

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear Wolfgang,*

Let me start by speculating that you probably sometimes share my frustration, at the fact that some people don't get it about diplomacy. Are you people just drinking champagne, using high flown language? But what are the practical consequences of all that activity? Well, it was brought home to me, today. I flew directly from Warsaw via Munich, I was able to use a European Covid certificate without doing any tests. I went to London last week. I had to do a test before I went into the plane and then another one in London. So for me European integration not only works, it saves money.

My wife is actually in London, she is American. I'm not planning to send her food parcels from Poland yet. But the audit of Brexit is beginning and as you probably heard, Germany has increased its exports to the UK for the first half of the year. But British exports have dropped by eleven percent to Germany for the first half of the year. There are shortages of personnel: medical personnel, heavy goods vehicles drivers, construction workers, and so on. And my old friend Boris is proposing a new visa scheme, liberalising the conditions. I have an idea what to call that visa scheme: We could call it freedom of movement.

I met Wolfgang Ischinger when we both worked in Washington in the early 2000s. I worked at the American Enterprise Institute where my col-

leagues invented and made the case for the Iraq war; I ran the New Atlantic Initiative, which was seen as the voice of New Europe in the U. S. He, as the German ambassador, had the intellectually easier but politically trickier task of sounding cautious. The fact that he remained in good standing with the American establishment and that we have always remained on the best of terms tells you much you need to know about Wolfgang Ischinger's diplomatic and interpersonal skills.

The German federal elections took place yesterday, and as we all know the era of Chancellor Merkel is coming to an end. She has been Chancellor for almost 16 years and is leaving at a time of change, of rearranging orders, of new beginnings. Some of the traits she will be remembered by is her level-headedness and the stability that she provided.

Similarly, Wolfgang Ischinger has been Chairman of the Munich Security Conference for 13 years and has proved himself as being a steady hand in troubled waters. Like Chancellor Merkel, Ambassador Ischinger radiates stability, level-headedness, and trustworthiness. The two embody the virtues of German leadership.

As one era comes to an end, luckily for us, his era as Chairman thankfully continues. Under Ambassador Ischinger's leadership, the Munich Security Conference has grown as a centre of dialogue on global security matters. He has developed and evolved the conference into a global point of reference for security affairs, and with it Munich into the Davos of the security world.

Valued and respected as an outstanding diplomat whose home is the world, Wolfgang Ischinger is a trusted negotiator and an expert in bringing juxtaposed positions to the table and elaborating solutions.

Wolfgang Ischinger always supported and promoted the transatlantic alliance. He is among the elite group of Europeans who are capable of looking at the world also with American eyes, contributing to realism as to our European geopolitical options.

Wolfgang, with your authority as a security expert, you are committed to the stable security architecture needed by the West if we are to preserve our free, liberal, and democratic system in Europe. Indeed, the Munich Security Conference has, as a result of your leadership, itself created history. Who can forget the famous speech by former Ukrainian President Poroshenko, when he brandished Russian passports seized in the Donbass from "little green men."

President Putin's speech of 2007 was another memorable moment. In an address to the conference, he recited a list of complaints of U. S. conduct

in global affairs. It was one of those moments when leaders drop their diplomatic language to make a point.

Ten years ago, the U. S. and Russia ratified the new START treaty at the conference, which stands as an example of the contribution the conference makes to global stability and peace. In 2018, the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu warned the Iranian leadership “not to test Israel’s resolve” whilst holding a piece of an Iranian drone in his hands. Iran’s foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, called the display a “cartoonish circus.” They are all for the history books.

Ambassador Ischinger asks the right questions of the future so we can make more informed policy choices. This is crucial. The world is changing in a way that is detrimental to our interests. The global geopolitical structures have changed: China has become a serious geopolitical competitor and possibly a threat. The U. S.’ focus is consumed by political problems at home and the changing security concerns. The Presidency of Joe Biden will not mark a return to the ways of old.

Closer to home, Russia is destabilising our neighbourhood. It is not just the annexation of Crimea and the hybrid warfare in the Donbass. It is also this spring’s dress rehearsal for the invasion of Ukraine, the consummation of the union of Russia and Belarus and the aggressive scenario of another Zapad exercises on the NATO border. Wolfgang seems to be one of very few people in Germany to have noticed that the new Russian nuclear-capable missiles in the Kaliningrad region have the range to reach Berlin. And to realise that while U. S. attention is relentlessly shifting to Asia, the EU is simultaneously defenceless and unserious about its own defence. In short, Wolfgang is one of Germany’s few global strategists.

Wolfgang, you delineated the current set of issues that threaten stability well – the confrontation of great powers, the weakening of the liberal order and norms of international law, climate change and new security risks associated with it as well as the rapid technological development. It is in this context that, as you put it, “the EU must learn the language of power.”

Chancellor Merkel alluded to this new world in her speech in Munich in May 2017, when she famously said that “we Europeans have to take fate into our hands.” She talked the talk but has so far not walked the walk. And – given that defence systems take decades rather than months to create – time is a luxury we do not possess.

The pandemic is a moment of crisis, but also an opportunity. We must use this time to reflect, plan, and enact new EU initiatives in foreign, defence, and security policy. Let me underline one idea already proposed by Wolfgang, and add two proposals of my own.

First, we should introduce qualified majority voting in EU foreign policy-making. We cannot successfully and effectively conduct foreign policy on the EU level, if individual Member States can veto EU action. Equally important, we should loyally support the agreed lines and allow EU institutions to carry them out, rather than freelancing on our own as Member States.

Second, as President von der Leyen noted in her State of the Union speech, we need a European Defence Union. This would be a logical step towards a common security and defence policy. It would include establishing a Joint Headquarters and the post of a Commissioner for Defence to bind all defence initiatives under one roof in the Commission.

Third, we need a European military capability. If the EU wants to learn the language of power, it must have power. I do not use the term “European army” because it suggests the unification of existing national forces, which I think is politically unrealistic. But we could create units composed of volunteers from the member states, financed from the EU budget and answerable to the Foreign Affairs Council. We also need more joint EU procurement, which would go some way to alleviating the problem duplication and waste.

Naturally, these suggestions are not designed to replace NATO. NATO is an alliance that represents a much broader tent than an integrated EU security structure can provide. Indeed, these measures are complementary, and both the EU and NATO need each other to secure the liberal democratic order. Half of the new EU defence budget is to be spent on military mobility around Europe, which perfectly complements NATO.

These are by far not the only improvements we need, but they would be an important start. Some of these proposals require treaty change, others only political will. But as daunting as this may seem, the world we will face without these tools, will be much more so.

For a liberal society to survive and thrive, we need military security as well as economic well-being. The award tonight underlines that the issues you raise, Wolfgang, must gain a broader audience and acceptance tonight. The award thus rewards not only your achievements, but also advocates for the ideas you propose.

The end of the era of Chancellor Merkel marks another turning point in history. The changing global order will pose a series of questions to the new German chancellor. Wolfgang, I rest easier knowing that Germany, Europe, and indeed the world can rely on your wisdom, diplomatic skill, and strategic foresight. Who else would we want by our side than you to navigate the high seas of the changing global landscape?

Thank you Wolfgang for all you have done so far. May your era continue.