

TERRORIST THREATS AND REFUGEE CRISIS: FRANCE AND GERMANY MUST WORK TOGETHER TO RISE TO THE CHALLENGE



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This contribution results from the “Think Tanks Tandem”, a series of events held in July and October 2016 bringing together the representatives of French and German think tanks to discuss the terrorist threat and the refugee crisis (July 2016) and the European Union’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (October 2016).

The terrorist attacks on Germany and France in the summer of 2016 are a tragic addition to the series of attacks carried out earlier in France, Belgium and other European countries. Similarly, the consequences of the refugee crisis can still be keenly felt more than one year on from its climax in the autumn of 2015. Now, more than ever, these two developments require our two countries to work together, to go beyond the commendable spontaneous solidarity brought about by these events.

1. Different responses in Germany and France

Society in Germany and France has been affected in different ways by these challenges. While the fight against terrorism became a primary concern in France, discussions in Germany focused more on the asylum policy and the sharing of the burden with neighbouring countries with regard to the distribution of refugees. Overall, there has been no actual common Franco-German debate on these challenges, and the two countries have reacted very differently to them due to their competing priorities.

Since the terror attacks on the country, France has found itself on the front line in the fight against Islamist terrorism. In terms of domestic policy, Paris declared a state of emergency, which stands to this day, while France’s foreign policy has rolled out all its diplomatic and military resources to combat terrorism in the Middle East and in Africa. Germany, by comparison, is also investing in the fight against terrorism in these two regions, both through diplomacy and military action. This military engagement is all too often underestimated. In accordance with the ceiling set by the respective parliamentary mandates, more than 2000 German soldiers can take part in operations in Syria and Iraq and in the Sahel region. It is true, however, that on the whole, Berlin’s anti-terror policy is primarily focused on prevention and the work of the secret services.

Looking at their refugee policies, Germany and France did not set out with the same approach. Germany favoured a rather humanitarian stance, believing that the refugees arriving from the Middle East and other regions of the world were to be considered as victims and not threats, thereby giving them the right to apply for asylum in Germany. France, however, has proved

to be less open due to its economic, social and political situation. The French authorities even implied that it would be imprudent to welcome the flows of refugees “with open arms”, believing that part of this influx would include many economic migrants and a few potential terrorists.

Since the extension of the refugee settlement plan in France and the terrorist attacks in Germany, public debate has ultimately converged. Conditions are now in place for heightened cooperation between the two governments on these issues. We wish to provide a contribution through the following proposals drafted in tandem.

2. Proposals for a common Franco-German policy

In order to combat terrorism, we suggest that Germany and France should draw up a common initiative based on closer cooperation in terms of both domestic and foreign policy. As regards domestic policy, the only way to stop terrorists in France and Germany is, first of all, to strengthen cooperation between police and security units, the secret services and judicial authorities in both countries. Secondly, such an initiative must consider the borders of the Schengen Area, for which, acting on a proposal put forward at the end of 2015 by the European Commission, a European Border and Coast Guard was created in October 2016, thanks to key Franco-German support. Thirdly, Germany and France must further their joint discussions in order to find social and political responses to Islamist radicalisation within our societies. Faced with the same challenges but acting within considerably different political and administrative frameworks, our two countries have much to learn from one another in the fields of prevention, deradicalisation and integration, and also with regard to the profiles and courses taken by the perpetrators of the recent terror attacks.

As regards foreign policy, a Franco-German initiative must focus on Syria, Iraq, Libya and the Sahel region in order to combat ISIS and its metastases. Such an initiative can only be successful via operations in these countries. To achieve this, Germany would have to step up its military involvement in the future for our two countries to be able to take action more effectively in our immediate neighbourhood. It goes without saying that such involvement requires an international mandate and is placed under parliamentary supervision in order to ensure the legitimacy of all interventions.

In terms of the refugee crisis, the way the situation has developed since the autumn of 2015 has created the conditions for increased convergence between our two countries. The flow of refugees from the Middle East through Turkey and Greece has been considerably slowed in comparison to 2015 by means of a series of preventive measures (stricter checks at the EU’s external borders, hotspots in Greece and in Italy, the creation of the European Border and Coast Guard, the EU-Turkey agreement). Similarly, the integration of the refugees who arrived in Germany and France is showing encouraging results, despite concerns raised by a portion of public opinion. It is now up to France in particular to express more solidarity with Germany, and with other more open countries, by welcoming several tens of thousands of refugees, which poses no threat to the economy, security or identity of such a large country.

3. A coordinated European approach

In addition to a heightened coordination of bilateral cooperation, we are calling on France and Germany to work together to improve the European instruments designed to combat terrorism and to meet the refugee challenge. Given the complex nature of these issues, only a coordinated European approach can guarantee the long-term success of these efforts.

An improvement of the European Union’s ability to take action under a security and defence policy is fundamental. On the basis of the Franco-German initiative to step up the CSDP¹ launched in September 2016, Berlin and Paris must undertake efforts to ensure that the EU adopts measures that will bring about discernible progress in this area. More generally, Germany and France must work to strengthen the CSDP further, in particular against the backdrop of Brexit and the unpredictability of the new Trump administration’s foreign policy. In the medium term, discussions could focus on improving the efficiency of the permanent structured cooperation (PSC), but also on a common defence budget. There is also scope to improve further the cooperation between the military and civilian elements of European crisis management, as the current complex crises can only be resolved through an interaction between all available instruments.

