

A stylized world map composed of a grid of grey dots, with several dots highlighted in red to represent specific countries or regions.

## What Remains of the West? – Quo Vadis NATO?

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- NATO is caught up in a serious crisis. Its meaning and purpose is a subject of controversy – a return to territorial defence in the East or focus on a widening fight against terrorism in the South? Its leadership is uncertain – what does the US-under Donald Trump want? What do »the Europeans« want? Do they both still want the same thing? What remains of the Western Alliance, which sees itself as a democratic community of values?
- The considerable change that has taken place in the security environment of NATO since the adoption of the 2010 strategic concept and differences in national concepts regarding the future thrust of the Alliance require a process of clarification. NATO needs a new strategic concept, including the rekindled debate over the role of nuclear weapons, effective combatting of international terrorism and the right way to deal with technological progress in military doctrine.
- Looking towards the future of the Alliance, another decisive factor will be whether Europeans will want to assume an autonomous role – and if so, in which framework they decide to do this. By the same token, Europeans need to agree on what role they want the US to be assigned in Europe in the future.



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## 1. New Strategic Concept

Strategic concepts describe purposes, aims, objectives and ways, and on this basis extrapolate the means and resources required to attain these. Strategic concepts of alliances differ significantly from national security strategies. Like it or not, alliance concepts have to take into account the different national interests of alliance partners. This dilemma is a timeless structural problem which cannot be discussed away.

NATO is also forced to repeatedly forge compromises in its basic documents because, in spite of all the declarations affirming the community of values, different positions continue to prevail, having to be reconciled time and again. In the documents upon which the Alliance is founded, NATO has recurrently had to perform a high-wire act to somehow bridge this divide by means of »constructive ambiguity«. This alludes to a diplomatic language designed to finesse different positions by means of an abstract wordings of texts. Accordingly, critical passages are formulated in rather vague terms so that all the partners in the Alliance are able to interpret the respective text as they see fit. One current example of this practice is the widely discussed wording contained in the NATO summit declaration of Wales from 2014 pursuant to the guideline that national defence expenditures are to amount to two per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Moreover, in formulating its strategic concepts, NATO has often tried to crunch previous ad-hoc decisions into concepts *ex post facto*. Practice has outpaced conceptualisation. Thus, for example, in the strategic concept of 1999, new NATO practice with regard to military »non-article 5 missions« (missions that are not based on Article 5 of the NATO Treaty), beginning in the middle of the 1990s, subsequently began to be formalised into one of the new core purposes (crisis management) of the Alliance. And the strategic concept of 2010 that still applies at present maps development from 2008. Relations with Russia as a NATO partner had already cooled down at the controversial meeting with President Putin at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in 2008 and in the wake of the war in Georgia, also in 2008. Thus, strategic concepts have tended more to be prisoners of the past.

In the context of the expansion of NATO and the alarmingly ambiguous stance of the Trump Administration towards NATO thus far, this high-wire act attempting to bal-

ance the positions of the Alliance partners has resulted in a widening rift. Concerns over a strengthening of centrifugal forces in the Alliance have led – just like in the past – to a situation, in which more than just a few politicians and experts warn against revisions of the strategic concept of NATO, or want to postpone it in order to keep Pandora's box shut. It would be wrong, however, to turn this conservative-traditionalist argument into a guiding principle.

However, the disarray in the Alliance that can already be witnessed harbours an opportunity for a sorely needed clarification process regarding the future course of NATO. The task is to spell out and compare the differing interests of the Alliance partners in an open and appropriate manner, to identify the common interests of the Alliance partners anew and, finally, jointly decide on the right focus for the realignment. The laws of physics dictate that there can only be one centre of gravity. It is with this in mind that the NATO Council should not shy away from debates that go to the core of the matter and a lengthy consultation process.

NATO has been doing a balancing act between the interests and perceptions of threat held by its new Eastern European members and those of older Member States bordering on the Mediterranean. While the former have the Russian threat foremost in mind, the latter are more concerned about risks along the southern flank emanating from the Middle East and Africa. Fearing a loss of cohesion, NATO has thus far sought to patch up these countervailing interests by means of a »360-degree strategy«, i. e. defence in all directions, albeit with a focus on Eastern Europe and Russia. This is not enough. Future Alliance strategies need to shift more attention to the strategic environment of the 2020s. Over the medium and long term, risks linked with international terrorism and mass migration that stem from the environment of southern Europe will probably continue to mount and tie down considerable resources there. This will confront NATO with the challenge of not being able to be present with substantial forces at the same time in Central-Eastern Europe *and* along the southern NATO periphery.

## 2. Security Challenges – Russia and the Southern NATO Periphery

Looking realistically at the dynamics of the conflict between NATO nations and Russia, the »Charter of Paris«

on »a new era of democracy, peace and unity« from November 1990 today strikes one as having fallen out of time. Anyone, nevertheless, calling for adherence to its principles as a precondition for a new beginning in relations is doomed to failure in the foreseeable future as a result of the intensity and extent of the rift, which is being further fuelled by contrasting narratives. It is evident that the treaties and agreements of the past have lost traction. NATO's relations with Russia therefore need to be put on a new footing. An attempt must be made by means of many small initial steps to once again concur on security principles like peaceful resolution of conflicts, confidence and security-building measures, joint responsibility on the part of Europe as a whole and disarmament.

### Hegemonic Conflict and Power Struggle

Ever since the annexation of the Crimea by Russia and Moscow's continued military support for pro-Russian militia in the so-called People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in Eastern Ukraine, as well as its direct military intervention in the Syrian civil war to prop up the Assad regime, NATO and Russia have been mired in an ongoing confrontation. At the same time, the conflict is not primarily a result of manifest misunderstandings resulting from an accumulation of mutual misinterpretations. More dialogue, information and empathy in and of themselves would not remove the causes of this antagonism. On the contrary, at the root of it all is a fundamental normative hegemonic conflict and power struggle over the importance and weight of Russia's role in a European peace order, which Moscow no longer recognises as such because it feels itself excluded from decision-making processes. At the same time, the conflict relates to its struggle for power and influence against the backdrop of globalisation. Common values laid down in the Charter of Paris – such as openness of societies, democratic peace, political plurality, multilateralism and rule of law – are now officially rejected in Russia or enjoy a much lower status than in Western politics. Instead, patriotism with a nationalistic bent, »guided« democracy, power verticals and political justice are ascendant. On top of this, there are disinformation campaigns from state-controlled troll factories, with which the Kremlin is seeking to control public opinion. This used to be called propaganda; today, NATO classifies these activities under the rubric of »hybrid

warfare«<sup>1</sup>. Western calls for a *quid pro quo* with the media have rightly enough been discarded, however. Instead, the EU established the East Stratcom Task Force in 2015 as a network engaged methodically and professionally in collecting Russian fake news and correct them. A group of NATO states also established a Centre of Excellence for Strategic Communication in Riga in 2015 that has dedicated itself to meeting this challenge. And in the Estonian capital of Tallinn, a number of NATO states set up a Centre of Excellence for cyber defence as far back as 2010.

