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Europe and NATO:
Reliable Resilience – Credible Deterrence

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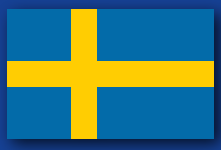

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DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Dr Eva-Charlotte Proll
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief,
Behörden Spiegel Group

Image: BS/Bildschön

We are approaching one of the highlights of the Behörden Spiegel events – the Berlin Security Conference 2025.
Following the US presidential elections in January, it is now clear that the foundation on which NATO stood, no longer appears to be so solid. European NATO member states cannot continue to feel secure under the umbrella of the US, without making any significant contribution of their own. This wake-up call seems to have been heard at this year's NATO summit, where Europeans finally committed to substantial investments in their own security.
These commitments of Europeans go beyond military requirements. As the commander of the newly established Operational Command of the German Armed Forces explains in his contribution to this magazine, Germany's resilience depends essentially on functioning civilian structures.
In fact, the military battlefield is only one aspect of the threat of war. Another significant factor is the destruction of Critical Infrastructure – CRITIS. The example of Ukraine shows the extent to which the targeted destruction of schools, hospitals and power stations can reach. But in Germany and other NATO-Allies, too, acts of sabotage against CRITIS are on the rise, as are measures such as disinformation and propaganda aimed at destroying the cohesion of our societies. The Allies must prepare themselves for Russia to continue testing them in the coming years and protect themselves against this. The intrusion of drones or fighter jets into national airspace is only a first taste of what the Alliance can expect in the next stages of escalation.
Resilience is therefore an issue that is becoming increasingly important in the context of external and internal security. We would like to take this fact into account with the choice of this year's theme for the BSC: Europe and NATO: *Reliable Resilience – Credible Deterrence.*
For the fourth time, we will have to conduct the BSC under the shadow of the war in Ukraine that is still on-going and becoming increasingly brutal. There is yet no indication that the Russian president – despite paying lip service to the American President – will take any real steps to end his war of attrition before he has achieved the goals, he has set himself personally with this war.
In addition, almost every day we see horrific images of immeasurable suffering of innocent children and people in the Gaza Strip, with no concrete signs that this suffering will end soon.
These two examples alone clearly show that the security architecture in and around Europe has been thrown into disarray and that coordinated, targeted and, above all, unified transatlantic action is now needed not only to restore balance, but also to send a signal to other regions of the world that military force cannot be a promising means of expanding power claims.
More than 75 years of peace in Europe are not least the result of credible deterrence by the NATO Alliance, to which Germany and the Bundeswehr have contributed for 70 years now. While in other parts of the world – but also in our neighbourhood – new or resurgent players are appearing on the scene, Europe seems to have grown weary. Europe must wake up and recognise that its own future will depend largely on its own commitment. The aforementioned defence investments are a first indication that Allies recognise this necessity.
I am looking forward to interesting discussions with decision makers in several fields related to the security of the free and democratic world. I thank all speakers and attendees of the BSC 2025 and I sincerely hope that this congress magazine will increase your anticipation of participating. I would like to particularly thank the Chair of the European Parliament's Defence Committee, Dr Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, for her commitment to take on her new role as Congress President of the BSC, and Major General (ret) Reinhard Wolski and our team for his excellent performance as Conference Chair and for his tireless efforts to further develop the BSC's position as a unique platform for high-calibre exchange on relevant security policy issues.

Dr Eva-Charlotte Proll
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief, Behörden Spiegel Group

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PROPRESS PUBLISHING GROUP
HEADQUARTERS BONN
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 57, D-53113 Bonn
Phone: +49 228 97 0 970
redaktion@behoerdenspiegel.de
BERLIN OFFICE
Kaskelstraße 41, D-10317 Berlin
Phone: +49 30 55 74 12 0
PUBLISHER AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Dr Eva-Charlotte Proll
EDITOR Colonel (ret.) Thomas Hönig
AD LEAD Sinan Yildirak

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AIMS AND OUTCOMES OF THE 24TH BERLIN SECURITY CONFERENCE

In 2025, the values-based free world stands once again at a critical juncture. Our security and defence sovereignty are being tested with a severity unseen in decades. The war in Ukraine, now in its fourth year, continues to define our era. This conflict is not only a struggle for territory, but a struggle for sovereignty, self-determination, and the rules-based international order itself. Peace will not be achieved through illusions of compromise, but only through diplomacy conducted from a position of strength. Should the Russian aggression have paused by the time of this Conference – whether temporarily or permanently – its consequences will remain a central challenge for Europe and beyond. Russia's hybrid warfare has shifted visibly towards direct attacks on Western infrastructure, demonstrating once again that our vulnerabilities are its targets. This raises pressing questions: how resilient are we, and when must Article 5 become a clear and active guarantee? The cohesion of NATO and the European Union is therefore not a matter of choice but of necessity. Only through unity can we develop effective responses. Meanwhile, the Middle East remains volatile, and the Indo-Pacific – critical to freedom of navigation and trade – faces persistent tensions as China asserts its ambitions.

> "Democracy and freedom are not given, they are to be actively defended."
>
> **Major General (ret) Reinhard Wolski**
> Chairman, Berlin Security Conference

Image: BS/Bildschön

NEW THREAT ENVIRONMENT

It is against this complex backdrop that we convene the Berlin Security Conference 2025. Our mission is clear: to gather senior political leaders and military commanders from across Europe, North America, and the wider transatlantic community to discuss strategic developments, anticipate emerging threats, and identify decisive options for action. Above all, we must recognise that NATO and the EU now face an omnidirectional threat environment. By strengthening our cohesion and demonstrating resolve, we show our adversaries that we are prepared to act collectively and decisively.

We are deeply honoured that the Kingdom of Sweden joins us as this year's partner nation, enriching the Conference with its expertise and perspective, and very prominent speakers. We also thank our partners from industry and business, who support our work not only through contributions but also through innovation, research, and the technologies that underpin our defence. Our agenda is ambitious. Strategically, we will examine threats from the Arctic and Northern Flank, across Central Europe, and to the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Special attention will be given to the war in Ukraine and its wider repercussions for NATO, the EU, the OSCE, and the United Nations. At the operational level, we will confront questions of interoperability, resilience, and multi-domain operations, drawing on lessons from Ukraine to improve defence across land, sea, air, cyber, and space. We will discuss the protection of critical infrastructure, the concept of "Total Defence," the integration of civil and military health responses, faster procurement, and the profound opportunities – and risks – of Artificial Intelligence.

DESIRED OUTCOME

The outcome we seek is straightforward yet far-reaching: to chart a path toward a more coherent, robust, and enduring security and defence policy for Europe and the transatlantic community. We aim to strengthen the transatlantic bond, while ensuring that European allies assume greater responsibilities. Together, we must align NATO's Strategic Concept, the EU's Strategic Compass, and national defence strategies in order to forge a comprehensive response to today's threats.

Above all, we must reaffirm the essential truth: democracy and freedom are not given, they are to be actively defended. They are the prerequisites for peace. This Conference is not only about dialogue; it is about commitment – commitment to act, to adapt, and to safeguard the principles that unite us. The Berlin Security Conference 2025 stands as both a forum and a signal: the free world is united, determined, and ready.

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THE BSC – A PERMANENT FIXTURE IN THE SECURITYPOLICY CALENDAR

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests of the Berlin Security Conference,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you once again this year to our important forum on security policy, the Berlin Security Conference (BSC). Over the past years, the BSC has established itself as a permanent fixture in the security policy calendar. Today it is not only a forum for exchange but an indispensable platform for debate, networking, and concrete solutions. I am particularly grateful that this year we welcome Sweden as our partner country. With its recent accession to NATO, Sweden not only strengthens its own security but also sends a strong signal of unity and solidarity within the Alliance.

The Berlin Security Conference thrives on the diversity and quality of its participants. Decision-makers from politics, business, and the military, at both national and international levels, are gathered here. They contribute their expertise, they debate, they argue, and they work together on strategies for a safer future. Especially in times when we are facing massive security policy challenges, this open exchange is indispensable.

CHALLENGING GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION

The geopolitical situation is more challenging than ever. Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has now entered its fourth year and has fundamentally shaken Europe's security architecture. At the same time, we see authoritarian regimes worldwide deepening their cooperation; hybrid threats, cyberattacks, and disinformation campaigns putting our democracies under pressure; and technological developments constantly opening up new dimensions of conflict. Security policy today is more comprehensive, more complex, and more global than ever before.This is precisely why the Berlin Security Conference is so important. It is a place not only to share analysis but also to build bridges: between politics and the armed forces, between business and civil society, between national perspectives and European responsibility. Security today can only be conceived and shaped collectively.

As a long-standing national defence politician, I am well aware of the challenges facing the Bundeswehr. For too long, our soldiers have been kept waiting with empty promises. Germany must finally live up to its responsibility and assume the leadership role in Europe that is expected of us. Not as an end in itself, but as an expression of our commitment to our partners and allies. A modern, operational, and well-equipped Bundeswehr is the basic prerequisite for keeping Europe safe.

> "The geopolitical situation is more challenging than ever."

