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360°-NATO: Mobilization on all Fronts

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NATO's 360 Degree Approach:
Heading Towards Confrontation with Russia and the Rest of the World

by Jürgen Wagner

It was former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who, already in 2010, brought forward the argument that the Western military alliance was in the process of transition into NATO 3.0.[1] As a matter of fact, the development of NATO from its foundation in 1949 until now can be roughly classified into three stages: Initially, the conflict with the Soviet Union was pivotal (NATO 1.0). Following the end of East-West confrontation NATO focused on the transformation towards a worldwide alliance for military interventions as well as on the expansion of its sphere of influence (NATO 2.0). For several years now, conflicts with Russia and an arms build-up at the Eastern flank have gained considerably in importance again. This by no means implies, however, that the Alliance would shift away from its claim to intervene militarily anywhere – including in cyberspace – wherever its future interests lie. In fact, having the best of both worlds is the credo of NATO 3.0!

In June 2015, the NATO Defence Ministers put this claim for an omnipresent projection of force and power in a nutshell and created a narrative for a NATO with a 360° approach, which has been used constantly ever since: "Russia is challenging Euro-Atlantic security through military action, coercion and intimidation of its neighbours. We continue to be concerned about Russia's aggressive actions [...]. We are also concerned about the growing instability to our South [...]. To address all these challenges and threats to the East and to the South, NATO continues to provide a 360-degree approach to deter threats and, if necessary, defend Allies against any adversary."[2]

Naturally, the fact that NATO has brought forth these "challenges" by its militarism and heavy-handed use of political power is not being mentioned. Instead of taking a critical look into their own court, the Alliance causes more and more chaos, conflicts and destruction. This, in turn, is closely connected to the fact that one thing has remained constant in all those years of its existence: NATO is, and will always be, the armed branch of the Western-capitalist bloc, serving the interests of its biggest member states by threat or use of force – at all costs, if necessary!

NATO 1.0: Strategic Focus Soviet Union

The formerly top secret US Policy Planning Study 23 (PPS/23), issued on 8 February 1948, provides an insight into the purpose of NATO's establishment, which had been instituted roughly one year later: "[w]e have about 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3 of its population. [...] In his situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships, which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and daydreaming; and our attention will have tob e concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world benefaction. [...] We should cease to talk about vague – and for the Far East – unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans, the better."[3]

Subsequently, when asked about the primary tasks of the alliance, Lord Ismay, NATO's first Secretary General of NATO, replied in a slightly more careful way: "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."[4] Thus, the grid of the Cold War and its constellation of interests had been specified quite accurately: The mission of the Alliance was the triumph of the US-led Western-capitalist bloc against the Soviet Union, while at the same time ensuring that Germany would never again strive for power by conquest.

It was primarily due to the power of the Soviet Union that this general framework remained more or less stable for the duration of the Cold War. Furthermore, this conflict resulted in keeping any expansionist ambitions pursued by NATO tightly in check and limited its field of action by and large to the Western sphere of influence.[5] Because EU member states lacked the military capabilities to counter this supposed existential threat from the Soviet Union – at least it was perceived as such – the United States became the undisputed leading power within the Western alliance: "Given the conditions of US hegemony and the competition of systems, there was nothing of the sort of an independent European strategy during the postwar decades. This held especially true for Foreign and Security Policy."[6]

With the decline of the Soviet Union, these frame conditions changed fundamentally at the beginning of the nineties. The adversary's system was defeated, thus heralding "the end of history" (Francis Fukuyama), the ultimate victory of the Western neoliberal model of global economics, as it was understood at that time. Subsequently, all efforts were aimed at enforcing this model on a global level – and NATO was one of the essential means to this end.

NATO 2.0: Conversion into an alliance for intervention

With the Cold War's end in the early nineties (which turned out to be just temporary, as one might argue from today's perspective) NATO needed a new mission if it was going to continue to ensure the Western hegemony it had just obtained against potential rivals like the Soviet Union (subsequently Russia) and China. Since these rivals underwent a temporary period of weakness, though, NATO turned toward a program of expanding and safeguarding the neoliberal economic system, by military force if necessary.

The new mission included the "protection" of Western economic interests like access to essential mineral resources and trade routes, but also more fundamental considerations: One consequence of this mission has been the impoverishment of large parts of the global population, as a direct result of the neoliberal global economic system. These economic strains are considered to be an essential factor in the violent escalation of conflicts and the breakout of civil wars. Since NATO member states show no inclination to change their neoliberal economic policies, it is inevitable that NATO will repeatedly need to use military power to keep the lid on the boiler that they are overheating themselves.[7] As Birgit Mahnkopf critically points out, this was NATO's aim at an early stage: "Given the extension of the definition of security, which NATO [...] has conducted at the beginning of the nineties, the North-South conflict, which has certainly a lot to with the absence of global justice and a growing global imbalance of opportunities in life, was re-interpreted as a 'global security problem'. [...] The pow-

At the 1999 NATO Summit a new intervention strategy was established. (Source: US Department of Defense/R. D. Ward)

ers of the capitalist regime try to get rid of the disorder, which is caused especially by the economy and which is externalized by the market within the structure of reproduction of the global system, by means of political and military force."[8]

Consequently, NATO quickly transformed from being - at least nominally - oriented along the fault lines of national territorial defense into being an interventionist alliance, willing to act on a global scale. At the summit meeting in Rome in November 1991 NATO adopted a new strategic concept: the "predictable" danger attributed to the Eastern bloc had been replaced by "multi-directional" threats. At that time this included nuclear proliferation, the spreading of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and other asymmetrical threats, and the disruption of access to vital economic resources.[9] In June 1992 NATO decided to be willing to conduct missions for the Centre for Strategic Cooperation in Europe (CSCE; today: OSCE) even if they would take place outside the Alliance's borders ("out-of-area"). By the end of the year this resolution was enhanced to also include

United Nations operations. With little notice, they had completed the transformation from an alliance of defense into one for intervention, which amounted to an "informal change of the treaty".[10] Starting in 1992, this new strategy of intervention was implemented when NATO controlled the arms embargo against Yugoslavia. A number of additional operations like the air combat campaigns in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1994 followed. In December 1995 NATO took over the command of the Implementation Force (IFOR, subsequently SFOR), which occupied the country and temporarily deploying up to 60.000 troops.

This transformation climaxed in March 1999: Without a UN Security Council mandate, and thus in clear violation of international law, NATO began an offensive air war against the independent state of Yugoslavia. The Alliance had emphasized its readiness to intervene "out-of-area" by acting independently of the United Nations Security Council and therefore avoiding the veto powers of Russia and China. After the armistice of 10 June 1999, NATO occupied Kosovo with more than 50.000 KFOR troops, thus

turning the province into a de facto Western protectorate while reorganizing Kosovo's economic system in a strictly neoliberal manner (see the article by Jürgen Wagner).

On 24 April 1999, just one month after the first air strikes on Yugoslavia, NATO adopted a new strategy that interpreted similar interventions as its core task. Addressing the topic of violation of international law, the document included the following telling statement: "NATO will seek, in cooperation with other organisations, to prevent conflict, or, should a crisis arise, to contribute to its effective management, consistent with international law, including through the possibility of conducting non-Article 5 crisis response operations. [...] In this context NATO recalls its subsequent decisions with respect to crisis response operations in the Balkans."[11] The reference "consistent with international law", while the line of action in the Balkans was addressed as being a model for future operations, was quite disturbing. The entire statement, in fact, runs contrary to the NATO treaty itself, as there is no provision in the treaty for military interventions outside the territory

of the Alliance. The member states make a mockery of their own treaty, which had remained unmodified since 1949, by inventing so-called non-Article 5 operations. Article 5 of the NATO treaty does not include an obligation for military assistance by the member states: The NATO states are held to exhibit solidarity in case of an attack against another NATO member state. Individual states are allowed to determine their own course of action in following this provision. Nevertheless, a case for extra-territorial operations for the Alliance was made following the attacks on the US on 11 September 2001. The invasion of Afghanistan by NATO began less than a month later. The justification for NATO's operation against Afghanistan was that the nation was providing shelter to Al Qaida and their leader, Osama bin Laden, who were blamed for the attacks. Offers by the Taliban, Afghanistan's de facto ruling party, to extradite bin Laden, were ignored.[12] In August 2003 NATO took over the governance of Afghanistan with its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). With the deployment of - at times - more than 130.000 troops, Afghanistan became the central setting for NATO to prove that it was capable of permanently seizing control of a conflict area. The Afghanistan mission was and still is of enormous importance to Germany, as well, as it is its most extensive combat operation since World War Two and it thus became an expression of Germany's growing ambitions in terms of military policy (see the article by Anne Labinski).

The last big operation clearly being initiated within the stage of NATO 2.0 is "Operation Allied Provider" at the Horn of Africa, which was launched in 2008 and continues to the present under the name "Operation Ocean Shield". As a consequence of a Us-led military intervention in Somalia in 2006, the country descended into total chaos. From the West's point of view, however, the most significant consequence was that the pirate groups operating within that chaos became the sole focus of attention. These pirate groups grew larger and became more emboldened so they began capturing commercial ships and holding them for ransom. This development threatened the free movement of Western trade and, thus, it was argued, fell under the purview of NATO. Since these pirates were threatening one of the world's most important maritime trade routes, NATO and the European Union (Operation ATALANTA) have been dispatching warships into that region since 2008 to literally attack the problem (see the article by Claudia Haydt). Patrick Keller, member of the Konrad-

Adenauer-Stiftung, writing on behalf of the NATO Defense College, summed up this development: "in its broadest sense, NATO today is the protector of globalization. By […] projecting security and stability in critical regions of the world NATO simultaneously drives and protects the process of modernization and liberalization."[13] Keller's statement clearly reveals the mission of NATO 2.0 – to emphasize the Western rules of the world (economic) order and to enforce these rules with military force.

NATO 3.0a: Out-of-Area without end

During the first decade of the 21st century, the wars in Iraq (where not NATO itself but several of its member states, such as the US and Great Britain were fighting) and in Afghanistan developed increasingly out of the West's control. In the Hindu Kush NATO "failed soundly"[14] in its largest military operation ever, particularly in light of its stated objectives for military action – namely to bring security, democracy, human rights and economic growth to the country. Fifteen years of war and occupation have devastated Afghanistan and produced countless civilian victims. Pulling out of Afghanistan was never seriously considered despite the lip service paid to this option by political leaders. ISAF's successor, operation "Resolute Support," is being extended again and again – sometimes there is even frank and open talk of NATO fighting for decades in the Hindu Kush.[15]

The reason for such stubborn adherence to the war in Afghanistan is quite simple: If NATO officially confessed its failure at its most important operation, future interventions would only become more difficult to legitimize and carry out. The Alliance's concern is to prove that NATO is not only willing but also able to "successfully" intervene out-of-area. As German chancellor Angela Merkel blatantly expressed already years ago: "I believe it is safe to say […] that the stabilization of Afghanistan is currently one of the greatest challenges for NATO and its member states. At the same time, it is, in some sense, a litmus test for successful crisis management and for a NATO capable of taking action."[16]

Although the political, personal and financial costs of the operations were rising dramatically, a high-ranking commission of experts for the development of a new NATO strategy avowed in May 2010 that operations similar to those in Afghanistan would belong to the core business of the Alliance in the future:

"In light of the complex and unpredictable security climate likely to prevail through the coming decade, it is not possible to rule out NATO's future participation in similar (although hopefully less extended) stabilisation missions."[17] The reformulation of the NATO strategy, which was released shortly afterwards, sounded quite similar demanding once again to "improve" the capabilities of the Alliance to accomplish operations like these "successfully": "we will […] further develop doctrine and military capabilities for expeditionary operations, including counterinsurgency, stabilization and reconstruction operations."[18] In the NATO Centers of Excellence they work hard to generate the knowhow deemed necessary for this purpose (see the article by Christopher Schwitanski).

At the same time, due to the risks outlined above, skepticism over interventions utilizing a large number of Western troops considerably increased over time. Because they didn't want to back away from their aspirations for military intervention, a feverish search for alternative military options that didn't involve massive numbers of ground forces began in the Western capitals. Thus, ever since 2011 they increasingly rely on the training and armament of local forces, while operating with smaller numbers of special forces units. The Western aerial bombing campaigns continued apace as they are considered to be relatively free of risk.[19] The increased use of armed drones has similarly become an important weapon in this "low-risk" doctrine (see the article by Marius Pletsch).

Probably the most vital prototype for this new form of intervention was the war against Libya, started by an ad hoc coalition on 19 March 2011. On 31 March 2011, the entire conduct of war was given to the "Operation Unified Protector" (OUP) and thereby to NATO. This operation displayed several unique features: First, It was not led by the US, but by France and Great Britain. Second, with its non-involvement, Berlin stood not only against Washington and London, but also against Paris for the first time. This initiated a downright propaganda offensive in Germany claiming that a faux pas like this should never happen again. The war also relied solely on air strikes except for the deployment of special forces. Finally, in contrast to the NATO missions in Kosovo and in Afghanistan, it didn't turn into a military occupation on the ground after its completion on 30 October 2011, after Libya's ruler, Muammar al-Gaddafi, was murdered. In Libya, NATO had substantiated its readi-

ness for further military interventions. According to former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen one of the most important lessons of this intervention was that "those who claimed that Afghanistan was to be NATO's last out-of-area mission" had been disabused.[20] Although the operation resulted in civil war, chaos and destruction within Libya itself, and even destabilized the entire region, especially Mali[21], some regard it as a role model for future – for the West – "inexpensive" military interventions by NATO (see the article by Jürgen Wagner).

In response to the political violence and civil war in Syria, influential politicians on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean have long-since pushed for direct military intervention. At the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016 the heads of state and government finally gave the go-ahead for NATO's AWACS-airplanes equipped with radar and communication technology to control the airspace above Syria (and Iraq) and, thus, to join the fight against the so-called "Islamic State group" (see the article by Christoph Marischka). With the new US president Donald Trump, who took office on 20 January 2017, NATO's efforts to be militarily active in the region will likely grow even further: "In terms of his priorities, Trump has stressed repeatedly that fighting jihadist groups, especially Daesh, is his security policy priority."[22]

NATO 3.0b: NATO at a new Cold War against Russia

Yet at another front massive trouble started to loom again in the course of the 2000s: In the middle of the decade, the longstanding anti-Russian NATO-policy resulted in a complete change of sentiments towards the West, which had been friendly minded in the beginning. NATOs pretense of trust based on partnership toward Russia after the end of the Cold War was revealed to be nothing more than a strategy to impede the reemergence of state power from Russia at any cost. NATO's expansion into former Soviet territory was predestined to serve as the main tool to produce this result.

The violation of promises given to former Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev in return for ending the Cold War and for the NATO membership of a reunified Germany, has been the object of heated debates until today. This controversy, which has often been maintained by means of very quirky arguments[23], is driven by the fact that these verbal promises were given and that Gorbachev obviously assumed their validity.

Gorbachev clearly viewed NATO's eastern expansion as a violation of these pledges: "The decision for the US and its allies to expand Nato into the east was decisively made in 1993. I called this a big mistake from the very beginning. It was definitely a violation of the spirit of the statements and assurances made to us in 1990."[24] The demand to expand NATO in the direction of the former Eastern bloc was fed into the debate as early as 1993 by former German Secretary of Defence Volker Rühe. One year later, the "Partnership for Peace"

Vladimir Putins speech at the Munich Security Conference 2007. (Source: Antje Wildgrube)

programme was issued. It was especially aimed at the gradual introduction of the former Warsaw Pact countries into the Alliance. Consequently, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were formally invited to join NATO in 1997, and were admitted on 12 March 1999. This occurred at the same time NATO started its war of aggression against Yugoslavia, which represented, as has already been mentioned, a drastic violation of international law since the war was conducted without a mandate by the UN Security Council and, thus, bypassing the Russian right of veto. Subsequently, NATO pushed further: In November 2002 it was decided to incorporate seven more states into the Alliance, even including states that formerly comprised the Soviet Union. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became members of the Alliance, even though Moscow had always called this a "red line" not to be crossed.[25]

For a long time Moscow has been anxiously observing NATO's plans for missile defense. These plans were reasonably interpreted by Moscow as a specific attempt to neutralize Russia's second-strike capability.[26] In 2003, the so-called "color revolutions" started. Pro-Russian rulers were replaced by pro-Western rulers in nations directly at Moscow's doorstep. This included especially those coup d'états that were in part substantially supported by the West in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kirgizia (2005). Taken together, these measures

formed a critical mass that resulted in a fundamental Russian policy shift. Russia perceived these measures as hostile and determined to use its own means to oppose NATO's policy of expansion.

Western observers first became aware of this shift in Russia's attitude when Vladimir Putin aggressively spoke out against these expansions at the 2007 Munich Security Conference. The resulting conflict reached its first climax in the summer of 2008, when Russia answered the Georgian war of aggression against South Ossetia with a severe military counterattack. Moscow unambiguously signalized its readiness to shoot the bolt against further Western expansions by the use of force if necessary. Western reactions to Russia's use of military force in Georgia were particularly strident. As a result, already at that time

there was talk of a "New Cold War" brewing up between Russia and the West.[27]

Generally, it was argued that a confrontation of blocs between "democracies" (U.S. and EU) and "autocracies" (China and Russia) was in the making and that the West had to brace itself against it. In the US, it was the influential political scientist Robert Kagan who summed up this argument in his book "The Return Of History And The End Of Dreams", published in 2008: "The old competition between liberalism and autocracy has also reemerged, with the world's great powers lining up according to the nature of their regimes. [...] History has returned, and the democracies must come together to shape it, or others will shape it for them."[28]

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean numerous representatives of the political establishment internalized this position as well. Thus, Nikolaus Busse, correspondent of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in Brussels, stated in 2009: "We will experience fierce competition and severe conflicts of interest among the rising great powers in an increasing number of spheres. This requires a determined global presence of the West, and that means not only of the US. [...] They will be less and less able, though, to bear the burden on their own. [...] Europe won't be able to subsist as one big peace movement in a world full of rough geopolitical rivalries, but has to develop its own ambitious diplomacy and self-confident appearance. This problem cannot be solved by creating more positions and structures in Brussels, but instead the elites in the large member states need to develop more readiness to jointly face up to tough issues of power politics."[29]

To be able to present solutions to the crisis which culminated in 2008 and simultaneously getting prepared for any possible further escalation, Russia moved ahead with a two-pronged approach. As an option for cooperative de-escalation, the Russian president at the time, Dmitry Medvedev, announced in June 2008 that he was seeking to create a "Euro-Atlantic Security Agreement". Although first elements of its content were leaked shortly afterwards, the draft treaty was published in detail only at the end of November 2009. The intended contracting parties were supposed to come from all countries "from Vancouver to Vladivostok" (i.e. including the US and Canada) as well as the respective international structures (NATO, OSCE, CIS ...). The core of the treaty is "indivisible security", meaning that no contracting party may undertake any actions that have a negative effect on any other's security.[30] Thus, the treaty would have given Russia a full voice in European security matters, including military interventions. Not surprisingly, there was no positive response
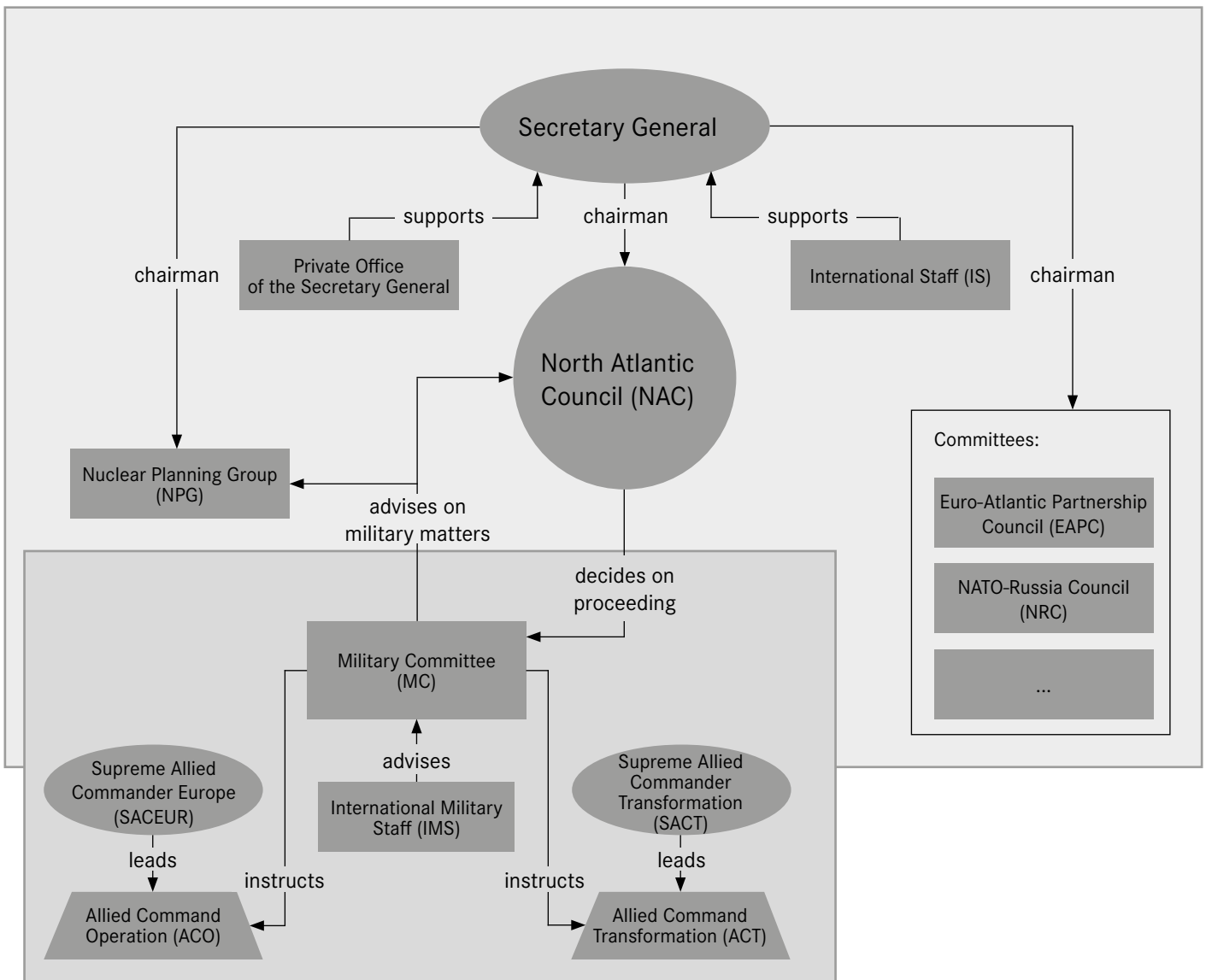
from NATO.[31] Consequently, Moscow expedited the formation of a counter-bloc, with Vladimir Putin announcing in July 2009 that Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan were creating a customs union. On 29 May 2014, Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus signed an agreement by which the new "Eurasian Economic Union" turned into being on 1 January 2015 with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan joining shortly thereafter, while Armenia, Uzbekistan and Mongolia were named as further candidates.

The relations between Russia and the West ultimately escalated over the Ukrainian crisis, which commenced when former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych in November 2013 refused to firmly integrate the country into the Western sphere of influence by signing an association agreement with the EU. This decision gave rise to protests, which were massively supported by the West, culminating in a violent revolt which resulted in Yanukovych fleeing from the country in February 2014.[32] Russia reacted to these developments in this geostrategically important country with the integration of Crimea which was a violation of international law and with the support of separatist forces in Eastern Ukraine. NATO responded by offensively arming its Eastern flank. The most significant framework for this purpose was the "Readiness Action Plan" adopted at the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014. It allows for the formation of a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) totaling about 5.000 troops, with Germany playing a pivotal role by its own account.[33] NATO also massively extended its activity in military exercises with a virtually permanent deployment of forces on the Eastern flank, a move that actually represents a violation of the NATO-Russia-record: "US ready to fight and defeat Russia in Europe", emphasized General Breedlove, then Supreme Commander of the strategic NATO command in Europe (see the article by Nathalie Schüler).[34] NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who took over from Denmark's Fogh Rasmussen in October 2015, expressed himself satisfied with the achievements at the Munich Security Conference early in 2016: "NATO is undertaking the biggest strengthening of our collective defence in decades. To send a powerful signal to deter any aggression or intimidation. Not to wage war, but to prevent war. [...] We agreed to enhance our forward presence in the eastern part of the alliance."[35] At the same place Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev pointed out afterwards that rela-

tions between Russia and NATO had hit rock bottom: "The proposed European security treaty has been put on hold. [...] We believe that NATO's policy towards Russia remains unfriendly and generally obdurate. Speaking bluntly, we are rapidly rolling into a period of a new cold war. Russia has been presented as well-nigh the biggest threat to NATO, or to Europe, America and other countries (and Mr Stoltenberg has just demonstrated that). They show frightening films about Russians starting a nuclear war. I am sometimes confused: is this 2016 or 1962?"[36]

NATO 3.0c: A catalogue of armaments for the 360°-NATO

Another important step forward on the way towards a further militarization of NATO's policies was the publication of a study in March 2016 funded by the „German Marshall Fund" and produced by numerous top-class NATO strategists. It provided a view into the crystal ball, on how NATO 3.0 is planning to proceed in the future. Among the participants were illustrious figures such as Karl-Heinz Kamp, president of the German Federal Academy for Security Policy BAKS ("Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik"), Pierre Vimont, Secretary General of the European External Action Service, and Kurt Volker, former US ambassador to NATO.[37] In March 2016, they presented a catalogue of measures, very obviously inspired by the idea of the 360°-NATO: "[A]lliance leaders are only now beginning to focus in earnest on the question of strategy toward the south. Mediterranean security – long part of the NATO calculus but rarely at the forefront – has become a pressing concern in light of risks emanating from North Africa and the Levant. [...] NATO needs to look south without weakening its commitment to deterrence and defense in the east and north, where Russian risks remain at the center of the strategic calculus." (p. 5)

As far as the eastern flank was concerned, their vision welcomed the existing measures of arms build-up, such as the formation of a "Very High Readiness Joint Task Force" or the massive extension of maneuvers, but that was nowhere near enough: "[T]he alliance cannot rely solely on extended deterrence and small mobile forces, like the [...] VJTF [...]. NATO must now shift its strategy toward an increased forward presence that would be in place before a conflict starts, and thus serve as a deterring and stabilizing force. [...] These forces would have to be combat-ready [...]. The size of a brigade force, one in the Baltics and one in Poland

would be a start" (p. 10). Two brigades, up to 10.000 troops, were not enough for former NATO Secretary General Wesley Clark, who, alongside other high-ranking NATO military officers shortly thereafter demanded the deployment of three brigades.[38] NATO's final deployment didn't reach these numbers, but it is sad enough that the NATO heads of state and government ultimately agreed on the permanent deployment of four battalions (roughly 4.000 troops) at the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016. One battalion of this enhanced forward presence is to be domiciled in Estonia (under command of Great Britain), another in Latvia (Canada), and a third in Poland (USA).

The build-up of the fourth battalion is under the control of Germany, which furnishes further evidence for how serious the Federal Government is with its statements of willingness to shoulder more military "responsibility". Right before the Warsaw NATO summit Chancellor Angela Merkel issued a government statement which included a passionate commitment to the whole range of NATO's aggressive policies – and to Germany's intent to play a leading role. The chancellor also embraced the "360°-approach": "In the East, Russia's actions in the Ukraine crisis have profoundly unsettled our eastern allies. [...] However, we have also witnessed a dramatic deterioration in the security situation to the south of the NATO area. [...] [The Readiness Action Plan] will make the Alliance faster, readier and more operational as regards meeting challenges of all kinds and in all directions, thus providing a 360-degree approach."[39]

One of the core assumptions of the 360-degree approach is that NATO predicts severe imminent conflicts with Russia. As the authors of the Marshall Fund report point out, these conflicts are not geographically restricted to the eastern flank, conflicts were also increasing in the far north (keyword Arctic) and in cyberspace, where NATO is becoming more active, too. Furthermore, Russian propaganda had to be answered by intensified "strategic communication" – i.e. propaganda. The report also puts special emphasis on the revitalization of the role of nuclear weapons, which was imperative considering the deteriorated relations with Russia (see the articles by Thomas Gruber, Christopher Schwitanski and Jürgen Wagner).

The report continues stating that the southern flank should not to be neglected either: "Russia is likely to consolidate its return as

a Mediterranean security actor, in Syria and in less visible but still meaningful ways in Egypt and Algeria. One consequence of this will be the spread of NATO-Russia military risks southward to the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean." (p. 16) Given this, and the rising conflicts in that region in general, NATO had to "[d]evelop a more robust role in the South." (p. 2) This went along with the idea that "VJTF and enhanced standing naval forces [...] can be employed

Source: Flickr/Juska Wendland

in the south, as required." (p. 12) Programs for "defense capacity building", especially in reference to the Arab states, were to be extended: "Cooperative frameworks in the south can also be useful for mobilizing regional contributions to potential NATO operations in the Middle East and North Africa" (p. 17). In light of such considerations the heads of state and government in the Western military alliance resolved at the Warsaw summit in July 2016 to start a new NATO training mission in Libya, depending on the approval of Libya's new unity government. Moreover, they approved a request by the Iraqi government in May 2016 to start a NATO training mission in Iraq.

Money for Nothing

Although the new US President Donald Trump repeatedly signaled a willingness to improve the relationship with Russia, it is far from clear whether this will happen. For example the analysts from the private intelligence agency Strategic Forecast do not expect a dramatic change of course in Washington Russia policy: „No matter who is in the White House, Washington's imperative to contain regional hegemons will continue to be a mainstay of its foreign policy. With Europe becoming increasingly divided since the Brexit referendum, Russia has another chance to recover from its strategic setbacks and regain influence in the Eurasian region in the coming year. [...] Ties between Washington and Moscow will

certainly evolve under Trump. Some tactical shifts, possibly including adjustments in U.S. sanctions and measured cooperation in Syria, will doubtless take place. Washington's policy of containment, however, is still very much in force, and it will continue to feature heavily in U.S. strategy well beyond the Trump administration."[40]

Where Trump has sent very consistent messages is in the area if military spending. Not only has he announced to hugely increase America's military budget. He is also exerting much pressure on the European allies to pay their "fair share" – i.e. to also increase their military spending dramatically. As Trump threatened that failing to do so could put America's commitment to NATO into question, the EU side has signalled its willingness to fulfill this demand – and at the same time, they are trying to take advantage of the opportunity to "improve" Europe's role as a global power: "In the months and years ahead, actually I can say in the hours we are living, there is and

will be an increasing demand of Europe from our neighbours and from our partners worldwide," the EU's High Representative Federica Mogherini said shortly after Trump won the election. "There is and there will be an increasing demand for a principled global security provider, for a superpower that believes in multilateralism and cooperation."[41]

Regardless of which way we look at it, although budgets are already soaring for some time, military spending is likely to increase even further. As the NATO's military budgets rose from $892 billion in 2015 to $918 in 2016[42] the declaration of the Warsaw summit in June 2016 cheered: "we have turned a corner".[43] Against this background it is particularly shocking how this money could have been made use of in a more reasonable way. The "Committee on Disarmament, Peace & Security" (CDPS), a nongovernment organization engaged in peace policies, compared the spending on armament with the estimated costs that would have been necessary to reach the Millennium Development Goals that aimed among others to fight extreme poverty (MDG) until 2015. While the security goals were light-years away from being accomplished, according to CDPS extreme poverty and hunger could have been eradicated with a yearly investment of $39 up to $54 billion. The achievement of universal primary education and the promotion of gender equality would have required another $10-30 billion. To reduce child mortality by two-thirds and to improve maternal health, in addition to combat HIV/Aids, Malaria and other diseases, $20-25 would have been necessary. Finally, ensuring environmental sustainability would have required $5-21 billion. In other words, $74–140 billion would have been necessary to implement ALL of the Millennium Development Goals – not even 10-20 percent of what NATO member states put into militarized security in 2015![44]

The consequences of all these measures are perfectly obvious, an increasing number of conflicts from which the West reckons it has to "protect" itself or even put up a "barrier" against. These are the words chosen by the in-house think tank of the European Union, the "Institute for Security Studies" in Paris, which published the report "What ambitions for European defence in 2020?" Thus, we see a programmatic article about the most vital tasks of Western foreign and military policy in the future anticipating the use of frightening measures to fight migration: "Barrier operations – shielding the global rich from the tensions and problems of

the poor. As the ratio of the world population living in misery and frustration will remain massive, the tensions and spillover between their world and that of the rich will continue to grow. As we are unlikely to have solved this problem at its root by 2020 – i.e. by curing dysfunctional societies – we will need to strengthen our barriers. It is a morally distasteful, losing strategy, but will be unavoidable if we cannot solve the problems at their root. [...] Today our security is increasingly dependent upon global transnational functional flows. Protecting these flows and their critical nodes will be the main security concern of the globalisation stakeholders (TNC, PMC and RTS) by 2020, for the very practical reason that if these flows fail then everything else will collapse. Challenges include friction (piracy, crime, corruption), shocks (regional instability, terrorist strikes against critical flows or nodes, operations by alienated regimes, earthquakes), strangling (pandemics), corrosion (poor design or maintenance) and so forth. Protecting flows will require global military policing capabilities (protecting sea lanes and critical nodes, etc.) and some power projection (preventing choke operations, managing regional instability)."[45]

A current example of these operations is the NATO operation in the Aegean adopted in late February 2016. As the report by the Marshall Fund emphasizes, this mission, as well as the NATO Operation "Active Endeavour", is supposed to help prevent illegalized migration. "[A] stronger capacity for warning, surveillance, and response" is deemed to be necessary to that end among other things as well (p. 12). The close interlocking of NATO and EU operations to fight migrants, adopted at the Warsaw summit meeting in July 2016, is also related to this context: "To support the EU Operation Sophia at the Libyan coast, the spectrum of tasks possible for the current mission in the Mediterranean was distinctly extended. NATO warships are supposed to get involved in the fight against human trafficking. Hence, the operation in the Mediterranean is called 'Sea Guardian'. It follows the Operation 'Active Endeavour', which was launched after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. The mandate for 'Active Endeavour' so far only permitted the surveillance of civil seafaring in the Mediterranean."[46]

If we ask ourselves why NATO is pursuing these militaristic policies with such a commitment, we can look at the Marshall Fund report mentioned above, which is not shy

to give an answer. The Alliance is enforcing the essential interests of its member states and this, essentially, was NATO's purpose, from its very beginning – to make sure that the structures of hierarchic order and exploitation of the prevailing world order are maintained in the long run: "The true relevance of the Alliance is based on its ability to unite liberal democracies in a volatile world and to assure the stability and well-being of the North Atlantic area" (p. 7).

