

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.” – John Muir

Assessment of Possible Reactions in German-Speaking and East Central Europe and the European Union (GS-ECE/EU) to Possible Strategic Outcomes in U.S.-DPRK Relations

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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) does not currently constitute a strategic threat *via* inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) to German-Speaking and East Central Europe (GS-ECE), to the States of the European Union (EU), or to non-EU European States. Proven and potential cyber threats do exist, however, as does the proven threat of traditional espionage.

Certain States of GS-ECE/EU have direct security concerns regarding how U.S.-DPRK relations might develop. These concerns arise in the context of three international frameworks:

- 1) These States' membership in NATO and their resultant commitments to the United States and Canada under a possible invocation of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty in the event of war between the U.S. and the DPRK.
- 2) These States' concurrent (though separate) strategic and security concerns in the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the CFSP's subsidiary Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). The Republic of Korea (ROK) is a party to elements of both the CFSP and the CSDP.
- 3) These States' current (as of 31 August 2018) negotiations with Japan for a Strategic Partnership Agreement to address, *inter alia*, matters of common security interests.

The States of GS-ECE and, by extension, the EU (whether members of NATO or not) have immediate and very substantial economic interests in all possible outcomes of currently developing (as of 31 August 2018) U.S.-DPRK relations. These interests arise primarily *via*:

- 1) The People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC is the EU's second biggest trading partner after the United States (as of 31 August 2018). The EU is the PRC's largest trading partner (ditto).
- 2) Bi-lateral trade between Beijing and Berlin. In Europe, Germany is the PRC's principal bi-lateral trading partner in both imports and exports. As of May 2018, Chancellor Angela Merkel has visited Beijing 11 times during her tenure in office which began in 2005.
- 3) The EU-ROK Free Trade Agreement (EU-ROK FTA). The EU-ROK FTA was provisionally applied as of 2011 and was formally ratified in 2015.
- 4) The EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EU-Japan EPA). The EU-Japan EPA was finalized in December 2017 and ratified on 17 July 2018.

Reactions in GS-ECE/EU to possible deterioration in U.S.-DPRK relations must be viewed first and foremost through the lens of the withdrawal by the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran. The U.S.' withdrawal has proved deeply unpopular in GS-ECE/EU, as well as for non-EU European States. Washington's action affects vital European security and economic interests in the Middle East, the Balkan Peninsula, and the Mediterranean Basin. Washington's action also places GS-ECE/EU on the same side of a critical strategic issue as the U.S.'s avowed or potential adversaries, namely Russia and China. It remains to be seen whether GS-ECE/EU commonality of interest with Russia and China in opposition to the United States on the JCPOA will sustain itself over time in the face of threatened U.S. secondary sanctions and separate U.S.-EU arguments over tariffs on steel and aluminum which were imposed by the U.S. government on 31 May 2018. So long as this commonality of

interest persists, however, it could adversely affect GS-ECE/EU attitudes and governmental policies towards U.S. decision-making regarding the DPRK, particularly if U.S.-DPRK relations deteriorate as a result of lack of progress toward Final, Fully Verified Denuclearization (FFVD).

Given serious, existing strains in transatlantic relations dating to 2016, any deterioration in U.S.-DPRK relations would likely generate significantly increased doubts in GS-ECE/EU and elsewhere in Europe about both the quality and the continued value of the United States' international leadership. This consideration would apply most particularly in the event of armed conflict on the Korean Peninsula. Already-extant animosity towards the United States among European populist parties (of both the Left and the Right) and/or in certain European governments, as well as concomitant sympathy for Russia, would thereby equally likely grow. To the same degree, any such developments would work to the near-term geo-strategic and economic advantage of Russia in Europe and possibly the long-term advantage of China. Exceptions to such a prognosis might be found in Poland and the Baltic States, however, where historically-conditioned suspicions of Moscow's geo-strategic intentions remains pronounced.

