



Deutsche  
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# 75 YEARS OF NATO

DECADES OF A UNIQUE  
TRANSATLANTIC  
SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

General (ret.) Klaus Naumann:  
Memories and Thoughts of a Contemporary Witness

## THE AUTHOR

### General (ret.) Dr. h.c. Klaus Naumann

was born in Munich in 1939. He served in the German Armed Forces from 1958 to 1999, his last assignment as Chief of Defense Germany ended in 1996. He was elected chairman of NATO's Military Committee and held this position until 1999. During his term as Chief of Defense Germany he was tasked with re-organizing and downsizing the Bundeswehr, dissolving and partially integrating the former GDR's National People's Army into the German Armed Forces and re-orienting the Bundeswehr from homeland defense towards UN and NATO missions and its first deployments abroad in Cambodia, Somalia, Georgia, Iraq and the Balkans. As Chairman of the North Atlantic Military Committee from February 1996 until May 1999, Naumann was NATO's highest-ranking soldier. During this period NATO developed a strategy which was valid until the fall of 2010; the Partnership for Peace program and cooperation with Russia started; NATO accepted Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary as members and started operations in Bosnia and Kosovo in March 1999. Following his retirement from active service in 1999, Naumann became president of the Clausewitz Society and the British-German Officers' Association. The ISS London appointed him to its Advisory Council, he served as International Advisor to the ICRC in Geneva, and Kofi Annan appointed him to the United Nations' Brahimi Panel, which, in the fall of 2000, presented 2000 proposals on how to improve UN peace missions. Later he joined the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty which presented its report on "The Responsibility to Protect" in December 2001. In mid-October 2008 he became a member of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.



He serves on the board of the German Atlantic Association as an honorary member, he is on the board of trustees of the *Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik* (German Society for Security Policy), was a member of the board of trustees of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and, from 2005 to 2019, a member of the senate of the *Deutsche Nationalstiftung*.

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# INTRODUCTORY REMARKS



On 4 April 2024, NATO celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. For three quarters of a century it has embodied the security and defense alliance between North America and Europe, the two centers of Western democracy, home to almost a billion people. The North Atlantic Alliance is the largest and most successful security alliance in history. The promise of mutual protection and defense assurances against external threats, regardless of a partner's location, size or political weight are its core elements. The solidarity within the alliance makes every nation stronger and more secure: One for all and all for one.

In 1949 NATO started out with 12 members. At the end of the Cold War in 1989 it had 16, today there are 32. This development reflects the eras which the Alliance has gone through, mastered and shaped: In the four decades of the Cold War it had guaranteed the security of Western Europe through deterrence and the ability to defend against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, it started a large-scale disarmament process and refocused on international crisis management outside the borders of the alliance. Then it started opening up for new members from Central Eastern Europe who joined the alliance in several waves. NATO also entered into special partnerships with Russia and Ukraine. At the time these ties were thought to represent the two pillars of a new Euro-Atlantic security order. But after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, NATO's focus started shifting, and now, after Russia's large-scale attack against Ukraine in February 2022, it is back on deterrence and the rebuilding of defense capabilities.

Today NATO is facing enormous challenges. The allies must support Ukraine so that it can resist, prevail and finally restore its territorial integrity. At the same time they have to work at full speed to ensure that NATO becomes truly able to defend itself. In view of the enormous political, military and financial efforts required to achieve this goal, the number of crises and conflicts that impact Europe's security, and, on top of that, the difficult domestic developments in several states of the Alliance, in both Europe and America, what matters most is the Alliance's capability to maintain its unity, cohesion and ability to act. The trust, reliability and solidarity among its allies form the basis of NATO's strength and our security.

The foundation for this was laid decades ago. Now the Cold War is history, but since Russia has once more become a threat, the principles of strategic thinking and NATO's operational defense planning have become relevant again. They deserve to be studied carefully. And we in Germany should remember how we became part of the Western World thanks to generous support from the U.S., be aware that we now play a key role for NATO's defense capability in Europe and bear a great responsibility for the future.

With this document General (ret.) Klaus Naumann makes an important contribution to NATO's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He draws attention to the decisive decades that shaped NATO and to the role that Germany played in this process. His observations as a witness of these years are enriched by his personal experience. Out of the 75 years of NATO's existence, Gen (ret.) Naumann spent 41 as a soldier of the German Armed Forces, shaping both institutions when he held key positions as Chief of Staff for Military Policy and Operational Command in the Federal Ministry of Defence, as the youngest ever Chief of Defense Germany, and as Chairman of NATO's Military Committee, i. e. as NATO's highest-ranking soldier. As an honorary member of the Executive Committee and the Board he has done the German Atlantic Association a great service with this contribution.



**Christian Schmidt**

High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina

Former Federal Minister

President of the German Atlantic Association

# PROLOGUE

I wrote this article for NATO's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary on request of the German Atlantic Association in my capacity as a contemporary witness. This explains why the focus of this text is on the decades of the Cold War from 1949 until 1989, followed by the transition to a different world order marked by the initially successful attempt to cooperate with the former enemies including Russia and create a zone of cooperative security from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

This security partnership, successful at first, began to crumble when the Kosovo conflict erupted in 1999. It could not be revived, although several attempts were made during the war on terrorism which started in Afghanistan in 2001, a time when increasingly imperialist attitudes became evident in Russia. Since Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022, NATO has had to refocus and provide security from Russia by returning to the concept of peace through deterrence in the transatlantic area. The period since 2000 is therefore described from the point of view of a contemporary observer.

One of NATO's most important achievements in the 75 years of its existence was to build and maintain confidence among the partners of the Alliance. This was accomplished in the 40 years of the Cold War, the biggest military confrontation that Europe ever faced in times of peace. It is the achievement of many soldiers, diplomats and civilian employees. They all deserve thanks and recognition, because of the many sacrifices they had to make in their service. After the greatest success which a defense alliance can achieve – to maintain peace without ever firing a single shot in war – NATO shifted its focus in 1990 to maintaining the trust it had gained and to building trust among former adversaries in order to achieve cooperative security. In both cases it was mainly the soldiers who extended a hand of friendship and helped to build bridges to peace.

So I dedicate this anniversary publication to the soldiers who during these 75 years served and fought in NATO forces and to those killed in action. Their legacy is that NATO's principle "an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us" has to be preserved as the basis for our future efforts to guarantee security.



*The initially successful transition to a new world order: Cooperation with Ukraine was decided on 9 July 1997 during the Madrid Summit. Meetings of NATO's Chiefs of Staff with the Ukrainian Chief of Staff, which I had the honor of chairing from 1997 to early 1999, were held twice a year from then on.*

# 75 YEARS OF NATO

## DECADES OF A UNIQUE TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

Germany owes so much to NATO: protection during the Cold War until 1989, security during the German reunification process since 1990, and protection against threats and instability in the difficult years of unrest from 2001 until today.

