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50 Years of Germany in the United Nations

Initiatives, continuities and change in German UN policy

50 Years
Germany in
the United Nations
Uniting for Humanity

Content

1. The double German accession in 1973

The weather was sunny and windy as the delegates convened at headquarters in New York on 18 September 1973 to open the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. One of the first items on the agenda was the admission of new members to the world organisation. The President of the General Assembly, Leopoldo Benites from Ecuador, spoke of how the imminent admission of the Bahamas as well as the Federal Republic of Germany (the FRG or West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (the GDR or East Germany) represented the end of "the restrictive stage of the Organization" and the beginning of "the stage of true universality". The admission of the two German states was in fact extraordinary in several respects.

The project of creating the international organisation had begun in response to and as an antithesis to Nazi Germany. In 1945, following the German-instigated Second World War and the Holocaust, it endeavoured to provide new and better protection for international peace. This included the designation of the war's aggressors as "enemy states" under Articles 53 and 107 of the Charter of the United Nations. The admission of these states to the United Nations effectively removed the possibility of claiming a special right to take action against them. The General Assembly has since described the enemy state clauses as obsolete. Upon their accession, the two German states now no longer stood outside and apart from the community of states, but in its midst.

Their admission was also remarkable in that their relationship with one another, too, was a quite unique one, as they represented a divided nation. The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany obliged the country's political institutions to "achieve the unity and freedom of Germany in free self-determination" (Preamble). Against this backdrop, the government in Bonn had for many years resisted any recognition of the GDR in constitutional or international law. It now demonstrated a certain openness to put their relations on a new footing while continuing to pursue its stated aim, as seen both in the treaty of August 1970 with the Soviet Union and in the Basic Treaty of June 1973 with the GDR, with the handing over of a Letter on German Unity. This letter stated that the new legal relationship created by the treaties did not contradict the Federal Republic's political aim of working towards "a state of peace in Europe in which the German people regains its unity in free self-determination". It was not until the policy of détente and of resolving the 'German question' *(Entspannungspolitik* and *Deutschlandpolitik)* in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the resulting rapprochement between East and West (at national and international level), that the way was cleared for the two German states to join the UN.

Thirdly, the two states were also in a singular international situation. They stood at the frontier between the antagonistic blocs of the Cold War, to which they belonged through their respective membership of NATO and of the Warsaw Pact. Here, too, an essential prerequisite for Germany's admission to the UN can be found – it was both an expression and a consequence of a détente between the two powers, one that had almost simultaneously been manifested in the first Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). The international situation was thus very closely intertwined with the German situation. It was therefore symptomatic of the state of affairs when, immediately after the admission of the two German states, both the Soviet and the US representatives took the floor to describe this admission as a "trend towards the relaxation of international tensions" (Yakov A. Malik) and a promising "new realism" (John A. Scali), respectively.

The particular nature of the accession of the two German states had repercussions in the General Assembly even at the procedural level. Specifically to prevent a (renewed) exacerbation of the divisions of the East-West conflict, the two states had been admitted via a combined draft resolution. The intention was that, rather than the two opposing blocs' supporting their respective favourite, a balance should be struck. Multiple attempts to vote individually – along bloc lines – were successfully thwarted. Even immediately before the adoption by acclamation, some speakers were still presenting arguments for or against the admission of one state or the other. It may be considered quite significant that the two German states' first step into the United Nations, even before their entry into the General Assembly, was very tangibly shaped by the desire for and necessity of compromise. When the German delegates subsequently took their seats, they did so next to one another. The Federal Republic of Germany had wanted to reflect the particular nature of the German situation, and the question of Germany's representation, through this physical proximity too. It thus placed itself alphabetically next to the German Democratic Republic under the name "Germany, Federal Republic of".

The 133rd and 134th members of the United Nations entered an organisation that had unequivocally ceased to be the restricted club of 51 states, mostly European in culture, that it had been in 1945. The United Nations had already taken major steps towards universality. As well as the agreement of both major powers in the East-West conflict, the two German states were dependent in particular on support from the states of Africa, Asia and Latin America. In the Security Council, too, the situation had changed. Just two years before the German accession, the People's Republic of China had taken the seat previously held by the Republic of China. Because the vote in the General Assembly was preceded by a recommendation issued by way of a Security Council resolution, which any of the permanent Council members could have vetoed, Beijing too had to be persuaded. Another influential voice concerning Germany's admission in 1973 was the Non-Aligned Movement. Significantly, Yugoslavia followed the Soviet Union and the US in taking the floor in the General Assembly immediately after the double accession, and spoke of a "step towards the ever more complete universality" and an "historic event in the life of our Organization". Ambassador Lazar Mojsov also emphasised the fact that this double German accession was closely linked to efforts to achieve an international détente. He added: "Europe (…) must know that détente has to be universal." On this side too, then, hopes of an improved global political climate were pinned on the accession of the two German states in 1973.

For the Federal Republic of Germany, which will be the focus of the following reflections, accession to the United Nations was both a consequence and an endpoint of its policy of treaty-making *(Vertragspolitik)* and détente – particularly with its Eastern European neighbours. However, the day was not without ambivalence for the country. Foreign Minister Walter Scheel brought this home in his speech of thanks to mark the accession on 19 September 1973: "Do you realise why we hesitated to cross the threshold to the United Nations? It is painful to face up to the political reality of the division of one's own country. We were afraid such a step might convey the impression that we had given up, abandoned hope of unity." In fact, Scheel and Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt as well as their successors reiterated time and again their commitment to the task enshrined in the Basic Law of bringing about German unity. But in his first speech before the General Assembly, the Chancellor

also emphasised that admission to the international organisation should not be understood solely in the context of German politics: “[W]e have not come here to use the United Nations as a wailing-wall for the German problems or to make claims which we know cannot be met here in any case. Rather we have come to assume a share in the responsibility for world affairs on the basis of our convictions and within the scope of our possibilities.” This would set the tone for the coming decades of German UN policy.