SECTION 2: METHOD, SOURCES, RATIONALE

Method:

Examination of open-source materials to determine likely reactions in German-speaking Europe (the Federal Republic of Germany [FRG], Austria, Switzerland, Luxemburg, and Liechtenstein), as well as Poland and Hungary of the Visegrád Group of States, and the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) to certain possible outcomes in the development of U.S.-DPRK relations.¹ For convenience these ten States are referred to hereafter as GS-ECE. Their reactions form an integral part of possible larger European responses within the European Union (EU) and, possibly, among non-EU and/or non-NATO States.

Three possible outcomes in U.S.-DPRK relations were considered in this assessment: 1) mutually favorable evolution in U.S.-DPRK relations relative to the overriding issue of the DPRK's denuclearization; 2) a continuation of the *status quo* in relations between the U.S. and the DPRK; and 3) a deterioration in relations – including the possibility of military action – between the U.S. and the DPRK.

Source-selection does not assert a uniform predictive authority throughout the range of possible reactions in the listed States.² That is, it does not support a statistically determined, or determinative, reliability. Instead, sources are intended to support reasonable, informed supposition regarding political and popular reactions in the listed States based upon current party-political and popular trends.

Sources:

For all listed States, German- and English-language sources included on-line governmental (ministerial level) websites to assess official positions; major political parties (to gauge possible parliamentary reactions in coalition governments); newspapers across the political spectrum; NGOs; and commercial and public radio and television. Individual sources may be cited herein for specific, illustrative purposes. In other cases, only summative observations are provided.

¹ Minority German-speaking regions of eastern Belgium and northern Italy are not considered here. The Visegrád Group consists of a working group within the European Union of the governments of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic/Czechia, and Slovakia. See <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/about>

² Cf. Michael Quinlan, *Thinking About Nuclear Weapons: Principles, Problems, Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 63.

Rationale:

- 1) Germany remains *the most important non-nuclear State in Europe*. Along with South Korea and Japan, it constitutes *one of the three leading non-nuclear States in the world*.
- 2) The States of German-speaking Europe comprise an aggregate GDP of approximately \$4,812,092,000,000; an aggregate population of 98,217,107; and an aggregate land-area of 484,916 sq km. Of the Visegrád Group of States, Poland and Hungary possess an aggregate GDP of \$642,000,000,000; an aggregate population of 48,327,114; and an aggregate land-area of 405,713 sq km.³ These States' geographic extent, as well as their economic and political weight make them significant actors. They should be considered by the United States in *economic and diplomatic* affairs.
- 3) Of the GS-ECE States, both Germany and Poland are critically important to the current efforts to bolster NATO's presence and capabilities on the alliance's eastern flank within the context of the European Deterrence Initiative.⁴ Therefore, Germany and Poland – but also the remaining GS-ECE States – are also significant military actors that should be considered by the United States in *deterrence and geo-strategic* matters.⁵
- 4) The GS-ECE States, minus Switzerland and Liechtenstein, have formal economic and strategic/security ties with South Korea. These ties include the *EU-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement (EU-ROK FTA)* and certain provisions of the EU's *Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)*, as well as the latter's *Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP)*.
- 5) In assessing governmental and public reactions in the GS-ECE States, a reliance solely on English-language reportage based in the United States often *misses important nuances* inherent in official German-language governmental and party-political statements, in German-language media, and in the positions taken by German-language NGOs. This consideration applies not only to German-language reportage on the German-speaking States themselves but also on Poland, Hungary, and the Baltic States.

³ *CIA Factbook*. All figures for 2017.

⁴ Cf. *EUROPEAN DETERRENCE INITIATIVE*, Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2019/fy2019_EDI_JBook.pdf Access-date 18 May 2018.

⁵ “Despite the challenges facing its military, Germany still provides more troops to NATO operations than any other country except the United States. And, as German defense officials regularly remind their American counterparts, defense spending has increased by about 14 percent since 2014.” See Matthew Karnitschnig, “Europe’s ultimate Trump strategy: Appeasement,” *POLITICO Europe Edition*, 14 May 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/europes-ultimate-donald-trump-strategy-appeasement-nato-germany-angela-merkel/> Access-date 18 May 2018. Though Germany has not yet met the agreed-upon NATO target of 2% of GDP to be spent on defense, Poland has. See “Military spending by NATO members,” *The Economist*, 16 February 2017, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/02/16/military-spending-by-nato-members> Access-date 18 May 2018. See also “Benefits of Poland’s NATO Membership,” Ministry of National Defence Republic of Poland, <http://en-m.mon.gov.pl/poland-in-nato/nato-summits-in-poland/benefits-of-polands-nato-membership-x2016-01-21/> Access-date 18 May 2018.

