



## **On the Reorientation of the Bundeswehr – Meeting the Challenges Ahead**

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### **Abstract**

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The dynamically changing global security environment is a key parameter for the reorientation of the Bundeswehr. The reform package, outlined by Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière in June 2011, is both ambitious and radical. It's most important drive has been to suspend conscription, and use the complimentary reduction in troop numbers to create leaner, expeditionary armed forces. The detailed planning consistently follows operational and capability-related considerations. In order for the Bundeswehr to fulfil its tasks in a constantly altering complex and dynamic security environment, its internal structures must ensure that it can adapt to new levels of ambition and retain its build-up capacity. This approach is part of the long-term national security approach and encompasses capabilities, structures and processes across the Bundeswehr as a whole. To this end, the Bundeswehr reorientation follows a top-down-approach. All five services – Army, Air Force, Navy, Joint Support Service and Joint Medical Service – will transform their command structure. The Ministry of Defence will be reduced by half. At present, work on the Bundeswehr reorientation is on schedule. The outlines of a Bundeswehr fit for the future are taking definite shape. Yet, the reorientation of the Bundeswehr including the German security and defence policy still has a long way to go.

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### **About the Author of this Issue**

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## ANALYSIS

### A Paradigm Shift

Berlin in May 2011. High noon – actually 12:30 hrs. The large conference hall of the officer's club at the Julius Leber Barracks is fully packed with roughly 350 curious guests – high-ranking military officials and representatives from politics and society. Federal Minister of Defence, Thomas de Maizière appears to present the key elements of the Bundeswehr reorientation. The Minister of Defence has just briefed the Federal Government about his plans.

The minister explains his aim of the reorientation: to structure the German armed forces in a way that allows the Bundeswehr to improve the way it deals with the given tasks. This means to improve processes and procedures, to become more efficient, and to become more effective in the way the Bundeswehr fulfils these tasks. The minister is crystal clear with his audience: *“Security policy is a policy for uncertainties. The future is uncertain. For this reason there can never be a finished Bundeswehr. ... The reorientation of the Bundeswehr and the Ministry of Defence is like open-heart surgery on a walking patient. ... Those who become actively involved and contribute will quickly find their place and their task. For those who do not, there will be no room.”*

In the aftermath of World War Two Germany has been a nation very sceptical about the employment of military force beyond the defence of Germany at the inner German border. Contemporary Germany has started to slowly but surely *normalise* its military affairs. Bundeswehr troops have been sent out on operational deployment since 1990. Today, the Bundeswehr is deployed in Afghanistan, where, their police training mission and special-forces are highly valued coalition assets. German soldiers are currently participating in eleven international peace missions – for example, as part of the anti-piracy Operation Atalanta on the Horn of Africa or the -UNIFIL mission off the Lebanese coast to prevent arms smuggling to Hezbollah. International missions, together with allies in NATO, the European Union and the United Nations, have now become normal. Yet, much needs to be done. The force's structures still have not been sufficiently geared to this paradigm shift.

The reforms of the recent past – MoD Scharping initiated a *Fundamental Renewal* in 2000, while his successor MoD Dr Struck initiated a *Transformation* in 2003 – had not managed to achieve the desired effects. For a long time, the generally known shortfalls of the Bundeswehr have been covered up by attention being drawn to the excellent job the Bundeswehr is doing in operations abroad. Steps in the right direction were sometimes balanced by counterproductive developments. Elsewhere, the circumstances or setting had changed. Lessons from operations were not translated into sustainable capabilities. Only a couple of shortfalls were tackled successfully, mostly in response to parliamentary pressure. Finally, it became apparent: the Bundeswehr has no sustainable future if it retains its current structures.