### Perceptions of Threat

Particularly in the Baltic States and Poland, a majority of policy makers and civil society are in agreement when it comes to concerns over Russia's military strength. While Western media were concentrated on the US army's campaigns in Afghanistan and in Iraq, Russia carried out an ambitious modernisation programme of its military forces, on a broad scale and largely unnoticed. According to the final report issued by the Russian Ministry of Defence on 7 January 2016, 47 per cent of Russia's military forces were equipped with the most modern weapons systems. The plan is to raise this level to 70 per cent by 2020. At the »Zapad 2017« exercise held in Belorussia in September, the Russian general staff staged operations along the border to Poland and the Baltic States focusing on strategic mobility, interoperability, air defence and A2/AD (anti-access/area denial). The primary objective was to perform training in escalation control, i.e. to prevent a conflict on the periphery from escalating into a global war. The Russian army demonstrated its capabilities as a modern, flexible fighting force that can carry out operations with tremendous firepower. It is not surprising, then, that in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius threat analyses involve potential Russian intervention scenarios which, in analogy to the Crimean script, feature »little green men« ostensibly coming in to protect the Russian-speaking minorities, the largest of them living in Latvia and Estonia. The concern is that in a situation of East-West tensions, Russia could declare them to be Russian citizens. In this case, they would explicitly be entitled to assistance and aid in accordance with the military doctrine of December 2014. This commitment to

1. Keynote speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the opening of the NATO Transformation Seminar, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_118435.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_118435.htm) (called up on 11 January 2018).

protection was already contained verbatim in the previous military doctrine of 5 February 2010. Above and beyond this, the Baltic Allies warn that the tactics and operations employed in Russia's large-scale »Zapad 2013« exercise were also used in the annexation of Crimea one year later. There is no proof for a direct link between this exercise and the political decision taken by the Kremlin to seize Crimea, however. What is more, in contrast to Ukraine, the Baltic countries and Poland are NATO territory. Here, in each of these countries, the Alliance has now deployed, on a rotating basis, a multinational Battle Group for the purpose of deterrence and defence. Operational since June 2017, they consist of around one thousand soldiers each. The Battle Group in Lithuania is led by the German army. The Lithuanian government is particularly concerned about Russia's military capability to carry out possible combat operations against the Baltic States with an advance warning of only 24 to 48 hours as well as its refined anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities (to deny access by Allied defence forces) in the so-called Suwalki Gap. In addition, even before the illegal annexation of the Crimea on 21 March 2014, Russia maintained a huge, geopolitically important naval base for its Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol, i. e. on Ukrainian soil.

In Russian media, on the other hand, attention has been drawn towards threats coming from the large-scale American summer exercises »Saber Strike« in the Baltic and Poland and »Saber Guardian« in the Black Sea region and Hungary. But even though American and Russian training exercises ended without any disruptions, both sides maintained mutual accusations.

In threat analyses conducted by Allies neighbouring Russia, the question is often ignored what advantages a military attack by Russia, which would, after all, trigger the mutual assistance obligation under Article 5, could offer or what could motivate Moscow to such action. It must be assumed that the Kremlin as well as the Russian general staff would definitely want to avoid such a situation, as they certainly are very well aware of NATO's doctrine of deterrence, and of the nuclear arsenals on both sides, which oblige all actors to rational thinking in their policy decisions. But Moscow is openly claiming the status of great power, and engages in political and military muscle-flexing to underscore this claim. It seeks to test the political coherence of the Alliance by means of destabilisation attempts in the media or through cyberattacks.

Moscow is also testing NATO's military response capabilities to intercept Russian warplanes or naval ships that venture all too close to NATO airspace or territory or even penetrate it. With growing military capabilities on both sides and risky cat-and-mouse games at the same time, the danger of almost »sleepwalking« into a military conflict is also growing.

Whether the NATO-Russia Council, established in 2002 as a confidence-building, security-policy dialogue platform, can contribute to de-escalation in the foreseeable future is questionable even though such an institution is urgently needed as an information and assessment body. NATO already suspended it once in 2008 in reaction to the Georgia conflict. The Council subsequently resumed its meetings, but NATO then suspended cooperation with Russia once again in 2014 in reaction to annexation of the Crimea and Russian support for the separatists in eastern Ukraine. Following tedious internal wrestling with the pros and cons of the NATO-Russia Council, meetings have been taking place once again since April 2016. From the very outset, the Council was at the nexus of controversies. But this should not provide a pretext to all those in the Alliance who reject this security policy forum altogether and who have contributed significantly to the difficulties in its consultations. Also, there are Russian military policy-makers who do not see any point in a dialogue with NATO. Now, efforts are needed on both sides to address the various disputes in the Council in a constructive manner. In the long run, there needs to be dialogue on military doctrines and strategies, threat analyses and arms control.

#### Dispute within the Alliance – Security against or with Russia

Within the Alliance, there is no shared assessment of a Russian policy, based on military power, let alone a consensus on the appropriate response. Northern and Central-Eastern European NATO countries call for a strategy focusing on security *against* Russia. In this context, in particular the conservative right-wing PiS government in Poland is opposed to those governments who believe that a permanent European security structure can only be built *with* and not against Russia, as tedious, interminable and open-ended this process might be. After all, they all share a common European history with Russia. Culturally and geographically, large parts of Russia and

its population are part of the European continent. Moreover, the unity of Germany and the return of national sovereignty to Eastern Europe through the abandonment of the Brezhnev Doctrine, was only possible because the Soviet Union under Gorbachev was engaged in a policy of Common Security. At the same time, in particular Berlin's policy towards Russia is criticized in Warsaw, and there is a tendency to suspect that Berlin may be interested in building a special relationship with Moscow (the Rapallo syndrome) or to put into question the regime of sanctions against Russia imposed by the EU and the US in the wake of the annexation of the Crimea. Poland's foreign and security policy is above all focused on Washington and – within Europe – it is traditionally aligned with Great Britain. Faced with President Trump's nationalistic *America First* policy and the upcoming Brexit, suspicion of Germany is no longer being voiced as openly as before – the US cannot be relied on any longer, and in the EU, Warsaw is losing London as a counterweight to Berlin. It was against this background that, during her visit in February 2017, Chancellor Merkel offered the Polish government closer cooperation in the area of defence, including an increase in German defence expenditures.

The widespread perplexity prevailing in the Alliance and its seeming inability to find a promising way to a stable political *modus vivendi* with Russia is being glossed over with the magic formula of »deterrence and dialogue«. Academic concepts of »balanced peace« or »plural peace« as a new way of assessing relations are not convincing either. Incidentally, NATO does not play any role at all in these concepts. The idea of »balanced peace« only involves the security of the »East European Six« (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belorussia, Moldavia and Ukraine). Security guaranties, according to this concept,<sup>2</sup> should be provided to these countries by those which are most heavily involved in the current crisis. But which countries are these and how should this be done? Armenia and Belorussia are both members in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) led by Russia; but Armenia continues to maintain its partnership with NATO. Russian troops are present in Moldavia's renegade region of Transnistria. For obvious geopolitical reasons, Azerbaijan is interested in good, close relations

with Moscow, but is also still in dialogue with NATO. Although Ukraine and Georgia were offered, in principle, membership of NATO at the 2008 Summit in Bucharest, no date was mentioned out of consideration for Russia, and no membership action plan agreed. For proponents of the »plural peace« concept, a credible renunciation by NATO of potential membership of Ukraine and other countries in the region would remove a crucial stumbling block on the way to future security arrangements with Russia. However, a general decision to keep NATO's doors closed contradicts the Western understanding of values and the general consent to accession issued in Bucharest.

### Risky Southern Neighbourhood of NATO

Above and beyond this, security risks emanating from the southern neighbourhood of NATO are also becoming extremely important. Religious fundamentalism, terrorism, ethno-political conflicts, state despotism as well as failing states are causing exodus and migration from Iraq, Syria and Libya. Spain, Italy and France, but also Greece and Turkey, are directly affected. The former group of countries are also facing additional multidimensional threats resulting from growing instability of states and ethno-political and religious conflicts in North Africa. Moreover, NATO's Strategic Concept of 2010 also cites climate change, water shortages and increased energy needs as drivers of conflict. Although the final declaration of the Wales Summit in 2014, establishing the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), also alludes to the »risks and threats of our southern neighbourhood – the Middle East and North Africa«, the military security measures taken primarily serve the purpose of strengthening the defence capabilities of Allies in Central and Eastern Europe because they are covered by the protection afforded by Article 5. The challenges emanating from the Middle East or southern NATO states, in contrast, are probably not of the type that would allow Article 5 to be invoked in order to cope with them. For this reason, the Alliance is carrying on with its balancing act, attempting to cope adequately with threat perceptions by Allies in the East and in the South. At least, the script of a major NATO exercise in 2015, »Trident Juncture«, dealt with a hypothetical conflict in Africa having an impact on Portugal, Spain, Italy and other NATO countries. But it was emphasised that this was a »non-Article 5 exercise«.

