The Ambassadors Series: 
German Ambassador Emily Haber 
Discusses the Evolving U.S.-German Relationship

TRANSCRIPT

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Please note: This transcript is based off a recording and mistranslations may appear in text. The names of participants in the Audience Q&A have been removed. A video of the event is available: https://www.hudson.org/events/1621-the-ambassadors-series-german-ambassador-discusses-the-evolving-u-s-german-relationship112018
Kenneth Weinstein: Good afternoon and welcome to the Stern Policy Center here at Hudson Institute. I'm Ken Weinstein, President and CEO of Hudson Institute. Delighted to welcome you back for the Ambassador Series in which leading voices in the Diplomatic Corps give their view on world affairs and relations with the United States.

This series fits very comfortably into Hudson's mission, which is to promote international U.S. leadership and global engagement for a secure, free and prosperous future. We are delighted to have the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany with us today, Emily Haber. I'll introduce her shortly.

We at Hudson have a long history of work on Germany. In the good old days, we had an office in Bonn and our books were regularly, our manuscripts were regularly published in German. That doesn't quite continue today but I can say that one of our colleagues, Peter Rough, who focuses primarily on Germany and US German Relations has just returned from a week in Germany and can't be here because he is doing live coverage of the U.S. elections for German media and last night he was on ZDF, early this morning he was on ZDF, so we have a robust body of work on U.S. German relations, U.S., European relations and Germany itself. We have close partnerships with major Stiftungs in German, Konrad Adenauer, Hans Zeidel, the Atlantik-Brücke and our discussion with the Ambassador, Walter Russell Mead, who is the Ravenel Curry Distinguished Fellow in Strategy and Statesmanship has most recently been the Richard von Weiszäcker Fellow at the Bosch Stiftung. And I should finally note that we have been fortunate to host two of the three leading candidates in the CDU to secede Chancellor Merkel as the head of CDU in the last couple of months.

Emily Haber: You need to hurry then.

Kenneth Weinstein: Exactly. Yeah, well I don’t think we are going to get the third. Jens Spahn, if you’re listening you got a very warm "eindeung" to come here to Hudson. Now the series is anchored by Walter Russell Mead. As I noted, Walter is the Ravenel Curry Distinguished Fellow in Strategy and Statesmanship. I think this is the first time I'm using your new title. To great appreciation to our good friend Ravenel Curry for his thoughtful and generous support of Hudson Institute. Walter is the dean of observers of U.S. foreign policy. His Global View column in the Wall Street journal is the most widely read column on U.S. foreign policy today.

And I'm especially delighted to welcome Ambassador Haber to Hudson. She has gotten rave reviews since arriving in the spring here as Germany's new ambassador to the United States. She is a native of Bonn. She served most recently as State Secretary in the Federal Interior Ministry where she focused on Homeland Security and Migration at the height of the refugee crisis and worked closely with American officials on the fight against terrorism and against cyberattacks. Previously, she was the political director of the foreign ministry and then the state secretary at the foreign office. The number three and number two positions at the German foreign ministry and the first woman to hold either position and also the first woman to be named German Ambassador to the United States. Previously, she held numerous diplomatic postings at Ankara, at the OSCE. Handled Balkan issues, handled Russian issues at the foreign ministry. She holds a doctorate from the University of Cologne on German Foreign Policy looking at German foreign policy at the outbreak prior to World War I.

Without any further ado it is with great pleasure I turn it over to Walter and Ambassador Haber. Thank you very much.

Walter Russell Mead: Well, thanks. And thanks, Ambassador for coming with us today. It's always good to see you and certainly you do an amazing job of representing Germany and to some degree, even Europe, at a time when that can be a little bit difficult in the United States. I was actually thinking of something Chancellor Merkel said recently about German/French relations where we said we often start from very different positions, but we are both committed to working towards some kind of compromise. At least a partial description of the U.S./German relationship too. Do you think these days we are getting closer to some kind of compromise as a way of working together or is distance still widening in your view?

