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Dear Readers,

Society is changing — and with unprecedented dynamism. Driven by digitalization, artificial intelligence and robotics, whole areas of life are transforming: employment, industry, education and the economy. But where will this journey take us? We will look into this question in this edition of commerce germany.

The famous science journalist Ranga Yogeshwar discusses the impact machines have on our daily lives and why a digital agenda is necessary to strengthen democracy in the era of digitalization. In keeping with this digital focus, our dossier takes a look at how digitalization is transforming the working world. Reiner Hoffmann, Federal Chairman of the German Federation of Trade Unions, answers these questions while also focusing on developments in the US. In addition, Michael Hüther, Director of the German Economic Institute (IW), comments on the introduction of a solidarity-oriented universal basic income in a digitalized working world.

But that’s not all we’re looking at in this issue: Our Board member Dinko Eror explains how new technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics will change the way we live and work in the next decade. What does digitalization mean for mobility in big cities? Frank Ruff from Daimler AG expounds on this topic. The automotive group from Stuttgart uses artificial intelligence to ease traffic flow and create mobility options using “learning mobility systems.” In light of global challenges, such as world hunger and overpopulation, US agricultural engineering company John Deere presents its concept of smart farming.

But it is not only society that is changing: Transatlantic relations are also undergoing change, if not disruption. We talked with former US Ambassador to Germany John B. Emerson about the current transatlantic relationship. One of Ambassador Emerson’s predecessors, John Kornblum, is sharing his view on the German-American partnership. He argues that not only the US, but also Europe holds a responsibility for redefining transatlantic relations. And Stefan Niemann, Director of the ARD studio in Washington, DC, provides insights into the current political situation in the US before the November midterm elections.

In these turbulent times, commerce germany offers food for thought beyond day-to-day politics and provides a platform for discussions on fundamental questions surrounding transatlantic relations.

Enjoy reading the magazine,

Frank Sportolari

Illustration: Charlotte Hintzmann

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Networking professionals:
the members of AmCham Germany

Becoming a member...

... of AmCham Germany means joining one of the most influential organizations in transatlantic business and gaining access to a top-level network. The Chamber offers a long list of member advantages. These benefits include networking opportunities, advocacy, valuable information resources, business support services and public communication. Depending on the size of your company, we offer the following membership categories:

• Executive Membership
• Corporate Membership
• Delegate Membership
• Basic Membership
• Individual Membership

Executive Membership benefits:
• Four free Delegate Members in addition to the company’s membership
• Company logo featured on our website
• Presentation of company logo in a special section of the AmCham Germany Yearbook
• Invitations to exclusive events
• Preferential admittance to Policy Committees

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AMCHAM GERMANY INVITES YOU

The voice of transatlantic business
CONTENTS

6 CHAMBER NEWS
8 115th Annual Membership Meeting
11 The new AmCham Germany president
12 NextGen Kickoff Conference

14 COVER STORY
Social change — threat or chance?

17 VIEWPOINT
FROM OUR MEMBERS:
The new relationship with machines requires planning
The great transformation of human mobility
Smart farming: The digital farm

20 EXTERNAL:
People must be placed at the center of digital change
Giving the unemployed access to regular jobs

22 TRANSATLANTIC TRENDS
Transatlantic partnership: Discussions on trade have to move
Midterm mania
An Atlantic world in transition

27 3 QUESTIONS FOR
Dr. Sylvia Rothblum, Warner Bros. Entertainment GmbH

28 POLICY SPOTLIGHT
Political voices from Germany
A transatlantic digitalization and innovation region?!

32 NEW MEMBERS

34 OUTLOOK

35 CALENDAR
For the first time, the Transatlantic Business Conference will take place in Berlin; and in choosing the title “In Trade We Trust — Shaping the Global Marketplace in Times of Disruption,” we are making a clear point. The conference will address the current protectionist developments and uncertainties in the transatlantic marketplace as well as focus on such topics as trade, digitalization and restoring trust in the European-German-American partnership.

New members on the AmCham Germany Board of Directors

At AmCham Germany’s 115th Annual Membership Meeting in Stuttgart, Ralf Brinkmann, President and Chairman of the Board, Dow Germany, and Dr. Sylvia Rothblum, SVP, German-Speaking Territories and Israel, Warner Bros. Entertainment GmbH, were voted onto the Executive Committee as new vice presidents.

New members were also voted onto the Board of Directors: Adel B. Al-Saleh, Member of the Board of Management, Deutsche Telekom AG for T-Systems; Wolfgang Kopplin, Deputy Chairman, Ford-Werke GmbH, and Managing Director, Ford of Germany; Kathrin Menges, Executive Vice President, Human Resources and Infrastructure Services, Henkel AG & Co. KGaA; and Kadir Teoebasi, President and General Manager Germany Hub, Lilly Deutschland GmbH.

Speakers will include James R. Fitterling, CEO, Dow Chemical Company; Lisa Davis, Member of the Managing Board, Siemens AG; Niels Annen, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office; Richard A. Grenell, US Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany; Dieter Kempf, President of the Federation of German Industries (BDI); Dr. Marcus Chromik, Chief Risk Officer, Commerzbank AG; Dr. Wolfgang Eder, CEO, voestalpine AG; and Dr. Ulrich Nussbaum, State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

AmCham Germany team: New colleagues

Over the past several months, AmCham Germany has welcomed new and returning colleagues to its staff. The events team has gained a new member with Julia Zhao. Before coming to AmCham Germany, she worked as a project manager at Frankfurt Business Media. She will be the contact person for regional events in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Erfurt, Nuremberg and Munich. Markus Mill has taken on the position of Head of Stakeholder Management and Business Development. He is transferring from Brussels, where he worked as a consultant for European Policy at the German Economic Institute (IW). Frank Hufnagel joined the communications team as Head of Communications and Press Relations and is based in the Berlin office. Ines Ceylan and Anna Schneider have returned from parental leave and continue their work as part of the communications team.
Berlin Airlift Contest:
Future of the German-American partnership

70 years ago, the start of the Berlin Airlift sent an important signal for developing the postwar transatlantic friendship. At a time when this friendship can no longer be taken for granted, today’s young generation has a unique opportunity to shape the future of the German-American partnership. To support this, AmCham Germany has created the Berlin Airlift Contest to encourage young people to express what the transatlantic partnership means to them. Contestants can be as creative as they would like and submit essays, reports, poems, short stories, video blogs, radio features or podcasts, and raps.

