



## Progress report on the research project

### **THE INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES OF EUROPE AND THE ARISING SECURITY THREATS. THE CASE OF THE FEDERAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE OF GERMANY (BND)**

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# **1. THE SECRET SERVICES OF GERMANY**

Germany has the following three secret services:

- Federal Intelligence Service (BND),
- Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), and
- Military Counterintelligence Service (MAD)

The Berlin-based BND employs around 6500 people headed by Dr. Bruno Kahl. It gathers intelligence outside Germany's borders focusing mainly on halting the drug trade, money laundering, the illegal weapons trade and terrorism.

The Cologne-based BfV employs around 2700 people headed by Hans-Georg Maassen. It deals with threats inside Germany, including spies, jihadists and political extremists.

MAD employs around 1200 people headed by ? . It deals with espionage and sabotage in the German army and controls extremist attitudes and actions among the soldiers.

## **2. A CONCISE PROFILE OF BND**

BND was established in 1956. Its original structure and intelligence apparatus was based on the so called Gehlen Organization and it was originally influenced by the Cold War western pursuits, mainly of USA (CIA). BND is the world's second largest, after CIA, intelligence agency employing around 6500 personnel and having an annual budget of 1 bil. euros with a considerable part of its employees (600-700) being military personnel. Its headquarters are accommodated in an enormous complex in Berlin including the newly established intelligence school (ZNAF) in which around 700 students are studying, among them several foreigners. The old, Nazi era, secret service headquarters in Pullach serve now as the base of Germany's electronic eavesdropping operations. During its 66 years of life BND had 13 presidents with the first one being Reinhard Gehlen, a high ranking Wehrmacht officer and the current one Dr. Bruno Kahl.

BND was stigmatized by several scandals and controversies (Swiss Crypto Scandal, spying on foreign journalists etc.) mainly influenced by or being a by-product of its close association with CIA. On the other hand the German government, the Parliament and the Karlsruhe's Constitutional Court intervened effectively to put BND on the right, law-abiding, track.

The focal areas of BND operations are Turkey (mainly MIT operations inside Germany), Russia (mainly cyber attacks threat), China (mainly security concerns influenced and exaggerated by USA fears and policies regarding China its arch rival) and the Middle East (terrorism). We expect that Ukraine is now the main focal area of BND with the collection of intelligence regarding war crimes (on either side) being probably a hot issues that may offer Germany significant intervention capabilities regarding the future status of Ukraine. The controversial and risky? visit of BND's chief in Ukraine, coinciding with the beginning of Russian invasion there, exhibits the enormous negative impact the Ukrainian War is exerting on Germany.

## **2.1 The pursuits of general Reinhard Gehlen**

General Reinhard Gehlen, chief of the secret service of the Wehrmacht in the Eastern Front, had developed a vast network of information, particularly in Ukraine. Gehlen's office was among others active in misinformation and destabilizing actions. Immediately after the defeat of Nazi Germany Gehlen laid the services of a large part of the mechanism he had created in the Wehrmacht, to the service of the Americans while creating the first institutional and operational structures of security services of W. Germany. Gehlen was accused by some Western sources that:

- He kept secret a small but crucial part of the network and intelligence material from the West.
- He inflated the Soviet risk to weaken the pressures on W. Germany concerning the application of de-nazification policies, promoting instead for Germany the role of a "barrier state" against the Soviet aggression.

Gehlen was a great supporter of western, mainly American, pursuits during the Cold War and indirectly supported the relaxation of control of Americans on key sectors of W. Germany. Also, his organization contributed, through partner collaboration with European secret services (mainly American), the necessary "know-how" (operational, technical, informational) for developing parastatal organizations in many Western countries (Turkey, Greece , Italy , etc. ) .

These parastatal organizations were directly associated with the armed forces and secret services and had as main objective the armed or "underground" defense against Communist/Soviet threat expected to manifest itself either in the form of a direct military coup or groundwater destabilizing movements. These organizations were characterized by two main objectives:

- The design and implementation of terrorist attacks, which would then be 'attributed' to the Soviets or their allies, to create an atmosphere conducive to the implementation, if it become necessary, of a second and more critical pursuit
- Overturning a dangerous for the West regime by a military junta controlled by the NATO / CIA.

### **3. THE PRESIDENTS OF BND**

#### Reinhard Gehlen

Born in: Erfurt

Positions held: Lieutenant-general of Wehrmacht

Years of service: 12 (1956-1968)

#### Gerhard Wessel

Born in: Neumunster

Positions held: Officer of Reichswehr Army

Years of service: 10 (1968-1978)

#### Klaus Kinkel

Born in: Metzingen

Studies: law

Positions held: statesman, civil servant and diplomat

Years of service: 3 (1979-1982)

#### Eberhard Blum

Born in: Kiel

Studies: law and state science

Years of service: 3 (1982-1985)

#### Hans-Georg Wieck

Born in: Hamburg

Studies: history and philosophy

Positions held: diplomat

Years of service: 5 (1985-1990)

#### Konrad Porzner

Born in: Larrieden

Studies: finance (tax expert)

Positions held: politician, member of the Social Democratic Party

Years of service: 6 (1990-1996)

Controversies: involved in the Swiss Crypto Scandal characterized by the Washington Post as "the intelligence coup of the century"

### Hansjorg Geiger

Born in: Allgau

Studies: law, Ph.D. holder: thesis title "Constitutional problems of the influence of political parties at top federal bodies"

Positions held: civil servant, public prosecutor

Years of service: 2 (1996-1998)

### August Hanning

Born in: Nordwalde

Studies: law, Ph.D. holder

Positions held: politician, civil servant

Years of service: 7 (1998-2005)

### Ernst Uhrlau

Born in: Hamburg

Studies: political science

Years of service: 6 (2005-2011)

Outstanding achievement: organization of exchange between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah of the bodies of Israeli soldiers in 2004

### Gerhard Schindler

Born in: Kollig

Studies: legal science

Positions held: civil servant, law enforcement officer, member of the Free Democratic Party

Years of service: 5 (2011-2016)

### Bruno Kahl (years of service: 2016-)

[https://www.bnd.bund.de/EN/Home/home\\_node.html](https://www.bnd.bund.de/EN/Home/home_node.html)

1962 Born on July 12th in Essen, Germany, widowed, two children

1983 Law studies in Bonn, Germany, and in Lausanne, Switzerland. Ph.D holder.

1991 Legal clerkships in Bonn and Speyer, Germany, and in Sydney, Australia

1995 Desk officer in the Federal Chancellery

1996 Expert consultant in the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in the Bundestag

2005 Head of the Minister's Office and spokesman for Federal Minister Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble in the Federal Ministry of the Interior

2006 Head of the executive group at the Federal Ministry of the Interior

2010 Head of the executive group at the Federal Ministry of Finance

2011 Head of Division VIII (in charge of privatisations, investments and federal real estate) at the Federal Ministry of Finance

#### 4. CONTROVERSIES REGARDING BND

In 2013, Edward Snowden (WikiLeaks) exposed massive global surveillance by the US National Security Agency (NSA) which, as he insisted, was assisted by the BND and UK spy agency GCHQ.

In 2017 the German magazine Der Spiegel reported that at least 50 telephone numbers used by international journalists had been monitored by the BND among those reporters of BBC, Reuters and the New York Times.

The BBC expressed dismay over the above spy activities whereas BND made no comment on the report.

During an interview with Spiegel (20/3/2017, [1]) BND's president responded to questions regarding the above spy scandals as follows:

**SPIEGEL:** The whistle blowing platform WikiLeaks recently published sensitive information from inside the CIA. Should we be worried that the BND also peers into the private lives of German citizens by way of all manner of hacked devices, such as mobile phones, televisions, cars and even smoke alarms?

**Kahl:** Germans don't need to be worried about that. We have no interest in intruding on people's private lives. The BND has a clear legal mandate: We must obtain information from abroad that is important for the security of our country. The private lives of German citizens are completely irrelevant.

**SPIEGEL:** Will you continue to conduct surveillance on journalists?

**Kahl:** We will adhere to the rules that are now law. There are different levels for Germans, Europeans and those journalists who work and operate in non-European countries. If a foreigner in Raqqa claims to be a journalist, we are going to conduct surveillance anyway if he is affiliated with Islamic State.

[1] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39080256>

Regarding the WikiLeaks exposures on Crypto AG spying scandal BBC reported in (16/2/2020, [2]) the following: "For decades, US and German intelligence used Crypto AG Swiss company's encoding devices to spy on other countries, and the revelations this week have provoked outrage. From the Cold War into the 2000s, Crypto AG sold the devices to more than 120 governments

worldwide. The machines were encrypted but it emerged this week that the CIA and Germany's BND had rigged the devices so they could crack the codes and intercept thousands of messages".

[2] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51487856>

## **5. LEGAL ISSUES REGARDING BND**

### **5.1 Public grilling of Germany's top intelligence officials by a parliamentary committee**

Following the international and domestic outcry on BND spying scandals a parliamentary committee of Bundestag performed a public grilling of Germany's top intelligence officials. DW (5/10/2017, [3]) reported the following:

BvF head Hans-Georg Maassen said that "the biggest threat" when it comes to German security is Islamic terrorism. At the same time, there is a growing danger of violent right-wing and left-wing extremists, and as well as cyber espionage. According to Maassen, secret services need "a full toolbox, which allows them to solve present-day problems," instead of being dependent on the tools provided by their foreign allies.

