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ALONE, BUT YET TOGETHER: ON THE MILITARY STRATEGY OF A NETURAL NATION STATE IN THE NEW EUROPE AS SHOWN BY THE EXAMPLE OF AUSTRIA

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The present paper analyses the development of the Austrian security policy starting in 1955 with the end of the occupation period by the victorious powers of World War II until the present era of integration of the continent under the aegis of the European Union. In so doing, it dwells on the general security-political framework conditions in Europe during that period and explains the concept of strategy in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 deals with Austria's specific role as a neutral state in the Cold War period. Chapter 3 examines the strategic approaches in Austria in the phase of change, the approach to NATO and the accession to the European Union as a neutral state. Chapter 4 assesses the possible military-strategic positioning of the European Union and its member states, which have set themselves the goal of building up a common defence in the foreseeable future. This requires that the nation-state-centred thinking is changed – to indicate this is the ultimate goal of the paper.

Key words: *Security policy, strategy, Austria, neutrality, European Union, national defence, Cold War, armed forces, NATO.*

Contrary to today's situation, “before” everything related to security-policy and strategy seemed to be so simple. This “before” applies to the post-WW II period until the end of the bi-polar world in 1989, which generally is referred to as the “Cold War” era. The main protagonists were located in Washington and Moscow, whereas the major battlefield, that is the theatre of war, was Europe. This was where the liberal, market economy driven West, the so called free world, and the communist, planned economy directed East, the world of promised freedom, clashed. The first of the two was united in the North Atlantic Treaty

Organisation (NATO), while the latter was integrated into its counterpart, the Warsaw Pact – and both of them ready to counteract any aggression by the other at any moment. Mass armies, air fleets and nuclear strategic missiles were maintained in order to ensure superiority over the opponent. The political differences appeared unbridgeable and there only seemed to be one solution to resolve this strained situation. To overcome the opponent by way of achieving total victory – or in other words – his total annihilation with the final result of imposing world rule by one of the two ideologies.

In order to do so, every means available was mustered, ranging from extended spying and espionage, through conventional and sub-conventional armament efforts, to the nuclear shield consisting of Pershing 2 and SS 20 missiles. Everything served merely one purpose – to deter the opponent or destroy him as soon as action would have started. Viewing all this in retrospective, it almost appears ridiculous, when terms such as second and third strike capabilities are used, implying the capacity to retaliate with the same assets after a nuclear strike. A calculation from 1983 is to show this horror scenario: “We do not know how a nuclear war would be fought. In this scenario [author’s note: this is merely a calculation example, while the real nuclear capacities are many times over the number given here] 14,747 warheads are detonated – this is less than half of the explosive force that the USA and the USSR have. 750 million out of the 1.3 billion of the urban population of the northern hemisphere would be killed instantly. 340 million would be seriously injured. The number of those who would perish due to the ensuing fire or heat cannot be calculated. Immediately after the nuclear strikes the rain water would be lethal. The drink water reservoirs would continue to be polluted for several years. Agriculture would be destroyed, industrial societies would take a heavy beating. One third of the surviving population would suffer from serious mental disorders. The energy and food supplies, communications, the waste disposal and health systems would break down completely. North of the Northern tropic a small portion of the surviving population might be able to escape diseases and hunger. The poor countries, which depend on foreign technology and food supplies, would be affected most heavily. There, the death toll might amount to more than two billion. [Note: in the 1980’s the estimated world population was 4.5 billion.]”¹ The conclusion of this dilemma is that Europe would have been completely annihilated in that phase of the total war, with both sides of the Iron Curtain being affected equally. Such a war would have become uncontrollable, indeed, out of control because it would have been raised to a higher power due to the employment of assets; all this, however, deliberately brought about by the strategy of total implementation of one’s supremacy. There could be no winner left and survival was more than questionable.

¹ Kidron, Michael; Smith, Dan: Die Aufrüstung der Welt – Ein politischer Atlas [Global Armament – A Political Atlas], Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1983, Sheet 8.

On the general concept of strategy

Both opponents were aware that there was no way out in the event of an armed confrontation, which is why they were extremely careful as to avoid an engagement; the arms race went on, leading to mutual deterrence and proxy wars, first waged as wars for liberation in the course of decolonialisation and, later on, as people's wars, again with the aim of liberating, this time, however, from capitalist kleptocratic tyranny on the one hand or from communist barbarism on the other. Both actors were involved directly in such conflicts only once each, the USA in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan – with both confrontations causing a bloody death toll on the part of the major actor. Other than that, the strategy of these approximately five decades of utmost tension for both blocks is easy to outline: to get prepared for the all-ending confrontation and, at the same time, to make sure that this would never happen. Nuclear weapons became “political” weapons and, thus, the strategy connected to this acquired a philosophical dimension. The “unthinkable” was to be thought and, simultaneously, an escalation was to be avoided.

This simplicity of the strategy concept in the political-military sense during the Cold War era had the concept itself to get augmented, giving it a more comprehensive meaning. In the past four decades and particularly in the German-speaking area, the concept of strategy in a way has come to be a sort of vogue expression for everyday use and has been used with numerous meanings. Frequently, the users of the term strategy were not aware of the original meaning and the hierarchic correlation. Hence, every diminutive location at a far-off combat site or crisis area was called a “strategic” point, decisions by treasurers of clubs and by branch managers of wholesale market chains were elevated to “strategic” status, and those skimming through the economic, financial and career-related pages of quite a number of reputed papers will find plentiful “strategic” aspects.

Well, there are innumerable definitions of the term strategy, yet they all contributed to a certain confusion in its use. There were, and still are, considerable differences in interpretation between the Anglo-American understanding and the German speaking area of usage. The understanding is complicated even more by the difference between the German term “Operation” and the English term “operation”. Carl von Clausewitz, much cited, constantly interpreted and increasingly modified in recent years to make him fit into the present and the future, delved into tactics and, moreover, into strategy. Since his remarks on strategy, which are located in the grey area of politics mingled with top-level military considerations and which, due to the selected type of philosophical reflection, make high demands on the analytical capabilities and the discipline of a consistently thinking reader, give way to a free and purpose-oriented, which is to say pragmatic, interpretation of the content and the essence of the term strategy! Howe-

ver, this blurs the meaning and the relevance of the concept of strategy, rendering its clear understanding impossible and, in this way, making its targeted employment as a guideline of thinking impossible.

