

# The Times They Are A-Changin'

**THE MARSHALL CENTER  
CELEBRATES A MILESTONE  
OF ITS OWN**







## By Ralf Roloff

DEPUTY DEAN FOR RESIDENT PROGRAMS AT THE MARSHALL CENTER

**I**n June 2018, the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies celebrated its 25th anniversary amid an increasingly complex, contested and volatile international security environment. Knowledge, experience and the open exchange of ideas are more relevant and important to establishing a peaceful and prosperous security environment in Europe and its neighborhood than ever before. In other words, the Marshall Center has become an indispensable academic and political institution that is highly appreciated in the countries it serves, as well as by its stakeholders, the United States and Germany. For 25 years, the Marshall Center has been operating in this changing and challenging international environment. This anniversary provides a good opportunity to step back to consider the strengths of and the opportunities for this unique institution. What are the prospects and perspectives for the Marshall Center?



The Marshall Center started with a strong German-American partnership. Germany and the U.S. agreed to establish a center for security studies that could support the painful and thorny transformation of former communist states and societies into democratic and well-governed states that tend to integrate into Western security structures, such as NATO and the European Union. Establishing a working system of security cooperation with former Warsaw Pact countries and former Soviet republics was the bread and butter of the Marshall Center's work during its first decade. Security sector reform and democratic control of armed forces had been the main areas of focus of studies and programs. Courses were initially nine months long, not just due to the quantity of subject matter to be covered, but because it was a fundamental premise that security cooperation requires establishing working interpersonal relationships and networks. Building trust and confidence requires the investment of time and effort in the participants — enough time to digest and discuss new perspectives on security sector reform, democratic control of armed forces and a fresh view on the European security architecture.

A second element established throughout the Marshall Center's first decade was outside activities to address contemporary issues relevant to partner countries. The Marshall Center established a conference coordination center that has planned and executed more than 40 events per year throughout the

region. A small but very active unit undertook research on the security aspects of transformation. It became quite clear that the mission of the Marshall Center was directed not only toward supporting transformation, but even more so toward integrating the former Warsaw Pact countries and Soviet republics into the Western security architecture and helping them to prepare for membership in NATO and the EU.

The post-Cold War decade ended abruptly with the terrorist attacks on 9/11. This date marks a sea change in world politics, and it marks a remarkable mission change for the Marshall Center. Building a global coalition for the war on terror became a major effort of the Marshall Center. This shift in mission resulted in the creation of one of the very first programs on countering terrorism worldwide. With the ongoing global fight against terrorism and the large military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, demand grew for support by qualified academic programs on a strategic level. As a result, new residence programs were developed, such as a program for stability, reconstruction and transformation that took a particular look at the opportunities and limits of military and civilian interventions, operations and missions. A third pillar has been a program on homeland security and internal crisis management, which took a comparative perspective regarding U.S. and European approaches, discussing their weaknesses and strengths. These three new programs built a very strong

Bavarian artist Christiane Horn is helped by U.S. military personnel as she prepares for the inauguration of her sculpture of Gen. George C. Marshall at the main entrance to the Marshall Center in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, in 1998. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



response to the growing demand from partner countries, as well as from American and German stakeholders.

As a result, the portfolio of the Marshall Center has been broadened, and with it, the level of expertise has broadened as well. Academic programs further developed in the direction of analyzing transnational security challenges. A full-fledged residence program on countering organized crime and countering transnational trafficking of narcotics was established. As cyberspace has morphed into the backbone of the international economy, society and security, the Marshall Center engaged at a very early stage in developing a cyber security program that goes beyond the technical questions and takes a broader strategic look.

In many aspects, matters of interest have clearly been moving from more regional issues toward transnational and global issues. Perhaps, it has been posited, the logical consequence should be that the George C. Marshall *European Center for Security Studies* becomes the George C. Marshall *Global Center for Security Issues*. Would that move the Marshall Center in the right direction and further develop its mission to keep it relevant for stakeholders and the partner countries? The answer is a lukewarm “not really” — the regional component of the mission remains paramount. This discussion was basically overtaken by events: In 2008, the Russia-Georgia war brought regional security issues back onto the agenda. Even more, the Ukraine crisis and Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 rudely brought the Marshall Center back to the regional reality. It responded to the Russia-Georgia war with a seminar on regional security and to the Ukraine crisis with European security seminars. The Marshall Center has responded to the demand to address in-depth more current and relevant security issues in an ever-challenging European and global security environment with curriculum changes, including a massive increase of nonresident activities and the establishment of a larger nonresident directorate within the College for Security Studies.

