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Willing and (un)able. New Defence Policy Guidelines and Reorientation of the Bundeswehr

On 18 May, after two and a half months in office, defence Minister Thomas de Maizière presented updated cornerstones of the ongoing Bundeswehr reform, which has been rebranded as a “reorientation” (*Neujustierung*).¹ On the same day, new Defence Policy Guidelines (DPG) were published, replacing the previous document of 2003.² The core message directed to internal public opinion and to international partners both disappointed and displeased with Germany’s troubled record in the security policy domain is laid out in the title of the DPG: “*Safeguarding National Interests – Assuming International Responsibility – Shaping Security Together.*” The DPG delivered a conceptual foundation for the armed forces’ transformation process, which will now be based on defined security policy assumptions—a feature lacking in the original reform announced in 2010 under the pressure of a financial consolidation plan.³ The document is both an outcome of the deteriorating German stance on the international security stage and an opportunity to push Berlin on the road towards assuming a new, more visible role, as a security actor.

German security policy has undergone one fundamental change since reunification. However, it was only after the decision of the Federal Constitutional Court of 1994 that Berlin became willing to engage in military peace and stabilization operations abroad, *i.e.*, to take up activities that have been taboo for both the elites and society since the end of World War II. This was reinforced by the increased expectations of international partners, willing to see German soldiers operating hand-in-hand with other states’ contingents, deployed in various theatres. Another reason was the increasing political ambitions of Germany, based

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¹ *The Reorientation of the Bundeswehr*, Speech by Thomas de Maizière, Federal Minister of Defence, Berlin, 18 May 2011, German and English versions available at www.bmvg.de.

² *Die Verteidigungspolitischen Richtlinien 2011. Nationale Interessen wahren—Internationale Verantwortung übernehmen—Sicherheit gemeinsam gestalten*, German and English versions available at www.bmvg.de.

³ See, *i.a.*, Jana Puglierin, Svenja Sinjen, Sparen als Staatsräson, Zur Debatte über die Bundeswehrreform, *Internationale Politik* 1/2011.

on its growing political and economic power and a new self-confidence (epitomized especially by its claim on a permanent seat in the UN Security Council).⁴

Nonetheless, some traditional elements of Germany's strategic culture have been adapted to the new circumstances. They include a focus on NATO as a pillar of European defence and a vehicle for sustaining a Western community of values, including the transatlantic link binding Europe with the U.S.; a multilateral approach to solving security issues, with specific attachment to the role of the United Nations in crisis management; and, above all, military restraint. These assumptions are based on the overall pacifistic attitude of German society, which is a distinct condition, shaping Berlin's policies and the political discourse of the ruling elites. Germany also has been committed to developing the European Union's security and defence policy (CSDP), seen as complementary to and not competitive with NATO. Using CSDP to deal with asymmetric and non-military threats fits well with the German concept of the EU as a "civil power" that builds international credibility and influence by conducting comprehensive peace and stabilization operations, with military units performing only limited tasks. An attachment to comprehensiveness is a further outstanding feature of German security culture, reflected best in the original concept of "networked security" (*Vernetzte Sicherheit*). Finally, the need to legitimize expeditionary engagements by putting it under the umbrella of a multinational effort and under parliamentary control constitutes another constant in German thinking about security.

The Afghan Trauma

German attempts to play a more important role on the security stage have brought only limited results so far. Subsequent German governments have walked the tightrope of trying to balance international partners' expectations with the incapability of the society to take on the burdens of a militarily active international actor. This is best seen in the case of Germany's troubled engagement in Afghanistan. Its record involves deficits in its communication policy towards internal public opinion, misunderstandings with Allies and significant shortages within the Bundeswehr, which turned out to be unprepared for such a complex expeditionary effort. The Afghan mission was simply too long and too difficult to allow keeping an ambiguous security policy framework and an unfortunate communication policy.

Since its beginning, German engagement in ISAF has been uniformly presented by government officials—in line with the concept of networked security—as merely a peace and humanitarian operation, only one performed by soldiers—"armed peacemakers."⁵ What was crucial, however, was that it also was to have been conducted in such a manner. The actions of German forces were severely restrained by compound regulations (so-called "caveats"), which suited overall the philosophy of German engagement, but had nothing to do with real operational requirements. In time it became impossible to uphold the discrepancy between the official German policy and the deteriorating security situation on

⁴ For an overview of the German discourse on Germany's international role, see Krzysztof Malinowski, *Nauka i polityka zagraniczna. Dyskurs o międzynarodowej roli Niemiec (1990-2005)*, Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2007.

