
Peer-reviewed

German Military Transformation – the Never-Ending Quest for Appropriate Military Capacities

Transformace vojenského sektoru v Německu – nekonečné hledání vhodných vojenských kapacit

Zdeněk Kříž

Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War, several military reforms have been carried out in Germany so far and a new military transformation is in the process of preparation. Over the years, the definition of the Bundeswehr's main missions has gradually shifted towards crisis management operations and the structure of the armed forces has accommodated to this shift. After the 2010-2011 reform, it was entirely evident that crisis management operations have become the main task of the armed forces. At present, German military policy places the main emphasis on "restoring the capacities" for collective defence. The strengthening of the expeditionary element in the German armed forces was made possible by the most efficient use of resources and investment inherited from the Cold War era and cutting capacities tailored to territorial defence. The author comes to the conclusion, that such policy is now evidently exhausted and is no longer sustainable - if German collective defence capacities are to be truly restored.

Abstrakt

Po skončení studené války proběhlo v Německu několik reforem vojenského sektoru a v současnosti se připravuje další transformace. V průběhu let se proměnila definice hlavních misí Bundeswehru směrem k provádění operací krizového managementu a tomu byla přizpůsobena struktura německé armády. V období po letech 2010–2011 bylo zřejmé, že krizový management se stal hlavním úkolem ozbrojených sil. V současnosti německá vojenská politika klade důraz na obnovení schopností ke kolektivní obraně. Posílení expedičního elementu v německých ozbrojených silách bylo doposud možné díky využití zdrojů zděděných z doby studené války a redukcí kapacit vhodných k teritoriální obraně. Autor dochází k závěru, že pokud mají být německé vojenské kapacity ke kolektivní obraně skutečně obnoveny, je tato dosavadní politika v současnosti již neudržitelná.

Key words: Germany; Bundeswehr; Military Transformation; Military Operations.

Klíčová slova: Německo; Bundeswehr; vojenská transformace; vojenské operace.

INTRODUCTION

Germany's current foreign and security policy is different in some respects from the policy approach of West Germany before reunification. For instance, the Berlin government has been very resolute in deploying its armed forces, the Bundeswehr, in various types of out-of-area military operation. This kind of international engagement creates a need to reform the German armed forces. The ability of Germany to advance its interests in international politics will be affected by the results of such a reform. In addition, given that Germany has the fourth largest armed forces in the EU and the sixth largest in NATO, the readiness for action of these international institutions naturally relies to a significant extent on the quality of the German military. Last but not least, thanks to military cooperation between Germany and Central European countries, which has developed significantly in recent years, the results achieved in reforming the Bundeswehr are also important for those states of Central Europe, including the Czech Republic.¹

Since the end of the Cold War, several military reforms have been carried out so far and a new military transformation is in the process of preparation. Reform of the Bundeswehr started in the early 1990s, in connection with the reunification of the country and the adjustment of its military to the limits set out in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). Later, the German participation in out-of-area military operations was a very important driving force. The aim of this paper is to provide a succinct summary of the adaptations of the German military to a changing operational environment since the end of the Cold War; to highlight the main issues currently faced by the German armed forces; and last but not least, to describe the ongoing German military transformation.

1 THE GERMAN MILITARY TRANSFORMATION - THE NEVER-ENDING STORY

The reunification of Germany in 1990 presented the country's political and military leaders with a problem how to deal with the legacy of East Germany's National People's Army (*Nationale Volksarmee*, NVA) and achieve the maximum limit of 340,000 personnel set out by the 2+4 treaty. Further, it was necessary to comply with the limits set out in the CFE Treaty. A reform of German military capability, based on a reduction in the number of heavy weapons, was therefore unavoidable.

But that was anything but the sole impulse. A 1994 White Paper noted unequivocally that there was no longer a risk of sudden attack in Central Europe, to which the armed

¹ URBANOVSÁ, Jana. Spolková republika Německo v české zahraniční politice 2016. In Michal Kořan a kol.: Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2016. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů Praha, 2017. ISBN 978-80-87558-30-0.

forces would have to respond at short notice.² Therefore, the Bundeswehr - built during the Cold War period to conduct war in an European theatre and to defend West German territory - was, as it stood, an army without an enemy.³ And yet, despite the reforms undertaken and unfinished in the first half of the 1990s,⁴ in the late 1990s, the Bundeswehr, with a nominal strength of 330,000 soldiers, was inadequately structured and armed; insufficiently trained; and, given the character of the expeditionary operations it undertook, unsuitably financed. Despite partial changes, the structure of the Bundeswehr followed that laid down during the Cold War; of course, funding was very significantly curtailed, and the development was no longer sustainable. In sum, Germany's military capacity was inconsistent with the country's foreign-policy obligations.

The developments that followed were swift. First, in spring 1999, the new Social Democrat/Green ('red-green') government (in office from 1998) mapped out the situation concerning the Bundeswehr, and the Minister of Defence Rudolf Scharping created a commission, headed by Richard von Weizsäcker. The commission was given the complex and ambitious task of setting out proposals for the Bundeswehr reform. In May 2000, it issued its final report, *Gemeinsame Sicherheit und Zukunft der Bundeswehr*, which promoted a very substantial strengthening of the expeditionary element in the German military structures, and provoked controversy and sometimes undisguised opposition among politicians and military leaders.

