Periphery or Contact Zone?
Periphery or Contact Zone?

The NATO Flanks 1961 to 2013

On behalf of Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences edited by

Bernd Lemke
Umschlagabbildung:
Deutsche Soldaten der Luftlandeartilleriebatterie 9 (AMF) vor einem Dorf in der Westtürkei (Umgebung von Cerkezköy), AMF-Übung »Alley Express«, 1988 (Bildsammlung Wambach).

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über www.dnb.de abrufbar.

Erste Auflage
© 2015 Rombach Verlag KG, Freiburg i.Br./Berlin/Wien


Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier (chlorfrei gebleicht).

Redaktion: ZMSBw, Potsdam, Schriftleitung
Koordination, Bildrechte: Michael Thomae
Lektorat: Nancy Pearson Mackie, Calgary/Kanada
Satz: Antje Lorenz
Grafiken: Yvonn Mechtel, Bernd Nogli
Projektassistenz: Carola Klinke, Elke Wagenitz
Cover: Maurice Woynoski, Carola Klinke

Gesamtherstellung: Rombach Druck- und Verlagshaus GmbH & Co. KG, Freiburg i.Br.

Printed in Germany
ISBN 978-3-7930-9798-3
Contents

7 Preface

9 Introduction

17 Bernd Lemke
The development of Alliance strategy, 1949–2014: A short overview

25 Agilolf Kesselring
The Nordic Balance and the realities of defence in the Baltic region, 1948–1961

43 Gökhan Özkan
Turkey, the United States and the NATO relationship during the Cold War: The Alliance and issues

57 Stefan Maximilian Brenner
NATO and the second Greco-Turkish conflict over Cyprus (1964/65): Its consequences for political cohesion of the North Atlantic Alliance

69 Francesca Zilio
The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and NATO southern flank: Mediterranean security as a source of intra-bloc tension

87 Gjert Lage Dyndal
The northern flank and high north scenarios of the Cold War

99 Gaetano La Nave
The transformations of the defense of the post-colonial Mediterranean and the role of Italy, 1963–1972

117 Dionysios Chourchouli

135 Augustine Meaher
The Baltics: A contact zone on the periphery, 1990–2013

141 Hans-Peter Kriemann
Germany’s participation in the NATO intervention in the Kosovo conflict in 1998 and 1999: Germany on its way to becoming an European formative power?
Contents

161 Michael Schmid
Transatlantic and Middle East crisis arcs: US strategic rebalancing to the Persian Gulf from October War 1973 to the Gulf War 1990–91 and the consequences for NATO

185 Harald van Nes
Crisis management during the Cold War illustrated by »Live Oak«

197 Abbreviations
201 Selected Bibliography
229 Index
231 List of contributors
Preface

The past 25 years have brought about fundamental changes at the global, regional and national levels. The end of the Cold War was initially a joyous occasion for Europe and the Western Alliance, but it was soon followed by new challenges and obligations. The demise of the socialist counter-model to the Western world did not really yield a lasting peace dividend, but rather gave way to numerous conflicts at a variety of levels, some of which have also taken place in Europe itself. NATO, once founded as a defensive alliance to protect its system of values against possible attacks from the East, not only felt obliged to develop new concepts and strategies, but soon found itself having to make decisions that went far beyond the mandate that had been applicable until 1990.

As early as the beginning of 1991, the Alliance complied with a request from the Turkish government and dispatched units to the country’s border with Syria and Iraq to mount a show of Alliance solidarity in the Second Gulf War. NATO’s tasks were then gradually expanded. Starting with peacekeeping and stabilization immediately after the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and moving through stabilization and combat operations in the Balkans to other missions around the world, the commitment of the Alliance reached its climax in Afghanistan, the military operation there being the most important one since World War II, especially for Germany.

The fact that the active Afghanistan mission, which was a topic of volume 3 of this series, ended in 2014 on no account means that NATO’s responsibilities have become easier. On the contrary, since then there have been further conflicts that are no less dangerous and entail an even higher threat potential because they have arisen right on the outer frontier of the Alliance, which has meanwhile been moved far to the east.