In Austria, too, the interpretation was adjusted to the specific underlying conception, and upon considering the respective definitions of strategy and military strategy throughout the decades by means of the relevant guidelines and instruction leaflets, one will strongly consent. This also applies to other armed forces and to quite some gurus of strategic thinking; they all have somehow “bent” the definition of strategy according to their needs.

Why is this clearly critical analysis of a multi-faceted application of an apparently adaptable and partly amorphous concept of strategy necessary here and now? This is all about the reception and the correct use of strategy as an echelon of command as well as of decisions. Strategy certainly is a characteristic of the highest level of leadership in a state, in the economy and, thus, also in the military field, no matter whether a certain strategy can be discerned or is practised or pursued on that echelon. Strategy is also linked to a time component, includes a certain longevity and continuity and, in this way, also needs to be applied consistently, at least within one and the same “strategic” cycle.

This almost invariably results in the question, which to some may well appear to be heretic, whether strategy should be – or must be – rated and placed equal to, or even above, politics. Only as long as politics is subjected to civilian shapers and decision-makers of state action and development and as long as strategy is fixated exclusively in the straightjacket of the military field, the well-known principle of the primacy of politics and, hence, the power of political decision-making may be justified. Should, however, a more comprehensive approach to strategy be selected, the civilian decision-makers or the existing powers will follow a strategy, and this somehow gives way to the realisation that, when considering the meanings of politics and strategy in a logical-consistent manner, politics and strategy may well be identical. The above-mentioned differentiation between politics and strategy may have its origin in an accidental or deliberate misunderstanding of the formulations given in the main work of Clausewitz as it was – and still is – somehow convenient for the attitude of the civilian powers that stand vis-à-vis the military as the strongest asset of state power, and the differentiation is, therefore, applied very often without thorough analysis and pointed out to the military.

But is this what Clausewitz really meant? He never questioned the claim to power of the sovereign. The sovereign was in charge of every aspect of politics, his was the final decision and all other instruments of the state were subjected to him. Clausewitz, however, clearly expresses that, when preparing a decision as to starting a war as a continuation of politics by other means (and with other risks) or in matters of command, the commanding general definitely has to be involved and that his well-founded expertise has to be heard and also be taken into consideration. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy’s entrance into World War I

along with its horrific consequences has shown that this may result in an insistence on military solutions if the military commander lacks vision in overall strategic questions and if those responsible for civilian foreign politics subject to this urging. Strategic thinking is indispensable on this echelon. World War I clearly demonstrated where the reduction of strategy to the purely military lead, even though the highest military echelon by way of the "Supreme Army Command" under Ludendorff took over absolute power in the German Empire, when there was no way out of this military stalemate and when grave overall strategic mistakes were made nonetheless. No one had any idea which disastrous consequences the USA's provoked entry into the war could have and no one succeeded in finding strategic approaches to formulating peace and war objectives, which might have been established as the starting point for finishing the violent struggle without having a peace enforced through victory. In absence of a strategy for creating the preconditions for such an enforced peace through victory, when the military failure started to become evident, the Supreme Army Command abruptly and simply blamed the unprepared civilian powers. The Habsburg Monarchy, which due to the scarcity of resources had become dependent on the German Empire, was also drawn into the maelstrom of collapse.

Clausewitz refers to the hierarchic structure of politics, strategy and tactics. Many elements, however, that Clausewitz considers within the framework of strategy obviously point towards the operational aspect in today's sense. Hence, one portion of strategy is a part of politics and the other portion is a part of the military echelon of operational command. Hence, auxiliary constructions, such as the "grand strategy" or the "military strategy", have been introduced in particular in the Anglo-American countries. Therefore, on the top echelon politics and strategy could actually be understood as a unit, as one system, which is independent of the respective field of application, no matter whether this is in the field of international relations, in the economic field or in the field of security and its maintenance. Subjecting strategy exclusively to war and the military resulted in failure, which may also be the case today, yet the exclusive subjection to politics may cause problems as well. The development in Iraq since 2003 can be used as an adverse example for this. Strategy is much more, it is more essential, even if this subjection may have been justified in periods when war was viewed yet in a downplaying manner as the continuation of politics by other means; in reality this view has been outdated for more than a hundred years.

If strategy is defined as "the planned preparation and coordinated application of all means by the state's leaders and the exploitation of all possibilities in order to ensure the security-political objectives vis-à-vis all threats", there was a wide range of strategic measures during the Cold War. On the one hand military national defence within the power blocs and/or the security-political military portion of an overall

² Stupka, Andreas W.: *Strategie denken [Thinking Strategy]*, Vienna, 2008, p. 41.

strategy went towards improvement in order to prepare the “absolute finale”. There was no option for war incidents within Europe below that threshold due to this specific constellation. On the other hand the societies living below this sword of Damocles of the totality of escalating pursuance of conflict were to be ensured a life that was capable of dealing with the usual threats, which required working health systems, efficient disaster relief, the securing of affluence by an adequate supply of the population, and at least in Western Europe all social and political liberties, so that despite the looming disaster everyone could make the best out of this apparently inescapable situation. In between the power blocs the so called neutral countries, that is Finland, Sweden, Austria and Switzerland, and the two non-aligned countries, Yugoslavia and Albania, were wedged. They, too, were aware of the horrific outcome of a nuclear war. However, they were all rated merely as secondary targets. The main area of operations was located in the German lowlands, where the East and the West were directly facing each other. With the exception of the extreme north and south of Europe, everywhere else the neutral and the non-aligned countries lay between them as buffers. They strove to convince potential aggressors from the East and the West that crossing their territories would take an unnecessary toll on the troops and amounts of time, which were more urgently needed for the main operation. The price to be paid for entering and crossing was to be exacted in blood, a heavy toll that could be avoided. The neutral and the non-aligned countries made efforts, albeit to different extents, to have adequate armament, even if their strategy was exclusively defensive, directed at efficient repelling and preventing their territory from being crossed or used as an assembly area either by NATO or Warsaw Pact troops.

In this strategic alignment Austria in a manner played a special role and shows a particular inconsistency. On the one hand Austria did not pursue its military national defence with such decisiveness as other neutral or non-aligned countries did, and on the other Austria’s so-called “active neutrality policy” established the country, after Geneva and New York, as the third official headquarters location of the United Nations, making it the venue of negotiations between East and West, such as the meetings of Kennedy and Khrushchev and of Brezhnev and Carter held in Vienna. The Federal Chancellor, Bruno Kreisky, clearly expressed his opinion, when he said on the eve of the opening of the Vienna UN Headquarters on 22 August 1979 that “a big army would be more expensive and less useful [than the Headquarters itself]”. According to another version of the statement, the Chancellor said that “this Vienna Headquarters is worth more than two armour divisions”. Mr. Kreisky was not the only one who was of this opinion. The Austrian special path within the strategic alignment during the Cold War period is to be described in the following chapter.