Given that the terrorism issue and the refugee challenge both stem from Europe’s immediate neighbourhood, Germany and France must work to ensure that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which

was reformed in November 2015, is successfully implemented and subject to continuous improvement. In particular, the ENP, which was originally designed by the Commission, must be made more “political”. Berlin and Paris can take a leading role in this respect. Furthermore, it could be beneficial to reconsider and update the ENP. The former geographical distribution which created a policy for the Eastern Neighbours and another for Southern Neighbours is now broadly obsolete. A redistribution of ENP partner countries could imply the creation of smaller regional groups and could be carried out in line with the current political situation, in order to counteract the conventional “single principle” approach. Moreover, France and Germany could agree on a position to be adopted in response to authoritarian regimes in some of Europe’s neighbouring countries. In practical terms, the ENP reform of 2015 has resulted in a paradigm shift from a policy based on democratic transition to

a policy favouring stability, which has considerably bolstered the position of some regimes which are resisting change.

The challenges of terrorism and the refugee crisis are so important that they could be a pressure test for Franco-German relations, on both government and citizen levels, particularly if populist and anti-European players in both countries succeed in arousing the instinct to become more inward-looking, by exploiting these issues for domestic policy. The need to work closely is therefore clear, now more than ever. If our two countries take a step towards each other, the cooperation to meet these challenges could not only consolidate Franco-German relations, but could also foster cohesion in the European Union as a whole.

1. Some of our proposals on the Common Security and Defence Policy were discussed during the European Council of December 2016.



Think Tanks Tandem

French and German Think Tanks' joint mobilisation for the EU

Spring 2016 - Spring 2017

The European Union is experiencing an existential crisis that demands stronger mobilisation on the part of the players involved in the public debate in Germany and in France in view of the key role that these two countries play. In connection with such crucial issues as the refugee crisis, external military engagement, the management of the EMU or the energy-climate strategy, our two countries must work tirelessly on convergences that will only be lasting and sustainable if they have the backing of their respective grass-roots opinions.

In this light, a schedule of working meetings bringing together the most important German and French think tanks working in the field of European issues has been launched on the initiative of Harlem Désir, the French Secretary of state for European affairs and Secretary of state for Franco-German cooperation, in an effort to use their potential expertise and freedom of analysis and approach to clarify and dispel the tensions that could cause the «Franco-German» twin engine to seize up and to help impart a fresh boost to the construction of Europe ahead of 2017.

The project's goal is to **bring together around 20 German and French think tanks on a regular basis over several quarters** so that they can engage in the kind of in-depth dialogue allowing them:

- to hold a direct and informal debate on the EU's policies and future;
- to adopt common positions subsequently illustrated in several publications;
- and to impart a fresh boost to the public debate on the EU in Germany and France and in Europe as a whole.

The **think tanks mobilised form a tight group** meeting regularly amongst themselves, albeit while inviting external players relevant to the individual topics being addressed:

- the think tanks involved on the French side are Ifri (Cerfa), Confrontations Europe, the ECFR, EuropaNova, the French Institute

for International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS), the Jacques Delors Institute, the Jean Jaurès Foundation, the Montaigne Institute, the Robert Schuman Foundation and Terra Nova;

- the think tanks mobilised on the German side are the DFI in Ludwigsburg, the DGAP, the ECFR, the Bertelsmann Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Genshagen Foundation, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Jacques Delors Institut-Berlin, Polis 180, the Progressive Zentrum and the SWP.

These think tanks mobilise their expertise and their networks, receiving political, material and financial support from the German and French authorities, who help organise and who also attend the meetings.

The schedule of meetings **kicked off in 2016** and is due to continue **until the spring of 2017**, at which date the current French and German authorities will be returning their mandate to the political arena – a deadline ahead of which the conditions for imparting a fresh boost to the construction of Europe must be in place.

The project's continuation or otherwise will be deliberated on the basis of a progress report due to be drafted in the summer of 2017.

The **first session** of the Think Tanks Tandem was organised by the Jacques Delors Institute and Terra Nova at the Abbey of the Vaux-de-Cernay, near Paris, on 8–9 July 2016.

The two round tables addressed the following topics:

1. The refugee crisis and beyond: what European strategy in the field of migration and asylum (Synthesis)
2. The struggle against Islamist terrorism: diplomatic, social and political responses (Synthesis).

Joschka Fischer, a former German Foreign minister and former German Vice-chancellor, was the guest of honour at a dinner on the topic: "Europe after the British vote".

The **second session** was organised by the Genshagen Foundation in its offices near Berlin on 21–22 October 2016.

The two round tables addressed the following topics:

1. The future of the Common Security and Defence Policy after Brexit (Synthesis in French or German).
2. Stability and security in the EU's neighbourhood (Synthesis in French or German).

Ambassador Pierre Vimont, a former Secretary general of the European external action service and a research fellow with Carnegie Europe in Brussels, was the guest of honour at the dinner for a keynote speech on EU-USA relations.

The **third session** will be organised by the Jean Jaurès Foundation in **Spring 2017**, at the Abbey of the Vaux-de-Cernay, near Paris.