Let us, in the midst of today's global insecurity, look back in time to Germany in the year 1949: The country is still largely in ruins, but in the midst of the reconstruction process. It is overpopulated after millions of refugees have arrived from the areas lost in 1945, occupied by the four victorious powers of World War II. It has no armed forces and is de facto already divided, because the dividing line between East and West runs right through the middle of Germany, with the Soviet Union lurking on one side after having expanded its sphere of influence to the banks of the Elbe, ready to continue until it reaches the Atlantic. It is at that point that, 75 years ago, NATO is founded as an alliance for the prevention of new wars in Europe and for protection against the expansion of the Soviet Union. But this is also the time when the division of Germany becomes final, with the Federal Republic of Germany in the West and the German Democratic Republic in the East.

There was no formal promise made to protect the Federal Republic of Germany, the law applied was occupation law. According to article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty only an attack on the armed forces of NATO partners in occupied Germany would have triggered NATO's collective defense mechanism, but not an attack on West Germany.

Of the 75 years of NATO's existence I spent 41 as a soldier of the Bundeswehr. I would like to describe Germany's integration process into the West as well as the problems in the context of forward defense to protect the territory of West Germany in the case of war, and then focus on how cooperation within NATO made the miracle of Germany's reconciliation with its former enemies happen when, in May 1955 – no more than ten years after the end of an atrocious war with millions of dead on both

sides – it became a member of NATO. It was also because of the trust built within NATO that in 1990 Germany could become Europe's most powerful state, none of the former enemies objected and all neighbors gave their consent.

The foundation of this trust was essentially laid by the soldiers who might have faced each other as enemies in battle hardly more than ten years before. Now, in this completely new and different organization, their biggest problem was to communicate with their new comrades in English and French.

This is one part of the publication on the occasion of NATO's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A second part describes the development of NATO's strategy during the Cold War, followed by examples of how Germany contributed to the alliance, and the final part will conclude with an outlook on the challenges of today.

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### Germany's integration into the West

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Any attempt to explain how Germany became part of the West needs to start with what happened before, in post-war Germany in 1945.

In 1945 Germany was a destroyed, defeated, divided and occupied country, subject to the four "D's" of the Potsdam Conference: demilitarization, denazification, democratization and demolition. For the German people, foreign policy was the least of their worries. Those who have experienced the year 1945 and the years until 1949 know that everyone was trying to survive, but they will also remember, with admiration and gratitude, the incredible feats the war generation achieved, above all the single women and mothers, often called the "Trümmerfrauen", the women who cleared away the rubble. These were the people who had laid the foundations for the reconstruction of Germany.

The reconstruction effort was also based on the political thinking and acting of the men and women of the first hour, Konrad Adenauer and Jakob Kaiser, Theodor Heuss, Carlo Schmid and Kurt Schuhmacher and others, who decided that the new state they were building was going to be a new, democratic and sovereign one.

As far as foreign policy was concerned, the fate of the shattered German Reich was left in the hands of the victorious powers. The harmonious relations among them were soon to be replaced by the East-West antagonism which would split Europe into two frozen halves. This is reflected in a statement that Adenauer made in 1945: "Russia has in its hands: the Eastern part of Germany, Poland, the Balkans, apparently Hungary, a part of Austria. Russia increasingly withdraws from cooperation with the other great powers and acts completely at its own discretion in the territories it occupies. The economic and political principles that prevail in these countries are already completely different from those in the other part of Europe. So, the division into Eastern Europe, which is Russian territory, and Western Europe is a fact."<sup>1</sup>

For Konrad Adenauer this resulted in the compelling necessity to make the Federal Republic of Germany a part of the West. Germany as a Western country – this is Konrad Adenauer's lasting achievement. It was secured by Germany's accession to NATO in 1955 and became final when Helmut Kohl insisted that the reunified Germany be accepted as a NATO member in 1990.

*It appears that Adenauer was not particularly disappointed about the failure of the EDC, because he was convinced that the only effective protection against Soviet expansionism were close ties to the U.S. on the basis of a treaty.*

Adenauer's decision was not uncontroversial. His opponent from the same party, Jakob Kaiser, was opting for a compromise with the Soviet Union. Unlike Adenauer he was ready to accept that Germany would remain neutral in the approaching thunderstorm of the East-West conflict. Kaiser's concept, based on the idea that a non-aligned Germany could serve as a bridge between East and West between the two German states with different social orders, achieving compromises and rapprochement failed. The idea,

however, remained. It became, without the explicit focus on neutrality, the basis for Willy Brandt's foreign policy and also, including the concept of neutrality, of Egon Bahr's approach.

Adenauer was more matter-of-fact in his thinking, his approach was more global. He understood that only a state based on values similar to those he hoped would shape the new democratic Germany and which had the power to protect it from Soviet expansionist desires could guarantee security during the reconstruction phase. To him there was no alternative to close ties with the United States. But he was also aware of the danger that Western Europe might fade into insignificance if it did not manage to speak with one voice in the looming conflict between the superpowers. But this required the reconciliation between Germany and France. This is how the two poles of Germany's western-oriented foreign policy were determined: ties to the U.S. and ties to France. Achieving the first goal would require the rearmament of Germany, which would, however, make it more difficult to achieve the second goal. Adenauer had no affinity to political power, but as a pragmatist he realized that political goals can only be achieved if people feel safe and secure. Only then would they be ready to make the sacrifices required to rebuild the country. He also knew that a new German state would only be able to exist if it had its own military forces. In 1949 he had already sought military advice, and in 1950, when he was Federal Chancellor, he set up a group of experts whose task it was to work out the basics of Germany's contribution to the defense of Western Europe. The experts met in the Himmerod monastery in the Eifel mountains, and the "Himmerod Declaration" they published served as a blueprint for the rearmament of Germany and the organization of the Bundeswehr.

Adenauer's foreign policy goal was to achieve sovereignty through rearmament and ties to the West strong enough to preclude any type of solo action and seesaw policy, but rather offer "freedom, peace and unity" to the German population. This was to be the foundation of a West German state which would, just like a magnet, develop an irresistible attraction to the 17 million Germans ruled by the Soviets. Any attempt by the Soviet Union to expand its sphere of influence would meet with the people's resistance and fail. Adenauer had never given up on German unity, but to him it was a long-term goal, achievable only in the European context. So he linked Germany's interests to those of the other European states – France wanted to be in control of Germany's instruments of power – and put them under the protective umbrella of the United States. The U.S. created the preconditions for the German-French reconciliation and, at



the same time, for the European Union. But these long-term goals were still far away, the reality was that Western Germany was completely defenseless.