³ Helmar Dumbs „Der Wiener Magnet für die Welt“ [The Viennese Magnet for the World] in: „30 Jahre UNO-City“ [30th anniversary of existence of the Vienna Headquarters of the UN], special supplement of the „Presse“ daily newspaper of 28 August 2009, page 1.

The strategic thinking in Austria in the Cold War period

After ten years of foreign occupation after WW II by the allied powers Austrian national sovereignty was restored in 1955, however not without certain imposed conditions: There was the requirement to maintain “permanent neutrality” vis-à-vis all inter-state matters, “according to the model of Switzerland”, which was to prevent a future – albeit highly unlikely – reunification with Germany or an accession to one of the power blocs. A more thorough examination of the prehistory of the declaration on the neutrality reveals that those responsible on the part of Austria were only marginally aware of the range of consequences that this status would entail. The Social Democratic Party had considerable reservations and would have preferred a different status – that of a non-aligned state. Moreover, the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 included a provision dictating that the Austrian Armed Forces were not allowed to have any missile weapons, which became obsolete de facto only with the end of the Cold War in 1987 and which precluded modern aerial defence and anti-tank weapons, thus making it impossible to ensure efficient military national defence as well as to fulfil the requirement to prevent foreign forces from entering Austrian territory. In addition, no officers who had attained the rank of colonel in the German Wehrmacht were entitled to enlist in the Austrian Armed Forces, which was another obstacle in establishing a defence staff that was able to think things through as well as on the political-strategic level, and caused great problems in planning and organising the army on the basis of the status of neutrality. Above all, Austria was required to achieve all this on its own, without any support whatsoever – just as any neutral state.

As indicated above, in 1955/56 neither the bulk of the political decision-makers nor the higher military echelons in Austria were interested in or had a concrete picture of – let alone approaches to – a concept for a small neutral country. Even if the passage “according to the model of Switzerland” was taken as a hook and point of departure, however, which measures this would entail in the overall state and political context as an actual guideline for acting and organisation (both for foreign and security policy, but also for the military component) was not taken into account in the end and remained, at best, a minor matter. The existing connection between a consistent policy of neutrality and its military implementation within the framework of the preventive duties required by the neutral state was not really understood – in any event it was not made the starting point for further deductions. This is why in the military field there was a focus towards defence as regards the implementation of the preferred mindset of the worst case. Yet, already the first Inspector General of the Armed Forces, Infantry General Erwin Fussenegger, realised in 1957 that the Austrian military was “miles away” from being able to accomplish this task. On the part of the military, the military poten-

tial of Switzerland was considered as a model to follow and a visionary long-term objective; however, already in the first assessments it was made clear that it would be extremely difficult to obtain the same political support for such expenses in Austria. It was very convenient that, initially, equipment for approximately two divisions was provided by the former occupying powers, especially the USA, and that the starting costs for equipping the Austrian Armed Forces did not need to be covered by the state. This uncertainty in the task assignment to the Austrian Armed Forces can be clearly seen in the various respective formulations of the Defence Act. Initially, there was only "the protection of the national borders" mentioned and no connection made to ensuring neutrality. The politicians were not interested in applying the Austrian Armed Forces as the relevant tool of neutrality, especially to this essential function. Neither was the relevance of having adequate aerial forces for carrying out the preventive tasks in the Austrian airspace realised nor an appropriate prioritisation made. This was exactly the sphere that was particularly delicate for neutral Austria, as the support offer by the USSR on the occasion of the Lebanon Crisis in 1958 showed.

Already the Hungary Crises of October 1956 would have offered the small and neutral Austria, which was located between the huge military blocs, a good opportunity to develop a strategic concept that would have been useful and viable with regard to the resources involved and that might have been accepted by politicians and been the basis for making the required tactical and organisational deductions. Instead, the experiences made in recent World War II were relied on, defence was limited to securing and monitoring the national border, and when there were indications that the military confrontation in Hungary might spread, orders were given for delaying action towards the west, without having sought coordination with politicians or having geared these measures towards neutrality or a political-strategic objective. Even then considerable differences showed between the foreign and the defence policies in general terms and the subsequent attempts made under State Secretary Karl Stephani to develop a national defence plan were limited primarily to "the military", and all other components, such as the economy, were assigned a function exclusively in this context. Attempts by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Kreisky, to direct the foreign policy and the Armed Forces towards the same objectives in the end resulted only in considerable reservations of the then Minister and later Federal Chancellor towards the higher representatives of the Armed Forces, who were still caught up in their "worst case" mindset, and were the cause that for quite some time the foreign and the defence policies were strictly separated.

From these limited considerations without alternatives in the military field resulted an almost permanent frustration in the Armed Forces and a series of internal and external tensions towards the public and politicians. The military considered themselves to be deprived of the means they required for successful task

accomplishment, realised that they had insufficient capabilities vis-à-vis other up-to-date opponents on the battlefield, and yet pursued operational considerations and tactical procedures, the usefulness of which not only the top-level decision-makers but also the common second lieutenants could not really believe in. Let alone the watching public! This was why the political establishment and the military were unable to convey to the broad public the significant role that the armed forces played as a useful military component in handling and ensuring neutrality and, thus, to justify unconditional support and to explain to the people that the expenses for this instrument served to effectively ensure the neutrality of the public and, hence, made good sense.

The military expected support from the West, that is NATO, to be the solution to this tightrope act of motivation and objective setting. Without checking this with regard to capacities or operational possibilities – or even starting putting feelers out – the idea of “interconnected” defence at the line Villach-Salzburg was propagated and participation of the “green” aerial forces taken as granted. Later on, this was replaced by referring to the “entering into effect of the international security mechanism” and high expectations were placed in the UN, hoping that a resolution by this organisation would cause an aggressor to stop operations immediately or even to withdraw fast. Eventually, this led to a clear suppression of the strategic problem – the military limited themselves to merely working on operational and tactical problems. The military leaders in charge, however, stood firm that the year 1938 must never ever happen again. This was when the troops of Nazi Germany marched into Austria and the politicians ordered the Austrian military to remain in their barracks – in this way Austria was occupied without putting up any resistance.