Emily Haber: Probably depends on what position you choose. If you look at the bilateral relationship only by framing it -- issues where we don't agree or partially agree if you only look at Iran for the moment or burden sharing or trade issues when you would probably come to the conclusion that there is change of alienation. But it's very wrong to take that position because you only get part of the picture.

If you want to assess a relationship you need to look at two other factors; the first one is the environment. You look at the environment and the trend of how this environment evolves. Nowadays people like to talk about the International World Order. Some people call it the Liberal World Order, what they basically mean was the system of rules and regulations that had evolved over 17 years had constantly changed and at the outset was two systems that were pitted against each other and the arena of being pitted against each other was basically in Europe. Now if you look at the trend in development you see today the incredible rise of China. You see after the end of the Cold War the re-
emergence of Russia as a world power. Both directly and indirectly mentioned in the National Security Strategy as strategic competitors of the United States. There is no more mention of the Islamist terrorist spread although I would claim, given my experience, that you see defeating ISIS is just a moment in history, Islamist terrorism. I believe that was not a final trend. This is the environment.

If you look at the environment not only the issues you quickly come to the conclusion that we are very much in alignment because basically we want to defend what we stand for, we want to defend our values, we want to defend our capacity to make democratic choices. We want to defend our capacity to have others make democratic choices too. And then there is a third element. That is important too. It doesn’t exist in all relationships, but it does in ours. Certainly that is -- it’s the architecture of a relationship. That is the big number of links and bonds that exist no matter whether we agree on Nordstream or on Iran. Talking about distant city, talking about jobs that are created by German companies in the US, nearly 700,000 I’m calling, I’m talking about the foreign investment of Germany in this company. I am talking about the school and university exchanges -- over 10,000 each direction. So this is the theology of a relationship.

And it doesn’t go away or evaporate if we agree on single issues. So this was a very long answer. I threatened I would be long in my answers.

What I was saying is yeah there was a couple of issues where we disagree, but the fabric and the environment is such and it is so intense that the cogent conclusion is that we are close because we are bound to.

Walter Russell Mead: I think you are absolutely right. The structure of the relationship is extraordinary. How many groups in Washington and in Berlin are oriented toward depending this kind of conversation? Looking at how that might be working out in practice I know that Germany and the Trump administration start in very different positions on the JCPOA. But I know also there was some very intense conversations about once the Trump administration had made its decision there was still a question of implementation and there were certain concerns that Germans and others had about implementation. How poorly or well has that process gone, do you think? Have some of the important German concerns been met or not?

Emily Haber: I think it’s fair to say that we why we disagree on the value of the JCPOA, we don’t disagree on the strategic objective. We don’t disagree with the assessment that the Iranian behavior in its neighborhood is malign. We don’t disagree on the missiles program. We don’t disagree with regard to the sunset clauses. These were all aspects that had been factored in as a matter of fact during the negotiations, which is fair to say, has been led by the United States for a long time.

So when the United States was removed from the JCPOA we continued to say we see the merit of keeping Iran in the agreement because if it left the agreement and if it returned to its previous enrichment honestly, would it make the region safer or less safe? Would it make the region and Iran more predictable or less predictable? So in our risk equation we came to the conclusion that it should be in our shared interest to make sure that whether the United States left the agreement or not Iran would stay in it, and thus contributing which would mean the European states and the other countries in the JCPOA would contribute to relative security in the region or at least preventing, not to let, not to accept further dissolution of their own security. So that was our position.

Now if you want to keep Iran in the agreement there has to be something in it for Iran for staying in. That was what we discussed with the United States we have exceptions -- we have exceptions on humanitarian grounds -would there be legal trade with Iran. Legal also under American law this was basically it. With the sanctions that have been adopted over the weekend we still need a lot of clarity on how, with the humanitarian exceptions that there are, and what will it mean with regard to medical and economic therapies possible, etcetera. We don’t know that precisely as yet and there are sudden openings.

