

# The NATO 'new strategic concept' or American-German partnership

by George Gregory

Irony is the art of not saying what you mean; diplomats never say what they mean, but diplomats are never ironic.

— Soren Kierkegaard

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. The reason why most people believe NATO was created, the Soviet Union, ceased to exist not quite ten years ago. So, NATO's existence, its tasks, and its future, provide much to talk about and much to decide. The German-Atlantic Society teamed up with the Academy for Political Education, in Tutzing, just south of Munich on March 5-7, to sponsor a conference on these and related subjects. Conference participants ranged from American Ambassador to Germany John Kornblum and other U.S. diplomatic representatives, to a broad spectrum of German national as well as high-ranking NATO military officers, German parliamentary and government defense officials, and diplomatic and academic representatives from many eastern European countries, the Baltic nations, and Russia.

This conference occurred, thus, amidst a spate of semi-public and public events and institutional military and political backroom wrangling, which is supposed to be consummated with a "New Strategic Concept" for NATO at the Washington, D.C. NATO summit in April. Kornblum's remarks, as well as those made from the podium and privately by German participants at this conference, reflect the fact that there is neither consensus nor coherence *within* the American policy thrust at this time on the "New Strategic Concept," nor within the most NATO-ized European member, Germany. There was much more common ground between Ambassador Kornblum and the Germans than between either of them and the new Cold/Hot War schemes of the U.S. State Department, the Department of Defense, and the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Henry H. Shelton. That uneasy situation created some slippery diplomatic ice for Ambassador Kornblum to tread, while the German side was cautious but outspoken in drawing the line which they will not cross in a so-called "New NATO."

It bears noting at the outset, that the conference reflected a refreshing and hardened maturity and honesty achieved in the American-German partnership, which is not identical to "NATO," since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A leading

German parliamentarian (in an officially unattributable remark) stated, for example, that Germany would not *need* NATO for its defense, because America would enter bilateral defense-treaty obligations, if necessary, at the drop of a hat. That remark implies that Germany and America can very well have a partnership based upon shared principles, but if a "New NATO" is used to tie Germany into a policy which is against any principle of partnership, Germany would draw the line. Since Germany has been reunified and the country is now formally sovereign, one would think German representatives would openly state what such a remark implies, but that debate is still simmering beneath the diplomatic veneer.

NATO previously provided Europe with security against the Soviet and Warsaw Pact threat, it provided Germany with "security *in* Europe, and it provided Europe security *from* Germany," as the Social Democratic Parliamentary State Secretary in the German Ministry of Defense, Brigitte Schulte, put it. With that remark, Schulte was, again, only implicitly, identifying the policy known as "integrate and constrain Germany," which was applied following the reunification of Germany by the Thatcher, Bush, and Mitterrand governments to assure both that Germany would not employ its economic and technological potential to reconstruct the formerly communist economies in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and also to assure that Germany would go along with the "shock therapy" policy of reducing Russia to the status of a criminalized economy which does little more than export cheap raw materials. Citing the late Manfred Woerner, former German Defense Minister and NATO Secretary General, Schulte also noted that "the greatest merit of the North Atlantic alliance is that it put an end to the evil of European power politics."

That formula still expresses wishful thinking, but such a superlative, "the greatest merit," also betrays Germany's hope that NATO will protect it against the evils of European power politics.

## American-German realities

The Tutzing conference provided a backdrop for what seems to have been a well-orchestrated demonstration of a German-American initiative to support the current efforts of the Primakov government in Russia to stabilize the economy and kick the engines of growth and production back into gear. That happened as follows.