An alternative plan by the inspector-general of the Bundeswehr, Hans-Peter von Kirchbach (the so-called *Eckwertepapiers*), was too conservative, however, and did not offer the desired change.⁵ Hans-Peter von Kirchbach was finally removed from the position of inspector-general of the Bundeswehr by the Minister of Defence Rudolf Scharping in 2000. For that reason, it was the conception elaborated by Harald Kujat (himself later also the inspector-general of the Bundeswehr in period 2000-2002), *Die Bundeswehr sicher ins 21. Jahrhundert. Eckpfeiler für eine Erneuerung von Grundauf*, that served as the basis for the government's decision from June 14, 2000. However, rather than increasing the capability for out-of-area military operations, Scharping's strategy endeavoured to make savings in the Ministry of Defence budget. According to Tom Dyson, this was the main reason that a transition to a voluntary method of recruitment was rejected.⁶ In 2002, further modifications were brought by the document "*Bundeswehr 2002. Sachstand und Perspektiven*".⁷

2 *Weißbuch zur Sicherheitspolitik und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr*. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung. 1994. § 205.

3 LONGHURTS, Kerry. *Germany and the Use of Force*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. p. 55. ISBN 978-1-8477-9590-8.

4 MEIERS, Franz-Josef. Germany's Defence Choices. *Survival*. 47, no.1, Spring2005, pp. 153-166. ISSN: 0039-6338.

5 KUČERA, Tomáš. Transformace německých ozbrojených sil po konci studené války. *Obrana a strategie*. 2, 2011, p. 33. [online]. Available at: <http://www.obranaastrategie.cz/cs/aktualni-cislo-2-2011/clanky/transformace-nemeckych-ozbrojenych-sil-po-konci-studene-valky.html#WynvFOkctIU>.

6 DYSON, Tom. German Military Reform 1998–2004: Leadership and the Triumph of Domestic Constraint over International Opportunity. *European Security*. 14, no. 3, 2005, pp. 361-386. ISSN: 0966-2839.

7 *Bundeswehr. Sachstand und Perspektiven*. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung. 2002.

The actual developments diverged to some extent from the Scharping's conception. In May 2003, under the new Minister of Defence Peter Struck (in office from July 2002 to November 2005) and the new inspector-general of the Bundeswehr Wolfgang Schneiderhan, new *Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien 2003* were adopted, which fundamentally changed not just the approaches towards the form of the Bundeswehr but also towards the country's security policy generally.⁸ Subsequently, in the first half of 2004, some of the key parameters of the plan were modified, with the aim of better developing capabilities useful for expeditionary operations. This was the framework within which the reform was completed in 2010.

The results of these reform efforts were contradictory and certainly cannot be considered a success. On the one hand, there was a shift in the desired direction (creating a smaller Bundeswehr that was cheaper to run), but on the other hand, the reforms were insufficient, as the discrepancy between Germany's foreign-policy obligations and its military capacities was not removed. The weakness of the Bundeswehr at the time was in its ability to fulfil the most likely tasks, i.e., to participate in expeditionary operations. The Bundeswehr was insufficiently prepared for the tasks that it would most probably have to undertake as part of expeditionary missions (policing, training of local law enforcement bodies, fighting against insurgents, disarming unlawful combatants, fighting against drug traffickers and other criminals, and constructing or reconstructing infrastructure).⁹ In many units, incongruence between training practices and the realities of deployment in the field was a persistent problem.¹⁰ In sum, the then-Bundeswehr suffered from defects of various seriousness in the areas of interoperability, strategic mobility, sustainability of deployment, strategic reconnaissance, precision-guided munitions, logistical support and medical support. The Bundeswehr had serious problems with procuring military equipment. The acquisition process was long and expensive, very often it did not reflect the needs of troops, while vital equipment arrived at operating units with significant delays. Many procurement projects dated from the Cold War era and were insufficiently adapted to the new needs.¹¹ Surprisingly, the acquisition process as a whole was insufficiently transparent. The above-mentioned problems are typical of the German military procurements even today.¹²

For these reasons, the Minister of Defence Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg convened the so-called Weise working commission on Bundeswehr reform in April 2010, which presented its report *Bericht der Strukturkommission der Bundeswehr: Vom Einsatz her*

8 *Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien erlassen*. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung. 2003 [online]. Available at: <http://www.ag-friedensforschung.de/themen/Bundeswehr/vpr2003.html>

9 HEINEMANN-GRÜDER, Andreas. "Auslandseinsätze der Bundeswehr - Anspruch und Wirklichkeit". In: GIESSMANN, Hans J. - GÖTZ Neuneck (eds). *Streitkräfte zähmen, Sicherheit schaffen, Frieden gewinnen*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2008, pp. 84–85. ISBN 978-3-8329-3608-2.

10 *Unterrichtungsdurchden Wehrbeauftragten Jahresbericht 2009* (51. Bericht). Deutscher Bundestag Drucksache 17/900, 17. Wahlperiode, 16. 3. 2010, pp. 14-22.

11 *Stichworte zur Sicherheitspolitik*. Interview vom Bundesminister der Verteidigung, Dr. Karl-Theodor Freiherr zu Guttenberg mit dem „Spiegel-Online“, 5-6 (2010), p. 123.