A whole belt of conflicts, wars and civil wars has formed around the territory of the NATO states and are all calling for answers. This field is the political and military future of NATO, which contrary to claims made after 1990 has not become superfluous at all. The spectrum ranges from strategic and resource-related conflicts in the north, the situation in the Baltic states the political and military divergences and struggles in Eastern Europe and in the Caucasus to the brutal wars and civil wars in Iraq, Syria and the Middle East. The transatlantic community will have to find solutions, otherwise there could be far-reaching destabilization. The fact that there are currently economic and political crises within the Western camp, including the EU, does not make this matter any easier.

The Alliance, however, has quite a bit of experience of conflicts on its flanks. And the flank states, often protagonists in the conflicts, as in the case of the Cyprus conflict, are long-standing members of the Alliance: Norway, Denmark, Italy, Greece and Turkey. Despite the primary focus in the Cold War being on the central sector, the other members also have a historical repertoire of experience and skill to solve the pending problems on the flanks. NATO is an alliance that was and still is organized in such a way that no region is regarded as an isolated
case. Despite all the changes that have taken place in the conditions, the tenet is still that security is indivisible.

This volume will take these facts into account. International scholars analyze key problems and conflicts on the Alliance’s flanks – in the north, the south and the east, looking at them from alternating angles. A cross-era angle has deliberately been selected in order to do justice to existing continuities and discontinuities. While German experts have also contributed to the volume, it is not confined to a German perspective. The Western Alliance, the member states of which have almost a billion inhabitants, will only be able to master the existing conflicts without engaging in major armed conflicts if it acts in concert.

This book is the outcome of a workshop that took place on 24 October 2013 at the Bundeswehr Center of Military History and Social Sciences. I would like to thank Dr. Bernd Lemke, who initiated and developed both the workshop and this volume.

It is customary in prefaces like this to acknowledge the people responsible for implementing the projects concerned. I would like to point out once again that this is not just a matter of duty, but is done as a conscious appreciation of the quality of the work done and the experience shown in so many instances. The responsibility for coordinating the publication within the editorial staff of the Bundeswehr Center of Military History and Social Sciences rested with Michael Thomae, who, as always, assisted in the implementation of this project masterfully, professionally and with verve. Our particular thanks go to the translators and revisers of the German Federal Office of Languages. This conference volume could not have been produced without the professional editing support given by Nancy Pearson Mackie (Center for Military and Strategic Studies, CMSS, University of Calgary). Bernd Nogli and Yvonn Mechtel prepared the maps and charts. Antje Lorenz was responsible for the layout. As with my previous volumes of this series, my special thanks go to Dr. Torang Sinaga and the Rombach publishing house for the innovative energy they have put into implementing the Neueste Militärgeschichte series and the sense they have of its potential. Last but not least, I would like to thank the authors for their articles and their faith in the Bundeswehr Center of Military History and Social Sciences.

Dr. Hans-Hubertus Mack
Colonel and Commander ZMSBw
Introduction

In September 2013, the Scorpions, Germany’s most famous Rock band, at a concert in the Greek capital, explained their decision to go to Athens with one of their hits: «Can’t live without you!» This powerful expression of cultural solidarity was greeted cheerfully by the audience. In fact, not everyone would subscribe to this. The history of the EU and NATO concerning its flanks is not an easy one. The problems have not really diminished in the last 20 years.

NATO has expanded and its boundaries have become blurred since 1990, maybe not in terms of its legal framework or the North Atlantic Treaty itself, but certainly from a political and a strategic perspective. In contrast to the situation during the Cold War where the military set-up alone created relatively clear demarcation lines, cutting Germany in half and generating fears of doomsday for any kind of confrontation, today, conflicts are raging on the periphery of NATO territory, which cannot be ignored and could pose new challenges for the Alliance, its member states and non-NATO countries. A global nuclear war, the major threat that dominated strategic thinking at least in Europe before 1990, is very unlikely to happen nowadays. Instead, a strategic ‘belt’ of uncertainty, conflict, civil war and war spreads from the Baltic states via Ukraine to Turkey, Syria, Iraq, the Near East and the Mediterranean. This concerns not only the nations and regions that have come into greater focus as a result of NATO’s eastward enlargement but also member states whose external borders and status within the Alliance have not formally changed since 1949.

