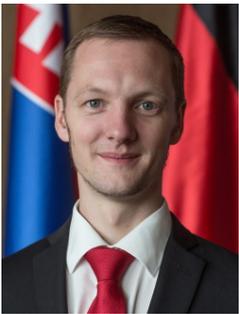




by Josias Terschüren  
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## Europe: The Rift between Expectation and Reality – to be a World Power

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or Iran-Deal contained many flaws and loopholes, even if it would have been fully and faithfully implemented. Which it wasn't. Internationally renowned experts like Olli Heinonen or Mark Dubowitz, as well as politicians like Donald Trump or Benjamin Netanyahu have been sounding the alarm for the better part of the last five to six years. But it has only been in the past few months, that the Iranian Regime openly, consciously and admittedly violated fundamental commitments it made under the JCPOA, i.e. de facto breaking it. This happened under immense and unrelenting pressure from the Trump-Administration for Iran's malign behavior and policies. In a current piece, Dubowitz' colleagues Jacob Nagel and David Adesnik argue, that the IAEA, the UN nuclear watchdog, has lost its credibility regarding Iran and is in need of a recalibration in order to fulfill its duty and mandate regarding the Iranian nuclear program.<sup>1</sup> The UN has yet to come to grips with the evolving situation in Iran and needs to adapt to the new reality, that the JCPOA might very well end up in the dustbin of history. After the US-withdrawal from the nuclear deal, the decisive players in this process are the three European powers: Germany, France and Great Britain.

### Europe in hot water

Developments over the past few months have made it clear that the European policy of stubbornly holding on to the Iran deal and the resulting equidistance that needs to be maintained from the USA, Israel and the Arabic nations on the one hand and from Iran on the other, has failed. Under French-German leadership, Europe has tried to take a middle position with the goal of moving the Iranian leadership toward a more moderate policy in order to save the nuclear agreement. Both the Americans and Iran are trying to woo the Europeans. The Americans can't carry out their Middle East policies without the E3 (Germany, France and Great Britain) and for Iran, the European policy is their best means of political self-defense.

Up to this point, like master Chess players, the Iranians have understood how to play this European policy to their advantage, to demonstrate Europe's helplessness in the face of targeted Iranian aggression and to play the Europeans against the Americans. Iran has succeeded in driving a wedge into the unity of the western world – without violating the tolerance limit of the Europeans so far. In the meantime, this leaves Europe sitting between two chairs, and thus in hot water!

### European patience in the face of Iranian aggression

The level of this irritation- and tolerance limit is made clear in an amazing way. Just look at the extent to which Iran has provoked the world over the past months in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz. They have needled the nations of the world through repeated attacks on and seizures of oil tankers and commercial ships in one

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2019/08/16/how-the-uns-nuclear-watchdog-can-restore-its-credibility-on-iran/>



of the major arteries of worldwide oil and natural gas trade.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, they have undermined the sanctity of the freedom of navigation in international waters. The “Deutsche Welle” published a chronicle on the subject.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to the USA, Great Britain and Saudi Arabia, most European countries held back from casting blame on Iran – in spite of the relatively clear evidence. The German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, even managed the trick of not naming anyone as the culprit in his statement regarding the double tanker attack. He simply left everything up in the air.<sup>4</sup>

### **Violation of the nuclear agreement – with no significant consequences to date**

Besides the escalation of the maritime situation, there are extremely questionable developments on another front as well. Iran has violated the Nuclear Agreement – and that in very significant areas. Not only have they exceeded the amount of 300 kg enriched uranium they are allowed to produce, but they also exceeded the 3.67% level of enrichment set forth in the agreement. This was done purposefully and after threats to do so. In addition, Iran has reactivated the heavy water reactor in Arak, which is needed to produce weapons-grade plutonium. Actually, according to the nuclear agreement, that reactor should have been rendered permanently unusable by filling it with concrete; but in early 2019 Iran boasted that it had procured spare parts for the few shafts that had actually been cemented shut already during the 2015 negotiations. So much for the nuclear agreement actually hindering Iran from developing an atom bomb! Diplomacy is powerless in dealing with such a deceitful negotiating partner. And yet, at the moment, diplomacy is the only way the Europeans are following.

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### **Helplessness stylized to look like virtue**

That means that, up to this point, European reactions have been exclusively verbal – a method that obviously leaves Iran totally cold. Out of fear of escalation, the European nations have not even been able to put a defensive task force together to secure economically critical waterways. The one exception being Great Britain under the new Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The German government refused an official request from the USA for Germany to participate in the naval operation “Sentinel” – and not without criticizing the (rational and functioning!) American policy of maximum pressure.

At the same time, there have been no German initiatives to date, and there is no clear Middle East strategy in sight. The Chairman of the German military association (Bundeswehrverband), Lieutenant Colonel André Wüstner, said in no uncertain

2 The straits are the best-known “eye of the needle” of the worldwide oil trade; 90 percent of the Gulf region’s energy exports pass through here. That amounts to 21 million barrels of crude oil, gasoline and other oil products per day – about 21 percent of world consumption. In addition, 4.1 billion cubic meters of natural gas are transported daily. That is about a fourth of global production.