12 *Thesenpapier III Rüstungdigitalisierter Landstreitkräfte*. Kommando Heer, pp. 7-8. [online]. Available at: <https://1url.cz/aMzE6>

denken, Konzentration, Flexibilität, Effizienz in October 2010.¹³ The fundamental characteristics of this new phase of reform were summarised in the document *Eckpunkte für die Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr*, dated May 2011.¹⁴ This reform plan was gradually implemented, with some modifications, since 2011, under the successive ministers of defence Thomas de Maizière and Ursula von der Leyen. However, by no means all of the phases of the transformation can be called an unqualified success. Regarding the German readiness to fulfil its obligations to NATO, some German security experts do not hesitate to describe their country's armed forces as a "Potemkin village".¹⁵ The ongoing problems are reflected in the 2016 White Paper and will be likely dealt with in the new Concept of Bundeswehr which is under preparation.

2 THE SHIFT IN THE DEFINITION OF THE BUNDESWEHR'S MAIN MISSIONS AND ADAPTATION OF BUNDESWEHR'S STRUCTURE AND SIZE

2.1 Developments in 1990-2004

During the Cold War, the Bundeswehr essentially had a single task: to participate in the collective defence within the framework of NATO. A partial shift in the definition of the Bundeswehr's main missions occurred very soon after the end of the Cold War. In 1992, the tasks of the armed forces were broadened by the addition of international deployment and resolution of international crises in an international framework (UN, NATO, OSCE, and WEU), through the performance of crisis management military operations. In this phase, expeditionary operations supplemented the original, defensive roles of the Bundeswehr, but were not yet given priority.¹⁶

Among other factors, their prioritisation was impeded by political leaders' interpretation of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, in which Article 87a lays down that the German armed forces may be used only for defence. The ensuing political debate was ended by the July 1994 ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court, which opened the door for German participation in out-of-area military operations, as long as these were actions undertaken within the system of mutual collective defence. What

¹³ WEISE, Frank Jürgen, et al. *Bericht der Strukturkommission der Bundeswehr: Vom Einsatz her denken, Konzentration, Flexibilität, Effizienz*. Berlin: Strukturkommission der Bundeswehr, 2010.

¹⁴ *Eckpunkte für die Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr*. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung. 2011.

¹⁵ KLEINE-BROCKHOFF, Thomas - TECHAU, Jan. Die Bundeswehr wird eine potemkinsche Armee bleiben. *Die Welt*. 2018. [online]. Available at: <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article173013598/Nato-Die-Bundeswehr-wird-eine-potemkinsche-Armee-bleiben.html>

¹⁶ *Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien*. Bonn: Bundesministerium der Verteidigung. 1992. §40.

mattered in practice was that the category of security institutions so defined included the UN, NATO, and, today, it includes the EU as well.

In terms of the development of its capacity, during the 1990s, the Bundeswehr underwent fundamental reductions in headcount and in the amount of its combat equipment. According to the 1994 White Paper, having completed tasks arising from the reunification of Germany, the armed forces would be gradually reoriented towards new tasks. What was planned was a slow evolution, rather than a revolution. Involvement in out-of-area military operations was still understood to be supplementary rather than equivalent to the traditional role of the Bundeswehr. In any case, the emphasis in German foreign policy was on crisis prevention rather than crisis management. As part of this transformation, German units were gradually divided into forces destined for rapid deployment in the event of crisis (*Krisenreaktionskräfte*) and the main defence forces, dependent on mobilisation to supplement their numbers (*Hauptverteidigungskräfte*).

In the first half of the 1990s, the Bundeswehr had about 500,000 soldiers, of which 45% were conscripts. As part of further reductions, the headcount was reduced to 330,000 soldiers, of which 41% were conscripts.¹⁷ In 1993, at the Ministry of Defence, the Coordination Staff for Operational Tasks (*Koordinierungsstab für Einsatzaufgaben*) was established, through which the inspector-general could newly exert the authority in foreign missions. According to Thomas-Durell Young “*this is a significant development. For the first time the Generalinspekteur has been placed in the direct line of responsibility for operational control over forces between the Federal Minister of Defense and the service operational commands.*”¹⁸ However, this was still a Bundeswehr whose structure was redolent of the armed forces of West Germany during the Cold War era. The deficits of the German armed forces were demonstrated in the operation Allied Force in 1999.¹⁹

In terms of defining the main missions for the Bundeswehr, a fundamental shift in direction occurred after 2000. In 2000, Weizsäcker’s commission presented a revolutionary proposal, according to which the main *de facto* task of the reformed Bundeswehr would be the execution of various types of expeditionary operations.²⁰ The final proposal by the Weizsäcker commission envisaged a reduction of headcount to 240,000 soldiers. Only about 25,000 of these would be conscripts. This would, in fact, introduce a selective military service, as the Bundeswehr would only be able to draft about 20% of the citizens able and willing to serve in the armed forces. The commission proposed to reduce the length of compulsory military service to 10 months. Last but not least, it proposed a modest increase in defence expenditure, although it carefully avoided making

¹⁷ HUBER, Reiner K. and Bernhard SCHMIDT. Auf der Suche nach einem neuen Gleichgewicht. *Europäische Sicherheit*, no. 2, 2000, p. 28.

