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The Foundation of the West is Shaken, Its Future Uncertain

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There are signs that the very foundation of what is known as the West appears to be shaken with something new coming to take its place. Some experts said that Trump's election in the United States signaled the end of liberal order. Some saw his victory as «the night the West died». Now the prediction appears to be confirmed.

Europe «must take its fate into its own hands» said German Chancellor Angela Merkel in her remarks, reflecting a new transatlantic rift that has emerged after the recent NATO and G7 summits. According to her, while Germany and Europe would strive to remain on good terms with America and Britain, «we have to fight for our own destiny». «The West has become smaller, at least it has become weaker», Sigmar Gabriel, Germany's Foreign Minister, chimed in. Martin Schulz, the German chancellor's centre-left rival at the upcoming September election, joined in saying Trump was «the destroyer of all Western values». According to him, the U.S. president was undermining the peaceful cooperation of nations based on mutual respect and tolerance.

So, there is consensus within the ranks of German political elite regarding the role of the United States. German politicians say it openly in the name of the United Europe led by Berlin.

Germany, the European number one, does not consider America as the West's leader anymore – the role indisputable since the end of the Second World. That's what the US does not like but there is nothing to be done about it.

According to Richard Haass, president of the US Council on Foreign Relations, «Merkel saying Europe cannot rely on others & needs to take matters into its own hands is a watershed-& what US has sought to avoid since WW2». *The Financial Times* believes the Chancellor has committed a blunder. Right or wrong, she has done it and it changes a lot.

The idea of taking Europe's destiny into its own hands, at least in terms of providing for security, is not new. The U.S. and the U.K. going separate ways from the rest of Europe is not a new trend either. It had come into focus before but it was unthinkable for a German leader to openly say such a thing. As it was unthinkable that a NATO member would be left out in the cold.

According to *Die Welt*, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Denmark have led a drive to block the next year's NATO leaders' summit from taking place in Turkey. 18 EU nations and Canada agreed with the decision to prevent the meeting from taking place in Istanbul. NATO defense ministers are expected to make a final decision when they meet in June. According to the report, the favored proposal envisions the meeting at NATO's new headquarters in Brussels.

The conflict had been smouldering for some time before getting near to coming into the open. Germany even mulls the withdrawal of its military from Turkish soil. An ally with the second largest standing force is on the brink of leaving the alliance or, at least, just keeping up appearances as a member without actually being one. As Montenegro joins the bloc, a trend in the opposite direction also becomes visible. It's not in the headlines, but Slovakia may soon leave NATO.

The EU is in deep trouble and on the verge of being torn apart. The internal divisions are a well-known trend. Germany and the states of northern Europe calling for austerity policies prompt resistance of weaker eurozone economies. The EU leader has become extremely unpopular among large countries like Italy, Spain, and Greece. The members of the Visegrad group - Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia – appear to be a bloc within a bloc.

The divisions deepen. Poland or the Baltic states are more pro-US than pro-German. Europe can become divided while implementing the «multi-speed» concept.

With all the discussions on the way, providing security without the U.S. and the U.K. seems to be a tall order. The European deterrent is to be based and closely connected with the US-led NATO. The much-vaunted concept of a European rapid reaction force looks more like a pipedream.

No matter who wins the September election in Germany, the stance on the US role will not change as the view is shared by all major candidates. It's hardly possible to say exactly what is in

store but changes will come. Evidently, from now on, it's hard to talk about such thing as Western unity. It is vanishing right in front of our eyes.

NATO and the EU are going through changes to shake the foundation the West was built on. There will be no such thing as the West-Russia pattern. Rather, Moscow will have to deal with the groups of states to emerge as a result of the West's unity currently bursting at the seams. Sanctions and other things will simply die away. The groups may differ in their views on the issues the West has been unanimous until now and the very term – the West – may lose its relevance. The things that had seemed to be unimaginable before have happened with new poles of power emerging to change the political landscape of the Euro-Atlantic region and the contemporary world.