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www.dias-online.org



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12.10.2003

Since the end of the Cold War, German defense policy has played catch-up with the evolving international situation. Germany went from a frontline state of the East-West confrontation to a country no longer facing a threat to its survival. As the 1994 government White Paper on Defence argued, “the danger of a massive attack threatening the existence [of Germany] has passed.”¹ After unification expectations of Germany’s new role abounded, both domestically and internationally, as is demonstrated by the dissatisfied responses to the almost purely financial contributions the country made during the 1991 Gulf War. Germany had to learn “that the authority which it can bring to bear depends largely on the extent to which it participates in security actions.”²

Germany is key to European security and to the success of the EU European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) because of the potential assets and capabilities it could bring to the table.

¹ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (1994): *Weissbuch zur Sicherheit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und zur Lage und Zukunft der Bundeswehr*, Bonn (p. 23, par. 202), translated by the author.

² Rummel, R. (1996): Germany's Role in the CFSP: 'Normalität' oder 'Sonderweg'?, in: C. Hill (Ed.): *The Actors in Europe's Foreign Policy*, London, pp. 40-67 (p. 55).

ESDP without a major contribution from the EU's biggest member state is simply not credible.³ A transformation of the *Bundeswehr* from a defensive into a power projection force would add significant capabilities to the European pool. One should, therefore, expect that "because of ESDP, the German military is under pressure to become, once again, an interventionist force."⁴

These forces, stemming from changes in the international environment, brought up the question of what the military is for after the end of the Cold War. Germany's answer up to now suffered from two fundamental problems. First, the lack of adequate resources and, second, a conceptual disconnect between the analysis of the strategic context and the prioritization of tasks the military is to perform. Minister of Defense Peter Struck published new Defense Policy Guidelines in May 2003 apparently determined to tackle the latter predicament. The simple question is: did he succeed?

Reform of the Armed Forces

In a sense the German armed forces, the *Bundeswehr*, has been in constant transformation since the end of the Cold War. Absorbing the NVA (the armed forces of the GDR) after unification, assisting the Soviet withdrawal from former GDR territory and beginning to deploy on UN peacekeeping missions is a formidable list of challenges. The formal review process that set into motion the ongoing reform of the *Bundeswehr*, however, was initiated by the incoming SPD-Greens coalition after their victory in the September 1998 elections. In May and June of 2000, three reform proposals were published. The first by an expert commission headed by the former Federal President von Weizsäcker, the second by then Chief of Defense von Kirchbach

³ As would be true for the EU's most capable states – in military terms – France and the United Kingdom.

⁴ Sarotte, M.E. (2001): *German Military Reform and European Security*, Oxford (p. 11).

and the third by then Minister of Defense Scharping. The Scharping report was adopted by the cabinet in June 2000 as the guideline for reform to be completed by 2006.⁵

Scharping's proposals echoed the 1994 White Paper in arguing that Germany's strategic situation had significantly improved. The main risks characterizing the international environment were regional instability stemming from intrastate struggles at Europe's periphery and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.⁶ Scharping further argued that because of the nature of these risks, a state could not guarantee peace and security on its own but was dependent on international cooperation. Furthermore, since intrastate crises can spill over and thus affect German security directly, they need to be defused or limited quickly.⁷

The Conceptual Disconnect

When laying out the tasks the *Bundeswehr* was to perform, Scharping argued that a continuum of forces was needed capable of territorial defense, collective defense, and crisis management missions. However, the prioritization within this continuum does not follow the logic of the strategic analysis presented earlier in the report. The 1994 White Paper argued that territorial defense, as one of the core functions of the state and its armed forces, had to remain unaffected by the changes in the strategic environment.⁸ Scharping similarly maintained that "above all the, size and structure of the *Bundeswehr* is based on territorial and collective defence."⁹

⁵ See: Kommission Gemeinsame Sicherheit und Zukunft der Bundeswehr (Ed.) (2000): *Bericht der Kommission an die Bundesregierung*, 23 May 2000; Kirchbach, H.P. v. (2000): *Eckwerte für die konzeptionelle und planerische Weiterentwicklung der Streitkräfte*, 23 May 2000, Berlin; Scharping, R. (2000): *Die Bundeswehr sicher ins 21. Jahrhundert: Eckpfeiler für eine Erneuerung von Grund auf*, June 2000, Berlin. There has been speculation about why three reports emerged and some observers have suggested that Scharping used the other two reports to portray his own proposals as the reasonable compromise. See: Longhurst, K. (2000): The Reform of the German Armed Forces: Coming of Age?, in: *European Security* 9(4), pp. 31-44 (p. 39).

