



German Hard Power: Is There a There There?

By Patrick Keller

The “grand narrative” of German security policy since the end of the Cold War has oscillated between Germany’s reluctance to use hard power and Germany’s desire to be seen as supportive of its American and European allies. This is reflected in the varying decisions it has made during foreign military operations and in the manner in which Germany’s military has conducted those operations. At the same time, the German military has undergone a series of reforms designed to modernize German forces and to make them more flexible and deployable. But a stagnant and low level of defense expenditures has made carrying out these reforms an ongoing challenge to the German military and German defense ministry. Germany has a vital interest in a stable and liberal international order and, hence, in having a military capable of helping maintain that order. As Europe’s leading economic power and, increasingly, as Europe’s central political actor, Germany could and should take the lead in reversing the precipitous decline in European hard power.

This is the sixth National Security Outlook in a series about the defense capabilities of America’s allies and security partners.¹

Two very different stories are in competition for the “grand narrative” of current German security policy. The first could be called “look how far we’ve come” and goes like this: Since reunification restored the state to full sovereignty in 1990, a thriving Germany has accepted its increasing share of responsibility in international security affairs. It has done so gradually—mindful of its historic baggage—but efficiently. After the 1994 breakthrough decision by the Federal Constitutional Court to allow out-of-area deployments of the Bundeswehr (German armed forces), the forces have been partaking in many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) missions, including the wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan and the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia.² Currently, Germany deploys about 6,200 troops in missions abroad; it is the third largest contributor to the

Patrick Keller (patrick.keller@kas.de) is the coordinator of foreign and security policy at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Berlin, Germany.

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and the lead nation in the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). Thus, contemporary Germany has finally established itself as a “normal nation” that contributes to international stability. It does so—if necessary—by military means as well, and certainly in a manner that is commensurate with its size and economic strength.

Key points in this Outlook:

- German ambivalence on the use of military power continues to bedevil German politicians and leaders.
- A stagnant defense budget will be a challenge to the German defense ministry’s plan to establish a leaner, more flexible, and more deployable German armed forces.
- As Europe’s economic leader and central political actor, Germany should guide the way in reversing the problematic decline in European hard power.

The other story could be called “too little, too late” and scoffs at these alleged achievements. From this perspective, German security policy during the last 25 years has always oscillated between two conflicting conclusions drawn from German history. One is to never again stand opposed to the United States and Germany’s (major) European neighbors; the other is to never again experience war. Hence, although Germany has made military contributions to international missions, it has never done so by its own initiative. Germany’s allies (mostly the United States) and partners in the EU had to drag Germany into its commitments. As a consequence, German leaders of various political persuasions have always tried to commit as few troops with as many caveats (such as restricted rules of military engagement) as possible without losing face among allies and friends. One can debate whether this is a prudent strategy and whether it worked well, but few would argue that it is a policy befitting the most prosperous, populous, and politically influential nation-state in the EU.

Germany is the third largest contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and the lead nation in the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR).

Every German security policy expert puts forward a version of one of these two stories or a combination of both, depending on circumstance. (The politically savviest tell the first story to international audiences while saving the second story for domestic consumption.) This unresolved “grand narrative” debate betrays German policymakers’ fundamental insecurity about their country’s role in the world and about the proper bearing for a leading power. What is even more curious, however, is how abstract this debate really is: very few talk seriously about the fundamentals of German security and defense policy—that is, about Germany’s military capabilities.

Both narratives implicitly assume that German military capabilities exist in sufficient number and quality to give policymakers a broad range of strategic choices, while in fact such hard power assets are waning in Germany and almost everywhere else in the West.³ If current trends continue, a different pair of competing stories might very well emerge: “We do not fight anymore because we cannot, as we are simply lacking the capabilities to do so,”

versus the more sophisticated, “We cannot fight anymore because we do not want to and took all necessary steps to prevent us from having those capabilities.” Either way, the continuation of current trends will result in calamity—not just for German security interests but also for the overall stability of a liberal international system.

German Armed Forces in Times of Austerity

Since 1990, the Bundeswehr has been undergoing constant reform. Main drivers of these reforms were the incorporation of the East German army (German Democratic Republic’s National People’s Army) into the Bundeswehr, the adaptation to new tasks in a changed security landscape after the Cold War, and the constraints of a limited defense budget. In fact, the military and the German ministry got so tired of the unending reform cycles that Thomas de Maizière, current minister of defense, prefers instead to call his reform a new orientation [*Neuausrichtung*]. Tellingly, this latest wave of Bundeswehr reform did not originate with a security-political decision by the defense minister but with a budget decision by the finance minister.