The winners will be honored during a transatlantic evening in Berlin on Nov. 8. US Ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell and Governing Mayor of Berlin Michael Müller serve as patrons of the contest.

More information about the contest can be found on our website: https://www.amcham.de/events/berlin-airlift-contest

New AmCham Germany Office in Frankfurt am Main

AmCham Germany moved its Frankfurt am Main office a few buildings down to Börsenplatz 13-15.

Here we’ll create an open space where we can meet and work together with our members and guests. Once everything is completed, we will encourage you to stop by and check out our new workspace!
The venue of the 115th Annual Membership Meeting, Stuttgart, could not have matched this year’s theme better: “Hidden champions — the driving force for transatlantic innovation trends”. Baden-Württemberg hosts around 800 branches of American companies and combines US-German expertise in engineering, automation and education with a transatlantic commitment to constant innovation and an open exchange of ideas.

Bernhard Mattes hands over the reigns to AmCham Germany’s new president, Frank Sportolari.
AmCham Germany’s diverse network is fueled by enthusiastic ideas, a broad platform supporting an open business climate and the intercultural exchange of ideas.
In compelling, thought-provoking panels and speeches, various business and political leaders expounded upon how entrepreneurs actively shape and need to cope with global trends. Dr. Samit Ghosh, a German start-up founder who expanded his business, the P3 group, into the US, encouraged businesses to embrace the ongoing transformations and to adopt a flexible, adaptable strategy. Still, as Martin Herrenknecht of the globally successful German family business Herrenknecht AG made clear, this calls for a non-bureaucratic, confident business environment. Cem Özdemir warned against mistaking the entire US with the political viewpoint of the current American administration. He reminded us “that the US is not Washington, DC, and Washington, DC, is not the White House.” In the view of our keynote speaker, Peter Altmaier, businesses face similar issues on both sides of the Atlantic. The US-German partnership can provide a solid framework for addressing challenges and opportunities associated with global trends.

At the meeting, Frank Sportolari was elected as the new President of AmCham Germany. Convinced of the value a US-German economic and business partnership can bring to American and German companies, Sportolari stressed his commitment to AmCham Germany’s already widespread membership base. In order for the transatlantic relationship to thrive further, Frank Sportolari pointed to the next generation of transatlanticists: “The instrumental pillar of a strong German-American partnership can only be strengthened and sustained if AmCham Germany’s diverse network is fueled by enthusiastic ideas, a diverse platform supporting an open business climate and the intercultural exchange of ideas.”
The new AmCham Germany president

After your first 100 days as president, what has stood out to you the most at AmCham Germany?

The first 100 days have been very exciting. After the steel tariffs went into effect, there has been an enormous demand for the Chamber to make its position known. Additionally, I’ve been meeting with as many members as possible since I was elected; it’s been great hearing from them and listening to their ideas.

What do you specifically see as the Chamber’s role in strengthening transatlantic relations?

As a business chamber, we have pretty clearly defined views on what is good for business. The views of the Chamber align very well with a sustainable economy that provides opportunities for companies and people all over the transatlantic region. Because we’re transatlantic, we’re able to provide nuance that other organizations are not as able to do. And that’s one of our particular strengths.

What advice would you give companies unsettled by the current developments in transatlantic trade?

Despite uncertainty, any crisis is an opportunity. Companies can look at their business models and see what they can do to be more flexible. What tools and strategies should one use today to thrive in a world that’s less predictable? Technology is disrupting the way businesses are run. All we can do is try to use this chance to encourage more flexibility in the way we do business.

One of the biggest current drivers of change is digitalization. Where do you see the most potential for businesses and for society?

It should be a given that digitalization is going to be a fundamental part of how we do business in the future. Digitalization has to be used as a springboard to create new products, to reach new market segments and different customers and to make products deliverable in remote locations. So digitalization is really a must.

Because we’re transatlantic, we’re able to provide nuance that other organizations are not as able to do.

Do you see potential for Germany and the US to work together to really reap the benefits of digitalization?

Cooperation could help smooth some of the differences in digitalization: its provisions and governance, and the differing viewpoints on both sides of the Atlantic on what it should do. There are numerous examples of websites in the US that are still not selling to Europe and companies that took their European site down because they couldn’t meet the requirements. This underlines the significance of solving trade distortions.

Looking to the future, where would you like AmCham Germany as an organization to be?

AmCham Germany will remain an organization that is led and driven by its membership. I’m not looking for a radical departure from the past. My real goal is to breathe more life into AmCham Germany and foster much more participation by our incredible members. I really want to make it an organization that becomes a trusted adviser on both sides of the Atlantic — an organization for people to find out about what business is thinking and what businesses need to be successful.
AmCham Germany launched its NextGen Initiative in 2017 to connect young professionals who have a strong interest in the transatlantic partnership and to foster the significant bond between the US and Germany among the aspiring next generation of leaders and influencers. By bringing together peers from a variety of sectors, AmCham Germany aims to support tomorrow’s decision makers and business leaders in developing their networks and leadership skills as well as in establishing their roles as transatlantic ambassadors within their companies. This unique program will not only enhance each participant’s skill set, but also create a young, up-and-coming community within AmCham Germany. Each year’s participants are chosen from a pool of promising employees, nominated by our corporate members. The Board of Directors and the NextGen Steering Committee take part in the selection process.
The transatlantic partnership is alive and well—despite the current discord.

Thirtyfive up-and-coming business leaders from all sectors were chosen to participate in AmCham Germany’s newly launched NextGen Program. The program was kicked off with a four-day conference at the Lufthansa Conference Center near Frankfurt am Main. Each day featured a different topic, providing the participants with sound knowledge and insights into AmCham Germany, the digital transformation of society and economy, and recent developments in transatlantic relations in terms of foreign and security policy, economic cooperation and the media.

