

Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC)

**A new era after the fall of the Berlin Wall:
Challenges for Germany's foreign policy**
Amb. Klaus-Peter Brandes



Med Agenda — New Series

MEDAC Publications in Mediterranean IR and Diplomacy

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About the author

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1977-1978 Economic Advisor, City of Frankfurt/Main
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1993-1996 Deputy Head of Mission, German Embassy, Harare/Zimbabwe
1996-1997 Deputy Head of Division, Public Relations Federal Foreign Office, Bonn
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1999-2001 Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Brunei Darussalam
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“A new era after the fall of the Berlin Wall: Challenges for Germany’s foreign policy”

by Klaus-Peter BRANDES

**Ambassador of the Federal
Republic of Germany to Malta**

Annual Ambassadorial Lecture
Valletta, 17th March 2015

I am delighted to have the opportunity to meet MEDAC Alumni in the context of MEDAC Alumni Association annual meeting, and to make some remarks about Germany’s foreign policy and its challenges 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In this presentation I will talk about six points, namely:

1. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the window of opportunity
2. The search for a new order
3. Internal debate and external expectations
4. Germany’s new role in the world
5. Three priorities for Germany
6. A Fresh Look at Foreign Policy: Crisis, Order, Europe

1. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the window of opportunity

The fall of the Berlin Wall certainly is one of the most important events in Germany’s and Europe’s recent history. As surprising and breathtaking this day of November 9, 1989,

was – when history was made -, today one can say it was only part of major political developments, the consequences of which we are still dealing with in our time. In a way, it started with the founding of the Solidarnosc Trade Union in Poland in 1980. This movement was held back through oppression for a couple of years, but finally it was possible to hold elections in Poland in June 1989. The Soviet Bloc had started to crumble. Also in June 1989, the Hungarian Foreign Minister Gyula Horn together with his Austrian colleague opened the border between their two countries by cutting a piece of barbed wire thus lifting the “Iron Curtain” which separated the two halves of Europe. A wave of Germans fleeing East Germany followed. And in November 1989: the fall of the Wall. The Soviet Union as a political structure collapsed. Kazakhstan declared its independence in December 1991, the last Soviet republic to leave the former Soviet Union. Only 2 years and the old world order had gone. For Germany, it was the window of opportunity to realize its unity. At the same time it was the opportunity for the unification of Europe – a window which was not to be open for a long period of time.

One thesis many political analysts are sharing is that the then leader of the Soviet Union, Michael Gorbatshev, was at that crucial moment in world politics internally strong enough to pursue his policy of “Glasnost”, which means transparency and openness and “Perestroika” which means restructuring and modernisation. Gorbatshev, who had taken over as Secretary-General of the Soviet Union in 1985 continued to hold a position strong enough within the Communist Party. However, the external position of the Soviet Union was already pretty weak, mainly because of a continued deterioration of its economic system. The Soviet Union had to let all these changes happen and the different countries gained their respective independence. East and West of Europe were unified. That is why I call

it the “window of opportunity”. Michael Gorbatshev received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990 for his reform-oriented policy and for his handling of all these conflicts in an altogether relatively peaceful manner.

Why look back in history for 25 years?

Because today this “window of opportunity” is closed again. Between then and now, the world order has changed dramatically and closing the window. The events of November 9th, 1989 made these changes more than obvious. In fact, the fall of the Wall marked the start of a new era for the world as a whole.

2. The search for a new world order

The world’s old bipolar order – the decades long division into East and West with its cynical certainties – disappeared on that day. The old order has been overcome! But the world has yet to find a new one. After the wall came down, some people thought the West’s unipolar moment had come – the “end of history” – the inexorable spread of freedom and democracy around the globe. Others saw the dawn of a multipolar age, with new players from Asia and Latin America all gathered around a single table on the international stage. But I fear the world of today is neither multipolar nor unipolar. It is non-polar. It is a world in search of a new order. And this search doesn’t resemble a calm academic debate. It is a struggle for influence and dominance, combined with ethnic and religious conflicts, which has erupted in a perilous number of crisis. I cannot remember in my diplomatic career such a barrage of international crisis, in so many different locations around the world, of so many different kinds, and all

at the same time. It seems as if the world is falling apart. This metaphor “the world is falling apart” stands, in my opinion, for two major trends that lie behind the individual crisis.