With an increasing demand for the timely and policy-relevant exchange of knowledge, expertise and ideas, Marshall Center academic programs are constantly adapting curriculum to meet the highest academic standards, as represented by the accreditation of all its programs under the Bologna Process. Adaptation does not only concern topics and academic quality. Innovative formats for activities and programs have been developed, tested, improved

and implemented. The implementation of tailored seminars for parliamentarians or senior officials in national, bilateral or trilateral formats is a key example. Workshop formats are increasingly replacing classical instruction, and new exercise- and scenario-building formats are finding their way into the curriculum.

The most recent adaptations to the changing security environment are the strategic initiatives. This format introduces a completely new element. It not only brings the Marshall Center’s work closer to policymakers in Germany and the U.S., but to partner countries as well. Relevant security policy issues are discussed in well-established groups of experts and officials, and the results inform policymakers in the U.S. and Germany. With renowned partners such as the Munich Security Conference, the German Marshall Fund,



Then-U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen brief the press during a commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Marshall Plan held at the Marshall Center in 2017.

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the Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik, the Aspen Institute and others, the Marshall Center is positioning itself as a valuable and appreciated partner for strategic dialogue.

“The times they are a-changin’,” Bob Dylan sang. This is not only true of the past 25 years of international security, it is certainly true as well for the work of the Marshall Center. The German-American dimension of the Marshall Center makes it an especially valuable instrument for both partners, given the current trans-Atlantic irritations. For 25 years, the Marshall Center has benefited European security by building a working network of security experts and providing quality programs. The time has come to harvest this huge alumni network and integrate it even more effectively into the curriculum and all other activities. The Marshall Center has great potential to grow its activities and be creative in providing a German-American platform for security studies regionally and globally. The Marshall Center has proved over the past 25 years that there is a desperate need for this type of institution and that it fills a place in the landscape of security institutions that no other can fill. *Ad multos annos*, Marshall Center! □



# What the Past *REVEALS*

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**S**even precarious coalitions battled French attempts to dominate Europe in the Napoleonic wars. Only the last one ultimately prevailed at Waterloo to send the emperor into permanent exile and restore peace to the continent. That peace lasted nearly a century. The alliance itself, having achieved its primary aim, dissolved almost immediately.

The reason there had been six previous coalitions is that various nations had joined for strategic purposes. When those had been secured, they departed the coalition, or, in some instances, Napoleon defeated them and forced them into alliance with France. In those circumstances, the remaining coalition's attempts to permanently defeat Napoleon stalled. Such is the way of most military alliances. Historically, they serve an immediate purpose to combat a credible and pending threat. Once the threat is removed, the armies disperse. Two Western democracies — the United States and United Kingdom — united with the totalitarian communist Soviet Union to battle the fascist powers of Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan in World War II. Once the Axis powers surrendered, members of the Allied coalition of necessity went their separate ways. In contrast, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization alliance of the U.S., Canada and many European nations has survived and succeeded for an unprecedented 70 years, even following the implosion of its chief adversary, the Soviet Union.

In *Grand Strategy and Military Alliances*, authors Peter R. Mansoor and Williamson Murray pull together leading historians to examine military alliances throughout history to establish parallels and discontinuities that are applicable to the present-day NATO alliance and to ad hoc “coalitions of the willing.”

Their premise is that today especially, alliance and coalition are essential requirements for a great power to

## Grand Strategy and Military Alliances

Edited by Peter R. Mansoor  
and Williamson Murray



achieve its strategic goals. The intent of this collection is to show the crucial importance that alliances and coalitions have played in the conduct of strategy in peace and in war over the centuries. In doing so, Mansoor and Murray seek to overcome what they see as the arrogance of, for example, American leaders who have at times in the past 30 years casually dismissed the importance of alliances, other than as “convenient political window dressing for American aims.” An alliance such as NATO has endured for 70 years because all members respect each other and contribute as best they can to the collective defense — an uncoerced coalition of the willing.

Mansoor's and Murray's collection notes the many alliances and coalitions that have succeeded, but their writers also discuss some that have failed magnificently, such as the German-Austrian “alliance” of World War I, and the Axis of Germany-Italy-Japan in World War II. Some alliances were interstate groupings formally constituted by treaty while some of the coalitions represented

more informal groupings, brought together by common interest. They summarize that some consisted “of the willing, the more-or-less willing, and the not so willing.” These degrees of commitment matter less than an agreed strategy to stay together until a common enemy is destroyed.