The extent of Germany's helplessness becomes evident in the United States' original plans for the defense of Europe before the foundation of NATO in 1949. The Federal Republic's security interests were completely ignored. Considering this, it was a great achievement to get Germany integrated into the alliance so that its borders would be protected. When NATO was established, Lord Ismay, who was afraid of Germany, made his famous statement: "Keep the Soviets out, the Americans in and the Germans down". This changed during the Cold War to: "Keep the Soviets out, the Americans in and make the Germans strong". The reason for this change of mind was the Soviet Union's expansionism which had become evident during the Korean War. So there was an increasing demand for Germany to become part of the West's security systems. Adenauer agreed on condition that the occupation statute be lifted, although the issue of Germany's rearmament led to fierce political debates in Germany and was by no means undisputed within the government. He achieved the first interim goal with the signing of the Bonn-Paris Conventions in 1952, which granted the Federal Republic at least a certain degree of sovereignty. In return, negotiations about the establishment of a European Defence Community between Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxemburg and the Netherlands started in May 1952. This community was to be a supranational alliance in which only the German military would have been placed under an integrated command whereas the armies of the other partners would have remained under the command of their governments. The Soviet Union tried to prevent these emerging ties with the West with the Stalin Notes in 1952, offering Germany to reunify if it would remain a neutral state. But Adenauer would not be dissuaded, even when Jakob Kaiser proposed his idea of stronger ties with the East again. Despite strong domestic criticism Adenauer rejected the Soviet Union's proposal. The treaty on the European Defence Community was not ratified by the French National Assembly in 1954, which was definitely a setback for Europe, but kept the doors of NATO open to Germany. It appears that Konrad Adenauer was not particularly disappointed about the failure of the European Defence Community, because he was convinced that the only effective protection against Soviet expansionism were close ties to the U.S. on the basis of a treaty.

In the same year, 1954, the Federal Republic of Germany was invited to join NATO. On 5 May 1955 it became a member of NATO

*In 1949 strategic thinking did not involve the Germans. They did not have armed forces and later, after the rearmament, they were prohibited by the Potsdam Agreement to set up their own general staff.*

and the Western European Union, renouncing the production and possession of ABC weapons. In return, the occupation statute was revoked and Germany regained its sovereignty, although the three Western powers reserved certain rights. So, only ten years after the end of the war, Adenauer's concept of gaining sovereignty by renouncing sovereignty had paid off. The western part of Germany had, as the German historian Heinrich August Winkler put it, finally arrived in the West.

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#### The development of strategic thinking in NATO

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For NATO, which had its headquarters first in Paris and then, after France withdrew from NATO's military command structure, from 1967 on in Brussels, there was only one goal: to prevent war in the NATO Treaty Area through collective defense.

The recurring theme through 75 years of NATO is expressed in a statement by the British military historian Basil Liddell Hart and his French colleague Gaston Bouthol: "If you want peace, understand war". This goes beyond the Roman saying "Si vis pacem para bellum", because it implies seeing things from the enemy's point of view and choosing the type of action which the enemy cannot bear.

In 1949 strategic thinking did not involve the Germans. They did not have armed forces and later, after the rearmament, they were prohibited by the Potsdam Agreement to set up their own general staff which prevented any strategic thinking and planning on their part. This is why the Bundeswehr was integrated into all NATO structures, so the responsibility for strategic planning was transferred to the Alliance and the operational command of the German armed forces to the Allied command authorities.

So there was no need to work out a national strategic concept in 1955/56. Which was actually an advantage for the following reasons: it took a while until the traditional operational thinking of the generals and admirals of the founding generation with its

separate approaches to the domains “land, air, sea” had changed after Germany had become member of a maritime alliance. Then there was the new dimension of nuclear weapons which also took some adjusting, because from 1957 on both the U.S. and the Soviet Union had intercontinental missiles and using them could turn any regional conflict into a global war.

It was only from the 1960s on that the German Ministry of Defence developed its own defense policy guidelines, the strategic military objective and the concept of the Bundeswehr. But even then those documents did not represent a national security strategy but were plans based on the Alliance’s strategy. A prototype of a national security strategy and the first definition of Germany’s national security interests were only developed in 1992 by the command staff of the German armed forces.

When NATO was founded, strategic thinking was determined by the United States. When, even before the foundation of NATO, the confrontation with the Soviet Union was on the horizon, the U.S. had been the only nuclear maritime power with global reach operating on the “exterior” line with the aim, in the event of war, to strategically encircle the continental power USSR operating on the “interior” line, to destroy its forces in attacks from different directions and defeat Moscow. Europe’s fate would be decided in the North Atlantic and not on the North German Plain. This line of thinking goes back to Admiral Mahan, it was dominant throughout the Cold War and it still shapes American thinking today. It implies that the U.S. as a maritime power located between two oceans basically owns the European coastline. Defending the continent of Europe is not the first priority but helps to keep wars away from the U.S., an approach called forward defense by the Americans. For the Germans in NATO, however, forward defense was always understood as defense as close as possible to the inner German border.

The first operational plans of the U.S., HALFMOON and later OFF TACKLE, largely forgotten today, as well as the U.S. strategic approach reflected the military balance of power with both the U.S. occupational forces and the small British and French forces dramatically inferior to the Soviet combat troops, far superior in numbers and ready for action, which were deployed right behind the Iron Curtain. Those plans focused on withdrawal to the European key areas Great Britain, Spain and the Western Mediterranean. From there as well as from other bases along the Indo-Asian periphery, air strikes with nuclear weapons were to be carried out against the Soviet Union during the first de-

fensive phase. Two years were allocated for building up a military force which would then launch a counterattack and finally defeat the Soviet Union. Since those plans involved the large-scale destruction of most of Europe, they were unacceptable to the European partners. So they demanded a stronger U.S. commitment in terms of conventional forces in Europe, to which Washington replied that the Europeans would have to make more of an effort. After the conclusion of the Brussels Pact on 17 March 1948, the Western European partners developed the “Wiesbaden Plan” based on common defense along the Rhine and further south along the Rhône down to the Mediterranean with, hopefully, U.S. support and reinforcement. But the Americans had their doubts whether this plan would work without additional land and air forces which the Europeans were obviously not ready to provide. So they adhered to their original plans until NATO was founded in 1949. Only then did the work on joint planning begin.

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#### NATO from 1949 to 1952

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There has been an interesting line of thought in NATO’s strategic thinking from 1949 until today: the fact that the U.S. attached great importance to weakening the binding nature of the mutual assistance clause in the Brussels WEU Treaty to ensure that it would not be automatically involved in the defense of Western Europa.

Here is a comparison between Article V in both treaties:

#### Article V of the WEU Treaty:

“If any of the High Contracting Parties should be the object of an armed attack in Europe, the other High Contracting Parties will, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, afford the Party so attacked all the military and other aid and assistance in their power.”

#### Article 5 of the NATO Treaty:

“... consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, will assist... by taking forthwith ... such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”

This comparison clearly shows that the WEU Treaty provides for immediate military assistance, a clause which was also made part of the EU Maastricht Treaty, while the NATO Treaty does not specify which kind of assistance will be provided.



*Signing of the Paris Agreements in 1954. The Federal Republic of Germany is invited to join NATO.*

Another interesting fact, also mostly forgotten today, is that the United States vigorously opposed the establishment of a military organization such as integrated command authorities for NATO, it would only permit regional planning groups. Therefore the earliest military preparations for the defense of Western Europe result from the Brussels Pact. The plan was to create three commands (from the North Sea to Remagen, from Remagen to Basel, from Switzerland to the Mediterranean coast) for defense along the Rhein and the Rhône under British and French command, without particular consideration for the interests of the newly created Federal Republic of Germany. But these plans were more operational than strategic in nature.