⁵ Christian Mölling, *Für eine sicherheitspolitische Begründung der Bundeswehr, Zehn Punkte für die Reform der Reform*, SWP-Aktuell 2011/A 20, April 2011, www.swp-berlin.org.

the ground. The Allies ceased to hide their annoyance with the German ineffectiveness in Afghanistan, which was caused mostly by these caveats.⁶ And German public opinion, as well as important parts of the political elites, started to openly question the true character and rationale behind German involvement. At the same time, it turned out that having about 3,500 soldiers deployed with ISAF from the 244,000-strong Bundeswehr was at the edge of an overstretch.⁷ Regardless of how shocking it may sound, its cold-war force structure meant the percentage of deployable units in the Bundeswehr was relatively low, which hampered its ability to provide larger contingents abroad.

The situation was complicated even further after an incident in September 2009 in which German forces contributed to attacking and killing a number of unarmed civilians near the city of Kunduz. Afterwards, a large wave of criticism struck the German government from both domestic public opinion and some of the Allies. The latter, including France, openly criticized German officers' lack of experience and the overall inability of Berlin to perform the mission. Internal ramifications of the incident were even deeper. Media and some politicians pointed out the failure of the official information policy, which presented the operation as a peacemaking effort while a full-scale insurgency was going on in the region. In the aftermath of the incident, the then-defence minister and the chief of general staff were forced to leave their offices.

Kunduz also has prompted the decision of the government to draw a perspective for withdrawal of its troops from ISAF. And only recently, on 28 January, the Bundestag—for the first time ever—endorsed in a yearly mandate for the use of Bundeswehr in Afghanistan, the start of the withdrawal by the end of 2011.

Nonetheless, the Kunduz incident actually closely followed the lifting of a majority of the German caveats and a significant surge in the German contingent, which had been decided in 2008 and gradually implemented throughout 2009. Shortly after the incident, yet another build-up of the contingent was announced and eventually German forces in ISAF reached almost 5,000 soldiers, making Germany the third largest contributor after the U.S. and Britain (350 additional soldiers remain in reserve to be deployed in an emergency). At the same time it needs to be noted that the 28 January decision by the Bundestag made the withdrawal strictly dependent on the security situation on the ground, despite multiple calls by the opposition to set a fixed date. All these steps mark a rising German willingness to respond to widespread criticism and calls for increased military effort on the part of the Allies by taking more of an operational burden. Over 2009 and 2010, the German contingent indeed had evolved from a much-restrained unit of "armed peacemakers" to a genuinely combat-engaged force, an advance sadly epitomized by an increase in German casualties in these two years. At the same time, the German internal debate on the ISAF engagement gradually took a different shape—shortly after the Kunduz incident, newly-appointed Defence Minister zu Guttenberg, followed by Chancellor Merkel, openly admitted for the first time that the operation in Afghanistan indeed had a combat character.

⁶ See, *i.a.*, *BILD-Interview mit ISAF-Kommandeur Stanley McChrystal: Deutsche müssen mehr Risiken in Afghanistan eingehen*, 20 January, 2010, www.bild.de.

⁷ *The Military Balance 2009*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London: Routledge, 2009. In May 2011, the German Defence Ministry set the number at ca. 220 000.

All in all, Germany's troubled Afghan record has itself prompted a discussion on Berlin's interests in the security policy domain and the future of the Bundeswehr transformation. It has been strengthened, however, by other developments that have been to the detriment of Germany, this time in the European military cooperation sphere.

Out of the boat of military cooperation?

Germany's position in the EU's CSDP has always been mixed. On the one hand, Berlin contributed largely to the creation of the CSDP's institutional framework and participated actively in EU or EU-related capability development initiatives (the EU battle groups system, Eurocorps, European Air Transport Command/Fleet, etc.). On the other hand, it has been a traditional sceptic with regard to CSDP military operations. It did not contribute to the remarkably complex, French-led EU military operation in Chad and Central African Republic, and recently was reluctant towards giving a more ambitious mandate for the planned—though not yet deployed—EUFOR Libya operation. At the same time, Germany took part in many civilian missions as well as the naval anti-pirate military operation, ATALANTA.⁸

Nonetheless, Germany has been known in the EU for its devotion to promoting and developing multinational military capabilities in Europe. This policy is best labelled by the concept of a "European Army"—a multinational military tool to be established in an indefinite time frame with an aim to give Europe military teeth. The concept appears to be a German flagship project with regard to the CSDP, since no other EU member recalls it so often, especially in high-ranking official documents.⁹ This "Europe-ization" of military power must be interpreted in the context of Berlin's traditional imperative to legitimize the foreign use of armed forces through multinational vehicles.

