There's no use denying that the bilateral ties between Berlin and Washington have been in decline for quite some time. Among the reasons explaining this phenomenon one can name a wide range of brazen intelligence collection operations Washington's agents have been conducting all across Germany. Those operations are only known to the general public due to the valiant efforts of a number of media sources that revealed American operatives being engaged in both the collection of sensitive information on regular German citizens and high-profile politicians at the same time.

In 2013, Wikileaks would reveal that American intelligence agencies wiretapped the cell phone of the German chancellor Angela Merkel and a number of her supporters.

A year later, German security agencies arrested an officer of the Federal Intelligence Service (BND) on charges of providing the CIA with sensitive secret documents to the detriment of his homeland.

This was the period of time when Berlin was at odds with Washington over the hard stance that Barack Obama took on Russia. The situation was further aggravated by the inability of the two parties to resolves their differences over the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, that was later killed by Donald Trump. Is it of any wonder then that Germany made the decision to stop backing up US military operations across the Middle East during Trump's term in office, says Die Welt.

It's curious that back in 2017, Angela Merkel herself hinted that there was a possibility of a divorce with the United States.

Last May, the chairman of the Bundestag's Economic Committee, Klaus Ernst reminded the much hated United States Ambassador to Berlin that Germany wasn't a colony of the United States, so it would tolerate no condescending remarks about its energy policies. In turn, the deputy chairman of the opposition Free Democrats (FDP), Wolfgang Kubicki announced his conviction that the repeated interference attempts undertaken by Richard Grenell that undermine Germany's sovereignty should have prompted Foreign Minister Heiko Maas to declare Grenell persona non grata.

There's no trace of the US-German friendship to be found anywhere these days, says Süddeutsche Zeitung, with Trump being in office no longer than two and a half years. According to this publication, it's high time for Berlin to develop a post-Trump plan as it's clear that Washington would never serve as a protector of German interests again.

Those who still had doubts about the prospects of the bilateral relations between Germany and the US, have recently discovered that Trump is equally eager to impose duties on German goods as if they were manufactured in China. What's makes this whole situation even worse is that it's crystal clear that Trump fails to comprehend that those responsibilities a country takes upon itself when it strikes a deal with another state is nothing to sneeze at. This notion can be exemplified by the fact that the Trump administration walked away from the Paris Climate Agreement and JCPOA.

It's been noted that Angela Merkel would make a public pledge to increase German military spendings to 1.5% of gross domestic product by 2024 and bring it closer to the 2% level members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. However, those commitments were announced prior to Washington's push aimed at blocking Nord Stream 2, a controversial pipeline that will increase the flow of gas from Russia to Germany, along with its attempts
to prevent the Chinese technology giant Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. from building Germany’s next-generation 5G mobile network. The Wall Street journal believes that if Germany lowers its military funding it would hardly be willing to purchase US aircraft or service the American nuclear arsenal stationed in the country as announced by the Defense Ministry earlier this year. The move will add further strain to a trans-Atlantic relationship that has been steadily deteriorating.

With Trump's first term nearing its end, the number of Germans who negatively assesses the state of Germany-United States relations increased to 73%, says a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center and the Kerber Foundation. Almost exactly the same percentage of Germans believe that their country should pursue a foreign policy independent from the United States.

Last February, on the eve of the annual Munich Security Conference, the Pew Research Center and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation presented a study showing that above everything else Germans fear the possibility of US influence increasing, as they say this state represents an avid threat to the German national security. This can sound paradoxical, at first, but then we can remember that the German press, like the majority of European media sources, portrays Trump as an unbalanced, erratic individual that is capable of launching new wars without even recognizing it.

It’s hard to describe how Germany, that is a thoroughly pacifist country after decades of Anglo-Saxon brainwashing, will try to approach the challenge of laying the responsibility for the security of the EU on its shoulders. This task contradicts the ideas that the whole nation learned to recognized as its own. This results in a considerable amount of frustration that Berlin experiences in connection with the countless attempts Washington would make to put an end to Nord Steam 2, to make it spend more money on its NATO commitments, instead of leaving Germany alone and abolishing NATO along with denouncing it as a monstrosity of the past. All these aspects of the geopolitical game are taking place at a time when Berlin continues to suffer from its geopolitical infantility. With those elites that remain haunted by the Trans-Atlantic spirits of the past, there’s an understanding that Germany should pursue its own interests that lie in the protection of the European Union from the Brexit disaster and Trump’s attempt to weaken the union.

With deep cracks running across the space that we used to denote as “the West”, Berlin has to find the courage to take the responsibility for its own fate and the fate of the entire European Union into its own hands. It’s been announced time and again that NATO may become a thing of the past one day, but a great many of American political figures has vested interests in preserving it, thus preventing Germany from pursuing its own goals. In this situation, it’s hardly a surprise that Merkel seeks rapprochement with Russia, as it seems much more predictable that the erratic US president.

Grete Mautner is an independent researcher and journalist from Germany, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook.”