

High points in the recent past were the appearances by US Vice President Joe Biden. He had previously attended the Munich Security Conference as a senator. In 2009, Munich was his first international appearance as vice president. At the conference, Biden virtually gave a government statement from the new Obama administration aimed at the international public; something similar happened again in 2013 following the reelection of President Obama.

I also remember the sobering moment in 2010 when Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki first raised hopes of a solution to the nuclear conflict and then completely shattered them. The fact that Mottaki had come to the MSC and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had, shortly before the conference, expressed Iran's willingness to cooperate on the nuclear issue gave many participants cause for hope. When the Iranian minister once more merely reiterated the country's well-known position, the realization of another Iranian refusal became all the more clear to everyone.

I am thinking, too, of the most recent conference, in 2013, when a Syrian student who had fled her home took the floor, saying that her people were suffering under the brutality of the regime and the rebels. Why, asked the young woman, was the world standing by doing nothing? She called for more action and fewer conferences.

As a place of reflection, the Munich Security Conference has earned worldwide esteem. In character it stands out from many other conferences. The venue in Munich offers participants direct proximity, specifically fosters unplanned encounters, and opens up interesting dialogues. The interweaving of the international stage with a wide range of confidential, bilateral talks produces the intense atmosphere on which the Security Conference thrives.

*Ulrich Wilhelm is director general of the Bavarian Broadcasting Corporation (BR). The public-service radio and television broadcaster has more than six million viewers and listeners daily. From 2005 to 2010, Wilhelm was spokesman of the German government and director of the Press and Information Office of the German government.*

*Towards Mutual Security, ed. Stiftung*

*Winnover Sicherheitskonferenz.*

*Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht (2014)*

*Bristol, UT USA | Göttingen*

*(6 pages) 343-348*



## “I Didn’t Know They Were Letting Girls Go to Wehrkunde”

Catherine McArdle Kelleher

In the late eighties, when the word spread that I had an invitation to “Munich,” a jealous American think-tank colleague snarled, “I didn’t know they were letting girls go to Wehrkunde.” I smiled as sweetly as I could and promised to debrief him when I was back.

He was right to be jealous. The Munich Security Conference is, and always has been, a great opportunity for those engaged in security policy at the national and global level. It stands almost alone as a wide-ranging policy review and annual conference, a mixture of political conference and intimate discussions, involving superstars of today, supporting staffers hoping to be the stars of the future, and featuring interchange with friends and occasional adversaries. It is always interesting and challenging, a reflection of crucial debates past, crises present, and risks future. I have attended in a number of capacities: official in the Department of Defense and at NATO, accompanying staffer, student of Russian-American-European relations in general and German security policy in particular, and interested policy critic. I have always learned a great deal and left with a whetted appetite for more.

What stand out most, though, are the almost unique opportunities for serious discussion that Munich provides. Some have seen it as the security twin of Davos: a type of mid-winter blood pressure check for the great and the good and a chance to catch up between formal organizational meetings. Munich, however, has always seemed more than that to me, especially in the ratio of serious participants to hangers-on or "wannabes." As Ewald Heinrich von Kleist intended from the first, it is a place for critical conversations, for launching and testing out new ideas or new compromises, for corridor conversations of moment. There have been a number of significant co-located negotiations. One of my strongest memories indeed is of the late Richard Holbrooke energetically striding through the lobby of the Hotel Bayerischer Hof with a number of Bosnian political figures in tow. Their destination was a major meeting in a hotel conference room to carry on the search for consensus late into the night.

There are also clear memories of the many "bilateral" meetings when I worked as a Defense Department official, particularly those I did in support of Secretary William Perry and Secretary William Cohen. Each used these meetings on the sidelines of the general conference to explore both broad issues and specific agreements, with "deliverables" always in view. The process is almost invariably the same. At the appointed hour, a small delegation from each side exits the main hall and sweeps into small associated rooms, there to be shielded both from other participants and the increasing number of global press Munich has attracted. Most of these meetings were productive and civil, but a few during the Yugoslav wars in particular were exercises in frozen hostility, lightened only somewhat by Munich's mid-winter warmth. One or two even featured unscripted exchanges, as when Perry and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, both by then security stars, fell into comparing their starts in science and reminiscing about their respective career paths.