In response to the 2008 global financial crisis and the ensuing European debt crisis, German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s government adopted a constitutional amendment limiting new federal debt to 3.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). To comply with this break on debt [*Schuldenbremse*], in 2010, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble prescribed every ministry an exact amount of money to be saved over the following four years. In relation to its overall budget, defense had to cut the most: €8.3 billion until 2014. Considering that the annual German defense budget is only about €30 billion, the prescribed reduction was substantial—especially for a military establishment already existing on limited means.

This daunting requirement propelled then-minister of defense Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg to initiate the most far-reaching reform of the Bundeswehr since its founding in 1955. In a first step, he killed one of his conservative party’s sacred cows: conscription. The practicality (and feasibility) of maintaining a conscription army in a post-Cold War security environment that required leaner and more professional forces had been contested for years. Sold as a cost-saving exercise in dramatic financial times by Germany’s most popular minister, protests against the change were suddenly soft. As it turned out, however, ending conscription did not save money but created extra cost for

recruiting and maintaining salary levels competitive with the private sector.

Thus, other elements of zu Guttenberg's reform package—downsizing the armed forces, reducing procurement of new weapons systems and platforms, trimming resources for research and development (R&D) for future systems, and increasing cooperation with EU partners on military matters (“pooling and sharing”)—became even more relevant. The actual concepts behind those general ideas, however, remained nebulous. When zu Guttenberg had to resign in March 2011 over allegations of plagiarism in his dissertation, it fell to de Maizière, zu Guttenberg's successor, to develop a strategy that satisfied both the treasurers and the generals. Such a strategy, de Maizière decided, should consider Germany's negative demographic trend, should be derived from an analysis of Germany's political and security situation, and should be financially sustainable.

Surprisingly, de Maizière—who is one of Angela Merkel's closest advisers and was, in her first term, the chief of her chancellery—proved capable of working under less harsh conditions than assumed: the prescribed cuts of €8.3 billion were taken off the table. To the contrary, the administration and parliament even agreed to a slight increase in defense spending and to project more modest reductions over the next two years. (See table 1.)

From 1991 until 1997, German defense spending was continually decreasing (from about €28 billion to €23 billion and, correspondingly, from approximately 2 percent of GDP to 1.6 percent). With the Kosovo War, the “peace dividend” era was over. Since 2001, defense spending has been on a slow but steady rise, with only minor cuts in 2003 and 2010. The financial crisis, starting in 2008, did not have a discernible effect on this trend. And, indeed, the projected cuts for 2014 and 2015 might yet be reversed—after all, the administration's original projected defense budget for 2013 was €31.4 billion, well below the €33.3 billion that was actually allocated.

At the same time, German increases in defense spending have remained modest and have not even offset the effects of inflation over the past 20 years. In real terms, defense spending has been decreasing. Moreover, with defense spending at around 1.25 percent of GDP, Germany obviously does not make defense a budget priority. (The budget of the ministry of labor and welfare is more than four times the size of that of the ministry of defense.) And, needless to say, Germany does not meet the pledge made by the NATO allies at the 2002 Prague NATO Summit to spend at least 2 percent of national GDP on defense.

TABLE 1
GERMAN DEFENSE SPENDING AS A
PERCENTAGE OF GDP

Year	Defense Spending (in billions of euros)	% of GDP
2006	27.87	1.2
2007	28.38	1.2
2008	29.45	1.2
2009	31.18	1.3
2010	31.11	1.3
2011	31.55	1.2
2012	31.70	1.2
2013	33.30	To Be Determined
2014	30.90 (projected)	To Be Determined
2015	30.40 (projected)	To Be Determined

SOURCES: Federal Statistical Office of Germany, “Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen;” Federal Ministry of Defence, “The 2012 Defence Budget;” and German Bundestag, *Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung*.

The budget increase of about 5 percent in 2013 seems striking, but it is because of a significant rise in the personnel cost of federal employees and a projected rent hike for some buildings used by the armed forces. It is not a gain in substance for military planners;⁴ in fact, the budget share allocated to the investment in actual defense-related capabilities (including not only military procurements but also R&D) has declined in both absolute and relative terms. In 2012, R&D and procurement constituted approximately 23.1 percent (€7.4 billion) of the total defense budget, but was reduced to 21.4 percent (€7.1 billion) for 2013. The figures for military procurements alone also reflect this, with a reduction from 17.2 percent to 15.4 percent (or €5.5 billion to €5.1 billion in absolute figures).⁵

In an effort to ease the budgetary squeeze, de Maizière proceeded to trim ministry structures and to downsize the armed forces. Upon completion of his new orientation in 2017, the Bundeswehr is envisioned to consist of no more than 185,000 active duty military and 55,000 civilian employees (down from 250,000 and 75,000, respectively, in 2010), with 10,000 soldiers deployable simultaneously in two areas of operation (up from 7,000).⁶ In the new personnel structure, the army, air force, and navy will consist of approximately 62,000 soldiers, 32,000 airmen,

and 16,000 sailors, respectively, and the Joint Support Service and the medical service will consist of roughly 46,000 and 19,000, respectively.⁷ (The remaining members are distributed among equipment, infrastructure, human resources, and other services.)