Compared to other countries and regions in the world, the Federal Republic of Germany, its Federal States (Länder) and cities have become a kind of strategic, political and economic «comfort zone» or even, as is sometimes said, a kind of paradise. This was certainly not the case previously. We only have to think back to the time of World War I and II, when violence and destruction emanated from German soil and were responded to with apocalyptic force. The Cold War with its demarcation line across the middle of Germany created a confrontational status quo in Europe which not only provided major military and political risks but also caused considerable fear. Although, in the two decades before 1990, the east-west conflict lessened, the threats of direct military confrontation in Europe diminished, and the east-west relationship developed into antagonistic cooperation increasingly managed by political means and on the way to resolution, the possibility of extensive war with widespread annihilation stayed. Major crises in the 1970s and 1980s reinforced the growing impression of danger and uncertainty in the media and in the minds of the people. Despite the most elaborate crisis management measures, the world very quickly could have been on the verge of an extensive nuclear war in the event of a military conflict.

For Germans today, such risks are a good deal ghosts of the past. Bloody conflicts with existential dangers for everyone, it seems, have become something we watch on television from our armchairs. Despite terror attacks in allied countries

and the corresponding media coverage, the words of classical German poet Goethe come to mind. He observed that one was engaged in “gossiping of war, and war’s array, when down in Turkey, far away, the foreign people are a-fighting.”

Against this background, it must look quite unusual for a German institute to publish a conference volume on the Alliance’s periphery. On closer consideration, however, this can be seen in a different light. There is more than one reason why Germany in particular should pay close attention to the fringes of the Alliance. We live in turbulent times. The bloody war in Syria, the new horrors in Iraq after the advance of the so-called Islamic State (IS) and the implications for other states and for NATO, the events off Lampedusa, the continuously divergent interests in the Arctic, and generally the entire security situation in the area around Europe provide good cause to reflect on the historical dimension of the Alliance’s flanks in an overall context.

At least three important reasons suggest that Germans, especially with regard to NATO, should concern themselves with the Alliance’s flanks and the regions beyond. First, everything that happens at the Alliance’s flanks also concerns Germany and its immediate neighbours, either directly or indirectly. This is by no means only because most of these states are part of the EU or NATO. History has taught us that, even without these highly integrated alliances and communities, everything in Europe has always been connected. Military historians can find many examples of this in their field of interest, World War I being one of them. Twenty-fourteen marks the 100th anniversary of its outbreak. It is not really possible to understand its origins and its course without giving due credit to the events in the Balkans, Asia Minor and the Near East for example.

Second, the division of Germany between 1945 and 1990 means that for 45 years, Germany itself was in the central focus of possible armed conflict. This applied to both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, even if they saw it from different or indeed contrasting perspectives. During the Cold War, Germany was a kind of frontline state, although the framework conditions and geographic circumstances were different to those of the flank partners today. This in turn means two things: firstly, as a former frontline state, Germany has a historical interest in comparable constellations, actors and the problems associated with them and secondly, the exchange of different views and perspectives is an immensely important aspect for internal communication and understanding in NATO. It is the very essence of the Alliance. Without such communication, it would not be a democratic alliance.

Third, thinking about the flanks gives rise to questions about the future, not least with regard to political and geostrategic aspects. In contrast to the Cold War, it

---


3 The articles of this volume are the result of a workshop that was held at the Bundeswehr Center of Military History and Social Sciences (Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr, ZMSBw), Potsdam on 24 Oct 2013.

4 The ZMSBw held a major international conference on this topic: «Dynamics of Globalisation. The German Reich between European state conflict and World War 1914–1918» (2nd–5th June 2014).
Introduction

is no longer a matter of ensuring adequate deterrence and defence against a powerful opponent, combined with political efforts for dealing with the situation. The situation today is much more fluid, volatile and somewhat more insecure than in the decades until 1990. The immediate question is how to act now and in the future?