*A U.S. F-15E Strike Eagle approaches the refueling boom of a tanker aircraft during a patrol over Northern Iraq on Jan. 12, 1999. The idea of a “new strategic concept” that would expand NATO’s mission to include out-of-area deployments, in areas such as Iraq, is meeting considerable resistance in Europe—and not only there.*

Ambassador Kornblum’s remarks differed significantly from the thrust of U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen’s remarks at the annual Wehrkunde Conference, in Munich on Feb. 5-7 (see *EIR*, Feb. 26, pp. 38-40). Cohen had claimed that the “old thinking,” i.e., the Soviet-era imperial policies, still dominate today in Russia, which is understood in Germany to imply that the West as a whole must continue to strangle the Russian economy, as if such a policy would provide security and stability in Europe or beyond. Ambassador Kornblum, by contrast, said in his keynote speech (this author’s unofficial translation): “Now we have a new paradigm. The external security shield supported by the United States is no longer relevant for the challenges we face today. . . . Today, the establishment of security means the consolidation of democracy in Central and East Europe,” which is inconceivable if the economies of Russia, other Commonwealth of Independent States members, and eastern European countries continue to collapse into chaos.

The Ambassador added, “It means cooperation in the pursuit of solutions to a possible worldwide financial crisis. And perhaps the greatest irony is that the threat from Russia is more one of weakness and economic instability than that of military confrontation.”

Kornblum did not, of course, say explicitly that he disagrees with Defense Secretary Cohen, and he left it up to the conference participants to see the difference between his emphasis on economic stability and Cohen’s stance of belligerence.

Kornblum also neglected to say explicitly that his remarks imply a completely different economic policy toward Russia and eastern Europe.

Kornblum did not expand upon these remarks before leaving the conference at the end of the first evening’s session, nor were his remarks discussed later in the conference. Instead, part of the specific sense of the Ambassador’s remarks emerged the next day. During the panel on the eastward expansion of NATO, a former high-ranking German NATO officer, who now works for Deutsche Bank, reported that Deutsche Bank had conducted a seminar just that week with German firms which have extended considerable volumes of advance financing money to Russian firms and projects in the past. The officer did not report in any detail on the content of the seminar, but he did say that the big question for the German firms was whether additional advance financing *now* would suffer the same fate as in the past, i.e., disappearing down a great black hole of corruption, and then onto the foreign bank accounts of officials who (under the Chernomyrdin government, in particular) were indistinguishable from the mafia.

The report on the Deutsche Bank-led seminar and the concerns of German firms was met with nods of acknowledgment, rather than indignation or embarrassment, on the part of Prof. Igor Maximychev, the head of the Europe Institute for the Russian Academy of Sciences, who was one of the podium participants in that conference panel.

There has been no fanfare in the German or other media over the fact that German industry has extended some 2-300 billion deutschemarks, and possibly more, for specific projects with Russian firms, which is all money hopelessly lost into the sewers of International Monetary Fund (IMF) “shock therapy” and “free-market” corruption in Russia. German firms have frozen their advance financing flows, but now a shift of policy is occurring. Even under healthy conditions, German firms would not commit their own resources to such projects without the backup of the financial resources of the *formerly*—and perhaps once again—industrially oriented German banking system. And the German banks would not commit their resources if the Bonn government did not itself provide the political support for it, and that means to de facto declare to the relevant institutions that it is government policy that the Russian economy get back on a healthy footing as soon as possible. The German government, in turn, could not have that sort of policy unless it had American support for breaking with the IMF punitive agenda against Russia, and, thus, to break away from what Germans call “the Kissinger strategy”: drive the Russians down and keep them down so that they are never again able to exert their supposedly nationally incurable tendency toward empire.

To those in Germany who are familiar with the “Kissinger strategy,” Kornblum’s remarks were a clear signal that *this Ambassador* does not hold to that strategy. It is also known that President Clinton does not hold to that strategy. What leading Germans did not know is whether the difference in strategy would ever have any practical effect.

The problem is that no one, neither the U.S. government, nor its Ambassador to Germany, nor the German government, is articulating a shift of economic policy.