BND chief Bruno Kahl said that secret services must adapt to the ever-changing issue of digitalisation adding that intelligence services, need to make sure that we keep up with these developments.

Clemens Binninger, the head of oversight committee and member of Christian Democrats, underlined that the hearing should be viewed as an attempt to take the secret services "out of the grey zone."

[3] <https://www.dw.com/en/german-spy-chiefs-face-public-grilling-by-lawmakers/a-40811010>

### **5.2 The Karlsruhe Constitutional Court hearings and ruling on the law regarding foreign spying activities of German intelligence services**

GERMAN FOREIGN SPYING LAW TESTED AT TOP COURT [DW] (14/1/2020)  
<https://www.dw.com/en/german-foreign-spying-law-tested-at-top-court/a-51997082>

....A wiretapping law introduced in 2017 to boost Germany's foreign intelligence agency in sweeps abroad is being challenged at the Constitutional Court. A verdict from the hearing is due later this year. The Constitutional Court on Tuesday began hearing a case brought by journalists against Germany's foreign intelligence service, the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND). The plaintiffs argue that mass BND surveillance abroad endangers the rights of citizens and journalists. The complainants are led by Germany's GFF civil rights association and include Reporters Without

Borders, six foreign journalists and a human rights lawyer. Following a law change, effective from January 2017, the BND has powers to collect and evaluate information about foreigners abroad, without the agency having to have legal justification. In pre-hearing remarks, BND chief Bruno Kahl said the so-called "groundless" scanning had become an "indispensable component" of his agency's work. As the two-day hearing opened, Matthias Bäcker, legal counsel for the media complainants, said that within the framework of its so-called "strategic signals gathering," the BND could target virtually any desired person. Under Germany's complex intelligence structure, the BND gathers foreign intelligence while the Cologne-based BfV agency oversees perceived domestic threats — alongside a swath of agencies run by each of Germany's 16 Länder (regional states). Tapping of telecommunications is a historically volatile issue in Germany, given its totalitarian Nazi past and post-war strictures, and remains topical in the wake of the 2013 American NSA scandal that exposed global practices of electronic intrusions into privacy.

#### 'Blanket and nonverifiable justifications'

Ulf Buermeyer, chairman of the GFF and himself a Berlin judge, said: "We have listened too long to blanket and nonverifiable assurances from intelligence agencies."

"The surveillance of telecommunications must always be [done] as an exception," said Buermeyer, who's association is coordinating the multiple constitutional complaints lodged by six foreign journalists and the national branch of Reporters Without Borders (RoG).

Christian Mihr, executive director of RoG's German branch, said the BND's "groundless" scanning abroad also impinged on journalists in Germany and had an "enormous intimidatory effect."

"When German journalists, who [under BND law] are not allowed to be placed under surveillance, work together with colleagues in other countries, who are [under BND law] allowed to be monitored — then they too will be caught in the web of strategic foreign reconnaissance," said Mihr, referring to a 2017 report by the newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*.

#### Informants fear global disclosure

That had confirmed prior suppositions that the BND monitored media outlets abroad and fears among informants that their communications landed long-term in databases that intelligence agencies worldwide could access, Mihr said. Journalists everywhere depended on reliably "good" sources for their work, he stressed. Media complainants assert that the BND law 'opens the door' to mass surveillance

#### 'Fatal' consequences for German military

Former BND chief Gerhard Schindler told the RND newspaper network ahead of Tuesday's court opener that curtailing the BND legally would have "fatal" consequences. "The protective role of the BND for our soldiers in Afghanistan or Mali would be directly affected," asserted Schindler. Germany's 1949 "constitutional fathers" would "turn over in their graves," he added, if they knew that communications by radical militias such as the Taliban or Islamic State (IS) would end up "protected by [Germany's] Basic Law." The Karlsruhe Constitutional Court hearing is due to run until Wednesday, with the judgement of its First Senate panel not expected for some months.

In late 2017, German authorities closed probes into allegedly specific American NSA spying within Germany.

COURT CURBS GERMAN SPY AGENCY'S BUGGING ABROAD [BBC News] ((19/5/2020)

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52725972>

**...Germany's highest court has ruled that laws allowing the country's BND foreign intelligence service to spy on foreigners' telecommunications outside Germany breach fundamental rights.** The Constitutional Court case was brought by foreign journalists, who say the ruling is a win for press freedom. The BND will no longer be able to monitor the emails or other data of foreigners abroad, without good reason. Currently some of that data is passed on to other countries' spy agencies. The key question considered by the court was whether the German state was bound by the protections of the constitution outside the country. The BND (Federal Intelligence Service) is already barred from snooping on German citizens' internet data abroad but the new ruling means that German spies will only be able to monitor foreign nationals abroad if

there is evidence of a threat. Among those bringing the case was the international organisation Reporters Without Borders, which advocates for press and information freedom globally. Speaking before the verdict, the head of the group's German office, Christian Mihr, said journalists had to be able to guarantee the safety of their sources. "We protect journalists so that they can go about their work, and doing work means that the sources, the informants that they have, can turn to them with confidence," he said. "With the lawsuit against the BND law, we want to strengthen the protection of sources and informants in the digital realm." Responding to the ruling, BND chief Bruno Kahl said: "What is new is that fundamental rights apply internationally, which the court has ruled on for the first time." He said the BND would help the government and parliament to amend the law, adding: "The protection of fundamental rights has to be considered, as well as fulfilment of the BND's mandate to keep Germany secure." The court gave the German government until the end of 2021 to amend the law that regulates the BND in response to its ruling.

## 6. ASSESSMENTS ON USA

### 6.1 The views of BND chief on USA-German security issues

GERMAN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF BRUNO KAHL INTERVIEW [SPIEGEL] (20/3/2017)

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-intelligence-chief-bruno-kahl-interview-a-1139602.html>

....SPIEGEL: As head of Germany's foreign intelligence agency BND, can you do without? U.S. President Donald Trump seems to be at risk of triggering a global crisis with just a single tweet.

Kahl: What the American president tweets can also be read elsewhere quickly enough. Plus, the U.S. is not one of our intelligence targets.

SPIEGEL: During the campaign, Trump said several times that torture tools such as water boarding are acceptable. The BND cooperates closely with U.S. intelligence agencies. Does Trump's position make you uncomfortable?

Kahl: Following the election, Trump's advisors quickly countered much of what he said as a candidate. And regarding torture, Trump said: If my secretary of defense, my secretary of state and my security advisor are against it, then we'll leave things as they are. Currently, we don't have any indications that the legal situation in the United States is going to change.

SPIEGEL: Trump's program is "America First." Is there concern that America's willingness to share information and terror warnings with German agencies will fade?

Kahl: Were "America First" to develop into a dogma in intelligence cooperation, that wouldn't be particularly amusing. Thus far, though, there is no indication that such cooperation is being reduced. I have great faith in the American institutions and am confident that, in the areas that are relevant to our work, sufficient sense and expertise will be exhibited by the new administration as well....

### 6.2 Cooperation of intelligence services of Europe and USA to encounter Russian threat

SPY CHIEF WARNS AGAINST RUSSIA'S MILITARY AMBITIONS [DW] (15/11/2017)

<https://www.dw.com/en/german-spy-chief-warns-against-russias-military-ambitions/a-41397335>

....Germany's top spy, Bruno Kahl, has delivered a dramatic warning about Russia's military ambitions in the European Union. But some analysts think that such alarmism only plays into the Kremlin's hands.

The president of Germany's foreign intelligence agency, the BND, has delivered his starkest warning yet about Russia's growing power. Speaking at the Hanns Seidel political foundation in Munich on Monday, Bruno Kahl outlined Russia's growing ambitions and questioned whether the European Union's defense capabilities are adequate.

Kahl said the BND had observed "unsettling" modernization and troop distribution on the part of Russia's army during the recent Zapad training exercises along the borders of the Baltic EU member countries. "In the entire military region in the west, but also in the south and the north, the scope of the armed forces has reached new heights," he said.

He also said the Kremlin was aiming to take a leading role on the European continent again. "Part of that is weakening the EU and pushing the US back and especially driving a wedge between the two," Kahl said. "To say it clearly: Instead of a partner for European security we have in Russia a potential danger. The world political actor Russia is back — and it will be an uncomfortable neighbor.

Bruno Kahl says Russia is going to be an "uncomfortable neighbor"

### **Drastic warnings**

Kahl's speech is being read as an unusual intervention by a figure who rarely makes his analyses public. The BND chief said it was imperative that German and European secret services work closely with their US counterparts.

"As president of the BND, I should say that the cooperation with the American intelligence agencies is an essential part of our power," Kahl said, before pointing out that the United States is the only nation with troops stationed on the world's three most critical geopolitical fronts: Eastern Europe, the Persian Gulf and East Asia.

The question that NATO and the international community at large needs to ask, Kahl said, is "whether their own defense and arms capabilities are sufficient."

The United States has "10 aircraft carriers that can be sent to international conflict zones in the shortest time," Kahl said. The US also has about 34,000 soldiers stationed in Germany, which "shows how tight the security bond between Berlin and Washington still is," he added. "It is only with the US that Europe will manage in the next few years to provide a credible counterweight to Russia on Europe's eastern flank."