Roland Koch, Chairman of the Board, UBS Europe is on the NextGen selection committee and opened the conference with a discussion on the future of transatlantic relations and globalization with the NextGen participants. He made a special point to address the importance of good leadership. Donatus Kaufmann, Member of the Executive Board of thyssenkrupp, and Matthias Machnig, former State Secretary at the Ministry of Economic Affairs also came to talk about transatlantic trade. They both stressed that only free trade will bring long-term competitiveness. In a conversation, Danyal Bayaz, Member of the German Bundestag (Alliance ‘90/The Greens), and Sabine Bendiek, Managing Director of Microsoft Germany and Member of the AmCham Germany Executive Committee underscored that digital transformation won’t succeed if it doesn’t include people. A site visit at SAP, Germany’s largest and most cutting-edge tech company, offered insights into both innovation and leadership. Other high-level experts from think tanks, the military and the media also attended and engaged with NextGen participants.

A design thinking workshop and an Oxford-style debate took the NextGen participants out of discussion mode and into a setting where participants could work on topics with each other. In these and other sessions, they proved their creativity, broad interest and enthusiasm.

“The NextGen Conference demonstrated that the transatlantic partnership is still strong because it is strengthened by personal ties.” Eveline Metzen, General Manager, AmCham Germany stated at the conclusion of the conference: “This is why we have to ensure we keep the next generations interested and actively involved in the German-American partnership. The NextGen Initiative is our contribution to this goal, and I encourages all AmCham Germany members to nominate the high-potentials in their companies for the NextGen Program, 2019/20.”
Social change — threat or chance?

About Ranga Yogeshwar

Ranga Yogeshwar’s enthusiasm for sciences is grounded in his studies of particle physics and astrophysics as well as his work for the Swiss Institute for Astrophysics (SIN) and CERN’s Research Center in Geneva.

Committed to making scientific knowledge accessible to all of society, Ranga Yogeshwar continued his career as a science journalist at several publishing houses in 1983, pursuing on to radio broadcasting and television. In that position, Yogeshwar headed the Department of Science at the West German Broadcasting Cooperation Cologne (WDR) and developed the concepts for and hosted several science shows such as WDR’s “Quarks & Co” — which first aired more than 25 years ago — and ARD’s “Show of Natural Wonders.”

In addition, Yogeshwar has published several books, such as “Next Exit Future” (2017) and “Any more questions?” (2009), which have become bestsellers in Germany.

Yogeshwar’s TV and media engagement, in which he continually advocates for a rational and calm understanding of scientific facts and news, have earned him more than 60 prizes, including the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.
Society is going through a period of change right now. What’s this process all about? We’re living in times of epochal change. This very fundamental transformation has actually just begun, and several factors are fueling it. Digitalization, in particular, is altering the makeup of our society. These processes are yielding uncertainties, and we have to carefully address a number of questions: Where are we heading? What are the sense and purpose of progress? Which areas can be advanced through critical dialogue?

Where is this journey taking us?
For the first time in human history, we’re now able to create a symmetry of information with the help of globalization and global communications facilitated by the internet. Today, it doesn’t matter if you’re sitting in Bombay, Berlin or Boston. If you have an internet connection, you have access to the same information. Technologies like the smartphone have changed entire communication and business processes. They’re changing communication within society and impacting the very way a society views itself. And then there’s the dawning of artificial intelligence: Machines are taking over certain processes once reserved for human beings and are doing these jobs much better than we can. This will have a huge impact on our work world over the long term.

In what ways could the increased use of machines and artificial intelligence impact the working world?
We’ll see job displacement: Certain jobs will disappear, and new types of jobs will be created. But what will happen if entire industries suddenly lose jobs, if call centers were to shut down tomorrow or if sales personnel became obsolete because they’ve been replaced by technology. Amazon is already pointing in that direction. Such changes will cause a period of instability. During this period, entire population groups will experience existential fear. They’ll worry about whether they have a future. This can lead to anxiety-driven populistic reactions, a step backward. This is where social networks come into play and give a voice to the silent majority. Populists exploit the situation and act illiberally because they disregard the rights of
minorities or ignore certain values. As we move into our digital future, we must find a long-range solution to such instability.

Do you think enacting new laws would be a solution?

Our era of digitalization is like the discovery of a new continent. Profitable resources are initially exploited undemocratically. It used to involve gold in America. Today, it involves sensitive data. Gradually, civilizing processes were put into place and laws implemented. One example is the Declaration of Independence, which helped civilize the United States. We’re seeing the same thing in the digital continent that we once experienced in the history of real continents. We’re waiting for such a Declaration that will gradually define the rules of the game. This process will certainly irritate some people because the power of the pioneers will decline. We have determined that business groups in the digital world have gained an unbelievable amount of power in a short time and that laws are needed. This year, we’ve experienced this in debates about Facebook and Cambridge Analytica — discussions that resulted in a new approach to data protection.

What will education be like in such a digital society?

Education will no longer be restricted to a certain period of time; it won’t just stop when you finish your degree. Today, we tend to need creative people who focus less on reproducing existing knowledge and instead concentrate on more precisely learning to innovate. Our educational concepts must enable students to “learn to learn” and prepare them for the time they’re in the real world where continuing to learn is essential.

How are human beings changing in this era of digitalization, artificial intelligence and the increased use of machines?

Since the days of Aristotle, people have been asking what makes human beings special, particularly in terms of what separates them from the animal kingdom. Humans have been described as “anima ratio,” which means that human beings, unlike animals, are capable of thinking rationally and planning ahead. Today, this debate is being waged about the difference between humans and machines. We’re asking ourselves what distinguishes us and what differentiates us from machines. Will future systems be able to express something like empathy? Will machines also perhaps be able to understand us emotionally? Patent registrations are on the rise for technologies that try to understand our emotions. Will we have therapists in the form of machines or will we decide that human beings have a certain quality that machines do not possess and that we want? This can be a characteristic a machine doesn’t have, something we can’t describe. And this is exactly the reason why this quality can’t be transported into the world of machines.
Machines have, in a certain way, become “intelligent” and execute complex tasks. In the future, we will no longer just operate machines as we have in the past, but will work together with them. But what does this next era of human-machine partnerships look like? Two international studies commissioned by Dell Technologies have explored how new technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, virtual and augmented reality, and cloud computing will change the way we live and work in the next decade. According to the experts surveyed for the study, employees and companies must prepare for the following developments by 2030:

• The majority of jobs in the year 2030 — about 85% — haven’t been invented yet; the ability to acquire new knowledge will therefore be essential to being part of the professional world of the future.
• Machines will not necessarily replace the human workforce, but the process of finding work and employee recruitment will change: With new and data-driven placement techniques, companies will be able to draw on talent from all over the world.

