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ANDREAS NICK

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Germany's UN Policy after the Election

Given the unusual experience of extended uncertainty about the formation of a new coalition government in Germany following the federal election in Germany on 24 September 2017, international observers have raised questions and concerns on the potential impact of the next government on Germany's foreign policy and future role in International Organizations.

Whatever the outcome of the extended process of forming a stable coalition government will be, a fundamental and broad consensus on foreign policy among the democratic parties remains and will ensure continuity and reliability on Germany's international role. Even in the absence of a coalition, the recent Bundestag votes on the required prolongation of German participation in international military missions have provided comfortable multi-party majorities in each and every case.

The success of Germany over the last seven decades has been critically depending on three pillars: European integration, the transatlantic alliance and open markets worldwide. Germany has been the main beneficiary of the rules-based liberal international order as the backbone for peace and prosperity. But this rules-based international order is increasingly being challenged by both external actors and also from within. It is Germany's pre-eminent strategic interest to maintain and develop the liberal international order.

KONTAKT:

DR. STEFAN FRIEDRICH
HEAD OF THE KAS OFFICE
NEW YORK
220 E 42nd Street
Suite #3300
New York, NY 10017
USA
newyork@kas.de



Andreas Nick, Member of the German Bundestag, during his speech in the office of the KAS New York

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Strengthening legitimacy and effectiveness of UN

The United Nations Organization (UN) remains the most important forum for international cooperation. Its creation – following the failure of the League of Nations in the 1920s – is one of the greatest achievements in modern history. The UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 created a basis of common values applicable worldwide. The United Nations still represent the best chance to create a global system of collective security. But it is also true that the United Nations can only be as strong and successful as its member states will permit.

A highly globalized world without any doubt is in need of more functioning global governance. Whatever shortcomings the United Nations system may have, it is still the best option to serve as a basis for enhanced global governance. With its 193 member states and various organizations, funds and programs, the UN possesses not only unrivaled convening power, but also the fundamental ability to set international standards and norms.

Nevertheless, effectiveness and legitimacy of the United Nations system have to be strengthened for the UN to play a stronger role in world affairs.

Going forward, the UN needs to better reflect the reality of today's world whereas its current institutional setup still reflects the power structure of the year 1945. Germany has therefore taken a proactive role in calling for more legitimacy through a potential reform of the Security Council by presenting a joint reform proposal together with Brazil, India and Japan (G4)¹. Personally, I also consider a model presented by Kishore Mahbubani for reform of the Security Council an interesting basis for discussion.² Under this concept, the Security Council would comprise 7 permanent, 7 semi-permanent selected from a defined group of medium powers, and 7 non-permanent members selected from the remaining group of smaller countries.

Notwithstanding its importance and urgency, the prospects for implementation of United Nations Security Council reform remain rather modest in the foreseeable future. This inevitably may result in a shift of global debates to other formats of international cooperation (like the G20) or a lack of global governance altogether.

The challenges: an Agenda for global governance

Even in the absence of Security Council reform, there is no reason for the UN to be idle and inactive. The agenda for global governance comprises key challenges for mankind to which the UN has made and will make significant contributions:

Nuclear Non-Proliferation: The United Nations Security Council has made substantive progress in the debate on sanctions in the case of North Korea and remains the most important forum to discuss that issue. The Security Council also endorsed the JCPOA on Iran.

¹ https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/internationale-organisationen/vereintenationen/reformsr-fragen/231618#content_3

² <http://www.mahbubani.net/articles%20by%20dean/keeping-the-ship-on-course.pdf>

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The concept of the **Responsibility to Protect** (R2P) that was developed after the Rwanda Genocide from 1994 is a good example of how important norms and doctrines can be advanced under the auspices of the UN. The R2P doctrine needs to be further developed and strengthened.