In seeking to implement this objective, NATO leaves behind a trail of chaos, conflicts and destruction – whether in Afghanistan, in Libya or in reference to Russia. NATO is one of the biggest factors of insecurity in the world and has to be dissolved – immediately! Therefore, it is a sight for sore eyes that the protests against NATO have gained pace again in recent years. Hopefully, this is a foundation to build upon in the future (see the articles by Jacqueline Andres and Thomas Mickan)!

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Occupied, looted, divided: NATO in Kosovo

by Jürgen Wagner

The war of aggression against Yugoslavia, started by NATO in March 1999, was seminal in several ways: First, it marked the conversion of the military organization into a global alliance for intervention by means of cheeky lies about the cause for the war as well as a blatant violation of international law. Second, the ensuing neoliberal rebuilding of Kosovo, undertaken within the context of the occupation, became a model for subsequent operations, such as Afghanistan, where the occupied area was openly transformed into a Western colony. Next, a new doctrine emerged recognizing state secession when Kosovo was allowed to fully separate from the independent state of Serbia. Finally, a very special cooperative strategy was developed where civilian forces (EU) worked with military forces (NATO) to subdue political protest, even if this was the result of miserable living conditions.

1. An interest-driven war of aggression

The accusation that Serbian-led Yugoslavian troops were committing genocide in Kosovo against the Kosovar Albanians was invoked as an official justification for the war. However, allegations of a massacre at Racak or Operation Horseshoe were subsequently revealed to be nothing more than cheeky war propaganda disseminated by Germany and other actors. This is particularly ironic given this announcement of the day, issued by the Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) Intelligence Office only two days before the onset of the aerial campaign: "Tendencies towards ethnic cleansings are still not perceptible."[1]

An argument can be made that NATO wanted to wage this war at any price. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was deliberately armed by the Federal Intelligence Service BND and later by the CIA. According to Heinz Loquai, German liaison officer with the OSCE in Vienna at the time, the task of the OSCE mission in Kosovo – the surveillance of a truce negotiated in 1998 – was intentionally undermined. Similarly, the collapse of the Rambouillet peace talks in early 1999 was a direct result of a disingenuous move by NATO negotiators. At the last moment, in a move that anyone would find unacceptable, NATO negotiators added an appendix to the treaty (Annex B) that the Serbians viewed as a serious threat to their nation's sovereignty. Since the NATO intervention was not supported by a vote of the UN Security Council, it represented a drastic violation of international law and confirmed that international law would not deter the Alliance. After putting together a commission on that matter, NATO subsequently tried to whitewash its conduct by using the formula "illegal but legitimate"[2].

The determination of NATO to employ aggressive tactics indicates that the operation was actually about protecting relevant interests. The Kosovo operation created a test case to sensationally finish the process of transforming NATO from an alliance oriented towards national defense into an alliance for intervention outside the territory of the Alliance. The Alliance sent a clear signal that NATO was not willing any more to allow the veto power of Russia and China in the UN Security Council to prevent the Alliance from using military force to back its interests. Klaus Naumann, chairman of the NATO Military Committee (1996 – 1999), wrote shortly after the end of the operation: "[During the Kosovo war] we showed them that they had no chance to interfere with NATO's interventions by a Russian veto. And I hope that Moscow has understood this."[3]

NATO's Kosovo operation substantially extended NATO's sphere of influence, and by extension that of the US as well. Heinz Brill, a former lecturer at the University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg, for instance, argued: "Against this background, the US interest in NATO's strategic repositioning on the Eurasian continent and its periphery, which has been identified as a key motive of the Kosovo War by many observers, emerges in its full moment. If the political influence and the military power of the US – as Brzezinski argues – was only 'immediately' entrenched on the Eurasian continent by mean of the NATO, the logical conclusion can be inferred that an extension of NATO's European scope, facilitated by the elimination of the Yugoslavian bolt, would inevitably also expand the direct sphere of influence of the US."[4] Willy Wimmer, State Secretary in the German Ministry of Defense until 1992, also revealed that similar motives were voiced by American NATO representatives at a conference in Bratislava in April 2000: "The war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was conducted to revise a false decision made by General Eisenhower in World War II [which put Yugoslavia outside the Western sphere of influence]. Due to strategic reasons the decision to deploy American soldiers in the region had to be rectified. [...] The goal of the recently pending NATO expansion is to restore the geographical situation between the Baltic Sea and Anatolia, as it had been at the time of the height of Roman expansion."[5]

There is also evidence that the NATO intervention in Kosovo was supposed to further expand the neoliberal global economic system through what amounted to a colonial occupation. Strobe Talbott, US Deputy Secretary of State at the time, admitted this interest quite frankly: "As nations throughout the region sought to reform their economies, mitigate ethnic tensions, and broaden civil society, Belgrade seemed to delight in continually moving in the opposite direction. It is small wonder NATO and Yugoslavia ended up on a collision course. It was Yugoslavia's resistance to the broader trends of political and economic reform – not the plight of the Kosovar Albanians – that best explains NATO's war."[6]

These justifications supported NATO's willingness to cause wartime destructions in Yugoslavia to total DM 26 billion according to estimates from a Federal Armed Forces report.[7] Moreover, the Serbian province of Kosovo was occupied at times by more than 50.000 KFOR troops. NATO's military intervention factually transformed Kosovo into a Western protectorate after the ceasefire of June 10th, 1999.

2. Neoliberal NATO colony

„Protectorates are in," Carlo Masala of the NATO Defence College (NADEFCOL) in Rome explains. "From Bosnia via Kosovo, to Afghanistan all the way to Iraq, the pattern of Western intervention policy is always the same. After successful military intervention, the 'conquered' regions are transformed into protectorates, and the Western states attempt to introduce liberal political systems, rule of law and free market economy to these areas."[8]

In Kosovo, NATO safeguarded the activity of the UNMIK mission of the United Nations, which acted as an occupation authority in the country. In the absence of a state authority, UNMIK became the ultimate authority in Kosovo by accumulating executive, legislative and judiciary powers. Economic historian Hannes Hofbauer confirmed the scope of this outcome: "The UN mission is a unique case in this form: there has not been a case of external and internationally constituted administration of a territory like this before in recent history."[9]

UNMIK-Headquarters in Pristina. (Source: UN Photo/Ferdi Limani)

By means of binding regulations, which factually represented legislative acts, the whole range of responsibilities of the occupation authority was specified in more detail. UNMIK allowed itself the "right" to annul any law and to remove any elected official, for example. Additionally, it saw itself entitled (or rather appropriated itself) to conclude international agreements in the name of Kosovo and to open embassy-like subsidiaries. Finally, Western actors were not subject to Kosovan (much less Serbian) jurisprudence. Gradually, the UN took over all relevant functions and virtually exerted full sovereignty over Kosovo – and it knew how to make use of these powers by completely turning the province upside down with neoliberal policies.

Soon after the occupation began, NATO's interests became obvious when Serbia was formally disowned: "With its first enactment after the entering of KFOR and UNMIK on July 25th, 1999, Bernard Kouchner, High Representative of the UN Mission, seized all movable and immovable titles of ownership belonging to the Federal Republic of Yugoslovia, which were located in Kosovo. Among these were facilities of telecommunications, infrastructure, the energy sector, banks, production centers, real estate, transport fleets, and much more."[10] After the Deutschmark was introduced as an official currency on September 2nd, 1999, the newly drafted "Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government" unambiguously dictated the implementation of free market economic policies in early 2001 and put the UN "High Representative" in charge of monetary and economic policy. The fact that the constitution was plainly imposed on the population without

the consent of the government by means of a UNMIK regulation (2001/9) revealed the power relations in the province at that time.

The European Union was responsible for the domain of "rebuilding and economic development" within UNMIK. Under its aegis, Kosovo was transformed into some sort of a neoliberal showcase project. The "Kosovo Trust Agency" was assigned by decree (regulation 2001/3) to privatize the formerly state-owned enterprises and cooperatives. The businesses were sold to foreign investors – oftentimes far below value and against the protests of the workers – in numerous "privatization waves": "50 percent of the public and collective corporations were sold to private bidders in 52 auctions so far. Especially the valuable ones went under the hammer; those companies where were sold amounted to 90 percent of the value of all public corporations."[11] According to estimates from labor unions, 75.000 workers lost their jobs due to the privatization of their labor.[12]

Moreover, customs and quantitative restrictions for the import of Western products were done away with almost completely. The World Bank takes stock: "Kosovo has one of the most liberal trade regimes in the world with two customs tariffs, one of 0% and one of 10%, as well as without any quantitative restrictions." The consequence was as foreseeable as it was intended: "Masses of cheap imports congest the Kosovan market." Since the domestic companies (if they actually still existed) could not cope with foreign competition, Kosovan industries were unable to compete: "Almost nothing is produced, the industry's share in the gross domestic

product dropped from 47 to 17 % between 1989 and 2006, according to the Kosovan economic-research institute 'Riinvest'."[13]

A blatant trade deficit is the result, amounting to more than Euro 2,3 billion in 2015.[14] At the same time, the International Monetary Fund put a debt limit on the Kosovan budget while tax revenues were negligible due to a low tax rate and difficulty collecting customs. The result was that the state had few financial resources available to improve the social situation of the population (even if this was desired). These policies and their consequences explain the disheartening numbers reported by the UN development organization: 29.7 % of the Kosovan population live below the poverty line, the unemployment rate is 35.1 % overall and even 60.2 % among 15 – 24-year-olds.[15] The relationship between neoliberal "reforms" and abject poverty is as obvious as it is predictable: "Kosovo is considered to be the most economic-liberal place in Europe and the poorhouse of the continent at the same time."[16]

3. A strategy of secession: divide and rule

The period of most direct form of foreign domination lasted until June 2008, when the Kosovan "parliament" adopted a permanent constitution. That February the Kosovan delegates resolved a declaration by which the province dissociated itself from Serbia, the legal successor of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and declared its independency. This happened at the behest of the NATO member states which were most involved in military and political issues, even though this was a blatant violation of article 2, paragraph 4 of the UN Charter: "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations." More than that: UN Security Council Resolution 1244, adopted in June 1999 after the end of NATO's war of aggression, makes reference to this principle: "Reaffirming the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other States of the region, as set out in the Helsinki Final Act and annex 2". NATO member states set the course for secession quite early, but without the province actually becoming sovereign. The Ahtisaari Plan, named after the UN top diplomat, ensured the secession and provided for

"independence under international supervision". In effect, the Plan placed control over the province in the hands of the European Union and gave the EU Special Representative almost limitless authority to exert power: "The highest colonial administrator has full power to elect the staff. He appoints the President of the Court of Auditors, the director of the national pension fund, the international judges and attorneys, the State Director of Customs, the head of the Revenue Authorities, the director of the reserve bank [...] and many more."[17]

The Ahtisaari Plan is referred to in the Kosovan constitution no less than eight times. Chapter XIII of the Kosovan constitution explicitly specifies: "The provisions of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement dated 26 March 2007 shall take precedence over all other legal provisions in Kosovo." Hannes Hofbauer remarks: "In comprehensible words: The Ahtisaari Plan [...] outranks the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo." The Kosovan side still had no say in economic matters, above all: The implementation of "market economy" was dictated without any alternative again (chapter I / article 7), the process of privatization was continued, and no influence could be exerted on the budget: "Thus, in its own constitution the former Serbian province [...] authorized the surveillance of its budgetary policy by the EU Commissioner and the IMF. More foreign domination is not possible."[18]

A number of protagonists of the NATO war of aggression against Yugoslavia recognized Kosovo as a sovereign state following its declaration of "independency", while many members of the UN General Assembly absolutely declined doing so. The General Assembly, at member state Serbia's request, even presented the following legal question to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for comment: "Is the unilateral declaration of independence by the Provisional Institution of Self-Government of Kosovo in accordance with international law?" (Resolution 63/3) The verdict was announced on July 22nd, 2010, and mainstream media and politicians declared that allowing the secession was correct because the ICJ concluded by ten votes to four that "the adoption of the declaration of independence of 17 February 2008 did not violate general international law, Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) or the Constitutional Framework."[19]

Thus, the mainstream media reported that the war of aggression and the divestiture of Yugoslavia were legally justified and the

ICJ had made a plain decision: "Clear the way for Kosovo!" (Die Presse); "Kosovo is independent" (Frankfurter Rundschau); "Secession in conformity with international law" (Baseler Zeitung); "Kosovo's independence was legal" (Business Week); "Independency of Kosovo affirmed" (Die Welt); "Den Haag calls independency of Kosovo legally justified" (Die Zeit). The whole matter, however, was flawed because the Court of Justice had obfuscated the key question, despite being aware of its assessment being used by the West to whitewash its policy of divestiture and recognition. "What hasn't been resolved:

German soldiers at a EU-NATO counter insurgency exercise in March 2016.
(Source: Bundeswehr/Sebastian Wilke)

Has Kosovo become an independent state? [...] But this is where the essential problems of the case are located. The international law protects the territorial integrity of states and only allows for the right of secession on very exceptional conditions. [...] The ICJ doesn't elaborate on this."[20]

Even though the ICJ essentially ducked the entire issue, the court's decision was held up as legal protection for the Western strategy of secession. Although the court noted that secession should occur only as a unique exception, the secession of South Sudan, which was also massively encouraged by the West, followed shortly afterwards on July 9th, 2011. However, when it suits the West's interests, the right of self-determination is once again subjugated to the principle of territorial integrity. In the Moldovan province of Transnistria, for example, plebiscites continuously demon-

strate that more than 90 % of the population favor secession and political rapprochement towards Russia, but the West keeps insisting on the unity of the country.

Eventually, "independence under international supervision" ended on September 10th, 2012. However, KFOR troops are still in the country (4559, effective of June 2016). The EU is also still present in force in the form of the EULEX Mission, started in 2008, which currently involves 1400 officials (jurists, customs officers and police). Thereby Kosovo's sovereignty is noticeably constrained. But it's the "Stabilisation and Association Agreement" (SAA), which was signed in October 2015 and came into effect in April 2016, which is responsible for the fact that large parts of Kosovo's sovereignty are ultimately transferred to the EU.[21] The 597-page document contains the obligation to establish a free trade area within 10 years (article 23) and to abolish almost all customs duties and other measures of protection for the domestic economy (article 23). First and foremost, Kosovo has to transfer the whole EU body of law (acquis communautaire), about 80.000 pages overall, onto its national legislation, without obtaining only the slightest authority on the elaboration of the acquis (article 74).

The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber concisely summarizes the total package put together by the West as follows: "The SAA will be the first comprehensive contractual agreement between Kosovo and the EU.

The SAA with Kosovo has the same structure and content as the agreements with the remaining countries of the Western Balkans (deregulation of trade with goods and services as well as capital transactions and the establishing of political dialogue, adaption of EU law regarding competition, public procurement, intellectual property rights, consumer protection, etc.) and contains all elements of a complete political and economic cooperation between Kosovo and the EU (social issues, education, culture, environmental issues, etc.)."[22]

4. NATO-EU: fighting hand in hand against insurrection

It's easy to comprehend why the Serbian minority group, who mostly live in Mitrovica, is anything but excited about present developments. Ironically, the Kosovo Albanian majority is also discontented in large parts, and for easily comprehendible reasons. In July 2004 75 % of the Kosovo Albanians directly blamed occupation authorities for the miserable economic situation. The organization Vetevendosje criticized corrupt local elites but also the Western colonial administration and its economic-liberal orientation.[23]

As protests over local conditions increased, NATO (KFOR) and EU (EULEX) reacted in 2009 by starting a long list of joint crowd and riot control exercises to "improve" their abilities to quell demonstrations. The EU provides the police forces, which have an executive mandate in Kosovo allowing them to make arrests, while NATO provided regular military forces in case the EU police forces were not able to handle the situation. The description of the mission of one of those exercises from 2009 indicates the socio-political background of the whole issue: "The exercise's scenario was based on real facts. The European Union parliament made the decision to redirect the donation of money to Kosovo from building two hospitals, as it was announced in an early spring press release, to establishing a trash recycling centre in Kosovo. The following day, after the announcement Kosovo television and radio stations reported upset and disappointed local civilians. In response to the news, the hospital workers association (HWA) called for demonstrations and actions to be taken against EU, EULEX […]. As a result, the exercise's participants were taught valuable lessons on being readily prepared in case they are faced with a furious mob, the ability to anticipate what the crowd may do and finally, practice

their crowd riot control techniques."[24] Statements by colonel Hans-Jürgen Freiherr von Keyserlingk, commander of the 43. German operational contingent KFOR, show how openly NATO and Federal Armed Forces prepared to conceal economic and socio-political failure by military means. The colonel was cited on the German army's internet page about one of these crowd and riot control exercises in March 2016: "Colonel Freiherr von Keyserlingk insistently justifies the necessity of exercises like this: 'After many calmer years, the political instability of Kosovo has increased again in the past months.' Large parts of the young people were without work and hope, whereas leaving the country legally is factually impossible. Peaceful demonstrations of the opposition repeatedly got out of control in the past weeks and months. 'The probability of an escalation has increased perceptibly,' as the colonel said. Lieutenant-general Jacobson is in complete agreement with the colonel and sums up at the end of his visit: 'At any time, KFOR is capable to react to changes in Kosovo appropriately, quick and accurately.'"[25]

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NATO in Afghanistan: A never ending story

by Anne Labinski

After the attacks of September 11th, 2001, NATO invoked Article 5 of its founding document, the North Atlantic Treaty, for the first time in its history. Shortly thereafter, an ad hoc coalition of military forces invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 because the Taliban, Afghanistan's de facto ruling party, provided shelter to Osama Bin Laden, who was blamed for the attacks. In 2003, NATO took command of the "International Security Assistance Force" (ISAF) and the operation soon became a "paramount example" for failed Western military interventions. NATO attempted to "pacify", or at least bring under control, the country with the assistance of more than 130.000 NATO troops.[1] NATO tactics included a list of "riot control techniques," applied for the first time on a large scale in Afghanistan in a kind of "field for experimentation". Germany took its place on the front line as well. Conditions in Afghanistan, however, continued to deteriorate as the desolate state of the country demonstrates. Even though the presence of Western troops is obviously a source of Afghanistan's deterioration and destabilization, and the NATO combat mission was officially declared completed in 2014, the NATO operation continues under the new label "Resolute Support."[2] Many in the Alliance are talking about the need to stay in the country for decades.[3] There is therefore little evidence to suggest that NATO's military "solution" to conflicts is going to change fundamentally, neither in Afghanistan nor anywhere else.

1. Afghanistan: A „laboratory for nation building"

The German government advisors of the „Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik" called the NATO operation in Afghanistan a „laboratory for nation building."[4] Techniques to „successfully" „stabilize" a country following a military intervention were to be tested and implemented there, building on NATO's first attempts in Kosovo, but this time to a distinctly greater extent. For this reason, some important examples of these techniques are presented in the following.

Neoliberal nation building: A number of studies came to the conclusion that "concepts for pacification", which directed neoliberal and radical market transformation of the economic systems of the occupied countries, were completely ineffectual at im-proving the well-being of the population and the stability of social institutions.[5] Nonetheless, all large NATO interventions relied on this strategy, including Afghanistan. Shortly after major combat operations ended, the "International Monetary Fund" (IMF) presented a long-prepared program of extensive neoliberal "reforms". The IMF relied on the compliance of the transitional government under Hamid Karzai, who was dependent on the support of the "international community" to maintain political power. The IMF already noted with satisfaction in 2003: "From the outset, the Afghan authorities have been strongly committed to achieving financial stability and maintaining fiscal discipline to support the reconstruction and recovery of the economy. [...] The economy would be based on liberal and open markets, led by private sector activity with low state intervention. Also, the external trade, payments [...] would be open and liberal; and private sector investment would be promoted. In their efforts to achieve all these goals, the authorities received the support of the IMF, the AsDB [Asian Development Bank] [...], the World Bank [...], and numerous bilateral donors."[6]

Legal conditions were established at an early stage, too, by the "Law on Domestic and Foreign Private Investment", as outlined by the "Bertelsmann Foundation": "In September of 2002, the Afghan government ratified the Law on Domestic and Foreign Private Investment in Afghanistan, which does not distinguish between foreign and domestic investments. This law enables 100 % foreign investments, the complete transfer of profits and capital to locations outside the country, international arbitration and streamlined licensing procedures. Foreigners who bring capital to Afghanistan are also exempted from having to pay taxes for four to eight years. To keep bureaucratic hurdles as minimal as possible, the Department of Commerce functions as a 'one-stop shop.' To protect American investors, the Overseas Private Investment Council is offering $50 million in risk insurance for American projects in Afghanistan."[7]

According to the Afghan government, tax legislation was "simplified" at the insistence of the IMF and World Bank with the introduction of a flat tax of 20 % on corporate profits.[8] In another move typical of the neoliberal devil's workshop, average customs duties on imported goods were reduced from 43 % to 5.3 %.[9] The predict-able result of implementing these measures was to expose the Afghan economy to overpowering foreign competition and Afghanistan surrendering its ability to protect its already meager domestic economy. These "reforms" failed to produce any significant increase in state revenue resulting in both budget and trade deficits.

Civil-Military Co-operation: NATO assumes that the "successful" stabilization of a crisis region cannot be accomplished by military force alone, but requires the simultaneous aid of civil actors. The term "Comprehensive Approach" (CA) refers to utilizing civil capacities and actors for the control and the transformation of societies. However the civil actors – jurists, engineers, agricultural technicians, experts at administration, well builders, police, etc. – remain under the command of the military. In practice, 27 "Provincial Reconstruction Teams" (PRT) operated in Afghanistan. These were units "composed of diplomats, police instructors, development aid workers, and soldiers."[10] To put it in exaggerated terms, these PRT were able to hand out food in one region in the morning, "pacify" the area at noon and build a school in the evening at the same spot. As a result of this close civil/military integration, the civil actors lost their neutrality from the point of view of the insurgents and became legitimate military targets as members of the occupying troops. This forced a number of civil organizations to quit their activities in Afghanistan. The umbrella organization of German developmental non-government organizations (VENRO) had vehemently opposed this integration of civil and military actors: "The concept of 'networked security' – or 'Comprehensive Approach' in the jargon of NATO – consequently means that public development assistance and aid is subordinate to military aims in the sense of 'counterinsurgency'. [...] The tendencies towards civil-military co-operation mentioned above and towards a subordination of development aid under political and military objectives result in a considerable complication of the work of aid agencies. They harm the reputation of NGOs and their credibility as independent and impartial humanitarian actors. At the extreme, this results in aid agencies being regarded as partisans of the military by parts of the population and classified as legitimate attack targets by insurgents."[11]

Train & equip, drones & special forces: To the same extent as the military resist-

ance increasingly enjoyed a large clientele, NATO intensified its actions and operated in a more "robust" way. After 2006, hostilities escalated in such a dramatic way that the number of armed clashes ("security incidents") exploded from 1755 (2005) to 19.440 (2010). The political, financial and personal costs of war were increasing rapidly, so NATO started looking for new ways to organize the operation "more effectively". One initiative that grew quickly was to transfer highly intensive combat operations onto the Afghan government forces (army and police) – the so-called "Afghanization" of the war. The Afghan forces were "trained and equipped", by NATO on a large scale. This strategy was "successful" in the sense that the number of Afghan government units (ANDSF) grew to 320.000 members. In combat operations 7.000 ANDSF personnel were killed in 2015, while, at the same time, the number of deaths among Western troops dropped to almost zero.[12] Although more recent numbers on ANDSF fatalities are not available, according to the latest Report of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction of the US Army they obviously had a rough time in 2016: "However, the ANDSF has not yet been capable of securing all of Afghanistan and has lost territory to the insurgency. As of August 28, 2016, USFOR-A reported that only 63.4% of the country's districts were under Afghan government control or influence a reduction from the 72% as of November 27, 2015."[13]

In an attempt to support the Afghan government forces while also limiting its own casualties, NATO increasingly resorted to drone strikes and special forces as the war went along. The "Bureau of Investigative Journalism" (TBIJ) called Afghanistan the "country most intensively bombarded by drones in the world".[14] According to the organization, until February 2017, between 2.472 and 3.196 people were killed in no less than 1.355 drone attacks. Similarly, the number of special forces' raids increased massively as well: In just a few years the mere number of night raids increased fivefold following the inauguration of the Obama administration in 2009. As with the drone attacks, NATO argues that it "specifically" takes action against high-ranking insurgents. According to a report by the "Afghanistan Analysts Network", these actions take a shotgun approach to eliminating targets. The study also concludes that NATO's definition of a high-ranking insurgent was "so broad as to be meaningless".[15]

Ultimately, these measures increased the resistance to Western occupation and escalated the violence. Germany played a critical military role in this doctrine, too.

2. Germany: „learned to fight"

In particular for Germany the importance of the operation in Afghanistan cannot be understated. On the one hand, because of the resulting backlash on politics and society, and on the other hand for "practical" reasons, when it comes to "learning effects" on the battlefield.

First and foremost, it was the operation in Afghanistan that was the impetus for Peter Struck (SPD), German Secretary of Defence at the time, to introduce an entirely new interpretation of article 87a of the Basic Law – "the Federal Government deploys forces for defense reasons." "Germany's security is being defended at the Hindu Kush," Struck and others argued at the time, thus giving the Federal Government a justification for military combat operations. Germany became the third highest provider of troops in the NATO war with, at times, considerably more than 5.000 soldiers. The logical ending of this development was the following statement in the 2006 White Paper of the Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr): "The Bundeswehr is an expeditionary force."

One result was a new discourse intended to get the population in the mood for perceiving the killing by, and the killing of, German soldiers as a commonplace. The title-page of the SPIEGEL from 2006 (No. 47) is a seminal example: "Germans have to learn to kill." The use of the words „war" and German „soldiers killed in action", for whom their own "memorial" should be created, slipped easily into the public discourse. Starting in 2009, a "medal of honour" was once again awarded. German colonel Georg Klein, the person responsible for 142 people killed by an air raid on fuel trucks near Kunduz in September 2009, was not arraigned for a crime, but instead promoted to the position of a brigadier-general in April 2013. The public discourse in Germany on state military matters has fundamentally changed: Where once the discussion of the necessity of military operations for the purpose of profane enforcement of German interests held a bashful and marginal tone, today they are announced with the vivacity of a town crier. The politicians responsible for defense policy within the CDU wrote in a position paper in April 2016: "The Federal Armed Forces have to be able to position

themselves in geostrategically important regions in the world, even if they are far away, in a more consolidated manner in the future, for example in order to ensure the permeability of trade routes. In accordance with the coalition agreement, we are guided here by our country's interests."[16]

Afghanistan also is an important scenario for NATO as a place where the Alliance can learn how to "master" military operations on a tactical level, which means on the battle field. In 2009, Germany's "national clarifications" of the NATO operations plan were revised, particularly the so-called "pocket card" rules dictating when NATO soldiers in Afghanistan were permitted to use lethal force. After the following sentence had been erased completely, German soldiers were allowed to follow a more offensive course of action: "The use of lethal force is prohibited unless an attack is taking place or is imminent."[17] In the same month the "Operation Eagle" took place. Its consequences were detailed as follows: "Operation Oqab [Afghan word for eagle] was the first German ground force offensive since the creation of the Bundeswehr. The importance of the German contribution is reflected in a statement by lieutenant-colonel Hans-Christoph Grohmann, commander of the QRF [Quick Reaction Force], who introduced one of his officers as 'the first lieutenant to lead an infantry company into battle since 1945'."[18]

The relevance of the war in Afghanistan for the Federal Armed Forces must not be underestimated: "Since the end of the imminent territorial threat to the Federal Republic of Germany and its allies, the Bundeswehr has gradually oriented itself towards out-of-area operations. In the 1990s, the Balkans took center-stage, culminating in the air campaign over Kosovo in which Bundeswehr aircraft played a significant role. After 2001, the focus shifted to the operation in Afghanistan. The ISAF mission constitutes the longest deployment in the history of the Bundeswehr. What is more, the Hindu Kush saw the most intense ground combat operations conducted by German soldiers [...] since the end of the Second World War. In short: In Afghanistan the Bundeswehr learned to fight."[19]

3. Admission of bankruptcy: poor, insecure, undemocratic

If one believes the Federal Government's „Progress report on Afghanistan", in more than 15 years of war and occupation great progress was achieved in all relevant

areas. Four "main goals" are addressed in concrete terms: "promoting peace, stability and security in Afghanistan and the region; strengthening democracy; promoting economic development and human well-being; and promoting the rule of law and respect for human rights, especially the rights of women and girls."[20] On closer examination, though, it can be established that this assertion by the Federal Government is not sustainable.

Security: The intensity of combat activities in Afghanistan in 2015 was very high (22.634 "security incidents", the second highest total ever recorded up to that point). In the following year, the situation deteriorated even further, according to the most recent Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the security situation in Afghanistan from December 2016: "Overall, the number of armed clashes between January and October 2016 increased by 22 per cent over 2015, reaching its highest level since the United Nations started recording incidents in 2007 and surpassing the previous record year of 2011."[21]

As of October 31, 2016, about 3.500 NATO soldiers have lost their lives in Afghanistan. The casualties on the Afghan side were distinctly higher. Between January 2009 and December 2016 (no reliable numbers are available from the United Nations prior to 2009) 24.821 Afghan civilians were killed and another 45.333 were injured in combat activities. Supposedly, there is also a high number of unreported cases. Enemy "insurgent" deaths and those who died from indirect consequences of the war are not even included in those figures. Other estimates therefore arrive at considerably higher numbers of victims: "If we added up all categories of war dead, we could estimate their number for Afghanistan at 184.000 up to 248.000 until the end of 2013."[22] Consistently, the country is ranked in the bottom three on the Global Peace Index (which measures the relative position of nations' and regions' peacefulness) ranking ahead of only Iraq and Syria.[23]

Promotion of economic development: As far as the socio-economic situation is concerned, the results of the occupation are anything but a success story either: In 2015, Afghanistan was ranked 171th out of 187 countries on the UN Human Development Index (2014: 169).[24] As the latest report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, published in December 2016 shows, the living conditions for large parts of the population are extremely difficult: "The continued deepening and geographic spread of the conflict has prompted a 13% increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2017, now 9.3 million. [...]Recent estimates suggest over 9 million people have limited or no access to essential health services. Rates of infant and maternal mortality remain among the highest in the world [...]. Severe food insecurity is on the rise with 1.6 million people severely food insecure. 2016 nutrition surveys show global acute malnutrition (GAM) prevalence ranging from 10.9 to 20.7%."[25] The general condition of the economy is not much better: According to the World Bank, Afghanistan's export volume in 2015 was a measly $571 million opposed to an import volume of $7.721 million, resulting in a huge trade deficit.[26]

Human rights and the strengthening of democracy: There is not much to be whitewashed here either. Afghanistan is called a "defective democracy" and a "facade democracy" for a reason. Every election since the invasion in 2001 has been delegitimized by massive electoral fraud. The rule of law, the observance of human rights, and women's rights in particular, are a cause for huge concerns.[27]

Handing over NATO-Mission ISAF to it's successor Resolute Support. (Source: Wikipedia/US-Army)

To sum it up, the situation in Afghanistan is as problematic as possible, which is even admitted by the United States' Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction in a report, published in January 2017: „ [P]ast gains are eroding: poverty, unemployment, underemployment, violence, outmigration, internal displacement, and the education gender gap have all increased, while services and private investment have decreased."[28] Against this background, it should have been realized long ago that sustainable solutions for Afghanistan can only be accomplished by moving away from the doctrine of militarily-centered nation building, at least as it was practiced so far. Unfortunately, this has not been the case!

4. Resolute Support: Continuation of the NATO war

Although the general public was made to believe that NATO had plans to fully withdraw from the country in 2014, ISAF just passed the torch to NATO's follow-up mission "Resolute Support". This mission deployed slightly more than 13.300 soldiers (as of February 2017). Its mandate left a certain margin for Western combat activities, but, officially, it was emphasized that it was "only" about the training of Afghan military and police units. These government forces undertake most of the combat activities but don't seem to be able to overcome the insurgents.

The US, among others, cite this failure to end the insurgency as a justification to once again postpone their troop withdrawal, which has been suspended several times already. There are currently about 9.800 US soldiers deployed in Afghanistan. This number was supposed to decrease to 1000 in 2017, but it was temporarily raised first to 5.500 troops, and is now at roughly 7.000. The US more and more stray from the official slogan of the revised NATO mission to "train, advice, and assist." Instead, the US offensive capability in Afghanistan is increasing once more. US general David Petraeus, responsible for the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as head of the Central Command from October 2008 until June 2010, along with Michael O'Hanlon, a well-known democratic security policy expert, professed that it was time to "take off the gloves" at last again in the Afghanistan war. This goal is not to be achieved by a buildup of ground forces, but by the vigorous use of airpower.[29] And indeed, in 2016 US airstrikes in the country rose up 40% over the previous year with 1.337 weapons being dropped by US forces in Afghanistan.[30]

Since early 2016 980 German soldiers (an increase from 850) have taken part in "Resolute Support". This will be reflected in the budget with Euro 245.3 million in that year.[31] In Germany, they seem to be ready for a further intensification of combat operations, as statements by German NATO general Hans-Lothar Domröse in November, 2015, suggest: "We need a robust consulting. [...] If we see that a Taliban attack is taking place, we must be able to repulse it". He called for a fundamental rethink on NATO military assistance for Afghan forces.[32]

NATO is now avoiding any commitment to pull-out dates. In a statement from the Warsaw NATO summit in July, 2016, pull-out dates were conspicuously absent: "NATO and its operational partner have today committed to sustain the Resolute Support mission beyond 2016 through a flexible, regional model".[33] More or less on the sidelines, they took care of NATO most likely being present in the Hindu Kush for many years to come and being involved in combat activities, as well. Thus, Spiegel Online points out quite critically: "In Warsaw, NATO has extended its largest military mission almost in passing, there is no talk about a pullout from Afghanistan any more. The Federal Armed Forces gear themselves up for an open-ended operation. [...] 'The subject pullout,' as a Bundeswehr general said in Warsaw,' is not on the agenda any more for now."[34]

5. Administration of the disaster

Western nations have spent an enormous amount of money on the war in Afghanistan. The United States alone – officially spent $783bn – until the end of 2016 and for 2017 an additional $43,7 billion has been requested.[35] Yet those figures don't tell the whole story, as the true numbers are most probably much higher. Germany, for example, officially spent €8.8 billion until the end of 2014.[36] Yet a study by the "German Institute for Economic Research" concluded that the operation of the Federal Armed Forces was about 2.5 or even 3 times as expensive as was stated by the government side.[37] If these amounts are criticized, the governments tend to refer to the "enormous" amount of money spent on development aid also poured into the country. This money, however, usually goes directly back into the pockets of Western reconstruction corporations or is directly spent on counter-insurgency. US "development aid" totaled $100 billion as of 2014. However, 60 % of this amount was earmarked for reconstruction

and the training of Afghan security forces.[38] The annual costs for maintaining these troop levels is roughly $ 5 billion – only slightly less than the total Afghan budget (2016/2017: $7.2 billion). At the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014, Afghanistan committed itself to bear $500 million of these costs annually, which is an enormous strain on the government's budget. Long-term promises by the European Union or other members of the international community to finance the ANDSF budget have never materialized. There is therefore an increasing risk that the highly militarized and well-equipped government forces, who have repeatedly been accused of severe violations of human rights, will seek alternative sources of income for themselves, like stealing from the population.