Dr Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, MEP
Chair of the Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE) of the European Parliament

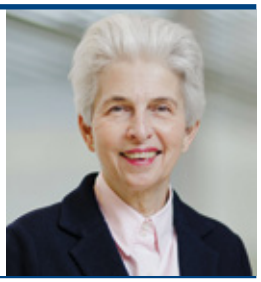

Image: imago images

NEW EUROPEAN SELF-CONFIDENCE

At the same time, Germany must think and act more European. In my role as Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE), I see every day how much our security depends on close cooperation. Instruments such as SAFE, the Defence Omnibus, or the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) are not just technical financing mechanisms. They are expressions of a new European self-confidence that can sustainably strengthen our defence capabilities and must be further developed. We must use them resolutely to make our defence industry competitive, to foster technological innovation, and to build European sovereignty in key areas relevant to security. Europe can no longer rely solely on the security guarantees of others. Our transatlantic partners remain indispensable, but at the same time we must assume greater responsibility ourselves. The Berlin Security Conference is precisely the place to discuss this responsibility, to develop joint strategies, and to strengthen the awareness that Europe's security lies first and foremost in our own hands. The challenges are immense, but they can be mastered if we face them together. This conference offers the opportunity to do just that. It brings together people who want to shape the future. It provides space for honest debate, for exchange between nations, institutions, and generations. And it enables us to build the urgently needed bridges between politics, the armed forces, and society.

I wish you all an inspiring, insightful, and constructive Berlin Security Conference 2025. Let us seize the opportunity before us. Europe's security depends on us assuming responsibility together. I look forward to engaging with you.

With warm regards,

Dr Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, MEP
Chair of the Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE) of the European Parliament

SWEDEN – A COMMITTED PARTNER FOR THE ALLIANCE AND THE EU

Sweden is most honoured to be the partner country at the 2025 Berlin Security Conference, a key platform for discussions in the field of security and defence.

This year's conference takes place at a crucial moment in time. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continues while NATO allies are subject to hybrid attacks daily.

At the same time, Europe is finally – after years of neglect – taking more responsibility for its own security, including through increased defence spending and continued support to Ukraine.

Allies' commitment earlier this year to investing 5% of GDP annually on core defence requirements and defence- and security-related spending by 2035 is a true landmark.

For Sweden as partner country, the conference will be an opportunity to explain and discuss our threat assessment, not least regarding Russia and the wider Baltic Sea region, and what we need to do to prevent and counter these threats.

As NATO's newest member, Sweden is fully committed to strengthening the Alliance's deterrence and defence to the benefit of European and transatlantic security.

Through our capabilities, expertise, geography and mindset we have made the Alliance even stronger and will continue to strengthen it.

Sweden, as the leading naval force in the Baltic Sea, offers surface ships, submarines, sensors and weapons systems as well as advanced maritime surveillance systems, adapted to the specificities of the region. This enables us to provide unique intelligence and situational awareness to NATO forces operating there.

Simultaneously, we will contribute to the development of the EU's security and defence policy, and other types of international cooperation, in compliment to NATO.

> "Sweden is fully committed to strengthening the Alliance's deterrence and defence."
>
> **H.E. Ms Veronika Wand Danielsson,** extraordinary and empowered Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden

Image: Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden, Berlin

PARTNERSHIP AND DEFENCE COOPERATION ACROSS THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM

Another Swedish asset is our world-class defence industry across all domains, from submarines and artillery to sensors, fighter aircraft and airborne radars.

At the conference, this industry will be well represented alongside high-level representatives from government, the armed forces and other authorities.

The partnership with Berlin Security Conference also reflects our long-standing and increasingly deepened security and defence cooperation with Germany, both at political, civil servant and expertise level, as well as between our defence industries.

As partner country, our joint endeavour is a commitment to a stronger German-Swedish partnership which will contribute to a stronger Alliance and a stronger Europe, including a stronger Ukraine.

I look forward to this year's conference and the exciting discussions that await us.

H.E. Ms Veronika Wand Danielsson, extraordinary and empowered Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden

EUROPEAN DEFENCE: AN ENDLESS STORY OF MISSED WAKE-UP CALLS?

If there is one persistent theme in European Defence, it is the one of wake-up calls. The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy already started with such a wake-up call in 1999 in light of the intervention in Kosovo. Georgia in 2008, Libya in 2011, Crimea in 2014, the first Trump administration in 2016 being only the loudest ones that lead up to the tragic climax which qualifies rather as a deafening siren than a call: Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine.

In 2023, EU's former High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, stated that Europe heard the wake-up call but did not leave the bed yet. At that time, defence budgets were starting to rise while the lack of industrial capacity and a lack of orders challenged national stocks and their replenishment as well as providing the necessary support to Ukraine.

Since then, a lot has happened on the European level to support Member States in improving this situation. The EU established its first instrument fostering joint procurement of Member States, EDIRPA, complemented by an instrument to support the industrial capacity building, ASAP, and the EU Defence Agency (EDA) negotiated framework contracts for the procurement of 155mm ammunition for Ukraine as well as national stocks in attempting to aggregate demand. While achieving some success, especially with EDIRPA, the overall impact was limited due to insufficient funding for EDIRPA and ASAP only amounting to 800 million. However, even in combination with EDA's efforts that found only little appetite by Member States, the declared goal to supply one million shells of 155mm ammunition to Ukraine within one year could not be reached.

> "We need a solid, supporting and sustainable structure for the threats and challenges ahead of us."
>
> **Michael Gahler**
> Member of the European Parliament
> and the BSC Advisory Board

Image: European Union 2024 – Source EP

EUROPEAN DEFENCE PROJECTS OF COMMON INTEREST

This year, the EU's efforts to support Member States reached a new level with the ReArm Europe initiative. The plan intends to enable 800 billion Euros of defence investments by Member States through a set of different measures with the goal of achieving defence readiness by 2030. At the centre of it is the so called "Security Action for Europe" (SAFE) instrument that will provide loans of 150 billion Euro to Member States for defence investments. Moreover, it provides the possibility of national exemptions for defence investments from the debt criteria under the stability and growth pact as well as the use of funds within EU's cohesion policy to support national defence investments. Additionally, the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP), that is currently under negotiations between the European Parliament and the Member States, provides another element in this context. It does not only aim to continue the EDIRPA and ASAP approach until 2028 but also addresses other crucial matters such as security of supply and the

development of joint capabilities, the so-called European Defence Projects of Common Interest (EDPCI). While EDIP with a budget of 1,5 billion Euros is the smallest European instrument since 2023, it is the most European one as it is focused on the European industry with potentially lasting effects, notably regarding the EDPCIs. Finally, in July the Commission proposed an increase of EU spending on defence and space of 131 billion Euros for the next Multiannual Framework from 2028 to 2034.

Considering the outlined progress on the European level and rising national defence budgets towards 5 respectively 3.5%, one can conclude, to stay with the metaphor, Europe left the bed and is in the process of getting dressed. The crucial question arising in that process is what shoes to put on: a pair of sneakers, well suitable for a fast run over a limited distance, or a pair of boots that are the ideal choice for a long march requiring endurance, providing protection against bad weather and offering ankle support. Given that we are facing a long-term security threat by Russia and considering the security implications by China's increasingly assertive stance, the choice is clear to me. We need a solid, supporting and sustainable structure for the threats and challenges ahead to move forward in a constant and effective manner.

ENDURANCE IS KEY

The defence of Europe is a joint task that requires endurance and predictability, not a sprint, despite the current need for speed. For the long-term perspective, we need a coherent institutional setup in order to be effective. Having on the European level the Commission and the Member State as only loosely connected pillars with partly redundant and incoherent instruments causes inefficiency, institutional infighting and unnecessary duplication ultimately wasting taxpayers' money. As the situation requires to remedy that situation ASAP, a treaty change is not an option. However, the current treaty already offers sufficient options to bridge the gap between the pillars. The new Commissioner for Defence could be such a bridge builder by naming him head of the EDA and the Member States' Special Representative for the Defence Union, entrusting him with the coordination and review of PESCO and the future EDPCIs with a view of aligning and prioritising them along the jointly identified capability gaps and goals.

That requires, foremost, Member States to fundamentally change their mind set, moving away from a mentality focused on protecting their alleged sovereignty, purely national industrial policy considerations and only measuring success in defence cooperation in the EU framework by the national return of investment in the EU budget. The guiding principle has to be to achieve the best and most cost-effective solution for our common defence ensuring the security of citizens. Given the existential threat we are facing and the uncertainty of the US security commitment to Europe, there is no other option than working closely together and thinking European, Member States and industry alike. We cannot allow European defence to become a story of missed wake-up calls as the next one could be the last.

THE CROSS-CONTINENTAL DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY: BUILDING RESILIENCE AND INNOVATION THROUGH TAIWAN-EUROPE COOPERATION

FROM FAR EASTERN QUESTIONS TO A SHARED STRATEGIC VISION

For much of the 20th century, Western strategic imagination treated the transatlantic and Indo-Pacific theaters as separate worlds. Security across the Atlantic represented the heart of Western defence, while conflicts in East Asia were dismissed as "Far Eastern questions"– peripheral, remote, and distant. This was not only a geographical distinction but also a psychological one. The peoples of Europe and Asia were often seen as inhabiting different strategic universes. Even with the advent of globalization – where trade, finance, and transportation blurred boundaries – this absence of a shared strategic vision remained.