Sebastian Schulte, the Germany correspondent for military magazine *Jane's Defence Weekly*, said Kahl's comments were "realistic, pragmatic, and echo the analysis of other observers."

"We are not talking enough about Russia's behavior towards the West, Europe and the Eastern European countries in particular, in the mainstream public sphere," Schulte said. "There is a low-intensity shooting war going on between Russia-backed forces and Ukraine, and the lack of public analysis that goes beyond the mere reporting of events is astounding."

### **Vladimir Putin is looking to drive a wedge between the EU and the US, Kahl says**

#### **'Alarmist terms'**

Mark Galeotti, senior researcher and head of the Centre for European Security at the Institute of International Relations Prague, believes that some of Kahl's observations could be true but said the overall argument was "framed in alarmist terms."

"Is it clear that Russia is much more assertive and aggressive and is it trying to essentially neutralize Europe? Yes, that's accurate," Galeotti said. "But I must admit I was surprised at the emphasis on the military dimension and the implication that Russia is a direct military threat, because that's inaccurate."

Galeotti pointed out that although the Kremlin is boosting its armed forces, Russia still likely has a long way to go before it catches up to NATO. "At least half the Russian military is still not properly modernized," he said. "And, what's more, if you look at European NATO countries, without thinking of the US and Canada, they have more ground troops than Russia has." Galeotti also pointed out that Russia has reduced its defense budget by 7 percent in the past year, and that the vast country is operating with an economy smaller than Germany's.

In Galeotti's analysis, Russia can realistically mobilize about 50,000 troops at any one time. "This is not the Soviet Red Army," he said. "This is not a force that could crash into Western Europe and take on NATO and expect to win."

Galeotti said there was an irony to such statements by figures of authority like Kahl. "When I talk to people I know in the Russian military, there is a degree of exasperation about how the West is alarmist about Russian intent and capacity," he said. "But there is also a degree of satisfaction, because the more Russia is played up as this great power with these phenomenal capabilities, that makes Russia more powerful. This kind of talk plays into Moscow's hands."

## 7. ASSESSMENTS ON TURKEY

### 7.1 The views of BND chief on Turkish-German security issues

GERMAN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF BRUNO KAHL INTERVIEW [SPIEGEL] (20/3/2017)

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-intelligence-chief-bruno-kahl-interview-a-1139602.html>

...SPIEGEL: In the fight against IS, Turkey is one of Germany's most important allies. Given those ties, what is your view of the recent friction between the German government and the regime of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan?

Kahl: It isn't my job to comment on relations between the German government and foreign governments. From the perspective of the rule of law, there have been developments in Turkey that are anything but reassuring. The question is: will the country remain a partner in the security alliance?

SPIEGEL: At the moment, Erdogan seems intent on worsening his relationship with the West.

Kahl: There are always better and worse phases. Intelligence agencies must also work together with states that don't conform to our constitutional principles. Because of its geographic location, we don't want to destroy these channels.

SPIEGEL: Erdogan has claimed that the cleric Fetullah Gülen was behind the coup attempt last July. More than 100,000 civil servants lost their jobs in the aftermath and thousands have been imprisoned. Was Gülen really behind the coup?

Kahl: Turkey has tried to convince us on a number of different levels. But they haven't yet been successful.

SPIEGEL: What is your explanation for the coup attempt against Erdogan? Was it staged by the government?

Kahl: The coup attempt wasn't staged by the state. Even before July 15, the government had launched a large wave of purges. That is why elements within the military thought they should quickly launch a coup before they too were purged. But it was too late and they were purged as well.

SPIEGEL: That doesn't sound like the kind of vast conspiracy of the kind that President Erdogan always claims.

Kahl: The consequences of the putsch that we have seen would have happened anyway, if perhaps not as deep and radical. The coup was likely just a welcome pretext.

SPIEGEL: Is the Gülen movement an extremist-Islamist movement? Is it perhaps even a terrorist group?

Kahl: The Gülen movement is a civilian association for religious and secular education. For years, it was a collection of tutoring centers and training facilities that worked together with Erdogan.

SPIEGEL: Would you call the movement a sect?

Kahl: I wouldn't say that. That's an explanation that is more prevalent in Western societies. One can, though, say that the Gülen movement wasn't a meaningless minority.

SPIEGEL: Loosely translated, Erdogan said that he wanted to shake up the world.

Kahl: Yes, that was a rhetorically interesting formulation. I wouldn't attach too much importance to his words, which were intended more for a domestic audience.

SPIEGEL: One could also interpret them as saying that Turkey has an interest in influencing German parliamentary elections in September.

Kahl: No. Turkey merely wants to influence the Turkish citizens who live in Germany with an eye toward the upcoming referendum on the constitutional amendment. Thus far, we have no indications that Turkey is seeking to interfere in the German elections. Others are doing so....

### 7.2 Tensions between Germany and Turkey and the Turkish intelligence operations in Germany

TURKEY SUMMONS GERMAN DIPLOMAT OVER BND CHIEF REMARKS ON GULEN [HURRIYET] (22/3/2017)

<https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-summons-german-diplomat-over-bnd-chief-remarks-on-gulen-111098>

...Last weekend, BND head Bruno Kahl told Der Spiegel news magazine that Germany had yet to be convinced of the group's involvement in the coup attempt. Also, German officials on March 18, allowed PKK supporters to march in Frankfurt with banners and flags despite a ban on the display of PKK symbols in public places. Germany had also angered Ankara by canceling referendum campaign events planned by Turkish ministers and Erdoğan. Ankara, however, insists the organization was behind the coup attempt, which resulted in 249 deaths. EU Minister Ömer Çelik told private broadcaster Haber Türk that Kahl's statement indicated Germany would protect a group that Turkey - its NATO ally - considered a terrorist organization. He also said Kahl's comments were "strange," as intelligence chiefs usually avoided being under the spotlight....

TURKEY'S INTELLIGENCE AGENCY SENT FILES ON GULENIST LIVING IN GERMANY TO BND: GERMAN MEDIA REPORT [HURRIYET] (28/3/2017)

<https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-intel-agency-sent-files-on-gulenists-living-in-germany-to-bnd-german-media-reports-111318>

...Turkey's National Intelligence Agency (MİT) has sent files regarding the followers of the U.S.-based Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen living in Germany to German Federal Intelligence Service (BND) after gathering information on them by spying, according to German media reports. Süddeutsche Zeitung, NDR and WDR said MİT had carried out spying activities and presented the information it gathered to BND at the Munich Security Conference in 2016. According to the reports, some 300 Gülenists living in Germany and nearly 200 schools and similar institutions affiliated to the group were on MİT's list. The list allegedly included the addresses, mobile and landline numbers, and secretly taken photos of those suspected of being members of the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ), widely believed to have been behind the July 15, 2016 failed coup attempt. BND head Bruno Kahl on March 18 told German magazine Der Spiegel that the Turkish government failed to convince them that Gülen was behind the coup attempt. "Turkey has tried on different levels to convince us of that fact, but they have not succeeded. What we saw following the coup would have happened regardless, maybe not on the same scale and with such radicalism," Kahl said, receiving harsh reactions from Turkish officials. Turkey has been in a bitter row with Germany and the Netherlands after the European countries blocked campaign events by Turkish ministers rallying to gain support for a "yes" vote in the upcoming constitutional referendum that will decide whether the current parliamentary system should be shifted into an executive presidency....

TURKEY CALLS IN GERMAN ENVOY TO PROTEST GULEN COUP COMMENTS [AFP NEWS AGENCY] (21/4/2017)

<https://news.yahoo.com/turkey-calls-german-envoy-protest-gulen-coup-comments-165220034.html>

...The foreign ministry said in a statement that the German charge d'affaires in Ankara was "invited" to the foreign ministry to hear a protest from Turkey. The statement said the link between Gülen and the coup was well established and Kahl's comments showed "the mentality behind Germany's tolerant and protective attitude" towards the group. Gülen denies any links to the coup. Tensions are running high between Berlin and Ankara after German authorities refused to allow some Turkish ministers to campaign in the country for a 'yes' vote ahead of the April 16 referendum on handing President....

TURKEY'S INTELLIGENCE AGENCY SENT FILES ON GULENIST LIVING IN GERMANY TO BND: GERMAN MEDIA REPORT [HURRIYET] (28/3/2017)

<https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-intel-agency-sent-files-on-gulenists-living-in-germany-to-bnd-german-media-reports-111318>

...After receiving the list of targeted Gülenists from Turkish MİT, the BND allegedly conveyed the files to the German government, Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Federal Prosecutor's Office, Federal Criminal Police Office, the police and the State Criminal Police Offices (LKA), which was followed by officials in the Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia states, warning that the names on the list were being watched by MİT. An LKA spokesperson, who did not want to be identified, told the German media that the names under MİT watch were warned that they would experience problems if they entered Turkish territories. In addition, the North Rhine-Westphalia police allegedly advised the suspected names to think thoroughly when deciding on whether to enter Turkish missions in Germany, saying that similar problems may occur there too. German security units have investigated how MİT had gathered the information, according to

the reports. Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ on March 21 said Kahl's remarks were "a mockery of Turkish people's intelligence," while Defense Minister Fikri Işık said the BND chief "is either blind, deaf or feels the need to hide the suspects of the coup attempt."....