All of this was to change fundamentally with the Korean War (25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953). The U.S. finally accepted NATO command authorities. With all the effort typical of the U.S. in the pursuit of great goals, NATO was turned into an effective military alliance with integrated high commands, six U.S. divisions were deployed in Germany, and Germany was asked to set up its own divisions.

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### Developments after 1952

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NATO's first strategic concept of „Massive Retaliation“ (MC14/1) was adopted in December 1952, but its complete dependence on U.S. nuclear weapons raised questions over the years. When the U.S. lost its nuclear monopoly due to nuclear armament in the USSR, the strategy's credibility was dwindling rapidly. But in view of the balance of power at the time – 18 NATO divisions vs. 82 Soviet divisions – “Massive Retaliation” continued to offer the only realistic chance to prevent war through deterrence. It was a deterrence strategy threatening to completely annihilate the enemy while at the same time minimizing risks for the U.S. by relying on tactical, i.e. relatively short-range nuclear weapons stationed in Europe. A “shield” of conventional forces was to guarantee the integrity of those nuclear weapons. The forces would spread out over the area to force the enemy to concentrate his troops which would then be crushed by the nuclear “sword”. The NATO Council adopted this sword-and-shield concept in December 1954. In political jargon it was also called “forward strategy” to express the political will to start defending the NATO Treaty Area far away from North America, as far forward as possible, although it was clear from the outset that any effective defense close to the border would require additional conventional forces. That left de facto complete reliance on tactical nuclear weapons.

In June 1955 NATO exercise “Carte Blanche” demonstrated what the use of those weapons would entail: based on the assumption that 400 nuclear bombs would be dropped on the Western European front, 1.7 million Germans would be killed and 3.5 million incapacitated. An option that was unacceptable to the Europeans to begin with and completely ruled out when the Soviet Union continued to increase its nuclear arsenal. When the United States announced that it intended to reduce its armed forces, this led to further discussions in NATO as the Germans, who had joined in 1955, were increasingly insisting on defense close to the border. The issues raised during this debate between Western Europeans and US Americans about the validity of NATO's strategy prompted the NATO Council in 1956 to adopt a political guideline for military planning. The sword and shield concept basically remained the same, but the shield was to be made strong enough to withstand an attack near the border so the use of nuclear bombs would not be required. That would give the reserves time to deploy and then use nuclear weapons to end the war.

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### MC 14/2 and Nuclear Sharing

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This political guideline was laid down in March 1957 in NATO's MC 14/2 defense concept. It sparked a debate about who would have a say in the decision making. The idea of "nuclear sharing" had come up in 1966 in the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), whose activity was based on the 1962 Athens Guidelines. With these guidelines the NATO Council created an information mechanism which helped clarify the "Nuclear Sharing" concept after the "Multilateral Force" episode in 1963. During the Kennedy administration, the suggestion was made to make not only submarines available to NATO, but also a fleet of about 25 battleships equipped with submarine-launched Polaris ballistic missiles with a range of more than 4,500 km. The missiles and warheads would be jointly owned by the NATO-countries involved and be placed under a joint NATO command.

### *The Soviet Union's nuclear armament in connection with the introduction of inter-continental missiles increased concerns in the U.S. about the country's vulnerability.*

The idea was to make the non-nuclear NATO states, among them the Federal Republic of Germany, participate in the possession, operation and control of a nuclear force. The idea failed because of the opposition of the British government and Prime Minister Macmillan. After this interlude, the discussion was no longer about physical co-ownership, but about participation in the planning process in peacetime, which would – in the event that those weapons were used – guarantee each state a certain say about the time of their release and, as a means of last resort, the opportunity to speak out against their use. But the final decision would be made by the nuclear powers. In December 1966 the Nuclear Planning Group was founded at the suggestion of the U.S. It was tasked with developing political guidelines for the use of nuclear weapons and their implementation in the overall strategy of the Alliance. As a result the NATO Council adopted two documents in December 1969: the general political guidelines for nuclear consultations (GPG) and the provisional political guidelines on the possible tactical first use of nuclear weapons (PPG) by the Alliance.

The Soviet Union's nuclear armament in conjunction with the introduction of intercontinental missiles gave rise to concerns in the U.S., it was perceived as a threat to its security and raised doubts about a strategy based solely on the use of nuclear weapons.

Since then there has been one recurring question in the strategic debate: would uncertainty about NATO's reaction actually reinforce deterrence or not? The Germans had a pretty good idea of what answer they would get if they asked the U.S. if it would accept the destruction of Boston in order to defend Hamburg. So they accepted "uncertainty" as an element of deterrence, although they would have preferred to know whether an attack with biological and chemical weapons might trigger a nuclear reaction. In the end Germany benefitted from this uncertainty, because it made it impossible for the USSR to calculate risks in such a way that it could use its superiority in conventional weapons to increase its chances of victory.

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### Flexible Response and the Harmel-Report

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Many years of intensive discussions within the Alliance about the credibility of nuclear deterrence led to the approval of a new military strategy in December 1967, which was laid down as the "Flexible Response" strategy in January 1968 in the now legendary MC 14/3 document.

NATO's "Flexible Response" pursued two related goals: break free from the nuclear stalemate which had developed between the United States and the Soviet Union since both possessed a nuclear "second strike capability", which even in the case of a devastating first nuclear strike would ensure that the attacker himself would become the object of a no less devastating counter-attack. This "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD) neutralized the strategic nuclear potential on both sides. So the territories of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union practically became sanctuaries. In terms of strategy this led to a decoupling of the European theater of war from the U.S. protective shield, which was unacceptable to the countries of Western Europe, because they would continue to be exposed to the nuclear threat from the Soviet Union. It was this situation which led to France's withdrawal from NATO's military structures and to the creation of the Force de Frappe. French President de Gaulle did not believe in the U.S.'s promise of protection against nuclear strikes. So France wanted to be able to protect itself against that threat.

The second goal was to avoid the scenario of a large-scale military conflict automatically involving the use of nuclear weapons by raising the so-called nuclear threshold. At the same time, however, an aggressor should still be aware that NATO would use nuclear weapons if necessary, but remain in the dark about the targets, the timing and the circumstances of such an operation. To this end, the Alliance wanted to have a broad spectrum of conventional and nuclear options at its disposal to convince the enemy that any attack against it would be doomed to fail.

Deterrence worked at three levels: conventional, tactical-nuclear and strategic. NATO's strong conventional ground, air and naval forces would form a coherent forward defense and stop or ward off any attack and end the war. If this did not succeed, the well thought out, selective use of nuclear weapons would demonstrate to the enemy that any further escalation would end in his destruction and that he better end the war. So the idea was not to compensate for the lack of conventional forces with nuclear weapons, but to make the aggressor run the risk of destroying his own country. This is different from the situation today, because now Russia considers tactical nuclear weapons a means of warfare, planning to use them on the battlefield from an early stage. Back then the Western approach to nuclear weapons as a means to prevent or end a war led to a dilemma for the Western Europeans: NATO proceeded on the assumption that the use of nuclear weapons over Soviet territory was justified while the U.S. would rather use them in the area west of the Russian border, i. e. over the territory of the Warsaw Pact's non-Soviet members. NATO remained vague on this issue. There were, after all, Britain's and, more importantly, France's nuclear weapons and the governments in London and Paris would decide if and when to use them. This meant another incalculable risk for the Soviet Union.