Yet the world has changed irrevocably. Today, authoritarian expansion in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific has revealed that these regions do not merely coexist but are interlinked as Russia and China support each other explicitly. The security of Europe and the security of Asia are inseparable. A crisis in one reverberates in the other, and a fracture in one flank has the potential to destabilize the entire edifice of the postwar rules-based order.

THE AUTHORITARIAN CHALLENGE TO THE RULES-BASED ORDER

The rise of economic nationalism, the partial unwinding of globalization, and the surge in populist politics have accelerated a reconfiguration of the rules-based order that has underpinned international peace for nearly eight decades. This has exposed dangerous vacuums of power, which authoritarian regimes may seek to exploit. In Eastern Europe, Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine has reminded the free world that force remains the chosen instrument of despots. In Asia, Beijing's growing assertiveness in the South and East China Seas, its coercive tactics against Taiwan, and its interference in democratic institutions abroad are further signs of this authoritarian surge. This convergence of authoritarianism across continents represents the gravest challenge since the end of the Cold War. Should democracies falter – should we allow revisionist powers to arrogate to themselves the right to redraw borders, silence voices, and manipulate the international order – then liberty itself will decay. The law of the jungle – where might defines right – would replace the rules-based order so carefully built since 1945.

TAIWAN'S STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

Taiwan occupies a uniquely strategic position within this contest. Geographically, it stands as the anchor of the first island chain, a maritime shield stretching from Japan to the Philippines. Economically, Taiwan commands world-leading expertise in semiconductor manufacturing, producing chips essential not only to smartphones and automobiles but also to advanced defence systems and AI. Politically, Taiwan embodies democratic resilience in Asia, proving that liberty and prosperity can flourish side by side in Chinese-speaking societies.

The implications of Taiwan's fall would be catastrophic: the collapse of Indo-Pacific stability, the disintegration of global technology supply chains, and a decisive blow to the rules-based order itself. It is precisely for this reason that leaders across Europe have spoken with increasing clarity. The peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait are not merely a regional issue; they are a matter of global concern.

> "Taiwan and Europe must envision a democratic coalition – a flexible alliance conceived not by formal treaty, but by shared conviction."
>
> **Ambassador François Chihchung Wu,** Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs ROC (Taiwan)

Image: Außenministerium Taiwan

EUROPE'S ENGAGEMENT

Europe's response has been noteworthy. The European Union's 2021 Indo-Pacific Strategy, reinforced by subsequent European Council conclusions, identifies the Taiwan Strait as a critical corridor for global trade and explicitly highlights the need to uphold stability there. The EU's framing of China as simultaneously a partner, a competitor, and a systemic rival underscores a sober realism that now pervades European policymaking.

The United Kingdom, in its 2021 Integrated Review and its 2023 refresh, embraced what it called a "permanent tilt" toward the Indo-Pacific. British naval deployments, such as the voyage of HMS Queen Elizabeth and subsequent freedom of navigation operations, have demonstrated London's willingness to defend the rules-based order beyond Europe's near seas. British leaders have spoken with increasing candor on the importance of Taiwan's security to global stability.

France, with its territories and citizens in the Indo-Pacific, has been a pioneer in articulating a European Indo-Pacific vision. Paris published an Indo-Pacific Strategy as early as 2018, and its latest version in July 2025. French naval vessels have repeatedly sailed through the Taiwan Strait, underscoring the non-negotiable right to freedom of navigation. President Emmanuel Macron has also declared that any unilateral attempt to change the Taiwan Strait status quo would be unacceptable.

The publication of the 2020 Indo-Pacific Guidelines and the historic deployment of a frigate to the region in September 2024 have also marked a turning point for Germany, which has regained momentum in its global security role. Berlin now seeks to deepen its economic security, and Taiwan plays a crucial part in this strategy. The landmark decision of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company to establish a fabrication plant in Dresden is more than an economic project: It symbolizes trust, interdependence, and a shared stake in technological resilience.

TOWARD A DEMOCRATIC COALITION

Despite these steps, more remains necessary. The authoritarian challenge is not sporadic; it is systemic, persistent, and transnational. To meet it, Taiwan and Europe must envision a democratic coalition – a flexible alliance conceived not by formal treaty, but by shared conviction. Such an alliance would strengthen resilience against disinformation, cyberattacks, coercive economic measures, and military intimidation. Why should democracies constrain

themselves when authoritarian powers show no such restraint? When such powers interfere in elections, manipulate digital spaces, and challenge sovereign integrity, our response cannot be timid. Instead, it must be bold; it must be unified. Taiwan and Europe can, together, pioneer mechanisms of resilience: joint research on secure supply chains, cooperative training for cyber defence, and policy dialogues on safeguarding critical infrastructure.

This is not a call to provoke, but to preserve. By deepening cooperation, we act not merely in our own interests, but in defence of a global order where international law restrains power, and where rights are not privileges but inalienable truths.

A DUAL STRATEGY: NOT-TODAY AND EVERYDAY POLICIES

The path forward requires a dual strategy of deterrence and reassurance.

To authoritarian actors, our message must be unequivocal: "Today is not the day to infringe upon the free world." I call this the not-today policy. This signal resolves and conveys a deterrent power that comes from clarity of purpose.

To our citizens, we must also offer reassurance: "Every day is a day to live with dignity, freedom, and prosperity." I call this the everyday policy. This enshrines the democratic promise that the struggles of our forebears will not be squandered, and that the next generation will inherit both liberty and stability. Peace and prosperity have never been gifts freely given. They are achievements earned by predecessors who sacrificed, who endured hardship, who rebuilt civilization from the ruins of war. Today, the mantle falls upon us. We must harness collective wisdom, summon courage, and craft a future where freedom prevails not by accident, but by deliberate and concerted effort.

CONCLUSION: A CALL TO EUROPE

History now stands at a crossroads. Taiwan has made its choice: to remain steadfast, to shoulder responsibility, and to fortify democratic and economic resilience at the front line of authoritarian expansion. Europe, too, must make its choice. By overlooking Taiwan, Europe would risk the erosion of its own security and the principles for which it has long stood. Europe will preserve its heritage as a guardian of civilization and rational order when it supports Taiwan and authoritarian powers are contained. Together, Taiwan and Europe can craft a narrative for the 21st century not defined by coercion, but by cooperation; not by submission, but by solidarity. Our partnership will not only safeguard the balance of power today—it will shape the architecture of tomorrow's order. Let us, then, forge across continents a common resolve: that freedom shall endure, that innovation shall flourish, and that democracy shall triumph.

RELIABLE RESILIENCE – CREDIBLE DETERRENCE

AT A CROSSROADS OF SECURITY AND HISTORY

Berlin is more than a city. It is a symbol: of unity prevailing over division, of oppression ousted by freedom, and vulnerability revived by resilience. To stand in Berlin in 2025, at a conference that brings together leaders, thinkers, and practitioners of security, is to be reminded of history's sometimes unforgiving rhythm. The Wall once cut through this city as a scar of coercion; today, Berlin is whole because people believed in freedom, Allies stood together, and deterrence worked.

This year's theme, "Reliable Resilience – Credible Deterrence," is more than a slogan. It is a precondition for peace. It reminds us that deterrence without resilience is precarious, and resilience without deterrence is naïve. We need both. Deeply, consistently, and visibly, if we are to safeguard freedom and prosperity.

The world in 2025 is turbulent. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is well into its fourth year. It has cost countless lives, destabilised global food and energy markets, and brought the nightmare prospect of an all-out war back to Europe, and beyond. From the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific, geopolitical competition is sharpening. Terrorist groups still plot destruction. Emerging technologies carry both promises and potential hazards. Disinformation corrodes trust. Climate change aggravates instability.

Against this backdrop, NATO – the most successful Alliance in history – has not stood still. We have adapted, transformed, and reinforced our resolve. We have done so to defend every inch of Allied territory and ensure that our one billion people can continue to live in freedom and security. And because our adversaries only respect strength. But adaptation is not a one-off task. It is a constant duty. We cannot afford complacency, nor can we rely on yesterday's models to deter tomorrow's threats. Here I will try to explore today's security challenges, outline NATO's evolving approach, highlight cooperation with the European Union, and stress the urgent need to reduce dependencies, rebuild industrial capacity, and project visible strength.

> "Defence spending is not about percentages: it is about ensuring soldiers have ammunition, sailors have ships, and pilots have aircraft."
>
> **Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone,**
> Chair of the NATO Military Committee

Image: NATO

CURRENT SECURITY CHALLENGES

Russia: The Immediate Threat

Russia's illegal, brutal and full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shattered peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and gravely undermined global security. It is not just a war of territory, but a war of worldview. Moscow wants to establish spheres of influence and fundamentally reconfigure the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, to deny sovereign nations their right to choose their future, and to replace international law with the law of the strongest.