BERLIN SUSPECTS TURKISH INTELLIGENCE OF TARGETING OPPOSITION IN GERMANY [THE ARAB WEEKLY] (30/5/2020)

<https://the arabweekly.com/berlin-suspects-turkish-intelligence-targeting-opposition-germany>

...Recent reports revealed that Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) has expanded its activities in Germany for years, while German authorities accused the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) in Berlin of carrying out intelligence work for the Turkish regime and receiving suspicious funds from Ankara. A new study issued by The Berlin-based European Centre for Counterterrorism and Intelligence Studies accused Ankara of using Islamic organisations and public institutions to spy on its opposition in Germany. Since a failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, tensions have increased between Ankara and Berlin, especially after the Turkish regime intensified its intelligence activities against its opponents. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has warned Turkey against conducting such covert operations, including those aimed at tracking alleged supporters of exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Erdogan blames for the coup attempt. The study also indicates that Ankara sees some of its citizens who live in Germany as opponents and adversaries, and considers German authorities as condoning their activities. Those linked to the Gulen movement are among the most prominent targets. Turkey is wary of the support the movement enjoys among segments of the German public and media, and considers that justification for its intelligence operations. German intelligence also confirmed that Turkey spies on members of the Bundestag (the German federal parliament) and collects information on them. A list stating entities, institutions and bodies infiltrated by Turkey names more than 300 people, the most prominent of whom are opponents of the government in Ankara, along with 200 institutions, schools and clubs. German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said that "what Ankara does in our country is unacceptable, regardless of its criticisms of the Gulen movement." Another political movement that Turkey targets is the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Ankara believes is being aided by Germany. Government connected research centres accuse Berlin of violating Turkey's anti-terrorism laws. On January 8, 2020, the SITA Institute claimed that Germany violated Section 129 in the Code Of Criminal Procedure regarding the prosecution of members of terrorist groups by welcoming sympathisers of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) that Ankara considers a terrorist group. Within Germany and in various other countries in the European Union, Turkey relies on institutions and organisations as intelligence arms. The most prominent is the DITIB. German authorities suspect DITIB reports back to the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyamet), Turkey's top religious authority, about alleged activities of supporters of the Gulen movement residing in Germany. The German government sought to limit DITIB's influence, suspecting its involvement with the Turkish government. In July 2018, the German Federal Ministry of the Interior announced that the government would not finance any of its projects. In September 2019, the BND considered putting the group on a probation list, according to Deutsche Welle.

### Increasing German intelligence concerns about Turkey is its relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood.

An intelligence report issued by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) warned of the growing security threat that the Muslim Brotherhood poses to Germany. There are indications of growing opposition in the German parliament to Turkish intelligence activities inside the country. A member of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Committee, Hans-Christian Strobele, called for the expulsion of Turkish intelligence agents, noting that he was sure some agents were working for Ankara on German soil. Hans stressed that his country maintains intelligence cooperation with NATO countries to combat terrorism, but does not deem the focus of Turkey's intelligence and espionage activities acceptable. The European Centre for Counterterrorism and Intelligence Studies recommended that Germany take stricter steps to deal with Turkish intelligence activities, provide protection to those targeted by them and build more awareness of such activities within the German parliament. It also recommended that Berlin receive guarantees from Ankara that the rights of German citizens of Turkish origin living in Germany are not violated, including when they visit Turkey....

## 8. ASSESSMENTS ON RUSSIA

### 8.1 The views of BND chief on Russia-German security issues

GERMAN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF BRUNO KAHL INTERVIEW [SPIEGEL] (20/3/2017)  
<https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-intelligence-chief-bruno-kahl-interview-a-1139602.html>

...SPIEGEL: America has accused Russia of significant interference in the presidential election there last November. Could the same thing happen here?

Kahl: We should at least plan for the possibility that it could happen here. In the past, we haven't just experienced it in Germany, but also in other regions of Europe where elections are approaching. Putin's goal hasn't changed: Despite Brexit and the new president in the U.S., Germany continues to support sanctions against Russia. This is something Putin would like to change. As such, it would make sense for him to make a small investment in the hope that the German election leads to change. That would be a motive.

SPIEGEL: A motive doesn't necessarily mean that any crime has been committed.

Kahl: We have to prepare for phenomena like those in Lithuania ...

SPIEGEL: ... where there were accusations of rape leveled at German soldiers ...

Kahl: ... small bits of fake news that find their way through the Russian media before making waves in social networks here. We have observed the pattern often enough. By making it transparent, we are of course hoping that Russia will be more careful. Putin doesn't have an interest in being caught red-handed.

SPIEGEL: What you are describing are just propaganda activities. But the Russians demonstrated years ago that they are capable of paralyzing an entire country. Estonia.

Kahl: There are reasons to believe that the attacks against the server in the German parliament were influenced by Russia. It followed the same pattern that was observed in operations targeting neighboring states.

SPIEGEL: Then it must frustrate you when the German government says that there isn't conclusive evidence for Russian participation. The relevant report written by the BND and the German domestic intelligence agency wasn't made public, despite initial promises to do so.

Kahl: That doesn't frustrate me. On the one hand, there is the small gap between evidence and proof that will hold up in court. On the other, our mission remains that of getting to the bottom of the incident.

SPIEGEL: How could Russia influence the German elections, aside from the standard propaganda?

Kahl: Think for a moment about the hacking attack on German parliament. There are many possibilities for how one could influence the German campaign.

SPIEGEL: Some say that WikiLeaks is also partially controlled by the Russians. Do you have any evidence of that?

Kahl: It is, at the very least, rather conspicuous that the propaganda I have just described reaches the public through three channels: the television channel RT, the website Sputnik and the whistleblowing platform WikiLeaks.

SPIEGEL: Who represents the greater threat: Russia or IS?

Kahl: I see terrorism at the very top of the danger list. That is the worry that is greatest among the population. Our agency has to get results. The Russian threat has become greater, which is why we are taking it extremely seriously. It isn't just the propaganda threat. Conventional issues are likewise returning to the agenda.

SPIEGEL: What do you mean?

Kahl: The things that are taking place militarily and with armaments. Russia has doubled its forces on its western border -- and we aren't just talking about Iskander missiles. There are also a lot of missiles in the Crimea region. And conventional armed forces. You can't interpret all that as being part of a defensive stance against the West. It also must be seen as a potential threat.

SPIEGEL: Particularly when you look at Russia's so-called Zapad military maneuvers, which will take place in cooperation with Belarus again this year. Are we soon going to be witness to a Russian invasion of the Baltics?

Kahl: There is a tank army based in western Russia. If it advances into Belarus as part of these maneuvers, I'll be interested to see if anyone will seek to justify it as a defensive tactic.

SPIEGEL: Edward Snowden, who made the tactics of intelligence agencies more transparent than ever before, is still in Russia. Looking back, were the revelations he made public exclusively negative from an intelligence perspective or was there a positive side to them as well?

Kahl: By the time I took office, the Snowden issue was basically over. But from my perspective, nobody can welcome a situation in which new security risks arise because secret information is made public. I think the damage is greater than the benefits....

## 8.2 The Russian cyberattacks threat

BRUNO KAHL: RUSSIAN HACKERS TARGETING GERMANY. STATE-BACKED ACTORS WILL PUT PRESSURE ON ELECTIONS [POLITICO] (29/11/2016)

<https://www.politico.eu/article/german-intelligence-chief-russian-hackers-targeting-us-bruno-kahl-vladimir-putin/>

...Germany is likely to be the target of Russian cyberattacks ahead of national elections in 2017, warned the head of its federal intelligence service. There is evidence that "cyberattacks are taking place with no other motive than to cause political uncertainty," said Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) President Bruno Kahl in an interview with Süddeutsche Zeitung published Tuesday. Kahl, appointed to the role in July, described targeted interference campaigns directed from outside the country that "put pressure on open discourse and on democracy," which he called "unacceptable." There are strong indications that Russia had a hand in the data hacks and spread of fake news that took place during the American election campaign, Kahl said, adding there were reasons to believe the cyberattacks were tolerated or even condoned by the state. Europe is likely to become Russia's next target, he said. "Europe is now the focus of these interference attempts, and Germany in particular," Kahl said, adding that trolls have become increasingly active in disseminating disinformation on the German-speaking internet since the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine. Kahl did not identify a particular party or candidate as the target of potential attacks. "The perpetrators are mostly interested in delegitimizing the democratic process," he said. "No matter whom they help get ahead." German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed similar concerns earlier this month. Asked whether Germany could expect cyberattacks similar to those that marked the U.S. election, Merkel said dealing with Russian misinformation efforts and online attacks had already become "a daily task" for her government....