At present nothing is certain. Questions abound. What are NATO and its Alliance partners actually doing at the flanks? Are they merely safeguarding their interests and stability and, should the need arise, will they only be defending the external borders? Are the flanks zones for contact and communication with the »others«, irrespective of how these »others« may be defined? Or are the flanks springboards for further global operations?

Regardless of whether these questions can be properly answered at the moment, they must be asked. Nothing stays the same. Time does not stand still, even if this sometimes seems to be the case. The Cold War is a prime example of this. For a long time it seemed that a dead end had been reached. However, the end of this era came quickly and with far-reaching consequences. And the dynamic potential at the flanks has anything but decreased since the end of the bipolar balance of power.

As a consequence, there is an urgent need to extend the focus of military history beyond the established fields of research and beyond the NATO central front. Despite the introductory remarks on the German angle, this volume is not conceived as a germanocentric publication, but as a history of the Alliance seen from a supra-national and also a global perspective. This is ensured by the selection of contributing authors.

The anthology contains 13 articles, offering viewpoints that are as diverse as the Alliance itself has been and continues to be, not least because of its basic geographic structure. This was succinctly expressed by the first NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe: »Eisenhower viewed his command area as a major peninsula bordered by two land-sea complexes.« Strategically, this peninsula had, and still has, a medium-sized centre with significant protruding areas and forward points that are susceptible to complications or even confrontation.


6 A contribution to the special perspective of the Federal Republic of Germany on the flanks was not included here as there is already an article in a very recent publication of this institute. Cf. Tim Geiger, »Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland und die NATO in den Siebziger- und Achtzigerjahren.« Wege zur Wiedervereinigung (see note 1): pp. 165–182. Cf. also my upcoming study Die Allied Mobile Force 1961–2002. A respective publication in English is planned.

The anthology was consciously compiled to span different epochs so that the issue of continuity/discontinuity would arise. It cannot be denied that the parameters have changed radically since 1990. Strategic concepts and political interrelations, now far more global in nature, have changed just as much as the geographic situation and the membership structure. Even more important is that, unlike its activities during the Cold War, NATO is now conducting military operations using real force. Completely new conditions have arisen, beginning with the deployment of the Allied Mobile Force at Turkey’s southern border in the Gulf War of 1991, which could perhaps be described as a transition phenomenon (the first active deployment of German units since 1945), followed by the military interventions in the Balkans in the 1990s. Finally, the mission in Afghanistan has been NATO’s greatest military live mission since its inception.

None of this, however, has fundamentally changed inner NATO’s principles. Its guiding doctrines and design, and also most of its basic problems and conflicts concerning its general functioning have remained the same. NATO is still an alliance of sovereign states which, just as in the Cold War, oscillate, or even move tactically between national interest and Alliance solidarity. The roles of the US and of Europe, here particularly the relationship between France and Germany, continue to be key issues. The EU still differs with NATO, over foreign and security policies. Even though the external threats are now not as deadly as during the Cold War, the Alliance is struggling with a credibility problem and often has difficulty responding to conflicts, especially to those at its periphery. Discussions of deterrence and crisis management quickly become uneasy and make way for dissent when a troublemaker remains unimpressed by NATO’s sheer power potential. In addition, there are traditional lines of division and even explicit conflicts within the Alliance, the fundamentals of which have not changed much either. The most prominent example of this is the unresolved conflict between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus.

NATO is still working to adapt to the special mix of change and continuity that began in 1990. Both aspects exist side by side and this realisation drives the need for a publication like this. The following contributions describe the different points of view and problems from different perspectives, some of them drilling right down to the very core of the Alliance. In addition to the questions, issues and problems that are addressed in detail here, a major goal is to build methodical bridges, not only in a general temporal sense, but also in direct and substantial military and political questions. For example, the shift from potential, more or less theoretical war before 1990 to direct requirement for military engagement and actual commitment thereafter (e.g. Kosovo, Arabian spring / Libya) is examined.