2. Germany in the UN – the UN in Germany

Germany was and continues to be involved in the UN at different levels and in different contexts. Even before joining in 1973, the Federal Republic (unlike the GDR) had acceded to the UN's specialised agencies (beginning in the 1950s with FAO, UNESCO, the WHO and the ILO, among others). It also participated in UNDP and UNHCR and made voluntary financial contributions to UNICEF and UNRWA. It was represented by a Permanent Observer mission in New York from 1952 (initially attached to the Consulate General in New York, first in the Chrysler Building and then on Third Avenue), which allowed it access to the principal organs of the United Nations (although without a member state's right to speak). Following its official admission as a member state, the Federal Republic relatively quickly assumed a quite prominent role in the United Nations system. In 1975 it was elected to the Commission on Human Rights, and in 1977/78 it held its first seat on the Security Council. In 1980, the former Permanent Representative Rüdiger von Wechmar was elected President of the General Assembly – the same year that the GDR first became a non-permanent member of the Security Council. In 1987/88, the Federal Republic once again held a seat on the Security Council, while the East German Peter Florin became President of the General Assembly. The unique situation of the two German states remained a major factor in their UN policy.

Following German reunification in 1990, the country became more actively involved still in the Security Council, holding a seat in 1995/96, 2003/04, 2011/12 and 2019/20. The Permanent Representation's move to new premises in the German House on First Avenue brought Germany yet another step closer to the United Nations. Furthermore, Berlin consistently participated in elected bodies such as the Economic and Social Council or the Human Rights Council, which succeeded the Commission on Human Rights.

While United Nations staff are employed as international civil servants, the fact that German diplomats have been represented in the UN Secretariat is a sign that the country's contribution and its expertise are appreciated, as reflected for example in the work of Karl-Theodor Paschke as head of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (1994-1999) or Angela Kane as Under-Secretary-General for Management (2008-2012). The Federal Republic of Germany was one of the leading contributors to the regular UN budget from the beginning (1973: 7.1%) and remains in fourth place (6.1%) today despite the subsequent expansions and changes to the organisation's membership. The fact that Germany, with its strong economy, is willing and able to support the United Nations was and has always remained a major determining factor in the role that it plays within the organisation.

The former West German capital of Bonn became a significant United Nations location following reunification. It is home to the Secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, as well as to other programmes and institutions for research, education and sustainable development, and the United Nations Volunteers programme.

3. Fundamental orientations of German UN policy

Even during the process of accession in 1973, two fundamental orientations can be discerned which have continued to determine German UN policy in new and different ways over the decades.

Firstly, among the core values of the Charter, three in particular were for the Federal Republic of Germany not just lofty international goals but a concrete part of its foreign policy and policy of détente: the triad of the non-use of force, the inviolability of frontiers and self-determination. Federal Chancellor Brandt emphasised this in his speech before the General Assembly: "[T]he consistent renunciation of force as a means of achieving aims, of furthering one's interests, and of settling differences, was the decisive factor needed to sow the seed of détente in the heart of Europe." The Treaty of Moscow and the Treaty of Warsaw, the Basic Treaty with the GDR and the Quadripartite Agreement or Four Power Agreement on Berlin all built on this core principle and repeatedly cited the goals and principles of the United Nations. Article 2, paragraph 4 of the UN Charter thus had a downright operative significance for the Federal Republic of Germany in the shaping of its foreign policy. Meanwhile, the inviolability of frontiers – another principle underlined by the Federal Republic's policy of treaty-making *(Vertragspolitik)* – formed a further cornerstone of a new European and ultimately also international peaceful order. Continued hopes of German national unity were tied to an option for reunification that depended on the consent of the international community. The example of the principle of self-determination, too, reflects how intertwined domestic and international policy were with one another. The desire for national unity was internationalised via support for the principle of self-determination as a structuring principle of the global organisation. The demand for self-determination, particularly in the context of "liquidating the anachronistic remnants of colonialism" (Brandt again, in his 1973 speech in the general debate), was regularly linked to the German demand, for example by Minister of State Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski in 1982: "The Federal Republic of Germany, which urges respect for the right to self-determination everywhere in the world, demands this right for the German people as well." The principle of self-determination is in this connection also understood as a bulwark against all forms of attempted domination in international politics. Against this backdrop, many statements can be found that were made at the United Nations over the years expressing the Federal Republic's positions on the policy of the non-aligned states, declaring this to be important and worthy of support – although with the qualifier that it must be a case of "real" non-alignment (as stated by, for example, Hans-Dietrich Genscher in 1983). The principles of the non-use of force, the territorial inviolability of frontiers and self-determination then also determined German UN policy during the process of reunification. Foreign Minister Genscher used his speech before the General Assembly in 1989 to personally address the Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski and to assure the Polish people "that their right to live in secure borders will not be called into question, not now or in the future, through territorial claims by us Germans. The wheel of history will not be turned back." And he continued: "Our foreign policy, in accordance with the dictates of our Constitution, rejects any kind of power politics. It is a policy of responsibility; it is determined by the fundamental values of our Constitution; it is based on unconditional fidelity to treaties."

A second root of German involvement in the United Nations, which was already formed and visible in 1973, can be discerned in the way that Germany's domestic and international policy made reference to individual human

lives. In this connection, the words of Foreign Minister Walter Scheel in his speech of thanks following the accession may be considered virtually a roadmap: “This means more than the mere security of states, more than the mere regulation of their diplomatic relations. It concerns the beginning and the objective of any rational policy; it concerns the human being. [...] before any decision in any body of this organisation is taken we shall first ask ourselves: What does this mean for the individual?” What might seem a rather trite or over-dramatic statement had, in the situation of 1973, a manifest background in the specific German history of the twentieth century. Scheel ended his speech with the words: “If there is anything we have learned from our own bitter experience then it is this: The human being is the measure of all things.” The use of this yardstick also entailed an integrative view of UN involvement that was observable relatively early on for the Federal Republic of Germany, one in which security, development and human rights policy do not stand alongside one other but are fundamentally interlinked. Genscher emphasised in 1977, for example: “Development policy must focus on the human being. Its first priority must therefore be to satisfy the basic needs of all human beings.”