The first trend is the continuation of crisis, something which is not going to change any time soon. Far from it. We will have to get used to crisis being the new normality. And I fear that this is not happening inspite of globalisation but because of globalisation. For, in an interconnected world, dangers and conflicts are no more bound by national borders than our imports, exports and capital flows. The second trend I am thinking of is this: The more the world “falls apart”, the more clearly we get to see the existing cracks and divides. In other words, the more public awareness is heightened by international crisis, the more we focus on the differences between states, peoples and cultures.

This can be observed in almost all current crisis: the Ukraine conflict is reviving longforgotten differences and reflexes from the days of the East-West confrontation. The barbarity and terror spread by ISIS is an extreme manifestation of fundamental religious conflict.

Unfortunately, the upsurge in differences is also to be seen in public debates. Just take the Arab Spring, Libya and Syria for example – three conflicts of widely different origins. They are not simple black and white stories. We should know well that when analyzing conflicts, it is the varying shades of grey that dominate. That “good” and “evil” are inappropriate categories in most cases because they do not give the whole picture. Perhaps, we are now sensing more clearly than before one particular consequence of globalization that we have long underestimated: The outside world which is coming ever closer seems more alien and dangerous to many people than we thought.

“The world is getting smaller” – for a long time that augured well, but it now sounds like a threat to many Germans safe at home.

3. Internal debate and external expectations

The expectation that Germany will play an active role is something my Government encounters every day. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Germany we just finished a review of our foreign policy. I will make some remarks about it in a few moments. Now, I would just like to quote one of the members of a large group of international experts who was asked during this review to formulate their expectations of German foreign policy. This expert said: “Germany should lead Europe, should lead the world. It should Europeanize Russia and multilateralize the United States of America”. Not much to ask really! And do you know who said this? It was not a Frenchman or an American, it was an Indian professor.

And what is the view from the other side, from Germany itself? In a recent poll, the German public was asked whether Germany should play a more active role internationally than it had done to date. “Yes”, said 38%. “No, do less”, said 60%.

Such is the divide between external expectations and domestic willingness with which German diplomacy is faced. To be honest, if I was an engineer, I would in good face not try to bridge such a gap. But as diplomats we have no other choice!

Germany is engaged in an in-depth and intense public debate on Germany's role in the world. This debate has started more or less a year ago when the German Federal President advocated the need to take over more responsibility on a

worldwide scale. Indeed, nowadays, we seldom see far-conflicts which have nothing to do with us. Therefore, the crucial question is not whether we should engage but in fact “where” and “how”. Germany’s answer is: Yes to shouldering more responsibility but not arbitrarily – rather in a manner which is forward looking and persistent; pro-active without being over-confident of our possibilities and always embedded in Europe and the international community.

Above all, we must renounce simple black and white depictions and catch-phrase responses, which sometimes make public declarations easier but make it harder to achieve solutions. Be it state of failure, civil war, conflicts with religious overtones or conflicts arising from the consequences of the era of bloc confrontation, the array is not only very extensive but extremely diverse, and each matter demands a bespoke approach to finding a solution. It makes me sceptical if we only ever come up with simple or the same answers to very diverse and entirely complex conflicts. It sometimes reminds me of what Paul Watzlawick warned us about years ago: “If your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.” However, in the sphere of foreign policy we are not only dealing with nails and, thus, we require more and at times different tools.

The general attitude of the German public reflects in a way the comfortable experience Germans made in the period after World War II and until the fall of the Wall, especially in the West of Germany. After having gained full sovereignty only in 1991, with the ratification of the 2+4 negotiation results, it took a while until Germany had accepted its new role. Now, Germany is back in demand when it comes to foreign policy.

“A new era after the fall of the Berlin Wall: Challenges for Germany’s foreign policy”



MAA Ambassadorial lecture 2015 delivered by H.E. Amb. Klaus-Peter Brandes, Ambassador of Germany to Malta (centre). Dr. Omar Grech, Co-ordinator of the Human Dimension Programme and Lecturer in International Law, and Ms. Suzanne Gili, President of MEDAC Alumni Association moderated the session.



Ambassador Brandes highlighting the German MFA publication referred to in the text, section 6: ‘A Fresh Look at Foreign Policy: Crisis, Order, Europe’.



A panoramic view of the MEDAC Alumni Seminar with HE Amb. Klaus-Peter Brandes.