## 8.3 Russian hacking threats to critical infrastructure

GERMAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES WARN OF RUSSIAN HACKING THREATS TO CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE [CYBERSCOOP] (26/5/2020)

<https://www.cyberscoop.com/german-intelligence-memo-berserk-bear-critical-infrastructure/>

...A Kremlin-linked hacking group has continued its long-running efforts to target German companies in the energy, water and power sectors, according to a confidential German government advisory obtained by CyberScoop. Investigators earlier this year uncovered evidence of the hackers' "longstanding compromises" at unnamed German companies, according to the memo that German intelligence and security agencies sent last week to operators of critical infrastructure. The hacking group — dubbed Berserk Bear and suspected by some industry analysts of operating on behalf of Russia's FSB intelligence agency — has been using the supply chain to access the German companies' IT systems, said the alert from the BSI, BND, and BfV federal agencies. "The attackers' goal is to use publicly available but also specially written malware to permanently anchor themselves in the IT network...steal information or even gain access to productive systems [OT networks]," the advisory said. There was no evidence of a disruptive attack on any company's industrial networks, German authorities said. The agencies did not respond to a request for comment. Berserk Bear is best known in the U.S. for a years-long campaign to collect data on U.S. energy companies, which the Trump administration blamed on the Russian government in 2018. It is one of a handful of hacking teams that Moscow can call on to spy on industrial computer networks, analysts say. Another group — known as Sandworm and believed to be operating on

behalf of Russia's GRU military intelligence agency — gained notoriety for cutting off power in Ukraine in 2015 and 2016. Berserk Bear is less conspicuous. They have used “waterholing,” or infecting websites and then picking off high-value login credentials, to compromise the IT networks of critical infrastructure companies in Europe and North America. In 2018, the hacking group “conducted extensive, worldwide reconnaissance across multiple sectors, including energy, maritime and manufacturing,” and also targeted U.S. government organizations, according to a report from cybersecurity company CrowdStrike. This is far from German firms' first encounter with Berserk Bear. In 2018, the BSI — one of Germany's main cybersecurity agencies — also accused the hacking group of trying to breach the IT networks of German energy and power companies. Robert M. Lee, CEO of industrial cybersecurity company Dragos, said his analysts were aware of the group's history — and that of a related set of hackers his company calls “Allanite” — of targeting German and U.S. electric utilities. “They have been aggressive and targeted numerous utilities, including those in the U.S., over the last couple years,” Lee said. “To date, they haven't shown the capability or intent to disrupt [utilities'] operations. Given their focus on industrial control systems and wide targeting, though, we continue to track them and report on them to the community.” Sven Herpig, a cybersecurity expert with the German think tank SNV, welcomed the advisory and urged German companies to heed the warning. The memo has “concrete recommendations of how to spot and protect against an intrusion” from Berserk Bear, he said. The Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C., did not respond to a request for comment on the German agencies' report.

#### FBI joins other intelligence agencies in warning about Russia

The FBI's top cyber official called Russia a “formidable foe” in an oversight hearing Tuesday by the House Judiciary Committee. “We have an absolute strategic warning that Russia plans to hit us. We will do our best among our interagency partners to provide more real-time updates as we already have for specific sectors,” Bryan Vorndran, assistant director at the FBI's cyber division, testified to the committee.

## **9. ASSESSMENTS ON CHINA**

### **9.1 Recent history of German-Chinese relations**

HOW GERMANY OPENED THE DOOR TO CHINA — AND THREW AWAY THE KEY. ECONOMIC TIES HAVE CAUSED BERLIN TO TREAD LIGHTLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS [POLITICO] (10/9/2020)

<https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-china-economy-business-technology-industry-trade-security/>

In the fall of 1984, Helmut Kohl traveled to China with German industry in tow on a mission to harness what he predicted would be a “century-long modernization” effort. After overseeing the groundbreaking of Volkswagen's first Chinese factory in Shanghai, Kohl returned home, telling parliament that he and Chinese leaders had resolved to build a “stable, long-term partnership.” Kohl's prophecy came true, convincing a generation of German political and business elites that China held the key to Germany's long-term prosperity. What they forgot to consider is what to do if Beijing used that key to lock them into an economic relationship they couldn't escape from.

Germany's big industrial companies — including engineering behemoth Siemens, car giant Volkswagen and chemical maker BASF — were among the first Western companies to make big bets on China in the 1980s and they've flourished there ever since. “We're going to get the Chinese off bicycles,” Volkswagen patriarch Ferdinand Piëch boasted as the company ramped up production of its coveted Santana model in China in the early 1990s. Last year alone, Germany exported nearly €100 billion worth of goods to China, accounting for more than half of the value of all EU exports to the country. Germany bought even more from China than it exported there, making the country its biggest overall trading partner. While the U.S. remains Germany's biggest export market overall, China drives the country's export growth. Even in the midst of the pandemic, China has remained a crucial pillar, with German exports returning to pre-crisis levels, while the U.S. has declined. In addition to the exports, scores of German companies produce locally in China and show no signs of drawing back. Just in May, BASF began work on a large-scale, high-tech plastics factory complex in the south of the country. The \$10 billion project

represents the largest single investment in the company's 155-year history. For BASF, China "isn't just the biggest market, it's the fastest growing," said CEO Martin Brudermüller. That reliance is the main reason Chancellor Angela Merkel has preferred to ignore calls for decisive action on China in response to its actions in Hong Kong and elsewhere, opting instead for a wait-and-see approach in the hope the tensions would dissipate.

## 9.2 The complexity of German-Chinese relations and the American concerns

MERKEL LOOKS EAST AS TIES FRAY-BETWEEN GERMANY AND US [POLITICO] (8/7/2020)

<https://www.politico.eu/article/merkel-looks-east-as-ties-fray-between-germany-and-us/>

....As Germany reappraises its long-standing reliance on the United States amid growing tensions with Washington over security and trade, there is less doubt among the country's leaders about the necessity to re-energize its partnership with China, Germany's largest trading partner. While China has come under criticism across much of the Western world, in particular in the U.S. and U.K., for not being more transparent about the origins of the coronavirus outbreak and, more recently, for its suspension of democratic norms in Hong Kong, the German government has been more cautious in its response. Asked during a press conference last week whether she would support the kind of sanctions against China under consideration in the U.S., Merkel evaded the question. Berlin's priorities *vis-à-vis* China have also had a profound impact on the EU's own approach. "The ties to China are important," Merkel stressed, adding "they are of strategic importance." In fact, it's difficult to overstate the importance of China as an export market for German goods, especially cars and machinery. Since Merkel took over as chancellor in 2005, German exports to China have risen fivefold to just under €100 billion last year. While some economists argue that Chinese demand for German capital goods is waning as its economy matures, the country remains a pillar of Berlin's economic strategy and a key driver of growth....

HOW GERMANY OPENED THE DOOR TO CHINA — AND THREW AWAY THE KEY. ECONOMIC TIES HAVE CAUSED BERLIN TO TREAD LIGHTLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS [POLITICO] (10/9/2020)

<https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-china-economy-business-technology-industry-trade-security/>

....Though Europe declared China a "systemic rival" last year and has adopted a more forceful tone on issues such as Chinese acquisitions of strategic European companies, it has yet to articulate a detailed strategy, calling instead for a "flexible and pragmatic" approach. As Europe weighs what course to take in the face of Beijing's growing belligerence at home and abroad, it has become increasingly clear that the decision depends on Berlin, far and away China's most important counterpart in the region. Equally clear is that Germany's economic entanglement with China has become so extensive that reversing it is no longer a realistic option. So far, they haven't. Washington has been pressuring Europe to pick sides in its standoff with China, a simmering geopolitical dispute many fear could devolve into another Cold War, or worse. Though Europe declared China a "systemic rival" last year and has adopted a more forceful tone on issues such as Chinese acquisitions of strategic European companies, it has yet to articulate a detailed strategy, calling instead for a "flexible and pragmatic" approach. In any discussion with a German official about the country's relationship with China, the word "complicated" will be repeated many times. Germans tend to describe the ties as "multilayered" and "nuanced" and highlight the different approaches to China taken by Merkel's chancellery, the foreign office and the economy ministry. In truth, the relationship couldn't be more straightforward. For years, Berlin has pursued a two-pronged strategy toward China, quietly rapping Beijing on the knuckles for human rights abuses in places like Tibet, even as German companies invested untold billions in the Chinese market, helping to transform the *Reich der Mitte* (Middle Kingdom), as Germans wistfully refer to China. In retrospect, the to and fro looks more like an elaborate choreography that benefited both sides by keeping politics and business neatly separate; while Germany pretended to be upset over China's human rights abuses, Beijing feigned offense at Berlin's "intrusion into its domestic affairs." That tacit understanding explains why the ever-cautious Merkel has been willing over the years to take seemingly provocative steps, such as hosting the Dalai Lama (twice for "private" visits in the Berlin chancellery) and Hollywood actor Richard Gere, a tireless advocate for the Tibetan cause and a regular target of Chinese propaganda. Though greeted with enthusiasm in Germany, the meetings were met with immediate indignation in Beijing. And then promptly forgotten. Germany