After a short overview on NATO and its strategies from 1949 to 2014, this volume contains three sections. Two sections examine the Cold War, one dealing

---

8 It is not possible to discuss the extensive research literature on NATO (including its flanks) 1949–2014 here. I will do this, with a special focus on the flanks, in the upcoming study Die Allied Mobile Force 1961–2002, which will be published parallel to this volume. For more detailed discussions including the state of the art cf. also the following articles which are mostly on the forefront of research.
with political and the other with military issues. A third section is dedicated to the period after 1990. The greater focus on the pre-1990 era is partly owed to the character of the project, which is indebted to historiographical basic research, the primary mission of the Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences, Potsdam. Considerable research has been conducted on the Cold War era, not the least, because the major sources for this time period were and still are better accessible than for the time after 1990. This also makes it possible to present outcomes of a more thorough and comprehensive nature.

It was, of course, not possible to cover all aspects of the subject completely and exhaustive as the scope and the means of this project were limited. However, the basic problems and features over time, especially across the divide of 1990, as well major new elements are very well represented. Most articles derive from research based on new sources.

The first contribution, also from a chronological perspective, is Agilolf Kesselring’s analysis of the political and strategic situation on NATO’s northern flank and its implications for the alliance in the period from the end of World War II to the early 1960s. Kesselring examines the relationship between political concepts (or interpretations thereof) and the military power balance, an aspect that is often neglected. His analysis focuses on the Nordic balance, the assumption that the four Nordic countries had formed a strategic equilibrium in light of the Soviet Union’s overwhelming presence. His examination of the military power equation, which was by no means to NATO’s advantage, shows that the Nordic balance, in part, was a theoretical construct, that, in itself, did not guarantee stability but had to be addressed by military strength and was always in danger of tipping. Kesselring demonstrates this by the example of the Baltic Sea region, the significant link between NATO’s defence regions.

Gökhan Özkhan analyses the role of Turkey, one of the most important but very complicated members of NATO. Turkey was and continues to be an essential pillar and outpost of NATO in the southeast, especially for the United States. It is no coincidence that the creation of the Truman doctrine shortly after the end of World War II was directly connected with the situation on the southeastern flank. The entry of Turkey into the Alliance in 1952 was the starting point of what continues to be a close yet sometimes difficult cooperation within the Alliance. Turkey first started with heavy commitment to the Alliance, facing disappointments along the way, especially at some major events from 1964 to 1980, and felt abandoned by Washington. As a result, it repeatedly went looking for alternatives, in the Middle East, for example. This trend was significantly reinforced after 1990 and is a decisive factor to this day. In fact, it has become the defining trait of Turkey’s role. Like most other flank states, the country oscillates between the Alliance and external powers. This is not necessarily a disadvantage. It does, however, involve certain risks, including to its domestic situation, which cannot be viewed in isolation from its foreign and alliance policy.

Stefan Brenner uses the example of the second Cyprus crisis in 1964/65 to illustrate the basic patterns of the Greek-Turkish conflict, relevant today, although strategic frameworks and conditions have changed. Greece and Turkey both undertook serious efforts to be admitted to NATO in order to benefit from its securi-
ty dividend. However, the conflict intensified in such a way that it posed a threat to NATO and its overall credibility. It was not only the precarious situation on the Alliance’s southeastern flank that was the problem, but also the Alliance’s global image as, at root, a solidarity organisation. Although NATO considered itself a supranational military alliance with the main purpose to fend off external threats, the Cyprus conflict confronted the Alliance directly with a diverse set of national, regional and domestic issues which it found difficult to handle. The Alliance does, however, deserve credit for supplying an institutional framework to contain the conflict so that a military confrontation between the two allies was avoided.