It has always been a vital interest of Germany, both in political and economic terms, to develop its industrial and technological defence base by participating in virtually all large multinational defence cooperation projects, such as Tornado in the 1970s or the subsequent Eurofighter and A400M in the 1980s and 1990s. Being an active participant in virtually all NATO, EU, former Western European Union and OCCAR agency projects, Germany has always been a well-established, first-league player with regard to industrial collaboration on European defence. And it was France that must be regarded as a key partner of Germany in this domain.

Germany's longstanding commitment to military cooperation in the EU met a sudden and harsh reality when the Franco-British military cooperation agreement, which was explicitly presented as detached from the CSDP context, was signed in November 2010.¹⁰ It was received in Berlin with askance and confusion about the future of French-German

⁸ Such as EUPOL in Afghanistan; EULEX in Kosovo; EUPM in Bosnia and Herzegovina; EUMM in Georgia; EUBAM MD/UA in Moldova/Ukraine; EUPOL COPPS in the Palestinian Territories; and, EUBAM in Rafah.

⁹ The *Koalitionsvertrag 2009* states: "Langfristiges Ziel bleibt für uns der Aufbau einer europäischen Armee unter voller parlamentarischer Kontrolle," p. 118, www.cdu.de; Marcin Terlikowski, *European Army—how to do it right?*, PISM Strategic file No 4., July 2008, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, www.pism.pl.

¹⁰ Gareth Chappell, *The New UK-France Programme of Defence Collaboration*, Bulletin No. 135 (211), 25 November 2010, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, www.pism.pl.

strategic cooperation, defence industry collaboration included, and France's apparent loss of interest in developing CSDP. It also showed the limitations of Germany with regard to the scope of strategic cooperation—reportedly France had proposed a similar set of arrangements to its German partner but the latter was not able to deliver the expected input. As a response, Germany called multiple times on the U.K. and France to open up all areas of their bilateral collaboration programme to other states that may bring added value, with Germany itself in mind. Furthermore, in December 2010, Germany, together with Sweden, presented a paper containing a number of proposals to boost military cooperation within the EU.¹¹ It proposed conducting national reviews of pooling and sharing options and proceeding further with joint military research and development, acquisitions of weapons systems and training. The non-paper also called for the harmonization of military requirements and creation of new multinational command-and-control structures.

Both the appeals to the Franco-British duo and the initiative with Sweden, however, received a cold shoulder from most of the EU member states, particularly the UK. Pooling and sharing was put under the vague framework of the so-called “Ghent initiative” (agreed upon in December 2010) and, with France and UK concentrating on their own military collaboration programme, so far it has failed to bring about tangible decisions. Furthermore, the UK-French rapprochement also has undermined another project in which Germany was quite remarkably: the so-called “Weimar CSDP Initiative,” building on Polish proposals to boost the CSDP during its upcoming presidency. Developed jointly by France, Poland and Germany over the last two years, the Initiative ended up in a trilateral letter to Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, calling for tackling key CSDP shortages, such as an ineffective command-and-control system, insufficient cooperation with NATO and the non-use of battle groups.

With all those recent developments, Germany started to face a prospect of finding itself outside the mainstream of both industrial collaboration and defence capability cooperation in Europe. None of these options is acceptable for Germany's long-term security and, maybe even more importantly, for its economic interests.

The Libyan Confusion

The restrictions set by German security policy became evident during the Libyan crisis. All ingredients of the German strategic discourse were focused in Berlin's abstention in the vote on Resolution 1973 and the subsequent withdrawal of its maritime vessels from the NATO operation to enforce the arms embargo on the Mediterranean, according to Resolution 1970 (adopted with the strong support of Germany). On the internal scene, both decisions met with substantial criticism from both opposition and coalition politicians. This criticism was continued by experts and media who argued that Germany's hesitant stance on Libya conflicted with the constants of German foreign policy (*Westbindung*, attachment to the UN, multilateral action, protecting human rights, etc.). Internationally, Germany was struck with criticism by its key European partners and the U.S. The harshest, however, came from France, which was frustrated by German reluctance to support the UK-French politically driven operation, and, in a way, to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the UK.

