

Experts

Young European Security Conference 2025

Paata Alaverdashvili

Paata Alaverdashvili is a psychotherapist and peacebuilder practitioner with extensive experience working on trauma-informed approaches to conflict resolution and community enhancement. He holds a Master's degree in Psychotraumatology and has completed qualifications in EMDR and IFS trauma therapy. Paata has worked with organizations internationally, designing and facilitating programs for peacebuilders and conflict-affected communities. He is the author of several publications on trauma, peacebuilding, and youth empowerment.



Dr. Muriel Asseburg

Dr. Muriel Asseburg is a Senior Fellow in the Africa and Middle East division of Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin. Her current research is focused on conflict dynamics and peace-making in the Levant (Israel/Palestine and Syria, in particular); German, European and US Middle East policies; as well as questions of state building, political reform and security in the Eastern Mediterranean. She is also the co-chair of SWP's thematic working group on "The challenge of autocratisation for Germany and Europe". Asseburg is a member of the Expert Forum on Asylum and Migration at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the International Advisory Board of Mediterranean Politics. In recent years, she headed research projects on "Transformation, elite change and new social mobilisation in the Arab world" (2012-2015) and "The fragmentation of Syria" (2014-2015). From 2006-2012, she headed the research division. Asseburg studied political science, international law and economics at Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich where in 2000 she obtained a Ph.D. with a thesis on "Palestinian State and Nation Building in the Interim Period". She has also lived, studied, and worked in the USA, Israel/Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon.



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Vera Benatar

Vera Benatar has been Head of Foreign and Security Policy Division since January 2025. Previously, she worked with the Center for International Peace Operations, the Middle East Division of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the UN Mission in Iraq, the UN Liaison Office in Vienna and various international and non-governmental organizations in Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Germany. She studied Political Science and International Security in Berlin, Paris, St. Petersburg and Nancy.

Dr. Vanessa Boese-Schlösser

Dr. Vanessa Boese-Schlösser is a political economist and research fellow in the "Transformations of Democracy" unit at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. Previously, she worked at the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Her research focuses on measuring democracy, waves of democratization and autocratization, and societal perceptions of democracy. She regularly publishes in leading academic journals and is internationally recognized as an expert on regime change and democratic developments.



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Dr. Tobias Cremer

Dr. Tobias Cremer is a Member of the European Parliament for the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), where he serves on the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Security and Defence. He is also a member of the Delegation for relations with the United States and the Delegation for relations with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Prior to his election Dr. Cremer served as a career diplomat in the German Federal Foreign Office, where he was most recently responsible for managing bilateral relations between Germany and the Baltic states. He holds a PhD in Politics and International Relations from the University of Cambridge, a Master in Public Policy (MPP) from the Harvard Kennedy School, an MPhil in Politics and International Studies from Cambridge University, and a BA in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics from Sciences Po Paris.



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Gregor Darmer

Gregor Darmer is CEO of Global Perspectives Initiative - an independent dialogue platform focused on strengthening European-African cooperation. Before joining Global Perspectives in 2023, he spent nine years at Stiftung Mercator, where he was responsible for the foundation's political communication. As Director of the Mercator Centre Berlin he represented the foundation towards project partners, politicians, journalists, and other stakeholders on the foundation's focus areas: climate action, digitization, participation and cohesion, and multilateralism. Previously, Gregor served as a program manager at the German Federal Foreign Office and gained working experiences at the German Council on Foreign Relations and the United Nations in the Department of Public Information and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.



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Deborah Düring

Deborah Düring serves as a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Finance in the German Parliament. In January 2024, she was appointed as spokesperson of the Green parliamentary group on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as well as foreign policy spokesperson for the parliamentary group Alliance 90/The Greens. Moreover, she is a deputy member of the Study Commission on lessons from Afghanistan for Germany's comprehensive international engagement in the future. From 2021 until 2024, she was a member of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development and served as spokesperson for international cooperation and development for her party's faction in the Bundestag. Ms. Düring is part of the supervisory board of several think tanks and institutions, including the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). Ms. Düring got elected in 2021 and is currently serving her first electoral term as MP in the Bundestag. Since then, Alliance 90/The Greens constitutes the German government, together with the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party. Previously, Ms. Düring worked in the field of development cooperation for the Reconstruction Credit Institute (KfW) and Survival International. Ms. Düring holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences and is currently enrolled in a Master's programme on "International Studies / Peace and Conflict Research". She lived and studied in Latin America for several years.