SECTION 3: INTRODUCTION

In the view of this assessment, all possible reactions in GS-ECE to the three possible outcomes in U.S.-DPRK relations must be viewed from the starting-point of the withdrawal by the United States on 8 May 2018 from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) entered into by the U.S. with Iran and the other members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany (P5 +1) in 2015. This assessment argues neither for the technical merits nor against the technical demerits of the JCPOA. It does, however, note that as of this writing, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, and France are collectively aligned with Russia and China, *i.e.* with avowed or potential adversaries of the United States, in opposing the unilateral action by the U.S. This opposition is very widely, and more or less uniformly, shared throughout GS-ECE and the European Union (EU).

German, British, French, and other European opposition to the U.S.'s withdrawal may gradually (and presumably unwillingly) lessen in the face of possible secondary sanctions either currently threatened or eventually imposed by the U.S. on European firms now doing business with Iran under the terms of sanctions relief as provided in 2015 by the JCPOA. Furthermore, U.S. tariffs on European steel and aluminum may be reduced or cancelled if Europe, particularly Germany, eventually supports Washington's position regarding Iran. Nevertheless, as of this writing, the three governments in Berlin, London, and Paris stand essentially united in their public rejection of the decision taken by the U.S. Government in the matter of the JCPOA.

As stated, this opposition is very widely shared across Europe, regardless of individual States' and/or their governments' party-political composition. In light of the demonstratively stated hopes of the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, and France that the JCPOA can be maintained despite U.S. withdrawal, and in light of similar public positions taken in Moscow and Beijing, European disavowal of the American position would appear further to strengthen the international profile of Russia and the Russian president, as well as China and the Chinese president, at the direct expense of the United States. *As a consequence, GS-ECE, the United Kingdom, and France all find themselves in varying degrees on the same side in this dispute against the U.S. as the two principal adversaries of the United States in the world.* Furthermore, and to the extent that Russia's importance to the GS-ECE States increases as a result of this dispute, such an increase will likely affect party-political responses in GS-ECE since there are numerous political parties and individual political actors in these States who are possessed of a markedly favorable view of both Russia generally and Vladimir Putin specifically. This is particularly the case in Germany (at least for certain political parties and their leaders though not the government itself), as well as in Austria and Hungary.⁶

In all of this, Germany plays a crucial role. The Federal Republic is at once a P5+1 signatory to the JCPOA of 2015; a leading member of the European Union; a vitally important member of NATO; and by far the most important State among those in GS-ECE. Chancellor Angela Merkel has repeatedly demonstrated a clear-eyed willingness to work with the Kremlin when necessary without, however, weakening to date on matters such as post-2014 sanctions against Russia. Similarly, and though Germany stands potentially to benefit significantly from the trans-Eurasian trade infrastructure being established in China's "New Silk Road"/One Belt – One Road initiative (over and above the Berlin's already-enormous bi-lateral trade with the PRC), Merkel appears to view Beijing quite skeptically due not least to predatory Chinese trade practices *vis-à-vis* German and European companies.

⁶ One should note that any increase in Russia's centrality in this transatlantic dispute will almost certainly exacerbate the already acute unease in the Baltic States and Ukraine over Moscow's behavior since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2014 and Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea.

It remains to be seen whether and, if so, to what extent this commonality of position regarding U.S. actions among GS-ECE, the rest of Europe, Russia, and China will change. For the moment, a commonality of view exists. From this starting-point, one may not unreasonably extrapolate reactions in GS-ECE to the three possible outcomes in U.S.-DPRK relations mentioned above.