The governments in the West are still spending a lot of money on Afghanistan, but they have cut spending for the development of civil society and democracy. They prefer to invest in presentable hardware as a visible proof of success for the taxpayers and voters at home. The West is part of the problem, though, and not of the solution in a country with complex social structures, unclear fronts and almost daily attacks. As long as the military presence of the West continues without a political vision, there won't be an end to the war in sight. Instead they keep on fighting without plan, sense or reason, as Ulrich Ladurner of the newspaper "Die Zeit" criticizes: "This is not a strategy, this is administration of the disaster. They pretend that a longer and stronger presence of the Federal Armed Forces [...] was weakening the Taliban with certainty. But what if it was the other way round? [...] The West, Germany has to get free from this situation – and that is only possible if it ends the operation."[39]

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Mission accomplished: Why NATO has destroyed Libya and destabilized the region

by Jürgen Wagner

On March 19th, 2011, the war of aggression against Libya began: a war, which was formally taken over by NATO at the end of the same month and which ended with the assassination of Libya's ruler, Muammar al-Qaddafi, in October 2011. The concern for violations of human rights was the official reason responsible for the intervention, but the truly decisive one was rather a "complex mixture"[1] of immediate and mediate interests. Strategic and economic desires were, for example, the country's oil reserves, but also Qaddafi's attempts to push back Western and, especially, French influence on the region. The crucial indirect interest, which was only partially connected to the conditions in Libya, entailed demonstrating NATO's "ability to wage war" after the debacle in Afghanistan as well as establishing a new doctrine of interventions in order to be able to organize future wars of the Alliance more "successfully" and more "efficiently."

Altogether, this toxic mixture resulted in a critical mass that finally led to the war and produced at least three dire consequences: Firstly, NATO had been depicting the intervention in Libya as a success and as kind of a prototype for coming wars. Secondly, the operation not only threw Libya itself into turmoil and conflicts, but the whole region as well. And finally, the disastrous situation in Libya is currently being used again as a reason to call for further military actions in the country – and this time Germany wants to take part as well, after generally remaining on the sidelines in the previous NATO-war.
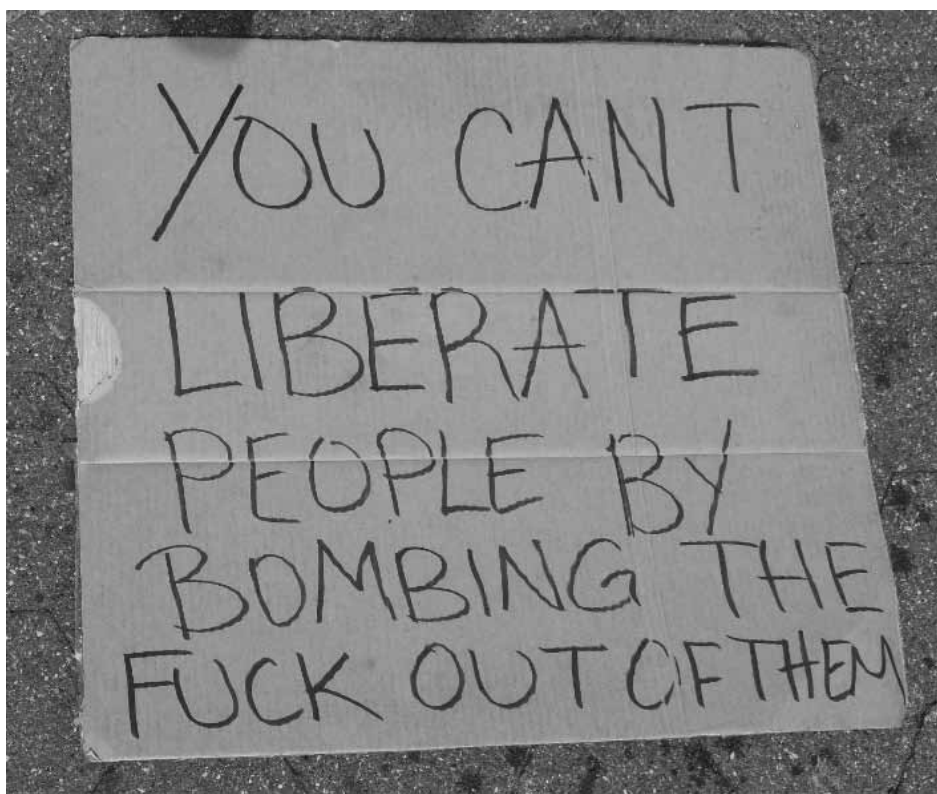
1. War for human rights?

As is the case with almost every Western war in the recent past, NATO's intervention in Libya was also justified by referring to the necessity to thwart severe violations of human rights. There is no question that the system established by Muammar al-Qaddafi was a repressive one[2], but - to at least the same extent - this holds true for a number of "friendly" states, which are left alone by the West. In early 2011 protests against the Libyan government broke out resulting in the adoption of UN resolution 1973 on March 17th, 2011. This resolution provided for the establishment of a no-fly zone, among other things, but was not meant to give the West a carte blanche to overthrow Qaddafi. It was, however, interpreted in such a way by the West in a completely unfound-

ed manner.[3] The reasoning for the attacks at that time was that the government did not meet its "responsibility to protect" the population, as it was emphasized in the resolution, because of its threats of massacres in Benghazi. This alone legitimized its subversion. Though even at that time a lot of clues existed that the claims were dubious at best, but mostly rather entirely false.

Thus, Alan Kuperman, a professor of public affairs at the University of Texas, wrote: "Nor did Khadafy ever threaten civilian

Source: Flickr/Debra Sweet

massacre in Benghazi, as Obama alleged. The 'no-mercy' warning, of March 17, targeted rebels only, as reported by the New York Times, which noted that Libya's leader promised amnesty for those 'who throw their weapons away.' Khadafy even offered the rebels an escape route and open border to Egypt, to avoid a fight 'to the bitter end.'"[4] Other charges have turned out to be mostly unfounded as well: "According to reports issued by the UN and Amnesty International, the justification of the military intervention at the time has proven wrong. There were crimes and severe violations of human rights in the civil war on both sides, to be sure. Systematic massacres, aerial attacks against protesters, organized mass rapes, and other grave accusations, which

Qaddafi's regime was charged with, were supposedly never committed, though."[5]

Thus NATO ultimately "took a side to decide a civil war by force".[6] It was not for the protection of the civilian population, but for the overthrow of Qaddafi as top of the agenda for intervention. As Klaus Reinhardt, former general of the Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr), criticized, "[t]he main reason was to unseat Qaddafi and to expel him from his position. This has been politically argued again and again from the very beginning.

And, of course, this also became the central theme of the operation and is only in a very limited sense concerned with the original plan to protect the civilian population."[7] For this reason, too, the rebels were directly supported by countries such as France, Great Britain, Qatar, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, as was unearthed by a UN investigation report, issued just a few months after the end of the combat activities: "By supreme authority, the report proves that weapons were handed out to the insurgents at a very early point of time and that these insurgents were supported by 'military advisors'. It also proves that NATO apparently assumed a dubious coordinating role accompanying its aerial attacks."[8] Literally, the report states that "foreign military support,

including deliveries of military materiel, had been crucial" for the insurgents' victory.[9] For this reason, the African Union's proposal for an immediate cease-fire to be followed by a national dialogue was ignored as well. Qaddafi had accepted the proposal on April 11th, 2011, but the rebels, who were well linked up to NATO, refused it.[10] Shortly afterwards, the presidents of the most important states involved in the war, Nikolas Sarkozy, David Cameron and Barack Obama, had collectively published a letter to unambiguously emphasize that "it is impossible to imagine a future for Libya with Qaddafi in power."[11] As far as the aim of the war is concerned, it can thus be registered: "To the contrary, all available evidence indicates that NATO's primary objective, starting early in the intervention, was to help the rebels overthrow Qaddafi, even if this escalated and extended the civil war and thereby magnified the threat to Libya's civilians."[12]

NATO was ready to amass heavy casualties – on the Libyan side – for the implementation of its own agenda. The estimated number of people who died during the NATO intervention varies very heavily. In the beginning, the rebels were talking about 50.000 victims, but this number was rectified downwards to 11.500 at a later point of time, without any hint about how the respective calculations had come about.[13] It does not shed light on the matter that NATO itself has not even gathered data about the civilian casualties of its airstrikes, although there had been a great number according to inquiries by the New York Times.[14]

But if the reason for the military intervention wasn't the violation of human rights, the question would all the more arise what the reason really was. An email on March 30th, 2011, sent by Sidney Blumenthal, a close advisor of then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, to his boss, who had been one of the prime movers of the war, gives some indication (Doc No. C05789481). He argues in the email that it was not expedient any more to bring in a „humanitarian motive" as a reason for war: "The humanitarian motive offered is limited, conditional and refers to a specific past situation. Having avoided a massacre at Benghazi, constantly claiming credit for it as though seeking gratitude from people (Libyans and American public opinion), soon reaches a counter-productive point." Let it be understood that he doesn't address the highly controversial question if a massacre in Benghazi was imminent, but only which justification could be used to continue

the bombardments until the overthrow of Qaddafi. In the email, Blumenthal further states some of the aspects that would suggest to work towards the overthrow of Qaddafi ("Q"): "The positive case for national interest in terms of removing Q, establishing stability in North Africa, securing democracy in Egypt and Tunisia, economic development, effect throughout Arab world and Africa, extending US influence, counterbalancing Iran, etc., should be obvious."[15]

2. Influence and profits

The direct interests connected to the war in Libya involve two large complexes. To begin with, the strategic and economic importance of the oil reserves there, as well as the state assets which were systematically used to push back Western influence in Africa, first and foremost at the expense of France.

The relevance of the Libyan oil reserves is beyond question. They are the largest in Africa totaling 48.4 billion barrels.[16] Thus, the country is especially important for the European Union, which imports ten percent of its oil supply from Libya. Furthermore, gigantic amounts of money can be made there. On the one hand, just a third of the surface has been franchised so far. On the other hand, the conditions for investment were extremely unfavorable for Western companies when Qaddafi was still in power: "The Libyan government, under a system known as EPSA-4, granted operating licenses to foreign companies that left the Libyan state company (National Oil Corporation of Libya, NOC) with the highest percentage of the extracted oil: given the strong competition, it came to about 90 percent." The EPSA-4 contracts contained the toughest terms in the world," says Bob Fryklund, former president of the U.S.-based ConocoPhillips in Libya."[17]

With that said, it is easily comprehensible that press reports like the following surfaced in early 2012: "Libya rewards those countries who openly opposed the former dictator with oil. [...] Ali Tarhouni, minister of finance within the Libyan transitional council, argued in Washington that his country was indebted to 'the friends'. He named the following countries, in descending order, as those friendly nations Libya was indebted to: France, the US, Great Britain, and Italy."[18] The continually disastrous security situation in the country renders large-scale access into the Libyan oil sector almost impossible at the present time. It does, however, at least stand to reason that it might happen in

the near future and might have posed a motivation for the intervention. Thus, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, too, assessed the motives of the belligerent states as follows: "Libya has the biggest oil resources in Africa and fourth largest gas resources. It raises the question: isn't that the main object of interest to those operating there?"[19]

A second thesis, which had been advocated at an early stage, also sees the attack in connection with the Libyan policy regarding attempts to emancipate Africa from the West: "A few months before the NATO attack on his country, Qaddafi invited the Arabian and African states to introduce a common currency in order to escape from the power of the Dollar and the Euro. As a foundation he suggested the golden Dinar, which is based on 144 tons of Libyan gold reserves stored in the state's central bank. This initiative was preceded by secret conferences concerning this matter in 1996 and in 2000. Most African countries supported the idea. If it were to be successful, France would be the biggest loser because the CFA franc would cease to be the currency in 14 French-speaking African countries resulting in the end of French postcolonial control over these nations. Qaddafi had three key projects to form the foundation for an African federation in the pipeline: The African investment bank in Sirte, Libya, the African central bank based in Abuja, capital of Nigeria, as well as the establishment of the African currency fund based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, which was planned for 2011 with a capital stock of $42 billion at command."[20]

Another email, sent by Blumenthal to Hillary Clinton on April 2nd, 2011, (Doc. No. C05779612) with the subject "France's client & Q's gold", sensationally confirms that considerations like these at least played a role in the French decision to start the war: "On April 2, 2011 sources with access to advisors to Salt al-Islam Qaddafi[21] stated in strictest confidence that while the freezing of Libya's foreign bank accounts presents Muammar Qaddafi with serious challenges, his ability to equip and maintain his armed forces and intelligence services remains intact. According to sensitive information available to this these individuals, Qaddafi's government holds 143 tons of gold, and a similar amount in silver. During late March, 2011 these stocks were moved to SABHA (south west in the direction of the Libyan border with Niger and Chad); taken from the vaults of the Libyan Central Bank in Tripoli. This gold was accumulated prior to the current rebellion and was intended to

be used to establish a pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar. This plan was designed to provide the Francophone African Countries with an alternative to the French.franc (CFA).

(Source Comment: According to knowledgeable individuals this quantity of gold and silver is valued at more than $7 billion. French intelligence officers discovered this plan shortly after the current rebellion began, and this was one of the factors that influenced President Nicolas Sarkozy's decision to commit France to the attack on Libya. According to these individuals Sarkozy's plans are driven by the following issues:

a. A desire to gain a greater share of Libya oil production,
b. Increase French influence in North Africa, [...]
c. Improve his internal political situation in France,
d. Provide the French military with an opportunity to reassert its position in the world,
e. Address the concern of his advisors over Qaddafi's long term plans to supplant France as the dominant power in Francophone Africa)".

3. Libya Doctrine:
A war as a means to an end

Perhaps the most important motivation[22] connected to the war, especially from a NATO point of view, had been to prove its own "ability to wage war" after the disastrous intervention in Afghanistan. Former NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen almost stubbornly remarked after the end of the intervention that it had proven all those wrong "who believed that Afghanistan had been NATO's last out-of-area operation."[23] The operation was said to have game-changing character not only concerning the "if", but also the "how". Thus, Susan Glasser wrote in 'Foreign Policy': "At the same time that silence reigns over these two long-running conflicts, America's foreign policy elite is falling in love all over again with a new model of war, one that supposedly beckons with modest investment, no boots on the ground, and a convenient narrative of freedom toppling dictatorship. Yes, I'm talking about Libya. [...] In other words: Here's a war that works."[24]

Specifically, three aspects are at stake here. First of all, the West has been pushing for the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) – in effect another name for

humanitarian interventions – as a customary practice for years. After the West had succeeded in anchoring the Responsibility to Protect in resolution 1973 and subsequently cited it as a justification for war, many humanitarian interventionists regarded the war in Libya as a precedent. The Western interpretation went like this: "In terms of resolution 1973, for the first time in its history, the United Nations Security Council has approved of a military intervention into the internal affairs of a sovereign state to protect the population on March 17th, 2011."[25] It is doubtful, though, whether this has been a case of successful adoption of a new standard. A large part of the international community would have to accept it – and that is obviously not the case. Many countries – China and Russia among others – reject the Responsibility to Protect and there has not been more support for the concept since the war in Libya.

A second aspect of concern is the transatlantic division of power and responsibilities, which was supposed to begin with the war in Libya. The US, understanding their weakening political power, avowedly sought to pivot their focus onto East Asia and to increasingly relinquish their involvement in Eastern Europe and Africa to the Europe-

Destroyed war equipment of Libyan National Army. (Source: Wikipedia/Bernd.Brincken)

ans. This would imply a yield to the allies ('leading from behind'), especially as far as military operations are concerned, and represent a radical departure from the previous US policy to always insist on the exclusive leadership. The war in Libya was the first tangible case of application, but ended with mixed results. On the one hand, the operation was really led by France and Great Britain. Yet on the other hand, the US was very dissatisfied with the "performance" of their allies and requested them to massively top up their arms budgets. Since this has distinctly not happened to the extent desired by Washington so far Donald Trump, who took office in January 20, 2017, exerts even more pressure to invest more in their military equipment than his predecessor.

Therefore, the third aspect of the war in Libya should have had the most lasting influence on the elaboration of a Western doctrine for intervention: a new way of warfare. After Iraq and Afghanistan had quite plainly shown how high the personal and financial costs and risks of military operations with considerably more than a hundred thousand ground forces are, the frantic search for other options began. And these had seemingly been found in the war in Libya: "The West is counting on the superiority of its air force and is supporting the forces of the allied conflicting party on the ground with secret agents, special forces units, military advisors, and deliveries of arms via third countries. It is unwilling to repeat historic mistakes by getting involved in the risk of a tedious and costly war with the deployment of its own ground forces in Libya after Afghanistan and Iraq."[26] And as a matter of fact: Although NATO doesn't want to rule out large-scale usage of ground forces in an extreme case either, it is quite plain to see that military operations will primarily focus on a mixture of these elements until further notice.

4. „Downswing into chaos"

Shortly after the intervention the former US Ambassador to NATO and the then Supreme NATO Commander in Europe declared in a visibly satisfied way: "NATO's operation in Libya has rightly been hailed as a model intervention. The alliance responded rapidly to a deteriorating situation that threatened hundreds of thousands of civilians rebelling against an oppressive regime. It succeeded in protecting those civilians".[27] Such an appraisal testifies to an amazing degree of denial of reality, though. At best, the intervention was a model for how to launch

a "downswing into chaos" in a country and in the region as a whole.[28] Similarly, a British parliamentary report published in September 2016, vehemently criticized the war: "David Cameron's intervention in Libya was carried out with no proper intelligence analysis, drifted into an unannounced goal of regime change and shirked its moral responsibility to help reconstruct the country following the fall of Muammar Gaddafi, according to a scathing report by the foreign affairs select committee."[29]

The operation's destabilizing impact on the whole region can be deduced from the UN investigation report from February 2012, which has already been mentioned: "While the exact influence of the crisis in Libya on its neighboring countries is hard to determine, the investigations of the commission of experts suggest that armed insecurity in neighboring countries like the northern parts of Mali and Niger has recently grown with an increase of arms trade, armed raids, terrorist activities and the reactivation of revolutionary movements."[30]

Most notably, the conflicts in Mali have commonly been interpreted as a direct result of the Western intervention in Libya and were, in turn, the motivation for a number of further military interventions, such as the UN mission Minusma (formerly: Afisma) and the UN operation Barkhane (formerly: Serval) led by France and EUTM Mali under the umbrella of the EU. Moreover, Alan Kuperman, professor for political sciences, who has already been mentioned, convincingly argues that the intervention in Libya at least bore part of the blame for the dramatic escalation of the conflict in Syria. The protests, which had started there almost at the same time, were peaceful in the beginning. The escalation in Libya, triggered by the rebels taking arms and "rewarded" with Western intervention, though, acted as a role model, as he assessed: "At the least, NATO intervention in Libya encouraged the militarization of Syria's uprising."[31]

However, Libya itself was obviously destabilized, too – there has been an almost permanent state of civil war in the country since the NATO intervention. This case is another proof that it is easier to break something apart by military means than to recompose it again at a later point of time. But again, the emanating conflicts paradoxically serve as a cause to call for further military interventions: "After all, the Libya operation should not let us forget the central lesson that previous conflicts

have taught us, namely that fighting the war is the easier part, whereas building the peace is where the real problems begin. If developments in Libya were still to go wrong, NATO and the international community could not simply stand by and watch."[32]

5. Go-ahead for Germany's new military interventionism

Gerhard Schröder, Chancellor at the time, recalls the involvement in the war of aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999 and the concomitant "removal of taboos of the military sphere" as the biggest achievement of his term. But when the war in Afghanistan, which had been conducted with German soldiers since 2001 as well, more and more escalated after the middle of the decade, the wariness against overseas deployment of the Federal Armed Forces increased again both among the population and within parts of the Federal Government.

In 2011, the Federal Government accordingly decided to abstain from voting for UN resolution 1973 and thereby factually rejected an involvement in the war against Libya: "The subsequent ferocious debate in Germany and NATO proved how this decision stroke a chord. While two thirds of the German population appreciated the abstention, criticism aroused among allies and one's own people [in the establishment]."[33] Former minister of foreign affairs Joschka Fischer was among the critics, as well. He argued as follows: "All I can say is that I feel ashamed for this failure of the German government and – unfortunately – also for the leaders of the red and green opposition parties who at first applauded this scandalous mistake! [...] The country has lost its credibility with the United Nations and in the Middle East: its claim to a permanent seat on the Security Council has just been trashed for good. And one really must fear the worst for Europe."[34]

Another leading critic of the German non-involvement in the war in Libya was Markus Kaim of the "German Institute for International and Security Affairs" ("Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik"). He criticized the "culture of military restraint," which was allegedly rampant in Germany, as a relic from the Cold War. Instead, Germany had to play a world's leading role particularly in military terms as well in the future. For this reason, it is telling that Kaim got leadership of the project "New Power, New Responsibility", wherein 50 representatives of the foreign and security policy establishment

had developed no less than a new "definition of German national objectives" between November 2012 and September 2013. In a nutshell, it came down to demanding to turn the back on the "culture of restraint" and to determinedly pursue a militarily underlain power policy in the future. Almost without changes, this demand resurfaced in the much-noticed speeches by Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Federal Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen and especially Federal President Joachim Gauck at the Munich Security Conference in 2014. Since then it has become the principle of German foreign and security policy, especially since the publication of the White Book of the Armed Forces in July 2016.[35]

The established wording "never again war" was replaced by "never again war without us" in the meantime, as can be seen using the example of Libya.

6. Another invervention?

In late February 2016 Le Monde reported that French special forces units were active in Libya and that president Hollande had authorized "nonofficial military activities."[36] American special forces units were reported operating in Libya as well, by all accounts to a lesser extent in direct combat action, but to train local militias instead. They have been supported by punctual air strikes for some time already. In November 2015 the US attacked targets of the Islamic State for the first time and since the middle of February 2016 they have been able to launch drone attacks from Sicily.[37] Plans for widespread air strikes have reportedly been already brought to completion in the US.[38]

Tedious efforts have, however, been made to uphold a relatively pro-Western "national unity government," established in April 2016, which has mighty adversaries in the country. As Libya is also singled out as a key partner in the fight against illegalized migration, NATO tries to put this government in a position to hold on to power with the help of military goods and educational aid. Thus the NATO summit declaration in June 2016 stated: "[W]e support the UN and Libyan-led efforts, which have led to the Libyan political agreement, and recognise the Government of National Accord as the sole legitimate government of Libya. We have agreed, in principle, on a possible NATO role in the Central Mediterranean, to [...] support, as appropriate, the EU's Operation Sophia through the provision of a range of capabilities including Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, and logistics support; through contribution to capacity building of the Libyan coastguard and navy, if requested by the legitimate Libyan authorities and/or the EU".[39]

In all this, Germany wants to take a leading role this time, as journalist Björn Müller reports, refering to a speech held by Géza Andreas von Geyr, Director General for Security and Defence Policy in the Federal Ministry of Defence, in early 2016: "'Don't stir up a hornets' nest, but when you do it, do it firmly – and we want to grasp firmly,' said the trained diplomat. Subsequently, the policy director of the FMOD mentioned four points that were essential for an intervention to stabilize Libya from his point of view:
1. To establish a 'Green Zone' in the capital of the intended unity government in Libya.
2. To transfer the militias into a coherent security structure (a training unit of the Federal Armed Forces would surely become important here [...]).
3. To fight the Islamic State in those regions in Libya where it has spread out.
4. To consistently fight the structures of human trafficking. According to Geyr it would be necessary to take action in Libyan territorial waters and to 'go ashore'. [...]

Von Geyr's brisk remarks can be taken as evidence that the Federal Ministry of Defence and the Federal Government, respectively, already have wide-ranging plans for an involvement of the Federal Armed Forces in the crisis state at hand. They also prove that the German engagement is envisaged as a thorough one."[40]

Source: Bundeswehr/Andrea Bienert

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The Militarization of NATO's Eastern Flank
Restructuring of NATO policy in the light of the conflict in Ukraine and the Russian crisis

by Nathalie Schüler

"Dangerous brinkmanship" – this is how London Think Tank "European Leadership Network" (ELN) has called the situation between "the West" and Russia since the Ukrainian crisis.[1]

That is to say, NATO no longer thinks of Russia as a partner. After the "annexation" of Crimea, which was controversial under international law,[2] as well as after the ensuing Ukrainian crisis, the foreign ministers of the NATO states suspended any military and civilian cooperation of the Alliance with the Russian Federation in April 2014.

One feature of this altered setting of relations is the increase of direct military encounters and clashes by a snatch between armed forces of NATO (as well as those of Sweden and Finland) and Russia. The European Leadership Network counted 66 incidents like these between March 2014 and March 2015, three of them were ranked as "high risk" incidents.[3] The total number of incidents is much higher, though. NATO reported more than 400 contacts with Russian airplanes in 2014, which is four times the amount of 2013, whereas Russia reported more than twice as many flights of NATO fighter planes – more than 3000 – in close vicinity of Russian borders in 2014 as compared to 2013.[4] As is the case with all other current lines of conflicts regarding the relations between NATO and Russia, different opinions exist about what has happened and why it happened. It is much less controversial, though, that both sides have distinctly increased their military activities and that the respective armed forces converge geographically.

Assessments like this, among others, emphasize the role of the Ukrainian crisis as, by far, the most serious crisis of the relations between the West and Russia since the end of the Cold War. The transatlantic alliance formulated three key tasks in its 2010 strategic concept – "collective defence", "crisis management" and "cooperative security"[5] – whereas "crisis management" ("out-of-area operations") has dominated in recent years. Today, though, "collective defence" of the Alliance and, thus, an alignment towards Russia is declared the paramount task again. The NATO summit meeting in Wales in September 2014 constitutes a decisive

stage here. The Alliance resolved a profound military adaption as a reaction to the Ukrainian crisis: the "Readiness Action Plan" (RAP). This is the basis for NATO's military restructuring, which requires fundamental changes in terms of planning, logistics, as well as equipment and training. Using the argument that NATO member states have to be "protected" and "assured" from a possible Russian attack in the eastern area of the Alliance, NATO is trying to generate broad legitimation of its new "arms build-up" these days and justifies its high level of training activities and its permanent military presence in the eastern area of the Alliance. This is to be elaborated in the following chapters.

The Alliance presents all these innovations as defensive measures, allegedly complying with the 1997 Founding Act for NATO-Russia cooperation. Moscow, however, grades these measures as proof for NATO's aggressive and expansionist nature. Its reaction to the increasingly tense relations with the West was a new military doctrine, signed by president Putin on December 25th, 2014. This doctrine had already been marshalled before the Ukrainian crisis, to be sure, but it characterizes scenarios relating explicitly to NATO and implicitly to the US as external military dangers second to none. In particular, "expanding the bloc" of the Alliance, the desire to "move military infrastructure" closer towards the Russian borders as well as the "deployment of military contingents of foreign states" in Russia's neighbouring states are mentioned as risks for Russia's security.[6]

The actions of both sides, which are called "purely defensive", but are interpreted as offensive by the other side, respectively, make a renewal of dialogue as well as confidence-building measures seem impossible. Additionally, they currently overshadow all considerations on how the interrelationships can be put on a sound basis again.[7]

1. NATO's "Readiness Action Plan"

When the heads of state and government of the 28 NATO member states met at their summit in Newport, Wales on September 4th and 5th, 2014, they adopted a plan for an enhanced readiness for action – the "NATO Readiness Action Plan" (RAP). Thereby, the Alliance wants to ensure that it is "ready to respond swiftly and firmly to the new security challenges".[8] The Alliance

does not only want to react to the current situations of crisis in North Africa, Syria, and Iraq but especially to the occurrences in Ukraine and their strategic impacts as well as to the eastern NATO states' insistence on more "protection from Russia".[9] While global military interventions have been the centre stage for many years, the RAP is now the most significant reinforcement of the "collective defence" within NATO since the end of the Cold War. A briefing paper of the British House of Commons calls the new plan a mirror of NATO's fundamental change of its "post-Cold War force posture" back to its old enemy – Russia.[10]

The action plan for the acceleration of the readiness for action had already been announced after the Russian assimilation of the Crimea in 2014, which was highly controversial under international law. Following the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis there had been a lot of doubt expressed within NATO questioning if the Alliance was sufficiently armed against a potential Russian incursion upon one of its member states. German Federal Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen admittedly stressed in May 2014 that NATO was able to "appropriately react to any development"[11] in the Ukrainian crisis, but an internal survey argued that in a case, when the mutual defence clause (article 59 would have to be activated, NATO was only partly ready to withstand an attack.[12] A document by the NATO defence planning committee points out that after the end of the Cold War the European NATO partners had come to the conclusion "that the assets needed to fight conventional, large-scale, high-intensity conflicts in Europe could be reduced." Russia, however, would be able to "pose a local or regional military threat at short notice at a place of its choosing."[13]

Following this assessment, calls by East European states for a NATO build up and an enhanced military presence close to the Russian borders to guarantee the safety guarantee under article 5 were growing ever louder. According to Spiegel Online, a draft for a comprehensive NATO survey of its military power claimed that the initial situation was "destabilizing as well as threatening for those allies sharing a border with Russia or living in its neighborhood."[14] Above all, this is meant to include the three Baltic countries as well as Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.

At the same time, it shouldn't be ignored that the concentration of troops at the Eastern border already has a destabilizing impact and, thus, that it is highly questionable if these provocations contribute to the security of the "threatened" states. In addition to that, some statements of the Wales Summit Declaration support the conclusion that the "collective defence" of the eastern NATO members is not the only intention, when it specifies that NATO should be able to react to challenges "that arise, particularly at the periphery of NATO's territory."[15] In this regard, the enhancement of the military presence at NATO's eastern flank "improves" the ability to project power into the bordering countries outside of the area of the Alliance, which are the object of more and more severe conflicts with Russia. There is a post on the Federal Armed Forces' (Bundeswehr) webpage, for example, suggesting that NATO aims at being able to influence the "non-aligned" countries between the Alliance and Russia with its military reactions: "The cases of Georgia, Crimea and East Ukraine have shown that Russia is able to act more quickly than international organizations. For that reason, it is all the more important to have extensive and flexible capabilities available and expand them where it is necessary."[16]

Even ahead of the meeting of the 28 heads of state and government in 2014, the tune against Russia was changed once more: Then NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen pointed out: "We are faced with a dramatically changed security environment."[17] The Summit Declaration read: "Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace."[18] Regardless of the fact that the West bears a significant part of the blame for the escalation of the relations with Russia, the Alliance, thus, confines itself to lay the blame solely on Russia.

Essentially, the Western representatives at the 2015 Munich Security Conference repeated their way of looking at things, which was retaliated by the Russian foreign minister by emphasizing two aspects, to begin with: First of all, that the West relied on expansion and was not willing to involve Russia in a solid security architecture: "The world is now facing a drastic shift connected with the change of historical eras. [...] Do they want to build a security architecture with Russia, without Russia, or against Russia?" Secondly, he emphasized the Russian point of view again that what happened in the Ukraine had been a "coup d'état" which the West

was jointly responsible for. The sovereignty of the country had been violated by the West and not by the Russian reactions: "At each stage of the crisis' development, our American colleagues, and under their influence, also the European Union, have been taking steps leading to escalation."[19]

Nonetheless, a number of arrangements for arms build-up based on NATO's analysis of threats are being authorized at the moment and the Readiness Action Plan provides the most important framework. In a NATO mode of speaking they say the RAP provided "a coherent and comprehensive package of necessary measures to respond to the changes in the security environment on NATO's borders and further afield that are of concern to Allies." The plan would "contribute to ensuring that NATO remains a strong, ready, robust, and responsive Alliance capable of meeting current and future challenges from wherever they may arise."[20]

The Readiness Action Plan essentially embraces two packages of measures. The long-term "adaptation measures" include, according to NATO, "the components required to ensure that the Alliance can fully address the security challenges it might face."[21] This means improving "the planning, logistical and equipment conditions for larg-

Source: DoD

er units to be moved more rapidly to their theatre of operations and enabling them to be more rapidly operational once there".[22]

The direct "assurance measures" include an immediate enhancement of NATO's presence and major military activities by land, air, and maritime forces in the eastern part of the Alliance. "These measures are in response to Russia's aggressive actions," the Fact Sheet for the plan, issued by NATO, points out.[23] These measures could be flexibly and gradually adjusted reacting to changes of the safety situation.

This "starting point for a military reorganisation of the Alliance" includes three key "innovations", which are worth a closer look: the expansion of the existing NATO Response Force, as well as at the center of the plan the ensuing Very High Readiness Task Force; the establishment of a permanent military presence at NATO's eastern flank; and the massive increase of NATO exercises all over Europe.