¹⁸ YOUNG, Thomas-Durell. *Trends in German Defense Policy: The Defense Policy Guidelines and the Centralization of Operational Control*. 1994. [online]. Available at: <http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/00169.pdf>

¹⁹ CLEMENT, Rolf. Die Entlassung von Verteidigungsminister Rudolf Scharping. *Deutschlandfunk*, 2002. [online]. Available at: http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/die-entlassung-von-verteidigungsminister-rudolf-scharping.724.de.html?dram:article_id=97400

²⁰ WEIZÄCKER, Richard et al. *Gemeinsame Sicherheit und Zukunft der Bundeswehr*. Bundesregierung, 2000. p. 13.

strong recommendations in this respect.²¹ The proposal met with disagreement from some experts and political leaders, and for that reason it was ultimately shelved.

According to a conception of the Bundeswehr reform under the Minister of Defence Rudolf Scharping, executed by the inspector-general of the Bundeswehr Harald Kujat the armed forces would continue to be primarily focused on the defence of the country's territory and provide collective defence, but their capacity to perform expeditious operations would be strengthened substantially.²² In terms of the evolution of capacities, the government ultimately proposed the reduction of the Bundeswehr to 255,000 soldiers of which 77,000 would be conscripts.²³ The reformed military would have 150,000 troops in the crisis response forces (*Krisenreaktionskräfte*).²⁴ In case of War, the Bundeswehr was expected to rise to 500,000 soldiers using reserves. Under this conception, the numbers of heavy weapons systems would be reduced and the worst military weaknesses of the German military addressed, in areas such as strategic transport, logistical support, the ability of units to survive in a modern theatre of war, precision guided munitions, communication and command systems and reconnaissance systems.²⁵ After the end of this round of military reform, the Bundeswehr was intended to be able sustain deployment of 10,000 soldiers in military operations.

However, in 2002 these number were further modified. According to the paper "*Bundeswehr 2002. Sachstand und Perspektiven*" from April 2002 during the Scharping's term, the future Bundeswehr was intended to have 285,000 soldiers, out of them 80,000 conscripts, 150,000 personnel in crisis response forces and in case of the necessity to defend the territory of Germany, the Bundeswehr was expected to rise to 500,000 soldiers.²⁶ Even in this paper, territorial defence and collective defence were expected as the main task of the German armed forces.²⁷ On the other hand, the paper accepted the idea, that crisis management would be the most likely task of the German armed forces in the near future.²⁸ Nevertheless, in July 2002, Scharping was removed from the office, new MoD Peter Struck was appointed and the Bundeswehr reform was deeply modified.

2.2 Developments in 2004-2010

During the implementation of the 'Scharping-Kujat reform' in Germany, a deeper change in the definition of the Bundeswehr's main missions was brought by the 2003

²¹ Ibid. 21. pp. 70–74.

²² Der Bundesminister der Verteidigung. *Die Bundeswehr - sicherins 21. Jahrhundert. Eckpfeiler für eine Erneuerung von Grund auf*. 2000, p. 9.

²³ Ibid. 23. p. 26.

²⁴ Ibid. 23. p. 28.

²⁵ Ibid. 23. pp. 23-25.

²⁶ Ibid. 8. pp. 30-31.

²⁷ Ibid. 5. pp. 153-165.

²⁸ Ibid. 8. p. 25.

Defence Policy Guidelines (DPG 2003) and the 2006 White Paper (WP 2006) during the Peter Struck's term (2002-2005). Various types of expeditionary operations, including tackling international terrorism, supporting allies, protecting Germany and its citizens and, last but not least, carrying out crisis response, emergency and evacuation operations, were considered in both documents as the missions that the Bundeswehr would be most likely to undertake.²⁹ DPG 2003 state that "these tasks are the major determinants of the capabilities, the command and control system, the degree of availability and the equipment of the Bundeswehr. They do in fact determine the structure of the Bundeswehr. In terms of intensity and complexity, conflict prevention and crisis management operations do not differ from, and may even turn into, operations conducted in support of allies. Both types of operations therefore require basically the same military capabilities."³⁰ The defence of the homeland remained the chief task of the armed forces merely in formal terms, because the notion of defence was re-defined to include expeditionary missions as part of crisis management operations. However, both documents did develop the idea that traditional territorial defence capabilities must remain at such a level that they could be rapidly expanded if necessary.³¹

Against this background, it was decided in 2004 that the target manpower of the reformed Bundeswehr (2010) would be 250,000 soldiers, of which 195,000 would be professionals (*Berufs- und Zeitsoldaten*) and 55,000 would be conscripts and reservists.³² According to this modified structure, the Bundeswehr would be divided into three broad categories of forces: (1) response forces (*Eingreifkräfte*), 35,000 soldiers strong; (2) stabilisation forces (*Stabilisierung skräfte*) with 70,000 soldiers; and (3) support forces (*Uterstützung skräfte*), with 147,500 soldiers.³³ It was assumed that, once the reform was completed, Germany would be able to sustain the deployment of 14,000 soldiers under various multilateral frameworks, especially in the NATO Response Force (NRF), EU battle groups and the United Nations Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS).³⁴ Special forces (*Kommando Spezialkräfte*) was increased from 900 to 1,200 soldiers.³⁵ Last but not least, the material and equipment should have been tailored to crisis management operations that, at that time, were seen as the most likely scenario for the near future.³⁶

²⁹ *Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien für den Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministers der Verteidigung*. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2003, p. 28. *Weißbuch zur Sicherheitspolitik Deutschlands und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr*. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2006. pp. 62-64.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 30. §78.