This development is accompanied by reductions in military materiel through cuts in prospective procurement and decommissioning of active systems. Although the German Navy is to remain more or less the same (albeit at a lower level of personnel), these reductions will strongly affect Germany's army and air force.⁸ (Table 2 shows some of the prospective changes.) To assess what this means for German defense policy, one needs to consider the strategic context of these changes.

Strategic Backdrop and Level of Ambition

According to Minister de Maizière, the cuts described in table 2 are not primarily dictated by budget constraints but reflect security-political considerations. Using Germany's 2006 white book as a starting point, the minister outlined the strategic thinking that was to guide the "new orientation" in a series of documents and speeches. The most important of those are the Defense Policy Guidelines (DPG) and the principles [*Eckpunkte*] papers, both published in May 2011.⁹ They provide a rationale for the German military in the early 21st century by explaining Germany's vested interest in a stable liberal international order and by analyzing current and likely future threats to that order.¹⁰ The ministry emphasizes that neither retrenchment nor the sole focus on traditional concepts of territorial defense are promising strategies in dealing with these challenges. Hence, Germany should take on a greater share of the burden in upholding global order, including military contributions to UN, EU, or NATO missions.

Consequently, the "new orientation" seeks to develop a sleeker force that is highly deployable and effective in crisis management and crisis resolution missions. "The ability to fight . . . is thus a benchmark for operational readiness," states the DPG.¹¹ Because of Germany's size and geostrategic position, the ability to fight cannot be

TABLE 2
CHANGE IN GERMAN DEFENSE PROCUREMENT

System	Current or originally planned number	New ceiling
Combat tank Leopard 2	350	225
Armored personnel carriers Puma/Marder	410 / 70	350 / 0
Armored howitzer 2000	148	89
Multipurpose helicopter NH-90	122	80
Support helicopter Tiger	80	40
Eurofighter Typhoon	177	140
Combat aircraft Tornado	185	85
Transport aircraft C-160/A400M	80 / 60	60 / 40
Multipurpose warship (MKS 180)	8	6
Naval mine countermeasures unit	20	10

SOURCE: Federal Ministry of Defense, "Ressortbericht zum Stand der Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr."

limited to a few specialized and highly qualified capabilities but must encompass a full-spectrum force, the DPG argues. Hence, a key slogan for the new orientation's force structure is "breadth rather than depth" [*Breite vor Tiefe*], meaning a preference for "a little bit of everything" over further military specialization. This strategy incurs deficits in sustainability and effectiveness in operations but is said to give Germany a key political role in cooperating with European partners of small and medium size. By offering broad basic capabilities, Germany allows other partners to develop highly specialized forces that can then be pooled and shared in common operations—presumably, at times, under German leadership and with financial benefits for all.

In assessing this strategy and its translation into military reform, several problems stand out. For instance, with the end of conscription, it is yet unclear whether the envisioned troop strength will be sustainable, and at what cost. To maintain a force of 185,000 troops, about 12,500 new career and longer-term service members need to be recruited each year.¹² Given the rule of thumb that the Bundeswehr needs four applicants to fill one job satisfactorily, this is more of a challenge than it might seem at first glance. Early data on recruitment under the new system have been inconclusive.

Even if the ranks can be filled, the restructuring of the Bundeswehr into a rapidly deployable fighting force still stops half way. Of 185,000 troops, the government is only aiming to deploy a maximum of 10,000. That is a low level of ambition, even if one takes into account that to deploy 10,000, an additional 20,000 will be either in preparation and training to deploy or resting from a

previous deployment. The political decision to limit each tour to just four months (instead of the more common six to eight) adds further pressure on personnel planning. And, finally, it should be noted that having a capability to deploy 10,000 personnel is the defense ministry's stated goal; it remains unclear whether it will be achieved.

German increases in defense spending have remained modest and have not even offset the effects of inflation over the past 20 years.