And hybrid tools reach beyond the battlefield: cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, manipulation of energy supplies, and information warfare designed to weaken our democracies and chip away at our freedom. This is not a "regional issue," but a global test. If aggression pays in Ukraine, authoritarian powers everywhere will take note. We must continue to call out these hostile actions by Russia and other malign actors and make clear that NATO is ready and able to respond.

Instability from the South

While Russia dominates headlines, instability in NATO's southern neighbourhood is persistent and dangerous, and Allies recognise its impact on their own security. Several states across the Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel face conflict, corruption, food insecurity, and extremist violence. Terrorism continues to be the

most direct asymmetric threat to NATO and our common security. As a result of the terrorist threat, millions are displaced, driving migration pressures that test social cohesion in Europe. This is also reason why we continue to deter, defend and respond to threats posed by terrorist groups.

The Indo-Pacific Factor

Today, the security of the Euro-Atlantic is not bound by geography, and developments in the Indo-Pacific have implications for the Alliance. The clearest example is the support Russia is receiving from North Korea and China. In particular, China's stated ambitions and coercive policies continue to challenge our interests, security and values, and its strategic partnership with Russia is a cause of profound concern. China is not an adversary, but it is both a strategic competitor and a systemic challenger. Beijing uses its economic clout to coerce, its technologies to dominate, and its resources to gain strategic dependencies. Its military modernisation, coupled with assertive behaviour, affects global stability. For NATO, this is not about projecting military presence to Asia but about protecting our interests at home from vulnerabilities generated abroad.

The Technological Race

The fourth industrial revolution has reached the battlespace. Artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, hypersonic weapons, quantum computing, and space technologies are rewriting the rules of security and changing the character of conflict. And we are also seizing the moment, for example by using new technologies, including sensors and AI, to better detect suspicious activity. Whoever masters innovation will hold the advantage. At the same time, technology empowers disinformation, cybercrime, and surveillance by hostile states. This is why we must constantly sharpen our technological edge by developing and adopting new technologies, cooperating with the private sector, shaping global standards, and embedding principles of responsible use in line with our demo-

cratic values. In this domain, cyber commands exercise resilience and readiness to respond to hybrid threats, in strong cooperation with civilian agencies.

Economic Security and Supply Chains

The pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and geopolitical competition have exposed a dangerous truth: our economies are vulnerable to strategic dependencies. From semiconductors to rare earth minerals, too many of our supply chains depend on few actors that seek to control key technological and industrial sectors, critical infrastructure, supply chains and strategic materials. We saw the consequences of energy dependence on Russia; we cannot repeat the same mistake with critical materials essential for our defence industries, green transitions, and high-tech economies. We have to recognise our dependencies, reduce our vulnerabilities, and manage the risks.

Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier

Rising seas, desertification, and extreme weather drive instability, fuel conflicts over resources, and create humanitarian crises. NATO has recognised climate as a security challenge, not an environmental footnote. Adaptation must account for this.

NATO'S RESPONSE AND APPROACH

A Decade of Transformation

Since 2014, NATO has undergone its most profound adaptation since the Cold War. Russia's first aggression in Ukraine triggered a strategic awakening. The 2022 full-scale invasion accelerated it. Today, NATO's deterrence and defence posture is fundamentally different from what it was a decade ago.

New Defence Plans and Force Model

For the first time since the Cold War, we have full combat-ready forces on NATO's eastern flank and the most comprehensive defence plans, covering all domains and threats. These are not theoretical. They are executable, with forces, capabilities, and logistics assigned. The NATO Force Model ensures that hundreds of thousands of troops are at higher readiness, ready to defend every inch of Allied territory.

Forward Defence

NATO's military presence in the east of the Alliance is an important component of NATO's deterrence and defence. In recent years, we have enhanced NATO's forward presence by establishing multinational battlegroups from the Baltics to the Black Sea. Naval patrols secure sea lanes. Air policing missions guard our skies. Their multinational nature sends the clearest message: NATO's strength lies in cohesion. Men and women from different nations, operating shoulder to shoulder, show unity in its most concrete form.

Investment in Defence

Credible deterrence requires credible capabilities. Allies have committed to spending 5% of GDP on defence. But this is not about percentages: it is about ensuring soldiers have ammunition, sailors have ships, and pilots have aircraft.

Visible Exercises: Deterrence in Action

Deterrence is not only about capability but also about perception. Adversaries must see our readiness, not just assume it. Deterrence can take different shapes and forms.

Starting from our Enhanced Vigilance Activities, which have proven to be an essential pillar of our deterrence posture. These deployments demonstrate NATO's ability to surge forces, reinforce Allies, and adapt to evolving threats, in real time. They are deterrence in action, day by day. At the same time, NATO's high-visibility exercises truly matter from large scale collective defence drills to tailored, domain-specific training. They are not only scenarios but show both our adversaries and our population that NATO Forces are trained, integrated and ready to operate under any circumstances. In 2024, Exercise Steadfast Defender, to name one, made our credibility visible, unmistakable and headline-worthy. When tens of thousands of troops manoeuvre across Europe, when logistics corridors are tested, when interoperability is proven, we send a clear message: we are ready, we are united, and we are serious.

Moreover, the port visits of Allied ships and their rotational deployments throughout NATO's Area of responsibility remind both friends and foes that our maritime presence is constant. These deployments – whether in the High North, the Baltic, the Black Sea or the Mediterranean – signal commitment, mobility and the ability to project power.

Finally, the military contributes to deterrence messaging also with our Subject Matter Experts, who participate in high-level security conferences, think tank engagements, and academic fora. They showcase NATO's expertise, help shape debates and counter misinformation with professional military insights.

Innovation and Resilience

The Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and the NATO Innovation Fund link startups, industry, and militaries. They ensure that innovation benefits security, not just commerce. NATO also works with Allies to strengthen societal resilience through a whole-of-society approach, protecting critical infrastructure, ensuring secure communications, and building energy resilience.

NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION: PARTNERS IN SECURITY

No single organisation can secure the Euro-Atlantic area alone. NATO and the European Union are natural partners: 23 countries belong to both. We share the same values and challenges.

Our cooperation with the EU has reached unprecedented levels in recent years. We have done a lot together on issues like military mobility, maritime and cyber defence. The EU brings powerful tools: economic weight, regulatory power, civilian missions, sanctions. NATO brings collective defence, military planning, and deterrence. Together, we are stronger.

Recent years have shown the value of this partnership. EU sanctions have weakened Russia's war machine. NATO's deployments have shielded Allies. Joint work on military mobility ensures that troops and equipment can move rapidly across Europe. Cooperation on cyber, hybrid threats, and resilience is deepening.

There is no competition between NATO and the EU. There is complementarity. The EU's drive to strengthen its industrial base, improve resilience, and invest in technology benefits NATO. And NATO's deterrence posture guarantees the security environment in which the EU can thrive. Faced with the biggest threat to our security in decades, we need even stronger multilateral institutions and even deeper international cooperation in Europe and across the Atlantic.

NATO and the EU must work with partners to diversify supply chains, invest in domestic production, and create stockpiles of critical materials. Just as energy diversification made us stronger after 2022, material diversification will protect us in the years ahead.

STRATEGIC INDEPENDENCE AND INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY

Lessons from Dependence

Europe's reliance on Russian energy was a strategic mistake. For years, warnings have been overlooked. The result was vulnerability to coercion. The lesson must be applied broadly: strategic depen-

dence equals strategic weakness. Today, China in particular dominates rare earth extraction and processing, controls critical nodes of semiconductor production, and seeks leverage through economic entanglement. These are not narrow, single-use commodities. They are enablers of everything from fighter jets to electric vehicles, from satellites to smartphones.

Revitalising the Defence Industrial Base

The war in Ukraine has revealed another uncomfortable truth: our defence industries were not prepared for high-intensity warfare. Ammunition stockpiles ran low. Production lines struggled to meet demand. Timeframes measured in years are unacceptable when lives are measured in days. We must rebuild a capable, scalable, and innovative defence industrial base across Europe and North America. This requires investment, long-term contracts, and political will. Industry must be treated not only as a supplier but as a strategic partner. The private sector's ingenuity, from AI to biotech, must be harnessed.

Balancing Open Markets and Security

Globalisation has delivered prosperity, but it has also created dependencies. We must strike a balance: open markets where possible, strategic autonomy where necessary. Economic policy is no longer separate from security policy. They are two sides of the same coin.

Unity as the Ultimate Deterrent

In conclusion, resilience and deterrence are not abstract concepts. They are lived realities. They are soldiers on duty at the eastern flank, engineers building secure networks, innovators developing next-generation technologies, diplomats forging consensus, and citizens who trust their institutions. As NATO's Chair of the Military Committee, I see daily the professionalism, dedication, and unity of our armed forces. They do not ask whether an Ally is small or large, north or south, old or new. They see only the flag, the commitment, the Article 5 promise that an attack on one is an attack on all.

Our adversaries hope to divide us, to exploit fatigue, to undermine will. We must disappoint them.