The chapter by Francesca Zilio connects the southern flank with the European perspectives in general and analyses the situation in the Mediterranean on the background of the negotiations on the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), concentrating on Italy. Rome had to face complex antagonisms. On the one hand, the Italians felt particularly capable of dealing with the littoral states in the Mediterranean out of Europe and, correspondingly, pursued political interests. On the other hand, it was clear that the major parties in Helsinki, at least in the first instance, were not concentrated on the southern flank of NATO. Further, Italy had to mediate between the Americans who registered the efforts to establish an European – Arab dialogue with growing suspicion, the Europeans and the policy of Malta that defined its role – not always realistically – as decisive outpost and bridge in the Mediterranean. Rome, despite its limited room for manoeuvring, managed at least to avoid a radicalization of the conflicts within the Western camp, so a deep, lasting rift didn’t arise. The problems around the Euro-Arab dialogue, however, could not be solved. The Americans defined the Mediterranean and the Arab world as their area of dominance. This is still the situation today.

Gjert Lage Dyndal opens the second section of the book with an important analysis of the Nordic region’s military position during the Cold War from a Norwegian perspective. He discusses the general definition of the area and presents seven exemplary scenarios that discuss the region’s image as a »flank« thereby underlining one of the primary objectives of this publication. The term »flank« can only be used to denote something that is located next to a centre or focal area of interest. This was not always the case. In some phases of the strategic development, such as during the 1950s, when strategic bomber aircraft were considered essential assets, particularly by the United States, the region almost played a key role in global politics. While Dyndal makes no attempt to deny the importance of the central region, particularly for Norway, he also considers the global strategic situation and argues that an exaggerated concentration on ground warfare in the Elbe region does not automatically lead to a balanced focus. Furthermore, it is to be noted that the term »flank« can change its meanings over time.

In his chapter, Gaetano La Nave examines a number of military problems to illustrate Italy’s special situation in the Mediterranean. During the Cold War, Italy oscillated between different positions in several respects. On the one hand, the country was »horizontally integrated« in the strategic Mediterranean region, not least due to its colonial past. On the other hand, Italy was a member of an alliance with a strong focus on the defence of its central region north of the Alps. The Mediterranean, in general, had to face many conflicts and crises during the Cold
Introduction

War. Most of them affected, as La Nave shows, Italy, even if the country wasn’t involved directly (e.g. conflicts over Cyprus, Near East). These conflicts were intensified by an unstable domestic situation. Especially worrying was the growing presence of the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean and the efforts of Moscow to increase its influence on the Arabian states around the Mediterranean on the expense of the West, as part of their global aspirations. La Nave argues that despite a certain military weakness Italy continues to be an important partner, with its strategically essential bases remaining neuralgic points of NATO’s overall defence, not least with regard to the situation in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Dionysios Chourchoulis gives an account of the Greek perspective on the dilemmas of collective military defence along the Alliance’s southeastern flank, a topic more or less neglected in the past. The serious threat that the Warsaw Pact, including the (not to be underestimated) Bulgarian armed forces posed to NATO would actually have necessitated a massive build-up of defence potential. Due to already scarce resources, however, which were also a result of budget constraints of the parliamentary democracies, the Alliance did not manage to mount such a response. Instead, NATO provided limited financial and material support, and, in keeping with the new Flexible Response strategy of the 1960s, shifted its focus towards concepts of mobile units and massive reinforcement in case of emergency. This included rapid response assets such as the Allied Mobile Force and specialised naval units. However, these forces had limited effectiveness (and were thus more useful for show of force and deterrence purposes), did not evolve beyond the planning stage or would have had trouble arriving timely in case of an escalation. The military situation at the southern flank continued to be precarious throughout the Cold War. It is likely that a massive attack would rapidly have led to a nuclear response.

Augustine Meaher’s contribution on the role of the Baltic countries after 1990 clearly illustrates the fundamental changes that have occurred since then and examines one of the key problems for NATO’s future. Contrary to what public discourse may sometimes suggest, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are by no means remote territories of little significance but play an important role as interfaces and as contact zones for all states east of NATO’s territory. Despite their dramatic significance, the alarming events following the Russian occupation of the Crimea in 2014 are ultimately the confirmation of long-standing relations and problems. In this context, the Baltic States are not just elements of the (north) eastern flank but have an impact on the situation in the south through the pursuit of interests shared with the Caucasian states, for instance. It remains to be seen what their future political significance will be in this context. It is safe to say, however, that the Baltic region has complicated the situation for NATO. In military terms, the three states effectively perpetuate and repeat what characterised the flanks before 1990: relative weakness, the use of reinforcements, demonstrative action (showing the flag) and typical crisis management in case of conflicts.