2. Reinhard Krumm, Alexandra Vasileva und Simon Weiss: For a Balanced Peace. First Steps out of the Security Deadlock in (Eastern) Europe, August 2017, p. 5 <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/13591.pdf> (called up on 16 January 2018).

NATO is also looking at Turkey with great concern. On the one hand, its geostrategic position as a bridge to Asia and to the Islamic world as well as with borders to Syria, Iraq and Iran, makes Ankara an important partner for NATO. On the other, the authoritarian Turkish leadership is pursuing pan-Turkish ambitions in the neighbouring region and is in the process of creating an option for closer cooperation with Russia in security policy. Its agreement to equip its armed forces with the sophisticated state-of-the-art Russian S-400 missile-defence system has raised questions in NATO and is seen as a deliberate snub to the US, which had attempted for some time to prevent the deal between Turkey and Russia. The Alliance is thus obliged to engage in continuous strategic calculations concerning Turkey. It has to balance out how much political pressure it can put on Ankara without completely losing its influence on the partner, which in terms of numbers, has the second biggest army in NATO. Frustrations in the Alliance over such a deliberate affront by the autocrat in Ankara are now becoming an even more serious concern as a result of Turkish military action in the district of Afrin in northwestern Syria. The region now under attack by the Turkish army is controlled by troops of the Syrian Kurds (YPG), which played an instrumental role in driving IS out of Syria. For Ankara, however, these Kurdish fighters are allies of the Turkish Kurdish organisation, the PKK, which is classified as a terrorist organisation. The US, on the other hand, has been allied with the YPG in its struggle against IS. Now, NATO is in trouble. Helpless, it looks, the Alliance has to watch its member Turkey impose its national interests on the region by military means, even using military equipment supplied by Germany, and explicitly not caring the least about the positions of its allies, as has been confirmed by its President. This makes it all the more difficult for the Alliance to develop a credible common policy for this region.

### 3. The Role of NATO in the Struggle against International Terrorism

»The NATO of the future has to heavily focus on terrorism and immigration as well as the threat posed by Russia on the Eastern and Southern borders of NATO«, said US President Donald Trump in Brussels in May 2017 at the first meeting of heads of state and government following his taking office. Does this mean that he wants to turn the Alliance into a powerful anti-terrorism organ-

isation, soon to start operating in the Middle East? A role for NATO engaged in »significant combat operations«, which Chancellor Angela Merkel has ruled out explicitly?

Violent actions against people and objects intended to generate fear and horror are commonly referred to as terrorism. To date there is no commonly agreed academic definition of terrorism. That is why the United Nations (UN) and NATO use the word »terrorism« as a general term, without differentiation. It is a political term that it is difficult to separate from, for example, violent opposition to an occupying power, actions of self-proclaimed liberation movements or other internal ethnic, religious and regional or tribal conflicts. With the increasing numbers of failing states since the 1990s, forms of terrorist organisations have taken on an international dimension through networking, high levels of flexibility and mobility as well as professional use of media and the erosion of borders. Only in the strategic concept of 2010, still in force today, i.e. in the period after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, did NATO explicitly define international terrorism as a real threat to the Alliance and to global security. This shift of focus in security policy has to be seen in the context of »9/11«, which, for the US, constituted a strategic change of paradigm and led to questioning the relevance of NATO by Washington. For the first time, the strongest military power in the Alliance was the target of an attack in the form of asymmetrical warfare operations of previously unknown intensity. But because by far not all allies considered fighting terrorism to be the new main task of the Alliance – which is still the case today – it took until 2010 for this threat to achieve a prominent place in the official strategy as one of the »new security challenges«.

#### But the Alliance Is Scarcely Called Upon

On 12 September 2001, the NATO Council invoked the mutual defence clause subject to the precondition that it be determined that control over these terrorist attacks came from another country.<sup>3</sup> After being informed about the results of the investigations on 2 October, the Alliance decided to take specific military measures on 4 Oc-

3. »The Council agreed that if it is determined that this attack was directed from abroad against the United States, it shall be regarded as an action covered by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.«

tober.<sup>4</sup> However, the US had not called for the mutual defence clause to be invoked. It wanted to decide itself, without having to consult with the bodies of the Alliance, how and where it would launch a military response. With Resolution 1368, the UN Security Council explicitly recognised that the USA could defend itself under Article 51 of the UN Charter. Because those responsible in the Al Qaida terrorist network, i.e. private individuals who had carried out the terrorist attacks, had found refuge in Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban regime, the military reaction of the USA focused on Afghanistan.

In October 2001, President George W. Bush declared the War on Terror with Operation Enduring Freedom. When his successor, Barack Obama, proclaimed its end in December 2014, it was in retrospect the largest military anti-terror campaign in history, with numerous military sub-operations from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Horn of Africa, to Central Asia and Afghanistan and all the way to the Philippines. NATO countries were involved in these missions in very different operational roles, which means that it was not a NATO mission. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) as well, which had been operating in Afghanistan since December 2001 as a Coalition of the Willing and mandated by UN resolution 1386, was only put under NATO-command at the beginning of August 2003. Its primary task was to carry out peace-keeping operations in support of the Afghan armed forces, initially only in Kabul, and beginning in 2006 across the entire territory, and to help rebuild and establish security in the country after the Taliban regime had been toppled. Combating terror remained the task of US operations being conducted in parallel. Neither military operation was based on Article 5, the mutual defence clause that had been invoked.

The mutual defence clause under Article 5 has served as legal reference for only two military missions, for the first time and only of limited interest for Washington. NATO's anti-terror campaign, »Eagle Assist«, in support of the US, monitoring US air space in the wake of 9/11 with five AWACS aircraft, only lasted seven months. The second NATO operation, »Active Endeavour«, involved sea surveillance in the Mediterranean. This Article 5 operation was ended at the summit meeting in Warsaw at

the beginning of July 2016 and replaced by the expanded Mediterranean security mission, »Sea Guardian«. The tasks of the new mission in the Mediterranean region have now been put into a broader context: They include tasks involving support for training and development of capabilities of the security forces of states bordering the Mediterranean, the preparation of situational imagery for the EU-led operation »Sophia« against human trafficking networks (EUNAVFOR MED) all the way to support for NATO's permanent maritime operating units in the Aegean. The legal foundations for this are provided by resolutions of the Security Council, decisions taken by NATO and general provisions of international law.

### Step by Step towards Combat Operations?

It was not only the US which considered itself at war with terrorism, however. France's President François Hollande also designated the massive terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 an »act of war by a hostile army, that of the »Islamic State«. He did not invoke NATO's mutual defence clause, either. Instead, Paris requested support from its EU partners under Article 42.7 of the EU Treaty, which was unanimously adopted on 17 November. It was in this context, that Germany expanded its military activities in Mali against al Qaida fighters and Ansar-Dine (Supporters of the Faith) with up to 650 soldiers – within the framework of the United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA).<sup>5</sup> Following the Paris attacks, the Bundestag decided on 4 December 2015, also by a large majority, to support the international alliance against IS mandating the Bundeswehr also take part in Operation Counter Daesh as part of the US-led Operation Inherent Resolve with up to 1,200 soldiers,<sup>6</sup> in the form of »reconnaissance, protection components and logistics« as well as air refuelling, maritime escort for the French aircraft carrier and staff personnel. And on 26 January 2016 a majority of the Bundestag voted to »continue the participation by German armed forces in support of the training of security forces of the government of the region of Kurdistan«. <sup>7</sup>

4. Statement to the Press by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, on the North Atlantic Council Decision on Implementation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty following the 11 September Attacks against the United States, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s011004b.htm> (called up on 11 January 2018).