Cohesion is our greatest strength. Without it, even the strongest armies are fragile. With it, even the most daunting challenges are surmountable. NATO and the EU, together, are guardians of a vision: a world where nations choose their path freely, where might does not make right, and where peace is secured not by chance but by choice. Deterrence works when it is credible. Resilience matters when it is reliable. And both succeed only when backed by unity of purpose and clarity of vision.

Ultimately, the military contribution ensures NATO's deterrence messaging is more than words. It is backed up posture, presence and performance, day after day, exercise after exercise, deployment after deployment. Take my words: The military component of NATO is there to deter and defend. The present is testing us. The future will continue to test us.

But if history teaches anything – from Berlin's walls to Ukraine's battlefields – it is that free nations, when united, prevail.

BERLIN SECURITY CONFERENCE 2025 – SETTING THE RIGHT FOCUS AT A CRUCIAL TIME

For more than two decades the BSC has been an important forum for international dialogue and discussions. Once again, the BSC 2025 offers excellent opportunities to discuss current topics with our political, military and industrial partners – this year with special focus to one of our long-standing partners and new ally: Sweden.

The concept of modern collective defence has been particularly well implemented in the northern part of the NATO alliance. The Swedish Air Force is an impressive example of a fully operational and state of the art Air Force in Europe.

Especially with its strong sea and air domain capabilities, Sweden is an important contributor to the Euro-Atlantic security. In challenging times with a war waging on European soil, we must act decisively and in a united manner. It is good to know the Swedish Armed Forces at our side – shoulder to shoulder, wing to wing, stronger together.

> “In challenging times with a war waging on European soil, we must act decisively and in a united manner.”
>
> **Lieutenant General Holger “HAWK” Neumann**
> Chief of the German Air Force

Image: Bundeswehr

CLOSE COOPERATION IN THE NORTHERN EUROPEAN REGION

The Luftwaffe has always paid particular attention to the northern European region. For many years we have been connected with the Swedish Air Force at various levels.

- We regularly train together in the exercise BALTIC HUNTER as part of our Weapons Instructor Course thereby consequently strengthening our interoperability.
- The certification of the German A400M for Air-to-Air-Refuelling operations with the Swedish Saab JAS 39 GRIPEN has massively enhanced our common ability to project Airpower over great distances.
- We have recently been able to learn a lot from our Swedish partners with regards to the concept of Agile Combat Employment and Dispersed Operations observing the exercise ICE24 as part of NORTHERN RESPONSE. In the field of Ground Based Missile Defence, we have established close ties to Sweden employing the weapons systems PATRIOT and IRIS T SLM – with even bigger cooperation potential for the future.
- And most important to me: We have succeeded in connecting our teams! Partnerships and even friendships develop, our aircrews fly side by side, and our two Air Forces face upcoming challenges together.

During my several close exchanges with the Swedish Air Chief Major General Jonas Wikman, we agreed that future Airpower will still be defined by reach, speed, precision and dominance. We project strength, create freedom of action, and dictate the operational tempo.

It is about achieving and maintaining air superiority andaccess to space, if necessary, striking deep into enemy territory while supporting ground forces at the same time against a capable opponent challenging all domains simultaneously.

For us, the implications are clear: The role of Airpower as a first responder makes it uniquely indispensable. This fact holds true, today and tomorrow.

COMMAND & CONTROL IN THE CLOUD – SITAWARE BATTLECLOUD

The Bundeswehr is undergoing a comprehensive digital transformation to secure and future-proof its command-and-control (C2) capabilities. At its core is a resilient IT architecture that combines strict security with flexible deployability.
A key pillar is the cloud-first approach. With pCloudBw, the Bundeswehr now fields a sovereign cloud infrastructure tailored for military needs. It delivers the computing power and storage for complex applications, ensures protection, and enables distributed operations – safeguarding sovereignty, integrity, and readiness.

OPERATIONAL DEMAND:

Modern C2 is shaped by mobile command posts, rapid force generation, multi-domain operations (MDO), rising data volumes and shorter decision cycles. Commanders must quickly create, share, and act on a common operational picture across all echelons – from headquarters to the tactical edge. This requires systems that support distributed, networked structures and remain reliable in dynamic environments.

TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSE: THE EVOLUTION OF SITAWARE BATTLECLOUD

Systematic's SitaWare suite is the world's leading C4ISR software, proven in operational use for decades across more than 50 nations – including 19 NATO members. As the software backbone of modern C2 systems, SitaWare sets interoperability standards with COTS solutions for every echelon of operations. Within the German Armed Forces, SitaWare is already embedded in major modernization programmes such as the Digitalisierung Landbasierter Operationen (DLBO), the Territorial Hub (TerrHub), and the National Maritime C2 Service (NMC2S). As part of the Mission Enabling Service Bundeswehr (MESBw), SitaWare provides the common foundation of a unified software ecosystem across all domains. In the coalition context, SitaWare is also the selected C2 solution for NATO's Landforces – a core enabler of multinational operations and part of the Alliance's digital transformation.
Building on this foundation, SitaWare BattleCloud marks the next step: shifting from on-premises installations to secure, cloud-based deployments in sovereign infrastructures like pCloudBw. It transfers the full functionality of the SitaWare Suite into a containerized platform, following Software-Defined Defence (SDD) principles: hardware-agnostic, modular, interoperable, and scalable for integration into existing IT landscapes.
SitaWare BattleCloud was designed from the ground up for deployment in cloud environments like pCloudBw, and covers the full operational spectrum:

- Forward-deployed units operating under low bandwidth and high disruption risk, relying on robust, compressed data connections.
- Rear forces using higher-capacity channels such as satellite, line-of-sight radio, or LTE.
- National data centres serving as the backbone of operational command.

The architecture also supports the PACE communication principles (Primary, Alternate, Contingency, Emergency), ensuring access to orders, situational awareness, and mission-critical data even if primary links fail. Multinational staffs, headquarters, vehicles, and dismounted troops can operate together in a unified, secure information space.
Beyond its technical adaptability, SitaWare BattleCloud integrates a wide range of data sources – from OSINT, imagery, and weather to sensor feeds and messaging. For the Bundeswehr, UAV reconnaissance can be fused with terrain and weather data to optimise manoeuvre planning and anticipate threats. AI analytics further automate the creation and distribution of consistent operational pictures in near real time.

OUTLOOK

SitaWare BattleCloud lays the foundation for the next generation of digital C2. Built for today's missions and future growth, it enables Multi-Domain Operations, broader integrations and remains a decisive factor for interoperability, rapid response and operational superiority.

SitaWare BattleCloud

Contact:
Systematic GmbH
Im Zollhafen 14
50678 Köln
Germany
www.systematic.com

FACING CHANGE WITH STRENGTH: THE GERMAN ARMY AT THE BERLIN SECURITY CONFERENCE

The Berlin Security Conference (BSC) is a major international event. Therefore, it is both, a special privilege and an honor for me to address you today, only shortly after assuming my new responsibilities as Chief of the German Army.

According to me the BSC represents an invaluable opportunity to engage with high-level stakeholders from politics, industry, academia, and the military. In particular, I appreciate the contributions of this year's guest nation, Sweden, whose perspective and expertise contributes to expanding the European and transatlantic cooperation. Sweden brings in expertise and comprehensive understanding of a region that is often overlooked: the High North. In light of the accelerated pace of climate change and Russia's increasingly aggressive behavior also in this region, Sweden's central position within Scandinavia leads to its strategic significance. Its historic decision to join NATO – after more than 200 years of neutrality – constitutes an unprecedented step, underscoring Sweden's strong commitment to peace, stability, and security in Europe.

BSC – A CORNERSTONE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEBATE

Over the past years, the team of the Berlin Security Conference has developed this event into a cornerstone for international debate on security and defence policy. Its success stems not only from highly relevant topics, but is also based on the presentations of outstanding experts. This combination of content, competence, and adding new perspectives is what makes the BSC such an outstanding event. Continuing the tradition of my predecessor, I am honored to chair this year's Land Forces Panel. Together with Lieutenant General Hübner, the new Vice Chief of the Army, who will contribute to the Chiefs' Session, we as the representatives of the German Army are grateful for this valuable opportunity to present to you our perspective on defence and to actively engage in shaping the discussion.

The German Army will remain a steadfast contributor to the Euro-Atlantic security framework. We are reliable, we will become more effective, and will fulfill our commitments with the utmost resilience. Our soldiers are persistently demonstrating outstanding professionalism and are serving with dedication, responsibility, and courage further and the will to further develop their capabilities.

RE-THINKING INNOVATION, TESTING AND PROCUREMENT

Tactical and material adaptation has always been a part of military reality. We have to integrate new capabilities in order to enhance our combat effectiveness. We need to keep the winning edge. Second place is not an option in war.