The idea of a force geared toward deployable operations abroad is not fully realized in terms of military hardware either. The Bundeswehr still lacks essential capabilities in areas such as tactical and strategic airlift. The proposed further reductions in helicopters and planned procurement of transport aircraft (A400M) do not mesh with the strategic analysis set out by the ministry, but they are a consequence of rising prices for new equipment and limited budgets.¹³

Especially in terms of capabilities, the current reform is designed very tightly, not allowing for much wiggle room for when a specific system runs into development problems or fails to materialize altogether. As the procurement process is notoriously unpredictable, this can thwart strategic planning—with serious consequences for German freedom of action. The most recent example of this is the cancellation of the unmanned aerial vehicle Euro Hawk because of licensing problems.¹⁴ The ministry's decision, which came rather late in the procurement process, prompted a parliamentary investigation into whether money was wasted on a system that was known to be unfit. In the midst of a federal election campaign, that investigation received much attention, overshadowing the more central question of why Germany needs (armed and unarmed) unmanned aerial vehicles and how to fill this capability gap.

Beyond these issues of manpower, hardware, and procurement, there are also political problems. The rather ambitious role envisioned by the defense ministry for German armed forces in international security is lacking support from the public, parliament, and even parts of Chancellor Merkel's coalition government. Most Bundeswehr missions abroad are not supported by a majority of the German people. German support for the largest and most well-known mission, ISAF, has been dwindling for years, from 64 percent in 2005 to 44 percent in 2010 to

37 percent in 2011.¹⁵ More consequential than this assessment of current or past missions is the deep reluctance to engage in similar operations again.

This tension is perhaps best encapsulated in foreign minister Guido Westerwelle's self-proclaimed doctrine, the *Culture of Military Restraint*, which is at odds with de Maizière's plea to take on "more military responsibility."¹⁶ It is no accident that the DPG paper issued by de Maizière is only a ministerial one; its bold assignment of tasks to the Bundeswehr would most likely not be approved by Westerwelle's foreign ministry and would therefore not make it into a government-approved white book or similar statement by the German government as a whole. This lack of strategic consensus, of course, also affects the reform of the armed forces. In fact, it goes a long way in explaining the root causes of the problems outlined earlier.

These political divisions and the general desire not to repeat the Afghanistan experience point to a larger issue: Germany's political leadership is instinctively reluctant to use hard power. The use of military means is suspected to be rarely effective in producing desired political outcomes and always incurs political costs at home. As a nation deeply ashamed of the horrors of Nazi militarism and having been reeducated as free-riding consumers of security, Germany still struggles with the appropriate approach to military means as an instrument of foreign policy. Moreover, the average German does not feel threatened by turmoil abroad and sees little or no connection between safety at home and the need to maintain a stable liberal international order. It is little or no surprise, then, that so much of German foreign policy is predicated instead on trade, soft diplomacy, and on occasion, unilateral disarmament initiatives.

This combination makes Germany an unpredictable partner in international security affairs. There is always a chance that Germany's aversion to hard power will trump its strategic interests. Most prominently, that was the case in Libya in 2011 when Germany abstained in the UN Security Council—the first time it voted with neither France nor the United States in that body—and subsequently refused to let its airborne surveillance capability (AWACS) contribute to NATO's Unified Protector mission.¹⁷

AWACS is a typical multinational capability, the very embodiment of the pooled and shared arrangements of "smart defense" that Germany keeps advocating in both the EU and NATO councils. Given such an example, it is not surprising that pooling and sharing arrangements are

making little progress these days. This is not just a problem for Germany's and the EU's credibility as effective actors in international security, but also for the "new orientation" that is designed with a view to deeper European defense integration. The whole concept of "breadth rather than depth," for instance, will prove hollow without sufficient cooperation with others, especially in Europe.

Conclusion

Assessing Germany's hard power is a treacherous undertaking. There are two main reasons for this: first, in the midst of far-reaching Bundeswehr reform, all hard facts—from the eventual size of the force to actual capabilities—are uncertain and in flux. Minister de Maizière aims to complete his new orientation in 2017; until then, many of the numbers discussed here are goals or data whose programs

are works in progress. While certain trends are discernible, their extrapolation is by no means reliable. After all, the Merkel government has undertaken several surprising reversals on defense issues already—for example, the sudden suspension of conscription or the unexplained retraction of the announced €8.3 billion in defense budget cuts.

Second, the development of German hard power over the last 10 to 20 years has been characterized by deep ambiguity, in terms of both posture and policy. This is a reflection of the two competing stories about the grand narrative of Germany's security policy.