As early as the beginning of the 1970s, a conceptual focus thus emerged which then took on a concrete form in the sphere of the United Nations during the 1990s in particular (including in UNDP’s 1994 Human Development Report) as the guiding principle of “human security”. The yardstick for domestic and international policy is not merely the security of the state, conceived of in primarily military terms. Policy must also be designed so as to protect other elements of human security – threats and risks to life can arise from an insufficiently secure food supply or economic situation, too. Pandemics and changes to the environment not only heavily affect people’s everyday lives, but can also claim appalling numbers of victims.

Scheel’s successors were to return to this orientation time and again in speeches in the general debate. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, for example, told the General Assembly in 2006: “People everywhere have the same fundamental interests: They want to live in peace, security, and free of poverty. They want good healthcare and good schools for their children. No responsible government would ever want to withhold these from its people.” As UNDP head Achim Steiner recently underlined while marking the publication of the report New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene, this conviction is in fact not a new insight but one with a long history that is emphasised by states in every part of the world (with Japan and Canada, for example, prominent among them). This fundamental orientation, too, has shaped the Federal Republic of Germany’s involvement in the UN over the last five decades.

4. Substance and initiatives

One of the Federal Republic of Germany's first initiatives in the United Nations was, significantly, once again shaped by the close connection of a German experience with an international concern. In the early 1970s, there were efforts on various fronts to develop a convention against terrorism. The backdrop to these efforts was not least the horror witnessed at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972, when members of the Israeli team were taken hostage and later killed. The endeavours to draw up a comprehensive convention, as suggested by the US, for example, ended in a stalemate arising from different states' differing understandings of the legitimate and illegitimate use of force. In 1976, Foreign Minister Genscher applied on behalf of the Federal Republic for the topic of international measures against hostage-taking to be put on the General Assembly's agenda, and thus initiated the attempt to transcend the stalemate on a number of fundamental issues and achieve concrete, albeit more limited, progress. For Genscher, the issue was also a personal one. He had been Interior Minister at the time of the Munich Olympics and had offered himself as a hostage in exchange for the Israeli athletes, but was refused by the terrorists. In New York, the West German initiative was advanced in particular by an ad-hoc committee that sought (not without controversy and difficulties) a consensus that would be acceptable to all of the United Nations' members. The International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1979 and ratified by the Federal Republic in October 1980 before taking effect in 1983.

Another initiative launched relatively early on by the Federal Republic of Germany and pursued over decades was the project of an international court of human rights. It was to be modelled on the European Court of Human Rights, founded in 1959, and was intended to further institutionalise the protection of human rights and provide opportunities for individual complaints and rulings. Genscher launched this initiative in a speech before the General Assembly in 1976 – the year in which the two UN human rights covenants entered into force. In 1990, the German Foreign Minister even called on the General Assembly to add a third covenant protecting natural resources. One year later, he linked the two initiatives: "We call for an international court of justice of the United Nations, where crimes against humanity, crimes against peace, genocide, war crimes and environmental criminality can be prosecuted and punished." It would be another seven years before such a court, now in the form of the International Criminal Court, was founded by means of the Rome Statute (without jurisdiction over "environmental criminality"). The first German judge at the International Criminal Court was Hans-Peter Kaul, who had worked closely on the court's creation in the preceding years – as part of the German delegation at the negotiations on the Rome Statute as well as at the Permanent Representation in New York and in the International Law Division of the Federal Foreign Office.

The Federal Republic's work on international law, centred on the rule of law in international relations, represents another focal area. As well as the lessons learned from the period of Nazi tyranny, which were clearly reflected in this area, too, Foreign Minister Genscher's first speech before the General Assembly in 1974 also mentioned the political and philosophical programme of Immanuel Kant, who in his 1795 treatise Perpetual Peace spelled out the creation of laws to regulate the potentially conflict-ridden relations between people and states at the level of constitutional law, international law and human rights. In this spirit, from the 1980s onwards, the Federal Republic supported calls for the United Nations' human rights work to be institutionally

strengthened through the creation of the office of a High Commissioner for Human Rights. This office was finally created in 1993 at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, and in 1994 the Ecuadorian José Ayala-Lasso was appointed the first Commissioner.

The Federal Republic was a prominent advocate for the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which has the aim of abolishing and prohibiting the death penalty, building on protections under international law. After the initiative was launched in 1980, the Protocol was adopted by the General Assembly in 1989 and entered into force in 1991. In the 1990s Germany pursued a similar aim in campaigning for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which took effect in 2002. Within the Security Council, Germany chaired the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in 2011/12 and was able to pass Resolution 1998 (2011) during its Presidency. Its efforts led to a concretisation of the criteria for listing countries that disregard children's rights, and a strengthening of the UN Secretary-General's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism. Furthermore, the Federal Republic supports the United Nations' Women, Peace and Security agenda and recently championed the passing of Resolution 2467 (2019) on issues around recognition, justice and protection for victims of sexual violence in conflicts, in the face of considerable resistance.

As one reflection of the Federal Republic of Germany's significant efforts in the field of international law, the country saw Carl-August Fleischhauer appointed as Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel in 1983, a post in which he remained until 1994, when he became a judge at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Fleischhauer thus succeeded Hermann Mosler, who had been appointed the ICJ's first German judge in 1976. Currently, Georg Nolte is the fourth German to serve as a judge in the fifty years since the double accession, having been appointed for a term of nine years. In the field of the law of the sea, too, Germany's long-standing engagement is manifested at the institutional level and in individual appointees: the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is located in Hamburg, and the German Rüdiger Wolfrum served as a judge at the Tribunal and later became its president.

