

d·i·e

Deutsches Institut für
Entwicklungspolitik



Years | 1964–2014

German Development
Institute

We Are in There Together with Germany: Observations by a Canadian

By Noemi Gal-Or,
*Senior Fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg /
Centre for Global Cooperation*

The Current Column

of 21 February 2014

We Are in There Together with Germany: Observations by a Canadian

Duisburg, 21 February 2014. To a Canadian, a bold speech such as the one recently delivered by the German President Joachim Gauck would not be expected from Canada's Governor General although he constitutionally represents the Canadian monarch, the Queen's, and carries the duty of Commander-in-Chief of Canada. Conversely, as expected from the Canadian Governor-General's speeches, Mr. Gauck's speech as well took a nationally oriented, decidedly German, prism to postulate a Western worldview on world security. This, of course, is appropriate, even required of a President's speech. In the January Munich Security Conference, his outlook was spanning a historical perspective – from Germany's past, through the present, and looking forward to a future largely unknown to Germany – that of a special form of responsibility. The remainder of the President's speech elaborates on this responsibility, and it is this that this note will address.

Responsibility is the latest buzz in the inter-national as well as trans-national world. Responsibility among states is being codified as we speak, mediated by the Articles of State responsibility adopted by the UN General Assembly. The same institution also endorsed the Articles of Responsibility of International Organisations, which by comparison, require significantly more elucidation. Germany's responsibility is conditioned by the current world order (*Weltordnung*) says the President, although without elaborating on the form or nature of this order. Thus the first observation in this note is triggered: In bearing its triple-fold responsibility - to the world, to Europe and the NATO member states, and to itself - Germany faces the task of delineating the parameters of its responsibility in more concrete terms. According to the President, Germany's responsibility to itself requires careful deliberation if it is to risking, and rather save, what is essential to Germans today. This sounds as a call for a nation-wide conversation, even debate, about its most treasured values. The President fired the first shot so-to-speak.

The second observation concerns Germany's responsibility for the security of Europe and its NATO allies. The cornerstone of the attendant duties are human rights. Freedom is a pillar of human rights, and in the President's words, free trade which is the pre-requisite for economic welfare, is a correlate of peace and stability. And while sustainable economic development is briefly being addressed, the nexus between economy and security deserves closer attention. In this context, it would be interesting to contemplate a reassessment of old mantras: Must free trade and the ensuing welfare and environmental benefits be postulated on a pre-

sumption of economic growth? Or, wouldn't it be a brave challenge for Germans – cooperatively with its developed EU and NATO friends – to contemplate a post-growth global free trade marketplace?

A certain undercurrent of fear runs throughout the President's message. It may be explained by the want of (State) control associated with the rising impact exerted by the non-State actor – terrorists, cybercriminals, etc. (and one should add, State officials and non-State actors rampant corruption) - both globally and locally; and the big unknown linked to the shifting power relations within the community of states. As mentioned above, responsibility rules are available to regulate the latter, and much less so to control the former, which is a worry indeed. The third observation is therefore that also in this regard, Germany and its allies should feel prompted to think out of the box.

Germany's security is intricately linked to occurrences close to its borders (e.g. the Ukraine), and from afar (e.g. Afghanistan, Africa); indeed a trait shared by all states on a global scale. The threats have been cascading at an unprecedented velocity, demanding swifter strategic planning. But isn't this an oxymoron? Doesn't strategizing require carefully measured contemplation and deliberation? The lessons from Libya and Syria tell us that in the more active role that the President urges Germany to take, along with its EU sisters, in promoting and developing the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the country should eschew hastiness. Western ideas handy in non-Western societies' national self-determination struggles cost these societies the formal acquiescence to global governance institutions, also of Western mentality. The balance sheet is mixed. Often, neither state-building nor nation-building matches the underlying model. The ensuing insecurity within these societies is now "back-firing", externalised on a global scale. Perhaps, and this is a forth observation, introducing a measure of multicultural consideration into the R2P collaborative endeavour, which admittedly might slow down the process, achieving security and stability will eventually stand a better chance of success.

The speech on Germany's Role in the World lays out an honourable grand plan. The time for Germany and its European and North Atlantic friends, including Canada, to cooperate in securing security could not come sooner.

Prof. Noemi Gal-Or, Senior Fellow at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Center for Global Cooperation Research in Duisburg