³¹ *Ibid.* 30. § 12, § 16, § 62.

³² WECBACH-MARA, Friedemann. Bundeswehr soll bis 2010 zur Einsatzarmee umgebaut werden. *Die Welt*. 2004. [online]. Available at: <https://www.welt.de/print-wams/article105276/Bundeswehr-soll-bis-2010-zur-Einsatzarmee-umgebaut-werden.html>

³³ *White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of Bundeswehr*. Federal Ministry of Defence, 2006. pp. 80-81.

³⁴ BRUNE, Sophie-Charlotte and Marcel DICKOW and Hilmar LINNENKAMP and Christian MÖLLING. *The German Armed Forces and the Financial Crisis. Towards National Restructuring and European Economies of Scale*. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Comments, 2010. p. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 34.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 5. p. 157.

In terms of increasing the capacity to carry out expeditionary operations, in 2010, the Bundeswehr, with its 250,000 soldiers, could sustain (only) 7,000 soldiers in expeditionary deployment at any given time.³⁷ It means that the reform failed at this point. Before the 'Struck-Kujat reform', the Bundeswehr could sustain the deployment of up to 10,000 soldiers, despite the fact that it had carried a much higher burden in the shape of a greater number of conscripts. On the other hand, the expenditures on the German armed forces were successfully reduced and the main goal (consuming peace dividends) was achieved.

2.3 The 2010 military transformation and its results

During the last round of the German military transformation (2010-2014), the Bundeswehr was reduced further, from 240,000 soldiers to 180,000; compulsory military service was abolished; and the Ministry of Defence would be restructured and reduced. Last but not least, the transformation involved a very substantial reduction and modification in the structure of existing garrisons. Germany intended to double (from 7,000 to 15,000 soldiers) the ability of the German armed forces to sustain forces in crisis management operations.³⁸

Currently, the Bundeswehr is divided into a military part (*Streitkräfte*) and a civilian administrative part (*Wehrverwaltung*). The military part consists of the German Army (*Deutsches Heer*), the German Navy (*Deutsche Marine*), the German Air Force (*Luftwaffe*), the Joint Support Service (*Streitkräftebasis*), the Joint Medical Service (*Zentraler Sanitätsdienst der Bundeswehr*), and the Cyber and Information Space Command (*Kommando Cyber- und Informationsraum*). As of 31 December 2017, the Bundeswehr had a strength of 179,562 active soldiers, ranking it among the 30 largest military forces in the world and making it the second largest in the European Union behind France. This number is approximately what was set as the target for the most recent transformation of the Bundeswehr. However, that does not mean that Germany is fully able to fulfil its foreign-policy obligations in the military domain. Therefore, the German Ministry of Defence assumes that by 2024 the number of soldiers on fixed-term contracts (*Zeitsoldaten*) and professional soldiers will increase by 12,000 to about 198,000 troops.³⁹

The current Bundeswehr, which is the child of the past military reforms, suffers fundamental shortages in its armaments, which were not at all remedied by the most recent reform. First of all, the contemporary Bundeswehr suffers from the low operational readiness of key weapons systems. According to the *Report on the Operational Readiness of the Bundeswehr's Primary Weapons Systems 2017*, the following are operational: 39 out of 128 Eurofighter Typhoon jet aeroplanes, 26 out of 93 Tornado jet aeroplanes, 16 out

³⁷ Ibid. 14. p. 26.

³⁸ Ibid. 14. p. 26.

³⁹ *Trendwende Personal*. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung. [online]. [cit.18.6.2018]. Available at: <https://www.bmvg.de/de/themen/personal/trendwende-personal>

of 72 CH-53 transport helicopters, 13 out of 58 NH-90 transport helicopters, 12 out of 62 Tiger helicopters, 3 out of 15 A400M transport aeroplanes, 105 out of 224 Leopard 2 tanks and 5 out of 13 Navy frigates.⁴⁰ Germany believes that some of the shortcomings in its armaments can be remedied in cooperation with key European partners. In April 2018, Germany and France agreed to move forward with the joint development and procurement of a new combat jet and other programmes.⁴¹ This is an important decision, because the Bundeswehr expects to make several very major acquisitions in the near future. It is expected that the investment into material equipment will reach 130 billion Euros in the period 2017-2030.⁴²

It is a well-known fact that the level of German defence expenditure grants some legitimacy to arguments that the country is a free-rider in NATO. But it is not simply a matter of expenditure as a share of the GDP. The discussion about the two-per-cent share - however attractive to the media - is nonsensical from an expert perspective. What matters is whether Germany has the necessary capacity at its disposal. Here it must be stressed that all previous Bundeswehr reforms sought to increase expeditionary operations capacities while saving money. That was only possible by shrinking the armed forces (smaller headcount, less technical equipment and fewer bases) by removing capacities that were deemed less important after the end of the Cold War and by limiting investment into equipment and military infrastructure. So far, Germany has been able to fulfil its foreign-policy obligations, albeit with some issues (very restrictive rules of engagement in foreign operations, an emphasis on the priority of non-military instruments, an emphasis on development aid, etc.). However, these issues were mostly implied by Germany's strategic culture, rather than resulting from a failed reform of the armed forces. From this point of view, the political guidelines of the Bundeswehr reform have been adhered to. And yet, the other side of the coin is that reversing the trend and increasing defence expenditure is now desirable. This is due both to external pressures - from allies and NATO structures - and to the simple fact that one cannot live forever from what one has, i.e., the investment made during the Cold War era.