⁶ See: Scharping *Eckpfeiler* (p.4, par. 4-6).

⁷ *Ibid.* (pp. 6-7, par. 14-15).

⁸ See: Bundesministerium *Weissbuch* (p. 41, par. 302).

⁹ Scharping *Eckpfeiler* (p. 8, par. 20), translated by the author.

The commitment to Germany's allies and territorial defense is thus emphasized and *Bündnisfähigkeit* – the capacity to participate in alliances in a fashion adequate for a country of Germany's size – becomes the main aim of reform. The political advantage of *Bündnisfähigkeit* is that it casts the *Bundeswehr* still as a defensive force while at the same time stressing Germany's international responsibility in a way that is not a clear break with German cautious attitudes towards military force thereby reinforcing the two principles driving post-World-War-II security policy in Germany: multilateralism and abstention of the use of military force.

Germany's aversion to the use of force and its embrace of multilateralism is a reaction to the country's past. As one of Germany's eminent scholars on the subject argued, the “first lesson drawn from the Nazi period was a widespread, instinctive pacifism, a rejection of anything military and of any use of force.”¹⁰ Along the same lines, multilateral cooperation was lifted from a means to an end in itself. The close integration into a framework of Western institutions within the process of European integration and NATO reassured Germany's neighbors – and as some might argue Germany itself.

The prioritization of military tasks did not logically follow from the analysis of the strategic concept depicted in Scharping's and earlier proposals. This represented the fundamental conceptual dilemma German defense policy faced. As Meiers has pointed out, the task that was seen as the most important one (territorial defense) was no longer the most likely one for the *Bundeswehr* to take on (crisis management).¹¹ In a 2001 paper outlining future equipment needs of the *Bundeswehr*, the German Chief of Defense evaluated the three main tasks of the armed forces against two criteria: impact on German security and probability of occurrence (see figure 1).¹²

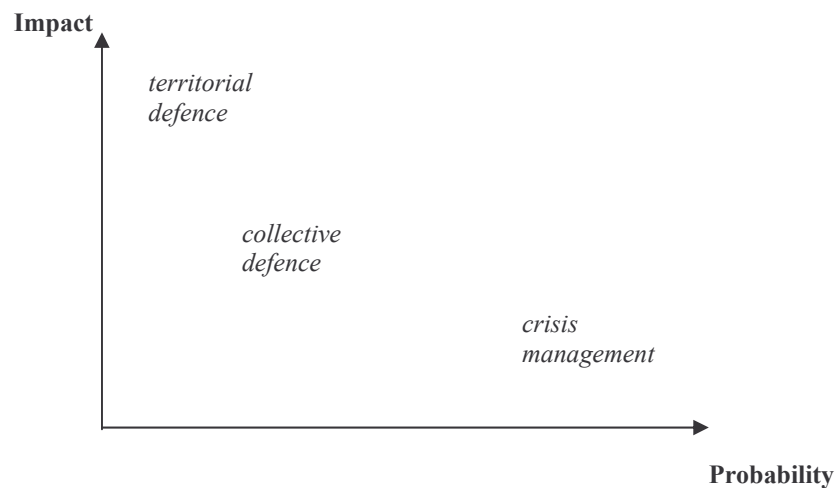
¹⁰ Maull, H. (2000): Germany and the Use of Force: Still a 'Civilian Power'?, in: *Survival* 42(2), pp. 56-80 (p. 66).

¹¹ See: Meiers, F. J. (2002): Deutschland: Der dreifache Spagat, in: Ehrhart, H.G. (Ed.): *Die Europäische Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik. Positionen, Perzeptionen, Probleme, Perspektiven*, Baden-Baden, pp. 35-48 (p. 41).