2. A Signal for Eastern Europe: The Spearhead Force

2.1 NATO Response Force

The NATO Response Force is NATO's Quick Reaction Force for operations all over the world. It was already adopted by the Prague NATO Summit in 2002 under the triad of tasks "to deter, disrupt and defend" and consists of a multinational unit of ground, air, maritime, and special forces capable of quickly reacting to a broad spectrum of security challenges – from "crisis management" to "collective defence". At the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales NATO agreed to a considerable enhancement of the Response Force. Induced by the restructuring in the course of the adoption of the Readiness Action Plan, NATO announced a massive increase of NRF force levels from the already existing 13,000 to, initially, 30,000 and, at a later time, 40,000 soldiers. Additionally, the existing NRF is complemented by another key element: The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force.[25]

2.2 Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

At the 2014 Summit in Wales, the Alliance's heads of state and government agreed upon the establishment of a NRF unit with very high readiness to further "improve" the Alliance's ability to react: The "Very

High Readiness Joint Task Force" (VJTF), also known as the "spearhead force" is at the heart of the Readiness Action Plan and constitutes NRF's new flagship. In February 2015, the ministers of defence of the 28 NATO member states agreed on a rough concept for a further elaboration of the Spearhead, resolved on at the Wales Summit. The quick joint task force should be able to be called into action within two to five days after being alerted, at the most.[26] At NATO's Warsaw summit in July 2016, VJTF was declared to be fully operational. It consists of a land component of about 5,000 ground forces, having air, maritime, and special operations forces at their disposal "that are able to move rapidly and respond to potential challenges and threats."[27] According to Uli Cremer of the German Green Party's Peace Initiative, the real force levels rather amounted to the order of 15,000 to 21,000 soldiers considering rotation and rest periods, however.[28]

As far as the future operational area of VJTF is concerned, the mere site selection of the logistics and coordination centers for the quick response force already is a clear statement: The eight new NATO bases, called NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs), are all situated in the eastern states of the Alliance. Each of the new bases is supposed to be filled with about 40 forces.[29]

The new Spearhead is supposed to be led by one of seven framework countries on a rotational basis, namely Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and Turkey. An interim VJTF was installed until the Spearhead's full deployment in 2016, led by Germany, the Netherlands and Norway, and was already declared operational in June 2015.[30]

3. Military presence at NATO's east flank

De facto, NATO is not allowed to be militarily present on a permanent base in the eastern part of the Alliance. This is because the Alliance has committed itself to refraining from a substantial presence of troops in the new eastern NATO member states on the basis of the "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation", signed by NATO and Russia in 1997. In the light of the Ukrainian crisis and the September 2014 NATO summit, which was much influenced by the crisis, the Founding Act became the centre of attention again for the first time.

In the summer of 2015, then, the results of a war simulation performed by the RAND Corporation became public, suggesting that it was impossible for NATO to defend the Baltic countries in case of a Russian invasion.[31] Even before that, especially since the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, the eastern European NATO member states had claimed to be increasingly in need of protection. Although Russia, too, has taken a distinctly more confrontational stance towards the West, mirrored in the new military doctrine, for example, there are no reliable clues that Russia is seriously considering an invasion of a NATO member state. Nonetheless, the sheer possibility is used as an opportunity to legitimize widespread measures of military buildup at NATO's east flank: "Given the security environment, given the actions of Russia, it has become apparent that we need to make sure to update the plans that we have in response to any potential aggression against any NATO allies," a Pentagon spokesperson is cited.[32]

Already in April 2014, NATO "agreed to provide assurance for eastern allies by maintaining a continuous air, land and maritime presence and military activity on a rotational basis." The Readiness Action Plan, adopted afterwards, – with its "adaption measures" and its "assurance measures" – encompasses the buildup of a considerable military presence of the Alliance in its eastern part, too. Admittedly, this is not a permanent deployment, but the armed forces that are supplied by allies on a rotational basis guarantee a continuous presence. Based on this argumentation, NATO takes the view that the measures were no violation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

Alongside the highly increased amount of military exercises in the eastern part of the Alliance (chapter 4), the most important elements of NATO's presence are the new NFIU headquarters, mentioned above, the relocation of several battalions, the heightened aerial surveillance, as well as the expansion of the maritime component and the advancement of military equipment for and into the eastern part of the Alliance.

3.1 NATO Force Integration Units and battalions

The "adaptation measures" of the RAP come along with a regionalization, among other things. This includes the regional buildup of the so-called NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU), in Sofia (Bulgaria), Bydgoszcz (Poland), Bucharest (Romania), Tallinn (Estonia),

Trademark of the new VJTF is its ultra-rapid deployability. (Source: NATO)

Riga (Latvia), and Vilnius (Lithuania). According to NATO, the location of the bases was decided by the North Atlantic Council and followed invitations by the countries mentioned above, as well as their military validation by NATO. In October 2015, furthermore, the establishment of two additional NFIU in Hungary and Slovakia was announced, thereby increasing the number of the bases in Eastern Europe to eight.[34]

These units were designed to make for the new Spearhead being ready for action as quickly as possible in a certain region, in cooperation with the host countries, and to coordinate the advancement of military equipment and supplies.[35] They have been active as of September 1st, 2015 and were supposed to be ready for action before the NATO Summit Warsaw 2016.[36] On that point, the Wales Summit Declaration reads: "We will also establish an appropriate command and control presence and some in-place force enablers on the territories of eastern Allies at all times, with contributions from Allies on a rotational basis, focusing on planning and exercising collective defence scenarios."[37]

According to the factsheet on the NATO Force Integration Units, the "small headquarters" would "help facilitate the rapid deployment of Allied forces, [...] support

collective defence planning and assist in coordinating training and exercises." It says explicitly: "They are not military bases."[38] According to NATO, the "NFIUs are a vital link between national forces and forces of other NATO Allies." To be able to quickly deploy the VJTF, the NFIUs are to "work with host nations to identify logistical networks, transportation routes and supporting infrastructure." For this purpose, the headquarters are to be manned by 20 national staff and 20 multinational staff from NATO allies on a rotational basis.[39] According to the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik), Germany is participating in all NFIUs.[40]

Moreover, the regional headquarters are supposed to assume more responsibilities, in particular the Multinational Division Southeast headquarters in Romania as well as the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNK NO), collectively operated by Germany, Poland, and Denmark in Szczecin. According to the defence ministers of the NATO member states, the new headquarters took on the effect "to constitute a visible and persistent NATO presence" at their eastern flank.[41] It must be assumed that a threatening posture is to be established this way. To further enhance the Alliance's ability to react, NATO, according to its own sources, is currently considering the

creation of even more Integration Units.[42]

In February 2016, furthermore, reports emerged for the first time stating that NATO was contemplating to the permanent deployment of larger forces in East Europe.[43] The NATO defence ministers agreed on the deployment of four battalions in June 2016, which was conclusively adopted at the NATO summit in Warsaw. 1,000 NATO soldiers each are supposed to be deployed in Lithuania (led by Germany), Estonia (Great Britain), Latvia (Canada), and in Poland (USA) as "enhanced forward presence". The first units were deployed in 2017.

3.2 Air Policing

The enhancement of the NATO mission for the military aerial surveillance of the Baltic nations (NATO Baltic Air Policing) is a consequence of the increased presence in the eastern states of the Alliance which is part of the immediate "assurance measures". NATO Air Policing is supposed to detect, track, and identify all aerial objects approaching or operating in NATO airspace.

When the Baltic nations Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined NATO in 2004, they didn't have the capabilities for aerial surveillance and protection of their airspace at first. It was subsequently agreed to establish an

aerial surveillance mission. Various Allies assumed responsibility for surveillance and safeguarding of the airspace with their respective air forces on a rotational basis. The Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian forces have been able to perform aerial surveillance on the basis of cooperation within the Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALNET) since 2006, but, because of missing aerial weapon systems, they are not able to perform identification on sight or to enforce air integrity by interception and/or pushing away on their own.[44] "In response to Russian activity"[45], NATO not only "boosted the number of aircraft dedicated to patrolling Baltic airspace in 2014", but also gives volatile effect to the operation. In 2014, the Alliance decided to double the Baltic Air Policing mission so that 16 aircraft from four nations have been in action for a respective duration of four months.[46]

In September 2015 word got abroad that Germany was from then on launching its "Eurofighters" deployed in Estonia fully armed for war. Full armament includes an armed cannon, infrared short-range missiles, an electric defence system, and radar-controlled mid-range missiles. At the same time it was reported that Russia intended to establish its own air force base in neighboring Belarus. "Nowhere else NATO and Russian forces come as close as they do here," Spiegel Online summed up. The alerting of aircraft deployed in the Baltics has become daily routine by now. 365 missions like this have supposedly been reported between January 2014 and June 2015.[47]

Additionally, NATO agreed in March 2014 to begin an aerial surveillance mission using NATO AWACS (Airborne Early Warning and Control Aircraft) over Poland and Romania. AWACS are aerial radar systems for airborne reconnaissance and surveillance of airspace with the objective of early detection and advance warning.[48] This decision was justified as a response to the events in Ukraine, too.

3.3 The maritime component and the advancement of equipment

The already mentioned Briefing Paper of the British House of Commons reports: "The maritime element of the Response Force is provided by four Standing Maritime Groups[49]. These consist of warships provided by NATO Allies and placed under NATO command for six months. [...] As part of the immediate response of NATO to Russia's actions in Ukraine, NATO deployed SNMCMG1 [Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures

Group 1] to the Baltic Sea in April 2014. Standing Mine Counter-Measure Groups will patrol the Baltic Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, including the Black Sea, as part of the 'assurance' response. The Standing Maritime Group which patrols the Mediterranean Sea under Operation Active Endeavour[50] [...] will also conduct maritime assurance measures, according to NATO."[51]

Furthermore, in February 2017, NATO agreed "to bolster its presence in the Black Sea in the latest expansion of alliance forces across a strategic region where allies have steadily added ground forces and air power, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said."[52]

4. NATO Exercises: Training For War

Since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, NATO and Russia have conducted numerous military exercises. According to Spiegel Online, the Russian ministry of defence reported 4,000 exercises for 2015 overall, but this number would include even the smallest preparedness exercises and was, thus, of little value. NATO's "assurance measures" in the course of the Readiness Action Plan are primarily borne by a massive increase of announced exercises. The Wales Summit Declaration explains: "Readiness of elements of the VJTF will be tested through short-notice exercises." It further reads: "We will establish an enhanced exercise programme with an increased focus on exercising collective defence including practicing comprehensive responses to complex civil-military scenarios."[53] General Jean-Paul Paloméros, commander of the NATO Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, announced 270 exercises for 2015 "under the NATO umbrella". Half of them were for the assurance of eastern allies. In 2014 NATO had conducted 162 exercises, according to official sources, which was twice as many as had been initially planned[54], whereas a total of 240 exercises were planned for 2016.[55]

The increasing scope of exercises is a display of a "new and dangerous security environment in Europe" according to a report by the London-based think tank European Leadership Network (ELN) with the dramatic title "Preparing for the Worst: Are Russian and NATO Military Exercises Making War in Europe more Likely?".[56] The recent exercises showed "that each side is training with the other side's capabilities and most likely war plans in mind." They didn't insinuate that either side had made a decision to go to war or that a military conflict was inevitable, but the exercises were a

cause for concern and added to maintaining the tensions in Europe which were stirred by the conflict in Ukraine. The profile of the exercises had changed in a way that each one was regarded as a provocation by the other side and that a momentum of suspicion and unpredictability had emerged, according to ELN director Ian Kearns. Both sides were relying on the deterring factor of such major exercises, but there was also a risk involved: The exercises could increase the feeling of insecurity and heighten the risk for "dangerous military conflicts".[57]

5. German contribution

Germany is currently taking a new line in terms of foreign policy – keyword: "New Power New Responsibility" – which includes the claim to the status of a global power, underpinned by a growing willingness to use military force to that end. At the NATO Wales Summit, therefore, Germany "agreed" to step forward to become a framework country for the new rapid reaction force, too, and to forge a tryout unit for the interim Spearhead out of its units that have already been registered for the NRF. In 2015, about 2,700 German soldiers already belonged to the Immediate Response Force (IRF), which constituted the core of the response force prior to the final deployment of VJTF. The headquarters of the I. German-Netherlands Corps in Münster adopted a key role here, as it was certified as Land Component Command by NATO in 2014 to lead ground troops of the NRF in 2015. The Mechanized Infantry Battalion 371 in Marienberg, Saxony, was certified as well and provides the core of the German army forces with about 900 soldiers, forming the interim Spearhead alongside specialists of other units.[58]

According to the ministry of defence, Germany reported about 4,000 soldiers from all branches of military services for NATO duty in 2015. The year before, the Federal Armed Forces had a share in NRF of about 3,000 soldiers.[59] "Germany intends to be a responsible member of NATO," said Chancellor Angela Merkel.[60] The country felt "committed to solidarity with the states of Central and Eastern Europe 'not only on paper', but in practical form".[61] Germany had "accepted a great many responsibilities," as for example, "aerial surveillance in Baltic air space, and the new headquarters that are to be built in Szczecin".[62] Szczecin is to be the operational headquarters for VJTF in the future in case of an operation or for training missions in the eastern part of the Alliance. According to Army sources, the operational

NATO-Exercise Trident Juncture. (Source: Flickr/NATO)

headquarters of the corps would run up to 400 soldiers, a third of these were to be members of the Federal Armed Forces. Additionally, the Federal Armed Forces would take a share in logistics bases, the NATO Force Integration Units mentioned above, of about 20 soldiers.[63] Germany's most significant contribution to the militarization of NATO's eastern flank is that it serves a the lead nation for the NATO battalion in Lithuania thereby playing a major role in violating the NATO-Russia Founding Act by establishing a permanent military presence in the region.

Although even the danger of unintentional conflicts itself is massively rising, the Federal Armed Forces took part in international field exercises, as well as in international operational exercises and computer-based exercises with about 154,000 soldiers in 2015.[64] According to the Bundeswehr-Journal, the number of members of the Federal Armed Forces went down by about 6,400 compared with 2014, but the number was also twice as high as in 2013.[65] In terms of the Readiness Action Plan, more than 4,400 members of the Federal Armed Forces are supposed to have taken part in 16 exercises in the Baltic nations and in Poland in 2015. Furthermore, the Federal Armed Forces budgeted a total of about Euro 21 million more for these exercises in the eastern part of the Alliance, which are related to the package of measures enhancing NATO's readiness.[66] Reportedly, they budgeted Euro 4.5 million in total for the Spearhead in particular.[67] Explicitly referring to Russia, the Federal Government appropriated a sharp increase of Germany's defence budget to 34.2 billion Euro in 2016 and then to 37 billion in 2017.

Taken all together, Germany is making an essential contribution to the new high

readiness task force, to the headquarters in Szczecin, to the assurance measures, and also regarding new personnel for NATO: The German Institute for International and Security Affairs explains that Germany provided "the backbone for the successful implementation of the Wales decisions. Without German participation, they would be hardly feasible."[68] Sadly enough, critical comments about this commitment in German media are rare. The following can be fully endorsed: "The Federal Armed Forces, of all things. They don't seem to be as overburdened, after all, as they keep repeating, when they not only want to be part of the NATO battalion in East Europe, but even aim at a leadership role. […] If Berlin really wants to lead so desperately – how about leading the way towards the de-escalation of the near conflict that has been stirred up carelessly? The trigger, i.e. the Ukrainian crisis, shows what happens if more importance is placed on military banter than on sustainable diplomacy."[69]

6. Summary

The aim of a strategic partnership between NATO and Russia has seemingly failed for now and the conflict about the world order seems to be unbridgeable. It can be safely assumed that their relations are facing a longer period of relative instability and tensions.

The eastern NATO member states demand more security from their allies. The immediate "assurance measures" of the Readiness Action Plan for "collective defence" are supposed to signal that they can rely on NATO's promise of support by means of more exercises and an enhanced aerial surveillance. In the course of adaptation, the Alliance has increased its readiness

and response capability, especially in the form of the new quick response force VJTF, the establishment of the Force Integration Units and, to support them, the advancement of military equipment in Eastern Europe. What has been characterized as "defensive measures", is regarded as a provocation in Moscow, however.

Thus, it will be indicatory, among other things, if NATO is able to keep its solidarity despite of the different positions of its members. Russia's actions are being criticized vehemently by all member states, but there are varying opinions about a "potential Russian security threat" too. For this reason, the opinions within NATO are divided on the issues relevant to how far the military adaptation of the Alliance should be stretched and how intensely it should be directed towards the East. The Eastern European member states of the Alliance mostly reject any dialogue with Moscow, whereas others want to use the channels for discussion. The revival of the NATO-Russia Council since April 2016 was at first encouraging, but subsequent discussions only revealed how far the two actors have moved apart.

It seems to be inevitable that the transatlantic Alliance and Russia enter into a dialogue again. The renewal of institutionalized relations poses the first step towards solving the conflict. But, for now, this is annulled by the massive loss of trust and the revival of traditional perceptions of threat on both sides, which should have been gradually laid to rest more than a quarter of a century after the end of the Cold War.

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NATO's (hybrid) role in Syria's devastation

by Christoph Marischka

Although NATO itself joined the conflict in Syria only hesitantly and at a relatively late stage, the Alliance still bears a significant co-responsibility for its escalation. During the early stage of the protests in Syria, which began in March 2011, the situation in Libya dominated media coverage internationally as well as in the Arabic-speaking world. As early as January protests had been reported, which quickly led to civil war. France, the US and Great Britain, together with allied Gulf States, stepped in with massive air strikes and NATO joined in shortly afterwards. Inevitably, Libya became an example for those forces in Syria (and on an international level) who were willing to attempt a coup d'état in other countries.[1] The intervention in Libya encouraged oppositionists in Syria to take up arms in a state of military inferiority and to escalate combat actions. Considering the difference between the strategies of the Kurdish forces around PYD and the Free Syrian Army (FSA), loosely associated with the Syrian National Council, the link becomes more apparent. The Kurds, who were neither hoping for NATO support nor calling for it, confined themselves to self-defense and to gaining more autonomy during the conflict. FSA, however, aimed to overthrow the regime and to takeover Damascus, after repeatedly demanding an internationally enforced no-flight zone.

However, NATO's intervention in Libya contributed to the Syria conflict in that it created a proxy conflict within the UN Security Council. In a "Memo" with the telling title "Saving Syria: Assessing Options for Regime Change", issued in March 2012, the Brookings Institution established why a diplomatic solution – Assad's internationally enforced retirement, from their point of view – was pointless in Syria: "Both [Russia and China] have shown that they oppose regime change in Syria through international intervention, including on humanitarian grounds. Russia's rhetoric stresses that it felt burned by the move from civilian protection to regime change in Libya, and makes known that it does not want to repeat this in Syria. [...] Moscow, along with Beijing, is determined to resist setting still another precedent that the international community has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign state".[2]

Taking sides against the Syrian government

Syria was never even mentioned in any NATO press release from the beginning of the conflict until June 2012. At press conferences, former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen repeatedly emphasized upon request that NATO had "no intentions whatsoever" to intervene in Syria as the Alliance had done in Libya. He justified this position with the missing of a corresponding resolution of the Security Council. Consequently, he left the question open as to how NATO would act in case of an existing resolution. Rasmussen repeated the formulation "no intentions whatsoever" with regard to Syria like a mantra until a few joint statements and press conferences were on the agenda in celebration of Turkey's 60th anniversary of joining NATO. In the course of a speech held in Ankara on February 17th, 2012, with the title "New NATO – New Turkey", he emphasized, at first, the Alliance's benefit from all "aggressors" knowing "that to threaten one Ally is to threaten them all." In terms of Syria he praised and welcomed "Turkey's efforts to bring a peaceful resolution to this crisis." The only solution was "to satisfy the democratic aspirations of the people." But he even proceeded to support Turkey's increasing and often openly framed ambitions of becoming a major power: "I believe that, as the Arab Spring unfolds, continued Turkish leadership will be crucial for a peaceful future."[3] During the following press conferences he clung to his statement that NATO had no intention of intervening, but he complemented them with formulations suggesting that NATO was "closely monitoring" the situation in Libya because it concerned an ally and threatened "regional stability".

In the following weeks, the international situation heated up and, thus, NATO went for a distinctly intensified rhetoric. In February 2012, China and Russia rejected a resolution of the UN Security Council, which solely blamed the Syrian government for the escalation and contained options for a military intervention. Meanwhile, several NATO countries – the US in particular – were already openly discussing an intervention with increasing frequency. On February 24th, "Friends of Syria" was founded in Tunis under France's initiative. Those involved included the Gulf States, which openly worked to overthrow Assad, as well as Turkey, the US, the European Union,

France, Great Britain, Italy and Germany. The Syrian National Council was also represented, inviting the attending governments to provide arms to the insurgents or to tolerate corresponding deliveries of arms. The consequences of this meeting were critical as they meant a powerful group of states in effect recognizing the Syrian National Council as a quasi-government. But when different actors on the same territory are recognized as a government by different groups of states, an internationalized civil war is almost inevitable. Although NATO itself was not present at the event, its Secretary General explicitly welcomed the foundation of the Friends of Syria on April 2nd and their efforts "to find a political and peaceful solution to the situation in Syria." Before that he had criticized the lack of consensus within the Security Council, which had neglected to "send a very strong message to the leadership in Damascus".

Backing up Turkey

After a meeting of the North Atlantic Council on April 18th, 2012, the Secretary General referred to the situation in Syria as a "matter of concern". In retrospect, his following remarks read almost like a script ushering an official NATO role in the Syrian conflict: "if there is a request from any Ally to consult on a security situation we have the very clear rule [...] that we are prepared to consult on any issue that may be raised by an Ally."[4] About two months later, the time had come. Turkey called for "consultations" under article 4 of the Washington treaty after a Turkish jetfighter had been shot down in international airspace, according to information from Ankara. In the meantime, the situation was heated further by a massacre at the Houla plain on May 25th, 2012. On the margins of skirmishes between the Syrian Army and the FSA, 84 member of three families were ferociously murdered.[5] Even before any investigations had been initiated, Western media and governments unanimously blamed the Assad government. Most of the "Friends of Syria" – Germany among them – expelled the Syrian ambassadors in the course of a concerted action. Hence, most NATO countries had broken off their diplomatic relations with the official Syrian government, whereas at least some allies – Turkey among them – delivered arms to opposition groups. Furthermore, on June 22nd, a Turkish jetfighter advanced into Syrian territory from the Mediterranean several times at low altitude

German Patriot missile launchers were stationed in Turkey until 2016. (Source: Bundeswehr/Mandt)

and at high speed, thus breaching Syrian airspace, before it crashed in Syrian waters. Syrian and Turkish information agree up to this point. However there were different interpretations concerning the exact place of the downing and, therefore, its legitimacy. Although the Turkish version was already considered highly implausible at that time and factually debunked afterwards,[6] NATO embraced it after the consultations in its official communiques and condemned the downing as "unacceptable" and as "another example of the Syrian authorities' disregard for international norms, peace and security, and human life."[7] The Secretary General announced that the Alliance would follow "the developments on the South-Eastern border of NATO" closely and that "the security of the Alliance" was "indivisible". This could easily be understood as a threat of war against Syria and as a backing, or even an invitation for Turkey to provoke further incidents. Such incidents took place between late September and early October 2012, when grenades and artillery shells, launched from Syrian territory, repeatedly hit Turkish territory close to the border. Although heavy fighting took place close to the border at that time and it remained un-

certain who had fired the projectiles (on one occasion they had evidently originated from NATO armory), Turkey and its NATO partners blamed the Syrian army. Even before that, Turkey had increased its number of troops at the Syrian border. On October 3rd, a grenade, launched from Syria, killed five people in Turkey, followed by the Turkish army bombarding positions of the Syrian army. On the same day the North Atlantic Council met for consultations under article 4. The following day, the Turkish parliament permitted the government to deploy the army without further consultations in northern Syria. NATO abstained from any criticism and, instead, emphasized its "solidarity" with Turkey again and again. In the weeks that followed the saber-rattling increased further. More and more NATO countries openly discussed an intervention. On October, 10th, Turkey forced a Russian airplane to land and, four days later, Dominic Johnson, departmental manager for foreign affairs of the German tageszeitung (taz), published an appeal called "Intervene! Now!": "Turkey has redeployed tens of thousands of soldiers and hundreds of battle tanks to the border. Why shouldn't they roll into Syria and protect the people

there against Assad's device of massacres? [...] There is only a military decision in Syria today."[8] In the middle November it became known that the Pentagon was making plans for a potential intervention with 75.000 soldiers. On November, 21st, Turkey officially asked NATO for support at air defence. The US, Germany and the Netherlands signaled readiness. On December 4th, NATO announced to consent to the Turkish request and to deploy anti-aircraft batteries in the country, which were directly subordinate to the NATO Supreme Commander in Europe. Although it was stressed in the Alliance's respective press report that NATO was not planning to establish a "no-flight zone", the US president, the NATO Secretary General and the German Minister for Foreign Affairs jointly warned that the deployment of chemical weapons would mean crossing a "red line", causing "serious consequences" and an "immediate reaction from the international community".[9] A lot of the media took this as an announcement of a NATO intervention and, still on the same day, UN as well as EU made public that they would pare their personnel and their activities in Syria down to the minimum. This is the usual indication of imminent airstrikes.

Threaten, wait and watch

The expected airstrikes did not happen, though, and NATO actually restricted itself to the Operation Active Fence Turkey with Germany taking a share of up to 400 soldiers (a total of 3.600 on rotational basis until the end of 2015). But the threat to intervene remained in force, of course, and gave rise to a noticeable restraint of the Syrian army in the borderland next to Turkey. This area was used as a supply route by armed groups striving to overthrow the Syrian regime. By 2012 at the latest, Turkey's support for the armed opposition with the help of secret service, training, refuge, a coordination office near Incirlik, as well as the unimpeded flow of weapons and fighters from Turkey had grown to an extent that could easily be classified as an act of aggression. This all happened in close cooperation with Qatar and Saudi Arabia – who provided weapons and money – and in loose coordination with the US. The latter also passed information about Syrian troop movements on to the insurgents, which had been collected by the German secret service (gathered by the Federal Armed Forces' spy ship "Oker"). With increasing frequency, however, these armed groups, which at that time were most commonly called FSA or democratic opposition by Western media, split into various religious and ethnic militia often just acting for mere criminal reasons. By August 2012, there was proof that the US already knew that Islamist and jihadi groups had gained the upper hand, and in November 2012 members of the opposition also publicly pointed to this fact.[10] Nonetheless, no efforts were made – neither by the US nor any other NATO country – to suspend the replenishment of weapons and fighters particularly from the Gulf States into the region. In May 2013, on the contrary, the European Union modified its sanctions against Syria in such a way that it upheld bans on deliveries of arms and other trade with the Syrian government, whereas military supplies delivered by member states to the rebels were allowed, though.[11] Correspondingly, the conflict in Syria became increasingly confusing, while continuing to escalate. After oppositional forces had repeatedly reported the usage of chemical weapons by the regime, a massive use of toxic gas occurred in Ghouta near Damascus, an area controlled by rebellious forces, on August 21st, 2013. This place is located just a few kilometers away from the place where UN inspectors had been accommodated for three days at the invitation of the Syrian government to investigate the

previous charges with the use of chemical weapons. A week later, the North Atlantic Council met for an extraordinary summit about Syria. Immediately afterwards, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen blamed the Syrian government and called the use of chemical weapons a "threat to international peace and security", which is the phrase that allows the Security Council to impose "robust" measures under Chapter VII. Several NATO members subsequently claimed that their secret services – among them the German Federal Intelligence Service – had evidence at their disposal that the Syrian army or even Assad had personally ordered the use of toxic gas. The line of reasoning put forth by Germany, France and the US differed in each case, but suggested an active exchange of secret service information. At the same time, it also established further unproven narratives such as the Syrian army having previously used toxic gas on at least 14 occasions. As a result, the government leaders of Turkey, France, Great Britain and the US argued in support of a military intervention, but they were in disagreement about its character and range. Public opinion, especially in the US, was leaning strongly against the use of ground forces. Meanwhile it became apparent in Libya, what a regime change without the use of ground forces – which had particularly been called for by Turkey and France – could lead to. Thus, the US president in particular preferred limited airstrikes as a sanction. Obama and David Cameron asked for parliamentary approval – although this was not necessary respectively –, but the British parliament resolutely defeated Cameron's request, massively discrediting the Prime Minister in the process. In the US, the senate's committee indeed accepted the resolution, but there were also hints for a potential defeat in the House of Representatives. However, a balloting never occurred, as Russia submitted an offer in the meantime: that Syria would surrender its stock of toxic gas for destruction under international control and join the Chemical Weapons Convention. On September 14th, 2012, the corresponding agreement between Russia and the US was nailed down. Although NATO was officially immaterial here too, the NATO-Russia Council met on this matter three days later. Afterwards Rasmussen announced that the Security Council would impose measures under Chapter VII if Syria didn't put the plan into action to its full extent. Russia, though, had consequently declined measures under Chapter VII before as well as after this.

From the red line to diplomatic recognition again

The consequences of the Chemical Weapons Agreement were manifold. At first, it enabled the governments in Great Britain and the US not needing to wage a war they had indeed announced but that met with resistance among the population, and, in case of the US, even within the army. Thus, a further internationalization and escalation of the war was avoided. At the same time, the agreement between Russia and the US illustrated to what extent the Syrian conflict had already become a proxy war, where competing major powers made arrangements how the respective state had to act. Another much more subtle consequence – though anything but irrelevant – was: The Syrian government was in charge of the acquisition, safeguarding and surrender of the chemical weapons. Until the implementation of the agreement, the western countries, too, were interested in stability at least in those areas where the chemical weapons were deployed. Inevitably, diplomatic contacts had to be brought back to use not only on an operational level: The fact that the "Syrian government" – the media returned to using this term more often again – joined the Chemical Weapons Convention was internationally acknowledged, which also applied to the government itself. At first glance, this looks like Russia's diplomatic triumph, but it supposedly also met the interests of quite a few western actors. As opposed to the path dependence towards regime change – created by the policy of the Friends of Syria in particular – diplomatically recognizing the government again allowed for additional flexibility once more, considering the clear dominance of sectarian Islamist groups within the (armed) opposition. Due to the civil war and its disastrous human rights record, the Syrian government could still be threatened with war, but at the same time it became possible again – at least theoretically – to enter into negotiations or even to stabilize those areas held by the regime in order to prevent a further expansion of the most radical Islamist forces.

The plan to destroy the Syrian chemical weapons was ambitious and its implementation started swiftly, but there were nonetheless quite a few delays. On October, 1st, the first inspectors of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) were in attendance, whereas the disassembly and destruction started on October, 6th. A month later, the OPCW confirmed the dismantling of all capaci-

ties to produce chemical weapons. Some stockpiles, though, had to be safeguarded on embattled territory and sent abroad for destruction. The government, with international assistance, had to negotiate short-time ceasefires with rebel groups. According to OPWC information, all remaining chemical weapons were being loaded at Syrian harbors between January 7th and June 23rd, 2014, and handed over to Great Britain, Finland and the US for destruction, which was finished in January 2015. Already on December 4th, 2013, the NATO-Russia Council had met again, welcoming the "work done so far" and noting "important progress" in a joint statement. The tone was conciliatory and obviously in compliance with Russia's position: "We recall UNSCR 2118 which stresses that the only solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process based on the Geneva Communiqué".[12]

War against terrorism instead of regime change

It is as of yet unclear which western countries deferred to claims by the Syrian government to equip them with armored vehicles and protective gear for the cover of the transport of the chemical weapons, and to which extent those countries agreed to the claims. However, the training and shipment of arms to armed opposition groups by the US, Great Britain, France, as well as the Gulf States and Turkey undoubtedly continued. The demand for a regime change was still raised by politicians and the media not only in the Gulf States, but in NATO countries as well, but not pursued by the governments – with the exception of Turkey – any further publicly. After western governments, actively supported by some groups of a civil society background, had been talking up the whole armed opposition as "democratic opposition" well into 2013, the public had difficulty realizing the predominantly Jihadi disposition of the insurrection. This only changed during 2014 when the Islamic State (ISIL/IS) seized control of ever-growing territories, committed massacres of Christian and Yazidi people and distributed videos of executions on the internet. Generally speaking, not much has changed concerning the principal strategy of NATO and the US as a result. Ground forces still seemed to be ruled out, whereas regime change seemed more unlikely, but still an option. The support and training of allegedly "moderate" armed oppositional forces proceeded, but it was justified by atrocities committed by IS and only to a lesser extent by violations of human rights committed by the Assad regime – as was any other further intervention from then on. However, the Wales Summit Declaration struck a more distinct note towards Syria again in September 2014. The Assad regime had "caused the current chaos and devastation of this country". It called for "a negotiated political transition", stressing "the important role of the moderate opposition to protect communities against the dual threats of the Syrian regime's tyranny and ISIL's extremism. [...] The deployment of Patriot missiles to defend the population and territory of Turkey is a strong demonstration of NATO's resolve and ability to defend and deter any potential threat against any ally." The statements further explains in reference to IS: "The people of Syria and Iraq and elsewhere in the region need the support of the international community to counter this threat. A coordinated international approach is required."[13]

War with and against the Kurds

However, the occurrences at Kobane shortly after the NATO Summit in Wales illustrated how far off from a joint approach the Alliance still was at that point. By mid-September 2014 IS, equipped with armored US vehicles (probably mostly captured in Iraq) pushed forward toward Kobane, a city held by Kurdish forces associated with the PKK, and threatened to overrun it and commit massacres afterwards. The skirmishes took place within range of Turkish military, expansively deployed near the border. But their only intervention was to stop the Kurdish supplies of fighters from Turkey.

On the other hand, starting on September 23rd, the US stepped in with aircrafts and bombed positions of the advancing IS, thus allowing the forces associated with the PKK, with support of some remaining FSA forces, to hold the city and push back ISIL. Turkey, though, seemingly didn't have any objection to a capture of the city, it had for months already tolerated ISIL governance on the Syrian side of the border stretching 150 km.