While the concept of "environmental criminality" that Foreign Minister Genscher brought into play was not included in the Rome Statute, the handling of environmental issues at international level is another continuity that marks German policy at the United Nations. The topic featured relatively early on in the Federal Republic's speeches before the General Assembly and drew greater attention still after the Chernobyl reactor catastrophe in 1986. Foreign Minister Genscher, discussing environmental issues, spoke of humanity as a community striving for survival that must endeavour to protect the natural resources on which life depends with a similar urgency to that applied to the prevention of military conflicts. The 1987 initiative to create an international year of environmental protection and a decade for the environment was not immediately successful. It was only years later that various official decades were established for environmental issues such as water protection. Amid the fallout of the Gulf War in 1991, Germany advocated for a resolution to fight environmentally destructive warfare, but amid ongoing differences of opinion on the relevance and the prohibition of environmental

criminality, this did not gain traction. Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel's calls to set up a UN early warning capacity for environmental disasters fared similarly in 1993.

Germany's more recent commitment, during its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council, to work on linking climate and security issues builds on this tradition in German UN policy. In July 2011, under the German Presidency, a presidential statement (S/PRST/2011/15) was passed following the first open debate on the issue of climate change and security which recognised the potential impact of climate change on international security issues and called on the Secretary-General to take this context into account when reporting in the Council – the first such statement to do so. The issue remains controversial. A planned resolution during Germany's membership in 2019/20 could not be passed largely due to the resistance of some permanent members. Instead, it was pursued in individual mission mandates and through the creation of a group of experts. Germany is not alone in its work on climate and environment issues, either – these issues have also been advanced in the Council by countries including Norway, Ireland, Kenya and Mexico. Furthermore, Germany is active in the Group of Friends on Climate and Security. At the institutional level, the Federal Republic has continuously provided operational and financial support for efforts to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme. UNEP was founded in 1972, shortly before the accession of the two German states. (The Soviet Union justified its boycott of the 1972 Stockholm conference with the failure to invite the GDR, among other reasons.) Since reunification, two Germans have served as Executive Director of UNEP: Klaus Töpfer (1998-2006) and Achim Steiner (2006-2016).

Finally, Germany's particular commitment to disarmament issues is also noteworthy. This, again, can be partly explained by the unique German situation. In the conflict between East and West, the country was at risk of becoming a battlefield where nuclear, biological and chemical weapons might be used. The Federal Republic was particularly heavily involved in efforts to draft a chemical weapons convention – even coordinating to an extent with the GDR. In the Security Council, West Germany managed to have a generic condemnation of the use of chemical weapons passed, Resolution 612 (1988), after condemnations of Iraq's actions in the war with Iran did not gain a majority. As well as other conventional issues, medium-range weapons in particular have been at the heart of German efforts to implement arms control and disarmament. Most recently, Germany brought the issue of nuclear disarmament before the Security Council in 2019, although this did not lead to further declaratory or operative action due to the resistance of several members. In this area, too, Germany's commitment can be seen reflected in a high-ranking appointee: Angela Kane served as the United Nations' High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, with the rank of Under-Secretary-General, from 2012 to 2015. As part of this role, she oversaw investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The examination of thematic focal areas thus leads on to specific conflicts and missions where Germany has been particularly committed.

5. Conflicts and missions

In the field of conflict resolution, the Federal Republic focused from the outset on the Middle East: the Yom Kippur War broke out just three weeks after German accession. The commitment to Israel's right to exist is inextricably linked with German history and is another constant in the Federal Republic's UN policy. The situation in Lebanon, too, was a recurring issue in the Middle East for the German Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

However, from the very first years of German membership of the UN, one special focus was on southern Africa. From 1977, the Federal Republic advocated, particularly within the framework of the Namibia Contact Group, for free elections and for independence from South Africa for the territory, which as German South West Africa had once been under German colonial rule. During the Federal Republic's first term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1977/78, the country was particularly involved in drafting Resolution 435 (1978), which sketched out a roadmap for free elections and Namibian independence. These efforts required staying power, until Namibia finally became the 160th member of the United Nations in 1990, the year of German unity.

In the Federal Republic's second term on the Security Council, Bonn was again able to bring its own focuses to bear in the context of a conflict and in collaboration towards a decisive resolution. Resolution 598 (1987) outlined the key elements of a ceasefire and of a durable settlement of the hostilities between Iraq and Iran that had begun with Iraq's attack on its neighbour in 1980. The Federal Republic was in contact with both parties to the conflict and worked in particular to ensure that the wording of the resolution would meet with consensus from Iran and its supporters, too. Ayatollah Khomeini approved the resolution in July 1988, paving the way for the ceasefire in August. The resolution gave UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar a number of implementation tasks. Here, too, the Federal Republic played a notable role, dealing with these implementation issues together with the Secretary-General during its Presidency of the Security Council. The process leading up to Resolution 598 is illustrative of the increased possibility for non-permanent members of the Security Council to play an active part in conflict resolution that was opened up by, among other things, the greater degree of unity among the Council's permanent members. In the case of the Iran-Iraq resolution, West Germany was supported in particular by Italy and Japan, which were members of the Security Council at the same time.

In the Security Council especially, it becomes clear that initiatives by individual states and joint action are mutually dependent. One excellent example from the Federal Republic of Germany's third term on the Security Council in 1995/96 is the country's engagement for Resolution 1034 (1995), in which the Council strongly condemned the crimes in Srebrenica, Žepa, Banja Luka and Sanski Most and, on the basis of a report by the Secretary-General, explicitly referred to the Bosnian Serbs' responsibility. Here Germany had succeeded after weeks of trying (not least within the Bosnia Contact Group) in having an unambiguous mention of crimes and responsibilities incorporated into a unanimously approved resolution.