Walter Russell Mead: Okay, so this is still being hammered out.

Emily Haber: Oh, I’m just starting to just be able to hammer it out.

Walter Russell Mead: In the early months and maybe even a longer period than that many foreign interlockers, foreign diplomats and so on said they had a hard time getting access to people in the state department in the White House to have conversations about U.S. foreign policy and relations. How was your access and are you finding that it’s improving? That you are actually able to reach the people that you need to reach?

Emily Haber: The access was good from the outset.

Walter Russell Mead: Okay, so from the German end it was always good?
Emily Haber: Yes.

**Walter Russell Mead**: Good to hear. Politics are changing both in the US and the EU. We are still digesting our most recent election. You have had a couple of regional elections in Germany recently that at least interpreters are saying weakened the standing of the coalition. What is your sense of how German internal politics might be affecting German foreign policy in the coming months?

Emily Haber: There’s the perception issue and then there’s the fact issue, more frankly. If a party chair changes after I don’t know after how many years-- is that a sign of weakness? Or is that a positive sign of democracy in action? I would just look at it that way. It’s the fourth tenure of the Chancellor -- she has been party chair for many, many years and in democracies sometimes changes either occur or the writing is on the wall, that’s it.

**Walter Russell Mead**: So you don’t, at this point, see much impact of German internal politics on foreign policy?

Emily Haber: I don’t a see foreign policy change imminent for this coalition right now.

**Walter Russell Mead**: Alright. As the Italian situation seems to be heating up at least as far as one can tell -- the Italians seem to be going ahead with their proposed budget, the EU has been very clear on its stance and we are seeing a little bit more instability in the financial markets. Where -- how will Germany try to play a role in this?

Emily Haber: Germany has taken care to make sure that the leading role in Berlin on this issue [inaudible -- 0:16:56].

**Walter Russell Mead**: Germans and technology, always a problem.

Emily Haber: I should stop being disruptive.

**Walter Russell Mead**: And the rise in populism generally, you know, we see it obviously in the United States. We have seen it in Europe, even in Germany. We have seen it most dramatically recently in Brazil. How do you see this affecting this liberal international institutional order? How can one strengthen the order, can the populous be integrated into this or is it simply a question of struggle?

Emily Haber: It really depends on what your analysis is -- what triggers populism. There’s not unified reasons for that, even looking at Germany I would say different reasons -- different reasons have given rise to populism in different regions in Germany. In Bavaria, for example, it has not really the income equality gap that has been the rise of populism, whereas in Eastern Germany- there has been an issue of respect for collective biographies, or a sense of having witnessed a disrespect. All in all I would say that one reason tends to be [inaudible -- 0:18:41] growing sense that in our hyper-connected world, in the European Union, in globalization, that the space for national sovereign…..

This looks like a weapon. What I am trying to say is the space for national sovereign decision is declining in the world of ours. And that played a role, and I witnessed it during the migration crisis when people felt what happened that expectations they wanted their governments to react, but the space for -- the space for actually reacting was limited by European law or by European institutions or by international law. It was a fact. And that made people say it was our control. And I find you see that across Europe that phenomenon, but I see it here as well.

So, it is less linked to the European Union. It is linked to the experience of people that while they hold their governments accountable for decisions they take they see that the governments are ring-fenced in their ability to make decisions. And we will have to tackle that. That will be center stage when trying to integrate populous movements and populous in our system.

Now you mentioned the Liberal World Order it's not an expression I use. Actually, it's been used only since 2012. No one at the time when the World Order slowly evolved thought of calling it liberal before. But it is true -- what we have seen is the emergence of rules and regulations and institutions that determined decision making and I would say for Germany, but I think that every European Ambassador that would sit here would echo what I am saying that this multilateral order has made us safer.