SECTION 4: GS-ECE/EU ECONOMIC INTERESTS WITH JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA AND CHINA WILL SHAPE GS-ECE REACTIONS TO EVOLVING U.S.-DPRK RELATIONS

Economic ties with Japan, South Korea, and China will shape, and be shaped by, GS-ECE/EU States' reactions to evolving U.S.-DPRK relations. These economic ties are briefly addressed *seriatim*:

- **Japan:** Japan is NATO's longest-standing partner-State outside of Europe and coöperates increasingly closely with NATO in areas of common concern, including maritime security, cyber defense, and nuclear non-proliferation.⁷ Such ties run parallel to more prosaic, but nonetheless enormous – and enormously important – economic relations with Europe. Those relations between GS-ECE/EU and Japan are now dominated by the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EU-Japan EPA) that was signed in Tokyo on 17 July 2018.⁸ The parties to the EPA represent approximately one third of the world's GDP. They publicly stress their commitment to the continuation of a rules-based, open, and mutually beneficial global trading order in goods and services. In entering into the EPA, the States of GS-ECE/EU, as well as Japan, recognize that this agreement, if completely fulfilled, will have created the world's largest free-trade area by the end of 2019. By that date, 99% of all tariffs between the signatories are scheduled to have been eliminated.⁹ Any deterioration in relations between the U.S. and the DPRK that might follow unexpected events (such the cancellation on 24 August 2018 of U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's scheduled trip to North Korea, much less any open resumption of DPRK missile testing or nuclear fuel processing) would automatically cast a pall over the EU-Japan EPA's prospects. Of course, armed conflict between the U.S. and the DPRK would almost certainly, and very severely, disrupt if not actually completely break the ties created by the EPA, at least for the length of time that any hostilities might last. By stark contrast, any significant improvement in U.S.-DPRK relations stemming from progress towards FFVD would naturally tend to maintain not only the political good will between the signatories as already generated by the EPA but also its very considerable and mutual economic benefits.
- **South Korea:** GS-ECE/EU relations with the Republic of Korea (ROK) are dominated by commercial considerations. These are regulated by the EU-South Korea (*sic*) Free Trade Agreement (EU-ROK FTA), though there also exists a not insignificant strategic connection. For example, on the economic side, South Korea is the EU's ninth largest export destination for goods, whereas the EU is South Korea's third largest export market.¹⁰ Thus GS-ECE/EU is immediately affected, not least because the most important categories of products from the EU are machinery and appliances,

⁷ "Allies agree Japan's Mission to NATO," NATO, 24 May 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_154886.htm Access-date 25 May 2018.

⁸ "EU and Japan sign Economic Partnership Agreement" <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1891> See also the Fact Sheets and other related data at <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/eu-japan-economic-partnership-agreement/> Access-date 25 August 2018.

⁹ "EU und Japan besiegeln Freihandelsabkommen," *Deutsche Welle*, <https://www.dw.com/de/eu-und-japan-besiegeln-freihandelsabkommen/a-44705076> Access-date 25 August 2018.

¹⁰ See data available here: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/south-korea/> Access-date 27 August 2018.

transport equipment, and chemical products.¹¹ These types of exports play directly to the Federal Republic of Germany's strong suit: Berlin's export-trade is traditionally very substantial in these categories. In the wake of the U.S.' withdrawal from the JCPOA, however, such commercial considerations must now take account of possible economic repercussions on GS-ECE/EU companies dealing both in Iran and in South Korea (as well as in Japan) unless those companies are exempted from threatened U.S. secondary sanctions and from possible punitive U.S. sanctions announced earlier against European exporters of steel and aluminum, this being a separate but related matter. At least as of this writing, GS-ECE/EU States appear determined to protect their commercial interests in Iran and, implicitly, elsewhere even as Russian and Chinese companies appear to be positioning themselves to profit from increased prices for oil (Russia) and from increased oil imports from Iran (China). *Once again, there appears to be a potentially substantial commonality of interest between GS-ECE/EU, non-EU Europe, Russia, and China.* If, as observers have noted, U.S.-DPRK relations is "the land of lousy options"¹² for the United States, the potential commonality of interests noted here bids fair to complicate U.S. decision-making even further. Also, the same sorts of possible developments could well arise for GS-ECE/EU trade with the Republic of Korea as noted above with Japan and for the same reasons. Added uncertainty is created, however, by the utter devastation that presumably would result in the ROK were armed conflict, even non-nuclear conflict, to erupt between the U.S. and the DPRK. Such devastation would almost certainly cause a severe, costly, and possibly complete break in economic relations between GS-ECE/EU and the ROK for the duration of hostilities and, presumably, during whatever period of reconstruction that would be required in the ROK thereafter.