Hans-Peter Kriemann examines the significant challenges NATO faced as a result of the events in the Balkans 1998/99. He analyses »Operation Allied Force« to show how NATO approached such difficult tasks. Here, in particular, old problems came to the fore under new and different circumstances. During the Cold
War, faced with manifest crises, Yugoslavia was relatively stable and managed to steer its course between the alliances despite latent discrepancies between the ethnic groups. The bloodshed after 1990, however, transformed this Balkan state from a more or less solid factor to a real problem for stability which required active NATO involvement, not the least in order to maintain credibility. Particularly for Germany, just beginning to reconsider its own role in light of its historical burdens, this proved a really difficult situation. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the United States were increasingly looking for individual solutions, which included operations not covered by international law. Kriemann shows how the complex planning and decision-making structures of NATO impeded mutual coordination and agreement on action. The Kosovo operation and its greater context definitely took NATO – and Germany – into uncharted territory thereby laying foundations for the missions thereafter.

In his contribution, Michael Schmid addresses an aspect that may be critical for NATO's future: the significance of adjoining strategic areas such as the Middle East and especially the Gulf region. Unlike the period before 1990, characterised by collective defence and the fear of attacks on NATO territory especially in the Central Sector, and despite NATO's emphasis on defence and stabilisation, the Alliance has more and more to cope with out-of-area situations. This not only applies to the historically unprecedented mission in Afghanistan, but also to NATO's external borders. Using potential »arcs of crisis« as an example and employing interesting temporal comparisons, Schmid illustrates the whole complexity of the problem from a historical perspective (in 1973 and 1990/91), focusing on the role of the US, the influence of regional powers and the role of arms deliveries. His analysis of the years from the Yom Kippur War to the Second Gulf war shows the special problems of NATO and its members in case of regionally confined wars, a dimension that continues to be of great significance to this day.

The volume concludes with a chapter by Harald van Nes, who takes us back to the realities of the Cold War along the central front and reminds us that Germany used to be a frontline state in the past. He describes the development of »Live Oak«, an outstanding instrument of the Western powers and NATO for crisis management at the lower end of the escalation spectrum concerning Berlin. Live Oak was created during the second Berlin crisis from 1958 to 1962 when the West realised that it did not have the means to respond adequately to small-scale provocations by the East and that it would be absurd to launch a nuclear strike in reaction to the blockade of an access road to Berlin, for instance. Although Live Oak remained active throughout the Cold War, it never had to be employed since the situation in and around Berlin did not escalate despite further confrontation. The organisation serves as a good historical reference for the current crisis management of NATO and the West. Nuclear weapons, nowadays and at least for Europe, are largely off the table and no longer a primary threat. What remains, however, are localised, small-scale scenarios as well as confrontations with the potential to evolve into larger conflicts.

Bernd Lemke
Bernd Lemke

The development of Alliance strategy, 1949–2014: A short overview

The strategic foundations for the Western Alliance emerged soon after the defeat of Japan and the German Reich in 1945.¹ The war coalition between the Western allies and the Soviet Union which had come about primarily through their common interest in defeating Hitler’s Germany and had already shown divergences as World War II progressed, fell apart relatively quickly. The Western allies felt growing pressure from the Eastern Bloc, particularly in Europe, and saw themselves confronted with increasingly large troop concentrations.²

Three crucial path markers were then to form the basis for all further events in the Cold War for the West. On 12 March 1947, US President Truman, aiming to get permission for military and economic aid packages for Turkey and Greece, delivered an address to the US Congress promising all »free« nations, including west Europeans, support in tackling Communism. This strategic course which became known as the »Truman Doctrine« officially put an end to the US position of »splendid isolation,« practiced in the period up to 1941 and meanwhile considered to be inadequate for dealing with dictatorships. In the same year, George C. Marshall, a former American general, announced a gigantic economic program aimed at stabilising Europe, the so-called »Marshall Plan,« which was