At the same time as the skirmishes, the equipment and training of Peshmerga forces in Northern Iraq started, conducted by Germany and other NATO allies. The fact that this armament was openly discussed and coordinated on an international level indicates that it represents a further step towards independence of the Kurdish Northern Iraq. US foreign policy has been aiming at this since 1991, at the latest. This is another instance of US and Turkish interests being contradictory. On the one hand, Turkey clearly prefers the opportunist Kurdish government in Northern Iraq, also in the sense of a weakening of PKK versus other leftist Kurdish forces. On the other hand, though, Turkey is not willing to accept a Kurdish state, which is favored by some NATO allies to stabilize Iraq, even if it was under the governance of the opportunist Kurds. However, Kurdish forces – Peshmerga by means of direct and open deliveries of arms and equipment; forces associated with PKK with the help of airstrikes against ISIL – became (temporary) allies of some NATO countries on the basis of their victories in the fight against ISIL.

Bundeswehr-Training for kurdish Peshmerga. (Source: Bundeswehr/Andrea Bienert)

International aerial war

All at once, the US support in the fight against IS also initiated the aerial war named "Operation Inherent Resolve" in Syria: Members of a large and, at the same time, very disparate alliance of NATO and Gulf States (without any official NATO involvement, though) started to invade Syrian airspace without any legitimacy under international law and attacked targets on Syrian ground. Until February 2017, Operation Inherent Resolve conducted a total of 18,458 strikes (11,160 Iraq / 7,298 Syria). Since those attacks were directed against IS at first, few protests were articulated on an international level. Even the Syrian government, which in the meantime had been equipped with potent antiaircraft by Russia, didn't express any resistance worth mentioning, as the operation was not directed against government forces. After Turkey started to conduct airstrikes solely directed against Kurdish forces in Syria in July 2014, while permitting a US utilization of Turkish airbases for attacks in Syria, Russia deployed jetfighters in the country at the invitation of the Syrian government. The reason behind this surely was to prevent airstrikes by NATO countries and their allies expanding onto forces of the regime. The Russian airstrikes, supported by cruise missiles, between October 2015 and March 2016 noticeably weakened IS and, thus, gave rise to doubts that the considerably larger US-led alliance was really willing to push back IS. Simultaneously, the airstrikes were directed against other parts of the armed opposition, classified as "moderate" by NATO allies, and enabled the Syrian army to considerably gain in territory. As a result, Russia's attacks were condemned by NATO's allies. In regard to this, a ceasefire was negotiated in February 2016, which only excluded forces allied with ISIL and Al Qaida, and reduced violence at least for some weeks.

But the potential for escalation remained enormous: almost a dozen countries still supported different groups within the Syrian civil war with weapons, advisors, special forces, and training, while up to eighteen nations backed different militia, partly fighting each other, from the air. US and Turkish jetfighters flew off from the same airbase near Incirlik – which is also a base for US atomic bombs due to NATO's program of nuclear sharing agreement – to support groups fighting each other on the ground in the Syrian civil war. Russian jetfighters, co-operating with the Syrian army, engaged in attacks at the same time – supported by

cruise missiles partly launched from Russian submarines in the eastern Mediterranean. Against the backdrop of Syria the horrible terrorist attacks in Paris were conducted on November 13th, 2015, killing 130 people and injuring several hundred more. France classified the attacks as an armed attack by ISIL, but instead of obliging NATO, France turned to the EU to – for the first time – trigger the mutual assistance clause, which is contained in the EU Lisbon treaty, but not activated up to that point. Following this, the German Federal Government – unconstitutionally, but with the consent of the Bundestag – resolved the deployment of 1.200 soldiers, six Tornados for surveillance, an Airbus for aerial refueling and a frigate to protect the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle in the eastern Mediterranean. It can safely be assumed that especially the last-mentioned frigate was not directed against the IS but rather against Russian units. Apart from the maritime component, the biggest part of the German contingent was deployed in Incirlik, Turkey. Some soldiers, however, also went to participating Gulf States and US command centers.

NATO, however, wasn't idle either after the Paris terrorist attacks. At a council of NATO defence ministers on February 11th, 2016, they decided to immediately send their Standing Maritime Group 2 to the Aegean under German command. Their aim was to interrupt the transit of refugees between Turkey and Greece in cooperation with the EU border management agency Frontex and the national coast guards and, thus, to implement the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal. However, a NATO naval task group seems to be oversized for combating illegalized migration. In case of emergency it could well become relevant to interrupt maritime supplies for Russian troops or to strictly monitor them beforehand. Such a purpose is all the more obvious because the NATO defence ministers – this time chaired by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, officiating since October 2014 – had decided at the same meeting "to step up our support for the international coalition to counter ISIL". Stoltenberg emphasized in this context "that all NATO Allies already participate and contribute to the coalition" and that the coalition could draw on NATO's experience and interoperability.[14] When asked how additional support for the coalition by NATO might look like, Stoltenberg remained vague: First of all, NATO had plans to train Iraqi "security personnel" again in the future by resuming the NATO Training Mission Iraq – of which those forces who

later on defected to ISIL had been trained between 2004 and 2011 had also been part. They began also running corresponding programs in Jordan and Tunisia, as well. Secondly, NATO would undertake duties of national defense "freeing up capabilities which these nations or the nation can use in the efforts of the coalition." Moreover, NATO would intensify its (intelligence) surveillance of the border between Syria and Turkey and, on that account, "agreed in principle to use NATO AWACS surveillance planes".

A civil war with NATO air reconnaissance

The fact that AWACS aircraft had not been in action for air surveillance and as mobile command centers for aerial war long since, but that their deployment had only been "agreed in principle" absolutely symptomizes NATO's role in Syria. Ultimately, the planes were committed in fact, but only above NATO territory (that is: Turkey) until March 2016 and only with a mandate for "integrated air defence", which doesn't include NATO stepping in to fight ISIL in Syria. At the same time, though, information is gathered about flight operations beyond NATO's genuine airspace, determined by the range of AWACS sensors[15] and passed on to NATO situation rooms. The German Federal Government didn't want to exclude that individual NATO allies were using this information for attacks in Syria. When Agnieszka Brugger (Green Party) proposed a corresponding question, the answer was merely: "The applicable grounds for a decision provides the use of the data for the purposes of integrated air defence. There are no findings about another use of the data."[16] However, the purport of AWACS operations is to make capacities available for the fight against ISIL and to support the coalition against ISIL. Thus, AWACS aircraft take over at least part of the tasks of the Patriot squadron for air defence, which was redeployed after September 2015. The final report of the German Federal Government described the purpose of the completed mission: "This resolution and the subsequent deployment of Patriot units laid the foundations that the Alliance is able to exert the right to collective self-defence under article 51 of the UN charter in case of an armed attack against Turkey under article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty." Furthermore, the deployment of soldiers of the Federal Armed Forces within the limits of the NATO operation enabled a quicker start of the German involvement in the anti-ISIL mission after the Paris terrorist attacks. The Federal Government pointed out: "Sub-

stantial parts for logistics and staff could be employed again directly in the country [...], speeding up the onset of the new operation of the Federal Armed Forces".[17]

In the same way NATO contributed to the escalation through its campaign in Libya thereby arousing hopes for the opposition in Syria, the Alliance also supported any intervention in the Syrian civil war by its members. Very early and blatantly this was the case in respect to Turkey: strengthening of Islamist forces within the opposition at first and at least promoting the imminent confrontation with Russia afterwards. This backing also holds true for the war waged by the Turkish army against the Kurds in their country, which was unleashed again since mid-2015. All other NATO countries that were or are willing to get increasingly involved in Syria – even with different aims and allies –also benefitted from this back-ing. The Alliance was however so far unable to agree on a leading role – implying an extensive aerial war – because some of its members express reservations regarding Turkey's aims. (Among other things – anoth-er reason is that a situation like the one in Libya shouldn't happen again). A new strat-egy took the place of the "characteristic" comprehensive and open NATO intervention, like the one in Libya. The new mix included informal influence, co-operation with irregu-lar troops and strategic communication with the objective of destabilization – an accusa-tion often currently directed at Russia with the label "hybrid warfare". It's hard to know and speculative to suggest to what extent NATO impinged on the reporting about the Houla massacre, the downing of the Turkish jetfighter, the use of toxic gas near Ghouta and other striking incidents which often took place in close vicinity to fixed meetings. Certain similarities to the "Racak massacre" prior to the war in Yugoslavia or the apparently imminent "Benghazi attack" immediately suggest themselves. This veil of silence without pictures, which has been observable during all NATO interventions to date being cast over the concrete combat actions by NATO allies: Images of planes taking off and landing are shown, but the devastation caused by them is not.[18]

1. NATO Secretary General Rasmussen himself talks about these expectations, for instance at a press conference on February 28th, 2012: "Very often, I get the question: 'Why could you intervene in Libya but not in Syria?' But in Libya we had a very clear United Nations mandate and we had active support from a number of countries in the region. None of these conditions are fulfilled in Syria." Press conference by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation General Stéphane Abrial at the ACT Seminar, nato.int, 28.02.2012.

2. Daniel Byman, Michael Doran, Kenneth Pollack, Salman Shaikh: Saving Syria: Assessing Options for Regime Change, Brookings Institution Middle East Memo #21, März 2012.

3. New NATO – new Turkey - Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen held in Ankara, Turkey, nato.int, 17.2.2012.

4. Press point by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen following the joint North Atlantic Council meeting in Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers session, nato.int, 18.04.2012.

5. The massacre of Houla took place, but in all probability wasn't caused by government forces because members of three families who had never joined the insurgence were killed specifically. On the contrary, there is evidence to suggest a war crime committed by Islamist militia with local support on the margins of regular skirmishes between the Syrian Army and the FSA. See: Rainer Hermann: Eine Auslöschung, Faz.net, 13.6.2012.

6. Markus Kaim, Günter Seufert: Deutsche Patriot-Raketen in der Türkei - Symbolik statt Strategie, SWP-Aktuell 1, January 2013. See also Bundestags-Drucksache 17/13515.

7. Doorstep statement delivered by the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, nato.int, 26.6.2012.

8. Dominic Johnson: „Eingreifen! Jetzt!", taz.de, 16.10.2012. Own translation.

9. "NATO threatens Syria with an 'immediate reaction'" („Nato droht Syrien mit 'unverzüglicher Reaktion'") was a headline used by the Tagesspiegel (tagesspiegel. de, 4.12.2012), the exact wording used by the NATO Secretary General can be found here: Doorstep statement by the NATO Secretary General at the start of the Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting, nato.int, 4.12.2012.

10. About the contradictory public and internal definition of the "insurgents" by Western governments, see: Christoph Marischka: Syrien - Wie Luftabwehr und Völkerrecht ausgehebelt wurden, IMI-Analyse 2015/029, imi-online. de, 6.8.2015. The indication of Islamist forces gaining power was accompanied by the demand to support FSA with more and better weapons.

11. EU Council Decision 2013/109/GASP. About its context see: Christoph Marischka: EU erweitert Instrumentarium - Aufrüstung von Bürgerkriegsparteien als Teil des Sanktionsregimes, IMI-Standpunkt 2013/012, in: AUSDRUCK (April 2013).

12. NATO-Russia Council Statement of Support for the OPCW-UN Joint Mission, nato.int, 04.12.2013.

13. Wales Summit Declaration - Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, nato.int, 05.10.2015.

14. Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Defence Ministers, nato.int, 11.02.2016.

15. Deutscher Bundestag – Verteidigungsausschuss: Ausschussdrucksache 18(12)652, 18.3.2016.

16. Ibid. Own translation.

17. BMVg, Auswärtiges Amt: Bericht der Bundesregierung an den Deutschen Bundestag zur Entsendung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte zur Verstärkung der Integrierten Luftverteidigung der NATO auf Ersuchen der Türkei und auf Grundlage des Rechts auf kollektive Selbstverteidigung (Artikel 51 der Charta der Vereinten Nationen) sowie des Beschlusses des Nordatlantikrates vom 4. Dezember 2012, sent to the parliamentary party leaders on April, 7th, 2016. Own translation.

18. The articles by Christopher Schwitanski in this brochure illustrate that NATO is optimizing its strategic communication, especially regarding aerial warfare.

NATO Centres of Excellence – Planning the Next War

by Christopher Schwitanski

Introduction

In the course of restructuring NATO's chain of command – a process initiated at the 2002 NATO Summit in Prague – NATO resolved upon the foundation of Allied Command Transformation (ACT). ACT's mission is to promote the transformation of the Alliance towards military interventions on a global level. ACT is supported by the creation of new military think tanks – so-called Centres of Excellence (COE[1]). There are now 24[2] COEs (and counting). The proliferation of COEs raises the question: what is the impact of COEs on NATO?

Answering a first minor interpellation by the German Left Party, the parliamentarians voiced the suspicion, "that the Centres of Excellence were instruments to deliberately create forums for the military and prospective executive personnel financed by tax money. The task of these forums is to develop a more offensive NATO doctrine for specials fields in particular, such as cyber war and strategic communication – outside of the military chain of command, outside of political control, outside of critical publicity and without taking into account international law in the process."[3]

This report will examine whether or not these reservations are justified and which importance is assigned to NATO's Centres of Excellence within the military Alliance. It will begin by describing the COEs in general and in terms of their progress, financing and working principles. It will then look more closely at two particular facilities with German involvement. Finally, Centres of Excellence will be critically evaluated as part of Allied Command Transformation.

NATO Centres of Excellence: Part of NATO's transformation process

At the 2002 Prague Summit, the NATO member states voted to reorient NATO's chain of command with the goal of giving the Alliance more flexibility in conducting military interventions. One outcome of the summit was that NATO's former Supreme Commands in Europe (Allied Command Europe) and the US (Allied Command Atlantic) were merged into a single Allied Command Operation (ACO) (based in Mons, Belgium, where the headquarters of the former Allied Command Europe

had been) with command over all NATO operations worldwide.[4] Simultaneously, the Allied Command Transformation (ACT) was introduced as the second part of the new chain of command. It is based in the facilities of the former Allied Command Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia, and in charge of promotion and control of all transformational processes of the Alliance.[5] ACT is headed by the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), one of two strategic commanders at the top of NATO's command structure. Taken together, ACO and ACT form NATO's chain of command, reporting to the highest military and civilian committees of NATO, the Military Committee and the North Atlantic Council respectively.

At a later meeting of the Defence Committee (which was dissolved in 2010 and incorporated into the North Atlantic Council) and the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) in Brussels, a resolution was adopted to support the new Allied Command Transformation by creating institutions known as Centres of Excellence. Their mission was to facilitate NATO's on-going process of transformation under the coordination of ACT.[6] COEs are internationally sponsored institutions that are not, despite their importance for the Alliance, under the control of NATO's chain of command. This relative autonomy was intended to facilitate innovative work outside the restrictions of existing NATO doctrine.

As early as two years after the decision of the Defence Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group in Brussels, the Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC) – the first Centre of Excellence – was approved by NATO and officially took up work in Kalkar, Germany. In 2006, the Defence Against Terrorism Centre of Excellence (DAT COE) was founded in Turkey. Within the next years the number of COE institutions has grown considerably to 24 NATO Centres of Excellence, with 23 of these in Europe (as of August 2016).[7]

Establishing a NATO Centre of Excellence

NATO's basic requirements for establishing Centres of Excellence cover a few general issues: At first, each COE is supposed to create some added value within the Alliance by having its own, unique subject area so that COEs are not competing with each other. COEs are explicitly invited to think outside the box and develop new innova-

tive concepts. Additionally, member nations are not required to sponsor COEs, but those that do finance the entire enterprise (no direct funding from NATO). Finally, the relations between COEs, NATO and involved member states are specifically defined by various agreements (Memoranda of Understanding – MOU). According to NATO, the general mission of COEs is to improve teaching and training, to enhance interoperability and application possibilities, to enable developing and testing of new concepts and doctrines, and to provide Lessons Learned Analyses. The COE's are integrated into various NATO working groups corresponding to their subject area. Thus, they are supposed to influence the revision of NATO concepts and doctrines, and to contribute to the transformation process.

State participation and financing

NATO Centre of Excellence host nations, or Framework Nations, provide physical space and resources, determine the institution's specific subject area and apply for NATO accreditation. The Framework Nation contributes most of the financing, though a group of member states or even NATO itself can sponsor the COE within a particular nation. All of these could come up with the initial concept for the new COE, but this provisional concept must be brought into accordance with the ACT. After the approval of the COE, the Framework Nation can offer participation in the project to Sponsoring Nations. These are usually member states willing to support the CEO financially or by providing qualified personnel. Nations that are part of the Partnership for Peace programme[8] as well as non-governmental organizations can also participate. There are also Contributing Nations/Participant who may provide resources, but have no right of co-determination within the COE and their financial sponsorships are not binding. Their specific role and obligations are defined by a technical agreement between the Contributing Nations, the COE and, optionally, the Sponsoring Nations.[9] That way, Georgia has been a party to the Energy Security Centre of Excellence (ENSEC COE) in Vilnius, Lithuania, as the first non-NATO country acting as a Contributing Nation.[10] Sponsoring Nations as well as other state and non-state actors thus have the ability to influence the work of the institution.

A COE's budget and Programme of Work are determined by the COE's Steering

Committee (SC), which is composed of representatives of all Sponsoring Nations. The SC meets bi-annually to oversee the budget and Programme of Work (POW). The POW is developed in coordination between Sponsoring Nations and ACT and then approved by the Steering Committee. The COE's work is provided to the SC's Sponsoring Nations, whereas "functional and political control of the output obtained in accordance with the 'Programme of Work' is effected by means of the nations present in the COE's Steering Committee."[11] The national representatives within the Steering Committee of a COE are further responsible for the evaluation of the individual Sponsoring Nations' responsibilities. Other organizations, including NATO itself, may suggest appropriate work for a particular COE.

Participation in a Centre of Excellence can provide a number of advantages to the Sponsoring or Contributing Nation. These nations benefit from the multinational expertise housed in a COE as well as from ideas and strategies developed there. Because Sponsoring Nations comprise the Steering Committee, they can influence the SC to provide work that furthers the Sponsoring Nation's national interests. Furthermore, housing an international military organization can be seen as a prestigious object and the involvement in a COE may also provide an opportunity for new NATO members to gain more influence within NATO's chain of command.[12] There is an assessment concerning this matter on the website of the German Federal Armed Forces: "Apart from their functional role, COE also fulfill a function by their sheer presence: they provide an opportunity to new NATO Allies in Eastern Europe, in particular, to visibly underline their NATO membership and to raise a NATO flag on their territory."[13]

Centres of Excellence also maintain relationships with other COEs and NATO facilities. For example, new ideas developed by a COE may directly influence teaching at facilities like NATO School Oberammergau. This way, new concepts can directly influence teaching. There is also cooperation with other countries, such as members of Partnership for Peace or the Mediterranean Dialogue member states, as well as with civil society actors, international organizations, industry, NGOs, schools, universities, and research centers. Such a mesh of relationships is officially called a Community of Interest (COI). The Centres of Excellence are encouraged to extend and foster them. NATO has established a web portal to aid

17. Cold Weather Operations
18. Crisis Management and Disaster Response
19. Energy Security
20. Explosive Ordanance Disposal
21. Human Intelligence
22. Modelling and Simulation
23. Stability Policing

1. Analysis and Simulation
2. Civil-Military Cooperation
3. Command and Control
4. Cooperative Cyber Defence
5. Counter – Improvised Explosive Divices
6. Counter Intelligence
7. Defence Against Terrorism
8. Joint Air Power
9. Joint CBRN Defense
10. Military Engineering
11. Military Medicine
12. Military Police
13. Mountain Warfare
14. Naval Mine Warfare
15. Operations in Confined an Shallow Waters
16. Strategic Communication

German Participation

NATO Centres of Excellence (Source: IMI)

Accreditation:

A Centre of Excellence must be accredited by the alliance as an official NATO organization. The criteria needed for accreditation are established by SACT. Compliance with these requirements are checked at regular intervals of three to four years. There are two different kinds of criteria: mandatory criteria and highly desirable criteria.

Mandatory criteria must be consistently maintained and allow for the COE to meet NATO's requirements to profitably support the Alliance in its process of transformation. The COE should provide skills, expertise and resources not residing elsewhere within the Alliance and deliver the added value already mentioned. Mandatory criteria influence the teaching and training of NATO personnel, thus, they are constantly coordinated with HQ SACT. Apart from these rather substantial criteria, they also include the obligation to provide for the security of the facility, its staff and its material. NATO takes top priority regarding access to support by and services of a COE, and contact between NATO and COE has to be possible at all times.

In addition to mandatory criteria, highly desirable criteria should be maintained to the maximum extent possible. To meet NATO's requirements to help in its transformational process is paramount. Thus work and organizational structure of the Centre have to be adjusted accordingly. Furthermore, NATO expects full transparency of all COE activi-

part of NATO's legal acquis governing the legal status of the Alliance's international headquarters). Having gained this status, an accredited COE has the same rights and privileges as other NATO headquarters.[15]

Activity

Upon accreditation, a Centre of Excellence begins its official work. This includes various projects within specialized subject areas that are pursued by subject experts, i.e. Subject Matter Experts (SME). SME are often involved in other NATO working groups outside the COE. Projects range from the development of new doctrines and strategic concepts, to recommendations, to evaluation and testing of new technology to support and assist in ongoing NATO operations. The Joint Operation from the Sea COE (CJOS COE), for example, has developed tactics and strategies for fighting pirates. These ideas have been deployed off the coast of Somalia. "Education and Training" is another COE mission. COEs frequently offer in-house courses and advanced training, and they also cooperate with NATO training facilities like NATO School Oberammergau. Advanced training activities are often, though not exclusively, directed towards NATO military personnel and even non-military and non-NATO members. Depending on the subject matter, external professionals and experts may also be involved. Numerous conferences and workshops hosted by COEs help bring together different actors. Depending on

Naval base in Kiel. (Source: Wikipedia)

the topic, political, scientific and business professionals may participate. Arms industries often act as sponsors of these events. The COE work results are often published as reports and articles, though some COEs periodically publish information brochures about the status of their current work. Such publications are made publicly available on the respective COE websites with considerable variation between the individual COE facilities. Even if public access is possible, it has to be kept in mind that the insight provided is most probably quite "selected".

The steady increase in NATO Centres of Excellence since 2003, now numbering 24, is remarkable and raises questions regarding the importance of these facilities for NATO. Aside from the official statements, what information remains hidden from public view? It can be safely assumed that individual Centres within the Alliance have varying levels of influence. The differing number of nations involved in the various centres, ranging from one single nation up to 17 in case of the JAPCC in Kalkar as well as the MILENG COE in Ingolstadt, suggests that centres with more involvement will have more influence. For example, in 2008, the former director of the Centre Combined Joint Operations from the Sea (CJOS COE) said about the Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC) in Kalkar: "That one (JAPCC) has been remarkably successful, producing a number of joint air power products for NATO, most of which have been accepted straight into doc-

trine." Similarly, the influence of individual Centres also strongly differs according to the relevance of their respective thematic subject matters for NATO. The Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD COE) in Tallinn, for example, is supported by 15 NATO member states. The Centre is heavily engaged in the current debate about cyber war by creating a frame for dealing with cyberattacks according to international law and calling for offensive cyber capacities within NATO (Tallinn Manual).[17]

German participation and financing

As a Framework Nation or a Sponsoring Nation, Germany is currently involved in 17 out of 24 accredited COEs. In case of three COEs, Germany is the sole Framework Nation: the Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC) in Kalkar, the Military Engineering Centre of Excellence (MILENG COE) in Ingolstadt and the Centre of Excellence for Operations in Confined and Shallow Waters (COE CSW) in Kiel. Germany also joins the Netherlands as Framework Nation for the Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence (CCOE) in Den Haag. Apart from that, the country acts as Sponsoring/Participating Nation for an additional 13 COEs.[18]

Financing of Centres of Excellence under German participation follows chapter 1422 of the German federal government budget (appropriations related to membership of NATO and other international organizations). Eleven COEs were financed by a total an-

nual amount of about 900.000 to 1 million Euro between 2011 and 2014. The share of the four COE's supported by Germany as a Framework Nation amounted to 70-80% of the money spent by Germany on COE's in total. The German government contributes 100.000 to 300.000 Euro annually for each of the four Centres. It has to be taken into account that the other Sponsoring Nations also contribute their share. Thus, the total budget of the individual Centres is much higher. The annual report of the JAPCC can be used as an example to provide insight into Centre's budgets: Since 2007, the JAPCC has had an annual total of about 950.000 € at its disposal. Most of the funding (55-63%) was budgeted under the category of "travel supply services". The other two budget categories turn out much smaller: "personnel" was said to comprise 24-26% of the Centre's budget and "AIS [Automated Information System] and Equipment" 12-18%. These broad categories demonstrate the limit to which this COE is willing to provide the public information on how their money is spent. Contributions are not limited to cash. Manpower expenses for the military personnel dispatched by the participating countries are not included in this Centre's budget. Similarly, JAPCC and the other two Centres located in Germany use facilities provided gratis by the German Federal Government.

Participating in 17 Centres of Excellence, Germany is involved in the highest number of these facilities among all NATO members,

followed by Italy (15), the Netherlands, Poland and the US (13 each), as well as France, Romania and the Czech Republic (12 each). It stands to reason that countries with broad participation in various COEs have more influence on NATO's transformation process and its military chain of command. Thus, Germany's comprehensive participation can be seen in accordance with its increasing military commitment within NATO. Furthermore, it is not inconceivable that German participation is influencing the awarding of contracts for the local arms industry, within the frame of research on new technologies within the COE's, for example.

Two Centres of Excellence are described in more detail below, so this report doesn't supply a complete description of all the aspects of the COE's, but only a first rundown.

Germany as a Framework Nation Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC)

Framework Nation: Germany
Location: Kalkar
Accreditation: 2005
Participating Nations: BEL, CAN, CZE, FRA, GER, GRC, HUN, ITA, NLD, NOR, POL, PRT, ROU, ESP, TUR, GBR, USA

Location

The Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC) is the first and biggest NATO Centre of Excellence since its accreditation in 2005. It is located within the German Federal Armed Forces' Von-Seydlitz-Kaserne facility in Kalkar. Spatially and organizationally, the JAPCC is integrated into the structures of German and NATO air forces, which accounts for the facility's location in Germany and Kalkar, in particular.

In addition to the JAPCC, the Von-Seydlitz-Kaserne facility also hosts the Combined Air Operations Centre, which is part of the German air force leadership for domestic and overseas deployments. The Combined Air Operations Centre also operates the Joint Force Air Component Headquarters (JFAC HQ), a transferable facility for conducting overseas deployments and multinational operations. NATO's Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) is located close to Kalkar, in Uedem. The CAOC is one of NATO's two tactical air force combat headquarters and is responsible for surveillance of 14 NATO member states' air space, compiling aerial views. "The area of responsibility reaches from the Baltic states to Great Britain and

Logos of the Centres of Excellence. (Source: NATO)

from the Alps to Iceland."[21] The National Air Security Center (NASC) is affiliated to the CAOC. It is responsible for surveillance of German air space, hosting soldiers of the Federal Armed Forces, officials of the federal police and the German Air Navigation Services, as well as members of the Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Relief. One of its primary responsibilities is defense against potential terrorist attacks by means of civilian aircraft.

Located nearby in Ramstein, Rheinland-Pfalz, is the central command of all NATO and US air forces. Air space north of the Alps is controlled from the base at Uedem/Kalkar and air space south of the Alps is commanded from Ramstein Air Base. Visualizing the concentration of Federal Armed Forces and NATO bases in Germany relevant to air force deployment, the incorporation of the JAPCC into Kalkar is not surprising, given the fact that it is assisting and cooperating with facilities nearby with its work. This cooperation is benefitting from a mutual level of command. The Director of the JAPCC, General Frank Gorenc, also acts as Commander of the US Air Forces in Europe, as Commander of the US Air Forces Africa and as Commander of NATO Allied Air Command, headquartered at Ramstein Air Base. Subordinate to Gorenc, the Executive Director of the JAPCC, Lieutenant General Joachim Wundrak, is also in charge of the German Air Operations Command and the NATO HQ Aircom (CAOC) in Uedem.

Work

According to its official website, the JAPCC "is charged with the development of innovative concepts and solutions required for the transformation of A&S [Air & Space] Power within the Alliance and the Nations."[22] The German Air Force frames this mission in less technical terms on its website, indicating that the facility was "able to successfully work on the full array of problems regarding leadership and the deployment of means of aerial warfare."[23]

Work at the JAPCC is not only focused on the development of new doctrines and concepts for the air forces, but it also contributes to new doctrines and concepts in space, cyberspace and interoperability between air forces and their armies and navies. Concrete results of individual projects – as far as this process is publicly accessible – are mostly published as studies and White Papers. This Centre of Excellence is interlinked to a number of other NATO facilities. The Centre's 2012 annual report explains that experts of the JAPCC "actively participated in over 70 NATO committees, panels and working groups as well as serving as Chairmen of three NATO Working Groups."[24]

Air force relevant areas of study include aerial refueling, aerial reconnaissance, transportation of troops and resources, and the operation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's, aka "drones"). The work on space outside of earth's atmosphere examines the utilization of space, especially for reasons of surveillance and information gathering, and for the purpose of increasingly anchoring it as one of the military's operational domains (along with land, sea and air) within NATO. Similarly, cyberspace is now considered a critical military domain. According to the bi-annual journal of the JAPCC, cyberspace is understood as one of the "five domains of warfare (Air, Land, Sea, Space and Cyber)".[25] The JAPCC also takes active part in the advancement of drones, working on drone schedules and concepts for implementation and operation within NATO and recommending a major effort to develop this technology in the future, too. Rarely taken into account in these discussion are the large number of civilian casualties resulting from UAV operations and concerns about the application of international law to this technology. On the other hand, the political acceptance of operations due to the absent danger to the pilots is commended as a positive benefit of UAV use. A White Paper on the deployment of Unmanned Air Systems (UAS) within NATO, published by the JAPCC,

states: "UAS can lower the risk and raise the political acceptance and confidence that high risk missions will be successful."[26] Aside from developing theoretical concepts, the JAPCC is also assisting specific ongoing NATO operations. The Afghanistan intervention, for example, is supported with guidelines for the use of airborne assets in combating the use of improvised explosive devices (IED). The anti-piracy mission at the Horn of Africa is another ongoing NATO mission where the JAPCC makes recommendations for how to use air assets to support the navy. The Centre's work isn't limited to the development of guidelines and doctrine, experts are often sent to the area of operation to assist in the implementation of the guidelines and doctrine produced by the Centre.[27]

The Centre also organizes events that bring together a wide variety of relevant experts and actors with interest in individual subject matters. The most important one is the annual Air and Space Power Conference, financed by numerous armament groups (among them Airbus, General Atomics, Thales-Raytheon-Systems). About 200 high-ranking military personnel as well as government representatives and business leaders attended the conference in 2015. The Future Vector study, published in 2014, is a particularly substantial project. It was the primary topic of the Air and Space Power Conference in Kleve staged in the same year. Within the frame of the "Future Vector Project", various NATO experts on air force topics compiled recommendations for the political and military leaders of NATO regarding the future role of the air force within the Alliance. The study called for increased expenditure by the European NATO countries on air and space assets because: "the ability for NATO to continue to employ and sustain both Air and Space Power to safeguard our populations and enable NATO operations is at risk."[28] The question of how air power that is usually deployed far away from Germany's frontiers is supposed to safeguard the population within those borders was not addressed. JAPC's conclusion that there is an urgent need for increased military expenditures is consistent with the narrative of allegedly underfunded Federal Armed Forces that has been pushed by Germany's media and politicians in recent years.

Apart from the Future Vector study's advice to further advance the deployment of UAS's, the study also encourages a continuation of a strategy of "deterrence,

based on an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities"[29] with respect to Russia and the Ukrainian crisis specifically and, more generally, "to reaffirm its [NATO's] current nuclear deterrence posture and retain a credible 'Dual Capable Aircraft' (DCA) capability in Europe."[30]

Clearly, NATO is a long way from nuclear disarmament. But the Alliance's attitude towards conventional bombs, as it is expressed in the JAPCC publications, is extremely problematic, as well. The Future Vector Project also examines past NATO interventions and the lessons to be learned from them. Beginning with the war in Yugoslavia and continuing to the wars in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan, an exclusively positive summary of air force operations is delivered and the decisive role of air assets to the "success" of NATO missions is emphasized. The enormous number of civilian casualties, the consequences of destroyed civil infrastructure and the ensuing breakdown of any public order go unheeded by this "critical" appraisal of the deployment of millions of tons of explosive air ordinance. Collateral damage is only considered problematic to the extent that civilian deaths threaten to undermine political and public support for military deployment. The civilian deaths themselves are, one might conclude, not problematic in and of themselves.

Another JAPCC study with a similar theme, "Mitigating the Disinformation Campaigns against Airpower", focuses on the question of what can be done to overcome "disinformation campaigns", which jeopardize the public acceptance of the use of air power. "Disinformation" stating inaccurate estimates of civilian casualties, for example, could result in public rejection of the use of air power in foreign assignments or public condemnation of the deployment of UAS. Public opinion studies in Germany, unlike the US and Britain, generally reveal an apprehension to use air power because of the threat to civilians posed by the use of air power. The report suggests that Germans' pacifist convictions are a residual effect of the Second World War: "[...] the Germans are far more susceptible to disinformation campaigns and anti-military campaigns than most other NATO nations."[31] Based on the problem of lack of support, the Centre recommends improving military communication efforts to enhance public acceptance of military interventions and to proactively engage adversarial "disinformation". The importance of this topic for NATO air forces is underlined by the fact that it was

one of the themes of the 2015 Air and Space Power Conference in 2015 in Essen: "Air Power and Strategic Communications – NATO Challenges for the Future". Its focus was on strategic communications as a means to counter disagreeable convictions among the population. Prior to the conference, the JAPCC – cooperating with the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga (StratCom COE) – published a Read Ahead text introducing the conference theme. The text was meant to be thought-provoking and included the following statement: "The lawfare movement, using civilian casualties as a justification, has moved not only to outlaw air munitions needed for future conflicts (cluster bombs are very important if fighting an enemy that is organized as a conventional force) but is also trying to establish a rule that ANY loss of a civilian or civilian collateral damage is a war crime. NATO will use all resources at its disposal to avoid civilian casualties."[32] The suggestion that NATO would use all resources to avoid civilian casualties can only be seen as perfidy if the necessity of cluster bombs was emphasized in the preceding sentence. Cluster bombs are outlawed by more than 100 countries, including Germany, because of their potential to cause horrible injuries among the civilian population. The reasoning used to improve the acceptance of NATO air force is perfidious, as the previous example has shown. The criticism of air campaigns that they result in a high number of civilian casualties is depicted as irrational and false and intended only to undermine the air force. Civilian casualties are thus reduced to nothing more than a functional argumentation aid used by anti-war activists, while the issue of immense human suffering resulting from the use of aerial munitions and the military's responsibility for that suffering are ignored. Indeed, the avoidance of negative media coverage seems to be more important than avoidance of civilian casualties. We can only hope that "the Germans"[33] continue to stick to their critical opinion of air campaigns and that this critical attitude continues to grow despite strategic efforts to improve the reputation of the air force.