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A project of the Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe in cooperation with the non-profit Hertie Foundation.

Melanie Eckert

Melanie Eckert is the co-founder and co-managing director of krisenchat, Germany's largest digital counseling service for children and young people. Since the outbreak of the war, krisenchat has also been offering counseling for those affected by the war in Ukraine. On social media, krisenchat raises awareness about mental health and reaches around 500,000 views per month. She is a psychologist with many years of clinical expertise and is pursuing a PhD in the area of innovative care models in mental health.



Gelila Enbaye

Gelila Enbaye (she/her) is a research associate at the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) in Berlin. Her current work explores futures-thinking in peace mediation and peacebuilding and African perspectives on conflict management. Her interests include foresight and futures methods, intersectional and decolonial approaches to peacebuilding and the political economy of conflict.



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Annika Engels

Annika Engels is a Desk Officer in the Division for Security and Defense Politics at the German Federal Foreign Office. Prior to this, she served as Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy in Tripoli/Libya from 2021 to 2023, as Political Advisor at the German Mission to NATO in Brussels from 2018 to 2021, and as a desk officer in the Cultural Department of the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin from 2015 to 2018. Annika Engels completed a Franco-German degree in Political Science/Sciences Po in Lille and Münster, as well as in International Conflict Studies in London. She has worked for the NGO Crisis Action in London and as a Fellow for Teach First Germany at an Integrated Secondary School in Berlin.



Dina Fakoussa

Dina Fakoussa is an independent analyst and consultant on the MENA region. Her research interest include democratization, regional power dynamics, geopolitics as well as the changing global order and its implications for German foreign policy and the MENA region. Prior to her self-employment she worked for 20 years in leading positions in international cooperation and policy advice targeting the Arab region. Fakoussa served as Head of the MENA Program at the German Council on Foreign Relations from 2011-2020. Before that she worked at German political foundations and non-governmental organizations in Lebanon and Jordan. Dina Fakoussa is Egyptian-German. She obtained her BA in political science with a minor in economics from the American University in Cairo and her MA in international relations from Freie Universität Berlin.



Ingrid Hamm

Ingrid Hamm is a co-founder and chair of the supervisory board of the Global Perspectives Initiative. She has been active in major German foundations for three decades. Most recently, she led the Robert Bosch Foundation from 2003 to 2015. Additionally, she is involved in German and international committees, including the University Council of the University of Tübingen, the General Assembly of the Goethe Institute, and the Board of Trustees of the Karl Schlecht Foundation.



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Julia Hammelehle

Julia Hammelehle is a Senior Policy Advisor at the Munich Security Conference (MSC) and is responsible for the program areas "Global Order" and "Sustainability". She specializes in German, British and EU foreign and security politics, Transatlantic relations as well as energy and climate security. Before joining the MSC, she studied International Relations in Dresden and Boston and pursued a Master's degree in EU Politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). During her studies, she gained work experience in, amongst others, the House of Commons, the German Bundestag, the State Parliament of Baden-Württemberg, and the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law.



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Prof. Marina Henke

Marina Henke is Professor of International Relations at the Hertie School and Director of the Centre for International Security. She researches and publishes on grand strategy, nuclear security and European security and defence policy. Before joining the Hertie School, she was an Associate Professor (with tenure) at Northwestern University, specialising in international relations, as well as at Princeton University where she was a Lecturer and Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. She holds a PhD in Politics and Public Policy from Princeton University, a Double Master of Science in Development Studies and International Political Economy from Sciences Po Paris and the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics, Politics and Latin American Studies from Sciences Po Paris. Her book "Constructing Allied Cooperation" published with Cornell University Press in 2019 won the prestigious 2020 Leppgold Best Book Award, the ISA 2020 Diplomacy section Best Book Award, and the APSA 2020 International Collaboration section Best Book Award.

Etienne Höra

Etienne Höra is president of Polis180, a grassroots think tank bringing young perspectives into European and foreign affairs. Etienne holds a Master's degree in International Affairs from the Hertie School. He is especially interested in the interface between foreign policy and societal debates, the emergence and recognition of new foreign policy problems as well as (Chinese) foreign policy narratives. Besides his role at Polis180, he works on European trade policy and geoeconomics at Bertelsmann Stiftung.