The political debate in Germany on increasing defence expenditure has not started because the subject was broached by Donald Trump. It has, however, become more intense due to the American pressure. At present, the 2019 budget is being prepared. The defence budget is intended to rise steadily to 42.2 billion Euros in 2022. According to Ursula von der Leyen, Germany intends to increase its military spending in 2019 by 4 billion Euros to 42.9 billion Euros (1.31 percent of GDP) and in 2024 the German military

⁴⁰ *Bundeswehr Compromised by Operational Unreadiness*. Warfare today, 28 February 2018. [online]. [cit. 15.8.2018]. Available at: <http://www.warfare.today/2018/02/28/limited-number-of-weapons-in-german-military-ready-for-action-report/>

⁴¹ *German Defence Ministry Says Military Budget Plan 'Unsatisfactory'*. New York Times, 27 April 2018. [online]. [cit. 15.8.2018]. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2018/04/27/business/27reuters-germany-budget-military.html>

⁴² *Jahresbericht 2017*. Deutscher Bundestag Drucksache 19/700, 19. Wahlperiode, February 20, 2018. [online], p 20. Available at: <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/007/1900700.pdf>

should reach 1.5 percent of GDP.⁴³ On the one hand, this intention represents a significant increase. On the other hand, this increase in military expenditure is unsatisfactory when measured against the enormous pent-up needs for modernisation after 25 years of underinvestment and the 2 percent political obligation.

As far as the political plea of 'two per cent of GDP expenditure' is concerned, this is unlikely to be met in the near future - unless the international political situation should rapidly deteriorate. If Germany really were to spend two per cent of its GDP (which, measuring according to the Cold War standards, is not very much) on defence and if these means were expended in a rational fashion, Germany would become - thanks to its enormous economic power - a military power of the first order within a decade. The mind-set of the German society, or that of its political and military leaders, is not currently ready for that. Interviews with German experts indicate that they believe it not to be very likely.⁴⁴ Another limitation for contemporary Germany is its not-very-efficient procurement system, which limits the absorption capability of the German army. Thus, if such a political decision to increase the defence expenditure to two per cent of the GDP were made, this system would first have to be fundamentally transformed. It will definitely take its time.

2.4 The 2016 White Paper and future prospects

In 2016, a new White Paper was adopted in Germany, which brought a certain shift in the perception of the Bundeswehr's main tasks. On the one hand, the basic list of the Bundeswehr's missions remains similar to before. It includes: *"to defend Germany's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to protect its citizens; contribute to the resilience of the state and of society against external threats; support and ensure the ability of Germany to take action in matters of foreign and security policy; contribute together with partners and allies to countering security threats to our open society and to our free and safe world trade and supply routes; contribute to the defence of our allies and to the protection of their citizens; promote security and stability in an international framework and strengthen European integration, the transatlantic partnership, and multinational cooperation."*⁴⁵ However, in addition to crisis management tasks, the importance of traditional tasks of collective defence including deterrence are (again) emphasised. In

⁴³ *German leader, defense chief vow boost in military spending*. Reuters, July 4, 2018, [online]. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-politics-budget/german-leader-defense-chief-vow-boost-in-military-spending-idUSKBN1JU2I4>

⁴⁴ Records from interviews. Interviews with members of Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, a member of Europäische Akademie Berlin, a member of Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, a member of European Council on Foreign Relations, with professor of Humboldt-Universität Berlin, realized from October 9, 2017 to October 25, 2017 within the Grant "Germany and Out-of-Area Military Operations: Civilian Power, Trading State or Middle Power?".

⁴⁵ *White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of Bundeswehr*. Federal Ministry of Defence, 2016. p. 90.

this respect, the statement that all tasks of the Bundeswehr are of equal importance⁴⁶ is crucial, as underlined by Hans-Peter Bartels, the parliamentary commissioner for the armed forces, in his most recent report. This whole shift is linked with the year 2014, which means it is put into the context of the crisis in Ukraine.⁴⁷

At the same time, the 2016 White Paper expects that *“the demands made on the Bundeswehr will continue to increase. The growing international responsibility of our country is accompanied by military commitments as well as the increased expectations of our allies and partners.”*⁴⁸ The Bundeswehr is also expected to be able to operate in the context of so-called hybrid warfare. Last but not least, it is emphasised that the Bundeswehr should have the capacity to allow Germany to act as a “framework nation” in NATO. In terms of priorities in the build-up of capacities, the 2016 White Paper emphasises command and control, reconnaissance, effects, and support.⁴⁹

Therefore, also nowadays, there is an ongoing debate about the future of the Bundeswehr. Currently, it concerns especially the so-called Bühler plan, which was developed by the head of the planning department of the Bundeswehr general Erhard Bühler. The German press reports about it as the “Bundeswehr 2032” plan. Available sources imply that the plans of the Bundeswehr reform for the upcoming one and a half decades anticipate the return to the defence of territory and allies as the main task of the German armed forces, yet without reducing the German role in foreign deployment.