You see a European commissioner the other day said there are two sorts of European countries. The first sort that is small and the second sort that simply didn't realize this yet -- that they are small. If you know that you understand instinctively you need in order to have a clout you need leveraging power of alliances. Once I read the power of the
United States rested on many pillars. True. But it also and probably centrally rested on the fact that it had I think it was 69 alliances. More than any other country in the world.

So your question was can we sustain it -- my answer is every European would tell you we need to sustain it because of our power and our capacity to defend what we stand for will depend on it.

Walter Russell Mead: Interesting when you think of the sort of institutional problems. The national governments when they're really moved can usually take action pretty quickly. But as you say, in many cases, They are too small. Even the United States can be too small to deal with some problems on its own. But international institutions almost by their nature are very slow to work and the answers that they come up with are generally speaking often less satisfactory to democratic public opinion in all the member states because they are these international institutions generally come up with answers that are not identical to what the political process is within each country would produce. So they got this sort of double handicap. How do we work on that? How do we address that?

Emily Haber: It's true that any international order is flawed. It is never perfect. Rests on comprises. Rests on institutions that are probably not ideal. It -- the International World Order after the second World War was never based exclusively on rules and regulations on strategic issues. We have seen many unipolar moments or unilateral moment, that is all true. But the question remains, and I suppose we might come to different conclusions there -- is this flawed, imperfect, constantly changing order is that better, preferable to a situation that creates a disrupted status quo with no predictability? And does the latter empower those countries that were never in favor of the multilateral order because either they were not part of the international arena when it was set up or because they did not like the constraints that were enforced on them and on the evolution of which they had no say? So in this risk equation Germans and Europeans would come to the conclusion we prefer by far, a situation that may be flawed, but is adaptable and should be adapted to a situation that would -- you mentioned President Weinstein that I wrote my PhD on the pre-history of the first World War. Well, that was in Kissinger's words, "A diplomatic doomsday machine." And the return to any sort of diplomatic doomsday machine I would find extremely dangerous.

But it's not what we're seeing actually. What I see today is sort of mixture of unilateral, bilateral and eclectic multilateral approaches. A worry of mine is once you start a downhill road in deconstructing the existing system of rules and institutions then you undermine the legitimacy and the credibility of it. And also the legitimacy and credibility of the alliances that mainly drive it.

Walter Russell Mead: I want to emphasize, by the way, that these topics you are talking about are very much in the center of Hudson's interest as an institution that the health of the U.S. alliance system has always been a kind of a at the forefront of Hudson's approach, so these are things we are thinking of and we look forward to continuing the discussion because I think one problem that is helping to drive the populism and stressing international alliances is that the post cold war era or sorry, the Cold War Era was a period of relative stability both in international lives where you had the durable bipolar system and somewhat stable in terms of the economic situation in member countries once the economic miracle had taken place in Europe so that people experience both a lot of economic security in their own lives and the international order wasn't having to constantly adjust to dramatic changes.

Now that we have both of these we have less stability and security in people's international lives and the international order is being hit from more directions by more shocks this places a lot of strain on international institutions and forms of cooperation.

Emily Haber: It occurs to me, but I may be wrong, that you embellish what has happened int eh past. You really think seriously that people were confident and trusted the stability during the time of the Suez crisis? You seriously believe that people did not fear that the Berlin crisis would go out of hand? The Cuban crisis? I think we have seen many, many dangerous moments, but where I would agree is that the system had rested on a tight web of constraints that all actors concerned and certainly the strategic competitors. If that tight web of constraints is fading away or dissolving then predictability of your competitors becomes something that you always have to wait on. That's dangerous.