In describing this ambiguity, it is important to note that the topic of German hard power does not lend itself to a straight story of unmitigated decline. The study of German hard power is not the opening line of a bitter joke. It rests on a modest but solid base of steady budgets in recent years and acquisition programs that, while

The German Military in Afghanistan

German military involvement in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan epitomizes the ambiguities of German security policy discussed in this Outlook. It can serve as an example for both narratives presented in the introduction: that of a strong and increasingly confident nation shouldering its share of the burden of upholding international stability and that of an indecisive nation pursuing a minimalist approach to its role in international security affairs because of its instinctive rejection of hard power means.

After 9/11, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder declared Germany's "unlimited solidarity" with the United States, and it was in Germany's former capital where, with the international Bonn Agreement, the foundation for ISAF was laid. Schröder put his own chancellorship on the line when he combined his decision to send German armed forces to Afghanistan with a parliamentary vote of confidence. He won narrowly. Also, it was Schröder's defense minister, Peter Struck (a Social Democrat as well), who coined the enduring rationale for this mission of the Bundeswehr, reflecting a new reality in the age of globalized threats such as international terrorism: "Germany's security is also to be defended at the Hindu Kush."¹

It is telling that such strong political backing was required for a relatively modest contribution: the initial number of German soldiers to be deployed to Afghanistan was a mere 1,200. Today, almost 12 years later, the size of the mandate encompasses 4,400 soldiers. These numbers indicate that Germany underestimated the difficulty of the challenge at hand and chose a strategy of minimalist incrementalism in dealing with it. This is also evident from the fact that German decision makers always emphasized the nonviolent nature of the Bundeswehr's job in the stable northern provinces of Afghanistan: networked security [*Vernetzte Sicherheit*], a German version of NATO's "comprehensive approach," was the key phrase, meaning that the armed forces did everything from painting schools to drilling wells, but would refrain from engaging the enemy. In fact, one of the German caveats in the NATO plan of operations for Afghanistan dictated that German soldiers were to shoot only in self defense in face of an attack or imminent threat—after having yelled warnings in several languages. The German parliament's somewhat fanciful insistence on a clear separation between Operation Enduring Freedom (understood as the bloody counterterrorism mission in which Germany could not participate) and ISAF (understood as the civilian reconstruction mission in which German soldiers participated as a kind of armed technical relief agency) underscored this general discomfort with hard power in action.

(continued on next page)

True to its reactive nature, German policy toward Afghanistan did not change until the deteriorating security situation in northern Afghanistan revealed a glaring gap between rhetoric and reality. In April 2010, Defense Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg was the first high-ranking German official who called the Bundeswehr's mission a war. Fearing the legal and political implications, he added "colloquially speaking." (Officially, "non-international armed conflict within the parameters of international law" remained the German phrase of choice.²) Around the same time, some of the caveats were dropped and the extreme restrictions of the rules of engagement were abandoned. As it turned out, despite limited equipment—in tactical airlift and reconnaissance, for example—the Bundeswehr performed admirably against the insurgents.

Between January 2002 and July 2013, 54 German soldiers lost their lives in Afghanistan. Although Germany has never before experienced such high casualties, public reaction was muted. Arguably, this is a sign of what former German president Horst Köhler called the public's "benevolent indifference" toward its armed forces rather than an expression of general agreement with Germany's fight alongside its allies and the Afghan government. After all, when in September 2009 an American fighter jet responded to a German colonel's call, striking two fuel tankers captured by insurgents and killing more than 90 civilians in the process, Germany—eight years into it—had its first intense public debate about military operations in ISAF. Former defense minister Franz Josef Jung; his deputy Peter Wichert; and the highest-ranking German soldier, Inspector General Wolfgang Schneiderhan, lost their jobs over the incident.³

The debate also highlighted increasing frustration with the perceived lack of progress in Afghanistan. Given the length and cost of the mission, Germany experienced the same kind of fatigue other allies did; strategic concern quickly turned to finding an honorable exit strategy. The changing face of ISAF was the main catalyst for this. The mission had been sold to the German public as a stabilization effort in which German forces would assist in Afghanistan's peaceful development toward democracy and prosperity; it was not advertised as a prolonged war against insurgents of dubious background and motivation.

Accordingly, NATO's decision to redeploy by 2014 was met with an audible sigh of relief in Berlin and in most other member states. As of yet, it is uncertain how many Western troops will remain in Afghanistan after that date—not as a fighting force, but as advisers in training the Afghan security forces. It is a testament to Germany's complicated relationship with its hard power that it was the first NATO state to specify an "after 2014" contingent of about 800 soldiers. While most observers applaud this bold commitment to alliance solidarity and Afghan stability, German officials keep their fingers crossed that this training mission does not evolve into a war-fighting operation once again.

Notes

1. Steffen Heberstreit, "Peter Struck ist tot" [Peter Struck Is Dead], *Frankfurter Rundschau*, December 19, 2012, www.fr-online.de/politik/ex-verteidigungsminister-peter-struck-ist-tot,1472596,21150806.html.