In a second phase of the study, 3,800 company executives from 17 countries were asked about the development of human-machine collaboration: 82% believe the human workforce and machines will work together as “integrated teams” in their companies within the next five years.

However, whether this future suggests an opportunity or poses a threat seems to divide the executives: 50% say automated machines will give people more free time while the other 50% disagree. This divided thinking continues in these areas as well:
• Intelligent machines will manage our everyday lives and connect people with highly personalized goods and services: 43% yes, 57% no.
• By letting smart machines execute unpopular tasks, job satisfaction will increase: 42% yes, 58% no.
• Improved collaboration opportunities between humans and machines will increase productivity: 49% yes, 51% no.
• Schools will have to teach students how to learn instead of teaching them what to learn if they are to prepare them for jobs that do not exist yet: 56% yes, 44% no.
• With an increasing dependency on technology, risks such as cyberattacks will increase: 48% yes, 52% no.

Among executives, therefore, no digital euphoria has broken out. A very substantial proportion of the respondents even expressed skepticism about the future. When asked if better opportunities for cooperation would lead to more productivity, the experts disagreed. Half the executives did not expect an increase in productivity! It seems indisputable that people will work with machines differently than before — but even key industry executives don’t have a clear idea of how that will look. The impending upheavals, however, require active planning, especially on the part of decisionmakers.
The great transformation of human mobility

We are witnesses to an era that will enter history books as the third great transformation of mobility and transport. It follows the invention of the automobile and the subsequent transformation driven by maturation in reliability, safety, comfort, performance, mass production and individualization.

In a nutshell, future mobility will be “Urban CASE.” As more than half of humanity already lives in cities and this share continues to rise, urban mobility will serve as the breeding ground for innovative vehicles, public transport and new mobility concepts. The future of cars, vans and trucks is “CASE”: connected, autonomous, shared and electric. In the city of the future, vehicles will be connected to a real-time “mobility data cloud.” Vehicles will anticipate traffic bottlenecks with “predictive intelligence” and seek their optimal route and speed. Connectivity will also enable seamless trip chains integrating several modes of transportation like private cars, public transport and on-demand mobility services. As more and more vehicles become highly automated, drivers and passengers may relinquish the steering wheel to lean back and relax or use the commute time for communicating or working. Mobility services like free-floating car-sharing fleets, ride hailing and pool buses with on-demand routes will flourish. “Sharing” and “automatization” will converge into new “shared autonomous” mobility options. This means that in a few years we will see self-driving cars that can be hailed instantaneously for an individual trip. Vehicles in sharing fleets will navigate autonomously to high-demand locations. Autonomous delivery vehicles on their routes will release “microbots” carrying individual parcels to their final destinations. And lastly, vehicle fleets will increasingly become electrified, emission free, silent and more sustainable in their energy usage.

What else will happen? Just to cite a few concepts: Cars will be equipped with personalization features capable of learning user habits — e.g., they might enable an immersive fit and healthy experience by integrating music, air-conditioning, ambient light and individual scents into a massage program. Innovations in artificial intelligence will enable “learning mobility systems” that ease traffic flows and instantaneously create mobility options where they are needed.

All in all, mobility will change profoundly in upcoming years. It’s an exciting time we’re living in, one filled with lots of opportunities — and a great deal of responsibility, too!
Smart farming: The digital farm

Georg Larscheid, John Deere

Automation and networking of tractors and combine harvesters is rapidly increasing in agricultural technology. Georg Larscheid describes digitalization in farming.

Due to the advance of globalization in farming and the rise in extreme weather conditions, the farming industry worldwide is under considerable pressure to produce on a more cost-effective and sustainable basis. To achieve that in the short and medium term, experts are of the opinion that digitalization in farming will have a major impact, with the topic of automation playing a decisive role.

An example of this is integrated automatic implement guidance. This system automates both the tractor steering and the transverse displacement of the implement using DGPS (Differential Global Positioning System) and camera technology. In addition, the forward speed is controlled fully automatically. This automation solution enables us to significantly reduce herbicide use over large areas.

At the same time, documenting data is becoming increasingly important for farmers. Consumers want to know how food is produced. Digitalization also offers huge opportunities in this area, since each work step is recorded. As a result, seamless proof of all the fertilizing and crop protection measures, for example, is possible.

We take the topic of data protection extremely seriously in documentation and recognize that production-related data in particular is very sensitive for our customers with regard to data protection. To achieve data security, we align both the technical infrastructure for data storage and processing, and the internal processes of our employees to this aspect.

Smart farming is sustainable and consumer friendly

Although there is indeed justification for long-term perspectives and strategies, we regard implementing digitalization in farming as a gradual process that will continue for many decades.

Although it is possible to technically imagine completely remote-controlled farming under greatly idealized conditions, application across the board is still a considerable way off, since the variability and unpredictability of local conditions in farming out in the open are extremely complex.
People must be placed at the center of digital change

The digital measurement will alter work performed by humans in fundamental ways

REINER HOFFMANN, GERMAN FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

When a cost-slashing wave swept through German factories in the 1970s and 1980s, many workers wondered whether machines or robots would soon throw them out of work. A dark shadow was cast across the future of gainful employment. Today, in the middle of the digital age, we, the unions of Germany, are leading the discussion on the “work of the future!” All of us are well acquainted with the horror scenarios: Robots and computers will shove most people aside and shatter the material basis of their lives. We, too, have heard the doomsday predications and think they are completely misleading.