Walter Russell Mead: I can certainly remember some of these moments you are talking on. Suez I can't remember, but I can remember being terrified in the Cuban missile crisis as a 10 year old and the Berlin crisis where you saw that picture of the American and Soviet tanks. But there it was always the same enemy in a sense. You didn't have -- so when we see Turkey kind of wandering off on a completely different tangent that's both -- that's an -- that changes the nature of an institution like NATO in ways that we -- that are really quite difficult for a bureaucratic rule driven organization to respond to. And it's those sorts of challenges that I think are worth thinking about now.
Emily Haber: That's true. The world was, should I say, two dimensional at a time and has many more dimensions in the meantime it's not only Turkey there are so many emerging well, either powers or failing states that is a huge one too. And then there are the large strategic competitors on the world stage. I agree with that that makes predictability somehow multi-dimensional -- multi-dimensional task or challenge. How to deal with it? My answer would be what not to do. If the largest democracy in the world with the largest -- If the -- let's put it differently then. If the most powerful country in the world which happens to be democracy with its alliance, which happened to be democracies, are making the point that human rights, democracy, democratic rights are center stage and they will uphold them in the rest of the world. That will be something that other countries, other actors will carefully factor in and they will carefully gage what the United States and its alliance will tolerate and what not if they will address the behavior to that.

Walter Russell Mead: It was actually on this very platform that Vice President, Mike Pence, made his speech about U.S. China relations a few weeks ago. And that speech at least from where I sit seems to be reverberating both domestically and abroad that in the U.S. it is interesting how uncontentious China policy has been in a very polarized time. I think many democrats and for that matter some republicans object to elements of the President's trade approach and so on. But the general idea the United States need to deal with the reality that China is not moving toward the kind of responsible stakeholder role that had been hoped for seems to be unifying opinion in the U.S. How is -- how do Germans see this development?

Emily Haber: We've been discussing this with the U.S. for a while. Actually, we had the fifth German/American consultations on China just the other week and we come from the same vantage point there if we look at intellectual property theft, if we look at market access, if we look at enforced joint ventures, if we look at the way that WTO rules are being bent. So basically, we are on the same page. Only, once again, everything happens in an environment. And if the general environment is seen as an arena where you compete with your allies for relative power then somehow it seems to be -- it doesn't really seem to fit. So I think we will have to tackle both. Our alignment on China is true and dealing with bilateral -- now Transatlantic European is issue that are simply -- they are not linked. But the - - in the general picture you will have to look whether things fit or that they don't.

Walter Russell Mead: We've seen some ups and downs in both the level of rhetoric and intensity of discussion between the U.S. and the EU on trade. From your perspective, how do things look right now?

Emily Haber: I don't think we've seen an escalation of tone or style since the two presidents met mid-July, discussed the way forward and charged both delegations to enter a scoping exercise on how to move forward and that is what is happening right now.

Walter Russell Mead: You feel there is some progress happening as we speak?

Emily Haber: I'm sure everyone sitting around the table would say so.

Walter Russell Mead: All right, well there is some encouragement. That might lead to the situation you were speaking of where the cooperation on issues regarding China might become tighter if we were able to resolve these EU, US --

Emily Haber: As I said, it is not linked. It is generally convinced that it is our shared long-term interest to make sure that a huge country like China abides by the rules of the WTO and offers a level playing field to both the United States and European countries. Only I'm saying -- I'm also saying that if you do that you cannot simply, at the same time, enter a trade dispute with the United States because it would somewhat undermine the position that you are trying to strengthen.

Walter Russell Mead: I take your point. Let's turn to another cheerful subject, Russia. I think after you know, there was some talk early in the Trump administration that for whatever reason the U.S. and Russia were about to reach a new kind of entente. That no longer seems to be on the cards. If anything, the relationship is moving into a rather deep freeze and probably with the democrats now in control of the house the -- that's even more likely to continue. How does Germany see its relationship with Russia and Russia's role in Europe at the moment?