2. "Tabu-Bruch: Guttenberg spricht von Krieg in Afghanistan" [Breaking Taboo: Guttenberg Speaks on War in Afghanistan], *Der Spiegel*, April 4, 2010, www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/tabu-bruch-guttenberg-spricht-von-krieg-in-afghanistan-a-687235.html.

3. For a succinct analysis of Germany's changing Afghanistan policy—and the political fallout of the Kunduz incident in particular—see Timo Noetzel, "The German Politics of War: Kunduz and the War in Afghanistan," *International Affairs* 87, no. 2 (March 2011): 397–417.

modest in scale, are technologically advanced. This cautiously positive assessment of German hard power gains particular traction in comparison to the developments of other European nations, large or small. In the conventional military balance among Europe's big three, for instance, Germany is catching up—although admittedly, this is due in no small part to the severe defense budget cuts in both France and the United Kingdom.¹⁸ And while Paris and London command crucial capabilities that Germany does not—nuclear weapons, amphibious forces, aircraft carrier(s)—these high-value assets eat up much of

their shrinking budgets, giving Germany an edge in other areas such as tanks (*vis-à-vis* the United Kingdom) and aircraft (*vis-à-vis* France).

Moreover, the direction of de Maizière's reform is sensible: focus on deployability, create leaner and more flexible forces, push for better cooperation among EU and NATO partners, and emphasize the need to be able to actually fight. So when the Atlantic Council states that "German military weakness is NATO's most significant problem," one could easily think of weaker and faster declining powers within the alliance—and more significant problems,

too, such as diverging threat perceptions among most members.¹⁹

Still, there is something to the charge brought forth by the council and others. The numbers—stable as they may be—are not impressive for a state of Germany’s size, location, wealth, and political power. They are, of course, even less impressive in comparison to the increases in the defense budgets of rising powers such as China, Brazil, and India. If Germany will one day be able to send 10,000 soldiers into combat abroad, equipped with some of the remaining Leopard 2 tanks, or to deploy abroad a dozen brand-new Eurofighter Typhoons (a nonstealthy aircraft of disputed competitiveness), will it make much of a difference?

One of NATO’s lessons from the 2011 war in Libya is that without US support, the European allies, led by Britain and France, could not mount a sustainable campaign for lack of ammunition and planes, among other things.²⁰ Germany did not participate in that operation against one of the world’s weakest militaries, but in terms of more effective air-defense suppression and close-air support, it would hardly have improved Europe’s performance in any case.

That Germany did not even try to make a difference in this UN-mandated NATO mission makes matters worse. It is indicative of a disconnect between the country’s strategic interests and its political will to use force. For every step forward toward a normalization of German security policy (Kosovo and Afghanistan), there is a step backward (utterly restrictive rules of engagement and Libya). When German armed forces are sent into international missions, it is usually first and foremost explained to the public as a necessary act of solidarity with Germany’s allies. Although this is a good argument, it should never be a substitute for a lucid formulation of German interests and a clear-eyed analysis of the threat to be countered.

One emerging threat is the increasing weakness of the European states when it comes to their hard power capabilities and thus their ability to secure their own periphery, let alone their global strategic interests. Germany, as the undisputed economic powerhouse and central political actor in Europe, would be well advised to lead the charge in reversing this dangerous trend. This, however, would require much stronger leadership on German security policy than the country has enjoyed over most of the last two decades.

The opinions expressed in this Outlook should be attributed to the author alone. The author thanks his research assistant, Aylin Matlé, for her support.

Notes to Tables

Table 1: Federal Statistical Office of Germany, “Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen” [National Accounts], www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/Indikatoren/Konjunkturindikatoren/VolkswirtschaftlicheGesamtrechnungen/vgr111.html; Federal Ministry of Defence, “The 2012 Defence Budget,” August 14, 2012, www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg!ut/p/c4/NYxBCoNADAB_tjFCL976iqqXjdYQg0kqa3b7fVQhjkNDExw4diEMETrqDDA-JF-qXZGicTlyOoSXLXuqATJlllydjxXrpUZ-dN0zLVQyblFJlfl_wfueK8NIDrvZ6wSyiBio/; and German Bundestag, *Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung: Finanzplan des Bundes 2011 bis 2015* [Briefing by the Federal Government: The Federal Budget 2011 to 2015], December 8, 2011, <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/066/1706601.pdf>.