### Identifying Shortfalls

Already in April 2010 a commission had been set up under the chair of Dr Frank-Jürgen Weise. The so-called Weise-Commission was tasked with identifying proposals for restructuring the Federal Ministry of Defence along organisational and procedural lines better oriented on operations as well as



**Frank-Jürgen Weise**



the civilian and military top-level structure of the Bundeswehr. The commission included military and business experts, experts from public administration and politics.

On 26 October 2010, Dr Frank-Jürgen Weise presented to Minister of Defence Dr Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg the Commission's report entitled *Focus on Operations – Concentration, Flexibility, Efficiency* and stated with outmost clarity: *"Troops are on deployment, and the helicopter does not take off. NH-90 stands for the NATO helicopter of the 1990s (last century). But it is now 2010 – and the helicopter has still not taken off. It currently takes 250,000 soldiers to sustainably deploy just 7,000. In other words, behind every soldier on operations there are 35 others and 15 civilian employees on routine duty or providing support. This describes only a few of the shortfalls of the Bundeswehr."*

The report addressed frankly that the German armed forces had suffered from severe shortcomings, long-term structural underfunding, and a conflict between their mission and the available financial resources. The problems include an excess of parallel structures, too many staffs, too much supervision for too little work and, in many cases, unclear accountability within command structures. Responsibility is often divided instead of being focused, and too much responsibility is being transferred from the bottom up and denied from the top down.

The findings of the Weise-Commission consisted of a set of recommendations for a new organisational structure of the Bundeswehr. This also included the suspension of the pre-induction examination and call-up, as the security situation no longer necessitates conscription in the foreseeable future. The Commission's findings were that the number of currently some 7,000 servicemen and women who can be deployed sustainably on operations should be doubled. The size of the Bundeswehr is to be cut back to some 180,000 posts for military personnel and some 50,000 posts for civilian employees. In addition, the report recommended bringing the Ministry together in Berlin and cutting the number of its civilian posts by half. The Commission also outlined extensive proposals to ensure that the Bundeswehr will still continue to be a competitive employer and an integral part of German society.

The Structural Commission's report became the point of departure for the reorientation measures to be taken. It was presented in parallel with the report of the Chief of Staff, Bundeswehr, which had called for personnel strength of 163,500 as the minimum requirement for the armed forces of the future. Together they constituted the basis for the policy decisions concerning the form of military service to adopt and the future overall size of the German armed forces and the Federal Defence Administration.

On 15 December 2010, the Federal Cabinet decided that the armed forces should have a target strength of up to 185,000 military personnel. This figure was to include 170,000 regulars and temporary-career volunteers. A Military Law Amendment Bill provided for the suspension of compulsory military service as of 1 July 2011.

### **Defence Policy Guidelines**

When Minister of Defence de Maizière presented the Defence Policy Guidelines in May 2011 to the public he assigned the Bundeswehr a broad spectrum of *interconnected tasks*, ranging from territorial defence as collective defence, international conflict prevention and crisis management to evacuation operations, homeland security and humanitarian relief abroad. Being *"the centrepiece of the security and protection of Germany and its citizens"*, Germany's armed forces are *"an indispensable tool of our country's foreign and security policy"*.



Which “... in their identity, structure and organisation, their scope, capabilities and equipment, follow the changing objectives and interests of security policy.”

The minister also highlighted: "A reorientation of the Bundeswehr can neither be rated solely by the money available, nor is it possible to simply pay for everything someone would like to have. It is a process that involves finding common ground." The objective of the reorientation is to position, finance and equip the Bundeswehr in a way that provides Germany with the lasting capability to make a significant military contribution to national and collective security as well as to the protection of international peace and stability, together with its partners.

Germany aims to field a Bundeswehr that is capable. To this end the Bundeswehr *level of ambition* was reviewed with regard to the new NATO Strategy, but also in order to take advantage of

- the *multinational capability development* as offered by the *smart defence initiative* of NATO Secretary General Rasmussen as well as the European Union *Ghent Initiative* that aims at intensifying military cooperation in Europe;
- the more efficient use of a *single set of forces* by harmonized NATO and European Union defence planning;
- generating a more substantial *comprehensive approach*.

