

Publications

# Standing Together. Protecting Each Other.

*Speeches* from the  
Eric M. Warburg Award Ceremony  
honoring NATO Secretary General  
Jens Stoltenberg



**ATLANTIK-BRÜCKE**

# Standing Together. Protecting Each Other.

This publication was curated on the occasion of awarding the Eric M. Warburg Award to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on April 25, 2024 at St. Elisabeth-Kirche, Berlin.

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### SPEECHES BY

- **Laudator** Irina Scherbakova,  
*founding member of the human rights organization Memorial,  
recipient of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize*

- **Honored Guest** Boris Pistorius,  
*Federal Minister of Defense*

- **Laureate** Jens Stoltenberg,  
*NATO Secretary General*



With Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine challenging international law and democratic values, Europe is suddenly threatened with a return to the turmoil of the 20th century.

Since then, NATO has demonstrated that it is not only very much alive, but also united, fulfilling its mission, and fit for the future. This is the achievement of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. He embodies the steadfast personality needed to lead an organization that guarantees our security.

On the occasion of NATO's 75th anniversary in Brussels, Jens Stoltenberg offered some useful advice to member states: The United States and Europe must remain strong and they must remain fully committed to NATO. Because an attack on one member is an attack on all.

Let's hope we all follow Jens Stoltenberg's guidance. He truly deserves the Eric M. Warburg Award, and Atlantik-Brücke is very grateful to him for having accepted it.

**Sigmar Gabriel**  
*Chairman Atlantik-Brücke*

**Julia Friedlander**  
*CEO Atlantik-Brücke*

Laudatio / Irina Scherbakova



**Dear Friends,  
Dear Jens Stoltenberg,**

I'm deeply honored to present you, Mr. Secretary General Stoltenberg, with this year's Eric M. Warburg Award for your

outstanding contributions to transatlantic relations and in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the NATO Alliance.

On this occasion I want to share a few personal thoughts and hope you can forgive me my poor spoken English! If someone had told me years ago that I'd be giving a speech thanking you for your work to strengthen NATO and build up armaments in Europe, I probably would have shaken my head in disbelief. In my wildest dreams I couldn't have imagined having to learn about things like Patriot-systems and Leopard-tanks! The memories of World War II were deeply painful for my generation, and we were gripped by the fear of the cold war escalating into a hot one! Mr. Stoltenberg, coming from a country that endured Nazi occupation, I think you know exactly what I mean.

Many of us behind the iron curtain saw NATO as a way to keep Soviet aggression at least somewhat in check. And there was a real feeling of hopelessness when the Soviet army crushed the uprisings in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring in 1968. The West couldn't of course directly confront the Warsaw Pact and risk another war in Europe, but that also meant that any hope for democracy in Eastern Europe for a very long time was lost.

By the time Perestroika came around and Gorbachev famously declared that "Europe is our common home," hope blossomed that the Cold War was finally coming to an end, along with the longstanding confrontation between the two blocs. I'm sure you shared in these hopes too! This was soon followed by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the demise of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and the dissolution

of the USSR. During these transformative years in Russia, the image of the North Atlantic bloc as a collective *bete noire* almost vanished. However, to our deep disappointment, our hopes for this *common home* never came true.

Since Putin came to power, a new confrontation with the West has become increasingly apparent. Putin's doctrine revolves around portraying NATO as the main enemy. This new 'era' saw the rise of aggressive nationalism in Russian society and politics, all while attributing aggressive intentions to NATO. As evidenced by Putin's notorious speech at the Munich Security Conference. Indeed, the 2007 attack on Georgia should have been a warning sign! But when the Baltic States joined NATO, some still saw it as excessive caution, as a kind of traumareponse to years of Russian imperial aggression. However, NATO membership provided them with genuine security.

And sadly, we now see that their fears were justified. As Putinism grew more and more aggressive and militaristic, and our past was twisted and manipulated into post-imperial mythologies, Cold War rhetoric resurfaced. This was clearly visible when May 9, Victory Day in Russia, became not a day of commemoration but a display of resurging militarism, highlighted by processions of missiles and military parades. We, in Memorial, repeatedly cautioned Western leaders about these escalating threats. Unfortunately, our warnings were not heeded sufficiently in Europe, even as this militaristic rhetoric escalated to the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine. However, unlike many others, you, Mr. Stoltenberg, recognized and understood these dangers! In fact, even before Crimea's annexation, you were vocal about Russia's threats to security and stability in Europe.