5. <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/072/1807206.pdf>.

6. Kampf gegen Terrormiliz, Bundestag beschließt Syrien-Einsatz, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2015/12/2015-12-01-syrienmandat-bundeswehr.html> (called up on 11 January 2018).

7. German Bundestag, stenographic report, 215<sup>th</sup> meeting, item 6 on the agenda, <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/18/18215.pdf> (called up on 11 January 2018).

## Deficits and Postulates

Germany's contributions to combating international terrorism have thus far always been purely reactive and primarily meant to show solidarity with Alliance partners: with the US in Afghanistan, with the US, Great Britain and Turkey in Iraq, and with France in Mali. Unlike Great Britain and France, Germany does not have any fundamental, vital interests in Hindukush, on the Arabian peninsula or in Africa due to colonial history. Whether, and if so, what strategic interests of its own Germany has today on the Arabian peninsula or in Africa has not been debated so far, when decisions on contributions to military support were taken. Generally, reasons were given only afterwards. Then, the political mantra was generally: We need to help provide stability by means of a military commitment in the interest of Germany's own national security.

Have NATO's military operations been useful to effectively stop international terrorism? They have not brought about its end. It's still there. In Afghanistan, the security situation is weaker than it has been for a long time. The UN-mandated peace mission in Mali with French and German soldiers as well as troops from more than 50 other nations is under considerable pressure. The military liberation of territories in Syria and Iraq previously occupied by IS should not lead one to prematurely conclude that this is the beginning of the end of this terrorist group. Terrorists do not need any territorial structure to carry out attacks like in Paris, Istanbul, Brussels, Nice, Berlin, Stockholm and Manchester. In combating terrorist structures in Iraq and Syria, NATO is operating without any clear military fronts. With the exception of special forces, NATO troops are not trained in anti-terror operations, nor are they supposed to be used within this spectrum of missions. Moreover, the mandates of missions often lack a clear purpose or goal.

Effective strategies for fighting terrorism should not be primarily focused on military action as they have been to date. All that the military can do well (air strikes, sea surveillance, training, supplying weapons, targeted attacks by special forces or drones) may serve the purpose of containing terrorism, and with an optimistic view even prevent it for some time. The aim and objective, however, should be to develop a security policy strategy in close cooperation with other organisations, in particular the EU, in which international terrorism is

fought subsequently: first with coordinated police and intelligence operations, and only after this with military action.

Whether the NATO summit held in Brussels in May 2017 has led to a new approach to combatting terrorism remains to be seen. It was decided that NATO join the US-led anti-terrorism alliance. Although this decision had already been taken earlier upon request by Washington – almost all NATO states are already members of the alliance, anyway – until then NATO had not been involved as an organisation. Nor is there any intention for it to assume a leadership role of some kind in this Coalition of the Willing of 68 countries. This role remains with the US. So, Chancellor Merkel was right to call it a symbolic step.

What are, then, the added military and security policy benefits to be obtained at a point in time when the IS has largely lost the territory it previously held in Iraq and Syria?

To contain international terrorism, NATO has to concentrate on combating groups of terrorists organised militarily and on missions to train and support security forces in the respective countries affected. This defensive Alliance is not suited, nor is it conceived for any other type of action to fight terrorism – like measures addressing the causes of terrorism or police operations.

This means, though, that conflict among the Member States is inevitable, especially with the US, which wants NATO to play a broader role in the fight against terrorism. Germany must not shy away from this conflict.

## 4. NATO Operations

The balance sheet on the operations of the Alliance since the end of the Cold War is a sobering one. NATO's first operations in the Western Balkans, beginning in 1995, were marked by massive military forces committing up to 60,000 soldiers in theatres that were relatively limited in size. In the wake of the civil wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, the stabilisation operations Implementation Force (IFOR), Stabilisation Force (SFOR) and Kosovo Force (KFOR) were embedded in a relatively dynamic multilateral conflict-management strategy that called for long-term support for the establishment of a democratic

political system. The reconstruction and stabilisation of states developing out of the broken federal Yugoslavia nevertheless proved to be a laborious and protracted process.

In Afghanistan, after 14 years no end is yet in sight for the NATO mission which began in 2003. On the contrary. Forces are being augmented again at present. In retrospect, it can hardly be characterised as a successful operation, even if improvements in the infrastructure, the health-care system and education in Afghanistan are undeniable. The core problems of security and containment of the Taliban, increasingly IS as well, the poor economic development, the struggle against endemic corruption and cultivation of drug crops remain unresolved. The Taliban have regained control over large stretches of the country. Since the end of ISAF operations and the transition in 2014 to the mission »Resolute Support«, which aims at providing support for the training of Afghan armed forces, the security situation has further deteriorated. In this intervention by NATO, the core cause of failure can be identified from the very start: the lack of overall political-military planning following the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001. The political approach to stabilising the country failed to recognise the peculiar aspects of cultural and social structures in Afghanistan and hence the difficulties involved in making stabilisation possible.

Military forces assigned to stabilise the country were undermanned from the start and far too few and insufficient to prevent the return of Taliban fighters which has been underway since 2003, and this at a time when the US was already preparing its military forces for the invasion of Iraq. The fact that several operations were taking place at the same time and in different structures further impeded the pursuit of a common aim and objective.

In NATO's air operations to support the rebels in the uprising against the Gaddafi regime in Libya in 2011 (»Unified Protector« with a no-fly zone and weapons embargo), there never was any strategy for a post-war order or stabilisation of the country, which would suggest that the decision-making process in the NATO Council was anything but analytical and forward-looking. »Unified Protector« began, with a UN mandate, as a mission to protect the Libyan population against the Gaddafi regime, after it had become clear that NATO was needed for such an operation, which was initially launched by

France with the support of Great Britain. The US, NATO's leading power, hesitated and decided to provide leadership »from behind«, as President Obama put it. The operation was then continued in the form of air support for the rebels, ultimately leading to Gaddafi being toppled and killed by a group of rebels. The country then disintegrated into chaos.

NATO has not undertaken any »lessons learned« analysis of mistakes, omissions and failures at the political-strategic level. But this is urgently needed, before any future mission could be launched. Although, in 2006 already, preparing for the NATO Summit in Riga the same year, the NATO Council had adopted the concept of a »Comprehensive Approach« (CA) for the political-military configuration of operations, preparing it failed to follow up on this by developing additional conceptual elements or adequately implementing it. This requires, in addition to a thorough analysis of the situation and strategies for successful action an effective coordination of all relevant policy areas. In addition to a strict review of legality and legitimacy, interventions by NATO in the future should be made contingent upon the development of a viable, promising and feasible political-strategic concept, which combines operative clarity of objectives and a detailed risk analysis. The practice of using military forces to make up for the lack of any overall political strategy or for the inability to devise a strategy, must end. If military operations cannot be embedded in a political strategy with a chance for success, they should not be engaged in. NATO should not adopt strategies for operations like the one in Afghanistan which are based on the principle of trial and error.