The German national *level of ambition* defines the quality and scope of the Bundeswehr capabilities to be provided. This includes security requirements, operational demands and the availability of personnel, materiel and financial resources. As an essential guiding principle for the Bundeswehr it also drives its structure. The *level of ambition* Germany has come up with in the context of the Bundeswehr reorientation aims at a *single set of forces* almost entirely dedicated to NATO and EU operations to include NATO Response forces and the EU Battlegroups. Only a few capabilities will be reserved for national, autonomous operations. Provisions for pure national security tasks have been limited to Military Evacuation Operations, securing national air space and water ways. Consequently, nearly all Bundeswehr operational capabilities will be dedicated to NATO and the European Union.

Although the German armed forces will be smaller, they need to be consistently deployment- and capability-oriented across the entire spectrum of tasks and capabilities. But for this purpose Germany no longer needs a military force comprising almost one hundred artillery battalions or thousands of heavy battle tanks as we did during the Cold War. Today the armed forces need a broad spectrum of capabilities, one that equips them for deployments based purely on stabilization as in the Balkans, deployments in zones of armed conflict such as Afghanistan, and, in the extreme case, in high-intensity combat operations.

The Defence Policy Guidelines define as goal of the reorientation a force that is capable of “*safeguarding national interests, assuming international responsibility, and shaping security together.*” It is often overlooked that Germany does not act in isolation, but with allies and partners. The German armed forces are almost always deployed within multinational structures such as NATO or the EU and operate together with the forces of our partner nations. Practically, that means forces that are adequate in number, well trained for modern missions, well-equipped, deployable, sustainable and interoperable with the forces of Germany’s European, transatlantic and further allies and partners. This logic has also informed the goal of achieving the capacity to



sustain deployments of up to 10,000 servicemen and women on operations in case our country assumes the responsibilities of a framework nation for land-based operations in up to two theatres of operation simultaneously along with one additional maritime operation. This means Germany being able to sustainably deploy 3,000 soldiers more than previously while also reducing the overall size of our armed forces.

More broadly, the German national level of ambition calls for a modern military force, capable of meeting Germany's responsibilities in the face of ongoing challenges in Afghanistan and the Greater Middle East and complex and evolving threats such as ballistic missile and cyber attack, in the framework of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept. To meet these tasks requires a Bundeswehr with certain attributes – not all of them military.

Germany understands security in comprehensive terms and it therefore requires a comprehensive range of mechanisms. In the context of networked security, military deployment represents an important mechanism, but only one mechanism among others. In order to contribute to an advanced integration of European military capabilities as well as security and defence policy, Germany's military capabilities need to be embedded into a truly comprehensive, effective and sustainable German policy that clearly identifies its purpose, ambitions and limitations, provides its capacities accordingly in a reliable manner and in this way generates trust with its allies and partners.

The capabilities of the Bundeswehr are derived from its mission and tasks, with the national level of ambition acting as a guideline. With view to a complex, dynamic security environment, the Bundeswehr must continue to keep a broad and flexible spectrum of military capabilities available. Current operations can only serve as an orientation in this respect. The Bundeswehr must be prepared to fulfil different operational tasks. The strategic requirements of the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union will affect the tasks, scope, structure, equipment and organisation of the Bundeswehr of the future.

Consequently, the Bundeswehr must retain capabilities for operations across the entire intensity spectrum, including observer missions, advisory and training support as well as preventive security measures. Assets must be specifically put together for each mission, they must be quick to respond, flexible and modular and possess both escalation capability and robustness. Cohesion – operating as part of a system – is an essential prerequisite for success on operations and therefore a major determinant in the design of interfaces between organisational areas. Sustainability must be ensured for forces that are earmarked for enduring operations.