¹² Based on: Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (2001): Material- und Ausrüstungskonzept für die Streitkräfte der Zukunft, Generalinspekteur Harald Kujat, 16 März 2001, Berlin (pp. 9-10 and Annex 1).

The response to the developing disconnect reflected the tension between international requirements and expectations for an adequate German contribution to military missions and domestic concerns on the other side. By emphasising the unlikely but politically acceptable tasks of territorial and collective defence, the German government prioritised domestic preferences over those expressed both in NATO's DCI and the EU's Headline Goal. As analysts concluded, the MOD's reform has the right goals but is trapped within the aforementioned conceptual mistake.¹³

Figure 1: Prioritisation of Bundeswehr Tasks



Getting it Right?

In the spring of 2002 the first signs emerged that the government was addressing the problem. An in-house assessment of the MoD's reform efforts argued that crisis management had become the most likely task for the German armed forces and that missions could not be restricted to the Euro-Atlantic space. Furthermore, the paper suggested that the foundations of military planning should not be based on the nature of any acute threat Germany is facing, but

¹³ See: Meiers, F.J. (2001): The Reform of the Bundeswehr: Adaptation or Fundamental Renewal?, in: *European Security* 10(2), pp. 1-22 (p. 17); Sarotte *German Military Reform* (p. 52).

rather on the requirements needed to ensure that the armed forces could be effectively used as an instrument of foreign policy.¹⁴ This gradual shift opens the door for a more active use of the *Bundeswehr* by characterizing the armed forces as means towards foreign policy goals rather than a means of deterrence only.

This path has been vigorously pursued by Scharping's successor, Peter Struck, who took over in the summer of 2002. Struck has stressed the reality of deployments of German troops on crisis management operations while boldly trying to link these with German security in an attempt to address the disconnect between the importance and probability of the armed forces' tasks.

Over the course of the last ten years, Germany has gradually expanded its role in crisis management missions. In 2002, German troops were deployed in the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa and Afghanistan forming one of the largest national contributions in terms of manpower. The center-left coalition government of Socialdemocrats and Greens sent German troops into their first post-World-War-II combat mission in Kosovo, risked its political existence by turning a vote in parliament over deploying the *Bundeswehr* on a NATO mission to Macedonia into a vote of confidence, and sent about 100 special forces soldiers on a terrorist hunt in the remote caves of Afghanistan, where Germany, until recently, was also leading the Kabul-based International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The reality is thus that the *Bundeswehr* is gradually transforming into an interventionist force despite the government's careful rhetoric of reform.

Table 1: Deployment Germany on UN and Peacekeeping Missions 1999 – 2002

Mission	1999	2000	2001	2002*
Afghanistan (ISAF)	--	--	--	1120
Afghanistan (Enduring Freedom)	--	--	--	100
Albania (AFOR)	some	--	--	--
Bosnia (SFOR II)	2738	2369	1900	1700
Djibouti (Enduring Freedom)	--	--	--	est. 600**
East Timor (UNTAET)	--	0	4	0
FYROM (Amber Fox)	--	--	--	560
Georgia (UNOMIG)	1 obs	10 obs	11 obs	11 obs

¹⁴ See: Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (2002): *Bundeswehr 2002: Sachstand und Perspektiven*, 8 April 2002, Berlin (pp. 25-27).

Iraq/Kuwait (UNIKOM)	15	14	11	14
Italy (Balkans missions)	--	--	200	200
Kenya (Enduring Freedom)	--	--	--	150
Kuwait (Enduring Freedom)	--	--	--	50
Uzbekistan (ISAF)	--	--	--	163
Yugoslavia (KFOR)	4400	5300	5100	4600
<i>Troops</i>	<i>7153</i>	<i>7683</i>	<i>7215</i>	<i>9257</i>
<i>Observers</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>11</i>
Total	7154	7693	7227	9268

Source:

IISS: The Military Balance 1999-2000; 2000-2001; 2001-2002; 2002-2003

* including operation Enduring Freedom

** Data from German Ministry of Defense, www.bundeswehr.de; obs = Observer

Defense Minister Struck has been very outspoken about this transformation. In an interview with the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in February 2003, Struck presented his mantra when stating that “Germany is no longer being defended on our Eastern borders, but is being defended around the world as the *Bundeswehr*, together with other states and organizations, helps prevent that countries turn into bases for terrorist attacks.”¹⁵ Struck furthermore started to argue that the structure and equipment of the armed forces has to be based on the most likely missions to be performed. In a named article Struck made the case that Germany has

“...to be ready to deal with the consequences of the fact that territorial defence has become an unlikely option. We have to ask ourselves in what scope the *Bundeswehr* has to prepare itself in structural and material terms against a conventional attack against German territory.”¹⁶

The 2003 Defense Policy Guidelines

In May 2003, Struck, after discussions with the cabinet, introduced the new Defense Policy Guidelines (DPG), which are the binding conceptual bases for German defense policy. In the history of the Federal Republic, this document has only been written three times (1972, 1979 and

¹⁵ *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (2003): Weitere Standortschließungen sind möglich, interview with the Federal Minister of Defence, Dr. Peter Struck, 5 February 2003, http://www.bmvg.de/archiv/reden/minister/030205_interview-sz.php, accessed 11 February 2003.

¹⁶ Struck, P. (2003): Deutsche Sicherheit und die Bundeswehr vor neuen Herausforderungen, in: *Europäische Sicherheit*, January 2003, http://www.bmvg.de/archiv/reden/minister/030106_europaeische_sicherheit.php, accessed 11 February 2003. See also: *Süddeutsche Zeitung Interview*.

1992) and was thought to have a sell-by date of 10 to 15 years. However, the new DPG will break with this tradition and will be updated regularly depending on international developments.¹⁷

Aside from laying out the guiding overall principles of German defense policy, the DPG explicitly undertake to “prioritize tasks and determine parameters for the capabilities of the armed forces.”¹⁸ To set the stage for the reprioritization of tasks and adaptation of the necessary capabilities to fulfill those tasks, the DPG make two crucial statements. The first is that, defense is no longer understood in its territorial context as being defined by geographic boundaries. A much wider definition of defense is advanced, in which defense has to contribute to “safeguarding [German] security wherever it is in jeopardy.”¹⁹ Second, the new guidelines straightforwardly assert that in the foreseeable future no conventional threat to the German territory exists and that capabilities “that had been kept available solely for [the purpose of national defense against a conventional attack] are no longer required.”²⁰

Instead, the risks to German security are topped by what is called the asymmetric threats of religious extremism and international terrorism of global reach. The proliferation and development of weapons of mass destruction are seen as threatening Europe and forces deployed on operations abroad. This risk is exacerbated by attempts of terrorist groups to acquire those weapons and delivery systems as the DPG acknowledge. Ethnically and nationalistically driven instability on Europe’s southern and southeastern periphery is still a risk, potentially fueled by international terrorism, organized crime or migratory movements. Finally, vulnerable information and communication systems as well as transportation routes complete the list of risks to German security.²¹

¹⁷ See: Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (2003): *Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien für den Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministers der Verteidigung – Erläuternder Begleittext*, Berlin, 21 May 2003, <http://www.bmvg.de/sicherheit/vpr.php>, p. 3.

¹⁸ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (2003): *Defence Policy Guidelines for the Area of Responsibility of the Federal Minister of Defense*, Berlin, 21 May 2003, <http://www.bmvg.de/sicherheit/vpr.php>, p. 4, guideline 7.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 3, guideline 5.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 4, guideline 12.

²¹ See *ibid*, pp. 5-7, guidelines 17-27.

In terms of the threat analysis, the DPG logically continues the trend found in previous documents. When it comes to the tasks the *Bundeswehr* is to perform, the true shift occurs. International conflict prevention and crisis management are listed as the most likely tasks. What is new is that, for the first time, the DPG declare that these tasks “are the major determinants of the capabilities [of the armed forces]...They do in fact determine the structure of the *Bundeswehr*.”²² The support of allies in a collective defense context and the protection of Germany and its citizens (divided into various subtasks) are defined as the remaining crucial responsibilities of the *Bundeswehr* but are seen as less likely. The DPG, therefore, introduce the principle that the most likely missions should determine the structure and capabilities of the German armed forces – a major revision of policy.