Another critical factor is the right size of military forces needed for such operations, in particular for initial entry operations. Often, in the case of stabilisation missions, minimal, undermanned operational forces are all too easily accepted in order to obtain domestic political support. To what extent the lack of troops can be compensated for by technology in the future is difficult to predict. For the time being, decision-makers and planners have to assume it will not be possible for NATO members to carry out medium to large-scale NATO operations in view of their ongoing operational commitments, even if some countries reverse the downsizing of their military forces. The augmentation of national military forces through an increase in budget allocations which are now planned again, will take at least five to ten years.

It will accordingly be of crucial importance to decide, whether and, if so, in which form NATO should be geared towards more crisis interventions. Ultimately, this will determine, which military capabilities nations will be willing to provide.

## 5. Burden Sharing in NATO and the Two Per Cent GDP Mark Agreed in Wales

This is also the context, in which the dispute over burden sharing in the Alliance takes place. This dispute among Allies is as old as the NATO Alliance itself. The mark of two per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for defence expenditures in the budgets of the Member States was mentioned for the first time around 15 years ago in NATO. Initially as a recommendation within the framework of the defence-planning process, this mark was later included in declarations by NATO ministers of defence as well as heads of state and government. All German governments had consistently refused to formulate any such binding targets and were also able to thwart any attempts to adopt them. For the text version, which finally was adopted for the summit communiqué in Wales in 2014, and which subsequently was a subject of hot debate in Germany, Berlin accepted a wording (*»aim to move towards the 2% guideline within a decade«*) which was originally interpreted to mean that Germany would approach the two per cent mark over a period of ten years without, however, committing to finally reach this target.

For the vast majority of NATO states, an increase in defence spending to two per cent of GDP means a massive increase in their defence budgets – for Germany almost a doubling of the budget for 2014. Such a significant step actually requires a debate and consensus on the strategic purpose and objectives associated with the planned build-up.

The strategic concept would be an appropriate framework for a new analysis of risk and threat as well as for the strategic framework upon which the hike in defence spending is to be based. It would be bizarre if the Alliance on the one hand was able to agree on a significant boost in defence expenditures in its Member States, but was, on the other hand, not in a position to agree on a purpose, a political objective, to justify the increase in spending. If the arguments for a considerable rise in de-

fence budgets continued to remain diffuse or only reflect a vague common sense, the Alliance would quickly degenerate into a coalition without any clear aim – a league of nations for the formation of ad hoc coalitions of willing states within the Alliance, in which the larger actors lay claim to the Alliance for their own respective national interests.

The whole point and usefulness of the two per cent mark can be debated. It is a pretty vague figure and does not say much about which military capabilities NATO partners truly make available to the Alliance. Thus, the real contribution to NATO by the five European Allies which already spend roughly two per cent of their Gross Domestic Product on defence is probably on the whole less than is commonly assumed. This especially goes for the NATO partners France and Great Britain, which are often presented as role models. In real terms, both countries probably devote 15 to 20 per cent of their respective defence budgets to the operation and modernisation of their nuclear arsenals. French nuclear weapons explicitly are not available for NATO deterrence. The contribution made by British nuclear weapons to deterrence through NATO is probably rather negligible. Above and beyond this, both countries provide substantial funding for national tasks of their armed forces, for example in overseas territories, largely in Africa. On top of all this, France itself is currently below the two per cent mark at 1.79 per cent of GDP. French contributions to NATO operations, including ISAF in Afghanistan, where no French forces are deployed at present in operation »Resolute Support«, have traditionally been rather scarce and are not comparable to contributions made by most other NATO partners. The British contribution to »Resolute Support« only musters half the manpower of the force contributed by Germany.

Against this background, it would make more sense to focus the debate on the capabilities of military forces and contributions that nations actually make available to the Alliance, instead of discussing the two per cent mark. To this end, NATO has had for decades a Defence Planning Process (NDPP), a cyclical mechanism which has, thus far, for the most part taken place at the expert level at NATO headquarters in Brussels. In this context, the Defence Planning Process should be given greater political attention. Realistic data for the current and future burden sharing in the Alliance could be generated here. The German government should oppose focussing

on the two per cent target in NATO and attempt to measure burden sharing primarily on the basis of the forces pledged to NATO within the framework of the Defence Planning Process. The assignment of troops to NATO operations should also be included into the equation. This would bring about more realistic and transparent processes of comparison.

Independently of all this, the need for a significant, but gradual increase in the German defence budget is beyond all doubt, if only to improve the combat-readiness of the German armed forces. A rise in budget item 14 to at least 1.5 per cent of GDP appears to be urgently necessary. This does not change the fact that a more precise analysis of the future security environment accompanied by arguments for such an increase in spending is urgently needed – an analysis which should offer a more specific reasoning than, for instance, the old Strategic Concept of 2010 and the 2016 White Book of the German government.

One especially sensitive aspect of the trans-Atlantic burden sharing is nuclear deterrence and its sharing by European Allies. Something which hardly anyone would have expected a few years ago has come up again on the political stage at NATO: A discussion on nuclear weapons.<sup>8</sup>

## 6. Nuclear Deterrence

For careful observers, this discussion is by no means surprising. It has been fermenting in the Alliance for years now. As it were, it involves, first of all, the modernisation of the aging B61 atomic bombs and the aircraft platforms to carry them within the nuclear sharing arrangements between the US and Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. In 2014, the Russian President reopened this debate, which had been on the backburner, with public statements he made in the context of the annexation of Crimea. He re-introduced Russia's nuclear arsenal as a topic for discussion and, with his nuclear sabre-rattling, encouraged those actors in NATO who had already been arguing for more than a technological upgrading for some time. In the meantime, the Intermedi-

ate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) of 1987 on the elimination of land-based short and medium-range systems in Europe is in jeopardy. This Treaty along with the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START Treaties) on intercontinental nuclear weapons are at the core of nuclear arms controls between the US and Russia. These are disturbing developments, with regard to which the German government needs to take position.

The following discussion does not address normative-ethical aspects of nuclear armament, about which much has already been written. Instead, it concentrates on the political-strategic dimension and argumentation.

### The Political-Strategic Rational Underlying the »Nuclear Alliance«<sup>9</sup> of NATO

As long as nuclear weapons exist in the European environment, Europe will be dependent on »extended deterrence« provided by the nuclear potential of the USA. In the European, and particularly in the German strategy debate during the Cold War, the basic principle that nuclear weapons are only political weapons and must not, under any circumstances, be considered to be tactical battlefield weapons, was common understanding. This underscored its political function of deterrence. This understanding must remain the guiding principle in all strategic, operative and technical considerations in the future as well. Politicians as well as nuclear experts can certainly not rule out that deterrence may one day fail and that nuclear weapons may be used in Europe. The explosion of only a few nuclear warheads would cause unimaginable numbers of casualties and could make large parts of Europe uninhabitable. A humanitarian disaster of an unthinkable magnitude.

This dilemma underlying the strategy of nuclear deterrence cannot be resolved, nor should anybody try to make anyone believe it could. Nuclear weapons must never be conceived or designed as weapons for waging war, but rather serve the political-strategic purpose of deterring against their use. In other words, the so-called nuclear threshold must be kept high and the dramatic qualitative leap from the use of conventional arms to the potential for nuclear annihilation must be retained. However, the general tendency in the modernisation of

8. Nukleare Abschreckung. Die NATO plant für den Ernstfall, <http://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/nato-russland-atompolitik-101.html> (called up on 11 January 2018; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* no. 201, 1 September 2017, p. 9: Riskante Rolle rückwärts.