Since a direct conventional attack on German territory has become unlikely, the personnel strength that was exclusively reserved for such an event is no longer needed. In order to deliver an appropriate level of security, the build-up capabilities of the armed forces will be maintained and universal conscription will remain enshrined in the German constitution, although the obligation to perform basic military service has been suspended. Within the capability spectrum a prioritisation is based on the likelihood of risks and threats that require a military contribution, on the time needed to provide these capabilities, on an assessment of national interests, and on the availability of funds.

On this basis, a *prioritised capability profile* for the Bundeswehr has been developed, which describes individual capabilities according to type, quality and scale. In this profile, particular consideration is given to the capabilities required for a framework nation, on which the contingents of other troop-contributing nations can rely. The detailed planning is geared towards strengthening those capabilities with high-tech support so as to limit

personnel intensive commitments in theatres of operation, ensuring opportunities for adequate participation in integrated and multinational command structures.

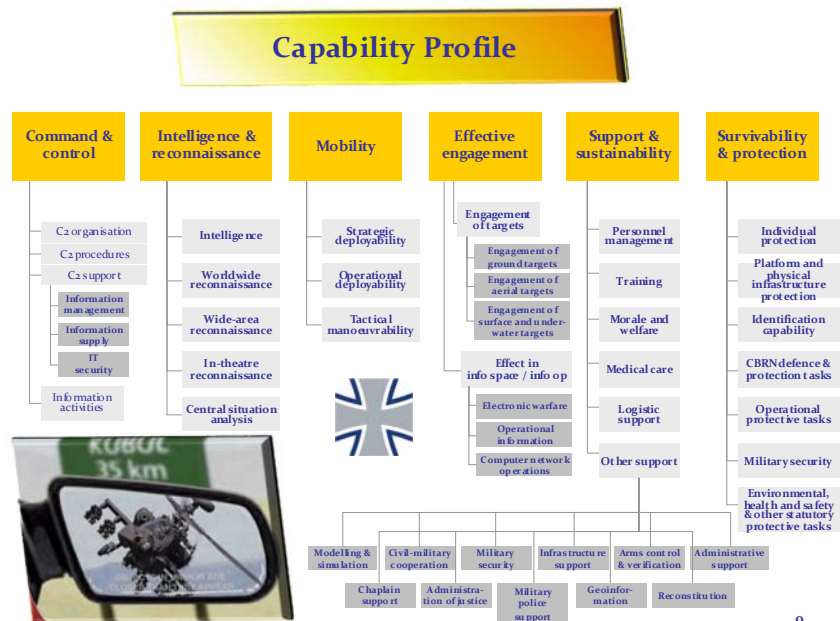
Providing security is the primary, yet not the only task of a government. Expenditures on defence must be compatible with other government obligations. This not only applies to Germany, as we are currently seeing among our partners in NATO and the EU as well as in many other countries. At the moment, Germany and its allies are dealing with the most serious economic and financial crisis since World War II. This is a challenge that concerns the entire state apparatus. Responsibility to future generations demands to decrease the debt burden.

However, it is also important to note that Germany requires armed forces that are ready for and capable of deployment and that correspond to Germany's international weight in terms of the quality of their resources and training. Thus, a significant part of the reorientation is to ensure that the financial possibilities available to the Bundeswehr in the coming years are commensurate with the capacities, structures, and resources required fulfilling the tasks ahead. Consequently, along with adapting to the needs of security policy and ensuring a stable demographic foundation, a central goal of the reform process involves securing a sustainable financial basis for the German armed forces.

### Implementation

In order for the Bundeswehr to fulfil its tasks in a constantly altering complex and dynamic security environment, its internal structures must ensure that it can adapt to new levels of ambition and retain its build-up capacity. This approach is part of the long-term national security approach and encompasses capabilities, structures and processes across the Bundeswehr as a whole. To this end, the Bundeswehr reorientation follows a top-down-approach. All five services – Army, Air Force, Navy, Joint Support Service and Joint Medical Service – will transform their command structure. The Ministry of Defence will be reduced by half.