Economy 4.0 will create new work and living conditions, and erase the borders separating regions, markets, industries, companies, machines and people. In addition, it will gain a new raw material: “Big Data.” Technological change can create opportunities to improve the world of work, making it more humane, more mobile and more self-determined. But digital change will also pose risks. People have to do more work in less time, and many secure jobs will become more and more uncertain. The benefits of digitalization will be unevenly distributed. For this reason, we must critically monitor the digitalization process on all levels and actively shape it in political, ethical and social terms. Human beings must be placed at the center of this change.

Tapping the opportunities of digitalization will require huge investments in education. Life-long learning will become more important than ever before. For this reason, we need a right to advanced training. This is the only way for us to remain employable and competitive. We also need industrial policies that promote the creation of new jobs and social policies that will support and encourage those individuals who are temporarily unable to find work. People who make broad-brush predictions that strike fear into the hearts of millions of people and assert that experience, skills and knowledge will be worthless tomorrow have failed to grasp the real challenges. In the process, they are driving people into the arms of populists.

A look at the US should serve as a warning to us in Europe: Silicon Valley has shaped the discussion about digitalization. With its mix of revolutionary and save-the-world rhetoric as well as its brass-knuckle business practices, Silicon Valley has completely ignored the problems of old industry centers, the Rust Belt and rural regions — as well as the people who live and work there. This failure contributed significantly to the election of the populist Donald Trump. We see here just how dangerous the path of blind devotion to technology can be. In Germany and Europe, we must prevent such social polarization from occurring, and we must conduct a public discussion about transformation. It is a discussion that should involve political leaders and social-contract partners as well as citizens themselves. This is the only way that the working world of the future can be a structure on the basis of solidarity and progressive thinking.
Cheered by various commentators, the solidarity-oriented universal basic income (solidarisches Grundeinkommen) has entered the public debate on long-term unemployment in Germany as a promise of salvation. A sustained analysis, however, reveals this point: The proposition from leading Social Democrats (SPD) neither expresses solidarity nor constitutes a basic income, and the wording itself is by and large strongly misleading.

**Long-term unemployed people need intensive support and training**

Long-term unemployment in the German labor market is nevertheless a highly relevant issue: Close to 1 million people have been actively seeking employment for over 12 months and are considered — while noting all the imprecisions of definitions — to be long-term unemployed people. These potential labor-market participants did not benefit from the recent employment boom. They are poorly qualified and struggle with health issues more often than the rest of the German workforce.

These individuals apparently need particularly intensive support and training, which shifts this issue back on the agenda: the chronic underfunding of Germany’s job centers in terms of reintegration training.

Unfortunately, this is not what the architects of a solidarity-oriented universal basic income had in mind. They envisage a government-backed “social” labor market that tries to address unemployment by having the state practically — and indefinitely — employ the unemployed. This hardly qualifies as universal basic income. In fact, it’s a form of subsidized employment legitimized through the hackneyed slogan “it’s better to fund employment than unemployment.”

**Governmental employment measures remove the incentive for a regular job**

In general, this is tantamount to returning to the past and Germany’s long-forgotten employment-creation measure (Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahme). This is a foolish step backward as there are few labor-market instruments that have turned out to be as defective as this one. The approach removes the incentive to search for a job in the regular labor market, and it creates subsidized competition that could potentially crowd out private companies.

This backwards-looking proposition for a solidarity-oriented universal basic income has simply very little in common with solidarity.
Transatlantic partnership: Discussions on trade have to move forward

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN B. EMERSON, FORMER US AMBASSADOR TO GERMANY, CONDUCTED BY EVELINE METZEN

John, it’s great to see you. Tell us, what brings you to Germany these days?

Thanks for having me. Actually, I come back to Europe quite frequently. I returned to the Capital Group, which is one of the most established asset management companies in the world and where I worked for 16 years before becoming ambassador. We’re essentially a Mittelstand company, 85 years old, family founded in the third generation of family leadership and the largest active manager of mutual funds in the world. I come to Europe to meet with clients and financial institutions to talk about different investment opportunities as well as geopolitical risks. Day to day this involves speaking at conferences, meeting with clients and presenting to small client gatherings around the world.

It’s also great that you can actually take the experience that you gained during your time here as an ambassador and bring it back to your firm to provide others with your knowledge.

That’s part of what I wanted to do. When I’m here, I also have a volunteer role as the newly elected chairman of the American Council on Germany (ACG) and a newly elected board member of the German Marshall Fund. During my time here, I was deeply committed to the transatlantic relationship and I hope to continue in that capacity through my volunteer efforts.

Taking into consideration your level of commitment to transatlantic relations, what do you expect in this area for the future?

While we are in a period of some uncertainty, there is no more important relationship for commerce...
America or for Europe than these regions’ relationships with each other, and that’s because of our shared values. We just had a conference with ACG and Atlantik-Brücke about the state of the transatlantic relationship. At a poll conducted on the conference, more than two-thirds of Germans and two-thirds of Americans reiterated the importance of the transatlantic relationship and expressed the importance of our shared values, such as free speech and democracy. There was, however, a sense among those polled that those values appeared to be eroding somewhat, but there was also a sense that there is great opportunity for us to work together on global challenges such as fighting terrorism and addressing climate change. Through some of the work of AmCham Germany, ACG and Atlantik-Brücke, we can help to grow and deepen people-to-people and business-to-business relationships.

Due to societal changes within our countries, both the US and Europe are experiencing growing populist movements. Where do you see domestic challenges in our respective societies?

While globalization and the technological revolution have created millions of jobs and opportunities for great prosperity, a significant number of people have been left behind in this process. This led to some of the frustration we saw with Brexit and part of what lead to the support of Donald Trump’s election in the US. There’s also a fear about cultural change, social liberalization and about immigration, which has been a reason for our continued economic success and our ability to reinvent ourselves over and over again. I hope the leaders of the EU and the US recognize this reality and begin to come to grips with it. What makes me the most nervous is the sense that there’s an increasing lack of trust in fundamental institutions that have really provided the foundation for the growth, prosperity and peace we’ve largely enjoyed over the past 70 years, certainly in the transatlantic relationship.

Because we’re facing the same problems in Europe and the US, it would actually be easier if we worked together to solve them. In many respects, the US needs allies to address these global problems. Do you think the US still has the leverage to form these alliances?

