



Dr. Gert R. Polli

Keynote Speaker
Expert on Politics,
Security and Intelligence Agencies



September 2001. It had only been eleven days since I had transferred from the Foreign Military Intelligence Service to the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, when I was asked by an evidently frenzied and panicky on-duty officer to join the rest of the team in the briefing room. A small group of officials were staring in disbelief at the overly large monitors in the room. CNN was live and broadcasting extremely frightening and shocking images. Moments before, a passenger plane had flown directly into one of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York. I assumed at first that it must have been an accident until it became clear that an identical scene had taken place just a few minutes before with another plane, into the side of the other tower. At the time I had no idea just how much of an effect this would have on my professional and private life. I was just about to reorganise and restructure the very organisation in Austria that would become the leading force on counterterrorism: the Austrian Federal Agency for State Protection and Counterterrorism (BVT). When I was entrusted with the position of leading this department three months later, nothing was as it used to be, and when I stepped down from this position in 2008, the world had fundamentally changed, and I with it.

Dr. Gert R. Polli

Founder & former director of the Austrian Federal Agency for State Protection and Counterterrorism (the domestic Austrian intelligence agency)

Lecture Topics



LECTURE 1

Our intelligence services have, throughout the decades, caused lasting damage to the European economy.

(Intelligence Services, Snowden & Industrial Espionage)

Industrial espionage is the fastest growing type of crime, yet simultaneously the most overlooked. In Germany alone, the annual loss as a result of this type of offence is estimated at over 50 billion euros. Intelligence agencies worldwide have perfected their espionage techniques over the last two decades. The national intelligence services in Germany and Austria have not only been unable to keep up with these developments, but have even taken on a considerable role themselves in the sell-out of European businesses.

“National intelligence communities, however, have also begun to pursue new targets. Examples include research centres and private companies. [...] What is happening to this huge amount of stolen sensitive information is still an open question. What is for sure is that the resulting losses can be devastating. A 2014 report jointly released by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the McAfee Company, for example, suggests that cyber espionage could cost up to 1.5% of a country’s GDP. But regardless of the actual figure, steps need to be taken to protect European industry.”

MASSIMO PELLEGRINO, Analyst at the EUISS (European Union Institute for Security Studies)

LECTURE 2

How severely are our commercial enterprises damaged by foreign intelligence services?

(Intelligence Services, Snowden & Industrial Espionage)

Since the revelations of Project-Echelon at the turn of the century, the extent to which foreign intelligence services are interested in our domestic economies and industries has been publicly known. The scale on which this type of espionage is practised in Europe, however, was only revealed as result of a series of documents leaked by Edward Snowden. To this day, no thorough investigation into this practice has taken place. The governments of Germany and Austria have simply continued to go about their daily routines -- a serious misjudgement of the situation in light of the looming economic war between the US and Europe.

“Would [...] somebody do a technological analysis of something from a friendly country, which had no importance, other than a commercial use, and then let it sit on the shelf because it couldn't be given to the American company? I think that would be a misuse of the [intelligence] community's resources. I don't think it would be done.”

JAMES WOOLSEY, former Director of the CIA

LECTURE 3

Do our intelligence services, security agencies and Internet service providers have our privacy under control?

(Intelligence Services, Snowden & Industrial Espionage)

Are we really in control of our private and personal data? Could we have been for a long time mere pawns in the strategies of the intelligence services, security agencies, Internet service providers, and global corporations such as Google and Facebook? The world of data is the most profitable business in our century. We are going to be witnesses to developments which will not only reorder the current media landscape but also our private lives.

“The ultimate goal of the NSA is total population control.”
WILLIAM BINNEY, former Technical Director of the NSA

LECTURE 4

Security policies do not increase the safety of the population but serve only to calm the public down.

(Potential Attackers, Terrorism & Surveillance)

Terror has reached Europe. Berlin, Paris, and Brussels are only the beginning of an alarming trend that is totally out of control. A look at the new security policies shows the powerlessness of politics and the authorities in dealing with this new phenomenon; they are so ineffective that one might even get the impression that European governments are actually pursuing completely different objectives.

“In the wake of a series of appalling attacks, from Paris to Berlin, governments have rushed through a raft of disproportionate and discriminatory laws. Taken alone these individual counter-terrorism measures are worrying enough, but when seen together, a disturbing picture emerges in which unchecked powers are trampling freedoms that have long been taken for granted.”