For Americans, Munich has also been unique because of the strong representation of both the executive branch and Congress at the same discussion table. The secretaries of defense have almost always come; in recent years secretaries of state have increasingly joined them. But the simultaneous and almost "equal" presence of congressional figures, giving and receiving messages directly, is novel for all sides. Powers such as John McCain, Joe Lieberman, Ellen Tauscher, Susan Collins, Jane Harman, and earlier, John Tower and Les Aspin, have been regular attendees and have often taken the floor to advance their own ideas. The Vladimir Putin-John McCain exchanges in the last decade were particularly memorable. But for many lesser lights, this has been a special experience, and an invitation to join

the congressional "delegation" has been eagerly sought after. The lure is the chance to meet European and Asian leaders, to observe the policy interactions directly, and to connect with a range of scholars and critics they would otherwise never encounter, let alone debate. I am told that the congressional breakfast that is always held is remarkably open and cordial. Given the recent regrettable narrowing of America's global vision and individual international experience, as well as its off-and-on political stalemate, these achievements take on new significance.

As a research scholar myself, I have also witnessed or been a small part of the many "test balloons" and policy suggestions that transnational groups have launched at the Munich Security Conference. Of particular note were the side meetings and discussions of scholars in the nineties who first began the work of untangling the individual and conjoined nuclear histories of Great Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. Led by Uwe Nerlich of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik and Ernest May of Harvard, and supported by the MacArthur and other foundations, these represented a distinct break with the past and led to the training of a whole new cohort of men and women interested in these issues on both sides of the Atlantic.

A more recent example and one perhaps more central to the core Munich discussions was the presentation of the results of two years of study and discussion by the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI) that was co-chaired by Munich's Wolfgang Ischinger, Senator Sam Nunn, and former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov. To me as an EASI commissioner, Munich presented a remarkable opportunity to broadcast the findings and to attract attention for EASI's ideas from precisely the people we called upon to act. Beyond the formal recommendations, EASI's successful trilateral approach had a considerable impact on its two dozen elite participants, was well received by the Munich conference participants, and has already given rise to a number of follow-on efforts and imitators.

I have also enjoyed the continuing professional and personal contacts Munich allows in a compressed time and space. I always see and interact with friends, colleagues from past posts, and officials I have interviewed and tracked over my own career. Sometimes, especially in earlier days, this tested the limits of protocol. An older member of the conference staff once reminded a small reminiscing group of us (younger then and perhaps more unruly in the hotel lobby than we should have been) that the real Munich conference was happening behind the closed doors of the conference hall. We meekly followed him back into the hall, but even then, I found some of the informal experiences close in just as valuable as some of the prepared speeches.

That assessment certainly holds true for conversations I have had with the women I have been privileged to meet and cooperate with at the Munich meetings. In recent years, this has become easier as more and more women have risen to levels of authority that command their presence at Munich. The Munich Security Conference now surpasses most other security conferences (for example, the annual International Institute for Security Studies meetings) in the number of women and the conference roles they have been accorded, formally and informally. Women politicians from Germany and Europe always came and spoke from the floor: among them Uta Zapf, Claudia Roth, Ilse Aigner, Brigitte Schulte, and Susanne Kastner. Moreover, the addresses by Chancellor Angela Merkel, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and the European Union's Lady Catherine Ashton alone have set a high standard both substantively and as an encouragement to younger women—and men.

But the relative ease of exchanges today can also be attributed to a stimulating development, the associated meeting of a “women’s breakfast” organized for the past three years by the Bavarian state government under State Secretary Emilia Müller, the Hanns Seidel Foundation, and Women in International Security Germany (WIIS.de), led by Constanze Stelzenmüller. Brief but focused, these meetings have attracted, among others, Hillary Clinton, Michele Flournoy, a remarkable group of American congresswomen, several European Union commissioners, defense officials, ambassadors, journalists, and scholars. Held at the Prinz-Carl-Palais, the gathering has had more than forty women in attendance in the past two years and attracted considerable press attention. It is without question a tradition to be continued and extended.