A look at German UN policy through the years reveals that Afghanistan is another conflict with which the Federal Republic has been particularly concerned. One reason for this is that, over five decades, the country by the Hindu Kush was affected by two critical constellations.

Following the Soviet invasion, the country is mentioned in virtually all speeches up until 1992, starting with Genscher's speech in 1980. The Federal Republic repeatedly condemns the Soviet invasion and calls for economic and development assistance. As a result of the September 11 attacks and the military operations against the Taliban, Afghanistan is again repeatedly mentioned in German speeches in the General Assembly from 2001 onwards, proving its special significance in German commitment to conflict resolution. In the case of Afghanistan, this was demonstrated not only by military engagement as part of ISAF, but also by Germany's efforts within the scope of the Bonn International Conference on Afghanistan and the Bonn Process to prepare elections and work towards a constitution in Afghanistan. In the Security Council in the 2000s, Germany assumed the chair of the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee and was co-penholder with Indonesia for Afghanistan, thus bearing a shared responsibility which for many years was generally reserved only for the permanent members of the Security Council.

The focus on the Middle East and Namibia of the early years of UN membership has broadened substantially over time, becoming more geographically diverse. Africa, Latin America and Asia only gradually became the objects of greater, more detailed attention. A recurring diplomatic issue in the 1980s is support for the Contadora Group in Central America and in the 1990s conflict resolution in the disintegrating Yugoslavia. In 2019, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas refers to a "far too long" list of conflicts that Germany has been trying, in various ways and to various degrees, to resolve: "Syria, Mali, Ukraine, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea". Libya and the Sudan are given prominent mention later in the same speech. Increasing engagement in conflict resolution was accompanied by an increase in Germany's contribution to United Nations peace operations.

Just as there is a "prequel" to German UN engagement prior to officially joining the organisation, so there is a "prequel" to German involvement in peace operations prior to the Federal Constitutional Court smoothing the way for the participation of reunited Germany in 1994. In 1973, shortly after becoming a member of the UN, Germany already provided transport capacities for the establishment of UNEF II in the Middle East. The Federal Republic also helped with transport when the UNIFIL mission was deployed to Lebanon in 1978. German engagement went a step further, however, as West Germany also provided equipment for the Nepalese peacekeeping contingent. In terms of the secondment of German personnel, the engagement for Namibian independence mentioned above was decisive. The Federal Republic supported the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in 1989/90 by sending fifty Federal Border Police officers.

For decades, in fact, the participation of Bundeswehr personnel in United Nations peace operations was regarded as incompatible with the German Basic Law, which stated that the armed forces were for purposes of defence (Article 87a). Even before the reunification of Germany, however, there was increasing debate as to whether participation in UN missions could not after all be regarded as in keeping with the logic of German participation in a system of collective security, also provided for in the Basic Law (Article 24). Early memorandums on German participation in peacekeeping missions can be found in the Federal Republic's diplomatic correspondence just a few months after it joined the UN. However, change did not come until after reunification.

Addressing the General Assembly in 1992, Foreign Minister Kinkel announced that his country would put in place the constitutional prerequisites for participation in United Nations peace operations: "As a reunited and sovereign country we must assume all the rights and obligations of a Member of the United Nations to avoid any discrepancy between our verbal commitment to peace and human rights and our active involvement in their defence." Two years later, he could refer to the corresponding decision by the Federal Constitutional Court, which had been preceded by intensive domestic debate.

In the early 1990s, Germany provided various types of personnel for a number of peace missions: as with UNTAG, police officers and medics were seconded (e.g. in Central America (ONUCA), Cambodia (UNTAC) and Georgia (UNOMIG)). The first substantial involvement of Bundeswehr soldiers was in UNOSOM II in 1993 – it was this mission that triggered the clarification by the Federal Constitutional Court of the constitutional requirements for German participation. There was further engagement, including of ground troops, in missions in the territory of the former Yugoslavia (UNCRO, UNPROFOR, UNMIK). Increased participation in UN-led missions ran parallel to increased German participation in UN-mandated missions – especially in Afghanistan (ISAF). To date, the Bundeswehr's largest-scale involvement in UN peace missions, with several hundred soldiers, has been in UNOSOM II, the mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the navy's participation in UNIFIL off the coast of Lebanon. The Federal Republic has also been active in the leadership of peace missions, in particular since the second half of the 1990s. Since then, over a dozen German nationals have headed peace missions or mediation efforts as special envoys, some of them more than once (e.g. Martin Kobler in Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Libya). From the outset, Germany firmly supported the new Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DKPO) set up by Boutros Boutros-Ghali as well as the initiative for the designation of stand-by forces.

This is not the only issue in the reform of and crises in peacekeeping on which the Federal Republic of Germany took a position. In 1999, following the experience of non-intervention in Rwanda and of intervention in Kosovo, Joschka Fischer pointed out that "the question of peacekeeping arises more and more in an area of tension between traditional state sovereignty and protection of human rights". The German Foreign Minister was echoing similar statements by Kofi Annan which eventually led, via various commissions and reports, to the establishment of the concept of the "Responsibility to Protect". In the 1990s, this concept was closely associated with the idea of human security postulated in the 1994 UNDP report. Here, too, Fischer's formulation was supportive (and in keeping with a fundamental orientation of German UN policy): "In the 21st century the individual and his rights must take a more prominent place, alongside the rights of states, in the concept of security as defined by the international community" (Fischer 1999). Germany had championed this standard even before the 2005 reform summit (at which the concept was taken up in the Outcome Document) and within the framework of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

6. Council and reform

Given the dynamic nature of the United Nations' field of activity, efforts towards reform are a modus operandi of the organisation. Entirely in keeping with this, Foreign Minister Genscher told the General Assembly back in 1975: "We must continuously adapt the structure of the organisation to the changing situation and tasks in the world." Particular attention is paid to Security Council reform and a possible permanent seat for Germany. In fact, this subject was already in the air in 1973 when the Federal Republic joined and Ambassador Walter Gehlhoff was confronted with proposals to establish new permanent seats on the Council in the future for the Federal Republic and Japan (possibly without a right of veto). The Federal Government, however, concentrating on securing the country's admission to the UN at all, reacted with extreme reticence. Nevertheless, the matter did not entirely go away and was the subject of various advances and ideas. It arrived back on the agenda with German reunification and the new global political climate in the early 1990s. Several states voiced their expectation that Germany would be given a permanent seat on the Security Council, and their support for such a move. Indeed, a plan presented by the President of the General Assembly, Razali Ismail, even formulated a concrete reform proposal.