You took over NATO when Crimea had already been annexed, when the war in eastern Ukraine had begun,

although many in Europe didn't want to admit it. But you did not entertain any illusions about appeasing Putin; instead, you worked on building up the military strength of the alliance and urged us to prepare for the threats that came from Putin's regime. This policy was difficult in every respect! The illusions were too strong! It was too scary for some to admit that the entire system of international security had been blown up by Putin, that it was once again time not to disarm but to arm, and that Europe was dealing with an unpredictable brutal aggression. And it is because of those persistent illusions that right now we find ourselves in an Orwellian world where those who advocate for peace, or rather appeasement, are not truly seeking peace but enabling Putin's expansionist agenda.

In this vein, I want to remind everyone of your recent statement:

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*“If Putin wins in Ukraine, there is no guarantee that Russian aggression will not spread to other countries. The best defense now is to support Ukraine and invest in NATO's military capabilities. Deterrence only works if it is credible!”*

So now I deliver this speech with heartfelt gratitude for your understanding and steadfastness during these challenging times. Putin anticipates progress on the frontlines by May 9, while Ukraine is valiantly fighting with dwindling resources.

I implore you: do not waver in your efforts. The fate of Ukraine, the peace and security of millions across Europe depend on it. And the hopes of Russians like me.

Speech / Boris Pistorius



**Secretary-General, Jens,  
Irina Scherbakova,  
Sigmar,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is no easy task to speak after such a distinguished historian, human rights advocate and Nobel Peace Prize winner and before the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and

recipient of this year's Eric M. Warburg Award. If you like, my role tonight is to build the bridge between the laudation and the award ceremony. Building bridges is the key term of the evening and is exactly what the Atlantik-Brücke has been doing with great success for more than seven decades.

Sigmar Gabriel mentioned it at the beginning: For the past 72 years, the Atlantik-Brücke has spanned a bridge over the Atlantic by bringing people together for the joint transatlantic project and by promoting mutual understanding through personal encounters. Over the years, these efforts have contributed to the strengthening of our freedom, security, trust and friendship.

The same is true for you, dear Jens Stoltenberg. I don't want to repeat what Irina Scherbakova said. Rather, I would like to share three personal memories from the past 15 months in which we worked together. They also illustrate the path Germany has taken in the context of our *Zeitenwende*.

The first time we met was on my second day in office as Germany's defense minister. It was a cold January day and we both participated in the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting at Ramstein Air Base. I was very new in my job, but one thing was immediately clear to me: Jens is a man who speaks his mind and who stands up for his beliefs and his values. Right from the beginning of the war in Ukraine, every member of the Alliance knew: When the going gets tough, we can count on NATO and we can count on Jens.

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Jens, since day one, we have continuously worked together to support our brave Ukrainian friends so that Ukraine can prevail in this war and can build a peaceful future. I believe that the situation in Ukraine is Europe's most decisive strategic issue today. That is why Germany is front and center when it comes to helping to resolve this issue.

Be it through our defense systems ranging from Gepard to IRIS-T SLM to Patriot. Of which we have only recently decided to send a third one to Ukraine. Be it through our training of military personnel in Germany, or be it through the delivery of humanitarian goods.

Let me also highlight how glad I am that the U.S. Congress has passed the 61 billion US Dollar aid package for Ukraine. This decision could save thousands of Ukrainian lives at a time in which Russia's determination to win this cruel and bloody war shows no sign of fading.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is our joint task to ensure that when this war is finally over, Russia will not be the one to dictate the terms of settlement. Therefore, our support cannot and will not falter.

Jens, you have witnessed first-hand the transformation of Germany's security and defense policy over the past decade. You know how far we have come from negotiating the Wales Summit declaration to actually spending more on our armed forces this year than ever before. And I can assure you: I am working very hard to increase this level of defense spending substantially.

We had to face up to a new reality. A reality in which we have a free and democratic Europe on one side, and an authoritarian and war-mongering Russia on the other. You accompanied Germany in this process and you played a role in encouraging us to grow up fast in security terms, to take more courageous steps and to demonstrate leadership.