Even in earlier days, when the number of women formally invited to *Wehrkunde* was far smaller, there were interesting and challenging contributions from women—if not always from the podium, then certainly in numerous questions from the floor and in published commentaries by researchers and journalists. One of those who was always larger than life was the *International Herald Tribune*'s Flora Lewis, who attended regularly and always wrote two or three thoughtful commentaries on speeches or issues that came up at the conference. When these were reprinted in the *New York Times*, many American foreign policy watchers got their first taste of what had happened at Munich. Other notable English-language journalists known for their reporting on Munich meetings over the years include Elizabeth Pond and Judy Dempsey.

Not all were fans of the conference method. I am reminded of distinctly wry comments from a German colleague about whether military

transformation and Bundeswehr reform would succumb to the “conference approach.” In earlier days, reflecting realities in both the academic and the think-tank world, most of the researchers were from the United States, from the United Kingdom, and from northern Europe. I vividly recall some sharp interventions from the floor, for example by now Dame Pauline Neville-Jones of the UK.

Once the post-Cold War transformation began, there was an influx of journalists and researchers from Eastern and Central Europe—and especially the former Yugoslavia, which was then being torn apart by civil war. In their case, intentionally or not, the meetings were part of a broader socialization effort, an attempt to integrate women in the new democracies into a broader international level of debate and discourse. Several later went on to hold high posts in the security establishments of their countries. In the past the same was true as well for women from a number of West European states.

As the Munich Security Conference meetings continue to expand their parameters to take in Asian and Middle Eastern security issues and balances, the inclusion of women from these areas will be a challenge; their present numbers are small. This is the spirit of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: to multiply the opportunities for women to lead in all aspects of security decision-making. I am sure this will be an item on the conference’s agenda of outreach and engagement.

My last comments on Munich’s “socialization” function reveal part of my answer to the now somewhat musty question: why does the participation of women in the Munich meetings matter? My own experience is certainly one indicator. “Girls,” to use the word of my past colleague, not only get invited; they even star at Munich. Over a span approaching three decades as a participant in the Munich Security Conference, I have seen the number and influence of women grow in the security sectors of government, the military, business, and intellectual life. They not only deserve a voice; they unquestionably enrich the dialogue and the debate, as the experience at Munich has underscored time and time again.

More women will appear at the podium as this trend continues. But more may well have to be done in targeted invitations or within the Munich Young Leaders group to ensure the trend continues in all categories. Now that security is defined globally, women in some areas may need disproportionately greater opportunities for socialization and exposure to the domain of defense than their male colleagues do to be fully effective as leaders or even analysts. Munich provides one opportunity. Women in International Security or WIIS, a global network I helped found, is another. Still others

should be created and extended to reach the goal of equal treatment and advancement—in political and military life, in journalism and diplomacy in civilian life and in combat. I confidently predict that the women who emerge as leaders from these broader programs will not do any worse than the 50 percent of the population that has up to now held sway.

Women are increasingly present as both actors and subjects in the security enterprise, and they should be involved fully and prominently in the global security interchange as well as in their domestic political frameworks. Especially at more recent meetings, the Munich conferences have made persistent, observable contributions to advancing women's participation in all conference categories. These conferences and the women who have contributed to them are the better for it.

*Catherine McArdle Kelleher is College Park Professor of Public Policy at the University of Maryland and professor emerita for strategic research at the Naval War College. She has served in numerous US government positions, including as US defense advisor to NATO and deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia.*

## The Munich Young Leaders

Klaus Wehmeier and Thomas Paulsen

There was absolute silence—a rare moment in the otherwise bustling large hall of the Hotel Bayerischer Hof. Only the spotlights aimed at the stage of the 49th Munich Security Conference hummed softly as Kholoud Mansour spoke about the tragedy in her home country of Syria. The emotional statement by the young Syrian journalist, who was attending the conference as one of twenty-five young professionals in the field of security policy, the Munich Young Leaders, was not really going to fit in with the otherwise sober, analytical conference discussion. Her people were suffering, and the international community was standing by and watching, argued the political scientist, who has since fled from Syria, in front of the international security policy elite gathered together in Munich. “We need more action and fewer conferences”—Kholoud Mansour’s appeal was an expression of rage and despair not only at the passivity of the international community but also at the disunity of the Syrian opposition. No, she did not expect any decisive moves to resolve the Syrian crisis, said Kholoud Mansour after her appearance—even though some observers rated the first meeting between Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and the head of the Syrian opposition, Moaz Al-Khatib (who has since resigned), on the margins of the 49th Munich Security