JOHN DALHUISEN, Amnesty International's Director for Europe

LECTURE 5

The design of the Austrian and German security policy and its actual value for the fight against terrorism.

(Potential Attackers, Terrorism & Surveillance)

These so-called anti-terror policies are designed to calm the general public down. This is particularly evident in election years such as 2017 where we see elections in Germany and France, as well as Austria, where there will be a snap election in autumn. The reality, however, looks different. Instead of finally reorganising the cumbersome structure of the security services, governments pass one new security policy after the other, while the actual roots of the security problems remain unresolved.

“It is a commonplace that Western integration after World War II had the aim of preventing a revival of German power on the European continent. The evolving security architecture was established by the Allies in order to ‘keep the Germans down’ (quote from the British diplomat and 1st Secretary General of NATO, ISMAY HASTINGS).”
SIMON BULMER & CHRISTIAN LEQUESNE, extract from the book “The Member States of the European Union”
The new European Union Series by Oxford University Press

LECTURE 6

The surveillance state and the line of argument regarding counterterrorism.

(Potential Attackers, Terrorism & Surveillance)

Since 09/11 the surveillance state has been continuously advancing. These measures have failed in curbing terrorism -- worse even, acts of terrorism have been increasing ever since. The measures taken by the surveillance state have long been in a symbiotic relationship with the subject of counterterrorism. It is still not clear, however, why the surveillance state should profit from actions against terrorism.

“The NSA is mass-collecting on everyone and it’s said to be about terrorism
but inside the US it has stopped zero attacks.”

WILLIAM BINNEY, former Technical Director of the NSA

LECTURE 7

Europe's fear of the end of American world policing.

(General Political Topics)

What we are experiencing right now is a transition into a new political era. The European Union has hit rock bottom: the monetary union, the banking crisis, and the rise of left and right wing populist parties. Accompanied by citizens' general loss of confidence in politics and the European Union, the EU has been led into an existential crisis. That is not all - the free ride Europe has been enjoying with regard to US interventions in crisis situations seems to be nearing its end with the election of the new US president. Europe needs to stand up and have an essential debate on the principles of European security policy, just at a time when the EU is weak and unable to act effectively. All signs point towards change.

"If the Europeans truly wish to improve their NATO contribution they can show it simply enough. They can establish professional armed forces, like those of the UK. And they can acquire more advanced technology. Indeed, unless that happens soon the gulf between the European and US capabilities will yawn so wide that it will not be possible to share the same battlefield. Alas, I do not think that sharing battlefields with our American friends - but rather disputing global primacy with them - is what European defence plans are truly about."

MARGARET THATCHER, former Prime Minister of the UK and Leader of the Conservative Party

LECTURE 8

Donald Trump, Europe, and Germany. What next?

(General Political Topics)

“We’re going to have to wrap ourselves up warmly”, was the assessment of the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Siegmar Gabriel. Europe, and above all Germany, is highly concerned. The new American president seems to lead his country like the CEO of a global corporation. Economic wars between Europe and the USA are inevitable and, as it would seem when looking at the new US policies, predetermined. “America first”, is the slogan of the new American government, and when Trump refers to Europe, he means Germany. The 70 year long era of German-American harmony is drawing to a close. Germany’s ‘good-faith’ policy towards the US has rendered the country defenceless

“Trump has a clear goal: the division of Europe and the destruction of the European domestic market. The fact that Brexit propagandist Nigel Farage was the first European he received in his tower speaks volumes. That is why we must strengthen the European domestic market and work even more closely together in Europe.

That is absolutely compulsory for Germany.”

MARTIN SCHULZ, former President of the European Parliament

LECTURE 9

Current political and security-related developments in and around Europe.

(General Political Topics)

Never have we had a period in which so many military, social, political, and virtual conflicts have been fought at the same time. It seems as if we have lost control of our political environment. The European Union seems to be going through a phase of fundamental reconfiguration. Germany is taking a leading role within Europe. Old resentments threaten to undermine the homogeneity and common values of the European Union. Russia is on the verge of redefining its geopolitical role in the world and establishing itself as a major player in the Middle East. This region has been permanently changed through the on-going conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and not to the advantage of European security. Terrorism, illegal migration, and the refugee crisis are directly linked to the security situation in the Middle East and Africa. It was the Arab Spring that prepared the ground in Europe for this, and for what is to come. Europe is expecting a new wave of refugees from Africa, and it is uncertain whether the EU will be able to bring a halt to this concerning trend through a policy of stabilisation. Overlaying this already ominous situation is the lack of predictability of US foreign policy. Indeed, with regard to NATO, the future of European security policy seems uncertain. Already the conventional components of NATO are undermined by an on-going cyber war against private companies, as well as daily attacks on critical Western infrastructure. Moreover, these already concerning trends are overlaid by the fact that it seems possible for outside forces to intervene in democratic elections. Our world has become much more uncertain, and this is only the beginning.