Nuclear weapons have always been present in U.S. strategic thinking, even if their use was to be avoided as long as possible to minimize the risk of the U.S. itself becoming a target. The Western Europeans, however, were convinced that in order to end a war quickly, nuclear bombs would have to be used on the territory of the actual aggressor, the Soviet Union, before a conventional war could destroy Germany or half of Europe. As I will explain later, this dispute reached its climax in the spring of 1989 when, during the WINTEX exercise, the "follow-on use" after a first unsuccessful use of NATO nuclear weapons was practiced.

Alongside "Flexible Response", another element of the strategy came to the fore: escalation and escalation dominance as instruments used by the attacker to overcome the first reaction of the defender. These escalation scenarios, in particular the conflicting views of Western Europeans and U.S. Americans, were never deliberately addressed by NATO, because it was assumed that the Soviet Union's position on this was similar. Today we know that this was our biggest misjudgment during the Cold War. In the event of war, the USSR intended to use nuclear weapons in Europe from the very first day on. That was the intention until about 1986. It was a consequence of Soviet thinking, which had always focused on the element of surprise in its strategy and operations. We should have tried harder to see things from the enemy's point of view, but the very idea of using nuclear weapons right from the beginning of a war was incompatible with our conception of war. With hindsight we know that we would have been able to deal quite well with an escalation. There were, however, definitely weaknesses in de-escalation, an instrument which is vital in crisis management to avoid conflicts.

*We should have tried harder to see things from the enemy's point of view, but the very idea of using nuclear weapons right from the beginning of a war was incompatible with our conception of war.*

At the same time, in December 1967, the Alliance adopted a new conceptual framework based on the Harmel report,<sup>2</sup> which advocated a dual-track policy for NATO: deterrence and détente, i. e., maintaining appropriate defense while promoting political rapprochement. It turned out to be a success, although the West had initially rejected the Helsinki Process which had started in 1973 with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and led to the Final Act in 1975, in which 35 states from East and West pledged to accept the inviolability of frontiers, the peaceful settlement of disputes, noninterference into the internal affairs of other states, and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Helsinki Process made it impossible for the USSR to maintain the lie about the failure of capitalism, over the years it led to a series of agreements on confidence-building measures, arms control and the reduction of nuclear and conventional weapons. It also prepared the way for the process which ultimately led to the breakdown of the Warsaw Pact and the German Reunification.

In order to largely eliminate the Alliance's nuclear tactical option, the Soviet Union introduced new operational concepts for fast, extensive attacks in the 1970s. They included the use of SS-20 nuclear missiles, which were highly mobile, basically invulnerable, equipped with multiple warheads and a range sufficient to target any location in Europe. If tactical nuclear weapons were used against the USSR, this would result in the annihilation of the European NATO partners, a signal to the U.S. that the USSR would limit a nuclear war to the territory of Europe. The Soviet Union also made a strategic mistake by challenging the naval power U.S. on its very own 'playing field' when Admiral Gorshkov accelerated the rearmament of the USSR's navy.

The Alliance's reaction at the beginning of the 1980s was threefold:

First, it improved its conventional defense capabilities through new highly mobile weapon systems.

Second, it went beyond forward defense, planning to fight the Warsaw Pact's second Strategic Squadron as soon as it approached from the depths of Russia's airspace. This operational concept was called Follow-on-Forces-Attack (FOFA) in an attempt to reintroduce the dimension of space into the deadlocked operational world of the Cold War. At the same time the "Concept of Maritime Operations"(CONMAROPS) was to protect the lifelines of the Alliance across the Atlantic.

### *Building the Bundeswehr from scratch is one of the success stories of the old Federal Republic of Germany*

Third, the Alliance tried, on the initiative of Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, to neutralize the threat posed by Soviet SS-20 medium-range nuclear missiles and embarked on a new path with NATO's Dual-Track Decision in December 1979. A treaty would guarantee the controlled reduction of the Soviet Union's lead in the military buildup, and if the Soviet Union should refuse to comply, Western Europe would upgrade its systems and deploy nuclear missiles with sufficient range to reach the territory of the Soviet Union. From a strategic point of view this proposal is maybe the most important one of the Cold War, because this is how the West seized the initiative again. I know that President Gorbachev himself said that the Dual Track Decision was the real



*A time full of hope for common security from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Unthinkable during the Cold War: Meetings with Russian soldiers, as seen here a few years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, were part of the efforts to build trust.*

turning point in the Cold War. The downside was that the nuclear disarmament started with the weapons on our side, precisely those that were best suited for the defense of Germany's strategic interests. It was essentially the unyielding attitude of Helmut Kohl's government and the deployment of Pershing-2-intermediate range missiles and ground-launched cruise missiles that led to success in the greatest confrontation that Europe had ever experienced in peacetime. It finally brought victory in the Cold War, it ended the division of Europe, and it led to the collapse of the rigid bipolar world order. The reunification of Germany was a logical consequence of NATO's resolute response.

Let us recall the bipolar world order once again to make it clear that Germany did achieve its goal of defending its territory as far forward as possible: A fence more than 1,200 kilometers long, equipped with booby traps and monitored day and night by GDR border troops, ran through Germany. Behind it lay five kilometers of deep barriers. Berlin, divided by a gruesome wall, was a beacon of the West in the socialist sea. The Allies' plans to protect Berlin with support from the Bundeswehr were a carefully guarded secret with the code name "Live Oak". On the Western side, Allied troops carried out patrols, the Federal Border Guard patrolled the inner-German and Czechoslovakian borders, and uniformed Bundeswehr soldiers were not allowed to move any closer than one kilometer to the border. The air space was permanently monitored by NATO. In the Baltic Sea and its straits, combat-ready NATO navy and naval aviation units were deployed around the clock, in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean NATO naval forces kept the vital sea lines of communication open. On the ground,

nine army corps from seven NATO countries, among them three of the German Army, were ready to support the defense effort, and NATO's concentrated naval power was ready to keep the sea routes to North America open for the transport of hundreds of thousands North American troops to Europe as reinforcement in the event of war. In the old Federal Republic of Germany more than 10,000 nuclear weapons were stocked as well as thousands of tons of US chemical warfare agents. The stockpiles in the GDR were probably even larger. Almost 500,000 Soviet troops, the Western Group of Forces, were stationed there, as well as about 160,000 troops of the National People's Army with its six combat-ready and an additional five reserve divisions, ready for deployment within 48 hours after mobilization. In Czechoslovakia two armies were ready to attack with Soviet troops behind them. In Poland, Polish troops were ordered to take Schleswig-Holstein in a landing operation. Hardly anyone believed that the Warsaw Pact would respect Austria's neutrality except for those who even in 1991 did not believe that the Warsaw Pact would ever attack anyone, even after Soviet plans including an extensive first use of nuclear weapons became known. These plans had been changed in 1986, but they existed until 1988.

