

## Ready for War?

### Military and Civilian Security Provision in the Federal Republic of Germany and NATO in the 1980s

Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea in 2014 led to a refocusing of the Bundeswehr on national and alliance defence (Landes- und Bündnisverteidigung; short: LV/BV). In contrast, international crisis management, which had taken centre stage from 1992/93 until the withdrawal from Afghanistan, receded into the background. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has acted as a catalyst for this development in military matters and also triggered fundamental political and public debates on compulsory military service and other issues of general security interest in the Federal Republic of Germany.

This rethinking and the resulting discussions in politics, society and the Bundeswehr led to the historically underpinned question of how the state and its armed forces in an alliance should ideally prepare for a defensive war. 'State of tension' and 'state of defence', LV/BV, General Defence Plan, territorial defence, costs for security, overall defence, nuclear sharing and critical infrastructure: these buzzwords have dominated the specialist debates ever since and suggest comparisons with the Cold War era and the East-West bloc confrontation. Although Germany today - unlike in the pre-1990 era - is not a 'frontline state' but is considered now as a logistical 'hub', the defence of Europe is once again a combined task for the NATO states and their armed forces deployed in Europe.

Historical research has clearly identified the broad lines of the Cold War. What remains unclear, however, is which 'expanded concept of security' (Christopher Daase) and which understanding of military and civilian security provision the state actors of the time followed. There has also been little research into how this security provision was conceptually designed and organisationally implemented in the individual states and in the supranational alliances - which could allow conclusions to be drawn about the actors' motives.

Historical studies on the security concepts of individual states are also scant because the 'search for security' (Eckart Conze) has often failed to include the state's security provision with its military and civilian aspects as well as the civil-military interdependence: In

historiographical debates on the 'concept and understanding of security' of states and societies, military aspects were often subordinated to the non-defence-related perspective. Concrete preventive measures of national civil and military security have largely not been analysed in such discussions or have been left largely to (military) journals. As a result of these methodological-theoretical presuppositions, the multitude of actors involved in the security provision has lacked serious consideration, as have the mechanisms that ensured state and military action in the East-West conflict.

With current military and political developments in mind, the Bundeswehr Centre for Military History and Social Sciences (Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr, ZMSBw) is taking these gaps in historical research as an opportunity to discuss important dimensions of military and civilian defence provision at state and intergovernmental level during the Cold War at its 64th International Conference on Military History (Internationale Tagung für Militärgeschichte, ITMG). The focus will be on the period between the NATO Double-Track Decision in 1979 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, as this era offers numerous points of reference for current debates.

**The conference will focus on the following key questions:**

1. How did the various NATO forces in the Federal Republic of Germany prepare for the 'defence in a time of war' ('V-Fall')?
2. What role did military and civilian ideas, plans and doctrines play in defence planning?
3. Which national and international legal bases existed for this?
4. What were the concepts of (civil-military) overall defence in the Federal Republic and how were they implemented?
5. Which actors were involved and how were they orchestrated on a national level?
6. How was 'general defence' perceived, discussed and presented in the media by the German public, not least of all in the peace movement and the cultural scene?
7. How did the other 'NATO frontline states' Norway, Turkey and Greece and 'hub states' such as Belgium, Great Britain and France organise their defence planning?
8. Which alternative security and defence concepts existed in neutral states such as Finland, Austria and Switzerland?

9. How did non-European states with ties to the West (e.g. Israel and South Korea) perceive European defence plans and did they at least partly adapt to them?

10. Were there any concepts for 'overall defence' in the states of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation in the 1980s and what kind of concepts were they?

### **Organisational matters**

Please send your proposal for a paper or a panel to the contact address below by **30 April 2025**. The proposal should include a 1-2 page abstract in German or English and a CV with a short list of publications.

The conference will take place from 5 to 7 November 2025 in Dresden.

Conference languages are German and English. Simultaneous translation will not be available.

The ZMSBw will cover the speakers' travel and accommodation costs in accordance with the German Federal Travel Expenses Act.

Organisers: Dr Heiner Möllers and Dr Peter Lieb

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