¹¹ *Pooling and Sharing, German-Swedish Initiative—Food for Thought*, Berlin and Stockholm, November 2010, www.europarl.europa.eu.

The main factor determining the restrained position of Germany was reluctance towards possible involvement in another long-term military intervention during a year in which a number of elections to regional parliaments were to take place. The most important was the March 2011 vote in Baden-Württemberg, which previously had been a bastion of the ruling political camp. The German government apparently took into account the pacifist attitude of German society, as well as the critical stance of public opinion towards participation in the ISAF operation. A poll carried out after the critical vote in the Security Council confirmed the reluctance of Germans to engage the Bundeswehr in Libya (65%), but as much as 62% of respondents supported intervention in connection with a no-fly zone.¹²

The risk of isolation and loss of influence on the international community's policy vis-à-vis the Libyan crisis prompted Germany to take action to reaffirm its commitment, loyalty and solidarity with the Allies. The first move was to expand the German contribution in Afghanistan by approving Bundeswehr AWACS operations over the country with the aim to relieve partners involved in the Libya operation. Additionally, it was declared that Germany could participate in a military-supported humanitarian mission in Libya—the prepared EUFOR Libya operation. Chancellor Merkel stressed multiple times that despite abstaining from voting, Germany shares the aims of UNSC Resolution 1973. Furthermore, Germany joined the International Contact Group on Libya, though mainly due to its potential role in rebuilding the country after the conflict.

All those steps could and should be interpreted as “damage minimization” tactics. At the same time, though, the Libyan abstention and its widespread ramifications (with damages to its image at the forefront) increasingly seem to be a catalyst for the renewed definition of the role that Germany wants to play on the international security scene—a role that has been inscribed in the new DPG.

Towards a re-birth of a troubled reform

Although Germany has taken various steps to limit the damages to its image caused first by troubles in Afghanistan then by the Libyan abstention, the re-orientation of the Bundeswehr reform and the announcement of the new DPG should be regarded as key steps on the road towards restoring Berlin's credibility as a security policy player.

In its original shape as presented 2010 by Defence Minister zu Guttenberg, the reform assumed a ground-breaking decision—the suspension of universal conscription and a consequential shift to professional armed forces and a reduction in the number of troops by 35%, from about 244,000 to around 160,000. It also introduced a number of other changes: slimming military administration, scrapping outdated weapons systems (some dating back to the 1960s) and delaying or cutting new procurements. The common denominator for the latter steps was a compelling need to cut the defence budget due to a mandatory public finance consolidation plan. By 2015, the cuts were to account for 8.3 billion euro, almost 25% of Germany's 2009 defence spending.

The Guttenberg reform was meant to bring impetus to the Bundeswehr's transformation process, which already had been started after 2000 with the overall aim to boost the armed

¹² *Emid-Umfrage für Bild am Sonntag*, 18 March 2011, www.bild.de.

forces' capacity with regard to expeditionary operations (a basic framework for the transformation came in 2006 in a White Book on defence). However, the "original sin" of Minister Guttenberg's project was an assumption that it was possible to balance the need for cuts with professionalization while at the same time conducting such a deep change of force structure without an open debate about the strategic goals of Germany's security policy. For this reason, the reform began to be criticized shortly after its announcement. Unsurprisingly, the SPD heavily criticized the cuts, pointing out that they may end up resulting in the Bundeswehr being unable to defend Germany and its interests. At the same time, the Greens called for even deeper cuts. But also, the coalition partner FDP inclined towards keeping the assumed level of cuts despite the CDU/CSU's attempts to obtain preferential treatment from the ministry of finance. Two strong blows to the reform came in early 2011. First, the public was shocked by the disclosure of disturbing practices in the armed forces, such as mobbing, or bullying. Then, the scandal over Minister Guttenberg's PhD thesis erupted and was followed by his resignation in disgrace.

Given this context, as well as the impeded position of Germany with regard to security policy, one can clearly see that both the re-orientation of the reform and the new DPG were burdened with huge expectations and tension. Nonetheless, incumbent Minister de Maizière sustained the main elements of the reform while keeping most of the novelties for the DPG.