<https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2019-07/persischer-golf-strasse-von-hormus-iran-konflikt-oeltransport#welche-bedeutung-hat-die-strasse-von-hormus>

3 <https://www.dw.com/de/die-tankerkrise-chronik-einer-eskalation/a-49728149>

4 <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/maas-golf-von-oman/2226610>



*It is high time that the German government, primarily the Foreign Ministry, informs the Parliament and the public regarding the strategic policy for the Middle East. One gets the impression that none exists.*

*Lieutenant Colonel André Wüstner, Chairman of the German military association (Bundeswehrverband)*

*It is time to find a workable way out of the crisis. It is time to formulate a strategy which serves German interests and strengthens our allies instead of discrediting them. A strategy which identifies our enemies and resists them instead of currying their favor and protecting them.*

terms; *“It is high time that the German government, primarily the Foreign Ministry, informs the Parliament and the public regarding the strategic policy for the Middle East. One gets the impression that none exists. The fact that the political discussion is again limited to the military developments - without taking the total picture into consideration - leaves me speechless. We are lacking the longer-term concept of a strategy.”*<sup>5</sup>

These circumstances apply to Berlin as well as to Paris and London: In the meantime, it is clear that the common policy does not work. Not only have the hoped-for results not been achieved, but against all hopes, Iranian aggression, threats and downright extortion have increased dramatically. Dominique Moisi, Foreign Policy Advisor to the French President admits: *“There is no clear alternative. This line doesn’t work, but is there another?”*<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the German government remains stubborn:

Minister of State in the Foreign Affairs Office, Niels Annen, even glorifies the German impotence and makes it a virtue: *“these Political attacks target the core of our foreign policy: the ability to work out political solutions to difficult situations. We will not be deterred by them.”* To the political elite in Europe, the reason for the failure of the Iranian Nuclear Agreement is clear: The fault is not with the terror-exporting and aggressive Iranian regime which is obsessed with the fantasy of destroying Israel, no; it is all Donald Trump’s fault!

Thus, the indignation of the Europeans and their politics is focused on the Trump administration. The Washington Post commented that Iran’s aggressive policies could force Europe to enter into an “unhappy harmony” with the USA – a cooperation – after all. But right now, Europe is resisting that with all its might. It is easier to scold a democratic ally than to show some backbone and take a stand against an aggressive religious dictator. This is something that not only Trump, but also Europe’s second favorite enemy experience repeatedly: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

### **Experts criticize Germany’s Middle East Policy**

It is time to find a workable way out of the crisis. It is time to formulate a strategy which serves German interests and strengthens our allies instead of discrediting them. A strategy which identifies our enemies and resists them instead of currying their favor and protecting them. German foreign policy has lost this focus under the last three social-democratic foreign Ministers – as the current example of Iran proves. In the meantime, leading experts and observers are in agreement regarding Germany’s Middle East policy: The lack of orientation and long-term goals must come to an end. German foreign policy needs to reset its course toward a new, moral value oriented Middle East policy. From a historical, moral, economical and forward-looking standpoint, that is only possible in cooperation with Israel and the USA!

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article198795347/Verteidigungsministerin-AKK-sucht-ihr-Nahost-Gefuehl.html>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/how-long-can-europe-maintain-its-balancing-act-between-the-us-and-iran/2019/07/08/9f18abd6-6987-4b96-9b43-4d71864063db\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/how-long-can-europe-maintain-its-balancing-act-between-the-us-and-iran/2019/07/08/9f18abd6-6987-4b96-9b43-4d71864063db_story.html)



*Only an honest view of German history – and the right conclusions drawn from it – will make it possible to establish a moral standpoint from which current German interests can be classified.*

Political scientist and Iran-expert Matthias Küntzel made the comment in an interview in the “Israelnetz” (highly recommended reading): *“The statement that Israel’s security is Germany’s ‘reason of state’ has become nothing more than an empty phrase in the meantime. Germany is following a two-faced policy in trying to maintain a special relationship with Israel and with Iran at the same time.”*<sup>7</sup> Michael Wolffsohn compares

Germany’s policy to a doctor *“who shies away from the correct diagnosis and thus cannot possibly provide a cure.”* For that reason, he describes the verbal solidarity with the Jews; *“as cynical or at least ‘spoken with a forked tongue”* in light of German efforts to appease Iran.<sup>8</sup> And foreign policy expert Frank Müller-Rosentritt of the Liberal Democratic Party hits the mark very well in his article in the “Neuen Züricher Zeitung” a Swiss newspaper

entitled *“The German Foreign Minister’s performance is pitiful”* where he says; *“One can justifiably criticize many things regarding the government policies of our allies (obviously referring to the USA and Israel). But continually flattering authoritarian and totalitarian regimes (Iran) while at the same time exercising totally disproportionate and fundamental criticism against allied democracies – with whom Germany should actually be standing together all over the world for the sake of freedom and conflict solutions – raises serious doubts in my mind regarding the direction and the constructive application of Maas’ Middle East policy. It neither serves German interests in the region nor our moral values. It is time for Heiko Maas to not only talk about German responsibility, but also to represent German foreign policy through the Foreign Office in a worthy manner!”*<sup>9</sup>

Only an honest view of German history – and the right conclusions drawn from it – will make it possible to establish a moral standpoint from which current German interests can be classified. Germany’s commitment to the European Union and friendly relationships to its European partners, its trans-Atlantic relations and its stand for the security and well-being of Israel have all grown out of dealing with the horrors of the Third Reich and the Holocaust – and they are all absolutely legitimate. The extent to which they have been neglected and “put on the back burner” is the measure of the current lack of orientation and the schizophrenia between expectation and reality.

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7 <https://www.israelnetz.com/politik-wirtschaft/politik/2019/07/30/die-europaeer-sind-dem-iran-auf-den-leim-gegangen/>

8 <https://www.bild.de/politik/inland/politik-inland/michael-wolffsohn-die-doppelzuengige-solidaritaet-von-anti-antisemiten-63932586.bild.html>

9 <https://www.nzz.ch/meinung/die-aussenpolitische-bilanz-von-heiko-maas-ist-klaglich-ein-gastbeitrag-ld.1501376>