Centre of Excellence for Operations in Confined and Shallow Waters (COE CSW)

Framework Nation: Germany
Location: Kiel
Accreditation: 2007
Participating Nations:
GER, GRC, ITA, NLD, POL, TUR, FIN, USA

Location

Established on the initiative of Germany, the Centre of Excellence for Operations in Confined and Shallow Waters (COE CSW) is located at one of the pivotal bases of the German Navy: Tirpitzhafen Naval Base Kiel. This COE is situated within the staff building of Flotilla 1, which is also accountable for maritime operations in coastal and shallow waters. Flotilla 1 largely consists of small and versatile units, like fast patrol boat squadrons, minesweeping squadrons, submarine squadrons, as well as the Naval Special Forces Command (SEK M). Aside from Flotilla 1, the Navy minesweepers and the Underwater Acoustics and Marine Geophysics Research Institute of the German Federal Armed Forces are also residents of Naval Base Kiel.[34] It can be assumed that there is close cooperation between the COE and Flotilla 1. This shows up not only concerning spatial and substantial overlap, but also considering the level of command: The director of the COE CSW also is Commander of Flotilla 1 at the same time.

Work

As far as the role of the Centre of Excellence is concerned, the facility emphasizes the importance of its work by wording on its website that 70% of the surface of the earth are covered by water, 80% of the world's population live in the vicinity of the coast and that 90% of international trade take place at sea.[35] If the enormous importance of maritime foreign trade for the German economy[36] is taken into account on top of that – causing the German Navy to deduce that "maritime security" was "vital" for Germany[37] – it is not surprising that Germany is participating as a Framework Nation. Furthermore, a study published by the COE arrives at the result that the anticipated increase of global trade "especially in the following regions: Intra-Far East; between Far East and Oceania, Latin America, and the Middle East [...] will further increase the significance of the major international shipping routes running inevitably through CSW as they are vital connecting links between the (major) ports as well as the (mega-) cities. Hence, the ability to secure these SLOCs [Sea Lines of Communication] in the CSW environment is essential."[38] Thus, a pivotal task of the Navy will be military safeguarding of trade routes in the future as well, specifically focusing on shallow and coastal waters. Apart from such fundamental arguments for the Navy's essential role in protecting commerce, subject matters of the Centre of Excellence include various projects, such as developing legal framework conditions for future deployments of the Navy, fighting sea mines and improvised booby traps in water (also by means of Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUV)), concepts for fighting piracy, and integrating other military domains such as air, cyberspace and space.

Like most COE's, the CSW is cooperating with numerous NATO facilities within the context of these projects, particularly with Combined Joint Operations from the Sea Centre of Excellence (CJOS COE), based in the US, with the German Federal Armed Forces, and there is also cooperation with the Frankfurt Institute for Transformation Studies at European University Viadrina and the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University (ISPK; see also Kiel Conference below).

One study published by CSW, "Prospective Operations in Confined and Shallow Waters", which discusses global developments and their implications for coastal regions as "battlefields", provides interesting insight into the future operational areas of NATO's Navy in coastal waters and, thus, into the subject matters of this COE. Several parts of this document about anticipated future "challenges" are particularly revelatory. Consider, for example, the following assessment regarding urban development: "Cities will accommodate 65% of the world's population by 2040. The majority of these concentrated urban clusters will be situated in the vicinity of or right on the coast in littoral areas and thus in proximity to CSW."[39] Many major cities are situated within the potential operational area of navy operations, where an aggravation of conflicts is anticipated: "Shortages in vital resources, failed infrastructure, increased likelihood of infectious diseases, and income disparities could result in dissatisfaction and rising criminality up to civil unrest in urban areas."[40] Consequently, naval forces are possibly needed to conduct peace support operations, humanitarian aid and stabilization missions in rural areas around and within CSW. The global imbalance in the distribution of vital resources, which has already been mentioned, is further expounded in the document: "The rising nutritional demand remains a vital issue to mankind as starvation and malnutrition are capital drivers for social unrest, riots and revolts easily creating areas with reduced governance up to failed states."[41] It is easy to observe today that a lot of the naval missions serve to protect trade routes and, thus, Western economies. Ironically, the cited passages reveal that military circles are acutely aware of the disastrous consequences resulting from the uneven global distribution of vital resources such as food and water. They even specify them accurately. The real problem, however, is not addressed. Instead of taking a critical view of the political and economic systems responsible for such an imbalance and proposing political solutions, they simply see an opportunity for future military interventions. Military interventions, of course, will not attack the source of these problems and instead seek to uncritically maintain those political and economic structures co-responsible for global misery.

To counter the pending developments on a "Battlespace of Rising Complexity", the COE CSW suggests: "Innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence, smart networks, advanced computing, automation, miniaturization, nanotechnology, robotics, bionics, additive manufacturing, and advanced ship-building technologies are to be assessed with regard to their potential to support operational demands in CSW."[42] For an institution such as COE CSW, a critical consideration of concomitant risks for society as a whole, to the extent that one is offered at all, is certain to come up short. Fittingly, the concluding publication of the Kiel Conference contains this passage regarding autonomous underwater vehicles: "Soon, these are expected to be up to 6.000 t in size and have an operating range of more than 7.500 nautical miles, including the potential ability to autonomously engage targets without a soldier in the loop. Such use creates potential ethical and legal issues in the eyes of European states, whereas the U.S.A., Russia, or China, are apparently dealing with that issue more openly."[43]

Like other COEs, the organization of various conferences is part of the mission. This includes the Conference on Operational Maritime Law, the Maritime Security Conference in cooperation with the CJOS COE, and the Kiel Conference, hosted for the first time in June 2015 by the COE CSW and the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University. The latter involved about 80 international experts representing military, political, scientific, and economic institutions. The organizers hope to establish the Conference as part of the Kiel Week on a permanent basis and as a naval counterpart of the Munich Security Conference. The official theme of the conference was maritime security with changing regional foci. The theme of this

Protests at the Kiel Week („Kieler Woche"). (Source: warstarts-herekiel.noblogs.org)

COE's first conference was the Baltic Sea and dealing with sea mines in this area. The conference's concluding documents elaborate on the threat to littoral states by Russia's (allegedly) increasing military activities: "Along with repeated Russian aggressive postures, the increased presence of Russian nuclear arms delivery vehicles in the region […] is of particular concern".[44] The document does recognize "critical" voices which view the potential threat as less problematic. The keynote, however, is paradigmatically reflected in thoughts about "whether and to what extent the concept of deterrence with a nuclear emphasis would carry in the face of a new facet of Russian military strategy that is hybrid in nature."[45] Predictably, this leads to the conclusion that Western military budgets must be increased: "Western states appear to continuously proceed in tailoring their defense efforts primarily according to budgetary constraints instead of aligning them to the rising threat at hand."[46]

Searching for a nuanced reflection of both Russia and NATO's roles in producing the current situation, which should include exposing the problems of the massive military buildup of NATO's eastern flank, NATO's significant military presence in the Black Sea and numerous provocative NATO military maneuvers near Russian waters, is futile. Given the emphasis placed on disproportionate military solutions to conflicts of this kind, it is highly ironic that the conference is co-hosted by the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University, which states on its website that it "is fully devoted to the University's motto 'Pax Optima Rerum' (Peace above all else)."[47] Aside from hosting the Kiel Conference, the Institute for Security Policy's unabashed incongruity with this motto is further evidenced by many of the Institute's activities: the institute compiled a study about the effectiveness of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and similar missions for the Federal Ministry of Defence, for example. Furthermore, a closer look at the directing staff even more explicitly reveals the institute's proximity to the military. This quote from the Institute's Academic Director, Prof. Dr. Joachim Krause, offering an assessment of the Ukrainian Crisis, further reveals incongruity with the Institute's motto: "Politics aiming at dominance of escalation without ruling out reasonable military measures would be a better idea. This could include deliveries of arms to Ukraine as well as American air support for Ukraine to help in their fight against irregular troops."[48]

Considering this aggressive rhetoric and the subject matters of the ISPK, the cooperation of both facilities is not surprising. It rather seems that two kindred minds have met. Neither the Institute nor the Centre of Excellence seem to comply with the motto "peace above all else" as both entities support the deployment of military forces in coastal or shallow waters. Military safeguarding of one-sided security interests in global coastal areas seems to have priority over peace where these two "think-tanks" are concerned.

Conclusion

The choice of the COEs sponsored by Germany as a Framework Nation, which were selected for this article, does not reveal the whole range of output from active NATO COEs. The selection of these COEs rather offers some insight into how the working principles and subject matters of this growing NATO structure, which were outlined in the beginning, are manifest in their output. These COE's also illustrate how military logic influences how these respective think tanks choose, consider and advise on topics of global importance. Examining these COEs allows us to draw several important conclusions.

First, the COE's evaluation of past NATO conflicts is remarkable. It reveals a narrow focus on short-term military success, while the enormous number of civilian casualties and the ongoing structural consequences of demolished infrastructure are not considered. Consider, too, how such an uncritical view is reflected in discussions about so-called "failed" or "unstable" states. Irrespective of whether or not such a classification of states is even reasonable, the role of NATO and Western military, economic and political policies in producing the conditions labeled "failed" or "unstable" are left entirely unexamined. The future conflicts predicted in various publications because of ruined states, poverty and global imbalance are only assessed as potential sites for future war deployments, while the COEs recommendations consider only military options.

In order to be ready for these future conflicts, JAPCC, as well as COE CSW bring forth demands for higher investments – which can also be almost called symptomatic – into the respective type of armed forces. Parliamentary control of budgets and sociopolitical conditions, such as massive debts and pressure to reduce spending – not least intensified due to the financial crisis – is completely ignored, as are the massive arms expenditures of individual states or NATO as a whole.

International participation at already existing COEs and the steady accreditation of new facilities reveals the relative importance of these respective subject matters within the Alliance itself. The recent concerns over "Strategic Communications" inside NATO, for example, are directly related to the establishment of a COE specifically concerned with this topic. StratCom COE took up work in Riga, Lithuania, in early 2014. Strategic Communications is not restricted to the work of StratCom COE, but can also be found in the work of the JAPCC. Communication strategies aimed at reducing public sympathy for the civilian victims of air strikes are nothing more than military propaganda intended to influence public opinion in favor of military activities.

The militarism pursued in NATO Centres of Excellence doesn't confine itself to the individual facilities, but is aggressively exported into the civilian environment. This is manifest in efforts to incorporate civil society into the COE's "academic" activities. While this aspect is already obvious in COEs like the Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence, all of the COE's seek to extend their influence by inviting civil guests to their conferences, for example. They also host events specifically incorporating civil society or try to establish partnerships with various universities.

Those interrogators who initiated the minor interpellation mentioned in the introduction expressed concern that NATO Centres of Excellence are narrowly concerned with structures promoting a more offensive NATO doctrine. They do so uncritically, without taking note of international law and perhaps most troubling they do so while insulated from normal checks on their activities by operating outside the military chain of command, political control and critical publicity. Conclusively, it can be stated that these concerns are not only justified, but are particularly more invidious than previously thought. As the selected publications of the different COEs have shown, the development of offensive military doctrines is taking place at the COEs. Whether it is the JAPCC recommending the deterrence capability of nuclear weapons and advocating the improvement of UAV technology, or the COE CSW reflecting about future missions in coastal waters, these activities are not about strategies for national defence but about interventions outside of the geographic area of the Alliance.

The ideological ground for further NATO missions is established with the help of various concepts and strategies for future application in international areas of conflict. At the same time an increasing involvement with civilian structures aims to result in greater public acceptance of these doctrines. The focus of the COEs efforts is primarily on military "solutions" for international conflicts and problems. Potential political solutions are omitted as is the fiscal situation of individual member states. This development is alarming because it suggests that conflicts can actually be solved primarily by military means and the result is an asymmetrical discourse favoring military solutions over political and civil solutions to troubling foreign affairs. This tendency towards turning away from the political for the benefit of the military can increas-

ingly be observed within German foreign policy, too. The source of this development is not in NATO Centres of Excellence, but COE's serve as supporters of a one-sided military ideology favoring the primacy of the military in foreign affairs. This primacy is brought even closer to political and civil society through various conferences, just as it is increasingly introduced into media discourses by Strategic Communication.

These developments within the structure of Centres of Excellence – established with the explicit aim to promote NATO's process of transformation – reveals NATO's future direction: towards an increasingly offensive and aggressive alliance for military interventions. This tendency is also clearly recognizable by the recently fashionable term "360° NATO". The General of the German-Dutch brigade commented that NATO had to have "a 360° view, which means all around. And it has to adjust itself to be ready for deployment in all potentially conceivable areas of application and theatres of operations. That is simply put, but hard to implement."[49] NATO Centres of Excellence should provide a fitting means to facilitate this implementation.

It is a waste of time to harbor illusions about NATO's nature. Even if it has committed itself to peaceful solutions for conflicts according to its self-portrayal as an advocate of democratic values, it is still an alliance for military interventions whose missions serve the interests of its members and are miles away from peaceful solutions and democratic values.

Fortunately, these developments haven't gone completely unnoticed. In the past years, there has been resistance against individual NATO Centres of Excellence and against events hosted by them. In 2015, a broad alliance of regional political, union and university groups formed in Kiel against the Kiel Conference (held by the Centre of Excellence for Operations in Confined and Shallow Waters in cooperation with the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University within the frame of the Kiel Week). Under the motto "War starts here – No war conference in Kiel!" those groups called for demonstrations against the conference. The call was taken up by more than 400 people and was also directed toward the university cooperating with military facilities such as the COE CSW.

In the same year, more than 700 demonstrators followed the summons "No NATO war

council in Essen", directed against the conference of the Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC) in Essen. The call demanded "No NATO planning of new wars – No advertising for the inferno!" as well as "Abolish JAPCC and wise the public up thoroughly!".

Hopefully, these protests will increase in coming years and specific events such as the Kiel Conference, which is to be established as a naval security conference, will face growing resistance in the future.

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4. Nato: Topics. Allied Command Operations, nato.int, 11.11.2014.
5. Nato: Topics. Allied Command Transformation, nato.int, 11.11.2014.
6. Nato Press Releases: Final Communiqué - Ministerial Meeting of the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group held in Brussels on Thursday, nato.int, 12.06.2003.
7. NATO Lessons Learned Portal: Centres of Excellence, nllp.jallc.nato.int.
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9. Guy B. Roberts: NATO's Centers of Excellence: A Key Enabler in Transforming NATO to Address 21st Century Challenges, stanleyfoundation.org, 08.10.2014.
10. Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania: News releases. Georgia joins NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence in Vilnius, kam.lt, 17.10.2014.
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13. Streitkräftebasis: Vernetztes Wissen. Das ABC-Abwehr-Kompetenzzentrum in Tschechien, kommando. streitkraeftebasis.de, 18.03.2014.
14. NATO Lessons Learned Portal: Communities, nllp.jallc.nato.int.
15. Hybl und János: Centres of Excellence, 2001.
16. Department of the Navy information technology magazine CHIPS: Q&A with Royal Navy Commodore R. J. Mansergh Deputy Director, U.S. Second Fleet. Combined Joint Operations from the Sea Center of Excellence, CHIPS Magazine, July-September 2008, p. 11.
17. See, for example: James A. Lewis: The Role of Offensive Cyber Operations in Nato's Collective Defence, Tallinn Paper No. 8, CCD COE, ccdcoe.org, 2015.
18. NATO Lessons Learned Portal: Centres of Excellence, nllp.jallc.nato.int.
19. The numbers above arise from the answer of the German Federal Government to a minor interpellation issued by the Left Party. (Drucksache 18/4567). The whole expenditure is presumably much higher by now, since Germany has been sponsoring six other COEs since the interpellation was issued in early 2015.
20. See JAPCC Reports 2008-2015.
21. Brigadier-general Nolte in an interview by the Rheinische Post. (Marc Cattelaens: Der Luftwaffenstandort Kalkar wächst, rp-online.de, 06.03.2014).
22. Joint Air Power Competence Center: About JAPCC, japcc.org.
23. Bundeswehr Luftwaffe: Joint Air Power Competence Centre, luftwaffe.de.
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27. JAPCC: Report 2011, japcc.org.
28. JAPCC: Future Vector Project, Present Paradox – Future Challenges 2014, japcc.org, p. 61.
29. JAPCC: Air & Space Power in Nato – Future Vector Part I, japcc.org, Juli 2014, p. 70.
30. Ibid.
31. JAPCC: Read Ahead, Air Power and Strategic Communications – NATO Challenges for the Future, japcc.org, 2015, p. 35.
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NATO at sea … The Alliance as a maritime power

by Claudia Haydt

As an Atlantic alliance, the Naval Forces figure prominently in NATO. Nonetheless, however, with NATO's focus on the Iron Curtain prior to 1990, armament efforts and military strategies focused on land-based and airborne plans of action. After the bloc confrontation had come to an end (at least for now) and due to the increasing economic race against the new rising industry powers (cue: BRICS countries), maritime strategies and maritime projects of military buildup feature more prominently. Most notably, three key aspects are at the center of NATO's current maritime activities: stemming the flow of migrants, fighting pirates in the area around Somalia, and adopting a threatening position against Russia, particularly through an enhanced presence in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea.

NATO and the German Navy

The German Navy was the first military branch of the Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) to put units under NATO's control. Hence, since 1957, the newly organized Federal Armed Forces have been seeking the opportunity to display their presence beyond German borders. With navies, few limits are set to the free movement of maritime forces as long as they stay in international waters. Maritime forces are thus an important tool for the expression of power politics, even when these forces are not engrossed in combat activities. Apart from the surveillance of the respective enemy and the control of strategic trade routes, a country or a military alliance can display its presence in strategically important regions and influence the political mélange just by a "believable" threat of intervention. This form of "gunboat diplomacy" is not at all a thing of the past.

NATO maintains two standing maritime operational units. Like its predecessor, the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1) has been deployed as a unit for quick crisis intervention (or attacks) since the 1960s. This maritime unit is NATO's oldest permanent operational unit. More than 150.000 sailors and more than 500 ships have been under the command of SNMG1 since 1968. The standing unit is heavily armed with six to ten modern destroyers, frigates and/or cruisers. The military command of SNMG1 is assumed by the Maritime Component Command in North-wood, Great Britain. In addition to Canadian, American, British, Dutch, and German ships, units of other NATO members and third-party countries (e.g. Australia, Ukraine) frequently participate in joint exercises. The main deployment area for SNMG1 was initially the Atlantic Ocean. In the early 1990s, the Mediterranean also became an area for operations. The predecessor of SNMG1 assisted in the naval blockade "Operation Sharp Guard" in the context of the war in Yugoslavia. The regional limitations were finally abandoned in 2004.

Defending the fortress?

SNMG1, as well as its counterpart, SNMG2, regularly undertake naval exercises which are telling us about the potential operational scenarios of these battle fleets. In mid-May 2016 the exercise "Baltic Fortress", which had been conducted on a regular base since 2008, came to an end. At this year's host Lithuania's invitation, 14 battleships from ten countries practiced cooperation at firing artillery and interdicting maritime traffic, among other things. NATO's aim concerning these exercises is obvious: to display force near the Russian border. This intention also becomes obvious in view of NATO's clearly intensified cooperation with non-NATO countries Finland and Sweden. Policies of détente and confidence-building measures do not seem to be high on NATO's priority list.

The predecessor of NATO's second standing maritime unit (SNMG2) deployed primarily in the Mediterranean and was originally only activated for singular operations. The former "on-call-Force" (NAVOCFORMED) had been a new mission for the German Navy since 1987, a time when many NATO member countries withdrew their units from the Mediterranean. The German Navy filled this gap and since then, it has been an almost permanent part of NATO's presence in the Mediterranean. During the second Gulf War in the early 1990s, NATO made the decision to generate a second standing unit out of the ad-hoc unit. This second unit reports to the NATO Maritime Component Command in Naples, Italy. The fact that SNMG2 is a part of the NATO Response Force shows that its tasks include more than just maritime surveillance.

Gunboat Diplomacy against refugees?

The EU countries' incompetence in providing a safe refuge for refugees, for a number of refugees that is manageable in relation to the total population of the 28 member countries, has resulted in almost panicky and inhumane measures of seclusion. In addition to coast guards, police forces and the border control agency Frontex, the EU, as well as NATO, also initiated military operations. These were officially directed against criminal traffickers, but in actuality affected the refugees themselves, who had to use increasingly long and dangerous routes as the traffickers adapted.

The German Navy, with the combat support ship Bonn as a flagship, is part of NATO's anti-refugee operation in the Aegean. Bonn is one of the largest operational platforms of the German Navy with a length of 174 meters. 200 soldiers of the Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) use it as a base to monitor the smuggling around the Greek and Turkish islands of Lesbos and Chios. They report sighted migrant boats to the Greek and Turkish authorities and ensure the seclusion of the EU. There are roughly 1.100 NATO sailors on eight battleships who don't have an explicit military mission, but this hardly matters when one considers the perspective of a rubber raft full of desperate people or a small coast guard cutter who see the huge battleships from the water.

The German news magazine Der Spiegel (20.04.2016) calls this operation, led by German Admiral Jörg Klein "a kind of a control mechanism for the refugee deal with Turkey." This naval deployment has to be called a new form of gunship diplomacy. This holds similarly true for the EU operation off the Libyan coast. The deadly politics of seclusion and trampling on international and human rights standards are enforced by dirty deals everywhere.

Geopolitical claims to control

Apart from the two standing combat units, NATO also maintains two anti-mine units. The Standing NATO Mine Countermeasure Group 1 (SNMCMG1) was under German command during the first half of 2016 and the German Navy had a share in it with its minehunters Dillingen (about 40 sailors) and Tender Donau (roughly 100 sailors). Since June 2016 it is under Estonian command. Deployments to the Red and Black Sea (Georgia) show that these are not merely defensive units either. This military presence in various non-Atlantic regions indicates where NATO is raising a

claim to shape, or at least to help shape the political situation. In other words: the radius of the maritime presence illustrates where the interests of the NATO countries rest.

Pirates? Maritime routes?

In recent years, NATO has had a special regional focus on the Horn of Africa, in large parts of the western Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. NATO has been conducting Operation Ocean Shield since August 2009 on the grounds of waging war against piracy. The NATO council has been routinely extended this operation's mandate ever since until the end of 2016. To that date, the mission was terminated because supporting countries in the region to build up their coast guards in order to fight against pirates by themselves was given priority from then on.

While running, Operation Ocean Shield was closely cooperating with the EU military operation ATALANTA. NATO handled Operation Ocean Shield quite pragmatically. The Alliance regularly put some of the boats of the standing maritime groups, which were around anyway, under NATO control. This way, the operational units had a distinctly wider scope for military operations. The arrangement with the internationally accepted government of Somalia – which locally is just in control of small parts of Somalia – enabled operational freedom in Somalian territorial waters. The operations of units for special tasks in the interior of Somalia, including repeated attacks by killer drones, took place independently of NATO.

According to Foreign Policy research[1], the American Joint Special Operations Command even runs a drone base in Somalia, which has been used for attacks presumably killing hundreds of people from the air. These operations are coordinated by AFRICOM in Stuttgart, Germany. The local spokesman believes the drone attacks to be a support for AMISOM, the military mission of the African Union in Somalia. This Union, on the other hand, is closely cooperating with the EU training mission EUTM Somalia, which, in turn was operatively synchronized with Operation Ocean Shield. Accordingly, one must see that the US drone war, which is against international law, the maritime presence of EU and NATO, and the EU training mission are all part of the same strategy to control this geo-strategically important region.

Deadly priorities

In fact, piracy in the region around the Horn of Africa has currently come to a halt. This is most likely a consequence of the military interventions into the civil wars in Somalia and Yemen[2] which hardly leaves any refuge for pirates, and less likely a result of the presence of the maritime naval formations.

With the decrease in piracy, the western merchant ships travel more safely, but the people in the region pay for it with an increase in insecurity, death and hunger. In Yemen, more than 7 million people are threatened to die of hunger, while in Somalia another 2.5 million are exposed to the same fate.[3] However, the World Food Programme incrementally lacks the money for food assistance in the region.[4]

This development is especially ironic and tragic because the so-called anti-piracy missions of EU and NATO were justified to begin with by the need to ensure a safe access for the World Food Programme.

In Yemen, only 16% of the $1.8 billion needed were made available for the UN in 2016. In Somalia, the situation is hardly better. $1.8 billion is how much two modern frigates (F-125) of the Federal Armed Forces cost. But while the Federal Armed Forces, and NATO along with it, demand more and more money for the military on behalf of "security," the monetary assistance really needed for survival in these countries is missing. NATO politics kill – by force of arms and by the disastrous financial prioritization of its member states.

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Cyberwar and information space: NATO and war on the fifth battlefield

by Thomas Gruber

„[T]he first shot of the next major international conflict or war will be fired in cyberspace." Rex Hughes, NATO security adviser for cyber defence, knows how to stage the pivotal relevance of cyberwarfare for NATO members.[1] Alongside the classic settings, such as war on land, in the air, at sea, and in space, cyberspace has long since been dealt with as a new fifth battlefield. The term cyberwar denotes acts of war in virtual space. These new offensive tactics include attacks on enemy infrastructure via the internet, implanting of defective hardware into communication networks, as well as the deliberate malfunctioning of electronic devices using microwaves or electromagnetic radiation, among other things.[2] The scenario of threat used by NATO allies to make cyberwar a subject of discussion ranges from mere industrial or diplomatic espionage to the full-scale sabotage of crucial civil and military infrastructure. The political and military decision makers suggest that cyberattacks on hospitals, power plants or war material – especially those effected by means of the internet – are highly low-threshold, inexpensive and effective[3] and, thus, feasible for countries with limited military means or collectives of hackers.

Suleyman Anil, head of the NATO Computer Incident Response Capability – Technical Centre states: "Cyber defence is now mentioned at the highest level along with missile defence and energy security."[4] It is highly unlikely, though, that a structure for cyber defence is ever thought about without the simultaneous planning of cyberattacks on behalf of NATO. This is because NATO banks on the following approach about the "value" of offensive capacities like this: "can any military force credibly claim to have advanced capabilities if it does not include offensive cyber operations in its arsenal?"[5]

Public display and structures of cooperation

NATO thoroughly depicts attacks within the information space as military actions. The Western press reports on cyberattacks against NATO allies by Russian or Chinese hackers or by political activists (such as the Anonymous collective) in a similar way. The actual aims of the attacks on the respective political or economic order are isolated into distinct enemy stereotypes: Thus, Chinese attackers confine themselves to corporate espionage,[6] while Russian hacks, on the other hand, focus on political retaliation against individual states or NATO struc-

tures,[7] and activist hackers aim for the disclosure of delicate official secrets for ideological reasons.[8] Therefore, NATO can show off as a savior – or even as an avenger at the appropriate time – of the Western union of values and economics against the overwhelming torrent of cyberattacks. But structures and technology are needed for a powerful ability to put up a fight: personnel has to be trained, hired, and jobs have to be maintained. In short, the defence budget of respective NATO member states is increased accordingly and national and transnational centers of excellence for cyberwar come into being. In the process, a struggle for the control of virtual space becomes apparent among state governments and their alliances. Whereas 10 to 15 years ago specific large-scale attacks in cyberspace were reserved for powerful and rich countries or corporations, they are increasingly worried about their exclusive status nowadays and are afraid of losing information and space in cyberwar against the smallest groups of able hackers.

At the national level the task of defending against and the conducting of cyberattacks is traditionally up to the secret services (in the US it is the National Security Agency, in Germany the Federal Intelligence Service).

Source: NATO

The "benefit" of operating non-transparent organizations like these is the option to perform clandestine acts of espionage or sabotage attacks yourself without having to address them in public. However, a secret clash in cyberspace is not always beneficial on a political level; from a national or geopolitical view, it might be absolutely reasonable to stylize a cyberattack as an act of war. But if a cyberattack was classified as a full-fledged act of war against a NATO country, it would be possible to activate NATO's mutual defense clause, as it is often wished for within a policy of military escalation. At the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales they argued: "A decision as to when a cyber attack would lead to the invocation of Article 5 would be taken by the North Atlantic Council on a case-by-case basis."[9] The very same premise is also used by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, established in Estonia in 2008.[10] According to their own statements, this institution was established to "provide [...] the capability of supporting allies to defend themselves against cyberattacks on demand."[11]

At the national level, military departments for defence against and execution of cyberattacks were established as well. The Abteilung Informations- und Computernetzwerkoperationen der Bundeswehr (Department for information and computer network operations of the Federal Armed Forces), founded in 2008, has been assigned to analyze the capability of a threat by enemy cyberattacks as well as to consider ways and means of offensive digital warfare conducted by the Federal Armed Forces.[12] In France, the National Cybersecurity Agency (ANSSI) was initiated in 2009 to deal with the security of French information systems. It reports to the Secretariat-General for National Defence and Security.[13] The United States Cyber Command, subordinate to United States Strategic Command, was founded in 2010 and deals with possibilities and strategies of cyberwar.[14]

Apart from establishing its own structures and training of military personnel for cyber tasks, NATO particularly draws on already existing expertise of private businesses. The formation of a NATO Industry Cyber Partnership (NICP) was agreed on at the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales to assist in establishing close cooperation between the Alliance and communications industry corporations. Two weeks later NATO representatives met with industry proxies to officially strike up NICP. NATO's aim within NICP includes the acquisition of "expertise" and "innovation" from the private sector. Koen Gijsbers, General Manager of the NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA), adds, "[t]his is about building an alliance with industry, and the key is building trust – to share sensitive information in order to respond to threats."[15] Thus, NATO officials hope for technological and innovative support by collaborating with corporations, and for delicate information (such as communication data or weak spots within their own security systems) to be transferred from the corporations to military actors. It can be taken for granted that substantial amounts of money will be forked out to IT security and communication companies. Apart from their newest attack and defence schemes for cyberwar, they also sell private customer data, or at least ways to acquire these, to NATO.[16]

NATO activities in cyberwar

Activities in cyberwar undertaken by NATO countries are effective as good publicity. The reports include military exercises, such as a bogus full-scale attack on computer networks of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre in Tallinn – methods for cyber defence were as important as attack schemes in cyberspace here[17] – or the embedding of cyber concepts into the high visibility exercise Trident Juncture in 2015. Trident Juncture covered an intervention in Africa, where NATO, by its own standards, had to militarily stabilize a region where two small countries were fighting over the access to drinking water.[18] In this spirit, cyber concepts were offensively applied during the exercise, too. A cyberattack of dangerous size for NATO allies is unlikely to emanate from a less technologized petty state. Instead, an exercise like this has to focus on cyberattacks against civil and military infrastructure, surveillance, espionage, and the possibilities of spreading Western war propaganda, so-called "strategic communication."[19] Same as it ever was, offensive tactics in cyberspace are embedded into a scenario of defence by NATO and justified as legitimate deterrents: "a clear enunciation of how NATO would use offensive cyber capabilities as part of any defensive operation would also change opponents' risk calculations in ways that would force them to consider how offensive actions, even if intended to be covert, are not free of risk or cost."[20]

Another way to manipulate public opinion is interlinking intelligence cyberattacks and openly communicated cyber defence. The reason is that Western major powers are vastly better able to obscure the source of their intelligence cyberattacks as opposed to countries like China or Iran. In 2010, for example, Iranian atomic plants were attacked by the internet worm Stuxnet,[21] which presumably originated in the US, whereas the ensuing retaliatory strikes by Iranian hackers were depicted as an attack and condemned by Western media.[22] Since the US agencies and security services don't disclose on which basis they locate the source of the new cyberattacks in Iran, one cannot rule out the possibility, therefore, that the Iranian hacks were feigned by the US themselves either. That is because if the American cyberattacks were not followed by a military or intelligence reaction from Iran, the false display of an enemy cyberattack would be conceivable to escalate the conflict. While sabotage is usually restricted to the usage against political enemies outside the Alliance in the case of cyberattacks, espionage efforts are rampant among NATO countries, too. A recent example is the NSA bugging affair, which went public because of the documents leaked by Edward Snowden in 2013: Under the guise of war against terrorism, the US globally and without suspicion monitored communication channels, revealed private communication and also snooped on government institutions as well as United Nations delegations. [23]

Impacts of cyberwar on civilian population

The scenario of threat constantly perpetuated by NATO harbors not only the potential of escalating international conflicts, but also a considerable danger for civil society. Targets such as hospitals or a country's electricity supply are on the list of objects vulnerable to cyberattacks, but they are also on the agenda for attacks by NATO countries, as can be impressively shown by the example of the presumably American attack on Iran's nuclear program. The outreaching digitization and technologizing of cities up to the planning of so-called Smart Cities successively provides new cyberattacks with a target. Intentions to automatize public transport, provide intelligent production lines and semi-autonomously control the electricity supply via small power stations are just some examples for vulnerable infrastructure. Their shutdown could stall whole districts and throw them into turmoil in the future.[24] The choice of the battlefield is of equal importance for society as a whole: most cyberattacks use a communication channel that is predominantly employed for civilian purposes – the internet. Hubs for data transfer have increasingly become targets for actions of sabotage and espionage.