The decision to suspend conscription starting 1 July 2011 was kept. The size of the armed forces was set to 170,000 full-time and contract troops, supplemented by 5,000 volunteers and a contingency of 10,000. This gives Germany a force of about 175,000 to 185,000 troops, a bit larger than originally planned. At the same time, Germany set a goal to build-up its rapid reaction forces to 10,000 troops, 50% more than the current size but 4,000 short of the original aim of the 2006 White Book. The reduction in forces is followed by a deep reorganization of military administration and management—the number civilian employees in the military will be reduced by 25% to 55,000. It also is accompanied by extensive reorganization—many of Bundeswehr's nearly 400 military locations will be closed. Previously announced decisions on scrapping outdated weapons systems were sustained, leaving all three branches of the armed forces with less equipment, including Transall transport and Tornado multi-purpose aircraft, old 206-type submarines (already decommissioned) and a number of armoured vehicles, notwithstanding older versions of the Leopard 2 main battle tanks.

Nonetheless, it is the DPG that brings about a reconsidered framework of German security policy. Looking at its rhetoric, together with Ministers de Maizière's various speeches, one may argue that Germany indeed has drawn conclusions from its mismanaged and badly presented engagement in Afghanistan and abstention in the Libya vote. The document opens with a relevant analysis of the current security environment of Europe and Germany, threatened by asymmetric and non-military threats (failed states, international terrorism and organized crime, undemocratic regimes, uncontrolled migrations, natural disasters, etc.).

What strikes first in the DPG is a clear declaration that Germany wants to take a more active part in crisis-management operations and is prepared to use the whole spectrum of national policy instruments, including military means. Moreover, the German contribution

should correspond to the country's standing, economic power and international obligations. In other words, the DPG seems to say that Germany is tired of being a second-league contributor to peace and stabilization operations and that from now on it wants to be a top-level player. What is reiterated throughout the document is that Germany wants to assume a role of co-decider with regard to multinational crisis-management operations.

This claim is confirmed by another clear and surprisingly strong goal—that Germany wants to actually play a leading role in peace and stabilization operations. Moreover, the leadership is not limited to the political dimension, but also involves the military. Germany would be able to act as a “framework nation,” able to take up responsibility for leading an operation only with the support of other states' contingents.

The second distinct feature of the DPG is a declaration that Germany will take a decision on its involvement in crisis-management operations on a case-by-case basis and only after a thorough assessment of whether German interests require and justify such an engagement. It seems to indicate that Germany, particularly after the Libyan abstention, wants to send a strong signal to the Allies that they cannot claim Germany's automatic involvement in all European-made peace and stabilization operations.

Nevertheless, the multilateral approach, an essential part of the Bonn Republic heritage, is still an imperative for the German security policy. The DPG stresses the importance of planning and conducting crisis-management operations with partners within the UN, NATO and EU frameworks (this is, however, presented as a “general rule”—*grundsätzlich*— which may indicate that Germany is open to joining “coalitions of the willing”). The document also signals that Berlin is willing to engage militarily in operations that are not directly connected to national interests due to German international responsibility.¹³

Finally, regarding the tasks of the Bundeswehr, one can easily notice the supremacy of territorial defence, listed as a top function of the armed forces. However, as Minister de Maizière explained, this is a consequence of the Constitutional regulation, which requires the armed forces to defend the country. Moreover, the catalogue of tasks should be seen in the overall context of the debate on NATO's New Strategic Concept, which re-iterated the importance of Art. 5 commitments.

Conclusions

By bringing a renewed conceptual framework for the transformation of the Bundeswehr, the DPG arguably provides Germany with an opportunity to become a more visible actor in the sphere of security policy. Facing a crisis of credibility and a substantial loss of position in European security cooperation, Germany now declares its resolve to co-decide on key issues regarding European security efforts, be it operations or capability development. The DPG signals a willingness to enable future missions by providing political and military leadership, and even vaguely suggests acceptance for coalitions of the willing.

¹³ See also Thomas de Maizière, *Regierungserklärung zur Neuausrichtung der Bundeswehr*, 27 May 2011, Deutscher Bundestag Plenarprotokoll 17/112, www.dipbt.bundestag.de; *Töten und Sterben gehören dazu*, Interview with the Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière, FAZ-Online, 27 May 2011, www.faz.net.

Nonetheless, the DPG also may be interpreted as an *ex-post* explanation of the German position towards the Libyan crisis, followed by an attempt to hide existing capacity limitations with ambitious declarations. In this way, being a sophisticated message to German partners from NATO and EU, the DPG's real value as a spur for further changes of policy towards more permissiveness with regard to military engagement may turn out to be limited. Proof of this might be in the stance of FDP Minister of Foreign Affairs Guido Westerwelle, who has recently underlined Germany's standing commitment to the policy of military restraint, despite quite opposite messages sent by Minister de Maizière.¹⁴ If this division is sustained, one could not expect tangible changes in German practice until new elections in 2013, provided that a stable majority will come of it.