Paula Köhler

Paula Köhler works as a policy advisor on topics related to technology and defense at the Munich Security Conference. She is particularly interested in NATO's activities, information warfare and disinformation, as well as the impact of new and emerging tech, such as artificial intelligence, on warfare. Previously, she worked at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and gained work experience at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Tel Aviv, the 1 German/Netherlands Corps of NATO in Münster and International Crisis Group in London. She holds a Bachelor from the University of Groningen and University of South Carolina as well as a Master's Degree from the Department of War Studies at King's College London.



Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer

From 2019-2021 she served as Federal Minister of Defense after she first became Secretary General of the CDU in 2018 and later its party chair. Prior she was Prime Minister of Saarland from 2011-2018, simultaneously serving as Minister of Justice, and from 2012 on, Minister of Science. She also served as Saarland Minister of the Interior and Minister of Education in 2007 and as Minister of Labor in 2009. In 2021, she handed over the CDU party chairmanship and renounced her seat in the Bundestag.



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Rafael Loss

Rafael Loss is a policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. His work focuses on security and defence in the Euro-Atlantic area; military operations, innovation, and technology; and nuclear strategy and arms control. Before joining ECFR, Loss was a research associate at the Center for Global Security Research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, California. He is an alumnus of the German Federal Ministry of Defence's Manfred Wörner Seminar, the NATO Defense College's Early-Career Nuclear Strategists Workshop, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Nuclear Scholars Initiative. Loss was a Fulbright fellow at the Fletcher School at Tufts University, where he earned an MA in international relations. He also holds a BA in political science from the University of Bremen.



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Philipp Lutz

Philipp Lutz works as a university assistant (prae-doc) at the Institute for Spatial and Social-Ecological Transformations (ISSET) at the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU). His PhD research is focused on the intersection of degrowth and the global political economy. Relevant subtopics include (de-)globalisation and trade, decolonisation, post-extractivism, and unequal global exchange relations. Prior to this, he studied Socio-Ecological Economics and Policy (M. Sc., WU Vienna), and Political Science/Literature in Intercultural Comparison (B.A., Ruprecht-Karls University Heidelberg, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela).



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Dr. Barbara Magalhães Teixeira

Dr. Barbara Magalhães Teixeira is a Researcher in the SIPRI Climate Change and Risk Programme. Her research explores the intersections between climate and environmental crises, conflict, and security, with a focus on pathways to sustainable peace. Her work examines issues of development, natural resource governance, extractivism, sustainable production and consumption, the green transition, and land and water conflicts, particularly in Latin America and the Global South.



Dr. Aylin Matlé

Dr. Aylin Matlé is a senior research fellow in the German Council on Foreign Relations's (DGAP) Center for Security and Defense in Berlin, Germany. Her research interests include German and U.S. security and defense policies, NATO, and transatlantic security and defense relations as well as the interconnectedness of the euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific theatre. Ms. Matlé has published widely on those topics, including in *Internationale Politik*, *Internationale Politik Quarterly*, *War on the Rocks*, *European Leadership Network*, and *Security and Peace*, and appears regularly as a commentator in German and international media outlets. She is a member of NATO's Civil Society Advisory Panel on Women, Peace and Security. Prior to joining DGAP, she worked as the deputy head of the Israel office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. in Jerusalem and as a research associate at the Chair for International Relations and European Politics at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. Ms. Matlé studied political science at Zeppelin University (ZU) in Friedrichshafen and "War Studies" at King's College London. She earned her PhD from Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg with a dissertation on the impact of US engagement on NATO and the defense policies of European allies during Barack Obama's presidency.



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Aditi Mukund

Aditi Mukund (she/her) is a German Chancellor Fellow with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, based at the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) in Berlin. Her research explores the intersection of gender, non-traditional security, and feminist foreign policy, with a current focus on climate security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific. Aditi co-chairs Generation EU-India, a network dedicated to fostering deeper engagement between young leaders from the European Union and her home country, India.



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Bente Presse

Bente Presse is a volunteer with the European Youth Parliament. She studied economics and econometrics in the Netherlands and the UK and joined the Dutch civil service as a junior economist after graduating. She is currently doing an internship with the European Commission. Bente has been active in the European Youth Parliament since 2017 and she is the project leader of the EYP's upcoming conference "The Hague 2025 - Young Visions of Peace and Security". The conference will bring together 300 young participants from 35 countries to discuss topics related to peace, remembrance, security, and defence.