Emily Haber: We've been in an alignment with the United States on the Syria issue, chemical weapons issue -- I mean with chemical Skripal case. We have been in alignment on the Ukraine and we have supported sanctions in all of these cases. Having said that we need to look at geography. It's our geography, Russia and the way we deal with Russia is something that will be important to any European. Dealing with Russia from the European point of view cannot be only about sanctions. We agree that any cyber-intervention needs to be responded to and reacted to. Actually, look at the way we attribute cyberattacks nowadays -- we have moved a step forward there as well and we would be in alignment with you. But in dealing with a big neighbor and country like Russia sanctions can't be the only
tool in the toolbox. And in my experience sanctions usually work if they target compliance and if compliance is feasible. And if the targeted country realizes that it will work out and something will be in for this country if it complies. If it's only about punitive measures the targeted country will ask the question whether compliance isn't the issue, but a structural change in the power configuration. So, for sanctions to work you need the compliance bit and you need the opening that will facilitate -- that will make it possible for the targeted country to reconsider and return.

**Walter Russell Mead:** What you are really saying is that sanctions can only do so much and if you try to push the sanctions process beyond that you are unlikely to get a satisfactorily result.

**Emily Haber:** Yes, in a way. I would say that sanctions are the strongest form of a diplomatic language and they work if the goal is compliance and if the country sees that compliance is actually feasible then they work. They might not work overnight, but over time they will.

**Walter Russell Mead:** Does the Magnitsky Act in your mind sort of go beyond what sanctions can do or is it a good example of using sanctions?

**Emily Haber:** The Magnitsky Act opens the possibility for sanctions in future as well. And there again, I return to what I said before -- countries would study it and draw the conclusion and adjust or adapt their behavior.

**Walter Russell Mead:** Okay. What about Russian activity in the EU where it and to some degree also increasingly China are building economic and political relationships that in some way might compromise the unity of the EU or governance in parts of the EU. Do you see this as a problem?

**Emily Haber:** They are certainly trying to do so, but it depends on the resilience of countries. I don’t remember -- I don’t know if you remember the Lisa case. That was a case during the height of the migration crisis was a young Russian/German girl had been raped by two migrants and it made a huge case. We saw a number of demonstrations across Germany, beautifully choreographed. I tell you as someone who worked in the interior ministry -- and the case was completely, completely invented. That became clear --

**Walter Russell Mead:** Fake news.

**Emily Haber:** Well, it was fake news, but a case that the Russian foreign minister mentioned at a press conference when sitting beside the German foreign minister. Even though the German police had already established the facts there was reaction to that. I believe that this case because it simply had been -- they had gone too far had created in the long run some resilience of the population against any such attempts. So I would say free press and constant observation and reporting has contributed to well, to produce immunity against attempts of this sort.

**Walter Russell Mead:** What about the -- you mentioned the re-emergence of Russia as a military power. What implications do you see for NATO, for German defense spending and presumably we expect the Russians to continue along this path at least to some degree?

**Emily Haber:** There has been a turn about in my country and in NATO since 2014. I -- and that doesn't happen rarely -- to hear complaints from American friends that we don't move forward quickly enough. It is fair to say that between 2014 and 2024 the German defense budget will have risen by 80% it will be the second largest defense budget in NATO. And while the 2% objective, yes that is one of the ways commitment is there we don't deny it, we are moving towards it -- 80% as we said. That's not nothing. There are also other factors that need to be looked at -- capabilities, for example. The readiness initiative. What we do in terms of air policing in the Baltic states. Being a framework nation for the very high readiness task force. Being -- offering the command structures -- it is all part and parcel of a general policy. I do find isolating surgically the issue of the 2% is really quite arbitrary.

**Walter Russell Mead:** I suppose it's just such an easy benchmark to look at that people focus on it the way that they do.

**Emily Haber:** But while a country like Germany puts all its capabilities -- military capabilities at NATO's disposal, the observation is in place that other countries don't.

**Walter Russell Mead:** So you would argue that the U.S. may be spending less than 2% on NATO itself if one looks at it carefully?