“When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges, and fashioning and implementing foreign and defense policies, the United States and Europe have parted ways.”
ROBERT KAGAN, US historian, author, columnist and foreign-policy commentator

VORTRAG 10

Are we heading towards social unrest and is the state prepared for it?

(General Political Topics)

Instability on Europe's borders has led to the import of crime and terrorism. Since 09/11, and even before, the state has been reacting to terrorism with more surveillance and radical restrictions to privacy. One cannot help but have the impression that the state's primary goal is not to fight terrorism, but rather to develop instruments that may be used to suppress civil unrest. Until now the situation is still calm and the public patient. However, the first signs of a changing society are already visible.

"Truth is suppressed, not to protect the country from enemy agents
but to protect the Government of the day against the people."
ROY HATTERSLEY, British MP and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party

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Lectures

Dr. Gert R. Polli gives lectures in German and English.

The lectures are designed for a time window of 60-90 minutes. Each lecture is adapted to suit each particular event. Special themes are available on request.

Dr. Gert R. Polli is available for:

- # Conferences
- # Subject-specific events
- # Keynote speeches
- # Conferences
- # Leadership training courses and events
- # Panel discussions
- # Political events
- # Customer events

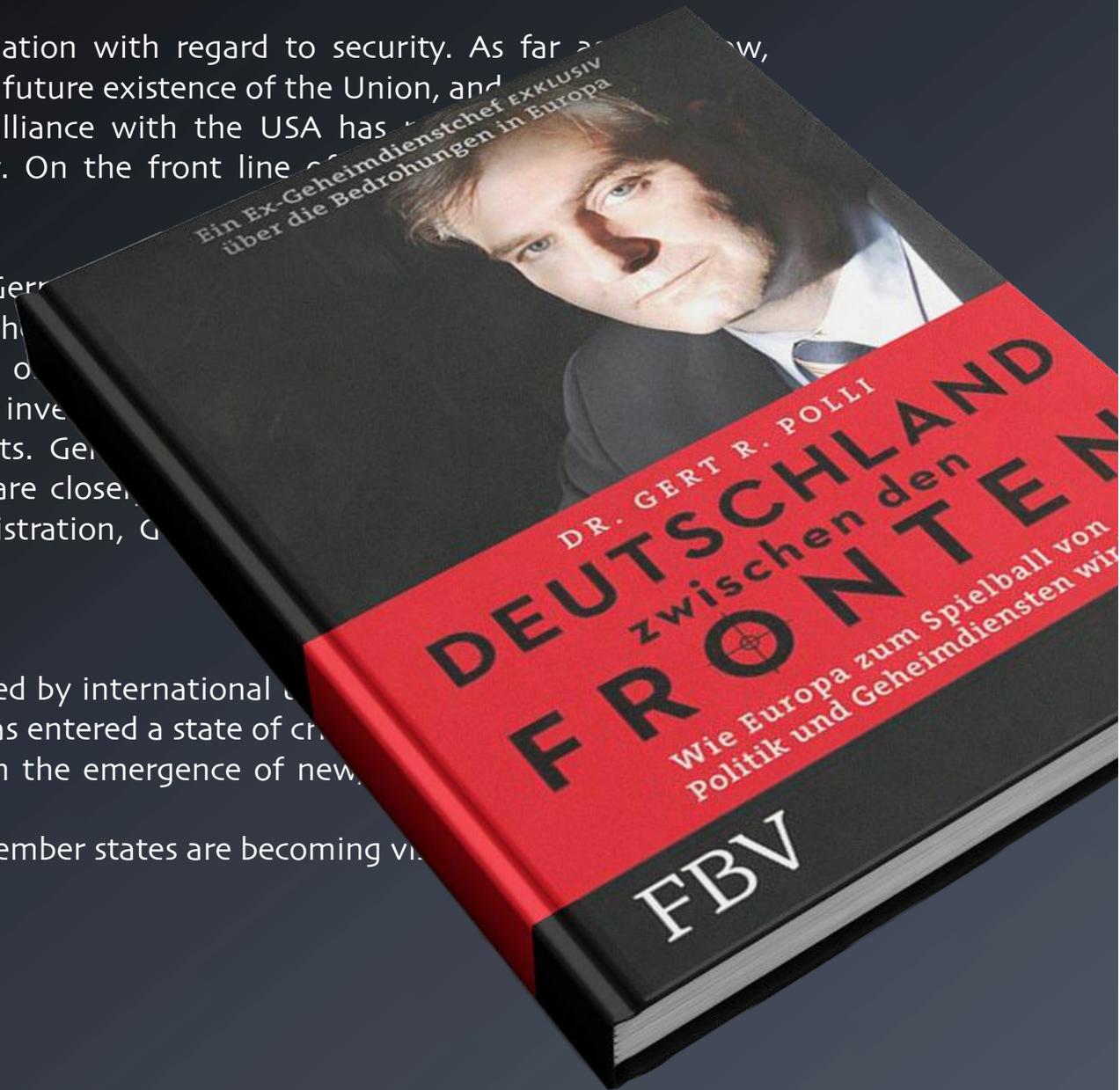


Book Author

Europe, and therefore the EU, is in a critical situation with regard to security. As far as we know, Germany is once again becoming a key factor in the future existence of the Union, and defenceless. Over the decades, a misinterpreted alliance with the USA has led to the surveillance of Europe, and in particular Germany. On the front line are our intelligence agencies and their agents.

Particularly controversial is the role that the BND (German Federal Intelligence Agency) has played in the background. For this realisation and many other reasons, the whistleblower Edward Snowden. The implications of this operation are disturbing. Not even a favourable outcome from an investigation by the Bundestag committee, can distract from these facts. Germany's politics, economy, and its intelligence capabilities are closely linked to its intelligence agencies. Under America's new administration, Germany is not simple, indeed, quite the contrary.

The global struggle for resources is being exacerbated by international competition right to the heart of Europe. The European Union has entered a state of crisis. It seems to be on the verge of disintegration. With the emergence of new, right-wing parties, shifts in our democratic structures within the European member states are becoming visible.