TAT-14, one of the most important transatlantic cables in the world, was repeatedly severed in Egypt and supposedly tapped by British security service GCHQ in Bude, an English coastal city.[25] According to NATO sources, Russian submarines now have the ability to cut transatlantic cables as well.[26] A common practice of cyberattacks is also the infection of numerous computers with viruses which are able to unnoticeably obey orders on private computers and transform them into a collective network, a so-called botnet. In this manner, web pages and servers owned by companies or government institutions can be overloaded, for example, by several thousand computers simultaneously accessing their website.[27] Thus, public communication channels turn into war theaters, private technology to weapon systems, and civil society ultimately is under fire from all sides in the digital world. According to Konstanze Kurz, "civilian population […] is taken hostage and its civil infrastructure turns into a battlefield and an unregulated area of operation."[28] On the one hand, these military tactics fan fear within the population and, thus, makes legitimizing new military actions under the cloak of national defence easier. On the other hand, the civilian sector provides a comfortable moral buffer zone in case of enemy attacks.

Within the context of the self-proclaimed war on terrorism, the danger of terror cells covertly operating from the center of society is exploited to expand surveillance mechanisms and to restrict the population's sphere of privacy. Apart from a constant surveillance by secret services, the military, as well, is supposed to be granted a broadening access to civilian communication. In this context, propagandistic methods against alleged terrorist advertising are deployed, as well as complex algorithms for the automatized analysis of subversive civilian communication. It is not new that subversive political groups fit into the grid of the armed forces in case of a surveillance without suspicion like this.

The decision makers of the Federal Armed Forces' Cyber and Information Space Command (Cyber- und Informationsraum-Kommandos CIRK), established in 2017, also resort to this rhetoric. Attempts at recruitment by terrorist groups, such as ISIS via social networks are classified as an attack on the information space and are supposed to be actively monitored and revealed to the same extent as deliberate cyberattacks on German governmental institutions and companies.[29] With the help of CIRK, the Federal Armed Forces are more easily able to erase unwanted content and to propagandistically influence public discussion. Thus, CIRK can be used as a hub for strategic communication. The planning is not harmed so far by the fact that the Federal Armed Forces will be able to sensitively intercede in private communication of users of social networks and, thus, in the private sphere of German citizens on the ground of preventive war against terrorism. German participation in the digital armament of NATO armed forces cannot be underestimated. Apart from the exceedingly present US espionage agencies, like the NSA or the US Airforce, next to no NATO country boasts aspirations for growth on the field of cyberwar as extensively as Germany. Military restructuring and the ensuing increase of the budget for the cyber sector is rubber-stamped through the parliamentary process of decision, justified by the outdated technology of the Federal Armed Forces, as well as by the unequivocal political wish to strengthen German positions in conflicts all over the world.

Divest NATO of virtual space!

NATO's line of action in cyberwar reveals various similarities to the NATO way of warfare in general. While NATO countries plan and conduct attacks themselves, only defensive scenarios are promoted in public. In addition to that, the apparent consensus in issues of defence is superimposed by nationalistic actions of individual states within NATO. These states mistrust and spy on each other. Private actors, such as IT safety enterprises, which were originally supposed to arrange for the security of the data they were entrusted, are corrupted by NATO and, thus, bring shame to their own products. This fact alone demonstrates that IT security cannot function within a market-based context; the only useful alternative still is collectively developed open source software that comes about independently of market and power interests. The true threat for civil society emanating from NATO, and every other military institution acting imperialistically, is of small consequence with respect to the constantly present fear of enemy cyberattacks. Motivation for diverse forms of resistance and protest should be summoned by drawing from the attacks on the private sphere and from the involvement of civil infrastructure in actions of war. Even small collectives of hackers can loom large as significant antimilitarist and anticapitalist actors in the digital arms race. The aggressive hostilities NATO uses to define hackers acting for activist reasons as legitimate targets in cyberwar indicate their significance: "so-called 'hacktivists' who participate in online attacks during a war can be legitimate targets even though they are civilians."[30] This is where the essential reason for the scenario of threat in cyber space NATO has provoked becomes apparent: Sabotage of communication networks operated by NATO countries or disclosure of national and corporate secrets in virtual space can be achieved without weapons technology that is hard to come by or individual spying. Groups of hackers positioning themselves as decidedly peaceful and beyond any power interests can be an obstacle to the capture of virtual space by executives of power political and economic interests. However, the true danger for civil society does not spring from small political groups, it rather originates in the international virtual arms race NATO countries unprecedentedly participate in. A cyberattack on truly important civil infrastructure, such as hospitals or energy supply, requires resources which only major military powers have at their disposal. That is because the supply of energy and healthcare is usually not linked-up in the internet as opposed to large parts of the communication of NATO, big corporations or government agencies. An attack has to be conducted by implanting compromising hardware or computer viruses specifically designed for this purpose. By trying to protect their own military networks of communication and their respective national and economic interests, NATO countries thus generate the danger for their population on their own. It is necessary to counteract this dangerous hypocrisy in society as a whole and to systematically deconstruct the line of argumentation of major powers that arm for (cyber)war.

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Militarization of information: NATO propaganda is now called Strategic Communications

by Christopher Schwitanski

Over the past few years, especially since the Ukrainian crisis, NATO has visibly ramped up its efforts in effective political and military propaganda. At first this propaganda acted against Russian propaganda and hoaxes, but there have increasingly been debates within NATO about how opinion, perception and assessment of NATO could be effectively and purposefully influenced within the NATO member states' own populations and also in reference to the population of enemy actors. Although various NATO concepts and concrete actions already illustrate that their reporting are not meant to be objective, but should influence public opinion to the benefit of their own position, NATO is anxious to avoid propaganda and similar negatively connoted terms at all costs. Instead, NATO calls it "Strategic Communications" (StratCom), and there is a growing body of demands within NATO to massively expand it: "In today's information environment, inform, influence and persuade functions should be as instrumental to the force package as deploy, fight, and sustain elements."[1] This development is particularly problematic considering that NATO and its member states were as central actors involved in various conflicts violating international law or they have added to their escalation in the past. If NATO's "Strategic Communications" manage to gain and maintain more interpretational sovereignty over the activities of the alliance in media and public, these war politics could come more naturally to the Alliance in the future.

Strategic Communication: Genesis

Developing a consistent communication strategy within NATO has risen in importance during the war that has been going on in Afghanistan since 2003, when the alliance officially took the lead of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the country. The first efforts towards this goal took place as early as 2004. This is because the anticipated support for the operation by the Afghan people did not occur.[2] At the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, the term Strategic Communications was mentioned and the expansion of the NATO HQ Media Operations Centre and the enhanced use of the Alliance's online TV channel were welcomed to support it.[3] As early as at the next summit in the following year, it was established in Strasbourg/Kehl that "it is

Source: DoD

increasingly important that the Alliance communicates in an appropriate, timely, accurate and responsive manner on its evolving roles, objectives and missions. Strategic communications are an integral part of our efforts to achieve the Alliance's political and military objectives."[4] This definition illustrates what has already been hinted at: that the purport of Strategic Communications is not to convey objective facts but to support NATO's political and military goals.

The concept has gained traction within the scope of the Ukrainian crisis, when NATO felt massively threatened by Russian reporting. This reporting is classified as part of a so-called hybrid warfare on the part of Russia. The concept not only includes Strategic Communications but also covert military operations.[5] Thus, the objective of Strategic Communications has increasingly been to counter Russian propaganda: "We will ensure that NATO is able to effectively address the specific challenges posed by hybrid warfare threats [...]. This will also include enhancing strategic communications".[6] Without doubt, Russia's reporting is a form of massive propaganda against the veneer of objectivity readily deployed in the EU, but that does not diminish the problem. NATO cannot justify conducting propaganda on its own, neither with reference to Russia nor regarding the presentation of its other policies.

The elevated importance NATO currently attributes to Strategic Communications manifests itself in the Center of Excellence specifically established for this purpose: the Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence (StratCom COE) in Riga, which

began its work in 2014 and is financed by seven Sponsoring Nations – with Germany among them. Its focus is the analysis of enemy propaganda – currently the focus is primarily on Russia and ISIL – as well as developing concepts and recommendations for the use and implementation of Strategic Communications within NATO and its member countries. Regarding the Alliance's previously mentioned "communication deficits" during the war in Afghanistan, the centre published a comprehensive study analyzing the efforts NATO had undertaken concerning this matter during the war, deducing various "Lessons Learned" for the future. The report divides NATO's communication process during the war in Afghanistan into two campaigns: 1) Seeking acceptance by the public in the 51 nations participating in the operation; and 2) Gaining the support of the Afghan population in the war zone. In the "Lessons Learned" section, the author's main argument is to establish Strategic Communications permanently and more effectively within NATO's operational areas; among other things, he recommends to "[e]stablish deeper, more mutually beneficial relationships with private industry and news media."[7] Beside these actors, NATO also seeks to "intensify engagement with other international organizations, including with the EU".[8]

One should note that co-operations like these already take place and that the increased activity in the Strategic Communications field is not confined to NATO as an actor. There has been a simultaneous increase of StratCom activities within allied organizations and governments. Since these parties contribute substantially to

the StratCom issue, merely focusing on NATO would make little sense here. Thus, activities by the EU and by the German Federal Government in this regard are taken into account in the following, as well. The propaganda activities of NATO and its allies can be divided into two main categories, as the example of Afghanistan already illustrated: 1) propaganda within to win the favor of one's own population; and 2) outward propaganda to convince the population of enemy actors of one's own perspective.

Strategic Communications within

The German Federal Government commented upon a minor interpellation by the Leftist Party: "Strategic Communications and issues of cyber defence rank among the tasks of NATO and the Federal Armed Forces."[9] Thus, it is hardly surprising that the Bundeswehr University Munich is already conducting research on the implementation of NATO concepts about Strategic Communications into the Federal Armed Forces and that the Federal Government is engaged in this field itself. Consequently, NATO was not the only institution to publish a paper during the Ukrainian crisis. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs also released an 8-page document, entitled "Realitätscheck" (reality check) directed at its own staff, at German politicians and media. Its aim was to "correct" 18 allegations from Russia. The first Russian "allegation" was that "[t]he West has barged into internal affairs of Ukraine and contributed to Yanukovych's legitimate government's dismissal from office."[10] The "correction", on the other hand, states that the Ukrainian population had taken a peace-

"WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND HE IS US"

AN ANALYSIS OF NATO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE (ISAF) IN AFGHANISTAN, 2003–2014.

NATO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

ful stand for constitutionality and against corruption out of frustration about the suspension of the EU Association Agreement, whereas the government had taken violent measures against it. With regard to Yanukovych's escape, the document further directly cites the viewpoint of the Ukrainian government that he had "eluded his official duties in an unconstitutional way". Violence used by fascist groups on the part of the demonstrators is omitted in the counter statement, as well as the various cases of factual western influence on the conflict and the participating actors. The purposeful funding of the Udar party by the CDU-associated Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, as well as the massive financing of pro-western groups by the EU, for example, would have been worth mentioning.[11] There is a lot of room for gratuitous continuation of the list of possible additions to the respective corrections.

In addition to the Federal Government's efforts, the EU established its own task force, assigned to counter Russian hoaxes: the Eastern Strategic Communications Team. The answer to a minor interpellation by the Leftist Party about this task force read that it was "engaged in developing 'positive narratives and communication products' in Russian language and set EU's point of view against 'Russian narratives'. This 'Eastern Strategic Communications Team' is supposed to become active in the internet, for example, and 'inform proactively about EU's policies and values via websites and social networks' in Russian. It is supposed to assess Russian media, 'identify obvious lies' and issue reports with commentary about them to EU member states. Another task of the 'task force Russia' also is to 'support independent media in Russia.'"[12] Furthermore, the answer to the interpellation in question illustrates that the EU is planning "to establish networks with journalists and media representatives, among others," as well as co-operations with "EU member states, international organizations, such as NATO OSCE and the European Council, EU partner countries, and actors within civil society".[13] As for co-operation with NATO, communication with the Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence in Riga is already in progress.

Although dealing with Russian information politics is the most distinctive issue to the public eye, NATO's Strategic Communications are not confined to this area. They are currently compiling a study for the NATO Joint Air Power Competence Centre, Kalkar, which is supported by the StratCom COE,

concerning the question of how to handle "disinformation campaigns" directed against the airpower. The study criticizes the belief, which is "mistakenly" prevailing in the media and the public opinion, that bombardments would result in high casualty figures among civilians, whereas drones "are generally disliked, as the public sees them as some kind of unfair or immoral weapon."[14] The situation in Germany is depicted as especially problematic with regard to the opinion on (aerial) wars: "the Germans are far more susceptible to disinformation campaigns and anti-military campaigns than most other NATO nations."[15] The resulting recommendations include one that it would be helpful to more strongly influence the reporting to direct such reservations to the benefit of a positive perception of airpower.

Strategic Communications out of area

Beside the efforts to influence the public opinion within the NATO member states, NATO and the EU have also undertaken various endeavors to convince the Russian population and Russian minorities in the eastern European member states of their narratives. Because the latter primarily obtain their information in the Baltics from Russian media associated with the Kremlin, NATO is trying hard to create alternative media in Russian language. As part of this, Estonia initiated its own TV channel in Russian language in September 2005. Latvia and Lithuania also strive to enhance the number of Russian speaking TV channels and have made arrangements to cooperate with Germany's international broadcaster, Deutsche Welle, which is providing content in Russian language in both countries.[16] NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow favorably emphasized the intensified commitment of Deutsche Welle in a speech at the Public Diplomacy Forum 2015: "Individual Allies are taking the information challenge increasingly seriously. [...] And in Germany, the government is increasing its financial support for Deutsche Welle, to allow it to broadcast in more languages and throughout Central and Eastern Europe."[17]

The coordination of different European media falls within the EU Communications Team's remit: "It is a task of the EU EAST STRATCOM Task Force to better interlink the EU member states and to better coordinate the different activities in the countries of the Eastern Partnership in Russia. [...] The goal is to identify potential synergy effects and, thus, contribute to an enhanced coherence."[18] Apart from that, the European En-

dowment for Democracy, EED, financed by the EU member states to support democratic and civil society groups in European countries and their neighbor states, is a party to the funding of pro-Western media in Russian language at EU level. As its model, which is the National Endowment for Democracy in the US, the EED is criticized for serving as a continuation of EU foreign policy.[19]

At first, efforts to pluralize the media landscape are, in principle, welcome, as are the efforts to intensify the social integration of partly excluded Russian minorities in the Baltics. However, once one understands that many of these initiatives are financed by EU grants and coordinated by the EU and its associated institutions with the aim to support "positive narratives" about the roles of EU and NATO, it seems appropriate to criticize the pursuit of counter-propaganda and the undermining of the independence of the sponsored media, which are additional results of the funding. One of the recent incidences in the propaganda war between Russia and NATO was the exploitation of the 2016 European Song Contest. Russia had criticized its outcome as a political choice. NATO had also encouraged this interpretation by introducing the Ukrainian winner of the contest in a very positive way on its Youtube channel long before the beginning of the contest and by posting the video after the ESC decision on Twitter, as well. Thomas Wiegold, who runs a pro-military blog, properly observed: "Thus, NATO lets itself in for the Russian interpretation that the decision in this contest was a political one. The Alliance is discovering culture, music and this transgressive event as a means for the information war against Russia."[20]

Conclusion

Apart from the various developments regarding the expansion of NATO propaganda, it is important to observe that media reporting often already contains a "positive narrative" concerning militarism and the policy of the Alliance. This development reached its unprecedented climax in Germany at the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, when lopsided and distorted reporting about the conflict characterized the discourse across various German leading media.[21] Developments such as these are especially menacing not in the least because wars in the past had always been initiated on the basis of lies and hoaxes. Whether it was about the accusation in 2003 that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction at its disposal or the assessments in 2011 that there was an imminent mass murder in Libya, these hoaxes proved to be false. Developments like these are being encouraged when media adopt and endorse the interpretations of military actors instead of relying on critical reporting. This is a tendency that could increase with the enhancement of NATO's Strategic Communications. If NATO wanted to meet its official requirement to feed the public with objective facts, a critical reconsidering of its own role would be as necessary as the willingness to leave the assessment of its own policy to critical and independent journalists without deliberately impinging on them.

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Allied Ground Surveillance: NATO's eyes and ears above Eastern Europe

by Marius Pletsch

NATO began using its own reconnaissance drones in 2015. On June 4th, 2015, the Alliance celebrated the rollout of their first drone with the innocuous identification "NATO 1". The drones are part of a program called Allied Ground Surveillance, or AGS.[1] Their mission is to carry out reconnaissance operations for NATO member states and supplement AWACS surveillance aircraft units. The HALE drones (High Altitude Long Endurance) type RQ-4B Global Hawk, produced by US-company Northrop Grumman, are able to operate at high altitude (absolute ceiling 18.288 meters) for extended periods of time (more than 32 hours).[2]

A total of five large drones are supposed to be at NATO's disposal. They are expected to be fully transferred to NATO Base Sigonella in Sicily, Italy in 2016. NATO's Main Operating Base (MOB) at NATO Base Sigonella and moveable ground stations (Mobile General Ground Stations, MGGS / Transportable General Ground Stations, TGGS) are available to process the data the drones have collected. The Alliance also acquired its own training unit. At most, two drones are to deployed at the same time so that two areas can be monitored simultaneously. The sheer amount of data collected by the drones' sensors requires an enormous expenditure of personnel resources.[3]

Not all of the 28 NATO member states were involved in funding of the AGS. The initial plan was to acquire eight flight units, but this number was reduced to five. Initially, 13 states signed the AGS Programme Memorandum of Understanding (PMoU) in 2009. This PMoU runs for 30 years. After an amended agreement was introduced in 2013, a total of 15 states participate in the funding and provide support (Canada has backed out of the procurement plan, but Poland and Denmark have joined the group). Three states bear about 89.7 percent of the costs according to the PMoU: the US 41.7 %, Germany 33.3 % and Italy 14.7 %. The remaining 10.3 % are allotted to Bulgaria, Estonia, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic. The allocations changed slightly after the amended agreement was introduced. Although two more states are involved in the programme, Germany still has to bear about 31 % of the total costs of € 1.45 billion, i.e. € 483.31 million. This includes procurement costs as well as the costs for operating the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance Management Agency (NAGSMA), which has been specially established for co-ordination and procurement.[4]

The system is set to be ready for action in 2018. The future area of operation for the AGS drones will be in the eastern theater of the EU. The big drones are supposed to supply surveillance results for Eastern Ukraine, Russia, and other bordering states. Global Hawk drones are already in action today. US drones cross the Baltic Sea or participate in exercises like "Trident Juncture" (2015) as part of the so-called "European Reassurance Initiative" which seeks to reassure the Baltic states that the military alliance stands by their side.[5] The German Federal Government could not present „any findings" in its answer to a minor interpellation about which further areas were supposed to be monitored and whose actions the drones were to spy out.[6] The government is satisfied with the US assertion that the surveillance technology is deactivated during the flyover across Germany.[7]

Source: NAGSMA

In the longer term, the Federal Government plans to operate its own big drones. Since the Euro Hawk turned out to be a black hole for money and is presumably only leaving its hangar for test flights after 2017, the Ministry of Defence is looking for another similarly constructed drone able to carry the surveillance technology developed by Airbus and admitted for usage in common airspace. As distinguished from AGS, which is mainly about radar and image data, the Airbus system functions as a tool for signal interceptions of radio and other data traffic. The system is called "Integrated SIGINT-System" (ISIS) and its costs have accounted for about € 270 million so far. The decision to procure the future carrier system is delayed and it is not yet sure if it can be set in the actual term of the Bundestag. It seems to be likely that the final choice will be MQ-4C Triton, also produced by Northrop Grumman. The expected costs run up to another € 648 million, in addition to the € 616 million that have already been spent for Euro Hawk and ISIS. It is still unclear whether Triton will be licensed.[8] It is in the cards that these drones will be deployed on NATO territory. AGS will be NATO's eyes and the drones owned the German Federal Armed Forces will be NATO's ears.[9] The fleet of drones owned by the Federal Armed Force is therefore expected to increase further.[10]

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Atomic Sabre-rattling: NATO's Nuclear Offensive

by Jürgen Wagner

In early 2015, the "Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists" moved its infamous "Doomsday Clock", which shows how the world is on the verge of a nuclear war, forward to three minutes to midnight. According to the nuclear scientists, the world has just once, 1953, been closer to such a brink of disaster.[1] In the following time, the situation only got worse, as the organization made clear in January 2017: "Over the course of 2016, the global security landscape darkened as the international community failed to come effectively to grips with humanity's most pressing existential threats, nuclear weapons and climate change. [...] For these reasons, the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has decided to move the minute hand of the Doomsday Clock 30 seconds closer to catastrophe. It is now two minutes and 30 seconds to midnight."[2]

High-ranking military officers share the same grim view although from a totally different angle: In May 2016, Richard Shirreff, who served as NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe between 2011 and 2014, published his book "2017 War with Russia". He warned in the book that a nuclear war between Russia and the West was not mandatory, but "entirely plausible". This could only be prevented by facing Russia with a decisive buildup at NATO's eastern flank. The preface to the book by James Stavridis, who served as NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe between 2009 and 2013, is similarly unsettling too. He is obviously of the same mind: "Under President Putin, Russia has charted a dangerous course that, if it is allowed to continue, may lead inexorably to a clash with Nato. And that will mean a war that could so easily go nuclear."[3]

It is not just the current conventional buildup, though, that massively contributes to this scenario, but NATO's nuclear strategy, which is closely connected with its US model. This strategy has always been aimed at waging a nuclear war "successfully" at all conceivable levels. But the aggressiveness and forthrightness employed in this pursuit has been a new development in recent times. Thus, there have been a lot of demands within NATO to distinctly enhance the role of nuclear weapons again with reference to the dramatic deterioration of the relations with Russia (chapter 1). Although an

official revision of NATO's nuclear strategy is not due before 2018, prime elements can already be guessed, based on the respective debates and programs that have already been initiated. As far as the tactical nuclear weapons are concerned, i.e. those "just fit for" operation on a limited battlefield, not just their modernization has been clamored for, but also a buildup of US nuclear weapons deployed in Europe within the scope of nuclear sharing. The – poorly proven – accusation that Russia had lowered its nuclear threshold of application so far that NATO had to react accordingly serves as a justification (chapter 2). On a strategic level, i.e. weapons meant to destroy the other side's arsenal in the respective home countries, the US and NATO are more and more clearly geared towards a first-strike capability against Russia (and China). NATO is an integral part of these attempts to win nuclear supremacy due to the modernization of the US nuclear missiles in Europe, which are hence turned into strategic weapons, as well as due to the missile defence currently under construction (chapter 3 and 4).

Since the US and NATO, too, refuse to issue reliable guarantees for Russia's (and China's) second-strike capability, both countries feel downright forced to massively invest in the modernization of their own nuclear arsenal in order not to be "susceptible to nuclear blackmail". In turn, a number of other countries feel threatened because of the dynamics inherent to the domain of nuclear weapons and make intensified buildup efforts on their own. This is why an "avalanche of nuclear armament" is currently imminent.[5] Instead of decidedly opposing this trend by initiatives for disarmament, though, high-ranking NATO officials more or less pronounce arms control dead (chapter 5).

1. NATO and the appreciation of nuclear weapons

As already mentioned, NATO's nuclear policy is essentially contingent on respective reflections in the US. Although France and Great Britain also have nuclear weapons at their command, the US have put their stamp on the nuclear policy of the Alliance from its inception till today. The 2010 Strategic Concept of the Alliance clearly addresses "the hierarchy of NATO's nuclear powers": "The supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States; the independent strategic

nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France, which have a deterrent role of their own, contribute to the overall deterrence and security of the Allies."[6] At the same time neither NATO nor its non-nuclear member countries hold any competence over the nuclear weapons of the US – not even over the nuclear weapon stockpile deployed in Europe within the scope of nuclear sharing: "NATO itself has no authority over the use of nuclear weapons use decision. The decision to employ nuclear weapons in support of NATO can only be made in Washington, London, and Paris by the state leaders of those nuclear-weapon states. NATO would be consulted and possibly consent (by consensus) to use but it cannot block use. [...] Consultation process formally relates only to weapons in NATO's nuclear sharing agreement."[7]

Nuclear policy under President Bill Clinton (1993-2001), as well under his successors George W. Bush (2001-2008) and Barack Obama (2008-2017) are based on being able to wage a nuclear war and also "win" it. US nuclear capacities have been "improved" under all three presidents facing the main enemies Russia and China[8]. Even though the Obama administration initially chose noticeably more careful formulations than its predecessor at first glance, the aim remained the same, namely to "strengthening deterrence of potential adversaries", in the 2010 version of the Nuclear Posture Review. This is a sparsely hedged reference primarily directed at Russia and China. The posture further elaborates the aim and reads that NATO "would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners."[9]

Consequently, NATO's politics were guided by this aim: "In its 1999 Strategic Concept and the corresponding military committee document MC 400/2, NATO went without depicting the use of nuclear weapons as a 'last resort' as it had still done in the 1990 London Declaration. The no-first-use policy was not issued either because the US reserve a right to nuclear first use in their national nuclear strategy, among other things. Thus, a blatant contradiction between the strategies of NATO and the US could be avoided."[10]

The next Strategic Concept was adopted at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon. It comprised moderate formulations by comparison and emphasized determination to

"create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons". On the other hand, NATO steadfastly stuck to the continued relevance of nuclear weapons: "Deterrence, based on an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities, remains a core element of our overall strategy. The circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated are extremely remote. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance."[11] At the same NATO summit, the construction of a NATO missile defense shield (see below) and a review of NATO's nuclear strategy were commissioned. The latter was published in May 2012 as "Deterrence and Defence Posture Review", but mainly stuck to upholding the status quo by arriving at the conclusion that there was no urgent need to act: "The review has shown that the Alliance's nuclear force posture currently meets the criteria for an effective deterrence and defence posture."[12]

All of this happened before the relations between Russia and the West turned into open hostility after November 2013 due to the Ukrainian crisis. Since then, not only the US, but also NATO have undergone a period of massive armament – verbally as well as factually, and in the nuclear sector, too. Correspondingly, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said at the Munich Security Conference in February 2016: "We have seen a more assertive Russia. A Russia which is destabilising the European security order. [...] Our deterrence also has a nuclear component. Russia's rhetoric, posture and exercises of its nuclear forces are aimed at intimidating its neighbours, undermining trust and stability in Europe."[13]

In this context, Karl-Heinz Kamp, head of the German Federal Academy for Security Policy (BAKS), fills the role of the whip. He argues that the grounds which provided the setting for the relatively modest 2012 "Deterrence and Defense Posture Review" is not existent any more: "Russia has withdrawn once and for all from the partnership and is defining itself as an anti-Western power. [...] Russia may be conventionally inferior on the whole, but within two to three days it could generate considerable force levels by concentrating troops from exercises. [This situation] has led to calls to reduce response times (taking into account the cost factor) and to step up military exercises in the use of nuclear weapons."[14] Along with Pierre Vimont, Executive Secretary General of the European External Action Service, and Kurt Volker, then US Ambassador to NATO, Kamp took part in the publication of a report, issued in March 2016, urging that "NATO must put the nuclear dossier higher on the agenda than it is today".[15]

To come straight to the point, the current debates in the US and within NATO all agree on insisting on the need for a more "credible" nuclear threat to avoid a confrontation with Russia. This, in turn, means to create the preconditions to wage "successful" nuclear wars. As mentioned earlier: Not the strategy itself is something new, but the fact that it is now promoted relatively frankly. Thus, Claudia Major of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs writes: "Nuclear deterrence offers protection, too – but only if Russia believes that NATO would actually apply nuclear weapons."[16] Accordingly, the tone of voice was slightly tightened within the Warsaw Summit

Declaration in July 2016: "Any employment of nuclear weapons against NATO would fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict. The circumstances in which NATO might have to use nuclear are extremely remote. If the fundamental security of any of its members were to be threatened however, NATO has the capabilities and resolve to impose costs on an adversary that would be unacceptable and far outweigh the benefits that an adversary could hope to achieve."[17]

2. Nuclear armament for tactical wars in East Europe?

Nuclear sharing is the connecting link between the nuclear strategies of the US and NATO. With its help, non-nuclear states become part of the nuclear mission planning. Conditions for participation include storing of nuclear weapons on their own territory as well as meeting the technical requirements to operate nuclear weapons – for example having suitable airplanes at command. Nonetheless, as has already been mentioned, all real authority to decide factually remains in the hands of the US: "In peacetime, the nuclear weapons stored in non-nuclear countries are guarded by United States Air Force (USAF) personnel [...]; the Permissive Action Link codes required for arming them remain under American control. In case of war, the weapons are to be mounted on the participating countries' warplanes. The weapons are under custody and control of USAF Munitions Support Squadrons".[18] Five NATO member states – Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Turkey – are currently participating in nuclear sharing, Poland is discussing the issue at the moment.[19] According to estimations,

between 150 and 200 tactical US nuclear weapons are deployed in these countries.[20] Most NATO strategists, as Supreme Allied Commander Europe James Stavridis, who was already quoted in the beginning, share two basic assumptions: The first one is that armed skirmishes with Russia in East Europe were highly probable. The other one is that Moscow exhibited the willingness to use tactical nuclear weapons. The reason for the existence of these conditions is seen in the conventional supremacy of the West, which Russia allegedly wanted to thwart with its bigger arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons. Indeed, the US only have 760 non-strategic nuclear weapons at their disposal, out of which only 150 to 200 are deployed in Europe as part of the nuclear sharing.[21] In comparison, Russia is estimated to command 1.000 to 6.000 tactical nuclear weapons, depending on the respective estimation.[22]

If Moscow is seriously considering the use of tactical nuclear weapons in connection with these conflicts, though, is highly questionable. One important argument against this scenario is that Russia has distinctly raised the threshold for the usage of nuclear weapons in the two most recent versions of its Military Doctrines, which are crucial in this context (2010 and 2014), instead of lowering it. But this fact doesn't impress most hardliners against Russia. They argue in the following way: "Russia's military exercises often include simulated escalation from conventional to nuclear weapons, suggesting that Russia envisions and trains for a continuum of military escalation that includes nuclear employment. [These exercises along with Russia's increasingly threatening rhetoric are factors that] engender concern that Russia stands ready to lower the nuclear threshold and use or threaten to use nuclear weapons to support its pursuit of aggressive objectives, notwithstanding the 2014 Russian Military Doctrine's position that nuclear weapons would only be used in response to a nuclear attack on Russia or a conventional attack that threatened Russia's very existence as a state."[23]

Ultimately, Russia's true attitude cannot be resolved, of course. The statement within the Military Doctrines are no evident proof for a high threshold to use nuclear weapons, whereas references to Russia's efforts to modernize its arsenal and its various exercises aren't convincing evidence for the opposite either. But clear evidence should be on the table for extensive adjustments of NATO's nuclear strategy. However, the perspective of Russia being ready for a nuclear war has been adopted until well into the highest ranks. In his speech at the 2016 Munich Security Conference, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, for example, warned Russia about using its tactical nuclear weapons without hedging around with clauses: "But no one should think that nuclear weapons can be used as part of a conventional conflict. It would change the nature of any conflict fundamentally."[24] In May 2016, another report by some high-ranking NATO strategists, among them former Secretary General Wesley Clark, followed suit: "NATO's nuclear deterrent should be strengthened by signaling to Russia that Moscow's strategy of using sub-strategic nuclear weapons to de-escalate conflict would be a major escalation and would warrant the Alliance's nuclear response."[25] The US and NATO lacked "adequate" means for such a "nuclear reaction" to Russia's hypothetical use of tactical nuclear weapons, according to the current line of argumentation. An escalation on a strategic level involved a high danger of a global nuclear war, in which no one had any interest. For this reason, more tactical nuclear weapons were required to be able to set something against Russia. Matthew Kroenig, professor for political sciences at Georgetown University and former member of the US Department of Defense, calls for a new round of nuclear armament in Europe: "NATO's decision to virtually eliminate tactical nuclear weapons from Europe has left Russia with a wide range of options on the nuclear escalation ladder. [...] NATO must plan for the development and deployment of a new generation of sub-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. After all, it was the deployment of the Pershing II missiles in the 1980s that convinced Moscow to sign the INF Treaty [regarding medium-range ballistic missiles] in the first place."[26]

Elbridge Colby of the "Center for a New American Security"[27] expressed himself similarly, as did Stanislaw Marian Koziej, who served as the Head of the Polish National Security Bureau from 2010 to 2015: "Unfortunately, escalation [...] seems to be the most probable course within this context of a new Cold War at the present. NATO could have no other practical alternative than topping up its own potential of nuclear weapons and changing its rules of engagement because of Russia's aggressive posture. [...] A wide-scale program of modernizing this class of weapon could be a logical next step; the improvement of its security, survivability, range and accuracy would be primary targets. A review and update of rules defining the involvement of non-nuclear NATO member countries in the Alliance's nuclear policy could succeed, as well."[28]

Factually, a nuclear armament of tactical weapons like this is already in full swing. As early as 2010, the Obama administration decided to initiate a modernization program that included the weapons deployed in Europe – the present weapons are slated for replacement by more accurate and, thus, "better" applicable types until 2020. The costs are estimated at $6 billion[29]: "The

new variant of the nuclear bomb, called the B61-12, is now expected to replace the older types 3, 4, 7 and 10 as well as the bunker-busting B-61-11 and B-83 strategic nuclear bombs. The latter has an explosive power of up to 1.2 megatons of TNT, making it more than 90 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima."[30] Although a few weeks after inauguration there exists no clear statement regarding the B61-12 from the new Trump administration, as the new president is very much in favor of nuclear armament (see below) it is highly likely that the "modernization" will proceed with full speed.