9. Strategic Concept of NATO, NATO summit meeting, Lisbon 2010, no. 17.

nuclear weapons to make them more accurate, including the possibility to be flexible and set their explosive power at very low levels, could lead to a lowering of the nuclear threshold. Some of the contributions to the debate at present create the impression that sub-strategic nuclear arsenals in Europe could be compared, in terms of numbers, just like, for example, force ratios of tanks and combat aircraft. Such mechanistic notions of balance cannot be accepted, as there must never be any operative warfare options involving nuclear weapons as battlefield nuclear weapons. The crucial factor is the role and function of nuclear weapons categories as part of an overall deterrence strategy.

In the wake of the Cold War, NATO reduced its nuclear weapons in Europe by around 90 per cent to a few hundred warheads, while Russia still has approximately 2000 nuclear warheads for shorter-range systems. Anyone calling for the withdrawal of the few remaining American nuclear weapons in Europe must not turn a blind eye on this massive Russian nuclear weapons potential in Europe. In Russian military doctrine, the role of these weapons of mass destruction is given special emphasis with NATO in mind, and Russia is still not interested in arms control negotiations in this area. It would moreover be reckless to ignore the probably disastrous consequences for NATO and the German position in the Alliance should Germany oblige the Americans to withdraw their nuclear weapons from German soil. Furthermore, Germany would lose its influence on nuclear planning in the Alliance, which would then take place without Germany. Eastern European states could try to compensate for this by calling for nuclear weapons to be deployed on their territory, which would lead to a very serious escalation in relations between NATO and Russia. Anything along these lines would certainly not be in the German interest.

### Credibility of Nuclear Deterrence

The crucial strategic calculus for the deployment of sub-strategic nuclear weapons in and for Europe in connection with nuclear sharing arrangements of NATO nations is usually only discussed in groups of experts behind closed doors. At the heart of it all is the question of the credibility of nuclear deterrence. One central consideration in this context is that a full spectrum of nuclear options is required in order to underscore the credibility of

deterrence. The expanded nuclear umbrella of the US for Europe, according to this consideration, would be less credible if only American intercontinental systems weapons were available. Only the option of US nuclear weapons based in Europe, possibly carried by the armed forces of European Allies, makes deterrence credible. This argument is based on the usually unspoken assumption that the US would attempt to limit nuclear escalation between NATO and Russia to European territory if possible and spare its own territory because this is in its own national interest. Underlying this assumption is the old wisdom of Clausewitz in his thoughts on alliances (»Schutz- und Trutzbündnisse«): »It will never be seen that a state that acts in the cause of another takes it as seriously as its own.« During the Cold War, advocates of NATO's deliberate escalation strategy, called »Flexible Response«, claimed that such »Eurostrategic« weapons in NATO's deterrence spectrum would lead to a strategic coupling of the US to Europe. Critics of this strategy countered that these weapons were actually »decoupling weapons« because they made it possible for Washington and Moscow to keep their own territories out of a nuclear escalation in Europe. This was also discussed in the context of the sharing of nuclear risk between the USA and the European NATO states.

All of these calculations are in the end based on assumptions and notions of plausibility, ultimately on belief systems regarding the expected decision-making behaviour of nuclear powers in a serious crisis or war in Europe. This is because nobody really knows, and for this reason can only make assumptions about how decision-making processes in Washington and Moscow would work and what their outcomes would be. Strategic calculations and dilemmas like these disappeared from debates over the strategies of NATO with the end of the Cold War. This was to the considerable relief of Germany and Europe because the dilemma existing between the logic of nuclear deterrence and the fatal prospects of becoming the nuclear theatre in a war, which could not be ruled out in the event that deterrence failed, appeared to have been banned.

### The New Nuclear Weapons Debate in NATO

For years now the US government has expressed its suspicion that Russia is violating the INF Treaty with various nuclear delivery systems. Washington is now convinced

that the SSC-8 cruise missiles, which Russia has developed and deployed, constitute a clear violation of the bilateral agreements laid down in the INF Disarmament Treaty of 1987. This Treaty prohibits the development of land-based nuclear cruise missiles as well as short and medium-range missiles having a range of between 500 km and 5,500 km. Russia objects to the assumption that it has violated the Treaty, countering with the accusation that the USA is violating the INF Treaty itself, in particular by deploying missile defence systems in Poland and Romania, which, from the Russian perspective, could also be used for medium-range weapons.

Reactions to the Russian violation of the Treaty are being discussed in the US and redeployment of modern medium-range weapons in Europe is even being considered. 30 years after massive demonstrations against the deployment of American medium-range missiles in Germany, this could potentially trigger a massive domestic political struggle – a »Pandora's box« that would put the fabric of the Federal government and Parliament to a serious test, as well as the political parties should they consider such re-armament. Germany needs to position itself clearly on this issue in due time, in NATO and vis-à-vis the US, best of all while closing ranks with France and other European partners.

### A Possible Violation of the INF Treaty Does Not Change Strategic Nuclear Parity in and for Europe

In this debate however, strategic serenity is appropriate on the side of NATO, as the extended deterrence for Europe, provided by the US, will not be negatively affected by the possible deployment of a few Russian cruise missiles. The range of American options includes, for example, sea-based medium-range cruise missiles, which are not covered by the INF Treaty. Washington's political will to maintain extended deterrence for Europe should not be put into question. The conventional potential of NATO, which still needs to be strengthened in conjunction with the existing strategic and sub-strategic nuclear potential of the USA, constitutes an incalculable risk for any potential aggressor staging an attack on Europe.

Given all this, the dilemmas of the Cold War must not be allowed to come back through the back door in a new guise. Mutual transparency and rational agreements between the US and Russia must make it possible to suc-

cessfully keep nuclear weapons politically »under lock and key« on both sides as long they cannot be eliminated through disarmament agreements. The German government needs to adopt a clear, unambiguous profile in the Alliance in this regard and together with other partners in the Alliance help make sure that political and military stability in Europe is upheld without a nuclear arms build-up. It must not shy away from a public debate over this, either.

At the same time, NATO cannot ignore a potential violation of the INF Treaty by Russia, and needs to address this forcefully. All political and diplomatic resources need to be leveraged in order to save nuclear arms controls as a whole. By the same token, however, redeployment of new land-based medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe – even as a last resort – must not be allowed to become an option. Washington should also be aware that the deployment of new nuclear weapons of NATO in Europe could tear the Alliance apart.

Even if the European NATO states are not parties to the Treaty, the German government, in tandem with France and other European states, should complement NATO declarations and call upon Russia for clarification, transparency and verification. Possible Russian concerns with regard to medium-range weapons in Asia and the US's and NATO's missile-defence system in Europe should also be included in this endeavour. This issue moreover involves not only the INF Treaty, but also saving nuclear arms control as a whole. The Europeans need to make it unmistakably clear to the parties to the INF Treaty and in particular to their Ally, the US, that they have a vital interest in maintaining the INF Treaty.

## 7. Challenges Emanating from New Technologies

On top of all these challenges, there is another crucial one: The rapid pace of development in military technology. At the very end of the communiqué issued by the Warsaw summit in July 2016, the most recent one to be issued – following the meeting of leaders in Brussels in May 2017 no official bulletin was issued – the Alliance reaffirmed that it was »especially important« »to encourage innovation with the aim of determining progressive new technologies, assessing their applicability in the military area and to launch them with innovative

solutions« »so that the Alliance can maintain its technological edge.« This verbal monstrosity of diplomatic jargon draws attention to the challenge confronting the Alliance, which it is virtually unable to face in any effective manner, however, because the issue is being approached from the wrong end. The issue is the challenges posed by a digital society that is developing at an extremely fast pace.