However, Germany remained reticent, as a look at its statements to the General Assembly shows. In 1992, Foreign Minister Kinkel said: "The Security Council is the guardian of international peace. Its efficiency and credibility are of equal importance. A debate on reforming the Council is under way. We Germans will not take the initiative in this respect, but if a change in the Council's composition is actually considered we too shall make known our intention to seek a permanent seat." In 1993, he repeated this, but added that the Council's credibility could be maintained only if "the growing importance of the third world" was taken into adequate account. In 1995, he believed that there was a "global consensus" on the need for reform and for the wider representation of Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as "several countries with an important global role". Germany, he said, "with the support of many Member States", had announced its interest in permanent membership of the Security Council as "the logical and consistent extension of our commitment to the United Nations". He took up the point again a year later, saying: "This, the principal guardian of world peace, still bears the countenance of the year 1945, but it now needs a new one for the year 2000. It is a question of enhancing that body's legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness. [...] the time is approaching when the General Assembly will have to decide." Kinkel addressed the matter again in his speeches in 1997 and 1998. After again thanking all member states who had advocated a permanent seat for Germany, he warned: "Security Council reform cannot be delayed any longer, otherwise the momentum will be lost. That would be extremely unfortunate." Speaking in 1999, Kinkel's successor Fischer reiterated Germany's "willingness to assume more and lasting responsibility". In markedly more concrete terms, however, he urges the introduction of an obligation for a state to explain to the General Assembly why it is vetoing a resolution. Fischer reaffirmed Germany's willingness to assume more responsibility the following year. In 2001, when the focus was on the repercussions of the September 11 attacks, and 2002, there was no such repetition, but a request for support for Germany's candidature for a non-permanent seat for the 2003/2004 term. In his speech in 2003, Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, asserting Germany's readiness to assume responsibility, referred to Kofi Annan's institutional reform proposals. In 2004, though, Fischer spoke more specifically, referring to

the shared willingness of Brazil, India, Japan and Germany, meanwhile established as the G4, to take on the responsibility associated with a permanent seat, and calling for increased representation of the African continent. In 2005, when, among other things, the G4 proposal was about to be officially considered in the General Assembly, State Secretary Klaus Scharioth regarded it as the only proposal capable of generating a two-thirds majority. However, owing to various obstacles and instances of resistance (not only on the part of Germany, but also other G4 members), no vote took place.

In the ensuing years, Germany's representatives expressed the country's willingness – on several occasions also pointing out that its candidatures for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council (2011/2012; 2019/2020) were a further indication of that very willingness. Following Kinkel's warning in the late 1990s, the still-perceptible reticence about declaring a permanent seat to be a goal of German UN policy was accompanied more and more by impatience and disappointment at the lack of progress on reform. In 2018, Foreign Minister Maas explicitly criticised this lack of progress and the delaying tactics employed by some member states (including in the intergovernmental negotiations that had begun in the interim): "[W]e should stop beating around the bush".

Ever since initial reflections back at the time of accession in 1973, the substantial obstacles to reforming the UN Charter had been abundantly clear to the actors involved. More than that, in the 1990s, Federal Chancellor Kohl seemed to have put all such ideas aside, to judge from a brief remark made in an interview and related interventions by the Federal Chancellery with supporters of the plan. All in all, however, the reticence that had dominated for years was followed neither by a declaration that Germany was not seeking a permanent seat nor by a decisive push for one. Naturally, the question also depends greatly on the general political situation and the dynamics between the various groups of states. And the views of Germany's representatives in New York on the justification for and likelihood of a permanent seat for Germany have varied over the years, ranging from urging strategic patience to criticising the lack of willingness to take risks.

7. Continuities and change in German UN policy

A look back over fifty years of German UN policy highlights a number of traditions and continuities. The engagement of the Federal Republic of Germany is based on recognisable fundamental principles, has demonstrated the country's resolve to invest in multilateral projects and support the Charter, and has proven itself successful through a whole series of initiatives. In connection with Germany's campaign for membership of the Security Council in the 2011/2012 term, former UN Ambassador Peter Wittig gave the following summary: "We have campaigned on the basis of issues and objective questions, remaining true to our reputation within the United Nations for being objective, capable and trustworthy." These adjectives can in fact be regarded as trademarks of German UN policy, having been applied on several occasions over these fifty years, not least by the other UN member states. They are the reason for electoral successes such as the two-thirds majority in the first round of voting for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. However, these adjectives are oriented more to the "how" of German engagement rather than to the "what" or "what for". But a whole series of examples and illustrations can be found in this brief overview for these questions, too. As general as they may seem, the fundamental commitment to the Charter, the rule of law in international relations and human security are authentic orientations of German UN policy. And they are echoed in the slogan for the Federal Foreign Office's jubilee campaign marking the fiftieth anniversary of accession, "Uniting for Humanity" – where "humanity" can be understood in the sense of human security and of humankind, the international community of states and individuals.