- **China:** GS-ECE/EU relations with the PRC are rather straightforward, at least from the point of view of which State in GS-ECE/EU currently benefits the most from economic ties with Beijing. That State is the Federal Republic of Germany. The FRG is China's largest bi-lateral European trading partner. Combined exports and imports between the two in 2017 amounted to more than €186.8 billion (approximately \$215 billion).¹³ Chancellor Angela Merkel has made 11 visits to China since assuming office in 2005 and serves unofficially as Europe's chief interlocutor with Chinese President (and now president for life) Xi Jinping. At the same time, Germany remains a major target of Chinese investment under the rubrics of initiatives such as the "New Silk Road"/One Belt – One Road project or "Made in China 2025." These initiatives include not only planned, vast infrastructural improvements (more than \$50 billion to date by one recent estimate) to facilitate direct trans-Eurasian commerce from ports on the North Sea, for example from Hamburg, to China but also attempted direct investment in robotics, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, energy technologies, *etc.*¹⁴ It is true that serious disagreements between Berlin and Beijing remain over predatory Chinese trade

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Victor Cha and Katrin Fraser Katz, "The Right Way to Coerce North Korea," *Foreign Affairs*, 97 (May/June 2018) 3: 100.

¹³ "China remains Germany's biggest trading partner in 2017," Reuters, 21 February 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-economy-trade/china-remains-germanys-biggest-trading-partner-in-2017-idUSKCN1G5213> Access-date 28 August 2018. See also "Foreign Trade Ranking of Germany's Trading Partners in Foreign Trade 2017," https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/NationalEconomyEnvironment/ForeignTrade/Tables/OrderRankGermanyTradingPartners.pdf?_blob=publicationFile Access-date 28 August 2018. Of all trading partners for the EU taken as a whole, China was the largest supplier for EU imports of goods, and the second largest recipient for EU exports of goods in 2017. See "China-EU - International Trade in Goods Statistics," *eurostat*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/China-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics Access-date 28 August 2018.

¹⁴Cf. Adam Segal, "When China Rules the Web," *Foreign Affairs* 97 (September/October 2018) 5: 10 – 18. Figure of \$50 billion at 17.

practices and theft of intellectual property, but the two countries have attempted to remedy these disagreements at the commercial level.¹⁵ Major strains nevertheless persist as a result of Beijing's increasing consolidation of apparently more effective cyber-hacking and related industrial espionage within the People's Liberation Army's intelligence services.¹⁶ Both States nonetheless continue, reasonably enough, to insist that economic relations between the FRG and PRC are vitally important to both parties.¹⁷ Thus, as in the cases of both Japan and South Korea, so also in the case of ties with the PRC, any deterioration in U.S.-DPRK relations (with the resultant instability in NE Asia), and particularly any return their status before the questionably successful summit in Singapore, would necessarily adversely affect the economic interests of both GS-ECE/EU and China. Of course, armed conflict on the Korean Peninsula would be potentially disastrous for those interests.

SECTION 5: CONTINUING DISRUPTION AND RESULTING UNCERTAINTY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE WILL FURTHER AFFECT GS-ECE/EU REACTIONS TO ANY CHANGES IN U.S.-DPRK RELATIONS

Informed observers generally agree that ties between the United States and Washington's European allies are more fraught than at any time since the founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 and the earliest beginnings of Western Europe's economic and political consolidation in the 1950s. While subsequent upheavals over both Vietnam in the 1960s; NATO's deployment of IRBMs in the form of Pershing II in the late 1970s and early 1980s; and Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 caused massive popular protests, the governments of the United States and the European allies remained essentially committed to one another. It may be said that even France's withdrawal from NATO's integrated command in 1966 did not fundamentally alter that country's alignment with the western alliance and the U.S., notwithstanding Paris' public posturing at the time.