Unmanned air and ground vehicles, Artificial Intelligence, and Deep Fires capabilities are developing at a speed that requires us to rethink innovation, testing, and procurement for our Land Forces. The complex testbed mechanisms for introducing new equipment will be a thing of the past. Testing new equipment through units on exercises and deployments will become the norm. Adaptation means that we will not be following long-term planning cycles. Being adaptative is a task for military leaders at every level. In spite of all these technological advancements, the human factor will continue to remain central. This is true for the Armed Forces, particularly, when they have to fight in extreme conditions that for example northern Europe has to offer. This pertains especially to the land domain, where the last one hundred meters must still be fought and won with boots on the ground. Or as the former Chair of NATO's Military Committee Rob Bauer said at last year's Berlin Security Conference: "… if you like it or not, mud and blood is still the reality. We need to fight for each inch with boots on the ground. Not with Cyber, not with Air but with Ground Forces."

> "The German Army will remain a steadfast contributor to the Euro-Atlantic security framework."
>
> **Lieutenant General Dr Christian Freuding,**
> Chief of the German Army

Image: Bundeswehr

THE IMPORTANCE OF A "WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY" SUPPORT

But it is not the fighting spirit of the military alone, that determines the difference between victory and defeat. It is the will of the government, the administration and especially the support of the civilian population. It is a whole nation's task and Sweden is a perfect example of how it can be done. I am curious to hear about your experiences and how this mutually interacts with the development of your military as our NATO partner. "The Swedish model" used to increase the strength of the Armed Forces is another aspect of special interest to us. In discussing these topics, the Berlin Security Conference provides a forum where politics, industry, academia, and the military can come together to exchange views, discuss new strategies, find common ground, and develop joint approaches. This spirit of cooperation is especially vital in Europe. Security today depends not on any one nation or profession alone, but on strong partnerships across borders. I look forward to the discussions ahead, the exchange of perspectives, and the fresh impulses that will arise here in Berlin. Together, let us make the Berlin Security Conference a beacon of reflection, a catalyst for cooperation, and a platform shaping the security architecture of tomorrow.

RESILIENCE OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM OF SOCIETY AND THE BUNDESWEHR

Germany is under attack. Not with guns or tanks, but nevertheless we are attacked every day by cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns or acts of sabotage at various levels. One of the most vulnerable targets: The IT and communication networks – the nervous system of our society and the Bundeswehr. The aim of the attacks is to interfere and interrupt our decision-making processes. To achieve these objectives, our enemies have various options: Attacks can be carried out through digital means, such as infiltrating our IT networks to obtain information and/or manipulate data. But attacking our command and control systems is not limited to the Cyberspace, our servers and computers. Conventional offline attacks via sabotage, destroying physical infrastructure for data transmission, jamming GPS signals or compromising communication systems by intercepting electromagnetic emissions could have serious consequences for current or planned operations.

Most of those assaults on civilian or military communication infrastructure are part of a larger scheme called “Hybrid Warfare”. It is characterized by the blurred boundaries between war and peace and internal and external security, but also the particular source of an attack, the attacker itself can often not be attributed.

One major aspect of hybrid warfare is cognitive warfare: State actors like Russia, Iran or North Korea, but also non-state actors like terrorist groups or organized crime groups are using propaganda and disinformation – knowing that the weakest point of the nervous system usually is its human operator. Both strategies have one goal: to weaken social cohesion, undermine trust between the population, government, military and their leadership, and thus render Germany incapable of action. Successful cyber-attacks or breakdowns of communication infrastructure can contribute further to this end: The state is perceived as powerless in defending its people, its critical infrastructure against a superior opponent.

> “Germany requires not only military strength, but also societal resilience.”
>
> **Vice Admiral Dr Thomas Daum,**
> Chief of the German Cyber and Information Domain Service

Image: Bundeswehr/U

THE GUARDIAN OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM IN THE BUNDESWEHR: CYBER AND INFORMATION DOMAIN SERVICE (CIDS)

The CIDS operates and defends the nervous system of the Bundeswehr. This involves not only the IT system at home and in areas of operation. But similar to the analogue conventional world: To be successful, defensive positions have to consider and prepare

reconnaissance and surveillance in advance and counter-attacks. Offensive cyber operations, such as penetrating enemy IT networks to obtain information and/or manipulate data and electronic warfare are therefore also part of the CIDS' portfolio.
As a result, the "eyes and ears" of the German Armed Forces - the CIDS - has a plethora of different capabilities. With regard to psychological warfare, we have the Operational Communication Center. There we have dedicated forces for conducting psychological operations to influence an opponent's will. Vice versa, the experts in this unit are also skilled to detect disinformation campaigns directed against us, analyze them and thus contribute to increase critical awareness among our troops.
The CIDS is also responsible for mission support from space. All our tasks – reconnaissance such as signal intelligence or image intelligence, communication networks, Geospatial Service – make use of space-based capabilities. Guarding and protecting the nervous system of the armed forces and providing offensive CID-capabilities at political discretion is challenge not limited to the Bundeswehr alone. It is a whole-of-government, even more: a whole-of-society challenge. For this end, we are working closely with other German, EU and NATO military as well as non-military institutions. For example, the responsibility for cyber security lies in Germany at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, while cyber defence is the responsibility of the Bundeswehr and thus the CIDS. But since the boundaries between war and peace have not yet officially been overcome, there are limiting laws and responsibilities. However, if the war in Ukraine shows one thing, it is the ever-increasing speed of innovations cycles in the area of cyber, cyber security and information-related technologies. The half-life of technical innovations of war in Ukraine is currently around 3 to 12 weeks. Then the other side either copies the attacks or finds a suitable countermeasure. In order to effectively counteract these developments, there need to be close interactions between civil and military IT and innovations dialog, particularly in the field of AI, autonomous systems and quantum computing. Because in the end the old military wisdom applies: Whoever shoots faster and hits better wins the firefight. Accordingly, we as the Bundeswehr and the CIDS are constantly working to enhance our capabilities, trying to adapt to current developments not only in the cyber sector.

WELL-TRAINED ARMED FORCES ARE NOT SUFFICIENT TO DEFEND A COUNTRY

Warfare on the digital battlefield is not a one-man show. It is an all-hands maneuver on the ship "Germany". Neither the CIDS in particular nor the Bundeswehr as such can act alone in the area of Hybrid Warfare. For example, even the most secure Bundeswehr networks are of no help in the event of a prolonged power failure caused by a successful cyber-attack on our electricity grids.
The ship "Germany" requires not only military strength, but also the resilience of society as a whole. This can refer to physical assets such as in the example above in Critical Infrastructure, but also to the various disinformation campaigns, espionage and sabotage. Resilience can be understood as a muscle that, like other military capabilities, needs to be trained regularly. Only a society that is resilient and has the will to actively defend its achievements is capable of improving its violent and non-violent skills and can, in these modern times, act as such against an aggressor like Russia. As the CID Service we do our best on our part to protect Germany!

BUNDESWEHR JOINT FORCE COMMAND – A SINGLE COMMAND ON THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL TO COUNTER CURRENT SECURITY CHALLENGES

The security situation in Europe has fundamentally changed since the Russian attack on Ukraine. In addition to traditional threats, the spectrum of hybrid attacks – from cyberattacks and disinformation to sabotage of critical infrastructures – is gaining relevance. Germany is increasingly faced with direct threats, such as GPS spoofing, drone espionage and attacks on underwater infrastructure, often without the option to clearly trace them. In order to deal with this complex threat situation and strengthen national and collective defence, the Bundeswehr has fundamentally restructured its command and control organisation.

A NEW COMMAND FOR A NEW ERA

Based on the Osnabrück Directive of May 2024, the Bundeswehr Joint Force Command (BwJFC) was established as the central command and control facility for all Bundeswehr operations. The new Command pools the tasks of the former Bundeswehr Joint Forces Operations Command and the former Bundeswehr Homeland Defence Command. It commands and controls all national and international operations from a single source at the operational level – around the clock, 365 days a year.

The command is resiliently posted in Berlin as well as in Schwielowsee. It acts as an interface between the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces as well as between military, civilian and international partners such as NATO and the EU. This reorientation involves drawing a clear distinction of roles between the strategic, the operational and the tactical levels of command. Faster decision-making processes and a reduced number of interfaces lead to a clear boost to efficiency in terms of responsiveness and deterrence.

MORE EFFICIENCY, CLEAR RESPONSIBILITIES

The BwJFC assigns and prioritises the tasks concerning the deployment of forces and responsibilities to the four services and to the Bundeswehr Joint Medical Service where purely medical operations are concerned.

Military planning and command and control is based on a comprehensive situation picture that the BwJFC must keep available and up-to-date at all times, including all relevant military and civilian situation information wherever feasible. This could potentially also constitute the basis for a national situation picture. The new Command's task spectrum also includes national exercises, administrative assistance and disaster relief, risk and crisis management as well as command and control of special operations forces. In terms of the standing operational task of national risk and crisis management, the new Command was able to draw on the expertise of the former Bundeswehr Joint Forces Operations Command. In doing so, the BwJFC was able to quickly respond to the most recent crises in the Middle East with specific measures, such as deploying crisis support teams to German diplomatic missions abroad or maintaining an up-to-date situation picture. Planning and deployment of Bundeswehr special operations forces in the Joint Force Command also seamlessly tie in with the former Bundeswehr Joint Forces Operations Command's reliable task performance. The same is true for relief activities within Germany under the responsibility of the former Bundeswehr Homeland Defence Command.