Even a cursory glance at five decades of German UN policy reveals a few difficulties in implementing this self-imposed aim. For example, the Federal Republic of Germany's declared condemnation of colonialism and of South Africa's policy of apartheid was criticised, not without reason, as being not entirely credible as long as Bonn was not willing to impose stricter sanctions and dissolve commercial ties with Pretoria. In such situations, the economic power of export-oriented Germany, which is also crucial for the UN's resources, is rather ambivalent. Altogether, Germany's concrete stance is often more reticent than might be expected given the clarity of its declared principles. For example, Viet Nam's intervention in Cambodia (against the Khmer Rouge terror regime) was discussed in similar terms to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan (Genscher 1979); addressing the 1982 General Assembly, Wischnewski referred to the imposition of martial law as "events in Poland". There is scarcely any explicit mention in official statements of the blatant human rights violations by the dictatorships in Latin America. This is also true of other delegations, as unambiguous condemnation of the actions of other member states appears only rarely in the public standpoints in speeches to the Council or General Assembly. In the context of the East-West conflict, the Federal Republic unequivocally followed the European Community, NATO and finally the United States. If the reticence about participating in the Security Council-mandated measures to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation still reflected Germany's fundamental military reticence, the country's active efforts to prevent a Security Council resolution legitimising the Iraq war in 2003 were an expression of principles-led policy that did not shy away from conflict with close partners. Not voicing clear criticism and condemnation (e.g. in the aforementioned Resolution 612, which criticised the use of chemical weapons in a general rather than concrete way) does have a diplomatic function, but over time can lead to exposed flanks in principles-led engagement, as well as to accusations of double standards. That such open flanks

can hinder political processes in the United Nations, even in the face of clear violations of Charter principles, as in the case of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, has been shown in the recent emergency special sessions of the General Assembly. Germany has been among those arguing ultimately successfully against attempts at relativisation – arguing not for a "Western" view of things, but for the principles that underpin both German foreign policy and the United Nations: the non-use of force, the inviolability of frontiers and self-determination as key elements of the system of collective security. However, these principles also entail attention to and solidarity in the face of security threats of a different nature and in different places.

Another criticism of German UN policy is the concept of the "German vote" – abstention on controversial issues – bandied about from a very early stage. This label doubtless derives in part from the special position of the Federal Republic (and the GDR) described above, which at times was the reason for non-involvement in peace missions. The Permanent Mission in New York, at least, realised even before the first term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1977 that the ensuing greater visibility and responsibility would mean that the "oft-seen escape through abstention" would become less and less of an option, if the country were not to lose face. Germany's abstention in the vote on Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011) on Libya may provide a further example. As Indian UN diplomat Chinmaya Gharekhan has put it, an abstention in the Security Council is never just a reflection of an undecided stance: in the case of a permanent member, abstention looks more like support (because it could have used its alternative option, the veto), and in the case of a non-permanent member more like opposition (because it is not adding to the necessary number of supporting votes). Notwithstanding all justified criticism of the dangers and implementation of the intervention in Libya, Germany's decision did contrast hugely with its otherwise prevailing support for the Responsibility to Protect principle in keeping with the traditional lines of German UN policy. More than that, Germany's abstention occasionally gave rise in the domestic debate to the impression that it had thus given itself the possibility of not participating in this decision by the Security Council. But one fundamental principle of the system of collective security as set forth in the Charter is that binding measures by the Council are indeed binding on all members and are to be supported – irrespective of how the member voted or even of whether they were involved in the Council vote at all.

Given the focus of this report, less attention has been paid to Germany's concrete initiatives and focal points in development and social policy. Even those active in German UN policy have repeatedly pointed out over these past fifty years that Germany's engagement in this field could be greater. Here, for instance in the debate about the new world economic order, the Federal Republic oriented itself in the 1980s more to the oppositional stance of the United States and the United Kingdom. Not least in respect of collective rights such as the right to development, the Federal Republic, while not rejecting the concept out of hand, itself approached the (in part ideologically expressed) debate in categories of antagonistic economic ideologies. The UN world conferences in the 1990s, however, encouraged a position increasingly oriented to the actual problem. Germany's co-moderation with Namibia of the preparatory process for the United Nations Summit of the Future in 2024, notable also in light of the history of German UN policy, presents both an opportunity and a challenge to further shape the Federal Republic's profile.

A cursory consideration of five decades of German UN policy also draws attention to the instruments and tools which have been and can continue to be successfully used by the Federal Republic. In conceptual terms, these include the high-level speeches in the General Assembly and other UN bodies, which certainly do not have to confine themselves to merely dutiful generalisations, but can provide a forum and occasion to profile German UN policy and present German initiatives. With regard to the main thematic focuses outlined here, Germany has indeed worked successfully for international norms and rules. In addition to work for thematic resolutions or statements by the President of the Security Council, this activity involves a number of other instruments: convening international conferences, setting up expert groups or staffing thematic special envoy/adviser positions in the UN system, or providing logistical and administrative support for them. Unlike with conflict-related special envoys, Germany has to date been somewhat reserved in this area (Klaus M. Leisinger, Special Adviser on the Global Compact; Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace). Germany's decision not to host the UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 was a severe loss for German UN policy. Bonn has been profiling as a UN location devoted in particular to sustainable development, and the recent conferences on Libya held in Berlin point to the capital's potential for high-level meetings, also in the field of mediation.

Being a non-permanent member of the Security Council offers a host of opportunities for engagement and profiling. In addition to working actively for conflict resolution, taking on dossiers, chairing committees and setting priorities during its various presidencies, the Federal Republic of Germany has also advocated for the constant improvement of the Council's working methods – even if it has ultimately focused again and again on the reform of the Council's composition, as yet unimplemented. Also worthy of mention is the fact that Germany, having organised over forty Arria-formula meetings of the Council members, occupies a leading position behind the permanent members France, the United Kingdom and the United States, and has in this way made a recognisable contribution to opening the body up to civil-society actors. The German 2012 initiative to enhance the Security Council's involvement and cooperation with the Arab League can also be regarded as a productive change in the Council's scope for action.