Given the way that NATO, as well as international financial institutions work, neither would currently be a forum for discussing or implementing such a turn, and a *turn* it is. Germany and America can obviously agree on important matters, which NATO, the Group of Seven, or the IMF could not agree on, if they were asked at this point. It is, however, a turn thus far only in the sense of byzantine “crisis management,” which means it is a necessary move at this time to tell Russia that it is neither American nor German policy to drive Russia over the brink into chaos. But, it is not yet an active policy to create a real foundation for peace.

### **What is ‘NATO’ all about?**

Kornblum’s keynote touched upon other issues which are directly relevant to the “New Strategic Concept” of NATO, and several strong “Americanisms” did ruffle the feathers of quite a few of the participants. Speaking in German, he said, “It is correct that America is the most dominant power in the world. It is also correct that only we have a unified conception of our goals, the military strength and the familiarity with the role of leading to be able to tackle the broad spectrum of security policy challenges in the world as a whole.”

To some, these remarks seemed quite in line with a completely different “New NATO,” in which the world order would be a geopolitical *Pax Britannica-Americana-Canadense* with “NATO” as the logistical base in tow. That line was reflected in the speech of General Shelton at the “NATO at 50” conference of the Royal United Services Institute in London on March 8 (see *EIR*, March 19, pp. 35-37, 47-48). However, Kornblum continued, immediately following the remarks just cited, “But these facts can be deceptive. The United States does not want to be designated the fire-brigade or police chief of the world. We are not a nation with an imperial past. The maintenance of a complex balance of power is not part of our national character. In order to obtain the support of the public for our role and to be able to employ our power successfully, we need common goals and partners. Power alone is not the answer. Power must be supported by a feeling for the direction of the goals and especially by a community of like-minded nations. . . . The guarantee of a feeling of security today requires the creation of a complex matrix of values, economic stability, and military defense.”

Conference participants noted that Kornblum did not say that America had “won the Cold War,” but rather that the Cold War had ended. The difference between the two diplomatic formulas is that, if America had “won the Cold War,” then all of world politics is determined by America as the sole remaining superpower, which decides to brand non-conforming nations as “rogue nations,” against which the superpower can do what it wants, without having to fear effective opposition from any other power. If America had “won the Cold War,” it would not need public support for its policies, nor would it need other nations as partners. Germans and all Europeans are familiar with that formula from the days of George Bush’s sermons on “the new world order.”

Kornblum also said that one of the issues of security was how to deal with heads of state such as Iraqi President Saddam Hussein or Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic, “who simply do not hold to the rules of international humanitarian law,” but he did not once use the term “rogue nation.” When he spoke of “expansion,” Kornblum said he supported the “expansion strategy of NATO and the European Union,” and then departed from his text to cite President Clinton. “European integration is not, as President Clinton understands it, the equivalent of the expansion of NATO,” he said.

Reading between the lines of diplomatic jargon, Kornblum in effect encouraged the Germans present to wage the debate on the “New NATO” much more sharply. “Too much dependence” of Germany on the United States, he said, “does not make for good feelings.” A real German-American partnership will require that the sense, very prevalent in Germany, that Germany often huddles close by American apron strings, has to be overcome. A “security community” cannot take shape if Germany takes no responsibility for deciding what is right and what is wrong with the policies the partnership is supposed to implement.

Kornblum spoke of the “partnership” between the United States and Germany, but not about NATO in this connection.

Schulte presented a second keynote address, which answered the American Ambassador, without hanging onto his apron strings. To the contrary. Following a spirited account of the dramatic history of NATO, Schulte worked a number of remarks into her own keynote, which stung the ears of many.

First of all, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary will soon be full members of NATO. Schulte emphasized that this is only possible “in a cooperative climate with Russia.” That “cooperative climate” is contrary to expanding NATO in order to counter a presumed imperial Russian thrust, but Schulte apparently thought such an explicit remark was superfluous.