When Germany joined NATO in 1955, it had reached its aims: defense of Germany as far forward as possible, and a considerable say in the planning of nuclear missions. But the most important thing was successful confidence-building, trust in the Federal Republic as a reliable partner, ready to fulfill its obligations so that the allies could rely on Germany in combat in the event of war, even if the attack was "only" directed against Germany's allies. One of the pillars of this trust was the Bundeswehr, which, together with the U.S. troops stationed in Germany, had become the backbone of the defense of Central Europe. Building the Bundeswehr from scratch was one of the success stories of the old Federal Republic of Germany, which later rose to the even greater challenge of building up the armed forces of reunited Germany while the Soviet troops were withdrawing from the country in a process that took almost four years.

During the Cold War Germany adhered to the principle of: "One for all and all for one". The trust it had gained made the Allies approve of the reunification in 1990 without fear of Germany's growing power.

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## Inside NATO

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In my 41 years of active duty I was involved with NATO almost right from the start and witnessed the close cooperation with U.S. forces. I served in the first conscription army of a democratic Germany which had retained the essential elements of all armed forces such as the principles of command, obedience and discipline, but which had also committed itself to protecting the dignity of each soldier through the force of law, making sure that soldiers would no longer be at the mercy of their superiors. This trademark of the Bundeswehr helped accomplish the unexpected, enormous task of reunifying Germany's military by either dissolving units or integrating soldiers of the GDR's National People's Army into the Bundeswehr, and it helped to build bridges of trust and reach out to the former adversaries from the Cold War.

During my various assignments I have also experienced how much the NATO allies trusted Germany. Looking back, I would like to share some of my experience to demonstrate that it was possible for every member to defend its national interests in NATO, even if the most important ally, the United States, did not agree. This is probably the decisive difference between NATO and the Soviet dominated Warsaw Pact: decisions in NATO were made collectively on the basis of consultations, in the Warsaw Pact the Soviet Union made all the decisions

Germany always had to bear in mind that the interests of a global naval power such as the U.S. were inevitably different from those of a regional continental power that the Federal Republic of Germany gradually developed into, but that there might be overlaps that had to be identified in the day-to-day running of the alliance. The newly created German state had to learn how to deal with its increasing power. It had to learn that its understanding of international politics as a product of codified law was different from the Anglo-Saxon states' interpretation. For them, international law was shaped by action in accordance with existing laws. Such action would eventually become the basis of international law. During the Cold War, speaking up in NATO against the United States or using political arguments to make the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) or the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT) reconsider and have them agree with you was considered the highest level of diplomatic skill. This is something I witnessed repeatedly, from my first NATO assignment as a colonel on the staff of the German Military Representative to the Military Committee (DMV/MC NATO) to my last assignment as Chairman of the Military Committee (CMC), i. e.

as NATO's highest-ranking soldier. It explains why I have often described the United States as a benign hegemon. However, I have also experienced that in order to succeed the majority of votes of the European allies was required.

The first time I witnessed this was during the Polish Crisis in the summer of 1981. Since April 1981 the situation in Poland had started to get out of hand, eventually leading to the imposition of martial law in December 1981. In the summer of 1981 the Warsaw Pact countries held large-scale exercises in the western part of the Soviet Union along the border with Poland. Considerable troop movements gave rise to concern. Was this the preparation for an intervention in Poland or even an attack against Western Europe? The Supreme Allied Commander Europe was planning to activate the lowest level of NATO's "Military Vigilance" alarm system. This would have led to the movement of more than 100,000 troops from the west to the east of Germany in the middle of the summer, when lots of tourists were going north or south. The Federal Government did not want the population to worry, and it did not want the Soviet Union to misinterpret the scenario. Most European allies were skeptical, too. So a working group at colonel level was convened to prepare a meeting of the Military Committee, which would present a recommendation to the NATO Council on how to deal with the SACEUR's proposal.

*Decisions in NATO were made collectively on the basis of consultations, in the Warsaw Pact the Soviet Union made all the decisions.*

I was the German representative in this Staff Planners Meeting, with instructions from Bonn to reject the SACEUR's request. So before the meeting I had to convince my colleagues from Northern and Central Europe that from a military point of view there were valid arguments against massive troop movements from west to east, and argue that the SACEUR's understandable precautionary measure was coming too soon and could possibly be counterproductive. At the time the Military Committee's task was to give strictly military advice to the NATO Council, to present political arguments was definitely not a good idea. At this point, however, Germany's voice carried sufficient weight, since it would have been the country most affected. In addition, there was the element of trust, the conviction that Germany would do everything it could to make sure a Soviet attack failed. In the end, with support from the Central and Northern European Allies, a decision

was prepared, in which the Military Committee recommended to reject the SACEUR's request and instead increase combat readiness in small steps which the public would not be aware of. Today we know from the files of the Polish and Soviet Politburos that this was the right decision, because at the time the Soviet Union had not planned an intervention.

This experience at the working level of the Alliance is one example of many that demonstrate how to find ways to harmonize the very different interests of the United States and Western Europe and make joint decisions, even if they were not always in line with U.S. interests.

During my later assignments, in particular as Assistant Chief of Staff for military policy when I was Germany's representative to NATO's High Level Group, which is subordinate to the Nuclear Planning Group, I have repeatedly experienced that the U.S. can be convinced to support positions that are not strictly in line with its national interests. Such as in the final phase of NATO exercise WINTEX 89 in February/March 1989. During the exercise things had escalated to a point where their impact on politics, as I experienced in the government bunker in the Ahr Valley, reached dramatic proportions. It was the first time that nuclear follow-on use was to be practiced in an exercise, i. e. a second use of nuclear weapons if the first use did not end the war against the Soviet Union. The script for the exercise was based on an unrealistic scenario with the rapid advance of several Soviet armies, virtually overnight, from Belarus to an area south of Berlin. NATO's Military Committee was to suggest to the NATO Council that 40 nuclear weapons be dropped on the former GDR, over an area south of Berlin. At the time there was a very controversial debate in Germany about the procurement of a successor system for the Lance tactical artillery rocket, which was capable of delivering nuclear weapons. The keyword was Follow-On-To-Lance (FOTL). The German government's decision was to be communicated to the NATO Council the next day, very early in the morning, before the Council met. I was called at around 02:00 in the morning by my deputy, Flotilla Admiral Frank, who was acting as Head of Staff during the exercise, and asked to come to the bunker. The Parliamentary State Secretary acting as Minister of Defense had refused to give his consent to the scenario and threatened to prevent Germany from participating in the exercise. He was convinced that sooner or later the scenario would become public knowledge and have a negative impact on the FOTL-debate. He wanted Chancellor Kohl himself to make a decision.