Let me address “America First”: It isn’t necessarily in America’s interest if “America first” means “America alone.” As a matter of fact, I don’t think former presidents from Truman through Obama thought they were putting America second when they continually worked to develop multilateral institutions that make America stronger. Past presidents just had a sense that one way to put America first was to have America work in conjunction with its allies. It’s important for the transatlantic relationship and for Europe to strengthen what it brings to the table as well. We’re beginning to see a movement in that direction.

Let’s focus on the opportunity side since you’re dealing with investment all over Europe and the US. What can Europe do to strengthen transatlantic business relations?

I’ve never heard President Trump say he didn’t like trade agreements; he just doesn’t like bad trade agreements. Clearly, there would be some kind of opportunity. I’m concerned when I read in the press that some Europeans say that if these tariffs are imposed, we’re not going to talk. The US and Europe should always be talking. I’m sure Europe has some of the same issues; what struck me the most was many of those issues were some of the same issues we were pushing during TTIP negotiations. That tells me there is a commitment and an interest in moving forward with discussions on trade.

We don’t hear much about how Democrats are positioning themselves in the lead-up to the midterm elections in the US. Is the Democratic Party moving in a different direction; do they have a different agenda?

First of all, I think the midterm elections will be very close. Right now, you clearly see energy coming from the Democratic Party’s base that’s fueled by the last couple of years. These midterm elections are fundamentally going to be much more candidate-by-candidate choices than some kind of overall referendum on the direction of the country. You’re going to have a high turnout among Republican voters who want to express their support for the president; and among Democratic voters who want to express their opposition to these policies. One thing we know for sure is that the day after the midterms, as is the case in our system, the presidential campaign will start.
Midterm mania: How Trump energizes fans and foes alike

GUEST ARTICLE
BY STEFAN NIEMANN, ARD
His name is not on the ballot, yet it all seems to be about him: Donald Trump. When Americans return to the polls for the midterm elections on Nov. 6, all 435 seats in the House of Representatives, one-third of the 100 Senate seats and no less than 36 governorships will be contested. That day also marks the middle of Trump’s term. It’s halftime for the 45th president of the United States. There is no doubt about it: The results of this year’s midterm elections will shape the future of Donald Trump’s presidency. But did his first two years in the White House change the way people vote, the way politicians campaign? And did the self-proclaimed disruptor in chief succeed in shaking up America’s democracy? My answers: YES, YES and NOPE — and that’s good news. I hope.

A study conducted in June among 2,002 adults by PEW Research Center, a nonpartisan “fact tank,” found: “Compared with recent midterms, more voters … say their view of the president — positive or negative — will influence their vote for Congress. A 60% majority say they consider their midterm vote as essentially a vote either for Donald Trump (26%) or against him (34%). These are among the highest shares saying their view of the president would be a factor in their vote in any midterm in more than three decades.”

To the barricades! Voter mobilization … on both sides

Twitter Trump, this self-centered, protocol-defying, provocative president, seems to deepen America’s divide. I only see unconditional admiration or absolute condemnation. Many conservatives shake their heads because of his often shameful behavior — making America right again is the wet dream of Christian zealots. At the same time, progressives unite to stop Trump from destroying the liberal America they love. While this president serves as a role model for activists of the so-called alt-right movement and encourages them to openly lobby for their nationalism, xenophobic and racist agenda, I have no doubt that he also mobilizes America’s left. Ironically, maybe as much as Obama did — although under a different pretext, of course. Take the swingleft.org movement, founded the day before Trump’s inauguration: Its volunteers focus on contested constituencies and pump all their campaign resources into them to swing House seats from Republican to Democrat—sometimes far away from where the activists themselves live.

Greatest leader of all time vs. lame duck

So, will the Republicans defend their respective majorities in both chambers of the US Congress and have Trump’s back for another two years? Or will he have to deal with a 116th Congress that is partly or entirely dominated by Democrats, and thus share the fate of his predecessor, Barack Obama, who found himself blocked by a powerful opposition?

The midterms matter so much because there’s an awful lot at stake. I’m certain victorious Democrats would crush the Republican legislative agenda in Congress. If they took over either the House (possible) or the Senate (unlikely), they could block the Obamacare repeal as well as additional cuts to Medicare, Social Security and welfare. If they won the House back, Democrats would gain new momentum to investigate the Trump administration. Whether that might even lead to the president’s impeachment — I find that impossible to predict. But the impeachment process starts in the House and might become more likely should that chamber be controlled by the president’s political enemies (even though it would take two-thirds of the Senate to actually remove a president from office).

Post-power shift in the midterm elections: Democratic rebellion, Republican loyalty?

Results of primary races show a shift in patterns of the past when Republicans (or rather Tea Party crusaders) often challenged GOP leaders and Democrats fell into the party line. In 2018, it seems to be the other way around: Democrats rebel while Republicans tend to toe the party line. In fact, Republicans in Congress have turned into a club of spineless opportunists who betray most conservative principles and have abandoned all pride to please this president, one who gave them what they never expected to see: the triumph over Hillary Clinton.

In one Democratic Party primary in New York, we saw Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez land the biggest upset victory so far: The 28-year-old liberal activist and first-time candidate crushed Joseph Crowley, a veteran lawmaker who was deeply rooted in the Democratic Party establishment. He was even being tapped as a potential speaker of the House. The New York Times calls Ocasio-Cortez’s victory “a stunning illustration of the energy on the left this year.”

Regardless of the outcome, I’m quite optimistic that in the end, these midterms will not have been about HIM, but about something much bigger: about checks and balances, rule of law and freedom of the press. In short: about America’s democracy and its unique ability to reinvent itself and emerge stronger.
These are difficult days for transatlantic business. We are in the midst of an era of fundamental — at times destructive — change. Fears that technology is destined to destroy our way of life are leading to anger and confrontation. Pressure to find answers is growing.

If change is so intrusive, our best course is not to block change, but to establish the morals and values of democratic civil society at the core of the global digitalized system. More important than the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) would be a re-freshed Helsinki Final Act that established values for the digital age.

Our Western story remains convincing: Our way of life is superior because it works. No one else can provide the freedom and prosperity that Western values have made possible. But if the West is to remain a defining global force, future governance must emerge from the grassroots. Our citizens are telling us that old top-down methods no longer work.

