

Statement by Gerhard Schröder to the Bundestag (Bonn, 17 March 1966)

Caption: In a statement to the Bundestag on 17 March 1966, Gerhard Schröder, German Foreign Minister, comments on the unilateral decision taken by General de Gaulle to withdraw French forces from the integrated command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and emphasises the importance of the Atlantic Alliance's European defence system.

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[...]

The House will understand that it is not yet possible to give a complete analysis or evaluation of the military and political consequences of the French initiative. The details we have been given do not provide a full picture of French intentions; for example, France has given no indication of its views on the future operation of the NATO infrastructure system established on its territory by the allies at great expense, and joint air defence.

[...]

1. The measures announced by France strike to the very core of the Atlantic Alliance.

All the partners will have to examine jointly the situation thus created. They have already started. At the WEU ministerial meeting in London, from which I have just returned, a preliminary exchange of views showed that there was agreement between Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany.

2. In 1955, the Federal Republic of Germany acceded to an alliance in which there is a balance between rights and obligations. The October 1954 Agreements, which ended the occupation regime in the Federal Republic and led to its admission to NATO, form a political and legal whole. They cover the Convention authorising the stationing of allied troops on Federal territory and the resolution of principle of the North Atlantic Council for the application of Section IV of the Final Act of the London Conference setting out the principle of the authority of a NATO Supreme Commander over allied forces stationed on the continent of Europe and the powers of this Commander.

[...]

Today the Federal Government is also convinced that only defence which is jointly prepared in peacetime by means of joint operational planning and under joint command — i.e. the integrated defence system — has any chance of preventing attack by a possible aggressor. This does not mean that the Federal Government is clinging to traditional concepts but in view of the continual progress made in armaments techniques, it considers integration to be the only way to guarantee the security of the Alliance, for it alone ensures the automatic application of the necessary defence measures in case of attack. Part and parcel of this system is the presence of American forces in Europe. Without this system, the less important nations would have no means of taking part in modern defence as equal partners and with full knowledge of their responsibilities.

3. Admittedly, the world situation has changed since 1949. But we cannot accept the assertion that the threat to Western Europe has diminished and that Europe is no longer the centre of international crises.

[...]

Moreover, we do not believe that the present relative calm — a term which calls for reservations when one thinks of the daily shootings along the inter-zonal boundary — in Central Europe means that this is no longer a source of international crisis. There can be no real peace here as long as this fatal division of Germany and Europe exists.

4. As I have just said, the Federal Government considers that the measures announced by France for a new definition of its relations with the Alliance do not concern each member country separately, but the allies as a whole.

5. The measures announced by France concern the Federal Republic of Germany, in particular insofar as France wishes to withdraw from NATO command its armed forces stationed in Germany. The Federal Government also considers that the problems connected with this withdrawal affect not only Germany but

also the other partners to the 1954 Agreements.

I wish to add that the policy of the Federal Government will continue to be based on the spirit which led to the reconciliation between the German and French peoples. We are convinced that the reconciliation and friendship of these two great neighbouring peoples are and must remain a permanent factor in their respective policies.

6. I wish to end by saying that the Federal Republic of Germany will not take the opportunity offered by present developments to call in question the contractual links which it has established with all its partners.

We want to maintain and increase what has been acquired thanks to the Alliance in the field of military and political co-operation.

[...]