That “cooperative climate” would, of course, be little more than a diplomatic formula or wishful thinking, were it not for concrete steps, such as helping to reconstruct the economic basis for Russian political and social stability.

Schulte salted the diplomacy with the following remark: Without any conditional “if . . . then,” she said, “The alliance stands for common security and common values. The notion of ‘defense’ of *interests* is, therefore, not entirely unproblematic, because it opens the character of the alliance, in terms of its aims and also its regional extension, into indeterminate dimensions.” “Out of area” military operations, either with NATO components or with the utilization of NATO European-based logistics and infrastructure, would then implicitly obtain no consensus-agreement with Germany, if NATO is merely the institutional cover for the pursuit of arbitrarily defined “interests.”

That “indeterminate dimension” explicitly concerns the so-called “out of area deployments. Schulte obliquely remarked that Germany has no conceivable military missions in Asia or Africa: “These areas need economic development,” she said.

German NATO officers commented privately that there are also “interests” being pursued without a policy ever being formulated, and so, no one is ever asked to agree on the legitimacy of the interests or the non-existent policy. U.S. policy in Iraq has been to “bomb now, think later,” or even “keep bombing to avoid having to think.” The Germans or other U.S. allies have no choice but to conclude that the United States is “defending its own interests,” whatever they might be, and not any common aims or values. Or, as Schulte, departing from her written text, said, “Whether to bomb or not to bomb in Iraq cannot, for Pete’s sake, be reduced to an issue of the *date* on which to bomb.” Furthermore, she stated, whatever movement there has been toward solving the crisis in Kosova has depended “quite decisively on the constructive cooperation of Russia.”

Kornblum answered these and other remarks from the floor. The U.S.-British attacks on Iraq were correct, he said, but the decision to proceed was made out of impatience. “Our leadership said it would do no good to consult [with NATO allies], and that bothers me.” But, said Kornblum, apparently

shifting his attention from Iraq to the Balkans, “the Europeans” have a habit of continuing to want “political solutions” under conditions when politics is impossible, and the United States feels it has to act. “The Europeans” think they have “diplomatic wisdom,” and that their job is to restrain the United States “from military adventures.” “Not only is it not true; it doesn’t work!” said Kornblum.

In fact, before, during, and following the Dayton peace accord on Bosnia, President Clinton’s hands were tied by British and French obstruction and sabotage, so, implicitly, the blunders of U.S. policy cannot be taken as establishing the “wisdom” of European so-called diplomacy.

The new evolution of the Atlantic Alliance is causing shifts in the meaning of many old and familiar terms. “NATO” has forces in the Balkans, ostensibly for peacekeeping purposes, along with the United Nations, but “NATO” is also “the Europeans” to which Kornblum referred, and “the Germans” have to decide whether they are “the Europeans,” referred to at this conference as a “chicken coop full of cackling hens,” or whether they have a policy, which they can articulate and responsibly carry out.

### **More NATO expansion?**

Prof. Igor Maximychev led off the discussion on the expansion of NATO. He was answered first by Gen. Wolfgang Altenburg (ret.), former Inspector General of the German Bundeswehr and Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. Prof. Zenonas Namavicius, Ambassador to Germany from the Republic of Lithuania, and Ewald von Kleist, formerly the organizer and master of ceremonies of the annual Wehrkunde Conference in Munich, were also on this panel.

The issue of NATO’s eastern expansion will not be over and done with when Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have full-member status. Other countries of the former “East bloc” have also applied for membership, and the question is, indeed, “Where does NATO stop, and what is it for?”

Professor Maximychev painted a drastic picture. NATO and the United States see themselves as victors of the Cold War, he said, and where there are victors, there are losers. The former U.S.S.R. and Russia are seen as identical, so Russia is the loser of the Cold War. The reality behind this view of the world, Maximychev claimed, is that the United States and NATO want to enforce their will as law, a “*Pax Americana*.” He raised the question of whether Europe were not returning to conditions such as those prior to 1914. There are no set limits to NATO’s expansion, which is sold as protection against Russian imperialism. Russia is not anti-Western, he said, but Russia refuses to be treated as a defeated country.