But there were approaches to developing a strategic concept. As of 1957, starting with a working group, they were to be elaborated as a proper national defence plan. It was directed at defending the country from preventive NATO operations in western Austria and at repelling an attack from Hungary and/or Czechoslovakia. This scheme would have required strong forces in Tyrol and in the east of the country. The operational implementation was to be carried out with the help of strong border protection troops to secure the border, followed by delaying action, while mobile brigades subsequently would provide the bulk of the forces to oppose the advancing enemy. Action was to continue until own assets and forces were exhausted or until help from the outside would arrive. This was seen as a chiefly military contribution to lay a favourable basis for future negotiations after a possible conflict. However, this was a purely military plan, unconnected with a greater neutrality policy and somehow irrespective of the actual relative strengths.

These drafts of a national defence plan had a strategic dimension, integrating aspects of civil protection and, to a minor degree, an economic component. In this way, additional considerations were added in the sense of the survival of the population in a conflict and the functioning of a state, which, even if it is neutral, was not to give in helplessly to all attempts at extortion. However, nothing followed these

approaches and the elaborated schemes were not pursued forcefully as of 1959, since the politicians had become uneasy at the strategic objectives, without providing adequate answers to the neutral state and its armed forces, though, and without the concrete definition of adequate and accomplishable tasks.

After the Hungary Crisis, which had affected Austria only marginally, the political and military decision-makers agreed that in the event of an attack by the Warsaw Pact the West would not have rushed in to assist Austria and that the country would have been on its own. In continuation of the line of thought, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Kreisky, maintained that a small neutral country was to be strongly interested in the United Nations Organisation as well as to contribute to UN actions to avoid war. The developments of 1960 in Congo and the request by the UN of July 1960 to deploy an Austrian contingent provided the opportunity to start into this political-strategic, and certainly very positive, direction and, in this way, both directly and indirectly made a contribution to the security and independence of Austria. On 2 December 1960 for the first time members of the Austrian Armed Forces left the territory of the Republic in order to engage within the framework of a multinational UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement operation and to provide humanitarian aid to the affected population. This strategic course was consistently pursued over decades, even if during the Cold War it was limited to the framework of the United Nations, yet the numerous contingents and participations strengthened Austria's foreign and security-political position, giving Austria a standing that was superior to its actual capacities. The appointment of an Austrian Diplomat as Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation is to be understood as the recognition of Austria's endeavours in this regard. In this field, Austria had managed to position itself by providing good services and concrete military and humanitarian contributions, which is important for a small neutral state. Moreover, Austria saw its chances increased that in the event of an attack support by the international security mechanism would be granted.

After restructuring the Ministry of Defence in 1962/63, the force organisation was adapted to the strategic-operational requirements by keeping three and four brigades available instantly and without mobilisation, in order to have 120 companies ready for first measures to support the border guards, which were being enforced as of 1960, in the case of a threat. Even if it was not formulated in that sense, however, this was an instinctive approach towards carrying out the preventive duties of a neutral state, although this was only seen in the military perspective and not in the context of a politically-strategically conceptualised neutrality policy.

After all, in 1965 a defence doctrine was enacted as a strategic superstructure, which included the definition of strategic contingencies and subordinated tasks and objectives to them. With the downgrading of the threat level, i. e. from the contingency situation to that of a threat to Austria's neutrality and defence,

the nation was able to prepare in a systematic way, even if this was still not linked to an explicit neutrality policy. It seems that the politicians did not really believe in realistic chances for coming through a situation of national defence, as the directive of the then Minister of Defence, Georg Prader, to remove this situation from the "Operational Directive No 1" for the preparations of Armed Forces operations planning. Thus, the operational plans were directed towards the respective individual neighbouring states (with the exception of Liechtenstein and Switzerland) and the developers attempted to work out the strategic-political starting situations for such operational situations in a plausible manner, however, upon realising the authentic conditions they could not help pointing out the comprehensive connection of the alliances surrounding Austria. Yet, the necessary conclusions to be drawn from this situation and the consequences for the small state of Austria as well as its absolutely limited capacities were not taken into account.

The Armed Forces' operation on the occasion of the Czechoslovakia Crisis in August 1968 is to be considered as the peak and a clearly visible sign of this political-strategic and also military-strategic helplessness. The government at that time was unable to declare the "crisis situation", even if this definitely was a crisis situation, and by limiting the situation to "critical", possibly out of fear of a reaction of the USSR or the Warsaw Pact or perhaps out of economic reasons and inner-political caution and the necessity to take measures included in the defence doctrine for such a situation – enacted by the government itself and planned for such a scenario. Hence, the Armed Forces, which were unable to conduct such a defensive operation at any rate, in particular in the Weinviertel area and the Vienna basin with their open spaces, were not deployed to the border and possible annoyance on the part of the military was averted by sending some troops to improvised quarters outside their home garrisons. The Armed Forces were totally barred from carrying out their duties of "protecting the borders" as laid down in the Defence Act, since also the border protection units were not employed and, thus, the customs officials and the gendarmerie officers had to bear the brunt and the burden of the task on their own. But also the employment of the Armed Forces on 6 September 1968 to protect important airfields in Austria can only be understood in such a way that a violation of the neutrality or even an aggression would not be tolerated without symbolic resistance. The operation was concluded with a political act by the Minister of Defence, Georg Prader, declaring that "the right measures were taken and everything went well anyhow" is to serve as an ideal example of strategic subtlety, and the subsequent harsh criticism and doubts expressed were regarded as unfair within the Forces, even if that was a legitimate final point of a period of lower strategic priority. It would have been perfectly in line with the preventive duties of a neutral country to expressly point out to the ambassador of the USSR on the occasion of his "reassuring" diplomatic meeting with the Chancellor that Austria was absolutely under obligation to carry out the preventive duties and that the development of the situ-

ation in Czechoslovakia was unpredictable. For who could guarantee that units of the Czechoslovak People's Army would not resist the Soviet troops or try to use Austrian territory to manoeuvre or enter into Austrian territory altogether? It is very likely that, by making a point of deploying the Armed Forces close to the border in carrying out the neutrality task, the population would have appreciated the deployment and acknowledged the Armed Forces as well as its requirements. Of course this is merely a statement in retrospect, but with some courage the political and military leaders might have seized a unique chance. Unfortunately, such considerations were not even discussed.