MEDAC Alumni Association Annual Lecture family photo 2015. (L to R seated) Dr. Monika Wohlfeld, Holder of the German Chair in Peace Studies and Conflict Prevention, Prof. Stephen Calleya, MEDAC Director, Ms. Suzanne Gili, President of MEDAC Alumni Assoc., Amb. Klaus-Peter Brandes, Dr. Omar Grech, MEDAC lecturer, Ms. Nadine A. Swai, MAA Committee, Lourdes Pullicino, MEDAC Lecturer, and Dr. Derek Lutterback, MEDAC Deputy Director.

“A new era after the fall of the Berlin Wall: Challenges for Germany’s foreign policy”



H.E. Amb. Klaus-Peter Brandes, Ambassador of Germany to Malta delivering MAA Ambassadorial lecture 2015.



Amb. Klaus-Peter Brandes (third from left) with MEDAC students.

4. Germany's new role in the world

On the other hand, I wonder if it is really a good sign for the state of the world, when foreign policy, not specifically Germany's foreign policy, is in high demand. The state of world affairs is indeed concerning. Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Islamist Terrorism, Ukraine, East-Congo, Gaza, Ebola, Central African Republic, hybrid warfare – these are the key problems we are dealing with these days. The question of war and peace has returned to the European continent, too. Under such circumstances, states which have the capacity to help cannot hold back or watch from the sidelines, when solutions are urgently sought after.

For decades, until that fateful day of November 1989, Germany was on the frontlines of the Cold War. West Germany lived in the shadow of the Wall under the protective mantle of the western alliance, in particular the United States of America. We were a partner with equal rights but without equal duties. Then, the Wall fell, and we have since become a new country: reunified, economically strong, firmly anchored in Europe, peaceful and respected in the world. This story is a success story. We are allowed to revel in it, but we must also see what made it possible: The free, peaceful, rule-based world order. And because of that, a country like Germany which has benefitted more than most from this international order must also contribute more than most to safeguarding it.

Germany is more interconnected in and with the world than almost any other country, according to a study conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute. Connected not just by flows of goods and capital and services, but also in terms of data flows

online and through human migration. Few people are aware that the percentage of Germany's population born abroad is already higher than the equivalent figure in the United States of America, the immigration country par excellence.

And once you have accepted that, you have to take the next step: As the most interconnected country in the world, we are reliant on the existence of a peaceful, rule-based international order and have to work to insure it is maintained! Not just in Europe, but worldwide – for example through reform of the United Nations. Germany's security and prosperity depend on predictable circumstances far beyond our borders. That is why Germany takes part in crisis management, actively raises its voice and brings its influence to bear to insure respect for and the renewal of the world order.

5. Three priorities for Germany

I would like to note just three concrete priorities:

Firstly, Germany will help to strengthen multilateral institutions. First and foremost within the framework of the European Union, and then, within the Transatlantic Alliance – at the last NATO summit in Wales in September 2014, we demonstrated that we can respond in a united manner. Investing in international order also entails shouldering more responsibility within and for the United Nations, which for all its imperfections remains a valuable and indispensable organisation.

Secondly, Germany will further develop its engagement and toolbox for overcoming crisis and conflicts. This applies to the entire crisis cycle – from prevention to mediation and crisis

management to post-conflict recovery. We are also reviewing how we can expand our engagement for peacekeeping within the framework of United Nations.

Thirdly, Germany has a particular responsibility for Europe's security. That means that we must think beyond the current conflict in eastern Ukraine. What I mean is that if we are able to de-escalate and resolve these critical conflicts, how do we then want to re-incorporate Russia into an European security architecture after trust has been lost. Germany is convinced that only a de-escalation of the Ukraine conflict and the avoidance of fresh antagonism of East and West will help strengthen the international order. It is only by overcoming this conflict that the United Nations will once again be bolstered and fully capable of carrying out its key task of securing peace in all parts of the world, as well as of restoring the Security Council's ability to act and take decisions. That is the wider context behind why we must neither resign ourselves to, nor willingly accept, the logic of confrontation and opposition.

Shouldering foreign policy responsibility does not mean taking the same action everywhere. What is right when dealing with conflicts in the Middle East can be wrong elsewhere. Thus, yes, in dealing with IS diplomacy is of no use, we must fight back against them. Germany will continue to tackle issues like this face-on! However, we will also continue to assess what the effects and the answers will be on concrete conflicts: Whether they bring us closer to or take us further from solutions. Indeed, a one-size-fits-all-approach does not work in foreign policy.