Table 2: Federal Ministry of Defence, “Ressortbericht zum Stand der Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr” [Interagency Report on the State of the Reorientation of the Bundeswehr], *Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*, May 8, 2013, www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg!ut/p/c4/NYvBCslwEET_aDcBRerNEhSvvdh4S9sQVpqkrjt68eNNDs7AO8xj8Im1ye0UnFBObsUR7Uzn6QNT3AO8cuG6QqREB_FMJekJfRYPc05eGsUnocrATjLDllnWZgpnUALWqVNr7T6R3-70-1qzUEfb0fcIvx8gOBjaR2/, 24.

Notes

1. To read the other five *Outlooks* in this series, see Bryan McGrath, “NATO at Sea: Trends in Allied Naval Power,” AEI *National Security Outlook* (September 2013), www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/defense/nato/nato-at-sea-trends-in-allied-naval-power/; Andrew Shearer, “Australian Defense in the Era of Austerity: Mind the Expectation Gap,” AEI *National Security Outlook* (August 2013), www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/defense/australiandefense-in-the-era-of-austerity-mind-the-expectation-gap/; Marcial Hernandez, “Dutch Hard Power: Choosing Decline,” AEI *National Security Outlook* (April 2013), www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-anddefense-policy/regional/europe/dutch-hard-power-choosing-decline/; Gary J. Schmitt, “Italian Hard Power: Ambitions and Fiscal Realities,” AEI *National Security Outlook* (October 2012), www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/europe/italian-hardpower-ambitions-and-fiscal-realities/; and Patrick Keller, “Challenges for European Defense Budgets after the Economic Crisis,” AEI *National Security Outlook* (July 2011), www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/europe/challenges-foreuropean-defensebudgets-after-the-economic-crisis-outlook/.

2. Up until the court’s decision in July 1994, the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany was understood as restricting the use of German armed forces for collective geographical security of NATO member states and the Western European Union (WEU). The court

held that the government was free to deploy German troops in NATO or WEU operations “to implement resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations” but that, to do so, the government would need the approval of the German parliament [Bundestag] first. See Karl-Heinz Börner, “The Future of German Operations Outside NATO,” *Parameters*, Spring 1996, 62–72, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/96spring/borner.htm>.

3. See Gary J. Schmitt, “The West’s ‘Hard Power’ Deficit,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 11, 2012.

4. Some in the ministry even make the argument that compared to the 2010 budget, such nonsubstantial, nominal increases mask the fact that in real money, the savings until 2015 practically amount to the storied \$8.3 billion.

5. See Federal Ministry of Defence, “The 2012 Defence Budget,” August 14, 2012, www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg/!ut/p/c4/NYxBCoNADAB_tJFCL976iqqXJdYQg0kqa3b7ffVQhjkNDExw4diEmeTrqDDA-JF-qXZGicTlyOoSLXUqATJllydjxXrpUZ-dN0zLVQyblFJlfl_wfueK8NIDrvZ6wSyiBio/.

6. See Federal Ministry of Defence, “Ressortbericht zum Stand der Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr” [Interagency Report on the State of the Reorientation of the Bundeswehr], *Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*, May 8, 2013, 13–16, www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg/!ut/p/c4/NYvBCslwEET_aDcBRerNEhSvvdh4S9sQVpqkrJt68eNNDs7AO8xj8Im1ye0UnFBObsUR7Uzn6QNT3AO8cuG6QqREB_FMJeKjRYPc05eGsUnocrATjLDllnWZgpzNUALWqVnR7T6R3-70-1qzUEfzb0fclvx8gOBjAR2/; and Bundeswehr, “Die Stärke der Streitkräfte” [Strength of Forces], August 9, 2013, www.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/bwde/streitkraefte/grundlagen/staerke/.

7. The Joint Support Service [Streitkräftebasis] was created in 2000 as a distinct organizational unit, unifying the armed forces’ logistical services at home and abroad. The Joint Support Service also includes the two universities of the armed forces (in Hamburg and Munich) and the secret service agency [Militärische Abschirmdienst] of the Bundeswehr.

8. McGrath, “NATO at Sea: Trends in Allied Naval Power.”

9. See Federal Ministry of Defence, “Information on the Personnel Structure Model (PSM) 185,” March 7, 2012, www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg/!ut/p/c4/NYyxDoMwDET_yCFdWnUrYulaaqS2wBbCCVXAix4GIH98w9E56yud6U0pu428UwrsFtOabqTrsMOWbh4SjTPKjKQphoWUPjBknjDtOAswZpeTlI1m9uz9nE0IY2DUg4qsVOjFaRCIQXQ5TBYpBmgYXWWburLVP_Z7eT2bvrXnU3OvHyau6-0HVC1uPA!/; and Federal Ministry of Defence, “Reorientation of the Bundeswehr: The Implementation Plans,” December 6, 2012, www.bmvg.de/portal/a/bmvg/!ut/p/c4/NYzBCslwEET_KJsiQvFmqQcvHgTReEvjJV1sN2WzaS9-vOnBGXiXNwy8oZT9SsErRfYTvMD1dOo2081rMln6EWVE0rTeiZQpss8YNpWFMOYU5SNpo5wHM_G9D0kVF3KrjSYRCvUcwSRafdZJFiDA3gbNU2trL_VN_64S6H27G27bW5wzLP5x8aaE_T/.