This also has an impact on Germany, since the Tornados meant for transporting nuclear weapons within the scope of nuclear sharing are not compatible with the B61-12 without modifications. For this reason, they are candidates for "modernization" as is the associated airport in Büchel, too, according to reports in September 2015: "German Tornados should be able to attack with the newest US nuclear weapons within the scope of nuclear sharing – made possible by modernizing the nuclear weapons deployed on German airbases. [...] Not only American, but also German sources plough money into the modernization of the airbase in Büchel. While the US pays for the weapons' integration into German Tornados, the German Ministry of Defence invests 112 million Euro into the modernization of the runway and the instrumental approach system in Büchel. Other US nuclear bases in Europe, like Incirlik, Turkey, or Aviano, Italy, are candidates for modernization, too."[31]

3. First-strike capability: a nuclear sword...

In 2001, a comprehensive study already reached the conclusion that Washington was on the verge of obtaining first-strike capability against Russia.[32] This might be the reason why Russia has been modernizing its arsenal in the following years. However, the US are pursuing build-up on their own at the same time. The fact that they are focusing on more accuracy and penetrating power suggests that they are really aspiring a first-strike capability. In 2006, a much discussed report in "Foreign Affairs", revealingly entitled "The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy", arrived at the same result: "Is the United States intentionally pursuing nuclear primacy? [...] [T]he nature of the changes to the current arsenal and official rhetoric and policies support this conclusion. [...] The current and future U.S. nuclear force,

in other words, seems designed to carry out a preemptive disarming strike against Russia or China."[33] In 2013, the two authors argued that the US were closer to obtaining first-strike capability than ever due to massive improvements in penetrating power, accuracy, and recon of mobile targets.[34] Other experts confirm these findings.[35]

Although a review of the nuclear policy under Barack Obama announced that there was no need for new nuclear weapons, his administration resolved on a complete modernization of the US arsenal that has no equal. According to current plans, between $355 billion and $1,000 billion – depending on different estimations – are to be poured into the modernization of the arsenal within the next 30 years.[36] Hans Kristensen, one of the leading experts on US nuclear policy, leaves no doubt against whom these efforts are primarily directed: "The final defense budget of the Obama administration [referring to the budget year 2017] effectively crowns this administration as the nuclear modernization leader of post-Cold War U.S. presidencies. While official statements so far have mainly justified the massive nuclear modernization as simply extending the service-life of existing capabilities, the Pentagon now explicitly paints the nuclear modernization as a direct response to Russia".[37]

In this context, Russia considers it particularly problematic that the restrictions for strategic nuclear carrier systems and warheads are limited in time. The New START Treaty, signed by Russia and the US on April 8th, 2010, and binding them to reduce the number of warheads from 2.200 to 1.550 each and the number of carrier systems from 1.600 to 800, is only in force until 2020. Regardless of Russian efforts, the US also refused to subject anti-missile defense systems to any restrictions. And there are no automatisms guaranteeing a continuation of the constraints beyond their duration of validity. At the extreme, if the relations get worse, the US are absolutely legally allowed to proceed with their nuclear build-up again after the contract has expired. They have more than 4,480 quickly applicable warheads deployed at their command, if necessary, as a "hedge against technical or geopolitical surprises."[38]

In this context, it is particularly troubling that the new US president Donald Trump called New START Treaty "just another bad deal that the country made" while simultaneously claiming that the United states must achieve nuclear superiority over Russia (and

others): "It would be wonderful, a dream would be that no country would have nukes, but if countries are going to have nukes, we're going to be at the top of the pack", so Trump.[39] To further clarify the president's position, White House spokesman Sean Spicer said: "what he was very clear on is that the United States will not yield its supremacy in this area to anybody. That's what he made very clear in there. And that if other countries have nuclear capabilities, it will always be the United States that has the supremacy and commitment to this."[40]

To make matters worse, under the heading "Prompt Global Strike", the US have been working on the capability to conduct strategic strikes with conventional weapons for many years. An Analysis by the US Congressional Research Service reads: "A prompt strike against an adversary's ballistic missiles or caches of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) might allow the United States to destroy these weapons before an adversary could use them."[41] In this context, a lot of work has been put into the new hypersonic missiles, which can be armed conventionally or with nuclear warheads. Physicist Mark Gubrod outlines the most obvious function of these weapons: "I see hypersonics as weapons whose only plausibly logical use would be a niche role in a strategic first strike vs. Russia or China. [...] [E]ven non-nuclear hypersonic weapons would be mainly intended to attack strategic targets including nuclear weapons and the infrastructure of nuclear war."[42] The developmental state still seems to be slightly off from such a capability, but the number of weapons that have to be taken into account for the potential of a first-strike capability could escalate in the foreseeable future as a result. This is particularly true in view of the fact that the US have steadfastly refused so far to adopt any potential limitations for wide-ranging conventional systems.[43]

In this regard, the US nuclear weapons deployed in Europe within the scope of nuclear sharing could matter in the future as well. Until now they have been too inaccurate and without enough penetrating power to be used as strategic weapons. But in connection with the modernized B61-12 they could be used flexibly either as tactical or likewise as strategic weapons in the future. Thus, they could become integral parts of US first-strike plans or potential Russian counter-strategies: "Armament experts confirm that the new B61-12 tactical nuclear weapons are much more accurate than the nuclear bombs that have been stored in Büchel so

far. In case of war, German Tornado pilots are supposed to fly attacks with US bombs within the scope of nuclear sharing. Hans Kristensen of the Nuclear Information Project (Atomic Scientists) in Washington D.C. criticizes: 'The differences between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons are obliterated with the new bombs.'"[44] In this context, it is particularly disturbing to read an AP report that says that the Obama administration had been weighing options to deploy new land-based missiles in Europe to be able to preemptively destroy Russian nuclear weapons under certain conditions. "The options go so far as one implied – but not stated explicitly – that would improve the ability of U.S. nuclear weapons to destroy military targets on Russian territory."[45]

4. …and a missile defense system

According to the US, the defense system, which has been under development since the cancellation of the ABM contract to limit missile defence systems in June 2002, was not directed against Russia and China, but primarily against Iran (or alternatively against North Korea). Reflections on this matter within the scope of NATO are claiming the same, of course. The September 2014 Wales Summit Declaration, for example, reads: "Missile defence can complement the role of nuclear weapons in deterrence; it cannot substitute for them. The capability is purely defensive."[46]
For as long as anyone can remember, there have been confessions that the actual

"meaning" of a missile defense system primarily was defending against Russian or, perhaps, Chinese missiles.[47] This holds also true for more recent plans: In its February 2013 issue, the Moscow Times reported of a Pentagon briefing that the US missile defense system, which was allegedly only directed against Iran, was utterly useless for exactly this purpose.[48] A study by the institute for conflict research HSFK came to a similar conclusion: "There are no convincing Iran-related threat scenarios that justify both the current U.S. programs and the additional – and therefore redundant – systems of European states now in place".[49]

The defensive character of anti-missile systems leaves much to be desired, too, as the Foreign Affairs article that has already been cited above points out: "[T]he sort of missile defenses that the United States might plausibly deploy would be valuable primarily in an offensive context, not a defensive one – as an adjunct to a U.S. first-strike capability, not as a standalone shield. If the United States launched a nuclear attack against Russia (or China), the targeted country would be left with a tiny surviving arsenal – if any at all. At that point, even a relatively modest or inefficient missile-defense system might well be enough to protect against any retaliatory strikes, because the devastated enemy would have so few warheads and decoys left. […] Washington's continued refusal to eschew a first strike and the country's development of a limited missile-defense capability take on a

new, and possibly more menacing, look."[50] Research on a missile defense system has taken high priority in the US for a long time – even before Ronald Reagan's infamous "Strategic Defense Initiative" (SDI), Washington had spent about $ 150 billion[51] and more than $ 165 billion have been added to that since then.[52] NATO, too, has been specifying considerations to develop a shield to cover the EU states, which is supposed to be closely interconnected with the American one, for quite some time. At the 2002 NATO Summit in Prague, the assignment of a "Missile Defense Feasibility Study" was issued. The result of the secret study, containing more than 10.000 pages, was that such a wide-ranging shield was technically feasible in principle and that it would occasion costs between Euro 27.5 and 30 billion – or more than 40 billion if it included the necessary early-warning satellites.[53] At the NATO Summit in April 2008, the resolution was adopted "to develop options for a comprehensive missile defence architecture to extend coverage to all Allied territory and populations not otherwise covered by the United States system".[54] At the Lisbon NATO Summit in November 2010, the final decision was reached. The new Strategic Concept adopted there read: "Therefore, we will […] develop the capability to defend our populations and territories against ballistic missile attack as a core element of our collective defence […] We will actively seek cooperation on missile defence with Russia and other Euro-Atlantic partners".[55]

Since Russia was to be brought in – at least officially – the plans, which had been blisteringly criticized by Moscow until then, were changed. On February 2nd, 2012, a "European Phased Adaptive Approach" (EPAA) with various stages of expansion was officially announced: "In Phase 1 of the EPAA, the United States in 2011 deployed a first warship equipped with the Aegis missile defence system in the Mediterranean. A mobile AN/TPY-2 radar was stationed at Kürecik, Turkey, to gather data on incoming missiles and transmit it to the command and control centres. EPAA Phase 2 was completed at the end of 2015, when the Aegis Shore missile defence base at Deveselu, Romania, achieved technical readiness and began test and training operations. Meanwhile, four US navy ships equipped with SM-3 interceptors were also stationed at Rota, Spain. […] The third and final phase of EPAA is due to be completed by 2018, when the Aegis Ashore missile defence base at Redzikowo, Poland, becomes operational."[56]

BMDS - THE BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM

Source: Missile Defense Agency (MDA), 2010

At the latest, the originally planned fourth phase would at least potentially have been capable to intercept Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles, even according to a study issued by the EU Directorate-General for External Policies.[57] After fierce Russian criticism, this fourth phase was abandoned in March 2013, causing NATO to claim that all reservations expressed by Russia were complied with. But it is not that easy – for one thing, Russia argues that parts of the capacities belonging to the first three phases could be directed against Russia. The shield's potential for upgrading is much more serious, though: Since neither the US nor NATO accept any reliable limitations, existing elements of a missile-defense system could serve as kind of a "beachhead", which can be expanded in case of need.[58] The German Institute for International and Security Affairs points out: "Russia is concerned about the flexible, global and open architecture of the planned American system."[59] The style of recent open claims to direct the missile-defense system against Russia affirms all concerns expressed by Russia in this regard: "NATO officials are considering deploying a long-planned missile defense system – aimed at protecting Europe from attacks from the Middle East – against Russia as well [...]. Calls for such an expansion to the system's remit, which is backed by the United States, are growing in Poland as well as in NATO member states Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia."[60]

At the moment, the US bear the lion's share of the costs, assuming control over the missile-defense system. But other countries, not least including Germany, are substantially involved as well: "Firstly, Germany hosts the command and control centre in Ramstein. Secondly, Germany has pledged a Patriot contingent with up to three launchers as a contribution to the NATO missile defence system; [...] Thirdly, Germany provides staff to the German-Dutch Competence Centre for Surface-based Air and Missile Defence in Ramstein".[61]

5. Arms race instead of arms control

As a matter of fact, the billions invested into the nuclear sector by NATO and the US and the corresponding projects only make sense within the context of waging nuclear war against Russia and China. It would be quite simple to get rid of suspicions to this effect if Washington just approved of legally fixed and unrestricted limitations of offensive systems (nuclear and conventional) and missile defense systems

– but the US are not willing to do so. US plans, especially in the strategic sector, downright force Russia and China to arm on their own.[62] A new "arms race 2.0" is imminent, but with distinctly more actors than before: "Washington is considering to take in hand a thorough modernization of the American nuclear triad (air-, sea- and ground-based systems for about a trillion dollars in the next decades. At the same time, Chinese strategists are contemplating to shift their nuclear arsenal to a faster mode of launch readiness ('hair trigger alert'). They are dreaming of their own triad and of so-called multiple warheads for their missile programs. Anyone into Asian armament dynamics knows that an Indian answer won't be long in coming. This will also provide for further Pakistani armament."[63]

The alternative to such a costly and high-risk arms race would be perfectly obvious – increased efforts towards disarmament and arms control. But NATO currently rejects considerations like these with a scratch of the pen, as Matthew Kroenig argues: "NATO should, of course, continue to consider arms control measures that advance the Alliance's security interests, but such proposals must take a backseat to NATO's deterrence needs."[64] The above-mentioned study issued by a number of high-ranking NATO strategists, among them Karl-Heinz Kamp, president of the BASK, speaks out in a similar way: "In light of Moscow's current nuclear reasoning, nuclear arms control in Europe – i.e. the mutual reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons – is no longer an option."[65]

Kamp finally puts the position unfortunately dominant at the moment in a nutshell: "Given the current confrontational conditions, a joint reduction of nuclear weapons in Europe is even harder to imagine. [...] With this, nuclear arms control is not ruled out – it remains a core element of Western security policy. But it is definitely secondary to the objectives of preventive security. The primary purpose of nuclear arms is not to be disarmed. The purpose of a nuclear weapon – just like any other weapon – is to contribute to security and defence."[66]

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Resistance against NATO structures in Germany - EUCOM in Stuttgart

by Thomas Mickan

EUCOM is pivotal for NATO's wars. It has been part of the Patch Barracks in Stuttgart's Vaihingen district since 1967, widely unnoticed by the population. The Barracks are not only home to the US European Command, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), the commanding officer for all NATO operations can be found here, too. He is also serving as Commander of U.S. European Command (EUCOM), a personal union that has been existing since 2004. The word "Europe" only survived by tradition. The SACEUR is always a US general, as well, whereas the NATO Secretary General is invariably provided by European NATO members.

In the course of the Ukrainian crisis and the growing tensions with Russia, EUCOM has increasingly gained center stage again, not least because upcoming wars and threat of war are planned and prepared here. When Curtis M. Scaparrotti succeeded Philip M. Breedlove as Commander in early May 2016, the tensions with Russia further heated up. When the new SACEUR took office, he got his point across, threatening: "'We face a resurgent Russia and its aggressive behavior that challenges international norms,' Scaparotti said, adding that forces must be 'ready to fight should deterrence fail.'"[1] According to US media, the shift of Commanders ultimately implied making a transition from a coordination office for NATO towards an office factually preparing war.[2]

Stuttgart as a military area

The German Federal Armed Forces and the US Army also maintain military structures in Stuttgart within the scope of NATO and for NATO operations, thus establishing the city as a military area. Stuttgart houses a number of Federal Armed Forces facilities, such as a large career center, including an assessment center for higher ranks as well. There are also the headquarters of the state Baden-Württemberg, parts of the Military Counter-Intelligence Service (MAD group V, MAD office 51) and a few smaller Federal Armed Forces service centres like the competence center for construction management. The state agency of the association of Baden-Württemberg reserves or the homeland security brigade 65[3] are mainly located within the Theodor-Heuss barracks or at Heilbronner Straße 186, too.

Matters are much more complex regarding the US Army. Four barracks constitute its core: the Patch Barracks in Stuttgart-Vaihingen, the Kelley Barracks in Stuttgart-Möhringen, the Robinson Barracks, solely used as residence and school, in Stuttgart-Bad-Cannstatt, and the Panzer Kaserne in Böblingen. A part of Stuttgart Airport – the US Army Airfield in Leinfelden-Echterdingen – is used for military purposes as well as smaller branches such as the 6th ASG CFMO Warehouse in Stuttgart-Weilimdorf, which is set for relocation until 2018, though.[4] The Kelley Barracks have become famous way beyond Stuttgart due to the US Africa Command AFRICOM and the drone war emanating from there.[5] The Representative Europe Office of the US secret service organizations NSA and Central Security Service (CSS) is situated on the premises of the Patch Barracks, as well.

Other units deployed in the military are of Stuttgart are far less known. The Patch Barracks house the Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR). The command directly reports to EUCOM and coordinates all special forces for operations in Europe, such as during the Yugoslavian war or in the course of large-scale exercises in East Europe, for instance. Units under its direct control are located at Panzer Kaserne Böblingen in the Stuttgart area, too. These include the 1st Battalion of the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and the US Naval Special Warfare Command (Navy Special Warfare Unit 2 of the Naval Special Warfare Group 2). One important task of these units was and is undertaking mutual exercises in East Europe together with the special forces units of those countries. Activities exceeding beyond this are barely known due to the nature of these units.

Another unit in the Böblingen Panzer Kaserne is the 554th Military Police Company. It is part of the 709th Military Police Battalion (Grafenwöhr), which, in turn, is part of the 18th Military Police Brigade (Sambach), thus reporting to the 21st Theater Sustainment Command (Kaiserslautern). Its nickname is "War Dawgs" – a colloquial term for war dogs. This unit was also responsible for the training of police units and for raids in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is also deployed to train Eastern European armed forces and military police in large-scale military exercises. Lastly, the Marine Forces Europe and Africa, which are part of the US Marine Corps, are another large

unit located at the Panzer Kaserne. This unit of the Marines participated in combat actions in Kosovo as well as in the Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Both 55th Military Police Company and Marine Forces Europe and Africa attend current exercises along the eastern borders of NATO.

Tradition of resistance

EUCOM has been an important focal point for the peace movement since 1983, when the human chain between Stuttgart and Neu-Ulm was formed.[6] About 400.000 people joined the 108 km chain as a reaction to the planned deployment of medium-range ballistic missiles at the Wiley Barracks in Neu-Ulm, among other places. Between 1988 and 1996, EUCOMmunity I-VI represented another period of campaigns resulting in the nonviolent removal of EUCOM fences. The protest was primarily directed against the US nuclear bombs deployed in Germany and coordinated by EUCOM. The activists went for the fences of the military base with plowshares and bolt cutters and tried to create media publicity by the ensuing lawsuits.[7] EUCOM witnessed a historic climax of resistance in 2003, when it was identified as an important logistics center for the war in Iraq. About 6.000 people were able to completely "surround" EUCOM on April 29th, 2003. Other actions, often in the guise of typical Swabian happenings like a "Ständerling" or a "Hocketse", followed and succeeded in blocking EUCOM again and again.[8] There has been a lively tradition of resistance for more than 30 years apart from the three mentioned culminations, and further acts of resistance are likely in light of new tensions with Russia and the US drone war.

Peace must spring from Stuttgart

Since the disclosures about the drone war in 2013,[9] which is partially coordinated by AFRICOM, just one kilometer away from EUCOM, resistance against military structures in Stuttgart has gained new quality and attention. It has been possible to increasingly emphasize the role of AFRICOM and EUCOM again and again in the past three years, which specifically applies to AFRICOM's role in the drone war and its cooperation with German offices and the Federal Armed Forces. Thomas D. Waldhauser succeeds David M. Rodriguez as Commander of Africa Command in the summer of 2016. In the military magazine Stars and Stripes,

Rodriguez let himself get carried away about his frustration as he talked publicly about the fact that AFRICOM was more and more perceived as a "hard-charging hunter-killer force."[10] Protests that force responses from military officers may readily be interpreted as a success of these protests.

One of these protests was another human chain in Stuttgart during the German Protestant Kirchentag 2015 with more than 2.500 people participating. Images showing that the peace movement can be active and dynamic even made their way to the TV news show Tagesschau.[11] Out of these positive experiences, a circle of activists got together to initiate and organize the 2016 year of events "War and causes of flight start here – peace must spring from Stuttgart!" ("Krieg und Fluchtursachen beginnen hier – von Stuttgart muss Frieden ausgehen!"). More than a dozen protest events were realized in the first half of the year. Among them were antimilitarist city tours, an international festival of artists in front of the barrack gates, lectures and a large blockade with the aid of a concert by the music and action group Lebenslaute in August 2016.

The special focus of the coalition for action is to reveal and attack the cooperation between army, civil offices and the city. Far from specific national resentments, the complex relationship between drones, NATO or the Military Counter-Intelligence Service of the Federal Armed Forces (MAD) is made understandable and tangible. In short, military landscapes, like the SACEUR, for example, are to be addressed in a functional way to show how they affect the city and its people. The connection with NATO is just one out of a number of connections which reveals the destructive role of the military across all spectra. In Stuttgart, thus, the full range of modern warfare – from drones and the tensed relations between NATO and Russia to secret services or military training missions and arms exports – can be attacked and portrayed in its everyday relevance for the people.

Following the long tradition of resistance, almost a dozen peace movement groups have formed in Stuttgart in the last five years! The cooperation with unions, churches, ecology groups and other social connections is constantly intensifying. The pivotal significance of EUCOM for NATO wars and AFRICOM for drone wars allows for the steady establishment of new groups as well as attracting people who want to start actively campaigning for peace or who want to resume doing

so after a prolonged period of abstinence. Resistance against NATO's war structures is also increasingly stirring at other places: in Kalkar/Ueden, Ramstein, Spangdahlem or Münster. In Geilenkirchen, resistance against NATO is only slowly building up, although the base of the AWACS surveillance aircraft located there was noticeably upgraded at the end of 2015. These planes have been deployed there since 1982 against the protest of more than 2.000 people at that time. At the end of 2015 NATO transferred the "NATO Airborne Early Warning & Control Force Command" (NAEW&C Force Command) commanding the AWACS from Mons, Belgium, to Geilenkirchen. In the summer of 2016, NATO is using the AWACS for about 90 flight hours every week. 85 percent of these are allocated to operations near the Russian border – under the command of SACEUR within EUCOM.[12]

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No NATO: Mapping the Protest Sites

by Jacqueline Andres

As a military alliance NATO commands large-scale structures in Europe, Asia and North America guaranteeing the readiness for action of its troops all over the world by their logistic interaction. Again and again, NATO's military missions as well as the sites in Europe used for planning wars and military training have been the subject of protests. The continuous eastward expansion of NATO, the Alliance's nuclear armament and its increasing participation in the EU's deadly control of migration in the Mediterranean are reasons for people to take to the streets to protest.

Current Protests against the expansion of NATO

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has continuously expanded instead of mutually dissolving alongside the Warsaw Pact. As recent as December 2015 the military alliance officially offered Montenegro membership in NATO. This happened at a time, when the people of Montenegro were on the streets to voice their increasing rejection of Milo Djukanovic, who has been acting in turns as prime minister and as president of the state for 26 years. The country, which has only been an independent state since 2006, has experienced a great deal of corruption and repression against government critics. NATO and the EU, however, have been carrying on membership negotiations with Montenegro since 2012, ignoring these disastrous domestic politics in favor of securing their own geostrategic and economic interests. According to Gojko Raicevic, president of the Montenegro peace organization No to War no to NATO, protests are focused on stopping NATO and EU membership and maintaining Montenegro's non-aligned status. According to the Montenegro Center for Democracy and Human Rights, only 37% of Montenegrins favor NATO membership. On October 14th, 2015, the Montenegro peace movement demonstrated against a visit by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, demanding an apology for the devastation of Montenegro during the NATO bombardments in 1999.[1]

In the Republic of Moldova, Dragon Pioneer, a joint military exercise of the Moldavian army and NATO troops in 2016, provoked a road blockade. Anti-war activists were able to stop about a dozen incoming military vehicles for a short time. A few weeks before

that, about a hundred supporters of the Socialist Party in the Republic of Moldova were protesting at the NATO offices and the US-American and the Romanian embassy in the Moldavian capital Chisinau. Keeping Moldova neutral was among their demands.

There were also protests repudiating NATO, but not Russia, as for example in Serbia. According to the Kremlin-associated news-portal Sputnik, more than 6.000 people went to Belgrade's streets in March 2016 to protest against the military cooperation between Serbia and NATO. Just a month before, the Serbian government signed a treaty with NATO, including mutual military exercises in Serbia, to improve the image of the military alliance and to allow NATO troops to move about freely in the whole country under diplomatic immunity. The protest showed that about 80 % of the population didn't feel protected by NATO, but jeopardized by it, instead. These numbers are confirmed by surveys.[2]

NATO also tries to expand the range of its influence with the so-called Host Nation Support Agreement and by agreements in principle. At the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales, the Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces General Sverker Göranson and his Finnish counterpart General Jarmo Lindberg signed such treaties with NATO. These allow for the Alliance to use parts of the Swedish and the Finnish national territory for military exercises and for the operative and logistic support of military missions. Although surveys by the Finnish public service broadcaster Yleis-radio Oy (YLE) revealed that the majority of the people asked (about 55 %) explicitly oppose Finland's accession to NATO, Finland continues to create ties with the most powerful military alliance in the world.[3] Thus, in May 2016 hundreds of people in Helsinki followed the call by the Peace Union of Finland to protest against this dangerous approach, which could lead to Finland joining NATO within the next years. Another cause for the protests was the two-week military exercise of US and Finnish troops at the north-eastern Finnish air force base of the Karelian Air Command in Rissala, which was assessed as a provocation by the anti-war activists. A few days before, a couple of dozen activists had already demonstrated against the exercise, which had not been talked about within the parliamentary defense committee prior to this, in front of the entrance gate of the base.[4]

Protest against MUOS.
(Source: Osservatorio Repressione)

Sweden has seen a similar development. On June 2nd, 2015, ten activists of the anti-military network, Ofog, Women for Peace and the People's Campaign against Nuclear Weapons got inside the military airport F12 in Luleå, in the north of Sweden, and interrupted NATO's military exercise Arctic Challenge Exercise by means of a die-in on the runway. The supposedly neutral countries Finland, Sweden and Switzerland were undertaking one of the biggest military exercises of the year alongside several NATO member states in Scandinavian airspace.[5] On March 16th, 2016, a group of peace activists performed a flash-mob against Sweden's NATO-treaty, which was recorded by the filmmaker Ruben Östlund, who has been nominated for the Golden Globe.[6] On May 25th, 2016, the Swedish Riksdag ratified the Host Nation Support Agreement, which had already been signed in 2014 and solidifies the existing cooperation. During the actual ballot, there were protests in the visitors' stand by people objecting the treaty.

Nuclear Armament

Another cause for on-topic demonstrations against NATO's current development is the renaissance of NATO's nuclear deterrence strategy, idealized as a means to prevent war. The intended costly renewal of the nuclear arms system Trident provoked the biggest demonstration against nuclear weapons in Great Britain since the 1980s on February 27th, 2016. According to estimations by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, up to 60.000 people participated – among them Labour party leader Corbyn and the Scottish head of government Sturgeon. Banners demanded higher spending for social, education and health issues instead of armaments expenditure.[7] Trident consists of four submarines equipped with up to 40 intercontinental Trident-II nuclear missiles. One of them permanently cruises the world's oceans on a "deterrence" mission, whereas the others are maintained and stationed at Faslane Naval Base on the Scottish coast. One of the nuclear devices has the explosive power of eight Hiroshima bombs – the bomb

that has been euphemistically called "Little Boy".[8] The permanent Faslane Peace Camp has been existing close to the naval base since 1982. Again and again, activists have been getting inside the base to emphasize how dangerous and accessible the nuclear weapons are. In March 2014 two members of the camp gained access to the military base and climbed on top of one of the nuclear submarines. At the end of May 2015, another member of the camp proved the vulnerability and the security risk for the residents originating from the base by getting inside without being noticed at first.[9]

Military Exercises and Operations in EUrope

Another concrete cause of anti-military protests against NATO was the exercise Trident Juncture in the autumn of 2015. Especially alarming for the anti-war activists were the close links between economy and military institutions, a distinctly increased civil-military cooperation with non-government organizations and the introduction of new Quick Reaction Forces revealing NATO's offensive character and its increased readiness for armed intervention. The protests were ranging from Spain to Italy and included art-action at night in northern Spain as well as the interruption or disturbing of military maneuvers by getting inside

the military areas in Teulada, Sardinia, and in Barbate, Andalusia, which were part of the military exercise. There were regional and nationwide demonstrations in Naples, Marsala, Pisa, Rome, Milano, Teulada, and Cagliari (Italy) as well as in Saragossa, Barbate, and Albacete (Spain). More creative protest happened in the form of street theater in Bilbao, Basque region, as well as in the form of a die-in in Almeria, Andalusia, and in Marsala, Sicily. The actively involved anti-militarist group No MUOS also criticized the militarization of EU migration politics and the opening of a FRONTEX office in Catania, Sicily.[10] The increasing inclusion of NATO military elements into the deadly EU migration policy – for example by sending NATO warships into the Aegean Sea – is opposed by anti-war activists on the Greek island Crete. In mid-April and in late May 2016 hundreds of people – bringing together communist and anti-racist groups, among others – protested in front of the NATO military base Souda Bay, Chania, against NATO and for the rights of migrants.[11]

Military Bases: A Tedious Resistance

Apart from the Faslane Peace Camp mentioned above, regular protests against NATO also include annual peace marches near the Spanish and US military base at Rota, Andalusia since 1986. Close to the strategi-

cally important Strait of Gibraltar, four US Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, equipped with Aegis missiles, have been deployed to Rota since 2015 as part of NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense System.[12] Among others, the Antimilitarist and Nonviolent Network of Andalusia (Red Animilitarista y Noviolenta de Andalucía (RANA)) criticized in March 2016 Spain's NATO membership and the military presence and defense spending as part of that membership. The reason for the criticism was the 30th anniversary of the referendum on Spain joining NATO in 1982. RANA demanded a NATO phase-out and the liquidation of the military alliance. Membership was expensive, militarized the whole area and contributed important logistic support for NATO operations worldwide and for US wars, which, in turn, forced people to flee from their homes. The network also opposes Spain and NATO participating in the surveillance of the Mediterranean, which jeopardizes the safety of migrants crossing the sea. RANA demands solidarity instead of war and surveillance.[13]

In the past decades, new groups have frequently formed against the militarization of their own social, economic, political and ecological environment. Among these is the No MUOS movement, which has been trying to obstruct the implementation of the satellite communication system Mobile User
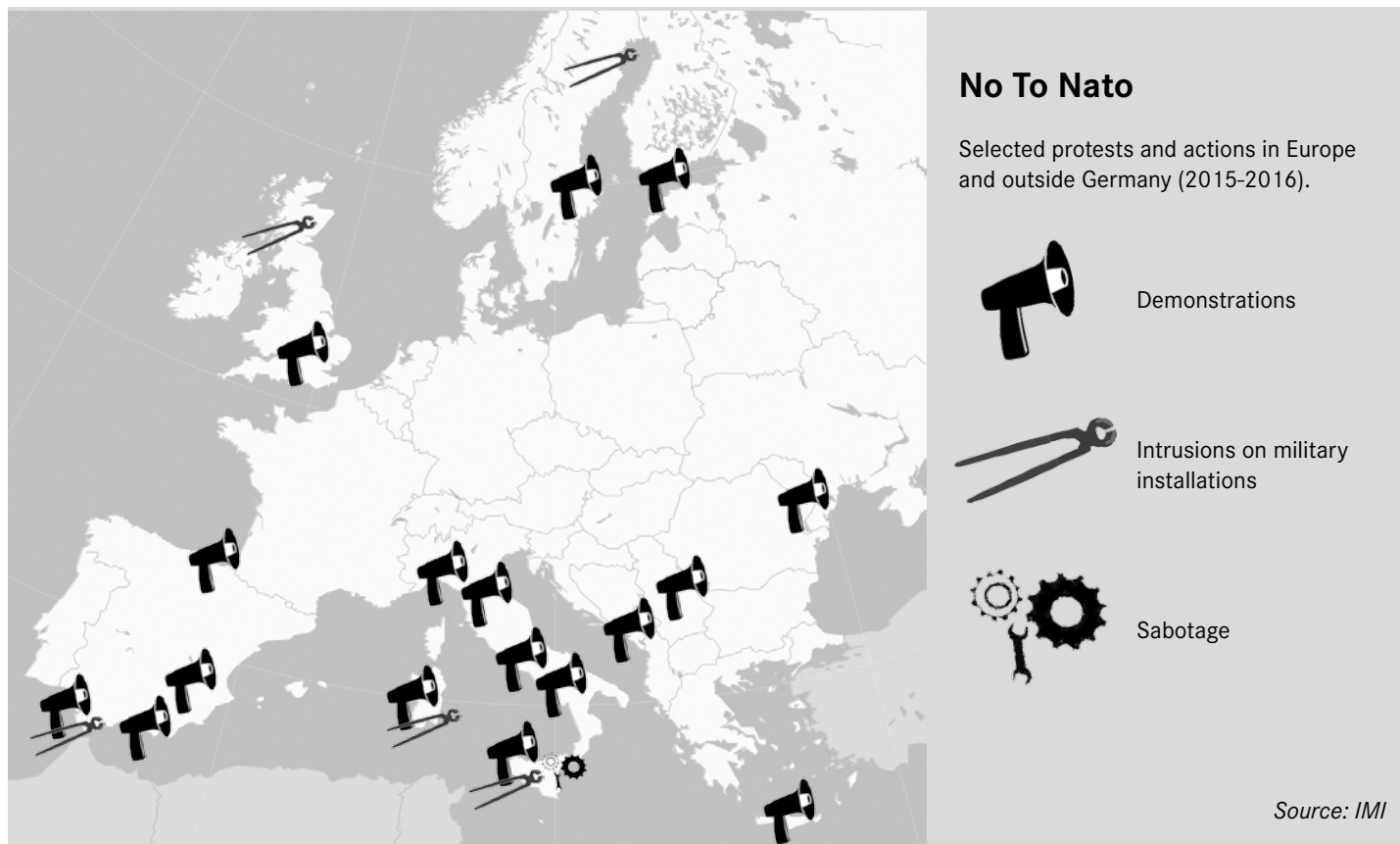
No To Nato

Selected protests and actions in Europe and outside Germany (2015-2016).

Demonstrations

Intrusions on military installations

Sabotage

Source: IMI

Objective System (MUOS) by the US military on Sicily and to cause a deactivation of 46 high-frequency antennas in use since 2012. This movement is not solely directed against MUOS, which enhances the capacity for data transfer of the US military communication system tenfold and represents a potential health risk for the residents by the electromagnetic radiation of three parabolic antennas. The movement is also critical of the superordinate NATO military base Sigonella, mainly used by US Navy.[14] Forms of resistance against the militarization of the island are manifold and include information campaigns as well as repeated sabotage of the military communication system and its associated high-frequency antennas. Within the frame of an annual camp against MUOS, activists repeatedly squatted on some of the US Navy antennas and forced the US military to turn off the antennas for a short time due to their harmful radiation. During the last action in November 2015, a No MUOS activist climbed on top of one of the parabolic antennas and with a hammer did about $800.000 in damage.[15] Further local antimilitarist movements with similar approaches and critiques are the NoDal Molin movement, located in Vicenza, Northern Italy, as well as No Radar in Sardinia.

Summits

More resistance against NATO regularly unfolds during the summit of the military alliance. At the 2012 Chicago Summit, which had been the biggest of its kind until then, veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars alongside Afghans for Peace spearheaded a peace march, joined by thousands of people. At the end 40 veterans threw their war decorations in the direction of the conference venue, chanting "No NATO, no war!"[16] The evening before, anti-war activists were shutting off traffic in the city by unheralded demonstrations in the financial district. The other summits in Wales, Lisbon, Strasbourg and, most recently, Warsaw were partly accompanied by fierce protests as well. It can safely been assumed that there will be dissent against the next summit, too.

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