The DPG also can be seen as a German challenge to the recent Franco-British rapprochement. If one agrees that one of decisive factors behind the 2003 Iraq dispute was a German desire to emancipate from the U.S. (also for reasons of domestic politics¹⁵), then the Libyan case might serve as a case of challenging French leadership in EU security and defence efforts. In this context, the DPG seems to say that Germany will not accept staying under the Franco-British exclusive leadership and is devoted to become a peer partner for the two.

In this context, provisions of the DPG may be perceived as a beginning of a route towards building-up political and military potential, which would finally allow Germany to be a key European partner in crisis-management and capability development. One of the ways of implementing these "pressing forward" tactics can be in boosting cooperation in the CSDP framework, particularly with less militarily capable EU member states. Since the strategic gravity of French-UK collaboration is both hard to mimic and unattractive to smaller states, Germany may try to assume a role of a European hub of lower-profile, military cooperation. This may be a chance for some EU member states interested in developing CSDP and intra-EU capability cooperation, and for the CSDP itself. In this case it would be now Germany that holds the keys for the future of the much-troubled EU efforts in security and defence.

In many cases, though, Germany has no other choice but to try to join Franco-British programs, otherwise it will simply lose its industrial base, *e.g.*, in space technologies, which cannot be augmented by the almost nonexistent potential of smaller EU members. The question is open, however, about whether Germany will approach France and UK only after strengthening its position by collaborating with other partners, or will it force any kind of agreement as soon as possible, risking being a secondary partner of the two. This strategic choice will be contingent on the advancement of the French–UK collaboration and, once again, on the internal dynamics in German policy.

¹⁴ *Obama's Kernbotschaft: Mut, Guido Westerwelle in Gespräch mit Christoph Heinemann*, Deutschlandfunk, 20 May 2011, www.dradio.de.

¹⁵ Chancellor Schröder mobilized domestic reticence towards U.S. policy and the pacifistic attitude of the society, See: Kerry Longhurst, Piotr Buras, "The Berlin Republic, Iraq, and the Use of Force", (in:) Marcin Zaborowski, Kerry Longhurst (eds.), *Old Europe, New Europe and the Transatlantic Security Agenda*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 50.

Regardless of the true motives behind the DPG (and apparently both situations described above play some role), there are two factors that are more than likely going to shape its outcome: public opinion and financial austerity.

The implementation of proposed changes in Germany's security policy will require a change in the society's traditional attitude towards the place of the armed forces in the state and the role of the latter in international relations. Further, in the mid-term perspective, one should not expect any radical change regarding the scepticism held by German society towards the deployment of military forces abroad. A deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan may even deepen the reluctance of the public to support military endeavours. Moreover, the political costs of the Bundeswehr's transformation are bound to be high because of the closing-down of numerous military facilities (scheduled for autumn 2011). Socially-based protests may appear as a consequence, though this is not the sole problem since the government is busy with so many tough economic issues that public support for dealing with security will be extremely prone to loss in case any of the changes become complicated.

Germany also cannot escape from balancing the costs of maintaining a professional army with a decreasing defence budget. A first, disturbing signal forcing reconsideration of the financial aspect is the negotiated option that the financial costs of radical personnel cuts will be transferred to the main public budget. Furthermore, the German labour market is booming, which makes the recruiting of skilled volunteers more difficult and costly. The exact scope of cuts in equipment to be procured also is unknown, so some drastic steps might be needed. In case they are broader than initially expected, the key assumptions of the newly re-orientated reform may need to be changed again.

One positive signal in regard to the ability of the government to pursue the DPG changes and transformation is the correlation of the acceptability of the use of force abroad with the age of the population. As one post-Libyan poll showed, while in the age group of above 60 years old only 23% accepted the possible engagement of ground forces, the support level reached 47% in the age group of between 18 and 29 years old.¹⁶

The final test for Germany's willingness and capability to assume a new role in European security policy will be its eventual participation or leadership in any new crisis-management operation (no matter if by partnering with France and UK or by becoming a hub for less-capable EU members). Only by sending in troops on the ground and winning the support of its own society for this kind of activity will Germany be able to finally break with the image of a constrained and unreliable partner.

¹⁶ *Forsa-Umfrage—Bodentruppen nach Libyen*, 6-7 April 2011, www.internationalepolitik.de.