to many years in prison simply for talking to a human rights activist or lawyer or expressing a particular opinion. I have the deepest respect for the representatives of Germany's political foundations everywhere in the world and I feel the *KAS International Reports* serve to keep me excellently informed. When I used to travel abroad in my role as President of Germany, many politicians thanked me for the huge benefits provided by the political foundations. We should be proud of this and I congratulate the Adenauer-Stiftung and its *International Reports* on the important work they are doing.