Professor Maximychev then shifted his focus to future tasks, as he sees the Russian view of these tasks. Russia, he said, will soon overcome its economic problems, and this will be done pragmatically along the lines outlined by the

Primakov government. "With a minimum of support, Russia will stabilize by the year 2002," he stated optimistically, "and then there will be neither an explosion, nor an implosion in Russia which could represent any danger to Europe."

Maximychev said that, in his view, "the West" is not at all enthusiastic over the prospects for stabilization in Russia, but Russian policy is aimed at a "common house of Europe." He praised German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, and said that there was no fissure in Russian-German policy with the transition from the Kohl government. "Russian policy aims at the development of all of Europe," he said.

General Altenburg responded that "we want our economic cooperation to be the foundation of partnership." He had been initially critical of NATO's taking in new members, Altenburg said, but NATO could not deny the sovereign wishes of independent nations. He would, however, think long and hard, he said, about taking in additional members, and particularly ones from the CIS states.

Europe without Russia, he said, is inconceivable. Altenburg picked up a remark which Maximychev had made, but which is highly ambiguous in German: "*Rußland hat nichts in Europa verloren*," by which he meant that Russia was not a "loser" in Europe. To say that "Russia has lost nothing in Europe" means, in German, that Russia wants nothing to do with Europe. Altenburg humorously noted that Professor Maximychev did not mean it that way.

Economic chaos or survival became the paramount issue of discussion again. As Ambassador Namavicius said, Lithuania has also applied for membership in NATO, and hopes for a positive answer. There are two primary issues involved: The first is simply a matter of principle, that a sovereign and independent country has the right to its own foreign and security policy; the second is that Lithuania does fear that, with the economic chaos in Russia, Russian military garrisons in the vicinity of Lithuania might one day decide to cross the border in search of bread to eat, "and who can assure us that it won't happen?" Professor Namavicius asked.

No one, of course, can give such an assurance. Professor Maximychev conceded that point. But it is questionable whether Lithuania, as a NATO member-state, would have such an assurance.

Lithuania's predicament highlights the conditions under which former "East bloc" countries made application for membership in NATO: Once freed of the Soviet Union, they wanted to belong to the "winning" side of the Cold War, and they wanted a military alliance with the winners, because they expected it would accelerate their integration into a supposedly prosperous Western economic system. Under current conditions, little more remains of the wishes of these sovereign states than the matter of principle, that, as sovereign states, they ought to have the right to join whatever alliance they wish, and there is only one alliance left, i.e., NATO.

Perhaps Ewald von Kleist's contribution to this debate was most thoughtful, because he did not analyze or discuss

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"others," but the tasks of German policy and what understanding is required of German policy. Von Kleist was introduced as a "critic" of NATO's eastward expansion, so some of his radical formulations were expected.

NATO, he said, has been the most successful alliance of all time, because it had ended a war, but not as its victor. Bolshevism collapsed in that war, not Russia. But Germany deceived itself: The confrontation was over, so now the agenda would move onward to cooperation, "or so we said," von Kleist remarked, since everyone knows how thin the cooperation has been. "We have to continue the cooperation and not let ourselves slide into a contrary role," he said.

Even Russia, said von Kleist, accepts the rights of sovereign states to conclude alliances as they wish, "unless reality creates problems." Russia will not be a threat, he said, "but if a red line is crossed, they will rethink their position. For us, a tilt even slightly in the direction of a new Cold War is highly precarious."

General Altenburg and von Kleist may be said to represent the older generation of the German military-political establishment. The Tutzing conference indicates that no consensus on a "globalized NATO," or a "rogue-state bounty-hunter" NATO is to be had with Germany, either with the old guard, or with the Atlantic Alliance-oriented Social Democrats.