As an example, I’d like to discuss an initiative a group of us has started in Berlin. We are offering an American-based program in English over the UKW frequency abandoned by the NPR network. Our goal? Transatlantic dialogue at the community level from the ground up. We’re unique in Germany as a nonprofit, noncommercial, community-oriented media platform. We’re neither beholden to sponsors, nor limited by the political correctness of German public radio.

But there’s more: Our locally produced outreach to Berlin’s rich ethnic mix carried out both in person and through the many new digital platforms offers a chance to expand our message and help integrate the thousands of new Berliners into the city.

Why KCRW Berlin and not Radio Kiez or something more typical of Berlin? Because the name KCRW — the call letters of one of Los Angeles’ NPR stations — adds not only an aspect of California, but also invokes the spirit of the namesake that embodies the new Berlin more than any other station in America. Our joint heritage offers a truly unique mix of news, music and culture found nowhere else in the world.

Such grassroots approaches are key to helping new generations understand why rules-based liberal systems are the best way to ensure that in the future, as today, our Atlantic world will operate, in the words of John F. Kennedy, as “a system of cooperation, inter-dependence, and harmony.”

Please listen: You can find us at 104.1 MHz in Berlin.
Or online at www.KCRWBerlin.com

About Former Ambassador John C. Kornblum

John C. Kornblum is a senior counselor at Noerr LLP. He served as US Ambassador to Germany from 1997 to 2001. He has spent over 35 years working in the American Foreign Service. John C. Kornblum has served as an AmCham Germany Board Member for 20 years.
In your opinion, what makes Germany such an attractive investment location for US companies?

In times of political upheaval and insecurity like we’re currently facing in many parts of the world, it’s especially important to rely on stable partnerships and a safe environment for investments.

Located in the heart of Europe, Germany is the continent’s largest economy and able to guarantee exactly this kind of stability. Germany’s quality standards, efficiency and highly educated specialists are some of the benefits investors enjoy. And, of course, the quality of life in Germany is especially high: A British magazine recently selected three German cities to be among the top eight of their 2018 list of the most livable cities in the world.

What opportunities and challenges does the transatlantic relationship currently face?

For the last 70 years, the relationship between the US and Germany has drawn on common values and interests. The US is the most important trading partner for Germany, and Germany is the fifth biggest export market for the US. Current turbulences such as the debates around German military expenditure or punitive tariffs hopefully won’t damage the partnership in the long run. In my opinion, there’s no doubt the US is the only possible partner for Europe in terms of guaranteeing political and economic stability and influence.

What is your favorite place in the US or Germany and why?

Munich’s city center on a sunny day in summer is one of my favorite places. Sitting in a café, sipping my cappuccino and enjoying the surroundings remind me why I made Munich my “hometown.”

Dr. Sylvia Rothblum has been Senior Vice President of German-Speaking Territories & Israel at Warner Bros. Entertainment GmbH International Television Distribution for 16 years. She is a member of the AmCham Germany Executive Committee.
Political voices from Germany:

Is Germany prepared for and internationally competitive in digital change in the areas of labor, education and infrastructure?

I meet smart minds almost every day who shape digital change with creativity, innovation and passion. But I see the federal government failing to create the public policy and legal and regulatory framework needed for digital change. This is reflected in the slow expansion of digital infrastructure and the lack of flexibility in labor law as well as the low levels of IT equipment and digital education in our schools. In these and other areas of digitalization, Germany lags behind both Europe and on the international level. If we want to make Germany a leading digital nation, we can only do so with a digital ministry that coordinates and is responsible for digital transformation.

Manuel Höferlin, FDP
Member of the German Parliament
Spokesperson on Digital Policy of the FDP Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag

Germany has received very bad ratings regarding the status of digitalization, be it in the fields of education, labor or telecommunications. It’s always too little, too late. Better coordination by the government and a consistent strategy that puts common welfare front and center is necessary. Digitalization offers many chances to save natural resources, yet Germany is currently not using this potential and not developing enough new technologies that would place us in the top tier.

Tabea Rößner, Green Party
Member of the German Parliament
Spokesperson on Internet Politics for the Alliance ’90/The Greens Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag
we inform you about AmCham Germany’s advocacy work. As the voice of transatlantic business, we’re committed to having an open ear for our members and conveying their interests to relevant political leaders, think tank members and other stakeholders in Germany, Europe and the US. Strong transatlantic ties are the guiding principle of our policy committees, which are an important pillar of the Chamber’s portfolio.

In our section POLICY SPOTLIGHT

We live in a world that is becoming increasingly digital. Society as a whole has to shape and be part of the digital transformation in order to unlock its opportunities and realize its positive effects. With its digital agenda, the German government has set a clear policy for moving forward. With regard to digitalizing our infrastructure and labor markets, we have made great progress. However, when it comes to getting our educational system ready for the digital age, we still have to improve.

Tankred Schipanski, CDU
Member of the German Parliament
Spokesperson on Digital Policy for the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag

Germany is building on a solid foundation for digital transformation. For the next step to digitalization, we need to further accelerate infrastructure development. A new era in start-ups has begun in Germany over the last two years, and modern businesses are changing. The most important issue here is this: Our schools urgently need better equipment and qualified teachers. And that’s what we’re working to achieve. As a Social Democrat, I continuously focus on working conditions. In this area of policy, important preparatory work was already been carried out in the last legislative period and very concrete proposals have been made. These proposals have to be implemented to ensure that digital work will be a success story in Germany.

Dr. Jens Zimmermann, SPD
Member of the German Parliament
Spokesperson on Digital Policy of the SPD Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag
The digital transformation of Germany’s economy is key to securing the country’s position as a leading industrial nation. What will this transformation mean for government policy? The right conditions must be created to ensure that Germany’s economy can remain competitive and innovative.

The German government has already taken several important steps to improve the coordination of digitalization by appointing a state minister for digital affairs and by upgrading the Department for Innovation to the Chancellor’s Office. But digitalization is a cross-ministry undertaking that requires not necessarily centralization. We, therefore, welcome the appointment of the state secretary for digital affairs and the creation of digitalization departments in many important government ministries. Against this backdrop, AmCham Germany calls for the country to systematically continue down the path of digitalization. In the process, Germany must always weigh and carry out digitalization from the perspective of the issues under consideration and the respective legal, public policy and regulatory framework.