"Equally thrilling and distressing, as well as excellently written."
GEORG HODOLITSCH, Program Manager FinanzBuch Verlag

Presentation

Gert R. Polli's expertise lies in his 25-year career as a high-ranking officer in the Austrian Armed Forces, the majority of which was spent in the Military Foreign Intelligence Service, the HNaA. Only a few days before 9/11, he had been appointed to the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior in order to restructure and reorganise the Austrian Civil Intelligence Service. Subsequently, he was entrusted with the management of the Austrian Federal Agency for State Protection and Counterterrorism (BVT). Like no other, he scrutinised the developments and extremes that the "war on terror" brought about. As chairman of the "Middle European Conference" and member of the "Club of Bern", both high profile pan-European informal intelligence platforms, he was in constant contact with other European intelligence agencies. His interests, however, are far from limited to intelligence services; he is extremely well informed on the wider political developments in Europe. As a professional officer and a qualified political scientist, and as a top official in the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, Gert R. Polli is in the perfect position to critically examine security-related issues and present them in a current context.

Beyond even the fact that he is a holder of the "Great Badge of Honour for Meritorious Services to the Republic of Austria", it is his human merit that truly distinguishes him. His decision to share his knowledge with the public is based on a desire to create a foundation of information in times of political and social upheaval, thereby contributing to the positive development of Europe.

It might seem unexpected that the former head of an intelligence agency is writing a book. Indeed it is contrary to the particularity of this group of people, who generally see themselves as being part of a system that is largely misunderstood by the general public. The motivation to do so stems from my desire to present larger security policy related issues in a way that it is more understandable to everyone, and to divulge trends and draw conclusions which are otherwise not accessible to the public. I also want to support an atmosphere of new beginnings in Europe -- an atmosphere of departure from a European identity based around national security, and a return to the values which Europe stands for. This does not have to be a contradiction; it is a Gordian knot that must be solved if we want Europe as we know it to continue to exist.

This book is intended to convey insights and context, and to create awareness in a period of political and social upheaval.

DR. GERT R. POLLI, extract from his book 'Deutschland zwischen den Fronten'

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