Now, however, in evidently serious fashion – and arguably for the first time in the assessment's view – several critically important European States in GS-ECE and elsewhere in the European Union now question the fundamental reliability and value, if not quite yet the physical necessity, of the political and military leadership of the United States. For example, in a recent speech in Sofia, Bulgaria the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, very publicly criticized Washington's decision to scrap the JCPOA and that decision's potential strategic and economic effects. "If," said Tusk, "one looks at President Trump's most recent decisions, then one could think that with friends like this, who needs enemies?"¹⁸ Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, leader of the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), expressly shared this sentiment on the same occasion though not in the same words.¹⁹ Kurz' comments were noteworthy not least because his government currently (and until December 2018) heads the EU's office that oversees the day-to-day policy direction for the entirety of the EU. At the same time, Tusk also said that Europe must necessarily prepare to think about scenarios in which "we [Europeans] have to negotiate for ourselves"²⁰ without necessarily engaging the U.S. He added very sharply and with

¹⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Cf. Nicolas Martin, "Europa braucht eine Antwort auf die Seidenstraße," Deutsche Welle, 23 August 2018, <https://www.dw.com/de/europa-braucht-eine-antwort-auf-die-seidenstra%C3%9Fe/a-45180456> Access-date 23 August 2018.

¹⁸ "EU-Ratschef Tusk kritisiert Trump scharf" ORF.AT <http://orf.at/#/stories/2438812/> Access-date 16 May 2018.

"The European Council brings together EU leaders to set the EU's political agenda. It represents the highest level of political cooperation between EU countries." See https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-council_en Access-date 30 August 2018.

¹⁹ "EU-Ratschef Tusk kritisiert Trump scharf" ORF.AT <http://orf.at/#/stories/2438812/> Access-date 16 May 2018.

²⁰ Ibid.

an apparent tone of grim recognition: “[President Trump] has robbed us of all our illusions.”²¹ French President Emmanuel Macron has gone further still. In Sofia he said: “If we [Europeans] accept that other major powers, even if they are our allies, decide for us, then we are no longer sovereign.”²² Macron’s position cannot simply be dismissed as traditional Gaullist pique, tempting though such a dismissal might be to the historically literate. More recently, Macron again reiterated his position in a major address to French diplomats. In that address, he bluntly stated that “Europe can no longer rely on the United States for its security. It is up to us to guarantee European security.”²³

Equally seriously – perhaps more so given the Federal Republic of Germany’s geo-strategic place in Europe and, indeed, the world as noted above – Macron’s, Tusk’s, and Kurz’ views have also been repeatedly and publicly shared by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Since 2005 she has led the most important non-nuclear State in Europe and one of the most important non-nuclear States in the world (alongside Australia, Japan, and South Korea). The fact of her not having precisely the best personal rapport with the Oval Office is far too well known to require elaboration here. Nor should the historical fact be dismissed that Germany and Austria have a natural (*i.e.* socio-cultural-linguistic) link when addressing EU concerns regarding international affairs despite whatever quotidian policy differences exist between Berlin and Vienna and despite the fact that Austria remains pledged to a treaty-based military neutrality.

As on several other occasions before and since, Merkel made her views clear during her speech in May in the annual formal debate on the federal budget in the German Bundestag,²⁴ even if the reflexive German position continues for now to be one of a certain type of historically-conditioned deference to the United States in major disputes. Furthermore, the setting was noteworthy in that the annual budget debate represents any German Chancellor’s most widely received opportunity to make programmatic statements of policy which, even they if they are not necessarily binding at that moment, nevertheless constitute a most serious presentation of the German government’s views. While the address may in some respects resemble an American president’s State of the Union message, the Chancellor’s budget-debate speech should be regarded as rather more serious precisely because the office of Federal Chancellor does not have an American president’s representative function as Head of State or, to put it more prosaically, national “cheerleader in chief.” Thus, Chancellor Merkel’s position in the speech, when viewed in the context of her other, repeated comments reported widely in both German and non-German open-source media should be accorded the weight that this assessment suggests. In various fora and at various times, Merkel has said repeatedly that President Trump’s policies can no longer be relied upon,²⁵ a view which