*Since the summer of 1997, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) met twice a year at the level of Chiefs of General Staff under the direction of NATO's Military Committee to discuss mutual security issues with the non-NATO countries in Europe and Central Asia.*

Even before I was able to talk to the State Secretary it was clear to me that the exercise scenario proposed by the Military Committee was unacceptable to Germany. From a military point of view it did not make sense, because it was based on an incredibly rapid advance of Soviet troops. In NATO planning for the use of nuclear weapons in the event of war, Germany had always advocated the use of nuclear weapons against the actual attacker, the Soviet Union, at an early stage so that the attack would be stopped and the war ended. A scenario based on the Soviets moving whole armies from Belarus to the Magdeburg area overnight was so unrealistic that the NATO Military Committee should never have approved it. The State Secretary was very upset, so I suggested that he let me try to make the final decision-making authority, i.e. the United States, change the scenario. It took many long phone calls to finally reach the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Crowe, who was to assume the role of the President of the United States during the exercise, before a compromise was reached. The new scenario was based on a limited number of nuclear strikes close to the territory of the Soviet Union and one precision strike which would hit the Polish-Russian border to demonstrate to the attacker that it was time to either end the war or risk the annihilation of the Soviet Union.

Chancellor Kohl was briefed in the morning and agreed to the compromise on condition that WINTEX 89 would end with the NATO Council's deliberations on the follow-on mission. This was

accepted. I spent an unforgettable, dramatic night in the government bunker and experienced the moment when the exercise turned into a serious political crisis. Ultimately, the result was not only the termination of the exercise, but the discontinuation of all WINTEX exercises. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in January 1990 I met my American counterpart, Lieutenant General Lee Butler, in Vienna, and we agreed that Germany and the United States would submit a joint proposal to the Military Committee asking to discontinue the WINTEX exercise series.

It may seem that in this case the U.S. had only made minor concessions. But during the exercise it had accepted the risk that the adversary's next move might have been the use of nuclear weapons on American soil. This was only an exercise, but the Americans demonstrated how important the cohesion within the Alliance and the protection of the NATO Treaty area were to them, even if these priorities were not necessarily in line with their narrowly defined national interests. In this final phase of the Cold War, the U.S. repeatedly subordinated its own interests to those of individual allies and was more than willing to support them.

Another example I would like to mention in this context is the withdrawal of chemical weapons from Germany. As Federal Government Commissioner in charge I experienced for the first time how difficult it is to implement such a seemingly simple project within a federal system. Again, the Americans were very helpful when we met with members of the Federal Foreign Office in the Ministry of Defence in 1992 to convince them that it was time to unilaterally withdraw the almost 10,000 U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from German territory. This was accomplished by the end of 1994 against fierce resistance from the U.S. Army.

*Both Powell and Shalikashvili regarded me as trustworthy. They knew I would keep my promise.*

The last example dates back to my time as Chief of Defense Germany. At the summit in La Rochelle in 1991, Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand decided to set up a Franco-German army corps which would include the French-German Brigade. The decision was based on a proposal that Admiral Lanxade, as advisor to the President in the Élysée, and I, as Secretary of the



*In the presence of NATO Secretary General Wörner, French Chief of Staff Admiral Lanxade, SACEUR, General Shalikhshvili and I sign the SACEUR Agreement regulating the relations between NATO and the French-German Corps, which later became the Eurocorps.*

Franco-German Council for Security and Defense, had developed in Paris in the spring of 1991. The Alliance and the United States interpreted this step as an attempt by Germany to take its share, i. e. the Franco-German Brigade plus an army division, out of the NATO planning process.

In October 1991, during my first official visit to Washington as Chief of Defense Germany, I felt the consequences of this decision – the Americans were deeply disappointed. I still remember that during my conversation with State Secretary Baker at the State Department I felt like a character in a Western novel, the one who is tied to the stake. My attempts to explain that Germany rather intended to integrate a French division into the NATO planning process were met with skepticism, it seemed hardly realistic. At the end of my extremely short visit, Chief of Staff General Powell and I agreed to work out an agreement with France and the SACEUR. Our work was being disrupted by the British officers on the SACEUR staff who tried to interfere. But luck was on my side, because the SACEUR at the time was General Shalikhshvili, whom I had known for many years and who had become a friend when we worked together during the with-

drawal of chemical weapons from Germany. Both Powell and Shalikhshvili considered me a trustworthy person. They knew I would keep my promise. We negotiated the so-called SACEUR agreement in a process that took months and ended under rather unique circumstances, because the final negotiations took place at the American headquarters in Stuttgart. The French Chief of Staff Lanxade was not allowed to visit the Allied headquarters in Mons, because the French Foreign Ministry did not tolerate any contact with the integrated command authorities, but he was allowed to visit the American headquarters in Stuttgart. So this was where Lanxade, Shalikhshvili and I met as agreed without our aides and finalized the agreement. Occasionally I had an amusing interim function in this final phase because Lanxade requested my assistance as an interpreter from French into English. It was late at night by the time we had worked out the agreement. It was signed at NATO headquarters in Brussels. Germany had kept its promise to make an additional French division available for the planning of the integrated forward defense.

This last example also highlights the key element in Germany's recipe for success as a member of the Alliance during the Cold War and the subsequent phase of American world dominance which lasted until 2001: Germany gained credibility through its achievements, it became trustworthy because it kept its promises and stayed true to its commitments. Open information sharing and arguments that made sense from a military point of view enabled us to reach consensus with the Allies, in particular those in Central and Northern Europe. This was the only way to reason with the United States and Britain. If the German representative was considered a trustworthy person, success was almost guaranteed. Over time these ties became stronger, holding the Alliance together even in difficult times and helping Germany to achieve security from external danger which, ultimately, led to the great success of German unity.

Once our security was granted, we had hoped until the end of Chancellor Kohl's term of office that we would be able to build on the reconciliation with Russia and the incipient friendship with the non-Russian members of the Warsaw Pact to create lasting peace in Europe.

We were, however, never completely sure whether these positive developments would prove to be irreversible. That is why the Bundeswehr had to be kept ready to defend the country, although mobilization would take a certain amount of time. There had always been doubts, most of all because it became increasingly clear that the Russian General Staff would not change its attitude: NATO was and would always be the enemy. These doubts became stronger after Putin's speech in the German Bundestag in 2001, because from then on the common security zone was defined by Russia as reaching from Lisbon to Vladivostok, although the Paris Charter included the U.S. and Canada so that the obligations under the Charter would apply to a zone from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

There was another issue which became relevant for Germany's standing in NATO: the conflicts around the world, Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1991, the crises in Africa and most of all the wars in the former Yugoslavia raised the question if and when reunified Germany would participate in United Nations peacekeeping and peace enforcement efforts. But all political parties hesitated. The Federal Foreign Office in particular had taken the legal view that German armed forces could only be used for national defense on German soil. The Allies, above all the United States, insisted that Germany participate, and Anglo-Saxon legal scholars outright rejected Germany's claims that Article 65 of the Basic Law (Power



*6 May 1999 in Brussels: My end of tenure as Chairman of NATO's Military Committee with a farewell from NATO Secretary General Solana shortly before the end of the operation in Kosovo, NATO's first war mission. On the left Barbara Naumann, my wife since 1964, just before moving house for the 21<sup>st</sup> time.*

to determine policy guidelines) would prevent them from doing so. They referred to Article 24 which states that with a view to maintaining the peace, the Federal Republic may participate in a system of mutual collective security. The Federal Ministry of Defence had always shared that view, which also served as the basis for the Federal Constitutional Court's decision on Germany's participation in operations outside the country within a legally defined framework, such as in the Adriatic Sea in 1994. This was decisive for Germany's standing in NATO in the 1990s, because in NATO, participation equals influence. This is why, during a conference of the Chiefs of Staff in The Hague in 1993, I was asked to leave the room for the duration of the discussion of the UN missions in the former Yugoslavia. That was a rather humiliating experience for me.