10. This analysis is very much in line with similar statements by NATO in 2010 and by the EU in 2008. See North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (Lisbon, Portugal, November 20, 2010), www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf; and European Union, *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World* (Brussels, Belgium: December 11, 2008), www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf.

11. German Ministry of Defence, *Defence Policy Guidelines: Safeguarding National Interests—Assuming International Responsibility—Shaping Security Together* (Berlin, May 18, 2011), 10, www.nato.diplo.de/contentblob/3150944/Daten/1318881/VM_deMaiziere_180511_eng_DLD.pdf. The German version does not say “a benchmark” but rather says “the benchmark.”

12. Federal Ministry of Defence, “Ressortbericht zum Stand der Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr,” 24. Germany’s armed forces consist of service men or women who intend to spend their whole professional lives in the military, others who sign contracts to serve from 2 to 20 years, and enlistees who agree to serve much shorter service periods of anywhere between 7 and 23 months. The figure of 12,500 annually required new recruits noted in the text does not include those enlisting for this shorter period.

13. For a critique of the “missing link” in official German strategy documents between the analysis of the international security situation and the recommendations for German military planning, see Nick Witney and Olivier de France, *Europe’s Strategic Cacophony* (policy brief, European Council on Foreign Relations, April 25, 2013), 5.

14. Minister de Maizière cancelled the development of the Euro Hawk drone in May 2013, citing massive problems in obtaining flight permits for European airspace because of an insufficient automatic anticollision system and a lack of access to construction documents. According to the German air force, the necessary updates would amount to an additional cost of €500 to €600 million—a proposition unacceptable to the political leadership. The leading producing companies, Northrop Grumman and European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company N.V., dispute the ministry’s assessment. For a chronicle of the Euro Hawk “scandal,” see Helena Baers, “The Euro Hawk Scandal: A Chronicle,” *Deutsche Welle*, April 6, 2013, www.dw.de/the-euro-hawk-scandal-a-chronicle/a-16856113.

15. See Thomas Bulmahn, Rüdiger Fiebig, and Carolin Hilpert, *Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsklima in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [Security and Defense Policy and Public Opinion in the Federal Republic of Germany] (Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr, May 2011), 6; and “Halten Sie die den Afghanistan—Einsatz der Bundeswehr für Richtig?” [Is Keeping the Army in Afghanistan Right?], Statista, January 2011, <http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/37270/umfrage/>

beteiligung-der-bundeswehr-am-einsatz-in-afghanistan/. Interestingly, there are no reliable polls on this question for 2012–13. In the case of Afghanistan, however, the public's growing skepticism did not fully translate into political decision making. With the exception of the radical leftist party, all six parties represented in parliament did at least at one point vote in favor of the ISAF mandate.

16. Guido Westerwelle, "Das amt macht mir freude" [The Office Makes Me Happy], *Stem*, July 11, 2013, www.fdp.de/Das-Amt-macht-mir-Freude/4943c18747i1p452/index.html; and Thomas de Maizière, "Warum Schweigt der Kerl? Hat der was zu Verbergen?" [Why Is He Silent? Does He Have Something To Hide?], *Die Welt*, May 27, 2013, www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article116574251/Warum-schweigt-der-Kerl-Hat-der-was-zu-verbergen.html.

17. After much embarrassment, Germany finally decided to send 300 additional soldiers to Afghanistan, thus freeing allied AWACS units to move from there to Libya.

18. In 2013, Germany's defense budget is at €33 billion; the United Kingdom and France have €37 billion and €32 billion, respectively. By 2015, Germany plans to reduce spending to €30 billion, the United Kingdom to €35 billion, and France to €30 billion. See Christopher Chantrell, "Public Spending Details for 2010," www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/year_spending_2010UKbn_12bc1n_30; and Martial Foucault, *The Defense Budget in France: Between Denial and Decline* (Ifri Focus Stratégique, December 2012).

19. R. Nicholas Burns et al., *Anchoring the Alliance* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, May 2012), vi.

20. For a biting critique, see Steven Erlanger, "Libya's Dark Lesson for NATO," *New York Times*, September 3, 2011.