² Whether this threat perception prior to 1950 was indeed consistent with the facts has to be doubted, however. According to Detlef Bald, Hiroshima (see not 1), pp. 75 et seq., the Soviet Union initially reduced its forces after 1945 in a similarly radical way to the Western powers. A basic idea of the relevant views is provided by Norbert Wiggershaus, »Nordatlantische Bedrohungsperzeptionen im »Kalten Krieg,« 1948–1956,« Das Nordatlantische Bündnis 1949 bis 1956, eds. Klaus A. Maier et al. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993): pp. 17–54, in particular pp. 17–21.
also to include eastern European countries. It was intended to prevent the spread of Communism (containment) or even ·roll back· Soviet influence in Europe.  

The military equivalent of this economic program was created in 1950 when top planners in the US Administration undertook a basic situation analysis in view of the first Soviet atom bomb test. The findings were recorded in NSC 68, a policy paper (April 1950) which, far-sightedly, already contained all elements of development up to 1970 and beyond. Given the nuclear threat now posed by the Soviet Union, it was no longer considered possible to rely on the previous, rather limited armaments efforts. It was agreed, therefore, to undertake massive military buildups in all areas. In this course, the US government decided to build strategic nuclear weapons and develop smaller tactical nuclear weapons at the same time, and to also undertake a massive increase in conventional armed forces, while hoping particularly for support from the West Europeans and, subsequently, also the Germans. 

The extensive conventional military buildup was then actually set in proper motion by the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 where Greece and Turkey participated as members of the Western coalition for strategic reasons and in light of their own exposed situation. In Korea, it was clearly demonstrated that the Communist states and movements would not be deterred from their expansionist efforts by the mere existence of American nuclear weapons.

Western strategy evolved from these basic conditions. Initially, the conventional component remained crucial for the defense of Alliance territory, particularly Western Europe. Strong army units supported by tactical air forces were meant to stop one or several thrusts from the east as far forward as possible, this not least as protection for the strategic bomber units stationed on the western periphery of Europe. These units were tasked, if necessary, to attack the Soviet

---


Union with nuclear weapons and destroy its capabilities for warfare. The central basis for this was strategic directive MC 14/1 dated 9 December 1952. Yet, it did not take long to realise that the European states in particular, emerging from World War II in a weak condition, would be unable to contribute the effort for the necessary armament and mobilization. The United States themselves did not have inexhaustible resources of manpower and materiel, either. At the urging of Great Britain who wished to reduce the costly use of conventional forces on the mainland, efforts were started to deploy nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional armaments. The further development of nuclear technology to build smaller tactical atomic weapons came at just the right time. In the following decade, a massive nuclear buildup on all levels was set in motion. NATO paper MC 48 (22 November 1954) was the crucial milestone in this development for the Alliance. Whereas previously the intention had been to protect the nuclear bomber units (»Sword«) only through conventional armed forces (»Shield«) so as to ensure their deployment against strategic targets, now those conventional »shield forces« were also equipped with nuclear weapons. The NATO planning staffs had concluded that, without any nuclear weapons, there would be no realistic chance of repelling a major attack. »NATO would be unable to prevent the rapid overrunning of Europe unless NATO immediately employed these atomic weapons both strategically and tactically.« So, it seemed to be advisable to employ nuclear weapons right from the outset of a military conflict against the East.


6 The most detailed account regarding the lines of development of the nuclear strategy pursued by the United States, Great Britain and NATO, taking into consideration the development of tactical nuclear weapons, the importance of conventional armed forces and the economic deliberations of those involved, is provided in: Robert A. Wampler, Ambiguous Legacy: The United States, Great Britain and the Foundations of NATO Strategy, 1948–1957, (Cambridge, MA: Havard University, 1991), chapters I, V, VIII, IX, XI and XIII.