As of 1967 also within the Armed Forces approaches to operational concepts were developed, which were viable and promising even to a small country, characterised by a new tactical alignment that was to overcome World War II thinking and to be adapted to the changes in military technology and operational planning, which had taken place so far. These new tactical-operational procedures were to make it clear to an attacker that an advance through Austria would result in considerable losses of personnel, assets and, particularly, time and that entering Austrian territory did not mean that success would be achieved fast and easily. The prices to be paid for entering and staying were intended to complement each other and to have a detaining effect, or at least make an attacker think twice about being able to create a fait accompli fast and, hence, exploit the possibilities of the country.

General Emil Spannocchi, who later became Army Commander, thoroughly dealt with these strategic approaches, assessed respective publications and found that the theories on guerrilla warfare, such as those presented by Mao Zedong, Che Guevara or Giap, were the key to a concept of "defence without battle". This means that by breaking down the units into small elements the attacker was to be deprived of the chance to bring to bear his superior military technology in order to decisively wear down the defensive power. Yet, through a large number of skirmishes the enemy's mobility, command and control, supply and communications were to be affected in order to contain and attrite enemy forces and, especially, to be able to offer continuous resistance in the entire Austrian territory, if possible. In so doing, particular attention was paid to the phases of liberation warfare as described by Mao Zedong. The conclusion of Spannocchi was that, by preparing such a type of warfare in peacetime, one could do without the first phase of war according to Mao's teachings, that is organising resistance as a result of suppression by the aggressor, and exact from the attacker right from the beginning a high toll of entry as well as a high toll of staying. Pursuing this tactics vigorously creates a deterring effect if the opponent has to expect the wearing down of his forces and the delaying of his operations when he tries to move through Austria. The requirement, however, to carry out the preventive duties remained without consideration and the concept at the most accepted a military attack and the effects on the population, the economy, the infrastructure, etc. lin-

ked to it. Yet, the focus on “deterrence” was a military-strategic advance and the starting point for introducing a superordinated neutrality policy, even if the original concept was later made more efficient by preparing stronger defended key zones and areas adapted to the requirements of demonstration and the “deterrence effect” in a more realistic manner, which was not always taken positively by the advocates of the “pure” area defence concept.

As of 1970 the inner-political landscape underwent a change due to the election victory of the Social Democratic Party and the new government headed by Chancellor Bruno Kreisky. Due to his former activities in the foreign political sector he considered diplomacy and foreign policy to be decisive, stressed participation within the international framework of the UN, and saw his priority in the foreign political field as a mediator and provider of good services. His statement of 1979 regarding the Vienna UN Headquarters mentioned above that “the Vienna Headquarters is as good as two armour divisions” is a clear indicator of this overall attitude, and the point could not have been made any shorter and more concise. With regard to the preventive duties of a small neutral country, which Kreisky had realised fully, a new concept of military national defence was called for. General Spannocchi, with his concept, became the man of the hour and a guarantor of progressive thinking as well as of a new beginning to the Chancellor, thereby winning himself ample room for manoeuvre, even if, however, with limited financial support. In a military scientific paper, which was later published in part in the *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* (ÖMZ Journal), the specific basic ideas were described, making it clear that an attacker would not be able to pass through Austria fast or easily destroy weak forces in conventional combat, and that this was a completely new situation in the case that Austria was to be included in an offensive operation, at least on the ground. For the first time, this apparently provided the military strategic room for manoeuvre to a small neutral country for keeping out of a major conflict and remaining quite unaffected by it or, at least, for preventing or minimising damage to the population. This so-called deterrence strategy was a credible option, which was gladly embraced also by the politicians. This effect was further enhanced when in spring 1974 an Austrian weekly paper published what came to be known as the Polarka Plan. This was supposed to be the operations plan of the Warsaw Pact for a military intervention launched from Czechoslovakia against Yugoslavia and through Austria, and was passed on from American sources to an Austrian journalist. At the root of this attempt to mount pressure for the implementation of measures to strengthen the efficiency of the Austrian Armed Forces may well have been the fear that the published concept of comprehensive area defence would offer little resistance to a modern Eastern attacker, making it possible for him to thrust through the foothills of the Alps into the flank of NATO in southern Germany, which would make the setting up of a sufficient defence by NATO and France in the area more difficult

or even prevent it. The plan was allegedly provided by a general of the Czechoslovak People's Army, who had fled in spring 1968 from Czechoslovakia to Austria and later landed up in the USA.

The politicians, however, did not follow up accordingly to this strategic concept and, especially, did not provide the required financial resources. What is more, the national service period was reduced from nine months to six, which was the result of an election pledge put into practice. This quite neutralised the politically accepted and officially supported concept of a deterrent strategy. Obviously, the political decision-makers still backed a diplomatic strategy much rather than military measures, and to only a small extent a coordinated interaction of both.

Chancellor Kreisky pursued his foreign-political ideas in a consistent manner during the 1970s and, thus, his relevance as a strategic thinker is to be considered as extraordinary. He indicated the diplomatic possibilities of a small neutral country and made foreign policy the decisive strategic factor. He also pursued the development of a national defence plan and the establishment of national crisis management linked to it, together with a coordination of the various subdomains of the so-called Comprehensive National Defence. In addition to the crisis, the neutrality and the defence situations, also the situation of an "impending attack" was included, which might arise either from the crisis or the neutrality situation as well as extemporarily. This concept, if implemented fully, indeed could have met the strategic challenges of the small neutral country in a crisis and served the military. However, this national defence plan was only finished when its military strategic background with the conflict situation between the large alliances started to crumble, so that the then accelerating strategic development made the plan appear obsolete only a few years after its adoption.

In the course of the implementation of the military-strategic concept of area defence General Spannocchi realised that the tactics of "1,000 pinpricks" by guerrilla forces and commandos originally favoured by him could not really effectively have impeded or worn down the enemy. There was no useful deterring effect to be expected through it, because an attacker's goal would not be to take control of Austria and stay in the country, but the quick thrust into the territory of the opposing alliance system. Under such conditions, the expectable event of a quick advance of Warsaw Pact forces through the foothills of the Alps into the south of Germany and, thus, into the softer flank of NATO would likely trigger a response by NATO against such forces already on Austrian territory. In the 1980s the Franco-German manoeuvre "Kecker Spatz" confirmed that suspicion, since it revealed the shocking option of a preventive nuclear-strategic strike. Should Austria's population be spared such a threat, the country's deterring measures definitely needed to be increased!

This was done by concentrating stronger units in so called key zones. Their task was to block decisive areas along main communication routes as well as possible and to make it clear to the potential opponent that passing through wo-

uld require much time and, in particular, considerable losses and disorganisation. The definition of these zones and the assignment of territorial, mobile and mechanised forces were strictly subordinated to the strategic objective of defence. The deterring effect became the decisive factor and, hence, the deterrence strategy a real element of the neutrality policy.