Our member companies welcome the objectives set by the German government. These aims include creating a national, competitive digital infrastructure, teaching digital skills to all age groups, improving conditions for start-ups, constructively addressing the challenges of the digital work world, providing and expanding the resources needed to improve security in cyberspace, and expanding digital administrative activities. AmCham Germany believes the German government’s digital policies should set the following priorities:

- The expansion of high-performance digital infrastructures for conventional and mobile communication networks will require a regulatory framework that, above all, creates incentives for private investment and strengthens competition.

- Given the key role that provider activities play on the internet, clear rules regarding the responsibilities assumed by service providers for third-party content are needed. The European e-commerce directive contains reasonable assignments of responsibility for many areas. However, the introduction of these rules into German law has lacked the necessary clarity. Furthermore, the directive is being implemented to widely different degrees across Europe. This has created legal uncertainty as well as contradictory and, occasionally, impractical court rulings.

- Platform regulations should not stand in the way of innovation and growth. They must always be placed on applying existing laws. If Germany is to continue expanding its strong presence in the industrial internet, it needs high-performance, industrial platforms...
and the appropriate political framework that will facilitate the collection, processing, storage and transmission of data.

In particular, our member companies believe that the free, secure exchange of data with other economic areas will play a key role. This exchange of data will form the foundation for a prosperous German and European digital economy. AmCham Germany supports the German government’s commitment to transatlantic data exchange under the Privacy Shield agreement.

Another important element is a functioning transatlantic partnership because Germany’s and Europe’s digital economy cannot afford to be cut off from the US market. Normally, new products are launched in North America and Europe at the same time. The dialogue on both sides of the Atlantic must, therefore, be intensified.

The transatlantic economic region is critically important for the facilitation of innovation, and not just in terms of digitalization. The creation of joint standards and norms must be advanced. After all, uniform rules are vital to small and medium-sized enterprises. Working together, Germany, the EU and the US have an opportunity to positively shape digital change and manage the challenges associated with it. In the process, a balance must be achieved, between a critical examination of the impact of technological developments and a positive interpretation of technology. The German government must move to the forefront of this effort.

AmCham Germany’s policy committees: Our members’ forum to articulate and convey policy recommendations on critical business, government, legal and regulatory issues.

POLICY COMMITTEES
- Policy Coordination Committee
- Aerospace and Defense Committee
- Corporate Responsibility Committee
- Energy and Climate Committee
- Financial Services Committee
- Healthcare and Life Sciences Committee
- Innovation and Research Committee
- Social and Labor Affairs Committee
- Tax Committee
- Telecommunications, Internet and Media Committee
- Trade Committee

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Welcome new members

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With both our Silicon Valley origins and our strong German investor base, we truly feel like a US-German company. Joining AmCham Germany was a natural and important step for us as we increase the number of charging spots available to EV drivers in Germany. We’ve already started to put our membership to work by partnering with members to expand networked EV charging within the German market.

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Light at the end of the tunnel

This year, there was no Sommerloch in transatlantic relations. Quite the opposite. The introduction of US tariffs on steel and aluminum from the EU, the debate on car tariffs and, not least, the events of the G7 summit that kept us awake at night have caused much concern among companies on both sides of the Atlantic. But uncertainty is always bad for the economy. That is why the meeting between US President Trump and EU Commission President Juncker in Washington, DC, in July was the right signal at the right time: The US and EU will no longer turn up the pressure at customs but rather negotiate a road map for closer economic cooperation.

AmCham Germany welcomes these positive signals and continues to work intensely for a constructive dialogue to resolve the trade dispute. But we are not only promoting this position by going public and making the voice of our members heard: We are also active ourselves in improving economic relations between the US and Germany. We started an advocacy initiative with governors in order to leverage our position in the United States. And, in September, a business delegation from AmCham Germany will travel to Washington, DC, to hold talks with the US administration and other stakeholders.

Moreover, at our Transatlantic Business Conference in Berlin at the end of November, political and business representatives will discuss the global marketplace in times of disruption. And by choosing the title “In Trade we trust” we take a clear stand. AmCham Germany will emphasize its positions on trade, digitalization and the responsibility of our companies in the globalized world; by doing so, we will demonstrate how we are remaining at the forefront of shaping transatlantic economic relations in the upcoming months.

Best regards,

Eveline Y. Metzen
AmCham Germany General Manager

In our next issue

- Energy and climate
- Report on the 12th Annual Transatlantic Business Conference in Berlin
Upcoming event highlights
AmCham Germany

SEPTEMBER

10
Business Luncheon
Uwe Bartmann
Chief Executive Officer, Siemens AG Deutschland
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

12
Business Luncheon
Ulrich Dietz
Vorsitzender des Verwaltungsrats, GFT Technologies SE
STUTTGART

18
Business After Hours
Dr. Rainer Feurer
Senior Vice President, Customer Centric Sales Development, Customer Experience, BMW AG
MUNICH

20


OCTOBER

18
Event
Phil Murphy
Governor of New Jersey and former US Ambassador to Germany
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

NOVEMBER

8
Transatlantic Evening
Networking event and award ceremony for the Berlin Airlift Contest
BERLIN

14
AmCham Germany Expert Briefing
Ladekonzepte für Elektroautos in Flotten und bei Arbeitgebern, ChargePoint Germany GmbH
DÜSSELDORF

15
Business Luncheon
Stefan B. Wintels
Vorsitzender des Vorstands and CCO Citigroup Global Markets Deutschland AG
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

16
Business Luncheon
Axel Voss
Mitglied des Europäischen Parlaments
COLOGNE

DECEMBER

22
Thanksgiving Dinner
FRANKFURT AM MAIN HANNOVER

28
Business Luncheon
Christiane Grün
Vorsitzende der Geschäftsführung 3M Deutschland
DÜSSELDORF

29–30
12th Transatlantic Business Conference
BERLIN

7
Business Luncheon
Sabine Bendiek
Vorsitzende der Geschäftsführung Microsoft Deutschland GmbH
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