

# Germany's Next Fifty Years

*Kästner is the chairman of the Fusion Energy Foundation e.V. in Essen, Germany. The full title of his speech is "Germany's Next 50 Years: Our Role in Tomorrow's World."*

To be in Germany today and to talk about the next 50 years presents the first problem, because nobody here wants to do that. It goes beyond the four years of the parliamentary term!

I want to start with a quote:

An evolution of consciousness is the central motive of terrestrial existence. The evolutionary working of Nature has a double process: an evolution of forms, an evolution of the soul. . . .

Man occupies the crest of the evolutionary wave. With him occurs the passage from an unconscious to a conscious evolution.

—Sri Aurobindo Ghose,  
*The Future Evolution of Man*

With the initiatives of the BRICS, Eurasian Economic Union, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the New Silk Road, a new era in the evolution of mankind is dawning, which—if we make it possible—will create an enormous leap in our development. This development will also be characterized by making nuclear fusion a functioning reality, along with the exploration of space and the dialogue of cultures.

The emerging dialogue will be able to constructively resolve the old paradox between the One and the Many, nations and individuals, at a higher level, and thereby initiate an era of peace.

Yet, for Germany to participate in a dialogue of cultures and the Great Projects I described, it must first of all understand itself once again, because the 20th Century robbed Germany of its identity. And without knowing yourself, you cannot participate in a dialogue as a sovereign being.

Therefore, it is vital for Germany to rediscover itself.

To do this, we must return to Leibniz, because if anyone asks what constitutes modern political Germany, we have to begin with Leibniz. And when we do this, we realize that he was faced with very similar issues to those we face today:



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*Toni Kästner: These great projects "will also change our culture, by creating an optimistic vision of the future."*

It is certain that patriotic thinking was never more urgent than it is now, because our beloved fatherland is becoming weaker and weaker, and God's honor among the German nation almost seems to suffer; in contrast, some of our neighbors have grown in power and in good institutions, so that without better governance of our nation, it is almost impossible for us to keep apace with them.

Thus, it is always a pity that, because we humans, by the grace of God, have gained such excellent means to investigate the secrets of nature and we can achieve more in one year than our ancestors could in 10, or even in 100 years, we now do not want to honor this capability as it deserves.

—Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz,  
*Proposals for a German-Loving Society*, 1697

After the Thirty Years War [1618-48], Europe was destroyed, the German national paradigm of the Holy Roman Empire was finished, and the question arose of what identity Germany and Europe would adopt to determine the future of this region of the Earth.

First, Leibniz turns inward and calls on the Germans to love their country and themselves.

He also turned outwards and saw that Germany's only future lay in cooperation with Russia, China, and the young American colonies.

Therefore, he supported the young American colonies when he could, and befriended people like the governor of Pennsylvania, William Penn, whom he in turn

conveyed as a contact to the Tsar of Russia, Peter the Great, to actively create a dialogue among the different regions. In addition, he supported both countries in their own development, and that made it possible for them to obtain technology transfers and exchange of specialists from Germany.

Through this process, Leibniz also formed Germany's image abroad and Germany's own self-understanding. This is the reason why, still today, Germany is regarded around the world as the country that can create development through science and technology.

However, for Leibniz, China brought in another component, because for him, China was a country that did not need any further development, but, already due to its high level of culture, would become an excellent partner for the future. According to Leibniz, an exchange between these two cultures would make it possible to develop all the countries in between.

This is the reason that Germany was also recognized as a cultural nation. This is where our true identity lies.

Since that time, this would have borne much fruit, if we had appealed to it. That this is also definitely understood by other nations, no example makes clearer than Dr. Sun Yat-sen's initiative, 225 years after Leibniz, with his program for the *International Development of China*:

Germany should regard China as its own life-blood, helping China to become wealthy and strong, so as to regain its lost position in the world.

—Sun Yat-sen, 1922

Dr. Sun presented his project at the time, in order to create, after the devastation of the First World War, a platform that could bring Germany and Russia together, not only to develop China, but to promote an entire development of Eurasia—an idea quite similar to the platform of the New Silk Road today.

Also today, Germany, with its expertise in nuclear technology, space technology, space medicine, plasma physics, chemistry, materials processing, and the machine-tool industry, could provide a large amount of support to help the New Silk Road quickly grow and prosper as a platform. But also, through our common cultural, scientific, and economic history, we could, if we were to invoke this history, play an important role in the dialogue of cultures, and contribute to peaceful co-existence with most countries of the world.