²¹ Bernd Riegert, “EU will den Iran-Deal retten und Balkan eine Perspektive bieten,” *Deutsche Welle*, 17 May 2018, <http://www.dw.com/de/eu-will-den-iran-deal-retten-und-balkan-eine-perspektive-bieten/a-43816904> Access-date 17 May 2018.

²² “Trump Drives Wedge Between Germany and France,” *Spiegel Online*, 18 May 2018, http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/iran-crisis-trump-drives-wedge-between-germany-and-france-a-1208528.html?utm_source=RC+World+Europe+Memo&utm_campaign=2401e72a89-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9960d29f6a-2401e72a89-84571809 Access-date 25 May 2018.

²³ “French President Emmanuel Macron insists EU can no longer rely on US to guarantee its security,” *South China Morning Post*, 27 August 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/2161549/french-president-emmanuel-macron-insists-eu-can-no-longer-rely-us> Access-date 27 August 2018. This article was re-printed from Agence France-Presse. For a Swiss view, see Rudolf Balmer, “Europa kann seine Sicherheit nicht allein den Vereinigten Staaten anvertrauen,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 27 August 2018, <https://www.nzz.ch/international/europa-kann-seine-sicherheit-nicht-allein-den-vereinigten-staaten-anvertrauen-ld.1414901> Access-date 27 August 2018.

²⁴ Riegert, “EU will den Iran-Deal retten und Balkan eine Perspektive bieten,” *Deutsche Welle*, 17 May 2018.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

has been forcefully and recently seconded by the German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas.²⁶ These views may be particularly the case in the aftermath not only of the U.S.' withdrawal from the JCPOA but also in light of new tariffs imposed by the U.S. upon European steel and aluminum on 31 May 2018.²⁷ And while both Tusk and Kurz, as cited above, were referring directly to the potential effects of the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, such sentiment also applies *mutatis mutandis* to the situation in the Korean Peninsula since the vast bulk of GS-ECE/EU trade with South Korea, along with EU trade generally, is conducted *via* the EU-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement (EU-ROK FTA). The same consideration would apply to trade with Japan and China as noted earlier.

As of 31 August 2018, remaining tensions between GS-ECE/EU and the United States over the aftermath of the U.S.' withdrawal from the JCPOA could still adversely affect GS-ECE/EU's collective strategic position over and against a revanchist Russia and ambitious China. Such potential for adverse consequences remains of particular importance to GS-ECE/EU in East Central Europe. As noted in the Executive Summary, this concern derives primarily from the fact that States in GS-ECE/EU find themselves on the same side of the debate over Iran as Moscow and Beijing regarding Washington's withdrawal from the JCPOA. Given the immediacy of European economic and security concerns in the Eastern Mediterranean and throughout the Middle East and its implications for Iran, GS-ECE/EU States must necessarily take greater account of Moscow's (and China's) desires not only as regards the JCPOA but also, implicitly, as regards strategic outcomes in NE Asia. The necessity that GS-ECE/EU pay such greater attention acquires even more significance from the simple, enduring, and telling geo-strategic fact of Russia's being literally on GS-ECE/EU's eastern doorstep, as well as NATO's eastern flank. The States of GS-ECE/EU simply must pay attention to Russia in a way that the U.S. has traditionally had the luxury of not having had to do, notwithstanding the nuclear threats of the Cold War. All of these considerations are made much more pronounced by the fact of open war in the Donbas of eastern Ukraine and the Russian occupation of Crimea, both stemming from Moscow's seizure of the latter in March 2014. Russian coöperation is vitally necessary for anything approaching even a remotely peaceful outcome in either of these instances. Without such coöperation, the war and occupation drag on, presumably so long as President Vladimir Putin deems it geo-strategically useful and economically bearable (given punitive western sanctions imposed after 2014). Furthermore, GS-ECE/EU, and particularly the Federal Republic of Germany, is currently bound to apparently growing dependence on Russian natural gas deliveries by means of major projects such as the Nord Stream II pipeline under the Baltic Sea. Though the Baltic States, Poland, Ukraine, and the United States all object in varying degrees and for varying reasons to the pipeline's construction, the undertaking currently remains on track not least because Berlin needs natural gas to offset both the graduated termination of German nuclear-power plants and a significant declining of domestic coal production since 2005 (except in the Lausitz region of southern Brandenburg).²⁸ By the same token, Moscow badly needs the revenue to be generated by further increases in exports of natural gas to Central Europe (primarily Germany) in order to offset the effects of post-2014 sanctions.²⁹ Making matters worse, the existence of active pro-Russian political parties and individual actors in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and elsewhere only complicates any effort at a coherent GS-ECE/EU-wide position on any matter touching upon