Generally speaking, it should be a complex reconstruction of the German armed forces. By 2032, Bundeswehr should have at its disposal three divisions divided into 8-10 brigades with heavy armament which can be deployed simultaneously. Achieving this state would mean the increase by around 15,000 of nominal size of the land forces. As regards technology, it is necessary to modernize the Bundeswehr substantially and equip it especially with artillery, which had been reduced since the end of Cold War from nearly 40 to 3 battalions. In the future, German land forces should possess 14 artillery battalions.⁵⁰ Further on, as is stated by Glatz and Zapfe, *“to regain lost operational capabilities, the field army’s brigades, divisions and corps will be reassigned critical support units. For example, to regain critical indirect fire capabilities, rocket and tube artillery is to be organically reintegrated into the brigades, divisions, and corps through so-called “artillery capability packages” (“Fähigkeitspakete Artillerie”) of as of now unspecified strength and structure.”*⁵¹ German air forces should be reformed so that by 2032 they should be able to conduct 350 exploratory and combat missions a day, sustain air superiority over Ger-

46 Ibid. 47. p. 91.

47 *Jahresbericht 2017*. Deutscher Bundestag Drucksache 19/700, 19. Wahlperiode, February 20, 2018. [online]. Available at: <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/007/1900700.pdf> p. 8.

48 Ibid. 47. p. 88.

49 Ibid. 47. pp. 98, 103-106.

50 SELIGER, Marco. Verteidigungsministerium will das Heer umstrukturieren. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. 2017. [online]. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/verteidigungsministerium-will-heer-umstrukturieren-14960534.html>

51 GLATZ, Rainer L. and Martin ZAPFE. *Ambitious Framework Nation: Germany in NATO Bundeswehr Capability Planning and the “Framework Nations Concept”*. Berlin? Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Comments 35, September 2017. pp. 2-3.

many and together with its allies win air superiority over the territory of deployment. As far as the navy is concerned, it should be capable of deploying at least 15 warships and submarines at the same time. Last but not least, an intensive development of capabilities in the area of cyberwarfare is expected.⁵²

As far as NATO is concerned, Gustav Gressel noted that “*Germany promised NATO a number of things: a three-division army (out of which one division should be deployable within a relatively short amount of time); several fighter-wings, including some dual-capable aircraft for the nuclear strike role; an electronic attack wing; an escort group for transatlantic convoys; and naval assets for littoral tasks in the Baltic Sea.*”⁵³ In 2013, Germany introduced the ‘framework nations concept’ (FNC) to NATO. Since February 2017, Germany has been involved in the ‘Enhanced Forward Presence’, being in charge as a framework nation of the battle group in Lithuania (about 1,000 soldiers) together with France, Croatia, the Netherlands, Norway and Iceland.⁵⁴ Recently, Germany has committed itself to creating a new command of the forces designated to strengthen NATO’s military presence in Eastern Europe. In 2019, the Bundeswehr is to take command over NATO’s Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). As a framework nation, Germany led this force in 2015 as part of the project’s test phase. The German air force has long been involved in securing the Baltic airspace, as part of the Air Policing operation.

Germany’s commitments include participation in EU military operations. The country pledged to make 18,000 service personnel available as part of European Headline Goal (EHG) in 1999. Since 2010, Germany has been regularly involved in EU battlegroups. As far as the recently launched Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) project is concerned, the situation is more complicated. PESCO is intended to be a group of pioneers paving the way for greater defence integration in the EU. Germany supports the strategy of an inclusive PESCO, on the one hand, opening it to as many participants as possible and, on the other, avoiding clear commitments. With respect to France, Germany has committed itself to coordinate the procurement of the new generation of main weapons systems such as tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery, and supersonic aircraft. The schedule for this should be ready by mid-2018. Plans are also being prepared to develop a new generation of the main weapons systems or modernising existing ones. These include the successors to the Eurofighter and Rafael combat airplanes, the successor to the Leopard 2 and Leclerc main battle tanks and new artillery systems.⁵⁵ Moreover, Germany pushes forward many other bilateral programs of military cooperation

52 *Bundeswehr-Pläne: Heer soll drei volle Divisionen bekommen.* Deutscher Bundeswehr verband. 2017. [online]. Available at: <https://www.dbww.de/aktuelle-themen/politik-verband/beitrag/news/bundeswehr-plaene-heer-soll-drei-volle-divisionen-bekommen/>

53 GRESSEL, Gustav. *Germany’s defence commitments: nothing but paper tigers?* European Council on Foreign Relations, 27th March 2018, [online]. Available at: https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_germanys_defence_commitments_nothing_but_paper_tigers

54 SANDERS, Lewis. *How does Germany contribute to NATO?* DeutscheWelle, 9th March 2018, [online]. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/how-does-germany-contribute-to-nato/a-38033967>

55 *Deutschland und Frankreich wollen bei Rüstung kooperieren.* Deutsche Wirtschafts Nachrichten, 14th July 2017, [online]. Available at: <https://deutsche-wirtschafts-nachrichten.de/2017/07/14/deutschland-und-frankreich-wollen-bei-ruestung-kooperieren/>

with smaller European partners that are based on FNC. It concerns the Netherlands,⁵⁶ the Czech Republic and Romania.⁵⁷ The term “Ankerarmee” is used in this context.

Whether Germany is able to meet all of these commitments and plans is something that is presently discussed in the country. Some experts have pointed out that - given the present state of the Bundeswehr - it is not very likely.⁵⁸ Still, the accomplishment of the desired condition presupposes large purchases of military technology of all kinds, which presents enormous demands on the acquisition process and defence budget.