also hasn't shied from offering a safe haven to Chinese dissidents, from artist Ai Weiwei to Hong Kong democracy activist Nathan Law. It recently joined other Western countries in suspending its extradition treaty with Hong Kong after China imposed its controversial new security law on the territory in June. China complained on cue and, as ever, business ties between the two countries trundled along, unabated. Since becoming chancellor in 2005, Merkel has traveled to China a dozen times. Her last visit, together with a large business delegation, came a year ago last September, amid a crackdown against democracy protestors in Hong Kong. "Solutions can only be achieved through dialogue," Merkel said of the standoff between democracy protestors and the government. As if to prove the point, Merkel, sitting alongside Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, crowned her visit by overseeing the signing of 13 business deals between German and Chinese executives in the Great Hall of the People on (of all places) Tiananmen Square. For a long time, Germans reasoned that China, aside from the great economic opportunity it represented, wasn't really their business. Tibet has been a perennial pet cause for the country's hippie set for decades, but not an issue that has gotten much traction in the broader public. Most Germans considered China a faraway place with a different mentality and mores, fundamentally "other." In contrast to the U.S., for example, the cultural ties between Germany and China are limited. Relatively few Germans speak Chinese or have ever visited the country. As is true for many Europeans, the greatest exposure most Germans have had to Chinese culture is using chopsticks. Though German politicians often parroted American conventional wisdom on China — that economic liberalization would pave the way to democratic reform — few of those who claimed to know the country best, Germany's business elite, ever really believed that would happen. "We can't judge the Chinese according to our standard of values, or our cultural or humanistic ideals," Jürgen Herhaus, a billionaire businessman who spent decades dealing with China, including as the Asia point man for Germany's main industry lobby, told business daily Handelsblatt earlier this year. "They simply function differently and even have a different relationship to life and death." That sentiment, widely shared, if rarely expressed publicly, has informed German policy on China since Kohl. Yet recent events have begun to challenge German business' fatalistic approach to China. A combination of factors, from the crackdown in Hong Kong to revelations about China's abuse of its Uighur minority and their internment in "re-education camps," to fears that Beijing could surreptitiously export its surveillance state to Germany via 5G technology, have triggered reappraisal of China by the German public. While none of the issues is particularly new, the fallout from the pandemic seems to have crystallized the China question in Germans' minds. China's obfuscation about the origins of the virus, coupled with its ham-fisted propaganda effort to cast itself in the role of Europe's savior, backfired, sowing distrust. "We've seen a change in the level of trust, which used to be very high," said Janka Oertel, director of the Asia program at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "Now it's very low." Even before the German public woke up to the threat China poses, German business had also become more skeptical, albeit for different reasons. While most in German industry didn't expect China to give up on authoritarianism anytime soon, they did believe the country would open itself up to more competition, just as the West had done for China. One long-standing priority for Germany and other Western investors was for China to end the stipulation that foreign companies have a local joint venture partner, a tactic China has used with great success to absorb Western knowledge and expertise. Another was that China do more to curtail intellectual property theft of Western technology. Even if the Chinese remained under authoritarian rule, German businesses hoped their world would be liberated. That expectation all but died in 2017 when President Xi Jinping cemented his hold on power. Instead of withdrawing the government and Communist Party from the corporate sphere, Xi strengthened their hand. Many companies have been forced to give the Communist Party an explicit role in corporate decision-making. A recent cybersecurity law that forces companies to grant Chinese authorities access to their networks fueled fears among foreign firms that they would be powerless to protect their trade secrets. "Xi Jinping set clear, new accents for the Chinese leadership and communicated them to the outside world in a way we hadn't seen before," said Friedolin Strack, the head of the Asia division at the Federation of German Industry (BDI), the country's main industry lobby. "It's not that we were naive about China before, but rather that they went through a relatively dramatic transformation." China's aggressive turn forced German industry to engage in a radical rethink. In early 2019, the BDI published a paper by Strack and his team calling for a tougher approach on China. The message: The West's strategy for

opening China had failed. China would not become a liberal, market-driven economy, the report concluded. It was, Strack says, a “wake-up call,” both for Europe and China. A unified EU response was Europe’s only hope, the BDI argued. The report made 54 recommendations, including everything from higher spending on R&D to tougher controls against price dumping by Chinese firms. In Berlin and Brussels, the BDI report is often cited as a watershed moment. If even German industry, the greatest champion for deeper engagement with China, was beginning to worry about the long-term implications of the strategy, something must be amiss. Yet the report was controversial within the German business community itself. Smaller firms, which are most exposed to unfair Chinese competition, welcomed the call for a new approach. But Germany’s blue-chip industrial giants, which have an easier time protecting themselves in China because of their scale, worried that the tone of the report would do lasting damage. The main worry in Germany’s *Mittelstand*, the medium-sized businesses that form the country’s industrial backbone, is that sometime in the not-so-distant future, China won’t need them anymore. The reason German exports to China have remained so robust over the years is that German engineering is still superior. That’s particularly true of German machinery-makers, the country’s so-called hidden champions. But China is catching up. In the past, German industrial companies combatted China’s attempts to steal their technology by holding back their latest innovations from the Chinese market. In most cases, even if the gear they sold to China wasn’t state-of-the-art, it was generally superior to what Chinese suppliers could offer. That strategy has become increasingly difficult as Chinese rivals have become more sophisticated, forcing German companies to put their top-shelf offerings on the Chinese market. For German industry as a whole, the long-term question is whether access to China’s vast market is worth the risk. “We have created a massive competitor in exactly the businesses that we’re good at and we are being squeezed out of the market,” Oertel said. “That is not a positive outlook, so in the long run, German policy will have to adapt.” But will it? A genuine shift would require German to accept the economic fallout. China hasn’t shied from using its economic leverage in trying to cow other trading partners that have dared challenge it, notably Australia. So far, German action on China has been limited to rhetoric. In a sign of how rare direct criticism of China is in Berlin, a veiled rebuke by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas last week of his Chinese counterpart for threatening a Czech politician over a trip to Taiwan was widely hailed as a “new direction.” In 2007, a three-year program called “Germany and China: Moving Ahead Together” launched, including a touring exhibition of German companies like BASF throughout China. German opposition leaders say a real shift will require more than a few choice words. Omid Nouripour, a Green member of the German parliament’s foreign affairs committee, said Germany should start focusing less on business relations with China and more on Beijing’s record on human rights and the rule of law. “Germany needs to take a much clearer stance,” he said, adding that it was essential to do so together with the rest of the EU. But Nouripour also cautions against the kind of “full confrontation” U.S. President Donald Trump has pursued, a course he says is counterproductive. Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, a senior MP with Germany’s opposition Free Democrats who focuses on foreign policy, said that while the German establishment had been slow to understand the Chinese threat, it was slowly coming around. “In the long run I think we’ll see Germany alongside democracies like the U.S., Japan and the U.K. in standing up to China and pursuing a more sober, rational and less naive policy,” he said. At the moment, there are few signs of an awakening. Both Merkel and her key ministers, including Economy Minister Peter Altmaier, have shown no inclination to abandon the status quo on China. In July, Altmaier told POLITICO that he still believed in “transformation through trade,” with China. At times, it can seem like Germany’s discussion about China is taking place in a parallel universe. On Wednesday evening, for example, the Bundestag, Germany’s parliament, gathered to debate the China policy at the behest of the Greens. The ostensible purpose was the EU’s video summit with Chinese leaders, scheduled for next week. Jürgen Trittin, a senior Green MP, took to the podium with guns blazing. “In China, economic growth and the tightly bound globalized world go hand in hand with less rule of law, less freedom and total surveillance,” he thundered. “China is not a strategic partner. China is a difficult partner.” Niels Annen, a Social Democratic deputy foreign minister, defended his government’s soft China policy with a flourish of alternative facts. “Human rights are a central element of our China policy,” Annen insisted. He went on to upbraid the U.S. for “demonizing” China and said he hoped China and Europe would find a compromise on an investment agreement they have been negotiating for several years that would ease

restrictions on European companies in China. “We’re prepared for a partnership,” Annen said, as if one didn’t already exist. Some see Merkel’s pending departure — her government’s term ends in a year, and she does not plan to stand for reelection — as a chance for Germany to reposition itself vis a vis China, especially if the Greens join the next government as is widely expected. If Joe Biden wins the U.S. presidency, Germany would be more willing to lock arms with Washington, many argue. Omid Nouripour, a Green member of the German parliament’s foreign affairs committee, cautions against the kind of “full confrontation” U.S. President Donald Trump (above, with Chinese President Xi Jinping) has pursued, a course he says is counterproductive | Nicolas Asfour/AFP via Getty Images The economic realities tell a different story. With Europe still reeling under the effects of the pandemic, U.S. demand depressed and a messy Brexit on the horizon, China is about the only thing keeping Germany’s economy from falling through the floor. The same was true in the wake of the financial crisis in 2008 and 2009, when Chinese demand fueled Germany’s V-shaped recovery. Will whoever is leading Germany a year from now really risk the country’s economic relationship with China over Hong Kong or the Uighurs? Unlikely. A more realistic scenario is that Berlin will follow Merkel’s carrot and stick approach, with the emphasis on the former, much in the way it has dealt with Russia. Over the past year, Germany determined that Russia assassinated a Chechen rebel in broad daylight in central Berlin and hacked into the Bundestag’s computer system. It now suspects the Kremlin of poisoning Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent. The German government’s response? It *might* put its Baltic pipeline project with Moscow on ice. (More than half of Germans are against halting construction, according to a poll released this week.) It’s worth keeping in mind that Germany’s economic relationship with Russia — even before international sanctions were imposed on the country — is negligible compared with what it has built with China. For better or worse, Kohl’s goal of tethering Germany’s fortunes to China worked, and now there’s no going back. Whatever qualms Germans may have about China at the moment, looking the other way on human rights in exchange for prosperity is not a tradeoff they’ve ever objected to in the past. German exports are about more than good business, Kohl told reporters during his China visit in 1984. They create “jobs, lift GDP, ensure social security for a lot of people and, ultimately, a bit of private happiness.”....