6. A Fresh Look at Foreign Policy: Crisis, Order, Europe

About a year ago, after the now German Foreign Minister Steinmeier had taken over his position – for a second time in his career – a process was launched called “Review 2014 – A fresh look at foreign policy” by posing two deliberately provocative questions to experts in Germany and abroad: What, if anything, is wrong with German foreign policy? What needs to be changed?

I shall not try to summarize the 50 pages strong document, but just name the main three results. These are the topics Crisis, Order, Europe. The findings of this review process have already led to changes in the structural set-up of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

In our subjective perception, crisis is becoming a permanent condition. Crisis is not an exception to the rule within globalisation: it is a permanent epiphenomenon, sometimes even a product of globalisation. Defusing crises early enough and countering them through a balancing of interests, mediation and prevention before the only option left for us is damage control, needs to be one of the key interests and concerns of German foreign policy.

This is why a new Directorate was created in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs entitled “Crisis-Prevention, Stabilization and Post-Conflict-Rehabilitation”. The second new Directorate will deal with the international order, United Nations and disarmament. As foreign policy cannot look only to crises it must also look at the long-term and face the more arduous tasks. I have talked about the connectivity of Germany and the need for a rule-based order.

Working on behalf of a just and peaceful international order that is lasting and resilient even in the face of dynamic changes, and that can offer responses to the great issues of the future, from climate change to eradicating poverty, is in the ultimate interest of German foreign policy.

And finally, Europe: European integration remains the foundation of all German foreign policy. Yet here too the challenges have changed, and we must translate our old certainties into new answers. We must enable Europe to benefit from our strength, for we benefit from Europe's strength. Germany as the strongest country must invest in this Europe, for we are only strong through Europe. A positive and productive role for Germany in international politics exists only in and through Europe.

In conclusion:

German Foreign Policy wants to orient its structures and processes more consistently towards the major challenges of crisis, order and Europe. If the reader is interested in this review process, its methods, the interaction with the public, the participation of experts and of course involvement of the members of the German Foreign Office abroad and at home and finally in this process click on:

<http://www.valletta.diplo.de/publication>

and you will find a comprehensive publication about the results of the Review 2014.



It is in English, and maybe food for thought for your own respective Foreign Services. Some of it might be useful, others not. According to Watzlawick there are more tools than just one. It does not need to be a “German hammer”.



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About MEDAC



The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) is an institution of higher learning offering advanced degrees in diplomacy and conflict resolution with a focus on Mediterranean issues.

MEDAC was established in 1990 pursuant to an agreement between the governments of Malta and Switzerland. The Academy is currently co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta in the framework of the Swiss contribution to the new European Union member states. The Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (HEID) was among MEDAC's first foreign partners. More recently, MEDAC has concluded an agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany, represented by the Foreign Office, in turn represented by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and established a German Chair in Peace Studies and Conflict Prevention.

In 2014/15 acad. year, MEDAC celebrates its 25th anniversary. Since its inception, MEDAC has acquired a solid reputation both as an academic institution and as a practical training platform. We are fortunate to count over 670 alumni from 59 different countries who have completed successfully the post-graduate courses offered by the Academy. The EU's enlargement towards the Mediterranean, that included Malta in 2004, and the recent transformation of the political landscape throughout the Arab World have resulted in an ever increasing demand for MEDAC's programme of studies.

Academy Courses

- Master of Arts in Diplomatic Studies (M. A.)
- Master of Diplomacy (M. Dip.)
- **NEW** Joint M.A. with George Mason University (Virginia, USA) on Conflict Resolution and Mediterranean Security
- Diploma in Diplomacy (DDS)

The programme of Master of Diplomacy (M. Dip.) course is designed for junior diplomats with some field experience. They are instructed in the same core disciplines as the M.A. students (Diplomatic History, International Relations, International Economics, International Law as well as selected lectures in diplomacy) but with a special emphasis on diplomatic practice, languages, public speaking and on-line skills.

The course covers two semesters, from October to June, and includes field trips to Switzerland and to Germany. (See details of all courses on the website: www.um.edu.mt/medac)

“Med Agenda”, MEDAC Series in Mediterranean IR and Diplomacy, is aimed at publishing and preserving distinguished studies, speeches and articles dealing with international relations, diplomacy and security in the Mediterranean region. The authors are invited speakers, academics and diplomats, at MEDAC conferences and lectures, as well as MEDAC experts.



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