

The Security Times

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PROUD



BOY

Putin's zero-sum foreign policy has the world on a knife's edge

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PICTURE ALLIANCE/OPA/SPUTNIK | SERGEY GUINEEV

ALL TOGETHER NOW



DETLEF PRINZ,
PUBLISHER

There's no question that the Munich Security Conference (MSC) is being held this year in a perilous international political environment. We hope that all participants can take full advantage of the opportunity for intensive discussion, debate and negotiation. This is what matters, now more than ever.

As delighted as I am to greet the large US delegation, I'm deeply disappointed that no member of the Russian delegation is making the trip to Munich. The MSC at the Bayerischer Hof is unparalleled in the opportunities it provides for on-stage and behind-the-scenes dialogue. Nevertheless, I very much hope that this year's meetings will contribute to mutual understanding and further détente – disarmament is the order of the day in war zones as well as media outlets. The problems facing people worldwide are so great, there's simply no time for saber rattling and the drums of war.

Hunger, a global pandemic, environmental degradation, oppression, discrimination and the plight of refugees, these are the issues that politicians worldwide must address in order to help create a more peaceful world.

This conference marks the end of an era, as Wolfgang Ischinger bids farewell to his role as chair of the MSC. Over the past 10 years, he has transformed the conference, making it what it is today – the security summit where the international community's top political, diplomatic and academic minds convene.

Wolfgang Ischinger deserves our heartfelt gratitude for his peerless commitment and tireless efforts. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to his successor, Ambassador Christoph Heusgen. The MSC has a bright future with him at the helm.

PLEDGE OF ALLIANCE

NATO and the EU can rely on Germany

BY CHRISTINE LAMBRECHT

For more than a decade, the strategic focus of global politics has been shifting steadily toward Asia. And yet, today, at the Munich Security Conference, the emphasis is once again on Europe. After Russia's annexation of Crimea, which was carried out in violation of international law, and after the war in Donetsk and Luhansk, it is uncertain what the Federation's next move regarding Ukraine will be. Either way, the threatening situation created by Moscow as a result of its massive troop presence along the border – together with its exaggerated diplomatic demands – reminds us just how fragile European security really is. Peace in Europe is by no means a “done deal.” It's not something we achieved once and for all time. It's something we must fight for and defend, over and over again. This requires vigilant defense, unity among allies, large-scale investment and constant diplomatic effort aimed at building trust and defusing conflicts.

Against such a backdrop, Germany once again finds itself at the center of the security policy debate. This is no surprise. Our geographical

location, political power and economic strength make us a major player. The new German government, of which I am a member, is highly aware of this. We are conscious of the responsibility we bear, and we know how much scrutiny decisions made in Berlin receive.

In NATO and the EU, Germany has always shown that its commitment to and solidarity with the alliance can be fully relied upon. This is also the case today with regard to the current crisis on NATO's eastern flank. And this applies not only to diplomatic efforts seeking to achieve peace and trust, as is the case in the Normandy Format; it also applies to the Bundeswehr, for example, in the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Lithuania, where we are once again strengthening our forces.

It can be seen as well in the NATO Response Force, where we stand ready to provide credible defense for the alliance and rapid crisis management and where we're currently amid intense preparations for our obligations in the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force next year. We believe in dialogue and negotiation, but we also believe in the strength and steadfastness that allows diplomacy to succeed. Germany can do both. And we're ready and willing to put both to work wherever needed.

We are steadfast in our commitment to the fundamental principles of peace and freedom on our continent, from state sovereignty and the inviolability of borders to the freedom of each country to choose its own alliances. We are prepared to draw far-reaching consequences if these principles are attacked. And we will make a firm contribution to ensuring that these principles are enforced over the long term. Security is and will continue to be a key challenge. And it's not just about today's crisis diplomacy; it's about

ensuring that our children and future generations can also enjoy the peace and freedoms we may take for granted today. We must invest in the security of our continent now to ensure that generations to come can lead good lives in freedom and in peace.

The Bundeswehr is working at full speed to meet these urgent investments. We are seeking to get the German armed forces into shape so they can effectively meet future threats. We are in the process of acquiring modern systems designed to increase our combat capabilities and consolidate our role as an alliance partner in NATO. The forthcoming replacement of our Tornado fighter aircraft fleet is one example of this, as is the procurement of armed drones and the joint Eurodrone project for the Bundeswehr. Between 2014 and 2021, Germany's defense budget increased by 45 percent, and a

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PERMACRISIS EUROPE

The West v. Russia

BY WOLFGANG ISCHINGER

The question of war and peace has returned to the European continent,” said then-Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the Munich Security Conference (MSC) in 2015. Less than one year earlier, Russia had invaded and annexed Crimea in a cloak-and-dagger operation. What followed was international condemnation and a period of intense shuttle diplomacy between Moscow, Kyiv and capitals in the West. Arriving directly from talks in Moscow, then-Chancellor Angela Merkel warned on the main stage at Hotel Bayerischer Hof that “the foundations of the peace order in Europe are by no means self-evident.”

Exactly seven years later, Europe is once again facing an eerily similar moment of crisis: Europe's security order is in peril on the eve of the 58th Munich Security Conference in 2022. Russian troops are massing at NATO's eastern flank. Shuttle diplomacy is in full swing. A new German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, will return from Moscow just before world leaders meet in Munich to discuss the most pressing challenges for foreign and security policy. And once more, the MSC will be a platform for dialogue between East and West. Europe's permacrisis – the persisting tensions between Russia and the West – will continue to shape the debates on Europe's security for years to come. The tasks before Europe are momentous.

One thing is certain: In retrospect, Russia bears great responsibility for why its relations with the West have reached a new nadir. Yet, before NATO-Russia relations soured to the worrying low point we witness today, there were signs that a more cooperative age of security in Europe was in the cards.

Faced with the NATO membership aspirations of Poland, Hungary and

other former member states of the Warsaw Pact, the trans-Atlantic allies were tasked with a delicate balancing act in the wake of Soviet Union's collapse. While Russia was less than enthusiastic about the new NATO membership of its western neighbors, a revamped, more cooperative basis for NATO-Russia cooperation appeared to be an acceptable compromise to the Russian leadership in exchange for the admission of new members into NATO.

Enshrined in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, both the admission of new members – albeit with far-reaching restrictions on troop and missile deployment – and the creation of what later became known as the NATO-Russia Council were agreed in writing. Russia's ability to deploy personnel and arms close to NATO's eastern flank remained untouched. Thus, by signing the document, Russia officially accepted the principle of enlargement of the North Atlantic alliance.

The agreement with Moscow enabled NATO to proceed with its deliberations on the admission of new members shortly thereafter. The decisions made at the 1997 Madrid summit – namely, admitting Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to NATO in a first round followed by later enlargement rounds set to include Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltics – were informally discussed with Moscow to avoid a renewed fallout. In hindsight, this was a masterpiece of responsible *Ostpolitik* with Berlin in the driver's seat.

But relations went downhill from there. While Russia is without a doubt responsible for most of the lost trust in East-West relations, NATO, too, must acknowledge past mistakes. Starting with its 2007 Bucharest summit, an enlargement crisis began to weigh heavily on NATO-Russia relations. The Alliance greenlit a compromise

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