**Emily Haber:** I certainly would not argue that.
Walter Russell Mead: Just checking. Just checking. All right, well, I have enjoyed the chance to ask an Ambassador some questions. Is there anybody here who has a question you would like to ask? Again, I would remind you that a question is a short statement that would punctuated, if written, by a question mark at the end. Please identify yourself. Do we have microphones? Yes.

We're working on technology here at Hudson. This whole sound amplification thing is complex.

Audience Member: Hi... In terms of the current trade talks I've been told I can't call them negotiations yet, that are happening between the U.S. and EU there seems to be a sense that not all the EU member states are on the same page in terms of how to move forward. There is the July joint statement that said that-- whether there is an agreement to move forward on a potential trade deal on industrial tariffs and subsidies, but do you get the sense whether it is Germany, France or the EU 27 +1 are all in agreement that a trade deal is possible with the EU right now, excuse me, with the U.S. right now?

Emily Haber: EU member countries doesn't seem to -- EU member countries are never on the same page. That is the beauty of an international alliance or an international organization or institution. What compromises need to be hammered out and need to be hammered out because people come from different countries, have different vantage points, have different interests and possibly different objectives. But at the end of the day a compromise will emerge because everyone knows that they need one. It will not be perfect. It will not mirror in its entirety the national interest of one country alone, but it will be better than anything else. That's the way the EU functions.

Walter Russell Mead: Okay, sir. This gentleman here. Bring him a microphone.

Audience Member: Thank you. I'm [...] , retired foreign service officer. Two questions; your embassy is one of the key organizations that links U.S. to the German government. And my question is what is the hardest thing about American politics for you to explain to the German government? And my second question is; we in the U.S. have had major difficulty and challenges in deciding our cyber policy as part of National Security, how offensive to be, etcetera. My question is; where is the German government on your cyber policy?

Emily Haber: What's the most difficult thing to explain? I don't really know. But what I know is what is the thing I explain most. And that is I tell people to focus on the substance of issues and look at the substance of disagreements of partial disagreements. Look whether there are partisan or bipartisan or nonpartisan and ignore the -- shall we say the international staging bit? Factor in that there are different audiences for foreign policies in your country as in mine. And focus what is directed to the other audience and focus on what -- focus on the issues and focus possibly I found that good advice, on the continuity of some issues.

On the cyber strategy, I don't quite know what you mean. We have set up a cyber strategy two years ago. It is constantly being evolved. And as the cyber realm is developing at a breathtaking speed so does the reaction and the preparations of my government. If that was your question. I could give you a couple of examples? Okay.

A year ago -- a little more than a year ago we set up an institution in Munich that is trying to look at tools and instruments and processes in order to deal with malignant cyber hacking be it by international actors or be it by individual actors. Took some time. We probably did it too late. We did it against, at some stage adversity in the national public opinion of ours, but it was something that needed to be done.

Walter Russell Mead: Next question. Yes, over here.

Audience Member: I'm wondering, from your perspective as a senior member of not only the German government but also of the CDU, what do you think the prospects are of Chancellor Merkel's work of staying as Chancellor through 2021 even though she won't be CDU's leader at that point?

Emily Haber: I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint you -- I'm neither senior nor am I a member of the CDU, which makes me superbly unqualified to answer this question.

Walter Russell Mead: All right, in the back. Yes, sir?

Audience Member: Yes. My name is [...]. I work with private equity in the technology sector and my question kind of goes back to one on which you spoke earlier, but it's obvious that every American administration for the past 70 years has expressed virtually unqualified support for the concept of a multilateral military alliance that inherently that's a good thing. And it's also no secret that this administration has expressed misgivings about the concept of a
multilateral military alliance and put briefly, and I'll ask you to react to the concept, the conceptual challenge -- I listened to one of the president's advisors say that this whole idea of a multilateral military alliance comes down to the fact that we all take a vote, all those in favor of the United States doing more and us doing less raise your hands. It's unanimous, we've all agreed and that's how multilateral military alliances work. Obviously, that's fundamentally different from everything the United States has expressed for the past 70 years. So I thought it would be useful since you are really in the middle of it to comment on the conceptual challenge to multilateral military alliance and the role that the United States is by far the largest participant in it should play. Thank you.