The ongoing German debate can be characterised as a certain return to collective defence as a paradigm, which stands behind the military planning. Rainer L. Glatz and Martin Zapfe reached the conclusion that “*structurally, the Bundeswehr prioritizes high-intensity operations for collective defence. The same single set of forces will then have to provide troops for crisis management operations.*”⁵⁹ This is the absolute opposite of the situation regarded as desirable both in NATO and Germany since the end of the Cold War and achieved painstakingly in consequence of several rounds of military reforms sometime around 2011-2012. The present situation can be characterised as the Bundeswehr being optimised for conducting several types of out-of-area military operations and these existing capacities would be used in case of collective defence.

CONCLUSION

Over the years, the definition of the Bundeswehr’s main missions has gradually shifted towards crisis management operations and the structure of the armed forces has accommodated to this shift. After the 2010-2011 reform, it was entirely evident that these operations have become the main task of the armed forces. Yet, this shift has been somewhat slower than in other militaries in the West. At the turn of the millennium, the emphasis placed on territorial defence was still greater than in other NATO member countries, and its importance only decreased throughout the 2000s. The turning point came in 2003-2004 and the aim of the reforms was to build up the armed forces to make them suitable for various types of crisis management military operations, outside Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

⁵⁶ KASDORF, Bruno. Military cooperation between the German Army and the Royal Netherlands Army from a German perspective. *Militaire Spectator*, no 4, 2014, pp. 199-205. [online]. Available at: <https://www.militairespectator.nl/sites/default/files/teksten/bestanden/MS%204-2014%20Kasdorf%20Samenwerking%20KL-Bundeswehr.pdf>

⁵⁷ LEITHÄUSER, Johannes. Bundeswehr will „Ankerarmee“ für kleine Nato-Partner werden. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 9, 2017. [online]. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/sicherheitskonferenz/bundeswehr-will-ankerarmee-fuer-kleine-nato-partner-werden-14869905.html>

⁵⁸ JUNGHOLT, Thorsten. Bundeswehr ist mit Aufgaben in der Nato überfordert. *Die Welt*, February 15, 2018, [online]. Available at: https://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/article173593579/Bundeswehr-ist-mit-Aufgaben-in-der-Nato-ueberfordert.html

⁵⁹ Ibid. 53. p. 2.

Paradoxically, at the time these objectives stemming from the NATO security threat assessment and NATO defence planning were achieved in 2012-2014, threat perception changed and more emphasis was put on territorial and collective defence. At present, German military policy places the main emphasis on “restoring the capacities” for collective defence. This means that the reforms of the armed forces in Germany came too late, were implemented too slowly and without sufficient rigour. German political and military leadership was not able to prepare a military reform that would successfully anticipate the future needs of the German security policy. All German post-cold war military transformations only responded to stimuli coming from the outside. In formulating their country’s security policy, German political leaders always had to consider the discrepancy between Germany’s needs and its military abilities. Indeed, they had no choice, as they were unable to remove the discrepancy. On the other hand, at this point, Germany is not very different from the rest of European NATO members.

By and large, the Bundeswehr is in an unsatisfactory state as far as the needs of the German security policy are concerned, even though the targets of the past reforms were largely met. This apparent contradiction is due to the fact that during the past reforms the priority was to save money and, at the same time, to meet the German commitments to NATO and EU in terms of undertaking a broad spectrum of expeditionary operations. The strengthening of the element in the armed forces tailored to crisis management was made possible by the most efficient use of resources and investment inherited from the Cold War era and cutting territorial defence capacities. However, this policy is now evidently exhausted and is no longer sustainable - if German collective defence capacities are to be truly restored.

In this context, it must be noted that decreasing the European dependence on the USA in defence is impossible without a substantially greater contribution from Germany. The idea that by 2024 the country will spend two per cent of its GDP on defence (which would amount to about 70 billion euros) is hardly palatable to the German left nor to a substantial section of the general public. But even if this money were wisely spent, it would still not substitute for the US security guarantees in Europe. Thus, one can expect a continued contradiction between Germany’s economic might and substantial political influence in Europe on the one hand, and very modest German military capacities on the other. For the immediate future, the economic giant will remain a military dwarf.

This work was supported by the Grantová agentura České republiky (Czech Science Foundation) under the project “Germany and Out-of-Area Military Operations: Civilian Power, Trading State or Middle Power?”, registration number 17-12243S.

Author: *Assoc. prof. Zdeněk Kříž, PhD., born 1972. Graduated in political science and history at the Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University. He became associate professor of political sciences in 2006, based on his habilitation thesis "End of Germany as a civilian power? Germany's out-of-area operations during the red-green coalition of 1998-2005." He specializes in international relations, international security organizations, German and Czech security policies, civilian and democratic control of armed forces, and the history of armed conflicts. In 2010 and 2011, he was part of the Czech Defence Minister's expert team producing the White Paper on Defence of the Czech Republic 2011.*

How to cite: KŘÍŽ, Zdeněk. German Military Transformation - the Never-Ending Quest for Appropriate Military Capacities. *Vojenské rozhledy*. 2018, 27 (3), 47-62. ISSN 1210-3292 (print), 2336-2995 (on-line). Available at: www.vojenskerozhledy.cz