GERMANY’S PAINFUL WRIGGLE BETWEEN CHINA AND THE US [NIKKEI ASIA] (28/12/2020)

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Germany-s-painful-wriggle-between-China-and-the-US>

...While most Germans see close bilateral relations with the U.S. as being more important than with China, there are signs of ambivalence seeping into German attitudes. And while many Germans believe that bilateral relations will return to normal under the incoming Biden administration, this does not mask two major foreign policy dilemmas that now confront Berlin. The first concerns Washington's demands for a generally tougher stance toward China and a decoupling of economic ties that have grown close and very lucrative, especially, for Germany's car industry. China is Germany's largest trading partner -- shipments totaled about 200 billion euros in 2019 -- and it became Germany's most important export market in the second quarter of 2020. On the back of increasingly close and diversified commercial ties, Germany and China have developed a close political relationship, which they designate a comprehensive strategic partnership that includes about 80 specific high-level dialogue arrangements for bilateral political consultations. German public opinion about China has declined considerably in recent years -- polls show that two-thirds of respondents have a negative view of China -- and German business has also grown disenchanted with Beijing's increasingly robust state interventions in favor of Chinese national champions. But neither group seriously wants to sever the many and varied ties between the two countries....

## **10. THREATS FACED BY EUROPE. THE PERCEPTION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

In a survey conducted by the "Listen to Europe" (<https://listentoeurope.info/germany-threats/>) the following 13 European countries participated: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain.

The following list contains the countries with the lowest and highest percentage of “agree” together with Germany (1 for lowest "agree" percentage and 13 for highest "agree" percentage).

1. POLITICAL EXTREMISM: The percentage of people who agree and strongly agree “political extremism” is a threat to country’s democracy and political institutions:

Germany 38% (1), Austria 76% (13)

2. GLOBALIZATION: The percentage of people who agree “globalization” is a threat to country: Denmark 25% (1), Germany 34% (3), Greece 53% (13)

3. IMMIGRATION: The percentage of people who agree country would be stronger if we stopped all immigration:

Spain 26% (1), Germany 41% (6), Bulgaria 55% (13)

4. HUMAN RIGHTS: The percentage of people who agree that immigrants are human beings and it is our duty to help them:

Spain 65% (13), Germany 49% (8), Estonia 31% (1)

5. LEADERSHIP QUALITY: The percentage of people who are more likely to support a political leader who warns that a country is facing many threats:

Netherlands 16% (1), Germany 23% (2), Bulgaria 57% (13)

## 11. ASSESSMENTS ON TERRORISM

According to BND the major international concern regarding terrorism is associated with the globalization of a terrorist organizations strategy of violence. In the above context terrorist groups may pursue different political and ideological objectives but have similar strategies of violence. And they all count on the same psychological effect: spreading fear and terror. Furthermore, the multi-dimensional globalization process enables terrorism to move across the globe, from country to country, quickly and effectively. BND assesses that even after the so-called Islamic State (IS) lost its entire territory in Iraq and Syria, it remains the most dangerous terrorist group at the moment. The BND expects IS to continue to stay active both in those regions and through its international network of supporters.

To encounter the terrorism threat domestically BND pursues close cooperation among German security agencies by giving emphasis on fighting new threats in cyberspace and offering SIGINT support to cyber defense. To encounter the terrorism threat internationally BND pursues cooperation with international partners, in the Western hemisphere or in crisis areas and undertakes operations abroad. As it is stated in its official website BND supports Federal Government's policies to solve conflicts like those in Ukraine or Mali, contributing to the decision-making process on foreign and security policy matters.

### 11.1 BND's anti-terrorist department

From an interview of Bruno Kahl with DER TAGESSPIEGEL (16/2/2018) <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/bnd-chef-bruno-kahl-im-interview-es-ist-schwierig-in-afghanistan-von-erfolgen-zu-sprechen/20969760.html>

*...How can one imagine the work of the anti-terrorist department? What tools can she use?*

The Counter-Terrorism Department came into existence shortly before September 11, 2001, when international terrorist organizations became increasingly prominent. This can fall back on the usual means and sources: i.e. the eavesdropping on radio signals and other electronic signals, which we call signal intelligence, or sigint for short, and the use of human sources, which we call human intelligence, or humint for short. In addition, there are modern technical aids such as satellites and the evaluation of social media and evidence. For example, we try to keep an eye on jihadists who

come from Germany and are staying somewhere in Syria or Iraq, so that we can also see when they start their journey back....

## 11.2 German security forces capabilities to prevent terrorism

PREVENTING TERRORISM: WHAT POWERS DO GERMAN SECURITY FORCES HAVE? [DW] (17/9/2017)

<https://www.dw.com/en/preventing-terrorism-what-powers-do-german-security-forces-have/a-40546608>

...According to this DW report, since deadly terror attacks in Europe show little sign of waning, Germany's threat level remains high, forcing German officials to revise and tighten country's surveillance laws, while counter-terrorism measures continue to be expanded. In the above threatening context, the German government, in 2017, added an unprecedented spate of new public surveillance laws to Germany's Criminal Code, increasing at the same time the number security cameras installed across cities and sanctioning federal police to wear body cams while on patrol. The German security forces powers to prevent terrorism are enhanced by expanding their "stop and search" and "detention without charge" capabilities, tightening "checks at the borders" and easing deportations....

## 11.3 Capabilities of BND to combat terrorism and legal limitations

From an interview of Bruno Kahl with DER TAGESSPIEGEL (16/2/2018) <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/bnd-chef-bruno-kahl-im-interview-es-ist-schwierig-in-afghanistan-von-erfolgen-zu-sprechen/20969760.html>

***...Should the Bundeswehr show more presence again, also with combat units?***

The Federal Government and the Bundestag will have to decide on this. The BND provides information on the situation, but does not make any recommendations.

***The President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Hans-Georg Maassen, says he would like new instruments for his toolbox. Are you perfectly happy?***

In recent years, the BND has received a lot in terms of legislation, as well as in terms of personnel and material resources. But it's never easy to sit back and relax. Technical progress alone shows time and again that nothing is so good that it cannot be made even better. We can certainly imagine further improvements, including in legislation.

The endless construction site. Can anyone remember a time without barriers and dust? Long ago. In January 2019 is...

***What's missing in your toolbox?***

Today, communication via smartphones is often encrypted. This applies to social networks and messenger services. It is very difficult to keep track of ongoing communication with the current means. If there was a way to install a trojan on a terrorist suspect's cell phone to track the chats, it would help us a lot. The Federal Criminal Police Office has this authority for Germany. We don't have them for intelligence work abroad. But this is an issue that needs to be discussed in political bodies. The BND can only say what it thinks is necessary.

***In your opinion, what improvements has the new BND law brought about?***

The BND now has a solid foundation on which to practice its communications intelligence abroad. This means an increase in legal certainty and legitimacy. But this has made the work more complex and there are more bureaucratic requirements to be met. But it also helps us to prove that our work is not in doubt.

***Because it is now allowed to monitor phone calls and emails from other governments in the EU too?***

This must be applied for and approved by the independent committee set up specifically for this purpose in Karlsruhe.

***So now wiretapping among friends is allowed....***

It's not about bugging friends, it's about the fact that individuals and institutions in Europe cannot be left out when it comes to bugging security threats. That's what the legislature decided.

***Foreign journalists must now also expect to be targeted by the BND. The Society for Freedom Rights has therefore filed a complaint against the amendment to the BND law with the Federal Constitutional Court...***

Nothing has changed in the legal situation. In Germany, too, intelligence services are allowed to monitor communications involving journalists if the G-10 Commission of the German Bundestag agrees. The fact that a foreigner poses as a journalist abroad cannot protect the person from measures that are necessary and proportionate for security reasons.

***But "real" journalists abroad would also be affected...***

If there are journalists in the IS area of operations who communicate with IS and they are therefore on our radar, I don't see why we should stop the interception just because there is a journalist on the other end of the cable. When he talks to an IS man, what he says is of interest. This would have no consequences for the journalist. As long as he only talks to the IS man and doesn't arouse the suspicion that he belongs there himself, no authorities will bother him. It is important for the BND to determine security-related content. It's not about persecuting journalists.

## **11.4 BND's cooperation with foreign countries and agencies**

From an interview of Bruno Kahl with DER TAGESSPIEGEL (16/2/2018) <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/bnd-chef-bruno-kahl-im-interview-es-ist-schwierig-in-afghanistan-von-erfolgen-zu-sprechen/20969760.html>

**...Is it then inevitable that the BND will cooperate with the intelligence services of authoritarian states such as Russia, China and Turkey?**

yes we do too. We also exchange information with states that have not organized their political system according to our ideas. Conversely, we do not withhold any information that could prevent attacks in these countries. It is a good sign that states, no matter how foreign, are helping each other to save lives and prevent harm.

**Is that also possible with the regime of the Syrian dictator Assad?**

Of course, we are also trying to establish contacts with Syria that are necessary to avert damage. That includes getting information about ISIS, Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups that we can get.

**What are the limits of cooperation with other intelligence services?**

We have 450 intelligence partners in the world. We try to work with anyone who can provide us with information.