> "The Bundeswehr Joint Force Command reflects the reality of security policy in the wake of the Zeitenwende."
>
> **Lieutenant General Alexander Sollfrank,**
> Commander of the Bundeswehr Joint Force

Image: Bundeswehr/Anne Weinrich

DETERRENCE THROUGH OPERATIONAL READINESS

The security situation makes it clear that, although Europe is not at war, it is not at peace, either. Russia has become the greatest threat to NATO and the EU. Its hybrid warfare against Germany and other European nations, military buildup and the reorganisation of its industry to war economy increase the risk of escalation. As Minister of Defence Pistorius so clearly put it: "Warfighting capability is a guiding principle for action". With this in mind, the new Command's first major contribution to an operation was responding to acts of sabotage in the Baltic Sea within the framework of NATO's "Baltic Sentry" mission, during which the BwJFC proved its worth as national coordination authority between the Navy, air reconnaissance and civilian security agencies.

Exercises are a key element of deterrence. In the Quadriga 2025 exercise series, the Bundeswehr, together with armed forces of 13 further countries, conducted training in defending the Baltic Sea region in times of crisis and war. From August to September 2025, approximately 8,000 German military personnel from the Navy, the Army, the Air Force, the Cyber and Information Domain Service and the Bundeswehr Joint Support Command participated in several large-scale exercises in Germany, Lithuania, Finland and the Baltic Sea.

THE OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR GERMANY

The Operational Plan for Germany (OPLAN DEU) is essential in terms of national defence and will be further developed under the auspices of the BwJFC. It governs Germany's military contributions to collective defence – in particular as a logistics hub and "turntable" for NATO forces. OPLAN DEU considers supply corridors and the protection of critical infrastructure as well as the involvement of civilian resources and services.

It also highlights areas in which military capacities alone are not sufficient: Germany's resilience essentially depends on having functional civilian structures. OPLAN DEU therefore serves as a basis for planning whole-of-government defence for the Bundeswehr as much as it does for other actors.

CONCLUSION

With the BwJFC, the Bundeswehr has created a command which, for the first time, will command and control all operations from a single source. It reflects the reality of security policy in the wake of the Zeitenwende. The goal is to achieve maximum operational readiness and credible deterrence – through clarity, efficiency and overall national resilience.

RELIABLE RESILIENCE – CREDIBLE DETERRENCE

When we think of security and the transatlantic Alliance, we think in terms of traditional military categories: of capabilities, of divisions, and of the number of combat vehicles, ships and aircraft. However, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its consequences have shown us that credible deterrence is not only a question of military strength, but also to a significant degree depends on the robustness of our societies, on our resilience.

ESTABLISHING A SOLID LEVEL OF RESILIENCE

In a volatile world, whole-of-government resilience is the challenge. It acts as a signal to others. It is the core element of credible deterrence. The resilience of the NATO nations ensures that societies, infrastructure and armed forces remain capable of acting even when they are the subject to hybrid attacks. It is a matter of protecting our decision-making processes, our critical infrastructure, our energy supply, our communication systems and networks, etc. Or quite simply, of protecting our basic ability to function as a state in times of crisis by ensuring the provision of public services to all citizens. Military strength alone is not enough - the robustness of state and society forms the backbone of deterrence.For years now, Russia and its criminal war of aggression, together with the hybrid warfare methods it employs, has clearly shown the western world that a new reality has emerged. Russia tries to destabilise societies and put pressure on governments by means of cyber-attacks, espionage, sabotage, disinformation campaigns, by instrumentalising migration and by taking advantage of energy dependencies.

> "Military strength alone is not enough - the robustness of state and society forms the backbone of deterrence."
>
> **Lieutenant General Gerald Funke,**
> Chief of the Bundeswehr Joint Support Command Headquarters

Image: Bundeswehr/Alpers

RESPONDING TO THE NEW SECURITY SITUATION

Germany's efforts to take account of the changed security situation have led to some adjustments, such as the reorganisation of the Bundeswehr and the establishment of the Bundeswehr Joint Support Command. This is where the mission-essential capabilities of health care, CBRN defence, logistics, military police and the Bundeswehr Civil-Military Cooperation Command have been located. Capabilities that are indispensable for all elements of the armed forces with regard to the successful conduct of operations are kept ready following a joint approach.

By pooling the limited supporting capabilities, the Bundeswehr Joint Support Command ensures that maximum effectiveness can be achieved at the same time as maximum efficiency. In no other major Bundeswehr organisational element are such strong civil-military ties in all capability areas.

INTERLINKING CIVIL-MILITARY HEALTH CARE CAPABILITIES

There are close links between the Medical Service and the civilian public health system. The Medical Service can provide capacity in the event of a crisis, but must also be able to draw on civilian resources. These interlinking civil-military capabilities, which are undergoing continuous further development, also strengthen robustness across the whole of society, for example in the case of pandemics, mass casualties or hybrid attacks on the health care system.

ENSURING OPERATIONAL READINESS ACROSS ALL SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

The highly specialised Bundeswehr CBRN defence forces ensure operational readiness in combat and also contribute to the protection of the civilian population if needed. At the national level, the Bundeswehr CBRN Defence Command intensifies cooperation with other authorities, such as the Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance. The requirements for improving CBRN protection as a part of the overall defence effort are continually optimised. Bundeswehr logistics management during operations and routine duty requires the integration of third-party services, both through cooperation with partner forces and the involvement of commercial service providers. The need to extend cooperation with these commercial providers is greater than ever before, and not only where ensuring Host Nation Support is concerned. The German hub is at the heart of NATO's logistic operations in Europe. The Bundeswehr and its civilian partners ensure that forces can be rapidly moved through Germany and provided with appropriate supplies. The military police also make a fundamental contribution to this effort. With their diverse capabilities, they ensure the security of personnel, materiel and infrastructure, which includes organisational measures to enable the smooth flow of traffic during military transports on German roads. The military police is a close partner of the civilian police forces, other authorities and organisations with security tasks, and operates at the intersection between internal and external security.

The Bundeswehr Joint Support Command is the backbone of sustainability and survivability in a military and whole-of-government context. There can be no credible deterrence without health care, well-functioning logistics, CBRN protection and military police forces. If we want to make an attack on Alliance territory "unpalatable" for an adversary, we must be appropriately prepared in these areas (as well). For Germany - and this includes its capacity as NATO's geostrategic hub - these capabilities are not only a military but also a political signal: We are ready and able to support the Alliance in a war emergency.

The Bundeswehr Joint Support Command is an essential enabler and acts as a link between military fighting power and social resilience. The Berlin Security Conference 2025 is an important platform for instigating the dialogue required to strengthen Europe's resilience and defence readiness. Together, we must ensure that civil and military defence, which are inextricably linked, are aligned and adapted to the prevailing threat situation at the same pace.

On that note, I look forward to exchanging ideas and views on this topic at the Berlin Security Conference 2025.

HOW ‘SOFTWARE-DEFINED DEFENCE’ ENSURES SOVEREIGNTY IN GERMANY

THE “ZEITENWENDE” AND THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

On February 24, 2022, the security policy landscape in Europe changed abruptly. Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine marked a caesura, a turn of an era, which German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called “Zeitenwende.” The war in Ukraine, but also the conflict in the Middle East, demonstrate how much today’s conflicts are shaped by technology.

Parallel to this ”Zeitenwende” in security policy, we are in the midst of a technological “Zeitenwende”. Digital technologies in particular, such as quantum computing, cloud computing and Artificial Intelligence are developing at breakneck speed and changing almost every area of our lives. This also applies, of course, to the Bundeswehr and its armed forces. Today, success is increasingly determined not by calibre and armour, but by the ability to continuously develop and interlink systems, particularly through software, in order to act faster and more precisely. Defence Minister Boris Pistorius summed it up succinctly: ‘In the 21st century, military capability also means being digitally combat-ready.’

The challenge now is to actively and consistently shape two different kinds of “Zeitenwende”. Speed, adaptability and innovation are required. At the same time, resilience and robustness must be developed to such an extent that the armed forces can withstand future threats.

> “SDD requires not only technology, but also the right mindset.”
>
> **Lieutenant General Michael Vetter,**
> Director-General for Cyber/Information Technology and Chief Information Officer at the Federal Ministry of Defence in Berlin, Germany

Image: BMVg/Steve Eibe

DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY: THE KEY TO RESILIENCE

Digital sovereignty is on everyone’s lips – but what does it mean in a military context? Essentially, it is about using digital infrastructures, technologies and data independently, securely and autonomously. For the Bundeswehr, this means retaining sovereignty over key capabilities and minimising dependencies.

Recent geopolitical developments show how critical such dependencies can be – whether in communication satellites or cloud infrastructures.

‘Digital sovereignty is a prerequisite for security and innovation,’ emphasises the Federal Ministry of Defence in its strategic guidelines. Only if the Bundeswehr can independently access data, adapt systems and ward off threats it will be able to carry out its mission independently and without influence.