The first measures have been addressing the Ministry of Defence itself. As we speak, the ministry is in a process of reorganisation. In its redesigned format, it consists of nine directorates with approximately 2,000 personnel. Their directorates have been staffed with a mix of





civilian and military personnel. The nine directors are not only responsible for their respective ministerial directorates, but also for subordinated Bundeswehr agencies, offices and facilities.

The ministry is headed by the Minister of Defence, supported by two permanent state secretaries, and the German Chief of Defence. The Chief of Defence is the highest-ranking service member of the Bundeswehr and its most senior military representative. He is the administrative superior of all troops. He is the military advisor to the German government. Starting in April 2012, the Chiefs of Staff of the services are no longer part of the ministerial structure, but heading their services outside the ministry.

The German armed forces strength will be reduced from the current figure of over 222,000 troops to a maximum of 185,000 – comprising 170,000 regular soldiers and temporary-career volunteers, including reservists, and between 5,000 and 15,000 military service volunteers. For the five single services this means a reduction in the Army from 80,000 troops to around 61,320, in the Air Force from 38,000 troops to around 23,000, in the Navy from 17,000 troops to 13,850, in the Joint Support Service from 63,000 troops to 38,750 and in the Joint Medical Service from 21,990 troops to 15,120. The new force structure aims to make a pool of forces of at least 10,000 military personnel available for deployment on stabilisation operations. The number of people working in the Ministry of Defence will be reduced from 3,500 to approximately 2,000. The civilian personnel will see cuts by 25,000 to 55,000.

Looking at the services:

The Army will drop from currently five to three division-level units. The number of brigades will drop from eleven to eight. Modularity will ensure flexibility for a broad mission spectrum. The army plans for capabilities to enable effective engagement across the whole task and intensity spectrum and with graduated levels of sustainability, particularly allowing for rapid reaction to emerging crises and changing operational requirements. The necessary cohesion will be strengthened significantly in the brigade as an integrated system.

The Air Force's present divisional level will be abolished. It will be replaced by an *operational units* and a *support units* command. The guiding principles are

- focus on operations,
- fitness for the future,
- sustainability and efficiency.

The planning reflects the shift of focus in the capability profile from counter air operations to supporting air operations, surveillance and reconnaissance while maintaining the capability to conduct high-intensity air operations. The command and control structures will follow the principle of unifying task, capability and responsibility by pooling functional expertise and administrative responsibility within capability commands.

The Navy will be likewise organised in *capability areas* comprising two *flotillas* – to be strengthened in accordance with the focus-on-operations principle – , a naval air command and training and support elements. The required broad capability profile will be achieved by varying levels of sustainability. The structure of the Navy aims at concentrating maritime expertise. The division/service office level will be abandoned. Accordingly, there will only be one integrated Headquarters of the Navy, which will also incorporate the *Maritime Operations Centre* (MOC).



The Joint Support Service will remain the central service provider for the armed forces as well in Germany as in theatre. Herein Bundeswehr and joint support capabilities for missions, routine duty activities and national territorial tasks will be pooled. Three capability commands will be established – one for logistics, one for command and control support, and one for territorial tasks in Germany. Mobile operational forces, reach back capabilities for operations as well as training and development in the areas of logistics, command support and military intelligence will be consolidated under unified responsibility. The same approach will be followed for the *Military Police Command* and the *CBRN Defence Command*.

The Joint Medical Service will concentrate its operational forces in a single command. The same applies to the regional medical treatment facilities in Germany with the exception of the Bundeswehr hospitals. The objectives of improving military medical care in Germany and maintaining the quality achieved on operations abroad will be achieved by concentrating on medical support processes and consistently focusing on those tasks that require a medical licence. The ratio of surgeons in patient care facilities to those in staff functions will increase.