How could Germany participate in the new platform

FIGURE 1



and help shape the next 50 years?

Here, two regions have a special role to play. One is North Rhine-Westphalia, the greatest center of production and research in Europe; and the other is Saxony, an historic gateway to the East, which also has key areas in science, production, and research.

### North Rhine-Westphalia

Because of the very high density of individual economic and scientific branches per land surface in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), we could simultaneously carry out almost anything that we have in mind to do in the context of the planned expansion of the New Silk Road, the development of nuclear fusion, and even in driving space exploration forward. Since there is such a great concentration, both in area and time, of all processes, such as training, research, development, and produc-

tion, these can be combined and connected to each other, making NRW the Western motor for the development of the New Silk Road.

Various areas could be immediately reactivated and expanded:

- We could use the field of nuclear technology to initiate a nuclear renaissance. This is not just a matter of construction and development of advanced and inherently safe nuclear power plants, but also about harnessing the full range of nuclear physics and nuclear engineering.

- In the past, the Ruhr University in Bochum achieved a breakthrough in magnetic-levitation (maglev) concepts for different applications. One of these is the CargoCap, an underground freight transport in-

frastructure that can handle a huge volume of traffic. This is not only interesting for the Ruhr region, but also for India, China, and Japan.

- We can also reactivate and incorporate ship transport in NRW, which has the biggest interior port in Germany. Germany's existing well-developed waterways and inland ports make it possible to easily ship large components to production sites, like the interior of the ITER fusion reactors. These components could be nuclear reactor housing for nuclear fission and fusion plants, but just as well rocket engines, shuttles, or parts for maglev trains, or for a base on the Moon.

- It is not far-fetched to include space travel here, precisely because the NRW has a large infrastructure related to space exploration, which, were there a change in policy, could readily be expanded. Germany is already the leading country in the field of space medicine, and thus it

FIGURE 2

### A Space Travel Program for Germany



should be no surprise that NRW must have some important institutions related to this field. The European training center for astronauts is located here, too.

This way, Germany could immediately enter the field of space, within the growing cooperation among Russia, China, and India, make appropriate agreements with individual countries, and thereby help build the world and create stable local jobs. The follow-on investments would enormously boost the total number of suppliers.

- Materials research also has an important role for NRW in this context, because nanostructures, self-healing polymers, new textiles, metals, and many other products could be manufactured locally and be immediately incorporated into larger projects on the ground.

- Since NRW is also the largest area for chemical production in Europe, this would again open up new possibilities.

All in all, even these few examples make it clear what great potentials remains buried in NRW and thus in Germany—if we know how to use them.

## Saxony

The same, only on a slightly smaller scale, also applies to the state of Saxony, because Saxony also has important companies and institutions in all the above areas. We can add to that, Saxony's unique historical role as gateway to the East. Here there are many institutions, such as the Mining Academy in Freiberg and the Technical University in Dresden, which have had ties to the East over a long period, and their networks can be used immediately to both develop and coordinate all the above projects. Thus, this part of Germany could be immediately integrated into the New Silk Road, like no other area.

If Germany decides to go this route, these two regions could be used as driving forces for the entire nation, and also draw in other regions, with their key sites for production and research.

Since these projects are part of a greater order, which puts them in a position to generate a qualitative leap in various fields of industry, science, and research, they are crucial in determining Germany's next 50 years.

All these projects make sense only if they, as part in the development of Germany in the world, are considered as part of an emerging dialogue of cultures; they will also change our culture, by creating an optimistic vision of the future, and will challenge us to reflect on our society's cultural values.

The current negative conflicts within the population of the western states would be replaced by a “positive conflict.” Instead of saying, “Everything was better in the old days,” we would be saying, “What can we do better in the future?”

And this point will help us again, to internalize why it is important to acknowledge our identity as the “Land of Poets and Thinkers,” and a country with pioneering industrial spirit, and why it is, after all, that we are known as such a nation in the world.

That is what is required of us, if we want to be part of the solution, and not part of the problem, in the current global crisis. And that will determine how Germany's next 50 years will look.

*This advance copy of Kästner's speech was translated from German by the Schiller Institute. The longer, actual speech, with English simultaneous interpretation, can be viewed at the Institute's [website](#).*