However, digital sovereignty does not mean self-sufficiency. Rather, it is about having appropriate redundancies and the ability to use alternative routes – in line with the PACE method (Primary, Alternate, Contingency, Emergency). Trustworthy IT, secure supply chains, multi-provider ecosystems and open standards are key building blocks here.

SOFTWARE DEFINED DEFENCE: A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR THE BUNDESWEHR AND THE SECURITY AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY

Up to now, it regularly took years to develop, test and introduce a new system. In IT, on the other hand, development cycles tend to be measured in months or even weeks. Software Defined Defence (SDD) aims to harness the potential of software and its development for the Bundeswehr – moving away from a pure focus on 'rigid' platforms and systems towards software-focused capability development and networks. A central component of SDD is the use of modular, open architectures and standards. This makes it possible to develop modules or system components independently of each other and still integrate them seamlessly. This allows new capabilities to be added more quickly without long downtimes or the need to replace entire systems. However, modularity must not lead to arbitrariness, which is why stringent control is necessary.

By interlinking development, security and operation – in the spirit of DevSecOps – updates can be provided continuously. Security gaps can be closed more quickly and new functions can be integrated more rapidly.

For the Bundeswehr and industry, this means a cultural change. It is no longer a question of handing over a finished product after lengthy testing, but of working continuously with industry on its further development. Traditional client-contractor relationships are no longer sufficient for this. SDD requires thinking in terms of ecosystems – both on the part of the Bundeswehr and in industry. System houses and the 'classic' defence industry, start-ups, but also research must work more closely with the Bundeswehr in an eco-systems approach. One aspect of this is the development of infrastructures and platforms as 'software factory services' on which industry partners can develop solutions together with the Bundeswehr. Legacy weapon systems pose a particular challenge because they cannot simply be replaced. Solutions such as SDD gateways are needed here. Ideas for this have already been developed together with industry. These approaches still need to be tested, but the direction is clear: legacy systems must also become part of the SDD architecture. In addition to this work, further individual aspects have been worked on together with industry for several years, including a joint software development framework, the importance of AI and legal issues (liability, intellectual property, etc.). At the same time, work has also continued within the Bundeswehr. An approved SDD concept serves as a basis, for example, for Bundeswehr-wide working groups dealing with technical architecture, the adaptation of DevSecOps for the Bundeswehr, and the development of the SDD ecosystem. To ensure that SDD does not remain just a concept on paper but is gradually put into practice, initial measures have also been taken to create prototypes and carry out feasibility tests and experiments. The involvement of the ecosystem is essential for this.

CONCLUSION: COMBAT READINESS 2029+

Germany must act. Digital sovereignty, powerful structures, data as a strategic asset and a comprehensive ecosystem comprising the armed forces, industry and research form the basis for this. International cooperation ensures that Germany does not act in isolation, but as an active partner in NATO and the EU.

However, success does not depend solely on concepts and structures. It is crucial that politicians, the armed forces and industry actually deliver. With SDD, the armed forces have taken the right path. But SDD requires not only technology, but also the right mindset. 'Combat readiness also means being mentally and organisationally prepared,' emphasised Defence Minister Boris Pistorius.

If this paradigm shift can be consistently implemented, Germany has the opportunity not only to catch up, but also to set standards in defence innovation itself – and thus to secure its own sovereignty in the long term.

"RELIABLE RESILIENCE – CREDIBLE DETERRENCE" AS A DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL CHALLENGE

From an industrial perspective, reliable resilience and credible deterrence rest on three pillars: (1) sufficient budgetary means, (2) suitable regulatory frameworks at EU and national level, and (3) clear, aggregated and foreseeable demands, allowing the industry to scale up its capacities to a volume, where it can deliver on demand. When NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte expressed his wishes during the „Defence Industry Forum" on June 24th in The Hague, in front of industry representatives across European NATO countries, his statement culminated in a simple „deliver, deliver, deliver"! Let us be clear: once the three above-mentioned conditions are fulfilled, there will be no more reasons why the industry cannot deliver. Discussing the three pillars in more detail leads to the following picture:

> "Credible deterrence requires a massively increased output of defence material."
>
> **Dr Hans C. Atzpodien,**
> Managing Director of BDSV e.V.
> (Federation of German Security & Defence Industries)

Image: Illing&Vossbeck

SUFFICIENT BUDGETARY MEANS

Virtually all European NATO member states – except Spain – have promised to increase their defence budgets to an equivalent of 3.5 % of their GDP until 2035. In addition, they committed themselves to spending another 1.5 % on defence-related infrastructure. As a supporting initiative, the EU launched its „ReArm Europe"-programme, by mobilizing over € 800 billion for defence investments, leveraging national fiscal flexibilities and creating a new € 150 billion loan instrument (SAFE) for joint procurement. Germany itself issued a plan to increase its defence budget to € 153 billion by 2029, with the budget reaching € 86 billion in 2025 alone. This means that Germany will reach a defence-spending equivalent of more than 3 % of its projected GDP long before the NATO target. The aim, as expressed by the new federal government, is to provide the industry with better and long-term guidelines for investment planning. As the budgetary planning has to follow the rules of a yearly spending, proper planning requires quite a meticulous sequence of milestone payments, in order not to leave unused budget remains at the end of a fiscal year.

SUITABLE REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AT EU AND NATIONAL LEVEL

Regulatory „overhead" for the defence industrial framework in the EU has been piling up since the so-called defence package, known as regulation 2009/81/EC. The „Green Deal" added a lot more, for example the reporting directive SFDR 2019/2088/EU, not to mention the many regulations on environmental assessment (2011/92/EU). Since last year's publication of the „European Defence Industrial Strategy" (EDIS) and this year's „Joint White Paper on Defence Readiness 2030", it has become clear that acceleration of European armament will not work without „disarming" the regulatory framework. Therefore, the „Defence Readiness Omnibus" package, published by the Commission on June 17th 2025, together with a number of supporting draft documents, marks the true willingness to reduce respective hurdles and time-consuming obstacles the industry is currently facing when scaling up production capacities as rapidly as required. However, besides a very convincing description of the EU's overall threat perception, the documents are falling back behind the possible and envisaged regulatory content. For example: The supporting draft proposal for on the acceleration of permit-granting in the EU does not provide an exception for environmental assessments in case of plants for the production of military goods, but foresees only a more focused procedure with national points of contact. Another example refers to the SFDR-Directive. While the EU Commission recognizes the defence industry's contribution to meeting UN's sustainability goal no. 16, it has not yet provided the necessary legal framework to support this within the wording of SFDR itself. In other words: The EU proposals under the „Defence Readiness Omnibus" package are being wrapped with nice phrases regarding the EU's needs, but remain vague when it comes to bold facts. Consequently, national regulatory framework relaxations cannot be achieved, given the dependence of national law on EU regulations, which still lack the necessary clarity.

CLEAR, AGGREGATED AND FORESEEABLE DEMANDS

Finally and most importantly, the demands, which the industry must fulfil, should be aggregated among European buyers as much as possible. Only through aggregated demands can the industry know the extent to which it must scale up to provide the necessary output in time. Simultaneously, any available resources need to be utilized in order to achieve the required output. In Germany for example – despite willingness across our economy, and the availability of capacities, namely in the automotive sector, the incorporation these capacities into defence industrial supply chains remains difficult. Specific military permissions and certifications need to be obtained, which a company can only apply for in case of an order in hand.

Therefore, many well-structured efforts on the side of the industry, but also on the side of public procurement, are required, in order to realise an optimized output.

CAPABLE EUROPEAN INDUSTRY

Credible deterrence – to be reached at the latest by 2029 – requires, among other things, a massively increased output of defence material. The European industry is able to produce as required by our armed forces, and we as trusted partners are more than willing to go „the extra mile"!

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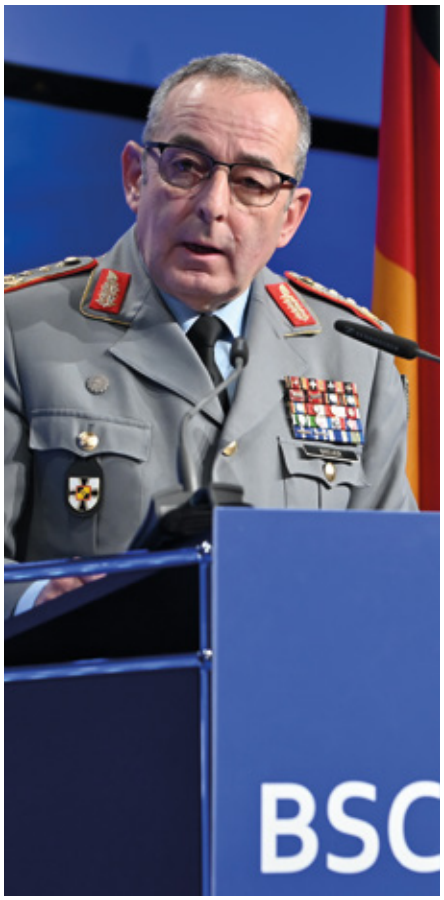
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