Rapid development in communications technology, which usually takes place and is fostered in the non-military, private business world, often in a transnational or multinational context, potentially has »a significant impact on military planning and operations of NATO«. This is already stated in point 14 of the currently applicable Strategic Concept of the Alliance from 2010. Cycles of innovation are becoming ever shorter in the business world. It is not the promotion of innovation, which is »especially important« and the »task of NATO«, but rather shaping innovation so that it is compatible within the Alliance – i.e. shaping innovation in such a manner so as to make it compatible among 29 nations which have very different political and technological ambitions and capabilities, but always have democratic decision-making processes, which require a certain amount of time.

Seven years later, the Alliance has not made much progress in this regard. Although the Secretary General created a department for »emerging security challenges« with NATO's International Staff for the first time as far back as 2010, its assignments include only a limited number of topics. It certainly does not comprehensively cover all emerging security challenges. And it especially does not address the question of which direction technological trends will probably take in the next ten years. This is the task of the Agency of the Chief Scientist, i.e. an office that is more geared to analysis of technology. Nevertheless, to guarantee security in cyberspace, the Alliance has already adopted a joint political strategy recognising this space in addition to land, water, air and outer space as the fifth military dimension in which the Alliance operates. In what form the Alliance is able to or should take action continues to depend on the nations.

However, the impact of new technological developments on political processes within the Alliance and between the Member States or between military leadership in operations and political responsibility, are not re-

ally addressed. There continues to be a lack of orientation on the part of the political and strategic leadership of the Alliance on how to cope with progress in communications technology, which must be characterised as revolutionary, within the Alliance. Developments in artificial intelligence, autonomous systems and in the linking of humans and machines do not only mean incredible progress in technology, for which many smart people are working at great speed at many places. These developments are above all a societal, political, strategic and also ethical challenge because they are revolutionising the way in which military planners and operators work. They are also a challenge to international cooperation in NATO and the EU as well as for the way in which individuals, holding positions of political responsibility, operate and for the system of checks and balances, executed by the parliaments in the Member States.<sup>10</sup>

It can therefore not be the Alliance which is primarily meant with regard to the task of »encouraging innovation«, but rather the Allies who pledge to each other to do this. After all, it is nations which encourage and promote developments, and they do this in different ways, with different resources and different aims. Encouraging innovation, including for military use, is also always promoting national industry. Companies from high-tech nations in NATO either compete with each other or they cooperate with globally, independently of whether their home country is a member of NATO. National legislation sometimes constrains their freedom of action, sometimes it grants them privileges. NATO itself does not play any role here. It is – and this must not be forgotten – an instrument of the nations.

So, it's the other way around: The Allies must agree on how each of them – acting for themselves, but also acting together within a framework of a military and a security policy alliance of democracies – can ensure that technological change does not tear them apart. The problem is not new, but the speed and scope of developments have taken on a new quality because this development, which nations can only control with difficulty, tends to conceive of humans as a source of error instead of the actors controlling the process. This could undermine hu-

10. On this topic, see also: Neue digitale Militärtechnologien und autonome Waffensysteme – Die Zukunft der Kriegsführung. *Arbeitskreis Internationale Sicherheitspolitik der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, Berlin, August 2015. Available online at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/ifa/11622.pdf> (called up on 7 December 2017).

man responsibility in decision-making processes. This is by no means mere hypothetical doodling. It is rather of direct practical importance, when the task is for nations to launch military research programmes, specify requirements to procure weapon systems, to submit procurement projects and get them approved by parliament. The question as to how the wide-ranging challenges posed by new technologies can be coped with at all strategic planning and decision-making levels in nations *and* in the Alliance has to be answered. In seeking an answer, actors from the non-military technology sector have to be involved here along with classical representatives from the sphere of politics and military.

Especially in the field of international security policy, fundamental provisions in international law and civil rights must not be lost sight of when committing the military power of the Alliance. This is where the Alliance's own ethics of responsibility come into play. The task of the Member States is to jointly ensure this.

Decisions on military missions taken in the Alliance – at the political and at the military level – must also be taken and carried out in a *conscientious* manner at all times in the future as well. And this in the strictest sense of the word – even if autonomous weapon systems or artificial intelligence would appear to hold out the promise of easing the process and boosting the efficiency of decision-making. Elected and appointed representatives of the Member States must be able to retain their unlimited decision-making sovereignty over whether, how and which military resources they want to jointly commit and to which end. This dimension of dealing with »new technologies« must also be taken into account by Alliance institutions and processes.

## 8. The Role of Europe

The »role of Europeans« in NATO also requires a more specific debate in order to gain more clarity regarding the future of the Alliance. It is closely intertwined with three questions:

Firstly: Who are »the Europeans« in this context? Is it the European Union, is it the nations of Europe – and if so, those within or outside the EU? Because the European family of nations is larger than the Union. The development of the Common Security and Defence Policy

(CSDP) of the EU Member States within the framework of the EU, the distribution of roles and assignment of competencies between the nations and the Union have by no means been completed, even if 25 EU states have now agreed that they want to establish a security and defence union. The projects they have been agreed upon must now be implemented, and even then the aims and objectives of the large states in the EU will still differ, even if they use the same terms.

Secondly: What role should the US play in Europe since the pivot to Asia decided by President Barack Obama in view of the growing challenge posed by China – and since Russia has been demonstrating its military might on the eastern border of NATO? The European nations still by no means agree on this, either.

Thirdly: To what extent are the Europeans able or willing to rely on their US-Ally since Donald Trump was elected President with his slogan »America First«? Since he took office in January 2017, he has demonstrated that he has little understanding for the work of the Alliance and co-operative security policy.

Official documents are clear and to the point: »We continue to be committed to a coherent international strategy (for security policy: note of the author), in particular between NATO and the EU« is how the communiqué from the Warsaw summit in July 2016 put it – but that was before the current President took office. The EU High Representative Federica Mogherini declared in January 2017 that the security of the Union could only »be improved by measures in the area of foreign relations and close cooperation with Nato«. And in his speech on the state of the Union before the European Parliament in September 2017, EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stated that the planned »European Defence Union« was an explicit desire of NATO. But affirmations and desires that are merely clear on the surface are one thing. Putting them into practice, a complicated undertaking indeed, is another. A clarification of terms and definitions is sorely needed.

The CSDP, and the EU as a whole for that matter, is in a critical phase of its development. Only at this juncture, eight years after the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force at the end of 2009, has the EU taken the first steps towards the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which is intended to pave the way for

cooperation between the most militarily capable Member States in the area of defence policy – even if not *all* EU Member States want to participate in it. None of these capable nations were willing to do this for a long time, including Germany. Only now, following the UK vote to leave the EU and the election of Donald Trump as President of the US, has this door opened.

Matters involving the »security union« – mostly issues relating to domestic and judicial policy with responsibilities of the Commission – are still separated by the treaty from the envisioned »defence union«, for which the ministers of foreign affairs and defence hold responsibility. Ultimately at issue is the fact that the member nations do not want to hand over issues involving defence to the responsibility of the EU in general, but rather keep full control over them, as is the case in NATO. At the same time, experts have made out a growing juridification, including in the foreign policy activities of the Union, which means that the European Court of Justice is also guardian over issues of the CSDP involving the activities of the Union against the background of rule-of-law principles. In contrast to NATO, nations in the EU are hence not the sole actors that matter. EU institutions have their own domains of competency regarding issues involving »foreign relations«, including in the area of security policy. Over the long haul, there could even be a shift in power towards the supranational institutions of the Union. The Commission and the European Parliament are working on this. Many nations reject it, including Germany and France. It is not foreseeable at present, however, whether it will come to this or not, and if it does, in what manner. At any rate, it will be of importance to the future of the Alliance to see which role the EU Member States in NATO assign to »Brussels«, i. e. the Union, in the sphere of defence policy.