The Reserve remains an indispensable element of the Bundeswehr and will become even more important in future. Reservists will continue augmenting the active-duty forces on operations and contribute their civilian occupational and personal qualifications. As citizens in uniform, they will also continue to serve as an important link between the Bundeswehr and society. A respective new reservist concept has just been adopted.

The procurement of defence equipment will also see major changes, although the actual scope of reform in this area, which features long-standing contractual commitments, is critically dependent on a constructive agreement between the Ministry of Defence and the defence industry. The 'wish-list' of the Minister of Defence Dr Thomas de Maizière encompasses both a reduction of in-service equipment and equipment to be procured in the future. The major reductions are as follows:

Army: the stock of the Leopard 2 main battle tank will be reduced from 350 to 225. The numbers of the new Infantry Fighting Vehicle Puma will be reduced from 410 to 350.

Air Force: the Air Force will only receive 80 NH90 Light Transport Helicopters (instead of 122 initially ordered), 40 Tiger Combat Support Helicopters (instead of 80 initially ordered), 140 Typhoon Multirole Combat Aircraft (instead of 177 initially ordered) and 40 A400M Transport Aircraft (instead of 60 initially ordered). The stock of the Tornado Multirole Combat Aircraft will be reduced from 185 to 85 and of the C-160 Transall Transport Aircraft from 80 to 60.

Navy: the eight F122 frigates will be put out of service. Only six instead of the initially planned eight Multirole Combat Ships 180 will be procured. In addition, the number of Marine Helicopters will be reduced from 43 to 30.

As the process of negotiations has just been initiated, it is too early to make predictions on the potential outcome. For the industry it will be difficult to judge the sustainability of the Minister's promise to reinvest resources freed from old contracts instead of using them as savings.





## On Schedule

In these days of the most comprehensive Bundeswehr reform, it is essential to look far ahead. Who wants to be successful in the future has to design it himself. Overall, work on the Bundeswehr reorientation is on schedule. The outlines of a Bundeswehr fit for the future are taking definite shape. It is now all the more important to use the upcoming opportunities to surmount the old ways of thinking and doing.

The reform package, outlined by Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière in June 2011, is both ambitious and radical. It's most important drive has been to suspend conscription, and use the complimentary reduction in troop numbers to create leaner, expeditionary armed forces. The detailed planning consistently follows operational and capability-related considerations. Despite and as a result of the reduction in size of the Armed Forces, basic structures will be strengthened and command structures streamlined to a considerable extent.

Of course, this cannot be achieved overnight. Dismantling structures that are no longer needed and organizing new units and groups needs time. The same applies to the equipment and materiel that needs to be disposed of or acquired. A key challenge remains is to realise the reductions in a reasonable timeframe and as far as possible in collaboration with the military and civilian personnel. Both tasks are difficult to achieve, since on the one hand the natural reduction of personnel through the suspension of compulsory service and the regular retirement of personnel is likely not to do the job. On the other hand the incentives offered to redundant personnel to leave the Armed Forces, especially in times of high uncertainty on the job market, are not always convincing. Furthermore, generating capable, effective and sustainable professional forces requires major initial investments that naturally reduce envisaged savings through the suspension of conscription.

Clearly, the reorientation of the Bundeswehr including the German security and defence policy still has a long way to go. The dynamically changing global security environment is a key parameter for the reorientation of the Bundeswehr. Change and reorientation will continue. Germany and its allies need a Bundeswehr that opens up a broad spectrum of options for political action. Also in future the German armed forces will be an indispensable tool of German foreign and security policy. They are the basis of German willingness and preparedness to defend itself.

Consequently, the task for policy makers is clear: they have to generate sufficient political will and societal support and translate it into sustainable commitment while the Bundeswehr keeps adapting to both current tasks and expected future developments. The security challenges won't stop. The mission of the Bundeswehr will be to contribute successfully to security and prosperity.

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**Remarks:** *Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.*