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That brings me to the second memory I would like to share tonight. It took place in Lithuania in June of last year when we attended the NATO exercise Griffin Storm. I would argue our decision to permanently deploy a combat-ready brigade to Lithuania is one of the most visible signs that Germany has indeed grown up when it comes to security policy.

The decision is a big and costly step for Germany, and it is a lighthouse project of the *Zeitenwende*: A strong message that for us, national defense equals collective defense. The security of our Allies is our security. Their freedom is our freedom. And we stand firm and ready to jointly defend both.

Together with our Allies we are sending a strong message to Putin: If any Russian soldier puts his boots on Allied territory, we will defend every inch of it. You were if I remember correctly, taken somewhat by surprise by my decision, nevertheless you were immediately by my side and supported us all the way. I will always remember that.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I promised to share three memories, so I will use my third story to build a bridge between 2019 and the coming summer. As the first representative of an international organization to speak to both chambers of the U.S. Congress in 2019 you gave an impressive speech, to which I listened carefully back then. I want to quote one paragraph which, in my view, captures the essence of the transatlantic partnership very well:

*“Europe and North America are not separated by the Atlantic Ocean. We are united by it. And just like the Atlantic, NATO unites our continents. Our nations. And our people. It has done so for 70 years. And today we must do everything in our power to maintain that unity for future generations. Because come what may, we are stronger and safer when we stand together.”*

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When I travel to the United States and meet with my U.S. colleague, Lloyd Austin, and other senior policy makers in Washington D.C. and New York in less than two weeks, this will be one of my messages.

All of us in free Europe are grateful for the U.S. security umbrella over the past seventy-five years. Germany is a proud and committed member of our Alliance in the heart of Europe. Both sides of the Atlantic have always benefited from this close partnership. It remains central to our security and we do and will not take it for granted. That is why we are working hard to make the European contribution to transatlantic burden-sharing more relevant.

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Jens,

Without you, the Alliance would not be what it is today. Together with you, we have increased the group of NATO members by four countries. We have strengthened our military posture from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. And together, we have proven that the West is anything but weak. The West stands strong. At the upcoming NATO summit we will demonstrate that we are stronger and more united than ever before! The NATO summit in Washington, D.C. will be historic in many ways. Not only will it be NATO's 75th anniversary and your last summit as Secretary General, but also the summit to underline our determination to keep our Alliance strong and united.

Jens, please accept my warm congratulations on the Eric M. Warburg Award and thank you for your commitment to build bridges for our security and freedom.

Thank you.

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18 Acceptance speech / Jens Stoltenberg



**Good evening, Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Sigmar, Dear Irina,  
Dear Boris,**

Thank you so much for your kind words. I'm not used to this. It is very nice but it also reminds me of the fact that I am getting old. That is also okay. Thank you.

I'm very honored and humbled by receiving this award tonight. And a special thanks to Sigmar and Atlantik-Brücke for hosting us all and organizing this event.

After the War, the Atlantik-Brücke helped anchor the Federal Republic in the political and cultural West. It also played an important role in building a strong transatlantic relationship with Germany at its core. By doing so, Atlantik-Brücke helped to make NATO stronger.

And Sigmar, I promise to not tell any details from the time we met but I can say that make NATO stronger was not the main purpose of our activity. The first time I met Sigmar it was green grass somewhere outside of Bonn and we attended a big concert called "Rock gegen Rakete". We had longer hair, but we were okay guys also then. No more details except for that I learned how to have good parties in Germany, I admit that.

Thank you, Boris, for your leadership, for our friendship and also for reminding me of the many times we have actually worked together over the past year. And I have learned a lot from you. And I was very impressed for the first time I met you because you had only been in your job for a couple of days, but you already had the authority and the strength and the commitment, which you have demonstrated every day since you were appointed Minister of Defense.

Boris, your clear-eyed understanding of the challenges, they are vital, not least in spearheading the *Zeitenwende*. Building one of Europe's strongest and

best-equipped armed forces. And strengthening NATO's deterrence and defense by permanently deploying a full brigade in Lithuania. And the reality is that before you made that decision, no one expected that to happen. But this was something you personally pushed through and I was in Lithuania when the decision was made. And this was really something they appreciated and the whole Alliance appreciated because it demonstrates the unwavering commitment of Germany to Lithuania, to the Baltic region, and to NATO.