**Who are the most important partners in the fight against terror?**

We have strategic partnerships with the major western services, particularly in the US, France and the UK. And we work successfully with the regional services in the hotspots of Islamist terrorism. In this network, a large part of the relevant information that helps us to prevent attacks is accrued.

**How has the NSA affair affected working with the NSA? The US foreign intelligence service has already given crucial tips on the subject of terrorism.**

First of all, we took our foot off the accelerator a bit in order to put the data exchange on a new legal basis. We agreed the new rules with the Americans. Now the cooperation is very intensive again and we still get valuable tips....

## **11.5 BND's assessments on Islamic State's situation in Syria, Iraq and Africa**

GERMAN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF BRUNO KAHL INTERVIEW [SPIEGEL] (20/3/2017)

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-intelligence-chief-bruno-kahl-interview-a-1139602.html>

....SPIEGEL: What is your assessment of Islamic State's current situation in Syria and Iraq?

Kahl: In contrast to other terror organizations, IS seeks to bring territory under its control. Currently, that is being taken from it; IS is losing territory. But that doesn't mean that it is disappearing. IS will continue to play a role and make itself visible.

SPIEGEL: Is Islamic State moving to other countries, like Libya, for example?

Kahl: We see IS activities in Libya. And we are watching activists in Sub-Saharan Africa who used to be called Boko Haram but who now must be assigned to Islamic State. We are seeing IS in Afghanistan, we are seeing IS on the Sinai Peninsula.

SPIEGEL: Are those distinct cells or is there a larger network?

Kahl: There are repeated efforts to undertake operations on behalf of IS, but it then takes some time before they are recognized by IS headquarters. But that doesn't mean that everything is controlled centrally. Some of the things that have taken place in Germany as well were not ordered by Raqqa or some other command post. The treacherous thing about this terrorist entity is that it can ignite itself largely on its own.

SPIEGEL: There is a theory which holds that the more pressure is placed on IS territory, the greater the risk of attack in Europe becomes. Is that true?

Kahl: I wouldn't formulate it so deterministically. Of course IS will ensure that it remains visible and generates successes for its followers.

SPIEGEL: What is more dangerous, that IS fighters wander from one region to another or that people ignite themselves, as you put it?

Kahl: The dangers exist concurrently. First, there are the returnees, the trained jihadists. They are dangerous if they once led lives in the West and are familiar with it. Second, there are those who come as part of the migrant stream. They might not yet have been given a mission, but they radicalize here. Third are those who have lived here for a long time and have become radicalized. The number of Salafists has increased substantially in recent years to 9,700 -- a large reservoir of people who could become violent at some point ...

SPIEGEL: ... because they become indoctrinated in mosques and training centers. Such sites are financed by Gulf states, with whom Germany has tight relations.

Kahl: We have noticed improvements in this regard. It also makes no sense to combat terrorism in the Middle East when missionaries in Germany are promoting it. That is why several members of the German government have traveled to the Gulf states. That has had visible results back home.

SPIEGEL: Since the NSA revelations from Edward Snowden, we have been talking almost exclusively about technical surveillance methods. Are there still classic spies of the type one meets in John Le Carré novels?

Kahl: They still exist too. We cannot forego human intelligence, the classic surveillance techniques with informants. We even want to expand the technique. But of course I don't like talking much about it.

SPIEGEL: But we should. Currently, one of your informants is being tried in court. Ali R. spent months supplying information about IS from Syria to the BND and other German agencies. Now he is facing a long prison term for membership in a terrorist group. What is your view of BND informants being convicted?

Kahl: Wait until there has been a verdict in the case! Generally speaking, though, we have to make sure that people who provide us information aren't punished for doing so.

SPIEGEL: How can you? A human informant in IS has automatically broken the law because he is a member of IS.

Kahl: You have to make a distinction here between a real membership and a membership that is a kind of cover. As a matter of practicality, however, that is a difficult distinction to make because members are forced to prove their loyalty and courage, which could result in the commission of crimes. It is an extremely difficult situation.

SPIEGEL: Islamic State is allegedly running low on money. Can you confirm this?

Kahl: It won't go bankrupt and lose its ability to act in the foreseeable future. But income from oil production is dropping, we can see that much. So too are the taxes and fees, because each loss of territory means a loss of population that can be extorted.

SPIEGEL: What are the consequences?

Kahl: The fighters are no longer able to arm and equip themselves as well as they used to. At some point, the coffers will be empty....

## 11.6 BND's assessments on terrorism in Afghanistan

From an interview of Bruno Kahl with DER TAGESSPIEGEL (16/2/2018)

<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/bnd-chef-bruno-kahl-im-interview-es-ist-schwierig-in-afghanistan-von-erfolgen-zu-sprechen/20969760.html>

The BND assumes that the Afghan state security forces no longer control 40 percent of their country...

***Do you know where these fighters are?***

We are talking about this with the foreign services and our domestic security authorities.

***Is IS trying harder than in previous years to bring terrorists disguised as refugees to Europe?***

We did not make this observation. There are cases - like the attacks in Paris in November 2015 - where perpetrators who already had plans for attacks were smuggled in during the flow of refugees. But the terrorists are not dependent on the routes taken by the refugees. There are also refugees who only became radicalized here via the Internet. IS is increasingly concentrating on providing instructions for actions in cyberspace. This is a consequence of the fact that IS lost its territory where it could train fighters. The radicalization of previously inconspicuous immigrants via the Internet is a much bigger problem for the security authorities than those who came to us already radicalized.

***They also observe the Salafists who left Germany for the IS. How many are there?***

Around 970 left the country, around a third perished and a third returned. We estimate another third are in the middle and lower Euphrates Valley in Syria, where ISIS still controls spaces. But these are getting smaller and smaller. Some are also trying to get to Africa. So far, I have not noticed a wave of people returning to Germany.

***But these fighters also have wives and some children who are trying to come back. Do they pose a threat?***

This is to be assumed since they lived in a radicalizing environment. There is caution. In the crisis countries we also have the phenomenon that women make themselves available as suicide bombers or that children are abused as suicide bombers. Many are also severely traumatized. And some children were born there.

***How dangerous is IS after it has largely lost its territory?***

We still consider him to be very dangerous. He is capable of causing much more damage in Syria and Iraq. He wants to practice more asymmetric combat again, i.e. pure terrorism, like before his campaign of conquest in 2014. That means attacks behind enemy lines, including in Baghdad. Although the city is heavily secured, it still remains possible to carry out large-scale assassination attempts. Across Syria and across Iraq, we expect ISIS to continue to be able to launch major attacks. The ability to organize attacks in Europe has not diminished either.

***Does IS still have enough money?***

The material resources of the IS are dwindling. With the loss of territory, it becomes more difficult to levy taxes and generate any revenue at all. But IS still has weapons and other resources. And his most important weapon will remain with him anyway: ideology. In this way it is possible to continue to radicalize people and to be very effective even with modest material means.

***Where is Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed "Caliph" of the IS?***

We have no reliable intelligence that he is no longer alive.

***Is it certain that the Berlin IS agitator Denis Cuspert was killed in January?***

We have credible evidence that points to his death. The images of the body and the location information we have are consistent with what was previously known of him. However, there is no such thing as 100% security.

***Western intelligence services have long been investigating indications that IS has been experimenting with chemical toxins and in some cases even using them. Is this still happening?***

There have been observations that IS has attempted to obtain such materials. We must assume that such efforts still exist.

***What danger does Al Qaeda still pose?***

We still think Al Qaeda is a very dangerous organization. Even if it has lost strength due to competition with IS and signs of wear and tear in Syria. But al Qaeda is involved in many parts of the world, especially in North Africa, in the Arab countries, in Asia. And al Qaeda still has the ability and the interest to carry out attacks in the West.

More and more civilian victims of attacks in Afghanistan

***What risk do you see for the Bundeswehr and for German institutions in Afghanistan in general?***

The Taliban and IS are capable of carrying out devastating attacks even in Kabul, which is well supplied with security forces. This means an ongoing danger for German soldiers and German

institutions in Afghanistan. It is always possible in all regions of the country that there will be attacks.

***According to new information from the Americans, the Taliban now have over 60,000 fighters. That is three times as much as was previously assumed.***

Reliable figures are very difficult here. One must also distinguish between fighters and temporary supporters, as well as families. A figure of around 30,000 active fighters seems more realistic to me.

***How far is Afghanistan in Taliban hands?***

We assume that up to 40 percent of the area in Afghanistan is no longer controlled by the state security forces, but has fallen victim to the Taliban and other resistance groups. But the level of control varies from region to region. Sometimes the Taliban capture parts of a province, only to be driven out again by the security forces.

***What is being done to stop the Taliban advance?***

The Americans, together with the Afghan security forces, who took responsibility for the security situation in 2015, are trying to push back and decimate the Taliban. With the aim of being able to enter into peace negotiations once the Taliban have been weakened.

***Can't win the fight against the Taliban?***

It is difficult to speak of sustainable successes in Afghanistan. If only because of the difficult, mountainous terrain. History shows that too. In Afghanistan, the British colonial empire and the Soviet Union failed. And even today, gaining control of the entire country is a challenging undertaking for the security forces. At the moment, all indications are that the security situation will not improve significantly for the time being.