²⁶ "Für eine balancierte transatlantische Partnerschaft," German Foreign Office, 22 August 2018, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/maas-handelsblatt/2129040> Access-date 23 August 2018. Maas' article first appeared in the leading German business newspaper, the *Handelsblatt*.

²⁷ Doug Palmer, "Trump hits U.S. allies with steel, aluminum tariffs," POLITICO, 31 May 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/05/31/trump-hits-us-allies-with-steel-aluminum-tariffs-615327> Access-date 31 May 2018.

²⁸ Benedict Neff, "Merkel und Putin reden über Krisenherde," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19 August 2018, <https://www.nzz.ch/international/merkel-betont-die-weltweiten-krisen-putin-die-wirtschaftlichen-interessen-ld.1412636> Access-date 19 August 2018.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

relations with Russia (and, again, China).³⁰ Internal socio-political strains, constantly aggravated by Russian disinformation-operations and electoral meddling, thus adversely affect GS-ECE/EU's reactions to possible strategic outcomes in the relations between the U.S. and the DPRK and are exacerbated by the recent imposition of tariffs on European steel and aluminum exports to the United States.

Therefore, it remains the view of this analysis that as long as Moscow and Beijing remain apparently and essentially committed to maintaining the JCPOA, GS-ECE/EU will likely find itself aligned frequently and openly, if not permanently or formally, with Russia and China in opposition to the United States not only in respect of that agreement but perhaps in a range of other important geo-strategic issues. These could include, but might not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Continued GS-ECE/EU, Russian, and Chinese attempts to maintain what remains of the JCPOA itself with Iran, provided Teheran does not cancel its participation in the agreement
- GS-ECE/EU acquiescence of increased Russian and Chinese influence in Iran and the Middle East
- An increased, though unenthusiastic, GS-ECE/EU willingness to accept greater Russian influence in the Black Sea littoral and Turkey should Moscow attempt to increase its already extant influence there
- An increased, though again unenthusiastic, allowance of still further Chinese investment in the economies of Europe

In all such matters, coöperative allies could become extremely useful for the United States, to say the very least. They are beneficial to the United States both in active and in passive respects and can significantly increase an already global U.S. economic, political, and military influence.³¹ Since 2016, however, the already-noted fissures in the transatlantic relationship remain unresolved. They could, potentially, last until at least 2024. If so, one should not look for rapid improvements across the Atlantic.

³⁰ Though such political parties and individual actors tend to be less visible or entirely absent in the Baltic States and Poland is a function of those States' immediate past dating to 1945. They were all of them either occupied outright (the Baltic States) or tightly integrated into the Warsaw Pact (Poland) and in any case governed by communist parties loyal to Moscow, at least until the rise of Solidarity in Poland starting in 1980.

³¹ Cf. the excellent brief overview of the crucial role of allies in James Goldgeier and Elizabeth N. Saunders, "The Unconstrained Presidency," *Foreign Affairs*, 97 (September/October 2018) 5, 144 – 156. See particularly 153 – 155.

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