*When participation in UN missions in the former Yugoslavia was on the agenda, I was asked to leave the room for the duration of this discussion.*

In the second half of the 1990s Germany became more strongly involved in NATO missions in the former Yugoslavia and was considered a respected and influential ally in spite of all caveats. It should, however, be mentioned that Chancellor Kohl's statement "No German soldiers on Yugoslavian soil" gave Serbian



*Unchanged and effective for 75 years: Vigilance is the price of freedom.*

dictator Milosevic the impression that he could act with impunity because Germany would prevent NATO from reaching the unanimity required for an intervention. The Kosovo mission in 1999, the first deployment of German soldiers in a war since the end of World War II and the last time I was involved in the Alliance's decision-making, settled the issue of German participation in NATO missions.

Within a decade NATO transformed from a Cold War defense alliance to a collective security alliance protecting Europe during the transition towards greater cooperation. It accepted new members and started the initially successful attempt to establish a cooperative relationship with Russia. The tensions over the intervention in Kosovo in 1999 led to setbacks in relations with Russia, although these seemed to have disappeared at the beginning of the new millennium thanks to a new agreement, the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

<sup>1</sup> Translation of a quote by Konrad Adenauer: *Briefe über Deutschland 1945–1955. With an introduction by Hans Peter Mensing, selected from the Rhöndorf Edition, Munich 1999, p. 30f.*

<sup>2</sup> Named after the former Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Harmel, who headed the "Special Group" which worked out a new political concept for NATO, which was adopted by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

# EPILOGUE

## DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 2000 AND AN OUTLOOK INTO THE FUTURE

The hopes for stability in Europe and a cooperative relation between NATO and Russia remained unfulfilled. The alienation process started in 2001, 9/11 marked a turning point because for the first time in history NATO activated Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty in the Global War on Terror, which led to the deployment of NATO forces in Afghanistan. Since the political goals of the mission could not be achieved, NATO and its partners withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. The hasty withdrawal of Western troops in the summer of 2021 was, on the one hand, a sign that Western promises could not be trusted and, on the other, an indication to Russia that, whatever action was taken, a strong response from the West was not to be expected. Since 2007 Russia had been testing how far it could go, first in Georgia, then on Crimea and finally in eight years of latent war in the east of Ukraine.

Breaching all treaties on security in Europe, Russia changed borders through the use of force. The hope for common security was shattered, and more importantly, all trust in Russia as a partner has been destroyed by President Putin with long-lasting consequences. But trust is the basis of all cooperation; to propose negotiations when there is no trust is as irresponsible as it is absurd.

Putin's criminal war of aggression against Ukraine has put Europe in the most difficult position since the founding of the Atlantic Alliance. The future of the European security order could be decided in Ukraine. Europe must never forget that the flags flying in Kiev at the beginning of the "Orange Revolution" were flags of the EU.

Which leads us to the question: Are there any lessons learned from those 75 years and especially from the first 50 years of NATO that are still valid today?

I think there are, and the first that comes to mind is the building and maintaining of trust by honoring commitments and through the open exchange of information about the developments in each nation. The best example is the Allies' commitment to spend 2 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on defense. Germany had been a strong advocate of this commitment, which, from the year 2000 on, was meant to be a condition for future members to meet. According to EU calculations, the member states have saved the incredible sum of 1,100 billion euros since 2006, because they have not spent 2 percent of their GDP on defense. What this meant was clear for all to see when Putin started his war of aggression against Ukraine: The Europe of the EU, one of the largest economic powers in the world, is incapable of protecting itself and has become more dependent on the United States for its defense today than during the Cold War.

Dependence has always been the equivalent of weakness. And when dependence in the area of defense is exacerbated by dependence on commodities, fertilizers or trade relations the discontinuation of which could become a survival issue, a country can become a pawn in international politics.

During the Cold War, the Federal Republic of Germany was able to avoid this kind of dependency because it enjoyed trust. This is as vital today as it was in the past. In the years after 2000, however, political mistakes were made due to a policy that prioritized the well-being of an ageing society and due to Germany's wavering policy in its relations with Russia and China. It ended up getting caught between East and West, a position which throughout German history had always been a poor choice. Germany squandered the great trust it had once enjoyed in NATO. The Allies did not understand why, in the years before 2024, Germany as the richest country in Europe had simply not kept its promise to spend 2 percent of its GDP on defense. Nor did they understand why Germany voted the way it did in the United Nations Security Council during the Libya crisis in 2011, turning against its closest allies.<sup>3</sup>

The next lesson would be to maintain close ties to the West with great determination, even if that involves taking risks. But the most important point is to make the appropriate contributions.

And this is the third lesson from the Cold War: security is the prerequisite for freedom and prosperity. To opt for unrestrained increase in prosperity and social security at the expense of national security with no idea how to finance all of this in the long term can bring even a democracy down. States can only prevent this from happening if they invest in the future and do not neglect their security. Without security, everything is nothing, and anyway, without security there are no benefits to distribute.

The next lesson is that only states that do invest in security and in the future are able to assume leadership roles vis-à-vis other European states and achieve unity among the free states of Europe. That is even more important today, at the beginning of a new world order, than it was at the time when the EU was founded.

The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO - the Atlantic Alliance that remains irreplaceable and vital for Germany – is the right occasion to reflect on these points, to develop guidelines for the future and then, building on the lessons from the war in Ukraine, to find new ways of generating and building armed forces within the Atlantic and European framework.

If NATO were to choose a headline for its future as an alliance of free, constitutional democracies whose doors must remain open and which must adapt to the conditions of a changing world, it should clearly and resolutely affirm that its founding principle "an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us" has remained unchanged and that the Allies will defend each other and share burdens and risks equally. When every opponent is aware that any attack, any attempt to change borders by force might ultimately lead to his own destruction, peace in the NATO treaty area will be guaranteed.

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<sup>3</sup> On March 17, 2011, in its Resolution 1973, the UN Security Council called for the establishment of a no-fly zone over Libya to protect the civilian population from the troops of dictator Gaddafi. Germany abstained from voting, together with Russia, China, Brazil and India.

## THE GERMAN ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION

The German Atlantic Association, with offices in Berlin and Bonn, was founded on 20 March 1956. Since then, it has been our task to discuss and deepen public understanding of the policies and objectives of the Atlantic Pact with regard to current foreign and security policy issues.

The German Atlantic Association is linked to over 30 national associations from NATO member states and their partners through the Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA). The association is independent and non-partisan. It is funded by a resolution of the German Bundestag..

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700

Members of the Youth  
Atlantic Treaty Association  
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150

Events across Germany annually,  
including Discussion forum  
"Atlantic Talk" and international  
Security Conference "NATO Talk"

Total number of  
DAG active members:

3.000



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