

The New German Vision of the EU a Geopolitical Power: Implications of the "zeitendwende" doctrine for the EU's security and defence (Part I).

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<https://media.istockphoto.com/photos/and-german-flags-fly-in-the-wind-in-front-of-the-reichstag-in-berlin-picture-id1269519877?s=2048x2048>

The New German Vision of the EU a Geopolitical Power: Implications of the "zeitendwende" doctrine for the EU's security and defence (Part I)

By Briane Mezouar

On Monday 29th 2022, the German Chancellor delivered one of founding speech preparing the future Germany's EU policy. Four years after Emmanuel Macron's Sorbonne speech, Olaf Scholz drew in sand 4 pillars of upcoming changes for the EU as a geopolitical entity and aspiring global power. However, even if the EU has been already operating deep change at some levels, just "noting a change of era does not yet make a programme" (Mennerat, 2022). Therefore, this two-part paper aims to explore the origine and the echoes of this concept and then, the legals implication of the most substantial proposals made by the German Chancellor for the EU's defence and security future.

Genesis, meaning and echoes of zeitenwende

Three days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, 27 February 2022, the "zeitenwende" (change of times/turning point) emerged in the German political landscape (and in the EU's and its members states one under various form). In his historic speech, German Chancellor - like most of his colleagues (e.g. French President stressed the need of a defense industry deep shift towards "war economy" (Emmanuel Macron, 2022, e.g. Ursula Von Der Leyen, 2022) stressed the need of taking Russian invasion as a prerequisite for profound changes in terms of Europe's strategic and political approach, notably within military matter (Mennerat 2022). This speech has grown in the moment when the post-Cold war achievement and balance are getting blurred and weak. Like Macron's recent speech to Ambassador (addressing the "grande bascule" of the world, see Duclos, 2022), zeitenwende is first and foremost an ideological answer.

In the first place, such strategic and political changes may be seen as a post-Russian invasion emergency reaction shaped in opposition, but also with one of the long-time latent causes of its aggression; the Russian's reject of the European and global security architecture - nourished by its reluctant behaviour to give up on its imperialist past and ambitions (Gomart, 2022). Russian President's speech and the following discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy in 2007 already contained an ideological proposal that rejecting the post-Cold War system. This speech targeted was described as an allegedly "hegemony of the West (and the U.S) with an unipolarity scheme", described by as one "centre of authority, one centre of force, one centre of decision making [...] one master, one sovereign", although many leaders in this post-Cold War system pushed to include Russia in a global security system (Fried, Volker, 2022). It's also the result of a desperate desire of securing a status, which one would judge crucial (Renshon, 2017). Thus, the distortion between felt and wishful matters can be upheld as one of the key factor shaping contemporary foreign policy issues and conflict sources. (Schmitt, 2022).

But more than 6 months later, the *zeitenwende* concept seems to gain in terms of practical consistency and became a structuring principle that shaped and impeded a global in-depth policy shift in Europe. For Chancellor Scholz, this doctrine means that "the world after is not the same as the world before". Basically, it is a question of whether "force can transgress the law" which would imply "to turn back the clocks to the time of the great powers" (Mennerat, 2022). The *zeitenwende* doctrine is a response to the potential end of strict observance and the development of international law, and a world order fundamentally structured around the framework and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter. Since those are some of the fundamental principles of the EU as an International organisation (e.g article 3§5 Treaty on the European Union, article 21§2,3 Treaty on the functioning of the European Union).

Thus, Europe is called to play a central role and become much more sovereign (Scholz, 2022). Not only an urgent need for in-depth changes and (r)evolution of EU's action and policy regarding defence arose in EU citizen perception (Conference on the Future of Europe, 2022), but also for EU's institution's ones, as the need for enhancing and improve European defence industrial and technological base (EDIB), notably through joint investment and procurement of defence capabilities improvement (European Commission, 2022). But is this turning point could be a political manoeuvre to allow Germany to take the lead of the defense and security in the EU? While the lower chamber of the Bundestag adopted the special 100 billions euros to modernize, adapt the Bundeswehr, capacities and increase NATO'S financial contribution, Olaf Scholz stressed that it was the « right answer to the historic turning point » we live. Scholz recently reaffirm during the German military's annual Conference that Germany has a « major responsibility for the security of our continent » and therefore should « become the pillar of conventional defence in Europe, the best equipped armed force in Europe ».

EU's "early" own *Zeitenwende* in CDSP : work in progress

The recent historic decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova and several CFSP decisions regarding Russia aggression, surely goes in that direction and is tied to what one calls "un virage idéologique" (an ideological shift) (SCHNEIDER, 2022) that proves Chancellor's point, which implies that Europe is now "reforming". To some extent, the EU became aware of the need to enter in a new geopolitical era. After being urged to realize that a non-enlargement is a strategic cost that would compromise the security and stability of the continent (European Parliament, 2022), it grants Moldova and Ukraine candidate statutes (European Council, 2022) and gives them a perspective of third State association to PESCO which expand EU influence and activities towards the legal boundaries of membership (Finabel, 2022). It also actively mobilises the CFSP and multiplies its initiatives, particularly concerning arms exports of lethal military equipment toward Ukraine. Thus, it seems to have initiated an ideological shift, by financing for the first time the export by some of its members of lethal military equipment up to more than 1.350 billion euros (e.g: Council of the European Union decisions, 2021; 2022).

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