Alongside the realisation that engagement in the United Nations framework necessarily entails cooperating and sharing responsibility with other member states, the close coordination and cooperation with the various Secretaries-General over the years has proved to be an effective, recurring instrument of German UN policy. There are also numerous instances of issue-specific cooperation in groups of friends or contact groups, where some German initiatives have developed and been implemented. In this context, what is also needed is the willingness to link certain themes and initiatives more with priorities and posteriorities and at the same time to embed concepts for one's own initiatives, to communicate these key efforts to the German public in a self-assured way and to provide the necessary resources for such themes. Incidentally, this highlights the necessity of linking German UN policy back to German society and domestic policy; the Bundestag Subcommittee on the United Nations, International Organisations and Globalisation established in 1991 is an important forum in this connection.

Finally, a look back over five decades shows that the Federal Republic of Germany's position has become more and more prominent. This prominence is not only a result of

the increased responsibility that came with reunification or the demonstrable expansion of German conflict resolution engagement in various parts of the world. It is also due to the fact that, since the end of the Cold War, the UN Charter's normative aspiration has not merely had to be articulated as a lofty ambition, but has had to be implemented through concrete action. This affects standpoints and measures in the fields of security, development and human rights that would never even have been discussed in the preceding decades. Freed from the ritualised deadlock of the East-West confrontation, the Charter's policy programme became more tangible, more implementable – and "more serious". This in turn led to foreseeable conflicts about the further, more precise implementation of principles and guidelines that had previously been of only rhetorical import. In the meantime, those very conflicts have themselves been heightened by the international polycrisis of challenges, justified or instrumental criticism of globalisation or of the position of "the West", justified or instrumental calls for a new constellation of power, populist attacks on the principle of international cooperation and multilateralism, the accentuation of a North-South divide, and the downright cynical disregard for fundamental values and principles of the Charter (seen, for example, in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine or the refusal to allow humanitarian access in Syria). In Germany, this constellation is discussed under the label *Zeitenwende* or "watershed". Owing to its historically and politically determined commitment to a rules-based international order, the Federal Republic is very keenly affected by such question marks over the international organisation. German policy has reacted to such trends by, among other things, establishing the Alliance for Multilateralism with France in 2019. In the future, it will have to try, with a clear understanding of its own interest and of the collective interest, to preserve and further develop the UN project with its habitual multilateralism, which is not merely procedural, but a fundamental guiding principle. In light of the last fifty years of German UN policy, too, this endeavour is not an ideology-driven withdrawal action, but an effort to deliver on the dual promise underlying the founding of the United Nations: freedom from fear and want.

Afterword

The text was proposed by the Federal Foreign Office as one of the measures to mark the fiftieth anniversary of German participation in the United Nations. As a member of the Federal Foreign Office Advisory Board on United Nations Issues, the author was invited to present initiatives, continuities and change in German UN policy in a short yet substantive report. A few brief pages are not enough to give more than an illustrative overview of fifty years of German UN policy; this is by no means an encyclopaedic or indeed complete picture. This concentrated approach undoubtedly falls short of paying adequate heed to other areas of German engagement in the United Nations that are indeed of fundamental importance. The prime focuses, not least for reasons of space, are the Federal Republic's perspective and the diplomatic and political processes in New York. As a result, less attention is paid to the seventeen years of the GDR's membership of the organisation and the essential work at other UN locations. Moreover, the aim was not to draw up a statistical picture of German engagement in terms of resources or voting patterns, but rather to highlight a few key contours of German UN policy. At the same time, the idea was not to tally up the successes and failures of German UN policy, but to reflect on the contribution Germany has made to the United Nations project.

It goes without saying that five decades inevitably produce a huge amount of relevant material. Even just reading and evaluating the wealth of official statements and speeches, as well as the literature on German membership of the UN, is in itself a considerable undertaking. In this context, the author would like to thank Annika Enning MA, with whom he compiled an overview of the nature of German speeches in the UN General Assembly which appeared in the journal "Vereinte Nationen" (German Review on the United Nations). Over time, an evaluation of these speeches, at first glance rather formal, presents an extremely valuable source referred to multiple times in the text.

In addition to published sources (including in particular reviews in which previous Permanent Representatives to the United Nations take stock), files from the Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office were consulted for this report. The author wishes to thank Knud Piening and Dr Simon Heßdörfer for their support. Preparing for publication also involved conversations with representatives of the Directorate-General for International Order, the United Nations and Arms Control at the Federal Foreign Office. The author extends his gratitude to Olaf Poeschke, Nabil El Eid, Florian Laudi and Dr Günter Sautter.

Although a brief overview such as this can only scratch the surface, a consideration of the UN policy of a member state over the decades can nevertheless provide a number of insights into that country's foreign and domestic policy as well as the United Nations' way of working, its possibilities and its limitations. There is further academic and political potential here.

Further reading

Of the wealth of published material on German UN policy, special mention should be made of three sources: Firstly, the "Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" (Files on the Foreign Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany), many of which are freely accessible, include files dating up to the 1990s (https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/aktuelles/themen/akten-zur-auswaertigen-politik/open-access). Secondly, since 2002 the German Government report on cooperation between the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Nations has provided continuous, detailed reporting on Germany's UN engagement for discussion in the German Bundestag (https://dip.bundestag.de/). Thirdly, the United Nations Association of Germany (DGVN), and in particular its journal "Vereinte Nationen / German Review on the United Nations", provides a rich source of analyses and documents. In the case of the journal, its archives are largely freely accessible and easy to use (https://zeitschrift-vereinte-nationen.de/archiv). Volume 4/2023 is devoted to the history and future of German UN policy. The DGVN has in addition released a series of publications of its own, including very substantial collections of essays with contributions from German Permanent Representatives to the United Nations. Further examples of literature recommended in this connection are:

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