

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

In 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! □