In addition, General Wilhelm Kuntner definitely is worth mentioning. In the 1970s he was appointed as Austria's military representative to the recently initiated negotiations between the East and the West within the framework of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Kuntner managed to address the essential strategic questions and earned himself international recognition by everyone involved. He started from the viewpoint that, in addition to other aspects, above all in the military field confidence and security-building measures were to make the decisive contribution to the strategic balance and stabilisation in Europe. The reduction of worries regarding a surprise attack by the opposing alliance system, the abandonment of covered force concentrations within the framework of so-called or real manoeuvres and the disclosure of troop strengths and weapons systems were the essential aspects for this. As a representative of a neutral country, Kuntner succeeded in being a strategic arbitrator, acting neutrally towards all parties, and in being a mediating negotiator as well as in conveying different opinions; in the end this resulted in a series of compromises that had far-reaching strategic effects. The efforts managed to strengthen the sense of security and to create stability by establishing a certain balance. Thus, a decisive contribution to Austria's security was made by means of diplomacy and military diplomacy. General Kuntner understood and put into practice these aspects as no other could, propagated them and worked for them relentlessly.

In this way, the confidence-building measures within the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe were a vital contribution to the reshaping of Europe. Of course, the USA and NATO with their double strategy of stocking up on Pershing II and cruise missiles in conjunction with negotiations in a way devalued the conventional military efforts of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact and, of course, the then U. S. President, Ronald Reagan, with his aggressive policy, above all through the challenges posed by the Strategic Defence Initiative and its financial-economic dimension on the counterpart, forced the opposing party to yield; still, the CSCE agreements were an essential social-psychological contribution in order for the USSR to give in by peaceful means. Austria's extraordinary path during that Cold War period shows that strategy together with a credible military national defence in the sense of a deterring effect, which effectively ensures the peace, gives a small neutral country options to participate in geo-strategic dimensions; organisations such as the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations are suitable platforms for such an approach. At that time the neutrality policy was perceived in a more uniform way in Austria, and the required political-strategic decisions were put into practice ac-

cordingly. The contribution of deterrence was embedded in the understanding that all political-strategic measures and decisions of the small neutral country in the event of a contingency had to be taken on the basis of the existing overall situation in harmony with the European framework, and that “staying out” or at least minimising the consequences had to be seen as the main goal.

Strategy and strategic thinking may have been simple for the two major blocks in past times, yet, a small neutral country invariably had to develop comprehensive strategies if it wanted to safeguard the peace for its population and not be hurled into the depth of international neglect.

The strategic thinking in Austria during the phase of change

The subsequent era of development in the history of the European continent after the collapse of the bipolar world was, and still is until the present day, the “phase of change”. Gone were the days of relative peace under the sword of Damocles of total annihilation. Approximately as of 1990 the war had taken on a different shape. At the latest since the break-up of the former Yugoslavia it had returned. Austria was directly affected by it and for the first time the situation of a “defensive operation in limited areas” according to the Area Defence concept was considered – in the end this remained a security operation at the border to Slovenia, which unilaterally had declared its independence. All of a sudden, Austria was confronted with the escalation of a situation, which already had been anticipated to happen after Tito’s death and been prepared in military operational planning under the name of “Operational Scenario Yugoslavia”; even so, its political vehemence and dramatic consequences could not have been predicted. The military were directly confronted with carrying out their preventive duties and, for the first time, did so with force and saw that, with only a few exceptions, the operation was fully endorsed by the population and the media.

In the early 1990s, basically all Eastern European Communist regimes had collapsed, even the Soviet Union had ceased to exist and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had been banned; the change in trend had acquired a dimension which had been impossible to foresee. In most former Communist People’s Republics the revolutions had proceeded peacefully – the individual peoples had had enough of the worthless promises of a better life and of being deceived by the old power structure and societal structure, so that no one, except the nomenclature itself, would shed tears for the workers’ and farmers’ paradises gone by. Yet, many of these countries had it clear that, in order to preserve their newly gained freedom, there could be only one alternative to the Warsaw Pact alliance: the accession into another alliance – NATO. Neutrality was considered, if at all,

only as a temporary option. Powerful NATO stood as a guarantor of peace and security, as the alliance comprised the states that had won the Cold War and that offered the highest standards of living in peace and harmony.

Also in Austria the accession to NATO was seriously discussed in the period of the eventful 1990s. Many considered neutrality to be an obsolete relic from the already bygone Cold War era; moreover, Russia was weakened and its veto as a former signatory state of the Vienna State Treaty of 1955 did not seem very likely under Boris Yeltsin. The Austrian population too saw NATO as a worthwhile discussion topic, which is sensational for Austria, as for the past 50 years of the Austrian political system neutrality had been proclaimed in all schools and by the military as a pillar of Austria's security-political position – and it was at the heart of the Second Republic and, thus, acquired an identity-giving character. Being guaranteed neutrality by the allied powers of World War II had somehow evoked a living ideal in the Austrian public opinion, which attributed a security-giving and protective effect to neutrality, just like a talisman worn to ward off evil spirits. Even some politicians were caught by the idea that the magical formula of “We are neutral!” would ward off any malicious intentions against the country from an enemy or even prevent him from attacking it. During these five years of intensive discussions, in the absence of the ideologically dissenting extreme Left, for which NATO was nothing but an aggressive, imperialistic, war-mongering military bloc, NATO was considered as a solid alliance to protect the Western community of values. The strategic assessment started from the logically stringent position that, after the bi-polar division of the continent, the European nations should begin to grow together in all fields. From the security-political military point of view, some public figures in Austria's political and scientific scenes saw NATO as a quite suitable framework for such a plan.