Emily Haber: All right, I don't think that the United States joined or founded a military alliance out of charity or out of misguided idealism. They founded the alliance because they thought it was best suited to advance both American interests and democracy abroad. And actually, it suited American and allied interests very well.

I do agree with you that the relevance of an alliance depends on the ability and on the coherence which will give it legitimacy and clout in the eyes of those that are shall we say, at the receiving end or not the receiving end but pitted against this alliance. Any undermining of the relevance of the alliance of what it should do will be carefully analyzed and engaged by other countries around the world and it will have an effect. I agree with you too that maximizing power by leveraging alliances has set the stage for American foreign policy for the last decades as it has been for European policy. I continue to think that this remains relevant and true and necessary. And I am surprised to what degree I'm not talking about the -- about NATO but also about the European union.

See Europeans ask themselves if nowadays bilateralism is the preferred strategy of the United States with regard to EU. And that is something that Russia would certainly agree with. They see the effects. They reinforce the effects. That is precisely what they would like to see in place because it will tip balance in their favor.

Walter Russell Mead: Yeah, I think sometimes Americans fail to understand that for Russia, the EU is a real threat to the kind of presence they would like to have in Europe. And the United States in my view, should certainly think twice about undermining something that is important to keep Europe independent.

Emily Haber: And that Russia would like to see undermined.

Walter Russell Mead: Precisely.

Emily Haber: And actually works hard to undermined it.

Walter Russell Mead: Correct. Yes, sir?

Audience Member: I was wondering about the current German government view of Brexit. Are you hoping or expecting a new referendum or perhaps parliamentary overturn or do you expect that England will be exiting the EU?

Emily Haber: I don't know. What I know is a democratic decision has been taken few years ago -- two years ago. We are grappling with the consequences. We are negotiating and what I also know is that whatever the consequences or the results Britain will remain one of our closest partners outside of the EU or preferably, that has always been our point, inside of the EU.

Walter Russell Mead: We might have time for another question. Over here.

Audience Member: You mentioned you were with the Ministry of the Interior. So many of us have been following now, 25 years after the fall of the wall, what's happening in the former Eastern Germany or Eastern Germany today. Especially around youth unrest and so on, political dissatisfaction. Maybe if you can spend a few minutes with us to discuss what is the current situation regarding the economy and full integration in the former East Germany and also what the situation is with extremism in that area. Thank you.

Emily Haber: I would like to direct your attention to a poll I've seen I think seven days ago or six days ago in which 70% of Germans said they were very satisfied with their financial situation. Actually, it was before the elections. I just noted it because I thought it was indicative of a stability that we would not necessarily note if we just look at the political debate in my country.

But now returning to the state of affairs in Eastern Germany where as in the two elections both in Bavaria and in Hesse you have seen either right wing or left wing parties at the fringes see some votes, but not so much really. It would be a different picture in the East with regard to both parties, right wing and left wing radical party. I think it's
closely linked to what at some stage today I noted collective sense of not -- not belonging that goes too far but of less belonging. Today in an article I saw someone being quoted as first the West Germans, then the asylum seekers and then the Eastern Germans, which of course is complete nonsense. But sometimes perceptions, even though they are nonsense are relevant and need to be seen by politicians. That is something that will be at the center of any political discussion in my country in the future because it will be at the center also -- the future of populism. It's about identity and value and respect.

**Walter Russell Mead:** Thank you very much. I think you all should join me in thanking the Ambassador for generosity with her time and with a very comprehensive overview. Thank you so much.

**Emily Haber:** Thank you.