And today I have the honor and the pleasure and the privilege to witness first hand not the German brigade in Lithuania, but to fly in a German Euro fighter. And to tell you the truth that is in itself a reason to become Secretary General of NATO. But don't tell anyone.

It was great to see the commitment, the professionalism and actually the care those pilots showed for me because I was a bit excited by putting on all the things and the gear I had. But then to fly and to see the Luftwaffe in action, actually together with a Swedish plane, and there was a German air to air refueling tanker that actually first fueled a German Euro fighter but then fueled a Swedish Gripen. Showing that our newest member Sweden is now fully integrated and demonstrating how interoperable we are in this Alliance and how Germany is at the core of NATO, working together as Allies. Germany is the European Ally that provides the most support for Ukraine. Not least, because of your personal commitment, Boris. One thing is certain, NATO can rely on Germany.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am humbled to receive this prestigious award in the name of Eric Warburg. A Jew in Nazi Germany, forced to flee to the



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United States. He understood the fragility of peace, freedom and human rights.

As you do, Irina. Having grown up in the Soviet Union, and documented the darkest days of Stalin's regime. In Russia, the past echoes loudly in the present. Thought is controlled. Freedom is curtailed. Opposition is crushed. Irina, again, you understand this more than most. Memorial, the organization you co-founded and which won the Nobel Peace Prize, was persecuted and dissolved. Because it stood up for human rights and basic freedoms in Russia.

As Russia has become more oppressive at home, it has become more aggressive abroad. Waging a fully-fledged war in Ukraine. We also face war in the Middle East. Rising global competition, including with China. And a range of other challenges.

Today, our world is more dangerous. So more than ever, we need Europe and North America to stand together. This year, we mark the 75th anniversary of NATO. Next year, the 70th anniversary of Germany joining the Alliance. In all these years, NATO has prevented war and preserved peace. It has helped spread democracy and prosperity. And enabled the enlargement of the European Union.

To maintain peace and prosperity for our one billion citizens, we need a strong NATO Alliance that meets the challenges of today and the future. And to do this **we need to do three things**. Strengthen our deterrence and defense. Increase our support for Ukraine. And work with our partners around the world to defend our freedom.

**First, deterrence and defense.** Since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has responded with the biggest reinforcement of our collective defense in a generation.

Today, we are bigger, stronger and more united than ever. With 2 new members, new and growing capabilities, and far higher defense spending.

This year, two thirds of Allies will meet the pledge to spend at least 2% of GDP on defense. Germany among them. But we must go further. Every Ally must do what is necessary to fully deliver on our defense plans. This means attaining and sustaining a minimum of 2%. To ensure we have the capabilities we need. And to share the burden of our deterrence and defense. Let me just add that I really understand that it is not easy to increase defense spending.

It is very easy for the Secretary General of NATO to call for more defense spending. But then politicians have to go back to the government, to the parliaments and then find that money. And when you spend more on defense that means less on something else: health, education, infrastructure. That is also the reason why all Allies reduced defense spending after the end of the cold war because tensions went down. But if we reduce defense spending when tensions are going down, we have to be able to increase defense spending when tensions are going up as they are now. And I have looked into the numbers for Germany and those of my own country Norway. Until the beginning of the 1990s, we spent 3%. So you had done it before. It is possible. But of course it is a bit painful to go through that transition the other way, to not go down, but to go up. But now that is needed.

**The second thing we must do**, is more support for Ukraine. Because that is where we are being tested. Every day, we see another attack, another atrocity. Russia is destroying Ukraine's infrastructure. Including major power plants. And then, we have to be honest. The reality is that, in recent months, NATO Allies have not provided the support we have promised. For months, the US was not able to agree on

a package. And in Europe, the delivery of ammunition is far below the levels we said we would provide. These delays have consequences.