Austria's politicians, however, could not arrive at an agreement and the “Options Report for the Austrian Security Policy”, developed by civil servants, was not accepted on the political level by the two coalition parties in 1998. The NATO option was the stumbling block and, with this, the window of opportunity had closed again. The question whether the accession to NATO would have made the Armed Forces, if planned and organised specifically towards NATO, more cost-efficient than continuing the rather conservative existing system was not objectively discussed but much rather treated ideologically. The political squabbling of the late 1990s and the sanctions by the European Union eventually did away with the idea of a possible NATO membership, while the public discussions ended. The final blow for the idea was when NATO activated the alliance and declared war on terrorism as of September 2001. In 2002 an “Austrian Security and Defence Doctrine” was enacted, laying down that *“The extension process of NATO is considered as a contribution to the promotion of security and stability in Europe, which is also in the security-political interest of Austria. The security and defence-political benefit of a NATO membership is continuously assessed by*

Austria in the light of the security-political developments and the option of accession borne in mind".⁴ At the same time, however, this option was linked to a popular referendum. In addition, this doctrine was decided upon merely by the coalition government parties (People's Party, Freedom Party) and not enacted through (a political-moral) constitutional majority, which would have been required for such a strategic realignment of the country. After a period of 150 years, in which the Austrian self-image has been successively reduced by way of lost wars, diminutions of the national territory, a criminal Nazi regime and foreign occupation, the Austrians have become sick of waging wars, unless this is absolutely called for. The Austrian really likes being in the position of the neutral who is trying to keep out of everything and, maybe, seizes the opportunity when it presents itself by acting as a mediator or providing humanitarian aid. Nowadays, an accession to NATO is out of question.

Yet, it was due to a political alliance that the country got into a security political situation that in its strategic dimension could hardly have been anticipated by the politicians of 1995 and before. Austria had joined the European Union on 1 January of that year and without more ado had ratified the EU's Maastricht Treaty of 1992. This document already refers to a common foreign and security policy (CFSP), which in the end, in a faraway future was to result in a common defence.⁵ This alliance was to be borne by the Western European Union (WEU), which simultaneously was to be established as the military arm of the EU and the European pillar of NATO. For Austria and its accession to the EU, however, the topics that counted were economic-political ones and, in particular, the fear to lag behind in Europe. The security-political and strategic aspects of such a step were viewed as less significant and, thus, the republic, despite being neutral, joined a "political" alliance, even if it was to have also a military component. What is more, Austria adopted the so-called Petersberg provisions, which apply to members of the WEU only and which, subsequently, were taken over as EU tasks within the framework of the CFSP. The provisions stipulate that the individual members will participate in the entire spectrum of operations, ranging from humanitarian, through peace support, to peace enforcement operations as well as the employment of military assets. In Austria this resulted in the amendment of the Constitution by Article 23f, in which this same WEU passage is laid down as a constitutional provision. Moreover, the Act of Neutrality still is valid, provoking a legal tightrope walk that cannot and is not to be understood by the general public, as it does not change the curious political-strategic situation, with neutral Austria as a member of a security-political alliance, the integration of which invariably continues.

⁴ Österreichisches Bundeskanzleramt [Austrian Chancellery] (eds.): *Austrian Security and Defence Doctrine*, Vienna, 2002, p. 12f.

⁵ See the "Maastricht Treaty/Treaty on the European Union" of 7 February 1992/Title VI/Article J.4.

The strategic alignment within the European Union

The phase of the security-political change in Europe and/or for the EU has not yet finished, as there are still numerous imponderabilities, which have to be clarified first. From the security-political and strategic point of view a common constitutional regime has to be created, which will regulate the security-political alignment and the military-strategic aspects resulting from it. Meanwhile, it has become necessary especially in the security-political area to question the individual members with regard to participation in security-political military measures. For the EU stabilisation and peacekeeping operations conducted in the neighbourhood this principle has worked relatively smoothly so far, due to the mostly existing solidarity of the member states towards each other; even if, however, these operations were limited in time and with regard to the intensity below the threshold of a direct military combat operation in order to enforce the peace.

Therefore, for all operations outside Union territory there is always a certain degree of uncertainty as to whether this degree of solidarity will ever be reached again in all future operations. Moreover, a relatively long decision-making process is required within the individual nation states, as among others the deployment of EU Forces in Chad showed in 2008. Fighting strength and efficiency of an EU force are reduced by those uncertainty factors because of which it appears to be necessary to introduce a force element on the EU level, which as an EU army will be subordinated only to Union bodies and be used for rapid operations outside Union territory.

Therefore, it would be necessary to establish a body on the EU level which would have to be the equivalent of a national ministry of defence in order to create a military organisation subordinated to it, for which the already existing EU Military Staff could be the nucleus. The troops of an EU army structured in it would have to be recruited by a specifically created recruitment organisation and placed outside nation state control. The individual soldiers, regardless of the situation in their countries of origin, would be subject to the same legal and pay provisions, as proposed already by the former President of the EU Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, with the initiation of the so-called "SAFE project". *"If we are to reach these goals, we need a link between today's situation, which is characterised by partly interoperable, but purely nationally organised forces, and the future goal of having a real European Army"*. SAFE stands for "Synchronised Armed Forces Europe" and would have to be applied in the Eurocorps first. This project envisions unified and equal pay, a unified disciplinary code and the possibility to enlist for every EU citizen fit for it.⁶ Thus, SAFE is an intermediate step towards a European army and would have to be supported by all member states.

⁶ Cf. the speech by Hans-Gert Pöttering on the occasion of the Seventh Berlin Security Conference on the topic of *Neue Entwicklungen und Ansätze für ein Europa der Verteidigung* [New Developments of, and Approaches to, a Europe of Defence], Berlin, on 10 November 2008.

This armed force on the EU level, which is to be aimed at as the security-political strategic goal will only be a part of the overall forces in Europe, since this army could only be used as a first defence measure in the event of an attack against European territory, if it is available in general as a closed combat formation and unless committed in operations overseas. Their fighting power as a defensive instrument will be limited due to its limited size. Such forces, which will be aimed rather at peace support operations and interventions of all types, will hardly be fitted with heavy weapons systems, such as a powerful tank weapon or an echeloned, in-depth airspace defence system.

Accordingly, a second portion of defensive units would have to be provided within Europe, which would have to be borne by the nation states as a matter of practicality and for which the states should retain the responsibility. These elements structured as reserves would principally have to be used for homeland defence, they should, however, be able to reinforce the forces on the Union level if required. The USA National Guard concept is an example for a national defence that is designed in such a way. This is basically the echeloned national defence system, as it was in place in many European countries before World War II. For the Austrian/Central European area during the Austro-Hungarian Empire this is reflected in the division into the Imperial Army and the Imperial Navy as the effective standing forces of the state on the one hand and the Austrian *Landwehr* or Hungarian *Honved* on the other, i. e. militia units, which formed the second line of defence, were to be mobilised exclusively in the event of direct national defence and which, if need be, could be reinforced by the *Landsturm* as the third and last line of defence, the general resistance to an invader comprising all males aged 17–42 who were fit for service and did not serve in regular or militia forces. This organisational concept would have to be adopted by the EU, allowing for an economic national defence with regard to the provision of forces, as opposed to costly comprehensive standing forces.