In operational terms, this reprioritization of tasks calls for a *Bundeswehr* that can participate in operations “anywhere in the world and at short notice and...across the entire mission spectrum down to high-intensity operations.”²³ Although the high-end spectrum of missions remains undefined, it is clear that it goes beyond peacekeeping and includes combat operations since it is acknowledged that there is no clear division between those missions and that rapid escalation of mission intensity is a distinct possibility.²⁴ The DPG, in other words, call for a globally deployable, high-readiness force that can engage in high-intensity missions.

Conclusion: One Down, One to Go?

German defense policy has been plagued by an ad-hoc adaptation to evolving international pressures. The 2003 Defense Policy Guidelines mark an important stage of catching up with this

²² Ibid, p. 16, guideline 78. The focus of the capability profile to be developed is, therefore, on command and control, intelligence collection and reconnaissance, mobility, effective engagement, support and sustainability, and survivability and protection. These are the capabilities determined to be essential for the *Bundeswehr* in the new environment and dovetail NATO and EU capabilities initiatives. See: Ibid, p. 5, guideline 15.

²³ Ibid, p. 12, guideline 57.

²⁴ See *ibid*, p. 12, guideline 58.

reality as the *Bundeswehr* takes on an increasing number of operations. Ideally, the DPG could serve as a starting point for a larger strategic debate in Germany about the purpose of the armed forces in the 21st century. Unfortunately, so far, there are no clear signs of this overdue debate taking place.

While the main conceptual weakness of German defense policy is starting to be corrected, the second major problem, that of finances, still looms large. There is consensus among analysts that the *Bundeswehr* is under-funded as a result of the steady erosion of the defense budget during the 1990s.²⁵ Given the current government's overriding priority in federal budget consolidation by 2006, there is little evidence that suggests any growth in financial resources dedicated to defense in the near future. The lack of adequate funding continues to contradict the reform agenda.

As experience from other countries demonstrates, military reform costs money before it can generate efficiency savings, on which the feasibility of the reform at current funding levels is based. In order to save by closing bases or outsourcing certain activities one has to spend first. The savings produced by such restructuring are unlikely to materialize quickly.²⁶ The German experience seems to follow exactly in this path. Financial restraints also constrain Germany's ability to equip its armed forces with the necessary capabilities as they transform into a modernized force.²⁷ The difficulties are magnified by the fact that these items are being produced and procured on a multinational basis, which means that Germany's European partners are also directly affected by German budgetary decisions as they risk facing higher costs per unit.

Germany's approach to defense policy has clearly been driven by domestic considerations both in terms of defining the role of the military after the end of the Cold War and in terms of

²⁵ See for example: Sarotte *German Military Reform* (pp. 42-44).

²⁶ See: U.S. General Accounting Office (1997): *Base Operations: Challenges Confronting DOD as It Renews Emphasis on Outsourcing*, GAO/NSIAD-97-86 (p. 1, 5).

²⁷ See: Struck *Entscheidungen zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr*. For the general argument see: Lemke, H.D. (2000): *Bundeswehrreform: Probleme der Finanzierung*, SWP-Aktuell, No. 65 October 2000, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin.

resources made available for the military to adapt to the new circumstances. Europe and ESDP are important reference points in this debate in Germany, but it seems that Europe is used as a cover for domestically unpopular decisions.²⁸ The relative vagueness of ESDP and the lacking definition of its strategic purpose helped the German government avoid making explicit the rationale underpinning the use of the *Bundeswehr*. The developments of 2002 and early 2003, however, suggest that the gradual redefinition of the role of the military has reached a tipping point. If this trend continues it would go a long way in bridging the conceptual disconnect between German security and the missions the armed forces perform.

²⁸ See: Bohnen, J. (1997): Germany, in: Howorth, J. / Menon, A. (Eds.): *the European Union and National Defence Policy*, London, pp. 49-65 (p. 59).