Gunter Rieck Moncayo

Gunter Rieck Moncayo has been an Economic and Trade Policy Advisor in the Division Analysis and Consulting, the internal think tank of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), since March 2023. Previously, he worked for nine years in the Division European and International Cooperation of the KAS, first as International Economic Policy Coordinator, then as Head of the Regional Programme 'Social Governance in Latin America' based in Santiago de Chile. Most recently, he was responsible for economic and trade issues in the department for Sub-Saharan Africa. Positions outside the KAS have taken Mr Rieck Moncayo to the staff of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva and to the Association of Family Businesses in Berlin, among others. During his studies of political science, economics and mathematics, he received scholarships from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Foundation of German Business.



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Axel Ruppert

Axel Ruppert is project manager overseeing international projects on socio-ecological transformation in the Green New Deal team of Das Progressive Zentrum in Berlin. His work includes rethinking security through developing and promoting a concept of 'progressive security'. Previously, Axel covered security policy in Brussels at the office of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and at the European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET) and European Network Against Racism (ENAR).



Martin Sklenár

Martin Sklenár served as Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic, as part of a technocratic government, from May 15 to October 25, 2023. Previously, Martin Sklenár served as Director General for Defence Policy at the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic since July 1, 2020. He was responsible for developing and implementing defence policy, defence planning and international cooperation in defence. Martin Sklenár served as the Director for Security Policy at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic between September 2017 and June 2020. He worked on issues related to Slovakia's membership in NATO and European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy. From 2014 to 2017 Martin Sklenár was posted to the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington, DC as Head of Political Section. Before taking up his duties at the Embassy, Martin Sklenár directed the Department for Security Policy at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in Bratislava from 2011 to 2013. He transferred to the MFEA from the Slovak Ministry of Defence, where he held various positions between 2003 and 2011, including Director for International Relations. The Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic posted Martin to Brussels to be its representative in the Politico-Military Working Group of the EU Council from 2006 to 2009. In 2010 he deployed to Pristina as a UN Volunteer to work in the Political Affairs Office of the UN Mission in Kosovo.

**Julia Smirnova**

Julia Smirnova is a senior researcher at CeMAS studying digital authoritarianism and online disinformation. She focuses in particular on how authoritarian state actors leverage digital technologies to manipulate public opinion. From 2021 till 2024, she worked at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue in London, where she tracked and analysed Russian influence operations and studied the spread of dis/misinformation, hate speech and conspiracy narratives online. Previously, Smirnova worked as a journalist writing for publications such as Der Spiegel, Die Zeit and Die Welt. From 2012 till 2017, she reported from Russia and Ukraine as Die Welt's correspondent. She holds an MA in Conflict, Security and Development from King's College London.



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Matthias Spielkamp

Matthias Spielkamp is co-founder and executive director of AlgorithmWatch (Theodor Heuss Medal 2018, Grimme Online Nominee 2019, Brandenburger Freiheitspreis 2023) and founder and president of AlgorithmWatch CH. He is a member of the advisory council to the German Digital Services Coordinator (DSC), elected by the German Bundestag. Matthias testified before committees of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the German Bundestag and other institutions on automation and AI and was a member of the Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) from 2020-2022. Matthias serves on the governing boards of the German section of Reporters Without Borders and Stiftung Warentest, the advisory councils of Freudenberg Stiftung and the Whistleblower Network and the Expert Committee on Communication/Information of Germany's UNESCO Commission. He was a fellow of ZEIT Stiftung, Stiftung Mercator and the American Council on Germany. Matthias is editor of the Automating Society reports and has written and edited books on the automation of society, digital journalism and Internet governance. He holds master's degrees in Journalism from the University of Colorado in Boulder and in Philosophy from the Free University of Berlin.



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Sarah Zielonka

Sarah Zielonka is a desk officer for Chinese Foreign and Security Politics at the German Federal Foreign Office. Before this, she worked as the Press and Economic desk officer at the Embassy in Tbilisi. Sarah Zielonka studied International Relations in Dresden and Political Economy of Emerging Markets in London, and has worked for the United Nations Development Programme in New York and for EY (Ernst & Young) in the field of political consulting.