In the coalitions against France, and then Napoleon, individual members participated for different aims, usually territorial. Some members did not see a necessity in defeating Napoleon for all time. Mansoor and Murray explicate that alliances are more likely to succeed the more closely their aims align. By the time of the seventh coalition, defeating Napoleon for all time had united the alliance members in a go-for-broke grand strategy. And that coalition succeeded where the previous six had failed.

Readers will discover that transparency and unity of command are key elements to successful alliances. The Allied powers in World War II worked tirelessly to ensure this in their respective theaters. Allied strategy sought to exploit the two fronts Germany faced in order to place the enemy in a vice grip. In contrast, the Axis powers did not unite and take military actions together for strategic aims. Germany surprised Japan with its invasion of Russia, while Japan surprised Germany with its attack on Pearl Harbor. They did not coordinate their operations to support the other in any meaningful way. And the Germans sometimes had to bail out Italy from misadventures not previously coordinated with Berlin.

This volume competently and comprehensively explores a variety of alliances, at least from a European perspective. These include the so-called Anglo-American way of war; the Anglo-Prussian alliance and the Seven Years’ War; the Franco-British military alliance during World War I; the Grand Alliance of World War II; and NATO adapting to survive in the Cold War.

Contributors also examine the political and military challenges of coalition warfare, starting with the Peloponnesian War and Sparta’s strategic alliances, and moving to the now obscure Anglo-Burgundian alliance and grand strategy in the Hundred Years’ War. A review of the Franco-American alliance tests the merits of the argument that the Americans could not have secured independence from Great Britain without France’s aid. Another essay disputes the practical utility to either country of the German-Austrian alliance in World War I. The most recent alliance reviewed is that of the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, which is dubbed a “coalition of convenience in a changing world.”

This volume presents many important takeaways, the most important of which is that coalition warfare is hard. National interests often must be subsumed to keep squabbles at bay in diverse alliances. Lead nations must weigh competing cultures, resources and policies for all coalition members, Mansoor and Murray argue. In its alliances to fight global terrorism, the U.S., for instance, learned it needed greater sensitivity when operating with coalition

partners who brought with them national caveats and differing means to operate, train and employ tactics. The authors write that the U.S. military performed poorly with allies because its post-Cold War professional education did not stress sufficiently the importance of alliance and training opportunities with potential allies. Part of this resided with seeking “partners as much to lend international political legitimacy to these ventures as it did to strengthen the coalitions in a military sense.”

Mansoor and Murray stress that “Alliances are stronger when allies need each other, either to stave off defeat or to secure victory. Alliances that include countries as mere political window dressing will invariably be weak creations of major powers with hesitant buy-in from reluctant allies.” In turn, “the creation of effective alliances among unequal powers is possible, but the most powerful alliance member needs to be willing to accommodate the interests of the smaller powers to ensure alliance harmony.”

One must appreciate why such cooperation is essential, whether to formal coalitions or to those that do not exist today, but may in the future, to address a pressing security challenge: Coalition management engages in friction, and friction is inherent in coalitions and alliances going back to the ancient world. The more opportunity to work out differences in peace, the greater opportunity to reduce friction in war.

The authors remind readers that alliance management occurs on three levels: political, military and technical. Of these, the political basis is the most important. The political goals underpinning alliances — whether defense against shared threats, a collective attempt to balance other powers, a mutual desire to conquer, the maintenance of the existing economic and security order, or other objectives — trump all other factors in determining their durability. In recent years, NATO has cooperated in peacekeeping, counterinsurgency and compliance operations. The Alliance has held together throughout, but what has given NATO a more urgent sense of purpose is Russian aggression in Central Asia and hybrid warfare and spoiler activities in Eastern Europe. Countering Russian actions requires political cohesion, and NATO has returned to its principles of active defense in response.

The case studies show that alliances that do not work in peacetime will perform no better (and probably worse) in wartime, when pressure on policymakers and military leaders increases by an order of magnitude. By contrast, leaders who take the time to understand the political and military cultures of allied nations will be most effective in fashioning a cohesive bond among them. “Relationships based on blood, friendship, honor and professional respect can help to smooth relations among allies,” Mansoor and Murray write. In an era when no nation can go it alone in a great military undertaking of any enduring consequence and purpose, these are lessons nations would do well to learn and embrace. □