One important element in this context is **international justice**, as recently exemplified by the conviction of Ratko Mladić for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

The adoption of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** comprising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. The SDGs constitute a paradigm shift as they apply to all countries and are not just directed towards the developing world. They focus on new actors in development cooperation and its financing. Increasing emphasis is put on domestic resource mobilization in developing countries and on multi-actor-partnerships with the private sector.

One key element of achievable sustainable development is **climate action**. The Paris Agreement is one of the latest UN success stories. The COP 23 conference this year took place in Bonn, co-organized with host country Fiji.

With regard to **migration**, several important institutions in the UN system do indispensable work in the field. Having learned the lesson from the underfunding of the WFP and UNHCR, which partly also led to the peak of the refugee crisis, member states should undertake sustainable financing of these institutions. In 2018, the UN will work towards a Global Compact for Migration.

Another example can be the UN work on **digitalization**, especially on internet governance. Germany has offered to host the Internet Governance Forum 2019 in Berlin. A German-Brazilian initiative also was at the center of resolutions and debates on the "right to privacy in the digital age".

Tackling these challenges will also further enhance the legitimacy of the United Nations. Strengthening internal effectiveness of the UN system is also required. The selection process of the Secretary-General has already set a positive example of creating more transparency. With the proposals by Secretary General Guterres' on internal reform, a new momentum for reforms exists to create a 21st century UN focused more on people and less on process. The focus is to advance reforms in three areas: making the UN development system "fit for purpose", restructuring the peace and security pillar and starting management reforms. Germany supports the Secretary General's efforts for a less fragmented and more effective United Nations system.

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Germany in the United Nations

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Germany is ready and willing to take more responsibility within the UN system. The Federal Republic engages in constructive dialogue, problem-solving and reforms and has declared its candidacy for non-permanent Security Council membership in 2019-2020.

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Germany has already been a successful member of the United Nations Security Council for four times, with the most recent term in 2011-2012. During that period, Germany successfully presented a wide range of initiatives in the Security Council. Two examples for German accomplishments during the last non-permanent membership were the adoption of a resolution on children in conflict (now yearly reports are being presented) and to set climate change and its security implications on the agenda.

The German candidacy for non-permanent Security Council membership in 2019-2020 is guided by the four principles "Peace, Justice, Innovation, and Partnerships". Examples for possible German initiatives could stem from the field of crisis prevention and stabilization or the responsibility to protect. Germany is committed to the further development of the concept of the R2P and its implementation under international law. Above all, the preventive pillar should be strengthened and more efforts for the stabilization of fragile states are required. Germany also supports the French proposal to refrain from a veto in the case of human rights violations. Another initiative could be to address the topic of health and security, an issue Germany already raised in its G7 and G20 presidencies.

Germany already is the fourth largest financial contributor to the regular UN budget as well as the separate budget for peacekeeping missions. It is also the second-largest contributor to UNHCR. German armed forces and police representatives take part in ten UN peacekeeping missions and make a valuable contribution. Stronger commitment in this regard going forward is being contemplated.

Germany will also seek better representation in staff and leadership positions the United Nations. UNDP-Administrator Achim Steiner is a strong example of how Germany can contribute to the United Nations system. We also want to further strengthen Bonn as a location for UN institutions. The German Federal Court of Audit is currently represented as one of three supreme audit institutions on the UN Board of Auditors, and will remain so for the next four years. Last not least, the appointment of Dr. Christoph Heusgen, the long-standing foreign policy advisor to chancellor Merkel, as new German Ambassador to the UN illustrates the pre-eminence of the UN on Germany's foreign policy agenda.

Conclusion

German foreign policy will remain committed to value-oriented realpolitik. Strong, capable international organizations and alliances will continue to be a key priority. A focus of German foreign policy will be on crisis prevention, crisis management and stabilization as well as to pursue multilateral development policy and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

A new government will not set very different and new priorities for German UN policy. Germany will remain a reliable partner and will make more efforts to take on more responsibility. We want to exercise influence in the UN that corresponds to Germany's political and economic weight. However, German foreign policy will also have to balance increased international responsibility with the required domestic political support.