Ukraine has been outgunned, allowing Russia to push forward on the front line. Ukraine has lacked air defense, enabling more Russian missiles and drones to hit their targets. And Ukraine has been short of deep precision strike capabilities, meaning Russia could concentrate more forces. But it is not too late for Ukraine to prevail. Because more support is on the way. At the meeting of NATO Defense Ministers and President Zelensky last week, Allies recognized the urgency and agreed to step up our support. I welcome that the U.S. Congress has approved over 60 billion dollars in new military aid for Ukraine. This week, when we were in Poland together, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of the United Kingdom announced more ammunition, air defense, and deep precision strike capabilities from the UK. As part of a commitment to spend 2.5% of GDP on defense.

Other Allies are also doing more. I already mentioned that Germany is the lead European Ally in providing support to Ukraine. And now you have also decided to deliver a third Patriot system from Germany. Actually, at the Laage Airbase I visited this morning, that is actually where they also do the training of the Ukrainian personnel to operate the German Patriot battery, which is going to be delivered to Ukraine. The Netherlands has just announced 4 billion extra to Ukraine. And I expect additional announcements to come soon. It is now our responsibility to turn these commitments into real deliveries of weapons and ammunition. And to do so quickly. We also have to put our support on a more robust and long-term footing. Ninety-nine percent of military aid to Ukraine comes from NATO Allies. So at our Summit in Washington this summer, I expect leaders will agree that NATO will play

a bigger role in coordinating military aid and training for Ukraine, with predictable financial support.

Making our efforts less dependent on short-term contributions, and more on long-term NATO commitments, I am also convinced that Ukraine will prevail. Not only because Allies are providing more support, but because of the incredible bravery and determination demonstrated by Ukrainian forces. Let's remember where this war started. When Russian tanks crossed the border, many thought Kyiv would fall in days, and Ukraine within weeks. But Ukraine fought back. Regaining half the territory taken in the initial invasion. So they have demonstrated skills and competence, demonstrated their ability to fight back against the Russian invaders. So far in his disastrous war, Putin has lost 350,000 troops, 2,000 tanks, a tenth of its air force, and much of its Black Sea Fleet.

But most of all, I am convinced that Ukraine will prevail because their cause is just. Democracy is stronger than autocracy. And Putin is wrong that we are not willing or able to defend our values. We are. The war in Ukraine demonstrates that security is not regional. It is global.

**So the third thing we must do** to ensure the security of NATO Allies, is to work more closely with our friends around the world. Russia's friends in Asia are vital for its war effort. First and foremost, China.

China is propping up Russia's war economy. Sharing high-end technology like semi-conductors and other dual-use items with Russia. Last year, Russia imported 90% of its micro-electronics from China. Used to produce missiles, tanks, and aircraft. China is also working to provide Russia with improved satellite capabilities and imagery. All of this helps Moscow to inflict more death and destruction on Ukraine, bolster Russia's defense industrial base, and evade

the impact of sanctions and export controls. China says it wants good relations with the West. At the same time, Beijing continues to fuel the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II. They cannot have it both ways.

Meanwhile, North Korean factories are operating at full capacity to produce munitions for Russia. Over the past six months alone, more than 10,000 containers have been delivered, likely amounting to well over 1 million shells or artillery rounds. Iran is also delivering substantial support to Russia, including thousands of deadly Shahed drones. And we are concerned by reports that Iran is also considering transferring ballistic missiles to Russia. In return for their support, North Korea and Iran are receiving Russian technology and supplies to help them advance their missile and nuclear capabilities. So we see that authoritarian powers are increasingly aligned.

What happens in Europe matters for Asia, what happens in Asia matters for Europe. That is clearly demonstrated by the war in Ukraine and the support Russia receives from China, Iran and North Korea.

In the past, we made the mistake of becoming dependent on Russian oil and gas. We must not repeat that mistake with China. Depending on its money, its raw materials and its technologies. Dependencies make us vulnerable. It is essential that we stand together with our friends around the world. Moscow, Beijing, Tehran and Pyongyang must not believe that they can get their way by using force. They must understand that democracies are strong. That we have staying power. And that we stand for our values.





Ladies and gentlemen, NATO is the most successful Alliance in history. By standing together, by protecting each other, and by being ready to fight for each other, the nations of Europe and North America have experienced a period of peace and prosperity unmatched in history. I know that, through NATO, and with our partners in Europe and around the world, we will continue to do that for many decades to come. And silence the echoes of the past.

*Thank you, and thank you for this prestigious award.*



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