This depends *inter alia* on which role the USA wants or is supposed to play in Europe in the future. Donald Trump was not the first person to call on Europeans to spend more money on the military and assume more responsibility for the security of Europe. Almost all his predecessors did the same. At the same time, the question that has remained unanswered then and now is what »responsibility for the security of Europe« means. Europeans have reacted in different ways, depending on their respective notions of their role in the world and their own respective military capabilities. Germany, for instance, explicitly intends to make its military forces a core ele-

ment of enhanced European defence capabilities within NATO along with France and Great Britain. This is called for in the plans for the implementation of the German government's 2016 White Book, which was prepared by the planning department of the German Ministry of Defence. According to these plans, Berlin intends to integrate national armed forces planning more closely than in the past into the armed forces planning process of NATO. And within this framework Berlin intends to play a leading role in its capacity as a »framework nation«, which is especially focused on Alliance defence against a Russia that has become aggressive. France, on the other hand, is first of all aligning its armed forces more towards missions combating terrorism and supporting stabilisation in North Africa and Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, which, within the framework of NATO, would ultimately be very complementary to the German position: Germany is assigning priority to threats to the East, while France sets its priority on threats from the South, harbouring the hope that Germany will support France in this. In the latest national defence strategy from October 2017, the most important European partner of Germany is secondly seeking to also »strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy«. To this end, Paris is proposing a »European intervention initiative« which is intended to reinforce the interoperability of European armed forces in the area of crisis intervention. This is within the framework of the »refoundation of Europe« which Paris actively pursues and not within the framework of NATO, whose most recent focus on defence of the Alliance has nonetheless received the full support of France.

Not only do security policy priorities of the most important European NATO partners differ accordingly – their perspectives also deviate from one another. The challenge here is to organise this in a compatible manner both within NATO as well as in cooperation between NATO and the EU. The crucial factor is which role the Europeans will want to assign to the US in all this, or which role the US will claim for itself. In the Alliance, it is the leading power, whose influence in the Alliance rests on its considerable military potential. That is not the case in the EU. In which way and in which framework the »Europeans« thus assume their »responsibility« will be decisive when it comes to the role the US will play in the future for the security of Europe. Will the superpower turn its back on Europe to focus more on the Asian-Pacific area? Does Washington consider NATO to be »obsolete«, outmoded or superfluous? Do Europeans still ac-

cept the claim of the US to leadership, even if their perception of threat and security interests are no longer in line with those of the US? Or will the Allies find a new way of interacting? Does »the West« still exist?

This question is after all taking on a more explosive nature with growing doubts as to the reliability of the US for the Alliance. A nationalistic *America First* policy pursued by a superpower that is reluctant to adhere to international agreements and rules and which instead puts these in question is the opposite of the »community of values« which the Alliance stands for. This is not only a question that applies to the US, however. Developments in the direction of an authoritarian, nationalistic regime in Turkey or towards an »illiberal democracy« in Poland or Hungary are putting the foundations of the Alliance as a league of democratic states into question. Reliability, trust and confidence in one another is of paramount importance to the future of NATO in terms of its permanent acceptance as a framework for a common Western, i.e. Transatlantic and democratic, security policy.

## 9. Summary

NATO is in a crisis mode. The immediate, wide-ranging challenges facing the Alliance, which account for its current crisis, require that the Member States agree on a new strategy. This new concept must explain the How and the Why, create a new balance between requirements applying to national defence capabilities and those for crisis intervention, while spelling out the resources and procedures which the Alliance requires to effectively cope with these challenges.

At the same time, the relationship between NATO and Russia needs to be put on a new footing. There is a fundamental power struggle and clash of systems taking place with regard to the rules governing security in Europe as well as between the major powers Russia and the US. The helplessness or indecision gripping the Alliance must not be papered over. It must be reversed and new paths of understanding must be sought.

Uncertainty also reigns in the Alliance regarding the question as to its role in combating international terrorism. Should the Alliance concentrate on this function, as US President Donald Trump has demanded? Or is the recently resolved commitment by NATO in the US-led coa-

lition against the terrorist grouping IS only a symbolic step? Militarily organised terrorism – such as, for example, the so-called »Armageddon sect IS« – can only be combated militarily. But armed forces do not offer any protection against random bombing attacks on groups or even targeted attacks on individuals, including by terrorists who operate along military lines. The general underlying principle must be that terrorists are not to be treated as combatants. In states with due process of law like the Member States in NATO, they are to be pursued and prosecuted as criminals by police forces and the resources provided for under penal law. The Alliance is not suited for a wide-ranging struggle against terrorism, including its causes, or for prevention measures.

The balance sheet on NATO crisis-intervention operations in Afghanistan and Libya is a sobering one. These missions were not embedded in viable political concepts. These countries have not been pacified. A critical analysis of mistakes and omissions has yet to be carried out. Major operations of this kind will not be possible over the short to medium term as long as the growth of national military forces, now being planned, has not been completed. That will take years.

The debate in NATO over national defence budgets is too much focussed on financial input. The crucial issue is not how much money countries allocate to their defence budgets, but rather which military capabilities they specifically make available to the Alliance within the framework of its NATO Defence Planning Process and for operations.

The debate that has been reopened in NATO over nuclear deterrence has to be an open one. Europe depends on »extended deterrence« through the nuclear arsenal of the USA and should not cast doubt on this. It must be clearly stated, however, that political and military stability in Europe will also be preserved without any nuclear arms build-up in NATO. Strategic serenity is appropriate here.

In view of the dynamics involved in the ongoing automation of digital military technologies, there is a danger that political and military control over their application will be lost. NATO members must act to ensure in their decision-making processes at the national and Alliance levels that human control is preserved under all circumstances.

Germany and its European partners also have to decide which role NATO is to play in the security of Europe in the coming years and how the European Security and Defence Union (ESDU) which is to be set up, would fit into this picture. This, at the same time, raises the question as to whether a nationalist *America First* policy by the US is to be accepted by Europeans or can be ignored as an intermediary phase. Will Europeans seek »strategic autonomy« and which consequences would this have?

The all-embracing nature and variety of the challenges identified here, which NATO and its Member States face at present, would appear to have implications which go far beyond the nature of crises that the Alliance has managed in the past. Not only have the number and types of threats from outside to the security of the Member States multiplied in comparison to the times of »simple« confrontation between East and West. Back then, the »good guys« were in the »West«, the »bad guys« in the »East«. Today, the Alliance is threatened from within. Terrorist attacks, primarily by Islamist groups that come from the midst of our own societies, are only one aspect of developments that are profoundly changing our nations. Now the »bad guys« come from the »South« or have long since arrived here among us in the »West«. Geographic labels are losing their significance.

The lack of unity and even helplessness in NATO, which it is accused of when it comes to the treatment of important security policy issues, also indicates that there is by

no means agreement within the Alliance over when and under what conditions the use of military force is appropriate. Some nations are ready and willing to intervene militarily for the purpose of crisis management, whatever that is supposed to mean in individual cases; other countries are not willing to go this far, or only with important restrictions. »The West« no longer faces adversaries who threaten its security as a whole with closed ranks. The Alliance has long since been reduced to a toolbox from which countries take whatever they feel may be of use to them. This has alienated the members of the Alliance from each other.

And this alienation is proceeding at great pace, with nationalistic-populist parties achieving significant electoral successes and influencing policy in a host of Member States. Governments in Poland and Hungary are already well along the way to authoritarian systems of government. The political system in Turkey is being reduced to one-man rule. And even the leading power, the US, has embarked on a nationalistic *America First* course, thereby undermining its leadership role in the Alliance, undisputed in the past, while the Europeans themselves are also far from being able to play a leadership role, even in a future EU defence union. If nothing happens, NATO will find itself in a process of bidding farewell as an Alliance of the »West«, a Western community of values, because this »West« no longer exists.

All this is on the table.



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