With regard to the military-strategic/operational design of such a defence and its possibilities for the individual nation state, the area defence concept, which is basically defensive and non-threatening to its neighbours, together with its aspect of “deterrence” might be taken into consideration again, since it would be extremely promising particularly for the European situation of relative delimitation of individual terrain sectors and geographical areas, as this would allow the individual EU member states to continue organising individually their national defence, as dictated by the requirements of mountainous areas, plains, coastal areas, etc. Yet, this requires a common coordination office for defence efforts on the Union level and, moreover, the relevance of ministries of defence would clearly have to be shifted towards EU bodies.

All the thoughts presented in the last part of the paper are still up in the air until the EU member states manage to decide or agree on a common security-

political programme to integrate defence efforts. Until that moment the phase of change will continue and each individual nation state will take care of its own defence and the required oversea operations. However, we can see already that this system of individual nation state responsibility is inefficient and cost-intensive with regard to EU strategy, which is why numerous countries de facto relinquish the maintenance of an efficient national defence while concentrating exclusively on the provision of response forces for international operations. This attitude could prove to be extremely counter-productive with regard to sudden threats and might plunge Europe into a new uncertainty. It is high time that security-political strategic provisions were made. Otto von Habsburg once commented on this, anticipating the security-political situation in Europe: "There is nothing more dangerous than being rich and weak at the same time. Wealth causes envy and weakness breeds the urge of aggression".⁷

These objectives are still far from becoming reality, as the decision of not to employ the highly praised Battle Groups shows that these EU-specific elements are still far from the underlying objective. Of course, issues of avoiding duplications and, especially, the costs linked to them play a decisive role for the bulk of the EU countries, which at the same time are also NATO members. Before further EU plans can be put into practice, objectives need to be clearly defined within the framework of NATO and the EU and even serious discussions about the continued existence of NATO are called for. Viewed realistically, these considerations are not of current interest and France's return to NATO along with the simultaneous allocation of two higher headquarters to French representatives indirectly underlines the diminishing confidence in the efficacy of an EU security and defence policy in its own right. Only a coordinated allocation of tasks to NATO and EU forces would make it possible to come up with effective military structures that are not based on outdated conceptions, but are clearly directed towards current and, in particular, future challenges. This would limit the costs – also for small countries – by way of sectoral contributions and, moreover, provide an actual benefit. In so doing, the USA will have to be complied with to some extent as long as its strategic capacities for a deployment of NATO or EU forces are indispensable and the costs are borne merely by the USA. The development of independent strategic capacities within the framework of the EU seems to be a process that is still far, far off. This is illustrated by the development of the transport aircraft A-400 M and the considerable problems linked to it, even if it is merely a "side component".

Yet, there are still numerous other aspects conflicting with a "trans-national" military EU component, ranging from legal issues or such of international law to discussions about the cessation of sovereignty, etc. This definitely would have to be thought about as a political-strategic objective and to be analysed in a genui-

⁷ Cf. Habsburg, Otto von: Europa – Sicherheitspolitik in stürmischen Zeiten [Europe – Security Policy in Times of Turmoil], in: Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift [ÖMZ Journal] 3/2002, p. 265.

ne manner. In so doing, also unconventional solutions might be taken into consideration. Why is it not possible on the Union level to commission one of the civilian “military and security enterprises” to provide a “response force” for humanitarian or similar operations, establish guidelines for the social and the legal status of its employees, define its status under international law, create a control mechanism and eventually, after according the operation with the respective conflicting parties involved, have it carry out the operation. This is truly a heretic idea, however in an era when such civilian contractors abound and in view of the internal political delicacy of the employment of armed formations by individual EU nations and the problems of providing the forces and assets required linked to it (just consider the deployment to Chad or the problem of civilian victims after the use of armed force in Afghanistan), searching for other solutions would definitely make sense and a number of dilemmas could thus be avoided.

Strategic thinking is called for again and should come to bear in its medium and long-term dimension on the national as well as on the international level. This means that neither imminent elections of any type nor day-to-day politics should interfere with the grand scheme. This applies to EU member states within NATO as well as the smaller non-NATO members. Ideas and consistent analyses are needed, strategic networks would have to be used; in any event the dawn of a new, different age is indispensable.

Conclusion

The strategic thinking in Austria in the Cold War era was embarked on a course that only slowly led to a practicable security-political concept and that had its heyday with what was termed “area defence” in the 1980s. Before that, after the experiences made in the preceding wars and the occupation period, Austria was hesitant in efficiently building up that armed might, which it was obliged to do as a permanently neutral state. By skillfully using diplomatic strategy, establishing Vienna as the location of U. N. organisations and carrying out U. N. peace support operations, the politicians intended to position Austria in the world and, thus, to ensure that the country was safe. The military component of national defence was considered as secondary due to the supposed futility of a defensive effort regarding the superior Warsaw Pact armies. This changed fundamentally with the military-strategic concept of “area defence”. Pioneers of this type of national defence, e. g. Mao or Tito, inspired the Austrian military to introduce this conception, which also provided the possibility to resist a superior enemy. - The objective was, initially, to delay the enemy and, subsequently, to extract a high toll for his staying in Austria. With this military strategic concept and the military-diplomatic scheme of intensively contributing to peace efforts within the U. N., the neutral small state of Austria developed a comprehensive national defence, which made its survival possible also in the event of war between the two Blocs.

After the Cold War, Austria found itself in a period of re-orientation, which moved it closer to a common defence concept under the aegis of NATO. Admittedly, from a military point of view this phase was characterised by a certain absence of orientation that, however, was shared with most European countries. The integration and the reaping of the peace dividend from the Cold War period caused many countries to reduce their defence efforts, the introduction of professional armies was considered desirable and, moreover, many countries were pushing into NATO. In this phase of vehement discussions Austria remained true to its neutrality and even continued general conscription as the only form of defence that is really appropriate for a democratic system. When Austria joined the European Union as a neutral state, this also entailed solidarity with the other EU countries in the sense of a planned common defence. This development has not been concluded yet, requiring a new positioning of the strategic conception, which might result in adopting the structure used by the United States. According to this conception, on the European Union level there would be EU armed forces for all matters of common external projection in order to carry out peace support operations and other operations. Actual national defence should remain the responsibility of the nation states, which might draw upon the area defence concept, which with its reserve component structure would be able to safeguard the security of the individual countries and, thus, of the entire Union.

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